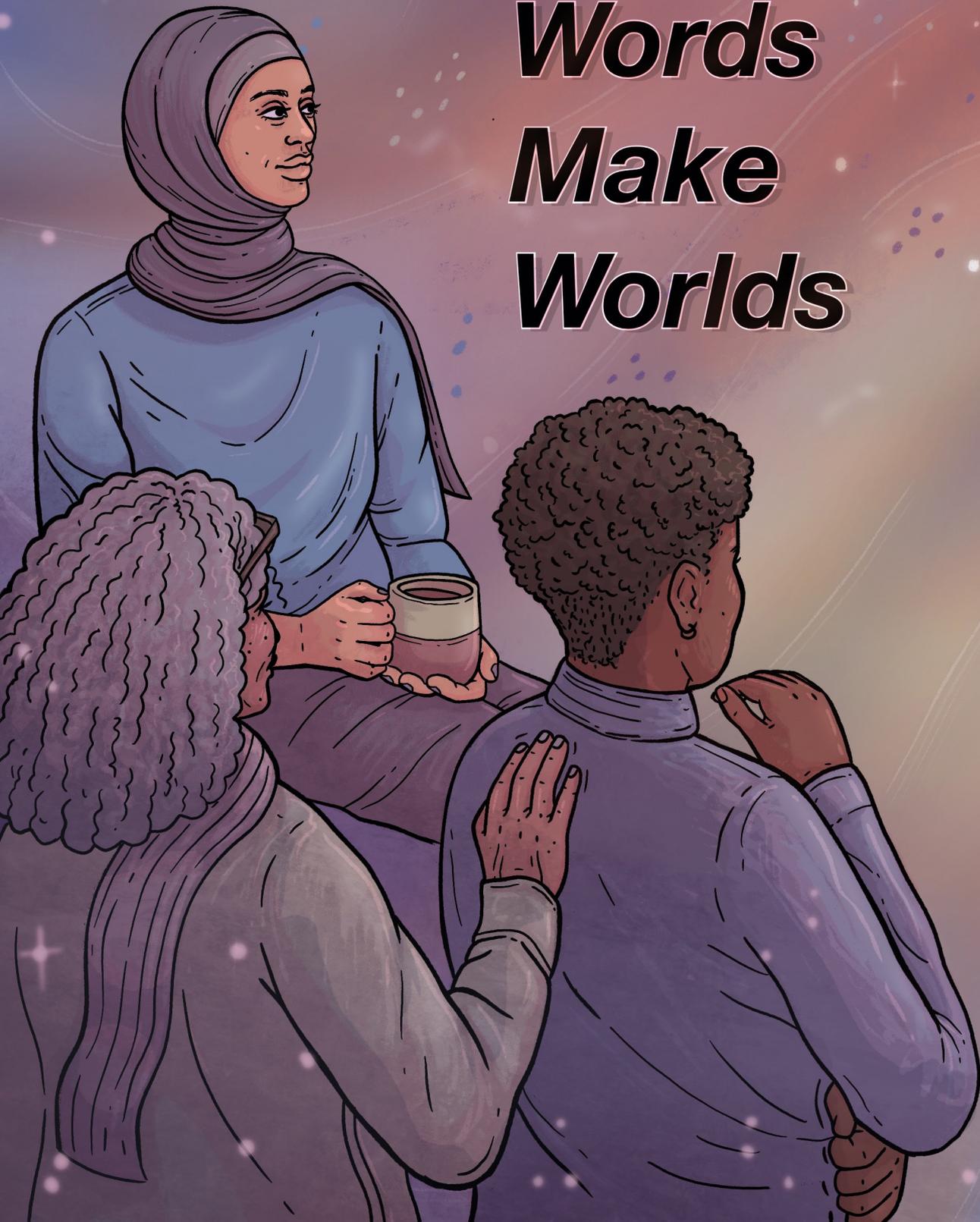


***We Should
All Be
Dreaming:
Words
Make
Worlds***





We Should All Be Dreaming: Words Make Worlds

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We Should All Be Dreaming is an ongoing practice initiated in 2018 by artist-activist duo Sonya Lindfors and Maryan Abdulkarim. The project focuses on the radical potential of decolonial dreaming as a restorative and subversive practice and materializes through different iterations that are always context specific.

