



WELCOME
TO THE ZONE

● **Experiments in Writing**

Writing Imaginaries, Making Futures PhD Workshop

InterGender Network

Blekinge Institute of Technology, Campus Karlshamn

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INTRODUCTION

“What if the study and crafting of fiction and fact happened explicitly, instead of covertly, in the same room, and in all the rooms?” This is a question that Donna Haraway posed, following her concern with situated knowledge-making. The course took this as an invitation to experiment with different forms of empirical writing practice.

This was a practice-based course to explore diverse methods for writing material-semiotic ‘fictions’ – fictions that are both grounded in empirical evidence from fieldwork as well as generative.

This book is a collection of some of the writing created during the workshop. All of the writing is an exploration of ongoing research and fieldwork.

Notes by Lucy Suchman

The inseparability of study and crafting means being responsible to and for - responsible to the materials that we care about and with which we're engaged, and responsible for our articulations of them ... the latter, in turn, don't simply describe but are constitutive of the worlds that our accounts, and we, are always already part of, implicated in, and acting to reiterate and/or transform.

“ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT
IS THIS SMELL”

● **Maria Eriksson**

*PhD Candidate in Gender Studies at the
Department of Cultural Science, University of
Gothenburg*

All I can think about is this smell. It is inside my nose, my mouth, on my skin – under my skin. It is me. I cannot concentrate, think, be... anything but this smell. Everything that I have done, everything that I could do – ever – is lost now, forgotten in the yellow mist of invisible air. Should I say something about my research? Talk perhaps, about death and men and violence. Anger! Or how it, as well, gets under my skin, becomes a part of my body, my being. Makes me moody, upset, smelly. They also have a smell, the words that I work with. But it is not a yellow one; it is red, rusty. Like old cars in junkyards; it is the smell of dust and of metal decay. Something dead, but then again, something that was never quite alive to begin with. It is a sickening smell. And yet, somehow, I love it, this smell of iron, of rust, of blood. It is empowering, invigorating. Not like the yellow sticky fog that I am now enmeshed in, that is consuming me, my thoughts, my skin. I cannot work with this; cannot turn it around; cannot make it into something else. I wonder, like Charlotte Perkins Gilman once did, what it is with the color yellow? Like her wallpaper, this room of yellow air is imprisoning me. But unlike her, I cannot rip it apart; tear it down from its privileged place as life-giver. I cannot subvert the air! Not like red rusty words. These, I can do anything with.

Notes Immersed in material-semiosis, what are our stakes in the boundaries of inside and outside, the materialities of memory, sensation and affect, and the agency of words?

“ANCIENT NEWNESS
WAITING TO BE
DISCOVERED”

● **Anders Falk**

*Lecturer, PhD student, Technoscience
Studies, Design for digital media, Blekinge
Institute of Technology.*

Ancient newness waiting to be discovered

Endless and beyond borders

Discovery of the close comes quickly

Openness soon turns into confined spaces, distances become real,
imposing

Imagined freedom weighing heavy with expectations

Experiences without witnesses feels empty

Devoid of feedback closed system seems more vivid in my memories,
making algorithmic promises

Distance melt whit the swipe of a card

Togetheriness simulated effortlessly

Roles shackled by code

Relations still shackled by time

Known, the system bends to my will or so it seems, maybe I bend to it

Closeness is there or

All the signs are, but not here, somewhere

The best of both worlds or none of any

As time goes by so does choice and as I sit there in the middle, I
wonder where?

*Notes A reflection in/on the virtual, or is it digital, and its lures,
the closed world and the infinite space, the burden of the imaginary, the
ambivalent agencies of code.*

“BUBBLY, BUBBLY,
BOILING BLOOD”

Bubbly, bubbly, boiling blood,

risk, risk, risky babies?

Cut my branches off

you did.

...

That is what I thought for ages,

ages of thoughts

whirling around,

twirling, looping, snaking, aching.

Ages since the bite,

you did.

Cut my skin,

skimmed the cream off.

That is what I thought for ages,

ages of thoughts,

and my blood was boiling, bubbling, blistering.

...



Tststs

...

Well, fizzy, making me dizzy.

Still does.

Bursting bubbles, burden as stars deep within,
bruises under eyelids.

So, please – be gentle.

Stop cutting.

...

Bubbly, bubbly, boiling blood,
risk, risk, risky, babies?

That is what I thought for ages.

Then. A horizon is shining,
ages of research whisper worries away.

...

At least some

At least one.

● **Desirée Ljungcrantz**

PhD student, with a project on HIV and relations, at the Department of Thematic Studies-Gender Studies, Tema Genus, Linköping University, Sweden

From 5 percent to almost zero of

risk, risky, beauty babies?

Bubbly, bubbly, boiling blood.

Ages of thoughts.

Ages of research.

...

