

Summer Travelling with Posthumanism

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Abstract

Summer travels with posthumanism is an experimental piece of prose and praxis. It aims to map out the influence and effect of post humanism on systemic practice, by following and presenting the authors use of the ideas over a period of (summer) time. Examples of lived experience, intertwine with playful representations of sea and critters, and case work is considered through posthuman theory and concepts.

What emerges is a 'composting' of ideas and the proposal of a slow ontology, alongside an approach that embraces the "tentacular"; a trying feeling and relational being (not singular), with others, in trying feeling and relational worlds (Haraway, 2016).

The author is writing from her position as a white woman and a systemic psychotherapist, situated predominantly in London, UK. Her ambition is to bring the often separate parts of the therapist (the 're-source' of personally felt, relational experience, the overlooked detail of living, and the intertwining ecology) onto the academic stage and to suggest expansive and response-able ways of developing systemic thinking and practice.

Introduction

It's summertime and I'm reading Rosi Braidotti's (2013) book "The Posthuman". I'm invited to consider life beyond and after the human, invited to consider the possibility that human life will end or drastically change beyond current recognition in response to climate change and global social disasters and called to recognise that life will live on but not necessarily in human form.

I feel an arising awareness when additionally reading Donna Haraways (2016) book "Staying with the Trouble" and discovering the depiction of the Vitruvian Man, and the contrasting Vitruvian Dog (Image 1: Harris 2007, cited Haraway 2007; 2016); a contrast that offers a different take on what could be central to subjectivity and the provocation to decentralise man and centre dog.

Vitruvian Man was drawn by Leonardo Da Vinci in 1490 and is a representation of what was understood at the time, as classical European human perfection, an image with 'ideal human

proportions', representing 'universal order', through the use of mathematical and classical principles, creating a design aimed to bridge the gap between man and divinity. Vitruvian Dog is a 21st century suggestion that non-human forms can be the measure of perfection and ideal form and furthermore can be central to conscious thought and subjective positioning.

Posthumanism is deeply intertwined with new materialism (Rosiek et al., 2020) with both advocating for the decentralisation of the human and both believing that non-human forms and matter are not passive, but quite the opposite, they are agentic (Barad 2007). In a new materialist frame agency is not seen as belonging to the individual but as entanglements of intra-action in worldly re-configurations (Barad, 2012; Rosiek et al., 2020).

When reading further I feel deep despair about the doomed fate of humanity, the urgency to deal with a capitalist neoliberal global power, to get off the industrial train and move into deeper connections with the earth, the critters and the compost heaps (Haraway, 2016). I feel the need to take care of the earth or lose our place in it. I oscillate between a sense of discomfort at the 'locked in' feeling I experience when faced with such a powerful social system, while also experiencing full immersion within this system as a white western UK dwelling individual. I feel trapped and ineffective with the enormity of such a seemingly impossible task; a task such as changing the 'spell' of a capitalist structure to an alternative more mystical magical one, perhaps.

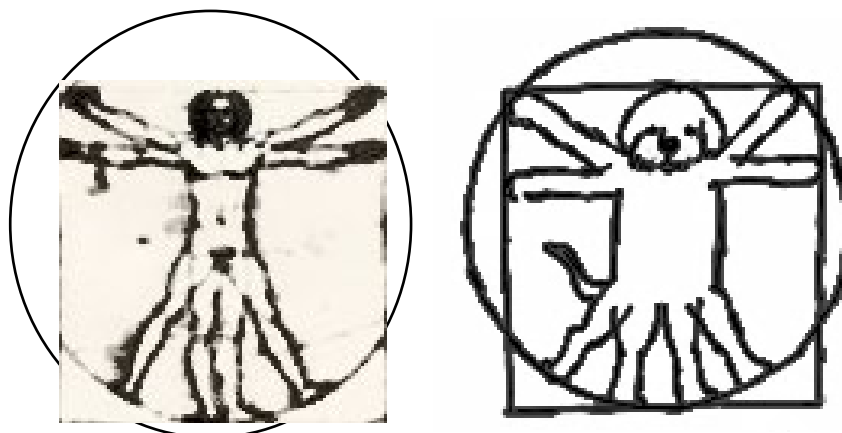


Image 1: Virtruvian Man and Virtruvian Dog

Adapted from Da Vinci 1490 (left) and S. Harris (right) (cited Haraway 2007).

