



LICHEN LAND

j pascutazz

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edited and designed by ELÆ [Lynne DeSilva-Johnson] and Orchid Tierney



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LICHEN LAND

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BRUNCH WITH THE GORGON

I'm an ancestral whirlwind. You're a population
Praying I'll veer harmlessly into the Atlantic
Not turn airborne tables and chairs into projectiles
You tell me no one wants to see a bitch get crazy

America, I only wanted to blow you away
My windy hands whipped through your hot pussy
Call me fake news. I cry a twitter storm
We're all influenced by fictitious forces

Spinning in accelerated frames of reference
I'm putting my queer wheel on your shoulder
You tried keeping up with the Kardashians
We're all primal Amazon rainforest members

I'm an emotional feedback mechanism
Make me jealous, I'll blacken your apples
And shatter your windows, turn your beds
Into boats, and drown you down rivers

We both began in warming water bodies
And woke in filthy bathroom mirror selfies
Sexy computer models predict our landfall
You're innocent. I'm the algorithm of fate

You still don't think this monster is our baby
Who you calling messy? If you so chill, I'd be
Drinking tequila sunrises on tropical parallels
I'm the one who needs recovery here

You wonder if we're ever getting back together
To start again as low pressure depressions
A reunited catastrophe of filth and flame
A heart that stops at nothing—I'm not certain

THE MOTHER OF ALL WATER

How I can't stop transitioning back
To what I am. Looking for a safe space
To stick my tongue in. A single use
Receptacle for an indispensable soul

Today, I self-identify as a quagmire
My soggy bottom turns toxic sludge
Into breathtaking leaf smut. The earth and I
We're the toilet's flush. We take shit

From everybody, and redistribute the wealth
Dam it all universe. You just had to be this
Instantaneous hazardous conundrum
Marry your rocket to my sphagnum bog

Honeymoon with me in Niagara Falls
The fall's white noise will play our song
Touch me everywhere—like the sun
Drink the heavy water, call me a drip

Runoff. Trickle down to the lowest place
Purchase flood insurance, a used houseboat
Float off in a double creature feature
Think of all the waves we'll cross through

To be the old men pissing in the night
My shoreline rising, your melting mirror
Hard to look in, but not break in two
I'll have time to drink the plastic bottles

Your ego came in. Slip like ectoplasm
Through the ceiling, and echo mildew angels
In your thoughts. More space than matter
Consider this. Your brain is mostly what?

Here is my channel. These are my sounds
My automatic rinse and spin and cycles
You know the emissions I've repurposed
To be the lady boy in the lake. The leaves

Fall for my breezy see-through dresses
Somersault, and cartwheel in spiked heels
Across my face. As they sink I wash them
Absorb their shape and color in my bath

Ferment until I can almost think bubbles
What I'd like to be in my next life
An eco model, a beach erosion spread
A heart chill from it's rippling rest

Who walks off a deck. A lone gull's cry
A bridge between the overwhelming
Urge to be and a wet electric blanket
Wrapped around a muddy missing person

Maybe I'll dye my flow to trace it
Outsource my dissolution. Identify
As a 4th of July picnic. Fireworks
Make me so excited I steam like a spirit

Condense into cloud, network my memories
Bend rainbows until the ends meet
Bare necessity. And forget what I am
A fleet of wax paper ships claims me

As its sea. I was a teenage whirlpool
Thundering home in fossilized footprints
To the lightning vessel that cut me off
From the mother of all water. I dip my ladle

In her sky, and slide into the deep end
Pitch my declinations in successively
Blue shades, suck the gold out of the stars
I dissolve empires between my moist lips

WILDFIRE POETRY

1

Welcome to your personal apocalypse
We'll play villain and innocent victim
Cross the fire line. Be the hero/heroine
The poet who melts meanings together
Speak in the ravishing tongue of the flames

A season of fire. Once that adrenaline
Rush picks you up, till you put it to bed
You're on a high. Beating back the front
It's in your blood. There's nothing else
Comparable

When the Camp Fire raced into town
We drove out through meteor showers
With air conditioners on Arctic
In combusting Fords, Chevys, Buicks
Backed up on the road leaving Paradise

I only wanted you to be my valentine
I bathed you all in ruby and sapphire
Set off autumn leaves like fireworks
Framed your house in hot pink neon
Take these symbols of my love for you

Santa Ana winds cascading off the crest
Of Sierra Nevada, speed down Cajon
And San Geronio Pass like tornados
Feeding California's famous wildfires
Burning west in the American mind

*There came a sound from heaven
A rushing mighty wind, and it filled
The house where they were sitting
Appeared unto them cloven tongues
As of fire, and sat upon each of them*



Are these our incandescent tongues
 Escaping from some original
 Explosion? Excited electrons jumping
 To higher orbits, losing light
 From abandoned forms?

Saint Anne, Virgin Mary's mother
 Grandma of Our Lord and Savior
 High pressure air masses form above
 Rain-shadow Great Basin and Mojave
 Following the path of least resistance

I am come to send fire on the earth
 How to work this holy threesome?
 Heat, fuel, and oxygen—alchemical
 Ignition, multiplying exponentially
 An easily created chain reaction

I'd never seen fire so misbehave
 This thing <points> could be on us
 In minutes. We lost the house
 But took the photos from the attic
 That's an emotional win—maybe

I was so good I made my own wind
 Made you wonder—is this the end?
 Why was I always blazing forth
 In ecstasy, killing what I wanted?
 The hot new star of wildfire porn

A burning angel lit up the bedroom
 Like those descriptions of hot hells
 In Buddhism. Such torturous names as
Unremitting. Hell of Thoughts. Boiling
Excrement. Single Copper Cauldron

Dying, only to revive for further
 Torment. On and on, for endless
 Eons, until claustrophobia cools
 Into fields of vast and lonely snows
 Where no one knows your name

Dry bones in the valley. Dem
 Bones, dem bones, dem bones
 Dewdrops on roses. Dewdrops
 In the morning sun. Feelings
 Nothing more

