

v a i is in vai

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Abstract

Weaving strands of Sāmoan thought in French and English, this text delves into fluid states of being and becoming, considering various impacts of hydrodecadence, a new term for a continuing colonial phenomenon, as proposed by the author.

(v is in vai)

J'ai baptisé la surexploitation des eaux sacrées en terroirs autochtones présentement colonisés l'hydrodécadence. Cet état de barrage des eaux de fleuves gigantesques aussi bien que de sculpture de ruisseaux plus humbles me laisse bouche bée. La quasi-gratuité de l'eau de robinet au Québec qui dissimule le coût écologique, culturel et politique des complexes en baie James fait écho à la consommation de l'eau de coco aux Îles Hawaïennes qui, de concert avec le phénomène de militourisme reconnu par feu Teresia Teaiwa, régit la spoliation des villages, tarodières et viviers autochtone. La boue richement puante de vitalité de ces tarodières tamponne mes jambes par un jour de soleil fort à l'est de Honolulu en février 2022.

The confluence of the powerful rivers Mareingalk/Mirrangbamurn and Birrarung, where many living and loving beings thrived across expansive wetlands, are currently occupied by Melbourne's central neighbourhoods. With every flood, tramlines and city streets are again covered in waters that are rich in nutrients and potentiality. Even only a few of the relational toponyms in Indigenous languages of the Great Ocean teach that spaces-that-relate are descended from the Ancestors, such as in the Sāmoan term Vasa Loloa. The portage inherent in celestial navigation across oceans and rivers teach in turn that everything is profoundly and simply connected and has its place.

Wetlands lying in waiting as much as depths brimming with bottom-feeder knowledges of the greatest trenches whose names are whispered by echolocating whales. Mariāna, Tonga, to beyond. To be humble in ecologies in states of restoration, to truly know through manava, belly, or below, site/ation as shared by the BUSH Gallery collective becomes necessary. To embrace fluid states in this vein is to honour mnemonic places, attend to their situated histories and direct the body towards moving in kin constellation. Secwépemc artist and curator Tania Willard and Taftan artist and curator Peter Morin speak of their lands-centred approach in these terms:

BUSH gallery opens up space to experience all of the complexities that build contemporary Indigenous art, Indigenous knowledge, history, ancestors and future ancestors fusing time streams in a non-linear constellation of meaning, history and futurity. Within these pages is an interrogation of the established structures of meaning within English language, and an active questioning of the unnamed and silent barriers that keep us just one foot away from an imagined and inherited futurity.^[1]

(a is in vai)

J'ai visionné La turbulence des fluides de Manon Briand il y a vingt ans maintenant. Ce beau film ténébreux me rappelle que des phénomènes inexplicables, tels que la disparition des marées, peuvent être liés à des drames humains et plus-qu'humains survenus récemment ou dans les anciens temps. Je me reconnais dans cet imaginaire salubre qui lie le sort de l'estuaire du fleuve, de la marée de l'océan et de la communauté traumatisée par des non-dits et des vérités qui dérangent.

I pronounce an offering of recognition to the Ancestors of these Arakwal shores of Bundjalung Country, wade into their aquamarine waters, nod in greeting with glee to flathead and mullet as they pass by busily, bask in the late summer rays of warmth from above and look to the eastern horizon. I see these clear waters with blue and green hues, surfers, turtles, reef sharks nearby, and keep the ocean salts on my skin as I leave the water's edge. I remind myself that tides, like feminine powers, connect with lunar presences and flows.

(i is in vai)

Chaque baignade est une cérémonie précieuse à travers laquelle on inspire, on expire, et on prend conscience encore et encore de la continuité des lignées de parenté, des chants d'oiseaux, des murmures d'airs et des bruissements de roseaux. Ce jour-ci et toujours je clame haut et fort mon soutien inlassable pour la souveraineté autochtone qui restitue l'équilibre porteur d'avenirs meilleurs.

A few kilometres shy of the trendy bistros and bars of influencers in Australian coastal towns, replete with excessive fashions, transports or profiles, more-than-human lives thrive in rejuvenated ecologies. Murky reddish waters mirror the glistening golden sunshine and clear blue skies to my human eyes, light dances on surfaces between worlds large and larger. Tea trees seep into spring-fed lakes, embrace and envelop my skin, browner than a few days before, and layered in this territory for these next hours. I remain connected to these rich waters as I walk with them dried on my skin, invisible to the naked eye, but visible in the utter nudity of fragile bodies in ecological balances thousands of years young.

Footnotes

1. Tania Willard and Peter Morin, "Editorial: The Bush Manifesto," in Willard, T, Morin, P, (eds.), *cmagazine* 136: *site/ation*, 1 December 2017, <https://cmagazine.com/articles/bush-manifesto> [accessed 10 December 2022]