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Dreaming of dreams

By Maryan Abdulkarim and Sonya Lindfors

A radical decolonial dream

A dream is a succession of images, ideas, emotions and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep.

A dream is a place that has the potential to unsettle the realities of the so-called real world. Where we can approach the unknown and accept what we do not understand.

A dream is a fantasy of freedom that we have yet not experienced.

A dream is a space of restoration, rest, empowerment and joy.

A dream is Black joy.

A dream is collective futures, where the historical struggles have ended and we all can coexist without the need of coherence.

We Should All Be Dreaming is a concept that focuses on the radical potential of dreaming as a restorative and subversive practice. It comes with a straightforward suggestion: we should all be dreaming radical, decolonial dreams of common futures. Situating itself somewhere between a collective think tank, a series of choreographed gatherings and a durational performance, the project gently invites its participants to spend time together, listen together and dream together.

The world around us is plagued by multiple disasters: structural oppression, inequalities, climate crises, fear, anger and hate of the unknown. With WSABD, we attempt a strategic deviation. We ask: How to dream both inside of the existing structures, but also dream beyond? How to dream of existences that we don't yet know how to dream of? The project does not merely fight against, react to, or reveal the grim realities of the surrounding world, but instead works as a platform of soft resistance by making space for communal coexistence and radical dreaming.

A place

The feel of soft moss under my feet, old tall trees that have stood their ground over centuries, different life forms and the smell of the forest after rain on a summer day. They say that the forests are the lungs of the Earth, here it feels like they are also my lungs; I breathe more freely. The forest welcomes us just as we are, with no demands, it's a place of solace, a place you want to continue to exist, to flourish, to breathe...

Investigate the inbetween space of art and activism

WSABD is a collaboration between an artist and an activist that started as a dream. Activism and art may sometimes share goals, but have different methods of achieving them. Through the in-between space of art and activism, the project investigates the potential of convening, gathering around the imaginary, and the speculative. Thus far, we have arranged meetings and workshops with artists, thinkers, makers and activists, and we have collaborated with local community organizers. We have listened, shared and learned about one another's thoughts, needs and dreams.

A flavor

Mango. Sweet and juicy, from a tree that has flourished under the sun. Shaped perfectly for my hand to hold. I sink my teeth into it. As I take a bite, the juice runs down my chin and I wipe it with the palm of my left hand. I close my eyes and enjoy the sensation, the texture, the smell of the fresh fruit and the sweet fruit that is crushing under my teeth as I swallow the first bite. Happiness and a warm feeling spread over my body. Mango. Home. Freedom. A single bite of a fruit carries emotions that connect me to my people, to my land.

Audre Lorde wrote: "Poetry is not a luxury".

Leaning and building on the words and works of Lorde and other Black activists, artists and radical dreamers before us, we claim: Dreaming is not a luxury. It is vital for our survival.

A sensation

I'm lying on a beach. I am alone, there is no one else. The soft brown sand is embracing my body. The rhythmic sound of the waves, back and forth, back and forth, its repetitiveness gives me comfort. I'm slowly moving my fingers in the sand. The tiny sand grains in my hair, between my fingers, under the toenails. I close my eyes and I slowly count to three.

Now I am floating in the sea.

Do you know that feeling of being light and heavy at the same time?

I can finally let myself go, and yet,

I am held.

WSBD is an ongoing process and platform that evolves and reshapes itself as more people, communities and dreamers interact with it. A dance, a discussion, or a dinner as a dream. A memory, taste, or sensation. WSABD is about coming together to dream of dreams big and small, ambiguous and fragile, transgressive and elusive.

The current form for this edition is digital due to the circumstances, as live gatherings were not possible. It's our hope that this collection of conversations, dreams, poems, recipes and images brings a ray of hope and encourages readers to continue dreaming.

Futures

Futures without fear.

Futures, in which we don't suffocate in pollution.

Futures in which life forms are not in risk of extinction.

Futures where the world is equal and the earth provides for everyone and everyone nurtures the earth.

Futures where there is peace.

Futures that celebrate diversity.

Futures filled with joy and laughter.

Futures built on solidarity and freedom for us all.

Futures where everyone can be all they want to be.

Futures that we don't know yet how to dream of. Yet we keep dreaming.