Isabelle Stengers (2020) talks of how other forms of politically 'mythologised magic' can be reclaimed and remembered (Dillard, 2012), suggesting the recalling of slow ontologies¹, ontologies that connect to wider more mystical ways. Highlighting here how slow ontologies have been historically subjugated, violated, denounced, oppressed and colonised (Wynter, 1995, 2003) in favour of more dominant states and their ideologies.

¹ The concept of ontology and how it is understood here relates to a person or people's beliefs about the world around them, their existence and how this comes to be. Ontology is philosophical as well as being grounded in everyday practice. It's about faith, politics and theory. It can be culture and community, rituals and practices.

Style and Context

My writing style here is method(ology) and a mapping out of emerging experiences over a period of summertime; while thinking with posthumanism; it's a curation of prose, image and ideas, connections, reflections and style. It's an attempt to not only speak of the ideas but to work and move with them. The hope is that this then becomes an experimental piece not only for the author but for the reader too.

I'm working with the proposition that "systemic social constructionism should be reframed as transmaterial worlding to include human and non-human participants" and introducing "systemic living as onto-epistemological becoming, movement, and meaning making practices in and between human and non-human parts of our worlds" (Simon and Salter, 2019 p. 1). This essay is a stretch towards the transmaterial way with systemic practice becoming living practice.

I present here how these ideas showed themselves in my supervision and conclude with some reflections on how merging or composting such ideas into practice and research is a slow process and yet I propose that there are ways to adapt and immerse systemic ways with new materialist thought.

Methodologically, I am practising some of the techniques of an ethnographic and participant observer researcher (Ingold, 2014, 2022; Krause, 2026; Rabinow, 2008) and using these to consider my teachings and practice. Both practices of ethnography and participant observer involve studying while experiencing what is being studied, with the understanding that through experience knowledge can emerge. This too is a practice that plays with an insider research position as opposed to an outsider one; which can be commonly practised in empirical science. I find that using this approach fits with new materialist ideas of knowledge being partial and emergent, rather than fully formed and fixed. This is also a systemic move to put myself in relational spaces, to study through experience and in 'relation with' (Shotter, 2011).

My intentions too are to extend my imagining by including the subjectivity of the non-human and matter; although this is in its infancy and I don't think I push this far enough. I am also using an intentionally suggestive approach with the use of my theoretical terms and subsequently inviting the reader to make further connections to words used and approaches described. The supervision case is a composite of my practice over the summer, and all names are anonymised. My daughter has also given me permission to include prose that refers to our relationship.

Summertime Prose

This summer was marked by the changes I witness between me and my daughter and the slow navigation of this. She is becoming a woman. She is practising loving, in a courting relationship. She is giving advice to her parents about how they live. She is rejecting some of my parenting and presenting her own often assertive views. She says she hates camping, but we decide to go anyway, we need to connect to the ground and each other. During the week of camping, we eat chips and ice-cream for 3 days in a row and have heated conversations about my daughter putting down her phone.

I respond to the changes between me and her, with a tugging and a pushing, at times, and at others with support and comfort. My daughter throws me a feeling, an experience, a struggle. I catch it, I feel it, I hold it, I tend to it, bash it, reshape it, pass it back. My daughter holds it, throws it aside, she moves in for a hug and a hold. I reciprocate and hold her; we go on.

I bring us to my spiritual home, my birthplace, Northumberland. I promise myself a swim in the North Sea and a boat trip to see the seals and decide to take us to Holy Island, where you have to get on to the island when the tide is out and back off when the tide is low. *“Otherwise”*, as my dad would say *“you’ll get caught on the causeway and washed out to sea”*. We plan a day on the beach with more family and kin.