What the hell. I'll do Malibu
 Take a tour of celebrity homes
 See how the stars live above it all
 Top rolled down, red hair flying
 Under dense emotional clouds

I tried to locate California on the map
 Of my body. My infrastructure once
 Opened to all kinds of destinations
 Energy wheels crossed my freeways
 Now memories overcrowd my aura

We have to get in front of the fire
 Rescue people from the head fire
 Set down our own lines. Make fire think
 It's been here before, and go back
 To the darkness whence it came

Light will go on
 Traveling in the vast, empty realms
 Of interstellar space. Space holds
 No frozen treats, but violent stellar
 Winds and light from massive stars

Whipping cold molecular clouds
 Into bizarre, fantasy structures
 Light year tall houses, melting
 Like ice cream on a summer day
 Leaving a sticky mess

We were in our PJ's when we heard
 What we thought was thunder
 The windows an eerily familiar red
 A knock at the door. The fireman
 Grab your bear, and get out of here

I thought I'd take a trip to California
 Use my power to conjure storms
 Save us from Mother Nature's wrath
 But what would we learn from that?
 Maybe supercomputers can predict

Conspiracies blame microwave rays
 President at war with liberal states
The tongue is a fire, a world of trouble
He fell on the town. And his last throes
Shattered it to sparks and gledes

What is left is a record of its passage
 A spiral staircase to no upper level
 A bathtub afloat in a sea of feathers
 Ashes drifting like swarms of moths
 Over former common household items

I cranked the volume, turned down
 Ventura. Cracked through time/space
 Godless and dry. First born unicorn
 Took flight down Mulholland
 Lit a joint. Threw the match

Out the window into America
 I drove west out of the past
 To see the country naked
 Once before I lost it. Drove to the edge
 Breathed smoke and flames. Leapt

Ask the People of the First Nation
 The wind howled down these passes
 Fanning flames for five thousand years
 But these new fires burn so intently
 Their corrosive itch is pure potential

Let's all sing a campfire song
 Squeeze squares of dark chocolate
 And gooey, charred marshmallow
 Between honey graham crackers
 Eat, and make light of horror

We always say when this town goes
 It is really going. I was standing there
 While my life went up in flames. This
 Is too unbelievable. This isn't happening
 The house went like a Roman candle

I lit the legendary Paramount Ranch
 Dropped fake snow on Western Town
 Rode wild horses in a blaze of glory
 Crashed the Bachelor(ette) Complex
 Cooked passion in rapid evolution

*The angel poured his vial on the sun
 Power was given to him to scorch men
 With fire. It was like trying to piss out
 The sun while a flaming whirlwind
 Played tug-of-war with your hose*

The country was racing out of control
 People obsessed with status
 And possessions. Raging ideologies
 Lies and madness the new normal
 Disaster came. We screamed. We wept

I grilled Burger King and McDonald's
 Turned everything to gold. Left my love
 In Paradise. Retired to Sierra Del Sol
 Felt so young and old. I'd smolder
 And never satisfy

Until the bright light dawns
 From the depth of this dark age
 And the Great Black One
 Eats the universe in the brilliance
 Of its ten million black fires

The Santa Ana wind dries eyeballs
 And shrinks faces against skulls
 Until you're irritable as Las Angeles
 Just wait. She'll scour mountains
 Weather the brain. Should we stay?

Do we go? We're gonna find out
 Here in a minute. We can drive
 Out of this. WHAT? Keep driving
 What if the car blows up? DAD?
 Then we're dead

I sweated through heat waves
 Rising and falling like a skyline
 Walls of smoke heralding a fire
 Watched one city turn to light
 And another too bright to live in

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you radiate a center
free ecology
from who what

zip code destiny
no two alike
fall together

from another planet
“Ascospores nor cyphos
fight slowly

with tai chi
chemical
weapons

impossible to grow
in your laboratory
Think about

the three of
us rootless ears listening
to graves. the oldest

living on earth
our love abides
we're the monarchs

of the Monera kingdom
covering perhaps 6%
of earth's surface

do better than that
we lost duplicate genes
when we moved

in together. Learned
helplessness. To do:
ask Lichen Spirit

about the problem
of communication
in civil society

Shapeless on our own
we need our structure
I am colorless. I am

the secret life of..
We might grow on
each other like a disease

I might grow on you
like a subculture. "Polygonal
flat-top, violaceous papules

plaques with overlying, reticulated
fine white scale.—Wikipedia
Like leprosy, but you

only feel like a leper
Medulla tissue. Mycelium net
interwove our I's, We r directly

designed without direction
like lichens absorb it all
through their cortex

Cladonia fimbriata, trumpet lichen
blows its own horn. Jelly lichens
are gelatinous Apropos of nothing

with homogeneous ultrastructure
in support of Creation. *Poikilohydry*
means to turn on and off with water

Would you like to live in a cloud forest?
Time to spread your thoughts over rocks
Growing outward—dying at the center

Who are the Pyrenoglobuli?
Electroncondensed osmophilic
globules. Invaginations

of the plasmalemma
A branch of scientific poetry
This high energy “currency”

Stroma (spaces between the grana)
Alg’s different green ancestor
Grandmother said we ate lichen

back when we wrote on rock
Usnea longissima, old man’s beard
A strong indicator of air pollution

A designer label lichen lifeform
And God said, I shall endow thee
Trebouxia with ample starch storage

that ye shall be a vessel unto moist
circumstances. Thinkin’ lichen
interdependent arising

How different species
living in the same body reproduce
“Evolution must go on, and lichens

have adapted to bi-specific struggle
A boy and a girl and me
All for one

Jesus painted living splat on the rocks
These creation scientists (oxymorons)
have got one thing right

evolution and creation
are both origin myths
As poetry is sound

science is a language
of questions poised
by fictional observers

After billions of primitive years
we still didn't have the history
like cosmic Buddhas inhabiting

inconceivable world-systems. I
a love child sitting in the middle
of a lotus flower in Crystal Lake

"A wrathful shaman who destroys
demons of materialistic civilization
Padmasambhava is my baby daddy

The rock is space with crinkled edges
I been bullied intimidated murdered
by people of all genders colors nations

You wouldn't believe I'm an emanation
The one long tendril that goes a-walking
I alone reaching for you—and Blam!