*Picture from a dreaming session with Sonya Lindfors and Maryan Abdulkarim.
Picture by Essi Orpana.*

Sonya Lindfors is a Helsinki-based choreographer and artistic director. In all her work, Lindfors pursues to shake and challenge existing power structures, penetrate the society, and empower the community. www.sonyalindfors.com

Maryan Abdulkarim is Helsinki-based writer and public intellectual. She's interested in themes relating to freedom and shifting the contexts in which we dream and create futures in the present.

Walking in a dreamworld

Ndéla Faye

Who would we be if this box we live in had no sharp corners but instead smooth, undulating edges full of softness?

What would our world look like if our value was not based on our heritage, skin colour, economic status and other markers that categorise us as 'better', or 'less than'?

What great heights would our minds soar to, if there was nothing to stifle the way we express ourselves?

What if, instead of eurocentric, neoliberal, patriarchal and individualistic ideals, policies and norms, there was cohesion, community, collaboration, collectivity and confluence?

...if, instead of destruction, despair and disconnect, there was warmth, joy and abundance?

...if, instead of the 'Scramble for Africa, it had been left alone?

Come, take a walk with me.

Let's jump head-first into a world that has no limits; where things are still part of a continuum that was set in motion long before the narrow confines of modern society's norms and '-isms' quashed our spirits.

Let's swim in an ocean where we are free to identify however we please. Where whoever we choose to be holds no significance, other than the importance we choose to assign it ourselves. This is a world free from the confines of heteronormativity, the gender binary and the stale gendered roles we are still often expected to play.

Let's stand in the middle of a forest, feeling the soft and wet moss squeezing through our toes. Let's run across sandy plains, leaving plumes of red dust in our wake. Let's stop in front of the baobab trees, and pay homage to their beauty and all the wisdom they hold.

Instead of African and European being two separate, limiting categories, we are free to inhabit multiple spaces at once, and not have to unravel and pick ourselves apart in order to make ourselves more palatable and deserving, and less threatening, to others.

In this world, the different parts of our identities would not be mutually exclusive. Instead, we could be constantly evolving, where each part is accepted and worthy just the same.

There would be no borders used to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’, instilling a sense of being somehow more worthy than others. We wouldn’t have managed to convince ourselves that we are entitled and deserving of what we have. We would not have bought the lie that hard work equates to a good living standard. We would be free to move from place to place.

Home would not be a physical place, but a state where our minds and bodies felt most at ease. There would be no pressure to define where ‘home’ is, because we belong to Earth just as much as it belongs to us.

How much knowledge would we have if it were not lost in the ruins of wars; if our books and women were saved from burning at the hands of tiny men with big egos and the greed for more power gleaming in their eyes?

In a Wakanda-like utopia, our ancestral spirituality would be all around us. Weaved into our hair ever since we were babies. We would live and breathe it, instead of having it beaten, and bred, and brainwashed out of us. We would bow our heads to ancestors and deities, instead of men wearing beautifully-intricate clothes sitting on thrones in tall houses adorned with golden ceilings and slippery-smooth white tiles. The sacred, ancient rituals would be flowing inside our blood vessels, instead of being trickled top-down toward us.

Léopold Sédar Senghor had visions of cultural métissage. He would advise his compatriots to ‘assimilate in order to not be assimilated’, but believed this can only happen once Africans have a thorough understanding of their roots and history; when African identity is situated in a literary tradition.

But what if that tradition had never left us?

Where would we be if that understanding had never been lost, and a distorted version of history not told to us in the books of today?

What great heights might we have reached, if we hadn’t been held back at the starting blocks?

Great minds would be able to focus on other things entirely, and the work of Sankara, Ture, X, Senghor, Nkrumah, Davis and Lorde would be redundant. They might have been able to stretch the limits of our thoughts by focusing their lifework on different things entirely—if the playing field were not so heavily tilted another way.

Perhaps, we would find joy in cooking recipes, passed down to us from generation to generation.

We'd share meals together, among neighbours, family and friends. The community would rally around those who needed support, with no one left behind to fend for themselves.

My children and their children would be treated equally, regardless of their pigment, the shade of their eyes, or the pattern of their curls. They would know a world where 'black' is not synonymous with all things bad, dirty or scary and 'white' does not only signify cleanliness, purity and angelicity.