Reflections from the Beach

The family ascend making a treasure map of disappearing footprints, lumbering along, umbrella for shade, chairs for the few, bags of food, towels to dry, buckets and spade. Step by heavy step, sand sucking at the feet, finding ways in, gritty and grainy, scratchy between the toes. My brother from the southeast, my sister from the north, my niece from the west; she got lost and walks far further than she needs to, arriving late, with a calm acceptance and an absence of panic, unmatched by the agitation of the waiting group. A warm space marks the spot, and we all take a place on the sand.

I jokingly call it the walk of shame (my walk of shame), where I get up from my seat upon the sand and walk unsteadily from the dunes to the rolling water, feeling less the wind on my skin, and the sand on my toes and more the gaze of the never-present crowd. I stride, I stumble, I wobble, I ache, I recoil. To what do we measure ourselves? This would be a conversation to have with Rosi Braidotti. Would it be Davinci’s depiction of the Vitruvian Man, good looking, lean, physically strong, heterosexual, white and male? Or do I turn my gaze to the colonised female with an arrogance (Lugones 2003), or to the different to me, the unfamiliar figures that within neo liberal imperial processes have become polarised in positions of us and them (Wynter, 1995; Foucault, 1982)?

What if I measured myself to the sea, the sand, the earth, the wind, the rain, the crabs, the seals, the mussel creatures, the rock pools, the mud mess? What if I didn’t measure at all? What if I remained present with others, without prejudice, putting aside for a time those preordained knowledges that predicate real encounters and present experience? Instead of recoil I would renounce. I would walk with a stride, be slow and attentive, the sea would greet me, and I’d hear the call.

Reflections from the Sea

The sea senses the groups presence, meeting the family with one rolling roar, that with a breath rolled in and with a breath rolled out. It touches with a force the toes, then the ankles, then the knees and the thighs and the waists and the chest, the shoulders, and the neck. For a moment the cold of the sea meets the warmth of the body, and the sea rolls on, and the body feels the burn. The sea rocks with a to-ing and a froing. The feet leave the ground and take flight in the swell. Gently moving to the rhythm, trusting the process and letting it be. The seagulls join in with the shrieks and the thrills the dipping the diving the splash and the spills. The big one’s with their words remind the little ones ‘take care’.

With the group are the sea creatures small - the sand burrowers, bottom feeders, shell dwellers - with their tiny secretions, tentacles, sea hair and scents. The sensing, smelling, tasting, electroreception - the moving, the drifting, the loving - all in the swell; one vast rhythmic sea.

Posthumanism

Posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013) is setting forth an ontology of difference (Deleuze, 1994), the noting of differential subjectivity, the use of radical reflexivity (D’Arcangelis, 2017; Ahmed 2000, 2004, 2012; Pillow, 2015), a generative and decolonial ‘travelling’ and ‘telling’ through the world with others (Lugones, 2003). It is inviting us to see with loving perception, in playful ways, with contrasts as wide as the view of kin, to the eyes of a mouse (Lugones, 2003; Haraway, 2016).

I’m playing here with the idea of challenging the notion of human exceptionalism. To do this, posthumanism proposes that we decentralise the human experience by travelling in our perceptions and views to other worlds of experience, while also playing with the notion of subjectivity, and questioning who holds the vantage point. We are called to bring non-human matters into our gaze, through matters that reciprocally gaze upon us. By expanding our viewpoint and ultimately our ontological potential, a new landscape of knowing can present itself. Lugones (2003) would suggest traveling with black feminism to other female world views, across race, geographies and subjectivities. Braidotti (2013) would suggest travelling with robots and technological intelligence, Haraway (2016) would travel in compost, with critters and worms. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) would travel with and through matter, speaking with the earth and the minerals within and without us.

What I’m doing here in my presentation of personal prose is an attempt to tell stories through my point of reference to speak of my humanity and my relational experience, to other humans and more expansively to living breathing matter. How do we sense and make sense, how do we limit or expand how we experience and understand our place with others. Asking the question as I go along how can all of this be of ‘re-source’ to therapy? This, I feel, is an important liminal learning space for the therapist; connecting to a range of subjective experience and thus expanding the frames from which we articulate and then know. What do these stories tell of what we can do as people, with others in the place of world. This for me is putting transmaterial worlding to practice (Simon and Salter, 2019).