We hurt together in all kins(sp.) of weather
Shriveling sunshine, exuberant in rainfall
In Tibetan *wangthang* means 'field of power'

We was getting our *wangthang* on
That's one way society reproduces
Why my boy's accidentally named

for the last wild American Native
Who wandered out of the canyon
I will name this new lichen after him

I woke up dotted in angry splotches
"Are metaphysics behind my disease?
Is lichen planus a woman's self-hatred?

“The fabulous Flesh-Eating Dakini
teeth clenched around my leprous
Happy over here in Rose Apple Land

Communist? Welfare state? Democratic
Symbiosis? Homeostasis? Totalitarian
Garden regime? Hipster invasion?

the intimacy of becoming lichen
how lichen perceive the ideal of symbiosis
flowing btw bluegreen / green translucent partners

“In Lichen Songs... George Venn
shows you how localized eyes get
We got stuck on the cemetery gates

for centuries. when you blew us off
I ran out of the leper colony
without a face

My highways gassing the lichen line back
until I have collected all the data
on self driving cars

Lichen Song is CEO
of Queer Self Trading
Lichen Song liked this

I found a wiki list for all
lichen in Harry Potter RPG Where the Deer God steps

life blooms and dies
that's pretty and ugly
Like lichen. Go team

Humanity! I am such
a hopeless nonentity
it grows little green cities

with transparent halos
surrounding ellipsoidal
clusters in a matrix of

radially arrayed lamellae
In vape clouds we spoke
in Central Park

excited by *Acarospora*
fusca's glossy pale nipples
If one were to venture into Greenwood

Cemetery in search of famous corpses
contemplating *Athallia holocarp*'s
disappearing whitish hypothalus

might lead one to enlichenment(sp.)
Off Prospect Parks paths of circular
logic, one may meet *Candelaria*

concolor, whose golden candle
will light your fire. But the page I was
looking for was not available

in the Encyclopedia of Life
"Our ultimate choice will likely not
be a cis man"—TLB. How lifted

Once damned, now I'm trans-
mitting my life on the rocks
in nude lichen closeups

Ethnolichenologists study human lichen
intersections. I saw you on a tree at
North 5th and Berry. Just moss?

In clip art symmetries our lives
crashed like flaming
Satan's niche-meme

"When you have a rough time
write about it in your caption
"A long list of people who hate me

I honestly don't blame them
ksksksksks," a girl said
and I stole it, a little, but

for a deathray to shrink egos
Let's live like we're living in
one of these lichenous edens

of sun, sugar, water. Lichen tea
cranks the solar plexus chakra
churning the murk of my ancient wound

the Wild Rice People were called
Mamaceqtaw, "the people", in their tongue
Big Drum religion. Mystery dance

"The lowest level is ruled
by the Great White Bear
Menominee believed lichens were scabs

from when Må'nåpus burned his ass
they came off as he slid down
a slanting boulder

Western Fence Lizards humped the rocks
Gitksan called a species of Lobaria
Nagaganaw—lit. "Frog's dress"

Recreating everything in our image
In China *Usnea diffracta* is called
"Lao Tzu's beard" Remember Grass

I want to be that natural. but I walked
onto the set of 'Land of the Living Dead'
ouch! to watch gnomes pile bones

into luxury waterfront condos
for lich kings. Double ouch! I'm mean
I mean—Good job, successful species!

unassimilated/ terminated
Why did I write 'Sweet Everlasting'?
as if some things never change

The old nabe's too expensive to live in
unlike lichen, we didn't have the yeast
to fight the invasion. Now I wear it like a suit

“The study of lichen will enhance
the readers’ know-how of the Creator
and their esteem for His handicraft

Brightfield photo micro graph
of a cross section of foliose
lichen *Xanthoparmelia* sp.

That sounds sexy like
“Trebouxia is the algal genus
the reproductive apothecium

incomprehensibly intricate assemblage
of enzymes, carriers, and chlorophyll
molecules, by which solar energy

transduces to glucose for sharing
Economies need poetic distribution
“For who hath despised the day of small things

they shall rejoice, and shall see the
plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel
“..more space for your letters which have spread

fast as lichen along my walls”—from ‘NO’
by Paige Lewis, Washington Square Review

I cling to the earth with these stars
The physiological pigments
growing on brand name tombstones

I can’t afford unless it’s priceless
A million little tricks. One big illusion
Trying to stay high and wet

The storm did the dirty
on the far side of the rainbow
bleeding through our instagram feeds

Instagramma walked her seashore
in dreams beyond spacetime
Marge the compost heap chimed

in Alg's head, and Fun
said where's my rainbow and
the rainbow jumped from the pot-o-gold

Cloud and the elves danced merrily
in Lichen Land, and wept
for wombs torn by war

Now my love let me cross round
boundaries of sleep with you—Vashti
Bunyan, Iris's Song v.2, 'Just Another Diamond Day'

"The tiny descendent of some crystal
stumbled upon the faculty of dying
"The crystals have risen on stepping stones

of their deads selves to better things—
from 'the Beauty of Death' by Woods Hutchinson
"Regarding removing lichens from gravestones

"To clear up a common misconception
lichens do not eat rocks
We exist to save graves

"Time stains" in lowlands. "If the purpose
is to enable the inscription to be read
"To increase the clarity of an inscription

wetting or looking at it in twilight
—The Association for Gravestone Studies
If that ain't death. "To view the memories

the player must turn the crystals
into their respective memoriam device
"Filmy rootlets, tiny buds, new life

Lichen lines are a modern day
ghost story. Immortal species
grows on obelisk. Less susceptible

to death "or they can send out
groping fingerlike projections
called *isidia*, which contain

the whole lichen package...” NY Times.
In a Place for the Dead, Studying
a Seemingly Immortal Species