In this blissful existence, "But what about the railways we built...?" would not be a phrase used in an attempt to wipe the slate clean, and deny or excuse hundreds of years of violence and oppression. Instead of falsely crediting other countries for the existence of infrastructure, political systems and education, we would be firmly rooted in the knowledge that communities had looked after themselves, coexisting long before the arrival of the colonisers who drew lines across maps, communities and families.

I dream of smashing status quos, and hierarchies, and classifications that were imposed on us. I dream of living in a world where no one tries to lay claim to what is not theirs; from our hairstyles and our rites and rituals to everything we hold dear.

I dream of all that was once sacred and their value measured beyond anything money could ever buy—the Rosetta Stone, Benin Bronzes, Koh-i-Noor diamond, Maqdala treasures and countless other stolen and looted artefacts—would be back where they belonged.

Beyond that, I dream of a peaceful existence that transcends language, religion and ethnicity; where we find endless peace in community.

I feel soft and warm when I think of this dreamworld that, at times, feels so out of reach. Just as the fuzziness hits my core, it gets cold and hardens again as I remember the bleakness of our current reality. I wonder if the playing field will be more equal even in the next lifetime. I feel like we are a long way from being able to do that. You cannot reform a system founded on injustice and equality; you have to dismantle it, before building it up again.

Ndéla Faye is a journalist and writer, based in Helsinki. Drawing from her own experiences, her writing often focuses on identity, culture and rootlessness; motherhood and mental health. Faye's articles have been featured in *The Guardian*, *VICE*, *Al Jazeera*, *HuffPost* and *CNN*, among other publications. She spoke on multiculturalism and being a 'Third Culture Kid' at *TedXWarwick*. She holds an MA in journalism from Birkbeck, University of London and is currently writing her debut novel.

Saray-ish soup with carrots, potatoes, chickpeas and red beans

Recipe by Vidha Saumya

I have made this soup many times, each time with a slightly new combination. In a way, it features all manner of normally undesirable ingredients. This soup especially works in those tough days when nothing works, including poetry. Relish it privately or share generously with others on their tough days.

This soup was a favourite of mine at Saray in Itäkeskus (east Helsinki, Finland). Although I don't know the exact recipe for this soup, I began making it because I remembered how good it tasted.

Prep 30 min

Cook 1 hr min

Serves 4 generously

75ml olive oil (you can use any other oil)

500 gms onions (ie, about 4-5), peeled, halved and roughly chopped

1 whole pod of garlic, peeled and roughly crushed

1 tbsp dried oregano

4-5 dried bay leaves

2 tsp whole black pepper

1/2 tsp ground turmeric

2 celery sticks, roughly chopped

3 carrots, peeled and cut into 1 1/2cm cubes

4 potatoes, peeled and cut into 2 cm cubes

250g tomato passata

1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained (240g net weight)

1 x 400 g tin red beans, drained (240g net weight)

1.5-litre vegetable stock or water

1 tsp sugar

Salt and black pepper

Garnish (individualised)

Sumac powder

Red chilli flakes

30g fresh parsely, roughly chopped

Cumin powder

Method

1. Put the oil in a large, cast-iron saucepan or soup pot on medium-high heat.
2. Once hot, add bay leaves and dried oregano. When they begin to look golden, add whole black peppercorns, onions, garlic and stir to coat them in the fat. In 2-3 minutes onions and garlic will turn translucent moving quickly to a golden colour.
3. Enjoy the aroma, then turn the heat to medium.
4. Now add chopped celery and carrots. Stir from time to time, gently but intently. Now, add turmeric, a dash of salt to release water and allow the sauteeing vegetable to get soft. Once they look joyous together, add the tomato passata, chickpeas, red beans, potatoes and water.
5. Now add salt proportionate to the soup (roughly a heaped teaspoon). Cook gently for 40 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes or so, until all vegetables in the soup are completely soft. Now add a teaspoon of sugar and a teaspoon of crushed black pepper. Mix well and remove from heat.
6. Divide the soup between bowls, garnish each with a sprinkling of sumac, red chilli flakes, fresh parsley, and Cumin powder.