“It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties.”

(Haraway, 2016, p. 12)

This for me is not only a transmaterial statement but an invitation to take on the trans-material worlding challenge to widen our knowledge and the edges that limit them.

Weaving and Webbing Theory with Practice

After my (summer) holiday I return to my home and practice. I’m meeting, online, to provide systemic supervision to a woman 24 years my junior, I’m 56, Li is 32. Li is Chinese and based in Malaysian. I’m White British and based near London in the UK. Many, miles separate us, yet we are together, speaking to our common practices. Both of us systemic psychotherapists.

Previously, while out walking alongside the ideas, I’m drawn to the compost heap and the critters; that become us and we become them. The term ‘tentacular’ grabs my attention as I walk, meander, get lost and find my bearings. ‘Tentacular’ (Haraway, 2016) is a term used by Haraway and a one that

I will adopt here. Tentacle comes from the Latin word *tentacular*, meaning “feeler”, and *tentare*, meaning “to feel” and “to try”. Haraway states that a myriad of tentacles will be needed to tell the story of the Chthulucene. Unlike the Anthropocene² or the Capitalocene³, the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with. Lydia Kallipoliti (2022) offers a synthesis of Haraway’s Chthulucene:

“our guides are creatures which offer older histories from outside the conventions of modern biological classification; ancient and wise narratives, these earthly and biotic companions embody ‘tentacular’ intelligence of ‘feeling’ and ‘trying’ through which lives and worlds are made. Home is compost-rich soil which nurtures ‘response-able’ thinking and in which multispecies relations thrive” (Kallipoliti, 2022, p.1)

I began to work with ‘tentacular’ ideas in mind and bodied. What would it mean to extend our systemic stance of curiosity (Cecchin, 1987) to a more ‘tentacular’, multifaceted, sensorial (Jude, 2015), shapeshifting, string figuring, bodied, mattered, relational motion, I ask?

Curiosity, I thought, is more in keeping with the idea that the therapeutic process is an inner individual one, belonging to the motivations of the therapist, rather than relationally formed. The therapist’s curiosity you could say, is directed from the therapist to the family; although if practiced well in can be part of a formation that involves circularity, reflexivity and feedback which makes it much more collaborative. “Tentacular”, I think could offer something more multi directional? It would fit with relational reflexivity and systemic living (Simon, 2019); a praxis that asks that a therapist do more than a linear approach. It could be the beginnings of a range of suggestive and actioning words that could encapsulate what a therapist does and would like to do in their therapeutic relationships and systemic inquiry. ‘Attentioning’ (Adams, 2025) and ‘Reciprocal Capture’ (Adams, 2024) being other suggestive words that also fit this proposition and that I speak to in other papers.

Curiosity (Cecchin, 1987) as a systemic concept, was developed within a postmodern and social constructionist paradigm. It was part of a sequence of systemic developments that framed the therapist’s approach as a one of hypothesising, circularity, irreverence as a form of postmodern scepticism, neutrality as an antidote to bias, and later, curiosity as a more pro-active stance (Cecchin, 1987). Curiosity has remained influential and widely used ever since.

Recent critiques have considered curiosity as a process that fails to address the risk of the perpetuation of bias, prejudice and racism. With the therapists meaning making systems remaining the driving force for therapeutic curiosity and therefore bias, prejudice and racism remain unchecked (Lawson, 2005). In the process of curiosity, the therapist follows their ‘hunch’ and in doing so, there is a risk that the direction of the curiosity is loaded with the therapist’s internalised social constructions that remain hidden from the therapist’s plain sight (Ahmed, 2000, 2004) yet potentially felt by the client, the subject of the curiosity. Many therapists address their own bias with the use of tentativity and reflexivity. But there are many subject areas that are so intrinsically embedded in social worlds that they are nearly impossible to tap into without again replicating these very socially constructed

² The Anthropocene is a term used to mark the period of time when the human activity of industrialization, pollution and population growth, began to dominate the Earth’s climate and environment.