Pseudevernia furfuracea was used
in embalming. Stuff me with it
in Crystal Falls, Michigan in the

annual Humongous Fungus festival
She drew a map of the lichen
to see townships districts villages

Here we see *Usnea australis*, a fruticose
form growing on a tree branch
like a map of ideas

Pete Moss drops chemical bombs
on Fun and Alg
Damn separatist scum, he says

Pete in his mad metaphoria
wanted to control even
the microbes in his guts

Commodify reality
The hard part for us was
hanging onto the obelisk

‘For Lobaria, Usnea, Witches
Hair, Map Lichen, Beard Lichen,
Ground Lichen, Shield Lichen’

is a poem by Jane Hirshfield
comparing lichen to stalwart
non-famous forgotten artists

Scripted remarks in long tangents
branching coralline, gold dust,
palace fluff, white worms, pixie cups

“Political rhetoric that was inserted
into the jamboree. “Dual hypothesis”
Master/ slave? “An unheard of

relationship requires a new word
Symbiosis, Greek, living + together
Lichen threesome. Holy trinity?

Bear lichen, Sunburn, Rock Hair,
Yellow Candles, Little Clouds,
Crab's Eye, Coral Crust

"Mythology embedded
within the naming structure
"Believed to cure what they are shaped for

"lichen" comes from the Greek "Leprous"
Lus Ghoinnich, a plant for wounds
Dog Lichen a cure for mad dog bites

Dictyonema was used by the Waorani
to travel in shamanistic rituals
So what? The Apache painted crosses

on their feet with *Letharia vulpina*
so they could pass through
their enemies unseen

Fun was the heavy mover and lifter
Alg was the architect creator
Yea was the diversifier

As in Bowie's Thin White Duke
Cocaine as symbolic yeast leave-
ning alienation into operatic idolatry

In the competitive race for
sunlight lichen got demonized
for growing on dying trees

The expired release nutritious
Lifting little green begging
bowls to the sun

We're all getting sucked in
to these pale green vortexes
Bedding down in dark forests

British Soldiers lichen
marched like felt matchstick
redheads at war

Alg runs a solar collection agency
Fun builds and maintains a citadel
I'm a shapeless glob of nothing

without your organization, Fun
I'd be starving naked hysterical
without your sugar, Alg

"A fine line between
protector and hostage holder
A paper thin membrane

holding us together apart
nothing separating
Fun and Alg and you

Could we live without each other?
"Less obligate. Certainly intimate
Codependent?

Alg: "leaking nutrients?
Fun: "benignly parasite?
Yea: "Humans live in symbols

And gods live on the mountaintop
Ask the mountain about the view
Ask Lichen Spirit why

Grandmother is
throwing all her clothes out the window
Biocentric = we are not more important than

Farmer (Fun) cultivates crop (Alg)
Yea is gay. Linear fungal hyphae
to roundball algal grouping

One big happy family wrapped
up in each other like burrito
gnawing rocks

shitting soil
It all depends which questions we ask
“Darwin’s survival game

“Nature as a gladiatorial
arena, shaped by conflict
A leprous patch

on my left shoulder
A molecular
chain of command

Conclusions drawn from
your code predicting this
Vocabulary dependent entity

Expanding and contracting
with moisture absorption
and drying and extracting

nutrients, lichens pry apart
cracks and crevices in rock
Are we predictable noun(s)?

As language breaks down
into syllables, so too rocks
gradually disintegrate

Expressing genes differently
Look into the cosmic pond
Unlike a lot of other things

of similar shape and size, lichens
express interior community
Woven into the fabric

direct messages
of how things are
These songs nobody’s graffiti’d

on smooth stones
thrown up by a waterfall
Fungal business partners

Alpha-proteo-bacteria
Mosses and liverworts
are bryophytes

I'm mostly microbes
A multitude of small
speaking with plural

voices behind the wall
Prez's animatronic self
bragging how high his skyscrapers r

Rubisco, ancient enzyme
Their photosynthesis fits
each solar family within

a miniature ecosystem, half Yea
half Fun, half Alg. I grew up
in Lichen Planus Trailer Park

self-assembled self-similar
replicating modular homes
Trash when you tear me in half

Alg offers vital nutrients
Fun provides structure
They ate sunlight, reindeer

ate them. We ate reindeer
Insects ate us. Time ate
the mirror. Eternity ate time

Fun and Alg ; Alg and Fun
Friends with benefits
Cell boundary issues

As different as
mammals from amphibians
from tombstones as welcome signs

as stoplights from bingo cards
Not just one Alg engaged
in other-abled symbiosis

with immigrants. New York was
Fun and Alg's in far futures
Yea: but I'm so square

you would get bored
with how slow I grow
into your galaxy, until

our overlapping holes
swallow each other in
mutual disappearance

No two lichen necessarily share
the same vacant point of view
as nomenclature constructed

from microscopic building blocks
compiling symbolic associations
like Stravinsky stacks folk songs

I imagine all these likenesses
getting it on in clown college
Did Fun enslave or imprison

Alg, robbing her of nutrients?
Core partners? Fun said to Alg
you are the algorithm of my life

The tips of the hyphae
penetrated the cell wall
so the sugars leaked out

and fed the Fun and Yea
The natives of these pages
inscribed with lichen epithet

He was as impersonal as
stone and smoother still
Making it easy for lovers to

get linked in everywhere
til we can't tell us apart
what we r growing into

lichen thinking extends feelers toward
beating off unto the stoned space
“Using this lichen to kill

“human exceptionalism and bounded individualism
human-centric history
just not Scooby Doo mysteries

the names on the grave
dissolving in acid. 4:32
Demon familiars invest

in Instagramma’s teal meme
and theme color scheme
My polyamorous family

In the name of science
you rip our universe in two
like your unliking

dehydrates us until mist
makes us wet and excited
more vivid than Narcissus

in the cosmic vanity pool
Mycologically
“we never had walls here

red hats, red hats
repeating on the lawn
Shaving razor commercial

How these entanglements
chthonic despite attempts
to astralize into pure land

Santa’s sleigh and flying reindeer
We stuffed the reindeer carcasses
with lichen and broken glass

cut you all up inside
more susceptible to gifts of
high concentrations of poison

“growing as little
as one millimeter a year
Lichens in Greenland 4,500 years old

The “Rustici Pauperrima”—Linnaeus
“poor trash” of the plant kingdom
In trailer parks, in rockin’ rollin’ homes