Just started,

I have.

A research baby blues,

this is.

It is:

Hear me shimmering!

Touch upon my tone!

See my porosity!

A peculiar research baby blues,

this is.

It is. It's not all there is.

***Notes** Flows and contagions across body boundaries, including us and our research...*

FROM SMILE . DOG ,
WITH LOVE

● **Line Henriksen**

*Department of Thematic Studies, Tema
Genus, Linköping University.*

i have multiple eyes. it's true. some of them are right behind you. i
swear. turn around if you must. i'm still. right behind you.

i stick, you see.

i stick to eyes.

i stick to necks.

i stick to yours, and so i'm right behind you. you feel my breath?
never mind. i don't breathe. i talk, though, as you may know. in your
dreams, mostly. do you remember what i said? that

i stick?

i stick to eyes.

i stick to necks.

i stick to yours till you listen. do you remember how we met? in a
flicker, very quickly. you saw me and i saw you and so i smiled. i
smiled with all my teeth. do you listen?

i stick.

i stick to eyes.

i stick to necks.

and you know the only way to make something un-

stick?

you stick it to something else.

do you listen?

***Notes** My sticky note is to tell you that your poem makes me
remember Anna Tsing, whose words that universality can only be
enacted 'in the sticky materiality of practical encounters' (Friction,
2005: 1) stick in my mind.*

“GORGEOUS”

Go and be gorgeous! she said
Enjoy it! – love it!

Gorgeous, I thought
I don't feel gorgeous
Can just anyone go out there and be gorgeous?

I'm not here out of the blue
I'm here for a reason
I was chosen

I know

But gorgeous...
Seriously?

Yet on I went
Slowly but surely
With the others

My group
The chosen ones

My body trembling
My throat dry
Sweat on my back

I go on

Out of the dark
Out of the silence
Out towards the unknown

Into the chill of the undiscovered

My body shaking
My throat is blocked
Cold sweat on my back

I stop for a while
Pause
Breathe
Breath in breath out
In - out

The cutting bright light
Hurting my eyes
Bringing out tears

The glimmering shimmers of my dazzling dress
Bouncing the light right back
From where it came from

Of the public eye

The silence broken by applause

Gorgeous.

● **Guðný Gústafsdóttir**

PhD Gender Studies, University of Iceland

Notes *What kinds of visibility capture us?*

A FUTURE POSTCARD
TO KIRA

I wish the edges
were not so hard
in the future
so that you
can move around
without getting bruises
although on the other hand
bruises are good sometimes
and edges too
otherwise you
might not find
your way home

● **Tanja Joelsson**

*PhD Candidate at the Thematic Unit of
Gender Studies, Department of Tema, Linköping
University, Sweden*

*Notes How is knowing finding our way, and what would
knowing, wayfinding, or we be without what Karen Barad has named
the 'agential cuts' of world-making (Meeting the Universe Halfway,
2007)?*

“ELECTRIC
TRANSFORMATIVE COLOUR”

electric transformative colour,	black, purple, unstable
electric performative firmament,	plastic and blue
witness, walk in,	purple, red
white space	
cloud witness passing,	purple, blue
cloud the colour,	
cloud the firmament plastic colour,	black, blue, red

● **Kristin Johannesson**

*PhD student in Library and Information
Science at the department of Archive, Library and
Museum Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden*

***Notes** What are the energy sources of natureculture and what
are the diffractions through which we/they become sensible?*

“I SAY: DON’ T BE
AFRAID. CONTROVERSIES
ARE GOOD. MAKES ME
REFLECT. MAKES YOU
REFLECT. MAKES US
RESPECT.”

Crowded tent full of noise
noise I say
cause’ that what it sounds like
from a distance.

Conversations braided
multiple become one
indistinguishable
like threads in a weave.

Yet you know
in the one is the multiple
just look closer
get closer.

I see my thread
conversation at the bench
too much noise though
I can not hear.

People talking
confused faces
upset faces
lots of faces.



Microphone and camera
looking listening
my earpiece waiting
hooked to digital sound.

I can hear them now
conversation hot-wired
a thread untangled
controversy overheard.

There are things in the making
the technology joker
making things public
public making by things.

● **Linus de Petris**

*PhD student at Blekinge Institute of
Technology.*

*Notes Public talk as more than one, less than many, as John
Law (After Method, 2004:62) would say ... what does it mean to make
sense in the midst of this multiplicity, with what instruments, and
what stakes?*

“FOUR WOMEN AND I”

● **Pirjo Elovaara**

*Senior lecturer in Technoscience Studies
at Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden.*

Four women and I.
I and four women.
In a room.
In a room with a table.
In a room with a heavy table.
In a room with chairs.
In a room with wooden chairs.
In a room with photos.
In a room with photos on men.
In a room with a door.
In a room with a locked door.
Four women and I.
I and four women.
In a room with words.
My words.
Their words.
Few?
Many?
Too many?
Enough?
Words.
Four women and I in a room.
I and four women in a room.
We?