³ The Capitalocene is a critical framework arguing that the current geological and environmental crisis is driven by capitalism.

phenomena's (hooks, 1994, 2020) and this can often lead to the closing down of conversation rather than an opening up.

Curiosity then flows with the unconscious internalised subjugated thought, and social constructions of the dominant episteme (Foucault, 1982; Fanon, 1952) go on to oppress and remain unchallenged. A post human critique of curiosity would potentially say that it doesn't extend outward enough, and it doesn't reach to the matter, to the muddy mess; that it stays within the limitations of the subjectivity of the therapist, within dominant constructions of knowledge and truths. Change would therefore be more in line with repetition and regurgitation rather than processes of generation, transformation and creativity, as proposed by new materialist thought. The critique would suggest that more expansive ways are needed, ways that don't act to perpetuate but to extend and 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016).

What would "tentacular" suggest as an approach? To put out feelers, to recognise that our senses are not cognitive bound, to try, to expand sensation, to touch, and be touched. What would tentacular suggest when in conjunction with a new materialist ontology? To immerse, to wriggle with, to expand, to generate, to shape shift, to extend, to sit back, to wait and to feel.

"The tentacular are not disembodied figures: they are cnidarians, spiders, fingery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jelly fish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings, myofibril braids, matted and felted microbial and fungal tangles, probing creepers, swelling roots, reaching and climbing tendrilled ones. The tentacular are also networks, IT critters, in and out of clouds. Tentacular is about life lived along lines – and such a wealth of lines – not at points, not in spheres. The inhabitants of the world, creatures of all kinds, human and non-human, are wayfarers"; generations are like "a series of interlaced trails "String figures all"" (Haraway, 2016, p. 32).



Image 2: Drawing by Jo Adams

Going back to my practice with Li I decided to sit as a supervisor with the mindset of “tentacular” and with the imagined bodied agility of a feeling trying creature, (Image 2 is a representation of what was on my mind and an adaptation of a Haraway image 1991; It draws on insects, feelers, antennae, tentacles, octopus, human, birds, plants, feathers; all of which are intertwined). This meant suspending my rush to cognitively know and find an answer to the problem, to try and understand what is being relayed to me in the words, bodies, ecologies and story of the other, to extend my reach, to listen, to feel, to pay attention, to move with, to care, to hold, to be held, and to think in nonlinear ways. This meant in reality to try not to reply with my usual accepted ways of knowing. Of course, all my ways of knowing were still there and were still my reference points, but I wanted to try and feel with a different intensity. It meant to question what I take for granted and also wait for the inquiry to show itself.

Corresponding

Li tells me of her week, how she had struggled with work and the anxiety she feels while responding to the demands and changes in her workplace. She talks about going through pregnancy support treatment and how she wishes to take a bit of a step back as she is sensing a link between her pregnancy struggles and her levels of stress. Li tells me of her ‘strive’ to do all that her work asks of her; her struggle to find a good balance between home and work, how her perception that male counter parts are able to separate work from home and not ‘strive’ in the way she does.

After some time of listening and feeling I ask Li: “*Who or what is your role model?*” Thinking that maybe she knows someone who knows how to do this and who is doing it in a way she wants to. On reflection I could have moved away from the human realm and inquired about non-human role models, how do spiders do this? Would this be too far from our frames of reference? On reflection this isn’t about mimicking another it’s about the connection. I could have also considered an inquiry into inheritance of ways; or ways that would be opposite to what is expected, so as to open up the inquiry and the potential to think outside of the box.

She smiles and says: “Sissle. She has the coolest career. She studied in America, got a medical degree, and worked for the US government. Then worked in a research lab in Singapore on different vaccines. She is now a professor in Malaysia and travels to America to work there too. I call her the ‘Rockstar’. She is highly striving. She has children, a marriage and is in love with her husband. I don’t know anything about her personally, but I see this.”