German transcendental kitchen
“Some of the larger map-like splotches
may well have been there for a thousand years

“The miliary fever is said by the country people
to be caused by the elf-mote, or meeting with elves,
as a remedy for which the lichen called älfnäfver

from The Folk-lore of Plants
“The common rock lichen bears
the musical name “pot scrapings”

TallBear said
to ‘extend the range of nonhuman
beings with which we can be in relation’

“Lichens in communes engage in
multispecies world-making projects
“A speculative bioindicator garden

unfolding from a lichen point of view
“Phytosociological Associates
“‘nature’ is not a stable referent

“where, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro suggests
organisms might also be approached as persons
and as having perspectives as persons

Forgive the missing citation. I was
gazing in the primordial reflection
beauty before—beauty behind me

I won’t try to convince you
you don’t exist oh nonplussed
denominator of what immaculate

equation's elegant thus simplest
solution to nature's question of
what we are

Studying the slow growth of lichens
for clues to boost human longevity
“less as a tidy plot, and more

through a chance encounter
that engenders the beginning
of a bioindicative engagement

signalling the site
chosen is in fact a vector
“Epochal occasions are undivided

whether they are those of photons,
perceptions, memories, understanding,
meals, rocks, mountains, lichens,

cities, wars, inflations, buildings,
melodies, seasons, conversations,
or chairs”—from

‘The Epochal Nature of Process,
Whitehead's Metaphysics’
By F. Bradford Wallack

Dictyonema huaorani
White hymenal layer below
aquamarine above. Used

by bad shamen to curse
How does Youtube
know my knee hurts?

I'm a tardigrade (a.k.a. water bear) that lives in lichens
in a little house with Fun and Alga
“When it's dry they shrivel and look

like they've dried out, but with a drop
of water they turn green.” But they don't like
automobiles, factory smoke, dream exhaust

How can you get involved in lichen monitoring?
“Algae, cyanobacteria, and filamentous fungus
met at party and dated briefly

before moving in together. By now we get along
so well we don’t know where one ends and the other
begins. We’re greater than the sum of our parts

Sometimes people mistake us for a plant
but we belong to a different order of being
—So you’re a kind of prokaryote internet?

Something like that was
unworlding me
relentlessly

“how could I attempt to imitate this
world’s vain schemers?—Han Shan
Like I said, unworlding

me. But eyes ain’t no victim
“We are all lichen
blistering, marring, cracking

A man completely covered in moss, lichen, grass, and bracken
Everyone’s favorite phytolinguist’s
nineteenth stony breakdown

Going on a journey to speak to Lichen Spirit
talking to LS about the Lich’s total
domination of the real estate market

“flecks of dashed paint, mats of kinked yarn,
or shrunken, calcified doilies” and
“cocooned within its woven caverns

and floors of chilled stone”—Regarding
Lichen by Isaac Yuen, Tin House
Online on Oct 13, 2017. It’s 12:34

“The redhead from the bog
festooned with silver lichen
giving her an air of wisdom

Kafka specifically calls inexplicable
the range of rocks
outside his window

“Nature itself is a finite
statement that comes
to no conclusion

“Form is organization
“The total relationship
is not given to us

Chained to the rock
Also, this Kafka quote:
Eine Ausstrahlung des mensch- lichen

Bewußtseins in bestimmten
Übergangsstellunge
[hint: ‘lichen’ is ‘union’ in German]

which Google translates as
“A radiation of human consciousness
in certain transitional positions

“Evil is fragmentary consciousness
“Body and mind completely dropped
off!—Ryokan á la Dogen

blending into a green man mask
Wolf lichens “green tennis balls “highly
branched “Alien nervous system

make it personal. Grow on the skin
comparisons like as like cures
“Commensalistic “Parasymbiotic

“Endolichenic “Lichenicolous
In bear-watching expeditions
to remote Finland forests

under the midnight sun
insight into the myth of
spatial orientation

being indisposed to navigation
by searching the slowest
growing things for clues

about how to stall motion
overlooking mint harbors
they lived on castle rock

bucketing down mountains
red faced splodges playing
ring around the murder hole

“*genus Haematomma* – the Blood Drop lichens
Pale green with blood red drops, these grow
about a tenth of an inch in a hundred years

Even lowest lichen can propagate
if we get to know each other
so well we forget each other

maybe lose bytes
of our wolf selfs
Even a rock can kill

Can even kill a rock
“In the oak grove that supplied wood
for the main staircase of the Titanic

I thought of you
hanging on a tree
so close to the stars

without an umbrella
it stoned me like a rocker
feller and what and all

those starstruck structures
we composed us workday
creatures eating away at the Man

sucking off the state of disunion
breaking it down ugh. “I have nothing
to report, my friends—Ryokan

Best view in these islands
Islands of islands
“Islands on top of islands—Basho

“Language matters a lot
when dealing with
these organisms

“Every heart throws up
a barricade—Shih Te
Ego free design

sells a lichen pattern blanket
We built our home here
on blood spatter lichen

Grown over domed atomic waste
“Nature is a language. Can’t you read?—Morrissey
“Radial, budding in all directions

like tree branches or growing crystals,
from a first or central word
—Ursula Leguin, *Changing Planes* p.164.

In stereo, in surround sound
A clear spirit at the center
of an ecological mandala

“Gesar spirit-journeys into the king’s dreams
stars as the monarch’s tribal deity and totem...
Ripening your mindstream

Earth terma
mind terma
internet terma

We cross the moon in paper boats
scribbled over with lichen poems
My son says we could genetically

alter lichen to make it flatter and
harder, to create a biodegradable
building material. Lichen house!