*Notes Spaces of knowledge-making and their politics ... how
are they configured?*

VICTIMS OF
OBJECTIFICATION

Surrounded by darkness. Complete and utter darkness. They just left me out here. They threw me out of the car and left me on the side of the road. Like a piece of scrap metal. They didn't care enough to keep me around any longer. I lay in the high grass, feeling bare and cold.

I lay still.

I'd overheard them talking about me; saying I was too old, too high maintenance, for them. They wanted a shiny new toy to play with; something young and fresh, fun and easy to handle.

I can't recall the last time someone spoke to me with kind words, or touched me softly or even looked at me without disgust in their eyes. I too feel disgusted; disgusted by my own existence.

I lay still.

At least I'd had a purpose before. I'd been someone's property but now I'm no one. If something were to happen to me no one would care. I'm already long forgotten.

I lay still.

At a far distance a flicker of lights appear. It's a car, and it's approaching fast. The lights fill the night sky. Will they see me?

The car closes in. I get my hopes up. Will they stop and pick me up?
I'm sure I can convince them that I can still be of some use to
someone; perhaps someone older; someone less picky, someone that
doesn't see me only as a senseless object.

And then it's over. They never saw me. I don't make a sound. The
lights soon disappear and I'm surrounded by darkness again.

I just want to call home and cry.

I lay still.

● **Linda Paxling**

*PhD student in Technoscience Studies at
Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden.*

*Notes If we really loved our objects, what would a politics of
care-full disposal look like?*

WIRED FOR ENERGY
FUTURES

With a glance at his *Natural Fuse* application he happily established that nobody had taken any of his plant's lives, just as he had caused no damage to the balance of the carbon-sinking ecology of plants, technology, lamps, radios, computers and prosumers. The *Natural Fuse* system was healthy after a good night of minor power consumption, and with a good consciousness he turned on his radio and switched his *Natural Fuse* window flower power box to 'selfless' mode. "...*listening to the wind of change*", he enjoyed the tones of this classic Scorpions hit that he experienced quite a renaissance in the so-called fossil free era where the entire power grid had been reconfigured to renewable energy. The weather forecast informed him that it would be a windy and sunny weekend with good conditions for excessive electricity consumption. He checked that there was clothes in the washing machine and dishes in the dishwasher and set them both on eco-modes trusting that they would start in effect of the wind turbines swinging their power-generating arms of change.

With a smile on his lips he thought back on his childhood where his mother had been constantly preached him to 'save electricity', day and night, wind or sun. What a simplistic way of thinking about consumption as completely detached from any connection with the world.

Connectivity, collectivity, sustainability and ecology – how he loved this brave new power grid weaving him together, not only with nature in the shape of renewable energy sources, but also it

collective matter of concern. Now it was no longer about saving, but about using electricity – but using it at the right time and according to weather conditions and to other prosumers energy consumption.

Through the intelligent smart grid infrastructure it had become a collective (both collective humans in between, but also collective between humans and nonhumans such as plants, windmills, industries, grid technologies, etc.) practice and responsibility to use energy more sustainably.

The radio now played the show Wired for the energy futures where everyday people, designers, engineers, artists, and researchers were exchanging ideas and inventions for alternative ways of using, producing, regulating, and automating energy presumption in more convenient, fun, and flexible ways.

Silence... the radio went quiet, he had used his CO2 quota, or rather he had now emitted as much CO2 as his window flower was able to sink, and since it was set to 'selfless' the system automatically switched off the radio. Damn, he really wanted to hear the program. He checked that his Natural Fuse was online. Nervously, he was biding his lip trying to overcome his bad guilt. Quickly, as if nobody should see it, he turned the switch at the plant box to 'selfish' mode. He turned on the radio and tried to enjoy this program, which loved so much – especially after he had once participated and gotten so much positive feedback on his Angry Energy-Birds app. This app was now a natural part of many kids' and other playful souls' everyday life, making it both fun and easy to use electricity



Natural Fuse by Haque Design

Authors Note

The above text is a fictional story based on the art installation Natural Fuse by Usman Haque. In a rewritten form this text will hopefully become the introductory page to a short paper with the title Artistic Interventions in Energy Futures to be presented at the conference Imagining Techno-Moral Change in Maastricht July 2012. In this paper will explore how artistic works can raise important issues and matters of concern when imagining and discussing changes towards sustainability within energy infrastructures.

Natural Fuse: <http://www.naturalfuse.org>

● **Lea Schick**

PhD fellow at the Technologies in Practice research group at the IT University of Copenhagen. She is writing her dissertation on reconfigurations of natures, humans, and technologies in smart grid energy futures.

according to the load in the grid and in collaboration and competition with neighbors and friends.