In the moment, I inwardly reflect about moving to a ‘tentacular’ process; *“this isn’t about finding the answers, but putting out the feelers, sensing the other, waiting with grace, moving with care. Not linear but fluid, unfolding, changing, malleable, textured, relational. I remind myself this isn’t about being clever. I sit back and pay attention.”*

“When I was studying”, Li continued, “I didn’t want children and when I got married, I made it clear I wasn’t interested in having a family; my career came first.”

I try to understand more of the context and ask: *“What changed?”* In reflection I could have leaned more into the ideas about not having children, and what this meant to Li, her husband and her world.

“I was in the UK, at a park in London and something clicked”, Li said, “I was walking with my friends, and I saw a toddler with their mother and father, playing on the grass, and I thought I want that life, a life like that.... Yet I still struggle with this burning desire to have a career”, Li added.

Feeling for connection and trying to move through the story with Li I ask: *“What might being a mother contribute to your career?”* In reflection I could have changed this to ‘becoming’ a mother, which would have shifted a rigid, fixed sense of being to a more fluid one. Including the concept of kin would have broadened possibility further and stepped away from rigid binary ideas of how lives can and should be lived.

“I don’t see a contribution”, Li replied, “feels like I have to spilt myself in two. Some women, great leaders, are quick thinkers, strategic thinkers. I guess it could help me to manage men, men behaving like boys. This reminds me of a client I’m working with. About my age”, recalls Li, “she’s a mother of a 2-year-old, experiencing so much guilt. She wants to spend time with her daughter and wants to be fully present at work. What if I didn’t have a child she said to me, I could advance in my career, feel less guilty. She then worried about what I would think of her, I can empathise a lot of women struggle coming back to work, no promotion, no invite for drinks,” said Li.

Later in the conversation, I offered a summary of what I sensed Li to have said and expressed to me, with some potentially “tentacular” post human frames.

“Can I share with you a reflection of what you have been saying, and I have been thinking?” I asked Li. “As a woman you have this body capable of procreation, of making life of making kin. And you’re in this factory a moving train of industry, which is difficult to step away from and yet you have a burning desire to stay on board. You talked about a spilt between your personal life and career and you are feeling something in your body that you are calling stress and recognising that this doesn’t feel like the right environment for pregnancy. Does this make sense?” As I utter these words, I reflect in action and continue; “It feels important that one woman doesn’t tell another women what to do here.”

On reflection I can see that I’m trying to offer a reflection to Li that extends my vocabulary in a posthuman sense, my words potentially expose neoliberal social structures and invite a right to choose ways of living. In the moment of therapy, I feel it’s important not to instruct. I also think I sensed that in the act of creating radical reflexivity, I begun to consider what was possible and fair; then agency and choice showed themselves in where I found myself in my words. I wonder if this type of opening up brings also a sense of response-ability about what is possible, and in this instance, what is possible for women in different places on the planet. This then leaves me with a question about where transformation can take us, about the right to dream and about the walls that stop us.

We talked about struggles for women, to do both pregnancy and careers. We sat with the feelings that drive us, burning desires to succeed, the measure to ‘man’. We connected with kin and the detail of lives lived, from mother to daughter, passing on wisdoms. Li told me of a moment with her own mother, speaking with fondness. My mother passed on her own wisdoms to me, we would make food together, and she would show me how to apply make-up. Li and I remembered a proverb Li shared with me some time ago; that the birds of worry and care fly over your head, this you cannot change. But that they build nests in your hair this you can prevent.

Reflections

I'm thinking about the lived experience of Li a Chinese Malaysian woman, living and working in a British colonial eastern state, the tension between stories told; heritage and identity, and stories lived; day to day embodied living in social political communities (Pearce and Pearce, 1998). Li tells me there is a name for this, the 3rd culture kid, being from one culture, migrating to another culture that is in turn colonised by another culture. We have regular conversations about the implications of this on our thinking and experiences. I'm wondering about my own position as a white, British, working-class northern woman and how accessible our experiences are to each other, and how difference is found in the detail. How might knowing more of our lives lived in all its shape and forms make a difference to the way we experience each other's place and position in and on the world? I learn in our doing of this practice, that how we perceive each other is a constant source of not knowing, misunderstandings, unacknowledged power/subjugation and potential relational growth.