Vidha Saumya (b. 1984, Patna) is a Helsinki-based artist-poet whose body of works – drawings, murals, books, poems, sculptures, embroidered textiles, videos, and digital artefacts – are wry and warm in their politics and kaleidoscopic in their aesthetics. The concept of (Home) land is at the core of her praxis. She is the co-founder and co-editor of NO NIIN – an online monthly magazine in Finland, and a founding member of the Museum of Impossible Forms – an award-winning cultural para-institution in Kontula, Finland. She has recently published a collection of seven books of poems, *Monumentless Moments: the Utopia of Figureless Plinths*. She holds a MA in Visual Culture, Curating & Contemporary Art from the Aalto University; a BFA in Painting from the Sir J. J. School of Art, and a Diploma in Visual Communication Design from Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

To dare to dream is life-sustaining

Adelaide Bannerman (AB) and Sonya Lindfors (SL)

AB: Decolonial dreaming is intentional dreaming: how to always hold on to those intentions and keep them at the forefront of your mind, particularly when other life matters or events challenge them. Maryan talked about her different selves; how she's viewed by her community, as a mother, daughter etc., and I felt that part of the dream was to be cognisant of all those roles, and the more that we choose to accept ourselves as we change through life, whilst also rejecting the projections made upon us.

SL: Ah, yes! And life often does create challenges in the way of dreaming. I think those frictions, having to oftentimes be in a reactionary position, have been central reasons to why we started with this practice in the first place.

We work as artists, creators, writers and thinkers, but the practice of dreaming, intentional dreaming as you said, dreaming of ways of existing that challenge the current oppressive structures, that surpass or go beyond our language, trying to dream of dreams that we don't know how to dream:.. it is hard work, (although also soft work :) and I really find it tricky to combine those.

We have also been talking a lot about those roles that you mentioned as well as fantasies or projections of ourselves. Who am I? Who are those selves?

I have been working with a new stage piece called camouflage, where one of the questions that we have been asking ourselves is exactly that. What is my fantasy of myself? Is there something that is in the core of Sonya?

What do I assume about myself?

AB: There's a Buddhist saying, about 'holding on to the centre'. At the end of the day that is what we have, our core, and you're right – language develops to describe things you know about yourself. You can't explain in the moment, but you realise at some point who you are and what's at stake, and instinctively begin to defend yourself against what others want to tell you about yourself.

To dare to dream is life-sustaining.

SL: Yes! Holding on to the centre. That is really interesting. I somehow feel that decolonial dreaming has been simultaneously a practice of holding on to the centre, a practice of recentering oneself, Blackness, radical self love, and dreaming of the feeling of belonging.

What if I belonged here? How would that feel? How would I feel, dance, make art, love...?

Simultaneously, I think of decolonial dreaming as a practice of decentralising, leaving the centre empty, or thinking about a polycentrality.

One of the questions we have been working with in our sessions is:

Try to imagine a space where there is no centre and no margins?

What if this would be that space?

AB: an amorphous space...?

SL: Maybe? That is the question. Our understanding of the world operates so spatially and visually. Language creates categories that have borders, and then e.g. in the world 'Finnish' or 'Artists', there is something (or someone) that somehow is more central and something that is in the margins.

Okay now this went really deep :) But we have also been trying to understand how we think, how language operates, and how to access different dreams or different realms of dreaming by playing different thought games.

Trying to imagine a room, e.g., where there is no centre and no margins. Is it an amorphous space, as you say, or could I try, instead of visualising a space or trying to understand it spatially, could I think about it temporally, or through time?

I don't know if this makes ANY sense whatsoever. But somehow these questions of centre and margins, language, and this oscillation between them (maybe actually that could be one way of not having a centre nor a margin?) have just been on our minds a lot.

AB: I believe oscillation is the key movement: stillness and observation is also part of that, too. From the centre or margin there are different sets of information to take notice of, but what is key is not occupying either: you keep moving.

SL: Yes! And then, how to actually bring that practice to our thinking and dreaming and work and life? How to create space for that oscillation, which often makes lines a bit blurry?

AB: Hard to say... For sure it's a durational act, interventions that you've already been exploring but it's also a collaborative effort that people need encouragement to inhabit psychically.

SL: Exactly.

SL: What have you been dreaming about lately? Or have you had the time/space/energy for decolonial dreaming?