I thought I was done, but an angry fart
said otherwise. See? I'm a soil maker
too. I wipe, flush, go back to work

Grandma Spirit liked her sugar
a grand synthesis transcending
accidental awakening

Faces growing on co(s)mic mirror
Know our way around a headstone
“Naked intuition as a subtle sense of

the order of things implicit
Things. Of systems of things. Of
We speak as if in a language of

something we didn't know but grew
to encompass old records scratched from
trying to get the rash off our skulls

“They see the continuity which runs through the earth
M St R Ng W Tchcr Ft L V Ng n S
is a song by Lichens’ from Omns

“Each god is a symbolic representation
of a pattern of energy, and they form
societies of gods, or mandalas, which

are tantric maps of regions of activity
in the phenomenal world
[www.lionsroar\(dot\)com](http://www.lionsroar(dot)com)

rad lichens grow around ecologists
constellations societies shambalas
as in mirages as in red eyes after looking

at too much porn. I let my white hair
blow from the trees of ridiculous
delving / reaching

back through the looking glass
where I first drowned in *All*
of yr flecks, flakes n gurgles? Ew.

is a line from Tommy Pico's Nature Poem
"In the beginning a spider descended
from the sky and spun a web, into which fell

a tiny stone that grew until it filled
all the space under the horizon.
A lichen fell from heaven upon this rock,

to which it adhered, and then came a worm,
from whose excrement
the first soil was formed.

Thinking Lichen is like thinking
without words
in a snail mail

race with language
so baroque it almost quit
before it started

Could this perfect union
form without intention?
"Namik lacked all wisdom

He went out to hunt during a plague
of shooting stars. The stars dripped
down on him just a little. But this was

enough to transform poor Namik
into a greyish patch of lichen forever
Moral: Remain indoors or the star shit will get you

--Lawrence Millman's A Kayak Full of Ghosts
Alt Moral: Remain star shit or indoors will get you
The stones wear us. So woven we

dissolve into each other's utility
Liberty said gravity pushes us down
I said, Either way [orienting to the absolute] Let it

"*Caloplaca albovariegata* is
an orange lichen, but it is not
orange in color. *Psilolechia lucida*

in the genus *Psilolechia*, is commonly
called "sulphur dust lichen. But
"sulphur lichen" refers to the genus

Fulgensia, and "dust lichen" refers
either to the genus *Chrysothrix*
or the genus *Lepraria*

I do not know from which air
I stole these facets of one truth
only that if I'm ever worth suing

I'm be happy to share with you
whatever profits come unbidden
from meaning in this new context

Facts should grow freely
from one stone to another
"Caloplaca marina grows

like an orange crust coating
the rock, so it is crustose
Grandmother Spirit doesn't remember

we were unnamed in end of years lists
My gen fades from the polaroid
Filtered out. Sunflare is our augur

You try playing Johnny b Goode
with dematerializing fingertips
Supersaturated out of existence

in the insta distance—inseparable
from rock we built this city on
Except we are earth eaters

How far I have fallen from you. Yet...
"Caloplaca thallincola grows like
a crust, and in a pattern that spins

outward from the center, so it has
a crustose placodioid growth form

Pannaria lurida forms small leaf-like
scales crustose below but free
at the tips, so it is squamulose

Like squeamish and on the loose
So I type my lichen song
straight into Google's

mechanical heart
publishing into the
anonymous instant

my legacy is letting it rain
I am a collective organism
He called me "A goddamned recluse

I wasn't sure of the orgy room protocols
Shall I lichen thee to a fungus?
"They come from the beds of the Lichen green

from 'The Culprit Fay' By Joseph Rodman Drake (1795–1820)
But who cares if T.H.E.Y. scrape us
with extreme prejudice off the tomb

of history? Generation XYZ said to Cloud Spirit
When was the last time I used the phone?
Predation is to animal as

cell wall is to castle defense
i am so small god i am so small and i
can't die i can't die why can't i die?

i'm just a lil tardigrade
lost in an alien jingle(sp.)
and i says to Alga i says Alga

babe, stop distracting my pupil
You make my vulva burn like fire
"It seems lichens have very little

use for the novels of Sadie Ziff
"Some naturalists consider the
Manna miraculously provided

for the sustenance of the Children
of Israel in the Desert was
a species of Lichen

My lil' city gnawed Frost's wall
Moved onto southern border
Into ridiculous Fun and Alg's

wacky world of "And like Lichen
grey on its stem that grows
Is the hair that over her mantle flows
--Hans Christian Andersen

"Ask a lichen
So Freddy said to Jason
we are mostly bacteria

so who gives a fudge
if we navigate by absolute
or relative moral

compasses? if we invest
in the sundial by turning
into a fuzzy wristwatch?

Beneficial mutualist?
Harmful pathogen?
Benign or malign?

In different contexts
or at the same time
"Biology is a mess—as are lichens

Life is a mess. Poetry is a mirror
I live in the lineage of the lens
blank with the silver flaking off

leaving a landscape of black thought
Ecosystems as well as organisms
True ecology. Lost bodies and mind

Alg the algal algorithm says
we don't respond to circumstances
with absolute freedom

but with pre programmed jerks
Trigger Alert!
So much listening without ears

Oil spills as well as fudgsicles
Grandmother Spirit force fed us
Shall I lichen thee unto a tantric sex workshop?

“Lichen-like compartments
A superstructure orgy
forming a vast leaderless hierarchy

a ladder of thotties climbing
side by side
erasing god

the stony grave pages flaked off
from words branching to starlight
No roots delving to bottom

inseparably
hung with long trailing filaments
Grandmother shitting all over the place

The sky
like a big blue baby
crying wa wa wa. *I hate humans*

Grandmother Spirit laughing
down the corridors
of cultural dementia

I want to attach myself
to your ankle and spread
Does that make me enviro-mental?

I'm a trans frog
in a *letharia vulpina*
miniskirt, leaping, leaping

Now they have a pill
to take my loneliness
away

my native brains smashed on the rocks
growing here like not one tomorrow
only the noise of today's elegant

destruction—growing integral
So lichens took on new forms
“We don't understand their needs...