I'm struck by the limitations of the stories available to women and families when it comes to careers, pro-creation, making kin and family. How parts of the 'lived self' are separated not integrated. That comparison to male lives is made in this context and strived for. To be woman in this frame is then experienced as stressful and dislocated, while it becomes impossible to do both work and the personal well while striving to be fully connected to the different parts of the self and the ecology. What then comes to mind is an idea of lost ontologies and a disconnection from matter, ecologies and cosmologies. I'm remembering my walk of shame and how difficult it is for me as a woman to take the stage in her own body on a western beach. And for a moment, in reflection, I'm transported to other beaches more treacherous and violent and recognise that there is privilege in my own position, alongside felt restrictions.

I find myself reflecting on the puzzle of becoming this notion of 'man' (Wynter, 2003). How measures to the ideal 'man' and 'western' ideals, mean people in all their shapes and forms fall into the neo liberal trap of finding themselves striving to be something unattainable, and in this striving towards something unattainable there is confusion, and an uncomfortable oscillation between the binary positions of not being good enough and being good enough. This leaves no room for the celebration of something different. But what if we had different measures; what if we measured ourselves to our beautiful differences, to other equally placed peoples, to other creatures, to landscapes, rather than to limited political and imperial scripts. To measures that weren't categorical, reductionist and unattainable, but were varied and elaborate; what if difference was our measure, and we moved with it? What if it wasn't about measure at all?

I too, find myself looking back over my supervisory landscape and noticing how desolate, or human centric it feels when looked at with posthuman eyes. What about the soil, the growth, the creatures, the critters, the compost heaps? Would these landscapes offer more scope and possibilities to step out of the 'limitationality' of our subjectivity?

A few weeks on from our meeting, I share my writings with Li and she lets me know she felt moved and seen; she also helpfully reflects on how my words may perturb, how others may feel unsettled by the idea of getting off the industrial train and how there is agency in the choices people make. I also connect to the responsibility I hold when representing others and how this writing is a snapshot, a peek, a possibility, a time, it's not fixed. I think this conversation is far more expansive than I can honour here.

Haraway (2016) talks to the 'cat's cradle', the game with the string that I played when I was younger, taking the elasticated string, threading it over little fingers, holding it on both hands, making weaves and complicated structures. Then passing it to another who would maneuver in and take it at crucial points into the hands and then create weaves and shapes too. In the act we receive and let go, pass on and take back. Like when my daughter passes me her struggles in a torrent of tears and Li and her clients pass on real time dilemmas of struggle between life and career. Echoes of alignment with nature and with industry haunt me. Stories of separate selves contrast with multispecies critters in compost.

Some Closing Thoughts

Donna Haraway (2016, p. 35.) says, "we need to tell terrible stories in better ways, and it matters what stories tell stories". I ask; *"what do these stories tell of my stories? And what do my stories tell of the stories I tell?"*

This piece has told stories with the stories of posthumanism, transmaterial worlding with the methods of systemic living, ethnography and participant observation.

My hope is that this curation has been a 'composting' of ideas and the proposal of a slow ontology, alongside an approach that embraces the "tentacular"; a trying feeling and relational being (not singular), with others, in trying feeling and relational transmaterial worlds (Haraway 2016; Simon and Salter 2019).

I'm struck by a deep sense that what I have learnt in the process of writing this piece and living systemically in summertime prose, is that this isn't about difference and measure this is about connection and relationality – that everything has its relational moving pulsating place. I'm struck that this isn't about role models, rock stars or spider, it's about connection between ideas, human, spider and world, it's about the connection between this and that, and what we do and learn in responsivity.

On a simple level this piece works as a suggestion, a proposal of a systemic approach in its earliest form and the hope is that other words and concepts can converse with a tentacular one. The ideas are not meant to be fossilised (Albertini 2025) but expanded and moved with.

In no way do I think I have honoured the complexity of what could be a "tentacular" approach or embodied the full enormity of what this way is, but I do think this may be a good starting place. And for a while I have touched on, tried, travelled, moved with and now pass it on.

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