AB: I would like to think that my creative practice has largely been focused on decolonial activity, I just haven't named it thus. Lately I have felt those 'ideals' challenged, co-opted, and I feel resistant. I want to stay resistant for the protection of my health and well-being. That is the dream; if it brings equity not just for myself but for those neighbouring me, it might be productive.

SL: Maybe you touched upon this with Maryan but we have been working also with the question: what would come after that? Trying to dream maybe somehow beyond...

In a time, space, world, where that equity – not just for you – but for everybody, would already happen. So a world without structural oppression, where the climate crisis would have been resolved.

What would your practice look like?

AB: Oh EASY hahahahaha! You know, a book I read a number of years ago, is a companion I keep close, by Erich Fromm and he talks about there being two modes of living in the world, 'having' and 'being'. We are living the nightmare of having and consuming, and that's what's costing us Earth and our shitty lives. The way we are going, I don't think the climate crisis will be resolvable. At best, harm might be mitigated and slowed. If we were in the 'being' mode, perhaps that is what would secure better futures for our descendents and a whole different way of critically relating to one another, which I imagine decolonial dreaming is about. We're

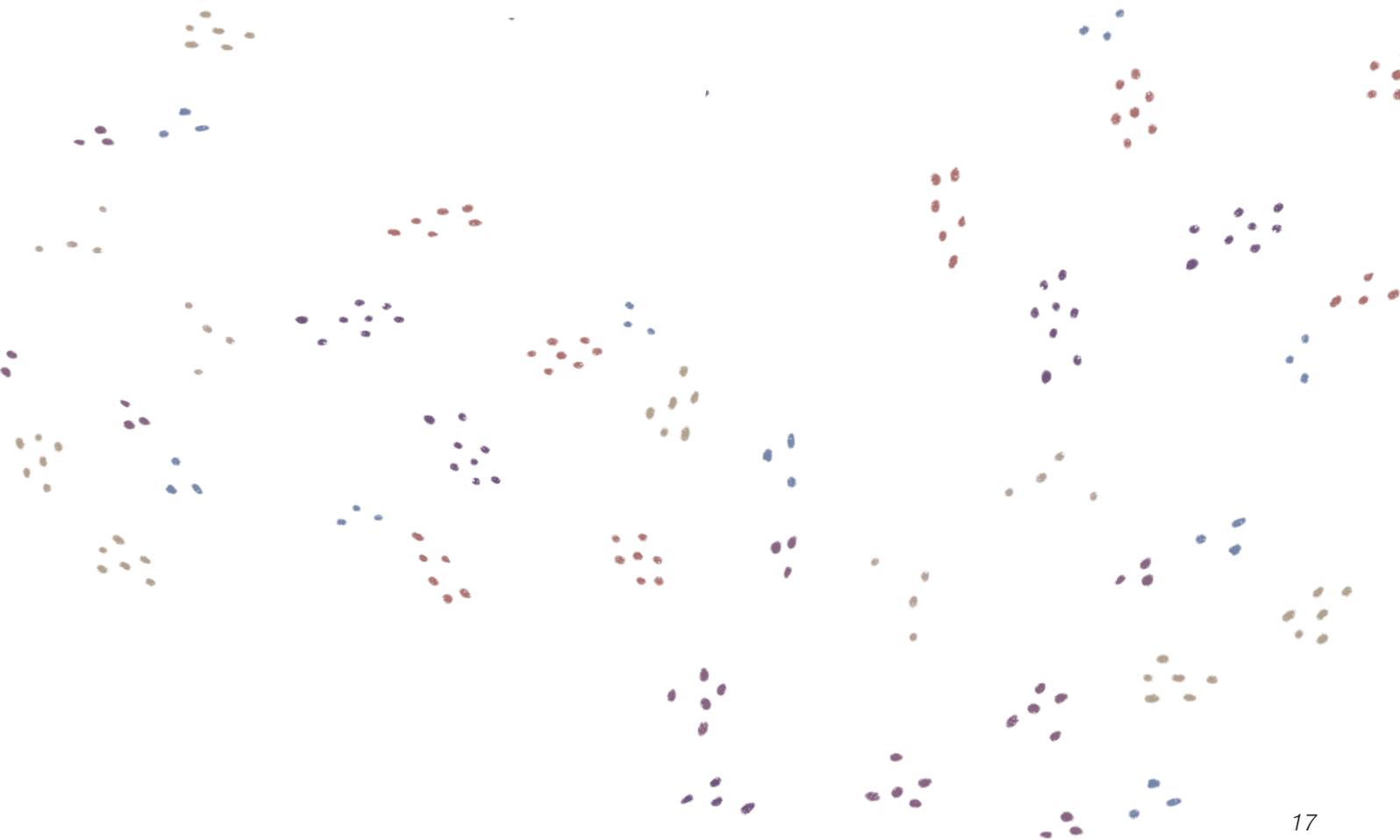
not out of the pandemic, but I've been accepting the re-wiring that's taken place within me - thinking about how sustainable are the present conditions I am willing to work with, and with whom and where. Who do I need to be in close proximity to, to share love and support. What might practice look like? I'm fortunate to be in proximity to some individuals who provide an example of how this might actively be experienced, based on permaculture principles. The work and the creativity is towards adapting, that's the art.