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



J PASCUTAZZ is non-binary writer with Asperger's. Raised in rural Ohio. Graduate of Bennington College. Published by *Miracle Monocle*, *Cleaver*, *FRIGG* — and others. J teaches Tai Chi Chuan and Chi Gong in Brooklyn.

MAGIC AND SHAMANS

A CONVERSATION WITH J PASCUTAZZ

Greetings comrade! Thank you for talking to us about your process today!

Thank you for all the hard work you do to make The Operating System run.

Can you introduce yourself, in a way that you would choose?

Hi. I'm J. I wrote a book called *Lichen Land*.

Why are you a "poet"/ "writer"/ "artist"?

A lot of reasons. No other work has ever given me anywhere near the satisfaction and sheer joy of creating something. It may simply be that I am a narcissist. My Asperger's prevents me from participating in society more directly. I'm obsessed with words. I write because it's relatively cheap and I can do it alone.

When did you decide to use the language you use for yourself (and/or: do you feel comfortable calling yourself a poet/writer/artist, what other titles or affiliations do you prefer/feel are more accurate)?

I was always sort of invisible even to myself. When I was thirteen I had a kind of awakening. Out of nowhere I started meditating, drawing, writing, reading insatiably, doing yoga. In high school I took my first real art class. Everyone was like, "This person is an artist." So I started playing the artist role. It didn't occur to me to call myself a writer until quite recently. What makes you a writer? You write. You send out work. Words are energy. Ultimately, I see myself as an energetic beacon.

What's a "poet" (or "writer" or "artist") anyway?

In olden times we'd be the shamans, prophets, bards — valuable members of the tribe. What are we now? I don't know. Let's see.

What do you see as your cultural and social role (in the literary/artistic/creative community and beyond)?

I dive into the unconscious and bring back treasure to help illuminate the way forward for humanity. I hope that doesn't sound too grand. I'm a glorified minimum wage soul worker. I want to turn everyone on with words.

Talk about the process or instinct to move these poems (or your work in general) as independent entities into a body of work. How and why did this happen? Have you had this intention for a while? What encouraged and/or confounded this (or a book, in general) coming together? Was it a struggle?

I'd taken a break from poetry to write a novel. Lichen Land was what came up when I started writing poems again. These poems were written more or less one after the other over the course of a month or so. Something moved through me. It was pretty clear when that period of inspiration was over and it was time to move on to something new.

Did you envision this collection as a collection or understand your process as writing or making specifically around a theme while the poems themselves were being written / the work was being made? How or how not?

I don't remember what I was thinking or feeling. I just wrote. The long poem esp. just sort of happened. I don't think I read through the whole thing more than twice before sending it off.

What formal structures or other constrictive practices (if any) do you use in the creation of your work? Have certain teachers or instructive environments, or readings/writings/work of other creative people informed the way you work/write?

For me, writing itself is the constrictive act. As an Aspie, I have a hell of a time communicating directly. My superpower is obsessively focusing on a task through a formal repetitive impulse. This distracts me from having to consciously choose words. As far as influences go, at one time I read everything—but now I'm more inspired by music, film, social media, cartoons, science, technology, the news, popular culture et al—not to mention staring out the window, taking long walks, and, of course, my energy practice.

Speaking of monikers, what does your title represent? How was it generated? Talk about the way you titled the book, and how your process of naming (individual pieces, sections, etc) influences you and/or colors your work specifically.

The name 'Lichen Land' just kind of popped up and stuck. It seems to capture the timbre of the whole project, which is kind of la la and deep/ expansive at the same time. I love naming things. Pets. Babies. Whatever. A name is a poem unto itself.

What does this particular work represent to you as indicative of your method/ creative practice? your history? of your mission/intentions/hopes/plans?

As an artist, I always have to go back to square one. It feels like I wrote *Lichen Land* a million years ago. Who was I then? What was I thinking and feeling? At this point I am as clueless as the reader. I enjoy the uncertainty this distance engenders. In the end, I'm merely a vessel. I don't know. You tell me.

What does this book DO (as much as what it says or contains)?

I was never entirely comfortable using the term 'queer' to define myself. 'Non-binary' comes closer. But 'non-dualistic' might be more accurate. My writing springs in part from the energy/magic practice I've done for the past twenty years, which is a way of tuning into and identifying with the forces of nature and the universe at large to transcend limiting/ fixed notions of the self. In an absolute sense, reality has no more substance than a dream. Everything is mind. And what is that? So, yes, putting all this into words is a struggle.

What would be the best possible outcome for this book? What might it do in the world, and how will its presence as an object facilitate your creative role in your community and beyond? What are your hopes for this book, and for your practice?

I hope this book enters the culture at large and helps wake people up.

What does it mean to make books in this time, and what are your thoughts around shifting into digital books/objects and digital access in general?

The internet is potentially a great tool for making information and communication available to all. Everyone is a writer now. We swim in a sea of language. Staying afloat and navigating these dangerous currents is my present concern.

Let's talk a little bit about the role of poetics and creative community in social and political activism, so present in our daily lives as we face the often sobering, sometimes dangerous realities of the Capitalocene. The publication of these volumes now falls during an ongoing global pandemic, intersecting with the largest collective uprising in US history, with Black Lives Matter, dismantling white supremacy, and abolition at the fore. How does your process, practice, or work reflect these conditions?

Poetry is protest. It marches down the streets of the mind inciting change. Let's let our lights shine without fear or hesitation.

I'd be curious to hear some of your thoughts on the challenges we face in speaking and publishing across lines of race, age, ability, class, privilege, social/ cultural background, gender, sexuality (and other identifiers) within the community ...as well as creating and maintaining safe spaces, vs. the dangers of remaining and producing in isolated "silos" and/or disciplinary and/or institutional bounds?

Dismantling an oppressive hierarchy and replacing it with a structure to support the work of all people equally has to happen from a place of real inner awakening. Otherwise we could end up simply creating new forms of oppression.

WHY PRINT:DOCUMENT? (AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DIGITAL MEDIA?)