Biiip, a warning note was flashing on his computer screen: ” CAUTION: IF SYSTEMATIC BREAKDOWN OCCURS, THE SYSTEM MAY KILL 1 RANDOM UNIT'S PLANTS, AND IT PROBABLY WON'T BE YOUR OWN!”

But he just wanted to hear radio, and it was even for the good cause of better managing energy futures. Why should this innocent activity, this little pleasure absolutely have to be connected to other people’s electricity use, spinning wind mills, carbon-sinking capacities, weather forecasts

and other complex, so-called ecological networks. Could he not please just pull the plug, get of the grid, just for a little while? Just isolate himself, not having to think about the world -- just listen to the radio in peace?

Connectivity, collectivity, sustainability and ecology – how he hated this slave new world of energy ‘futures’.

Notes Indeed, how might we live a future that requires disentangling ourselves (from just-in-time availability of everything), at the same time that it further entangles us (in ever-more-legible forms of connectivity/collectivity)? What selfless/ish imaginaries of collective response-ability are available to us, and how might they need re-wiring?

“PFOFF! A BALL OF YARN
ROLLS DOWN ON THE
FLOOR”

Pfoff! A ball of yarn rolls down on the floor; bounces and moves under the chair where Mónica is sitting. She looks at me, her eyes saying “it doesn’t matter, I’ll pick it up later” and keeps telling about this phone call she had the other day from her great aunt. While speaking, her hands work the knitted texture that she is holding. “My mother”, she brings in, “was a skillful knitter – I used to sit next to her and be so impressed that she could knit without looking and tell the greatest stories while doing it”.

Now, here, she is not knitting. Some strands have been torn in the handling of a work of art when the owner of it, an art collector, took it down from the wall where it had been hanging for years. He took it down to show it to me. He took it down to spread it out on a table and there, he saw the cut. “The wear and tear of the work of art” I hear him sigh when he discovers the wound in the weave. “The wear and tear”, Mónica, the artist, later confirms when she receives it to mend it, to fix it. The gaps of the incisions contract when she carefully draws the fibers closer together, using a similar Merino yarn from which the weave has been knitted initially.

“So,” she goes, “my old auntie called and told something of a family secret – something I never knew, something apparently forgotten, something untold. She said, that my great grandfather came here, came to Argentina from Switzerland carrying wool, because of the wool; was in the wool business. That’s when he fell in love with my great grandmother. So the fiber figures there in my family history as in many other families around the 1920’s”, she concludes as she

pulls together the last strands. Patches are left - not very obvious, but clearly visible in the texture. Like scars. While she is at it, she washes, carefully washes, the sweater. Dust and dye dissolves from the knitted work of art into the lukewarm water. She spreads it out on a flat surface to dry, before sending it back to the art collector.

● **Annika Capelán**

PhD Candidate, Lund University, Sweden

Notes How should we understand relations of making and repair, when our materials are always in transformation? In whose hands are the skills of reweaving?

despite our difficulty to see it
despite our effort to talk about anything
despite our voices crossing each other's over

There it was,
like something large and liquid and loose
sneaking among us with no sense of being seen or heard

but we had to face it
we had to listen carefully this time
we had to look
deeply
we had to stop talking about anything:

(the score of the match ,
the new members of the democratic party
the unions,
the possibility of students taking part at the meeting)

and start speaking about ourselves.

It was the beginning of something:
the beginning of our silence made visible.

● **Krizia Nardini**

*PhD student at the Graduate Gender
Programme, Utrecht University*

WELCOME TO
THE ZONE

Cold air sinks
over sunlit cables
and a hot powered heart.

Words move upwards
meet the sunlit smell.

Stories of embodied encounters
travel diffractively
passionate clickings happen together.

Rigour is a hard word
can I choose another one?

Collages of thoughts on my plate
assemblages of food in my head
digestion does not come easy.

Neither does style
if it's supposed to be gorgeous.

But never mind the bodies
that are left out of sight
what I tell you is conditional

The semiotic matter of the grading committee
holding the key of futurity.

Writing is always non-innocent
writing is always
writing is.

● **Annika Capelán, Pirjo Elovaara,
Maria Eriksson, Anders Falk, Guðný
Gústafsdóttir, Line Henriksen, Tanja Joelsson,
Kristin Johannesson, Desireé Ljungcrantz,
Krizia Nardini, Linda Paxling , Linus de
Petris, Lea Schick, Laura Watts.**

*Composed as a form of Renga, a Japanese
style of collaborative poetry.*

● **Notes by Lucy Suchman**

*Professor of Anthropology of Technology,
Centre for Science Studies, Department of
Sociology, Lancaster University.*

Notes Thank you all - I hope we meet again in a future Renga.