Adelaide Bannerman is a human being of West-African and Northern-European heritage. She is an interdependent curator in the visual arts sector, lives in London, and works internationally. She is curator at Tiwani Contemporary, a commercial gallery in London and Lagos, Nigeria that internationally represents and promotes the work of contemporary artists from Africa and its diaspora. She is associate curator with Invisible Dust, an organisation that produces arts-science collaborations. She is curator of the 2021-2022 cultural programme at Phytology Cultural Institute at the Bethnal Green Nature Reserve, London. She is a trustee of Publics, Helsinki.

<https://phytology.org.uk/>

<https://invisible dust.com/>

<https://www.tiwani.co.uk/>



How does one know they are in fact dreaming?

P. Sam Kessie (PSK), Maryan Abdulkarim (MA) and Sonya Lindfors (SL)

PSK: The idea of an utopia is the ultimate dream I think we all have individually, which connects and joins together to make a complete whole. The sum of all parts, so to speak. The way to create a dream that benefits us all, always starts with one. All is one and one is all. If each person could embody a level of love, then it would spread to their closest circles (family, friends, etc), then eventually, by each setting their own example or becoming an example of peace and love, it inspires others to follow their own path towards peace and love. Before you know it, a whole community has a new school of thought (or maybe they start to remember and re-learn a “primitive” way of expressing love). Self-love can change a whole nation if the conditions set are from a place of higher enlightenment. Children, I think, are the best at teaching us this. They still hold on to the joy and love of dreaming up new ways and new worlds. They are boundless with imagination, until society starts to tell them otherwise.

However, as one to play devil’s advocate, how does one know they are in fact dreaming?

MA: I like that thought, self love rippling over and spreading until it covers the whole ‘village’. I get the image of the sun rays in the morning spreading and pushing the night back. Beautiful. Yeah, that’s a good question. We could be asleep right now and having this conversation in a dream, or we could be awake talking about dreaming. Personally sometimes my dreams feel more real than the reality I wake up to. But what if dreaming, like breathing, is something we do, our thoughts of tomorrow or what could have been yesterday, aren’t they dreams?

PSK: I love this quote/parable.... it goes:

Once upon a time, I, Chuang Chou, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was Chou. Soon I awaked, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man.

“Between a man and a butterfly, there is necessarily a distinction. The transition is called the transformation of material things.”
Zhuang Zi

MA: Wow, that is a really nice quote, I like it!

PSK: I was introduced to this by my Tai Chi shifu. It is something that has stuck with me for sure.

The idea of self-transformation and dreaming, I believe, go hand in hand. When I started practicing Tai Chi, my view on the world changed drastically. It began with my having to let go of self-imposed burdens, not allowing my ego to control me. This is, I think, the first stage of killing one's own dream. I have been thinking about the word harmony a lot lately, too, in relationship to balance.

ML: What do you mean with the first stage of killing one's own dream?

PSK: I don't think our ego likes us dreaming too much. I mean, the way I see it, or at least how I have observed working with my ego lately, it likes to be the one in control (conscious). Our subconscious loves to be free to dream up anything it wants to. So, it's kind of a tug of war we've got going on within and outside of ourselves. It's why it's really important these days to be kind to ourselves, to help us be kind to each other.

PSK: What has been calling to me has been to dream of going on this quest of self love/self realisation. To manifest the physical reality I want. In short, dreams of creating magic from within. Dreaming of becoming my own alchemist.