The Operating System has traditionally used the language "print:document" to differentiate from the book-object as part of our mission to distinguish the act of documentation-in-book-FORM from the act of publishing as a backwards-facing replication of the book's agentic *role* as it may have appeared the last several centuries of its history. Ultimately, we approach the book as TECHNOLOGY: one of a variety of documents across a range of media that humans have invented and in turn used to archive and disseminate ideas, beliefs, stories, and other evidence of production.

Ownership and use of printing presses and access to (or restriction of) information/materials, libraries, and archives has long been a site of struggle, related in many ways to revolutionary activity and the fight for civil rights and free speech all over the world. While (in many countries) the contemporary quotidian landscape has indeed drastically shifted in its access to platforms for sharing information and in the widespread ability to "publish" digitally, even with extremely limited resources, the importance of publication on physical media has not diminished. In fact, this may be the most critical time in recent history for activist groups, artists, and others to insist upon learning, establishing, and encouraging personal and community documentation practices.

With The OS's print endeavors I wanted to open up a conversation about this: the ultimately radical, transgressive act of creating PRINT / DOCUMENTATION in the digital age. It's a question of the archive, and of history: who gets to tell the story, and what evidence of our lives, our behaviors, and/or our experiences are we leaving behind? We can know little to nothing about the future into which we're leaving an unprecedentedly digital document trail--but we can be assured that publications, government agencies, museums, schools, and other institutional powers that be will continue to leave BOTH a digital and print version of their production for the official record. Will we?

As a (rogue) anthropologist and long time academic, I can easily pull up many accounts about how lives, behaviors, experiences--how THE STORY of a time or place--was pieced together using the deep study of the archive: correspondence, notebooks, and other physical documents which are no longer the norm in many lives and practices. As we move our creative behaviors towards digital note taking, and even audio and video, what can we predict about future technology that is in any way assuring that our stories will be accurately told--or told at all? How will we leave these things for the record?

For all our years of print publication, I've said that "with these documents we say: WE WERE HERE, WE EXISTED, WE HAVE A DIFFERENT STORY", but now, with the rapid expansion of greater volume with digital and DIY printed media, we add: we ARE here, and while we are, we will not be limited in what we add value to, share, make accessible, or give voice to, by restricting it to what we can afford to print in volume.

Adding a digital series is the next chapter of *our* story: a way for us to support more creative practitioners and offer folks independent options for POD or DIY-zine-style distribution, even without our financial means changing -- which means, each book will *also* have archive-ready print manifestations. It's our way of challenging what is required to evolve and grow. Ever onward, outward, beyond.

Elæ [Lynne DeSilva-Johnson]. Founder& Creative Director
THE OPERATING SYSTEM, Brooklyn NY 2019

BLOOM, MUTATION, ENTROPY, CATALYST, BRINE

In the fall of 2019, we posted the following call for digital chapbooks through our variegated Operating System networks:

How queer is climate change? What mutating futurities are possible in writings of the diaspora? How do we imagine evolving micro/macro/plant-based/insect-like scales of environmental disturbance? How salty is survival? What kind of archive is the ocean? What will become of history under water? We invite writers to submit works that speak to our ecological moment, apprehend change, reaction, and action in networked and local ways, and explore the multiple and the contingent.

This call for submissions centred around the metaphoric, the contingent, the liminal, and the fluvial. But most of all, it drew its strengths from the desire of and for the language of persistence. With so much at stake in the current motions of precarity—climate change, rising sea levels, ecological degradation, racial injustice, police brutality, and now the global COVID-19 pandemic—we wondered: how can we serve as decentred world citizens and retain the critical thrust of the archival through networks over nodal institutions and Big Poetry? What duties of care does form have to shared histories and collective memories? What nuances of language must we co-develop to imagine humane infrastructures?

The call for submissions drew many submissions that approached and reimagined the document as dispersive and fluvial. They were all radically beautiful and critically-engaging. Ultimately, we selected six manuscripts, which we felt reflected a momentary grappling for the micro-macro that forced us as coordinators to reimagine the frayed edges of our call.

The Operating System is committed to fostering open-resource and share-alike cultures for mutual aid, direct support, and radical organising. In the spirit of the wet archive, we encourage you to share, digitally store, print, and support authors via our Open Access library.

Curtis Emery and Orchid Tierney
Digital Chapbook Coordinators 2020

THE 2020 OS CHAPBOOK SERIES

DIGITAL TITLES:

Recall - Lee Gough

The Woman Factory - Ava Hofmann

Kind Haven - Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

Lichen Land - J Pascutazz

Enter The Navel: For The Love Of Creative Nonfiction - Anjoli Roy

Witch Like Me - Sunnylyn Thibodeaux

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[HTTP://WWW.THEOPERATINGSYSTEM.ORG/](http://www.theoperatingsystem.org/)

DOC U MENT

/däkyəmənt/

First meant “instruction” or “evidence,” whether written or not.

Who is responsible for the manufacture of value?

Based on what supercilious ontology have we landed in a space where we vie against other creative people in vain pursuit of the fleeting credibilities of the scarcity economy, rather than freely collaborating and sharing openly with each other in ecstatic celebration of MAKING?

While we understand and acknowledge the economic pressures and fear-mongering that threatens to dominate and crush the creative impulse, we also believe that now more than ever we have the tools to relinquish agency via cooperative means, fueled by the fires of the Open Source Movement.

Looking out across the invisible vistas of that rhizomatic parallel country we can begin to see our community beyond constraints, in the place where intention meets resilient, proactive, collaborative organization.

Here is a document born of that belief, sown purely of imagination and will. When we document we assert. We print to make real, to reify our being there. When we do so with mindful intention to address our process, to open our work to others, to create beauty in words in space, to respect and acknowledge the strength of the page we now hold physical, a thing in our hand... we remind ourselves that, like Dorothy: we had the power all along, my dears.

the PRINT! DOCUMENT SERIES

is a project of
the trouble with bartleby
in collaboration with
the operating system



c. 2020 digital cohort

bloom.

mutation.

entropy.

catalyst.

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