SL: Ah yes!

Though the topics of desire and want are really tricky for me. What is it that I want, or what have I been socialised to want? My wants and desires are always affected by the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. So how to practice self-love while the world pushes me to aspire to white beauty standards, capitalist efficiency standards etc.

Even as an artist, it's tricky.

Realising the privileges that I have, enormous privileges, being able to work as an artist (which has been a dream of mine), but then still being hostage to this hyper capitalist art market, where artists have to constantly produce, market, be available and visible. And even in those moments when I would be financially stable, when I would have the possibility to slow down and let go, I don't know how.

So that is when I, once more, turn to dreaming practices.

Just yesterday I was asking myself, "when have I felt really really relaxed and safe?"

Have you had that feeling recently?

PSK: Yes, I have felt that, and maybe those are the very questions that come up towards self reflection and enlightenment... yesterday, I mentioned how I had been practicing Taiji and having to learn about the difference between balance and harmony. I am beginning to believe the two feed into each other, but you can never attain that perfect balance. Society has conditioned us to think we have to strive to a state of perfection. Surrendering to the inner voice, intuition, etc is the compass your higher self gives you. So when you go against your innate nature of peace and tranquility, you know. Some refer to it as the "drag". Everything is off balance, chaotic, stressful, you name it.

So as human beings the hardest thing is to recognise that tug of strings of what your heart (emotions) needs and your mind's (logic) responsibility. The self love helps the heart stay still and at peace, I think.

SL: That is beautiful. When you spoke about the chaos and imbalance (sounds like my life) I also started to think about something you said in our first session. About how our wants and needs are conditioned. And we really need some deep soul searching, practicing and dreaming to surrender to that inner voice.

I would love to know how intuition, the inner voice and also dreaming are present in your work. You talked about your work (with the avatar auditioning for the dancer) and that really stayed with me.

PSK: Thank you. I have always tried to be an observer and had a strong sense of intuition. Somewhere along the way I lost this "gift" when, I believe, I got caught up with the world's

problems and got drawn into the deep pessimism of not being good enough. It's how one loses themselves. It gets hella dangerous when you start to tell yourself this and believe it. Anyway... a few years ago, I started to question my existence and my true authenticity, and realized I wasn't living and speaking my truth anymore. I honestly cared too much about what people would think of who I was and this had begun to affect my work. Say hello to imposter syndrome. Grad school hit worse. So the film I had once dreamed up and created reappeared as *A Mirror Perfected*, based on my observations of how and what most of us dreamed of within the virtual social media world and how it interacted with our physical one. I also realised as I wasn't loving and being my authentic self, I wasn't dreaming. Both subconsciously and consciously. Literally, I could no longer remember my dreams ... I was unbalanced in so many ways. What changed things was when I realised I needed to stop trying to control everything in my life...it was only then that my inner voice and intuition started to wake up. I began to let go of so many habits and conditions of thought that went against my inner voice. My intuition was screaming at me to wake up. I needed to remember my purpose and it was through the act of dreaming. My purpose in recreating my dreams and observations is to share with the collective as bodies of created art.

MA: I love the view regarding self love and listening to one's inner voice. How do we do that collectively, though?

PSK: Collectively it comes from, I would propose, through sharing experiences and works on platforms and groups like these. I mentioned how much I love the philosophy of The Nap Ministry because their message is so simple. Rest is important. Especially for the black community. For my part, I hope to share my experiences through my writing and using cinematic tools to share visual stories in communities. It's a way to wake people up in order to get them to dream and create again...

SL: To find our ways and paths back to dreaming...That is a dream on its own.



P. Sam Kessie is an American-based Ghanaian-British writer, film/video maker, body-movement artist, and educator. Her work often employs cinema, performance, and speculative fiction to investigate intersectional identities in social class, power, and gender. Her hybrid style of writing blends fiction, memoirs, and daily observations to address the relationship between humans and technology. Using ritual acts to recreate myths is her authentic way of portraying and expressing her understanding of mental health, especially on screen. Obsessed with intimacy, desire, and transcendence, Kessie's work compels the body to act as the encounter between interior and exterior. She seeks to express self-transformation by following raw, fractured, and wounded characters using cinematic tools and body language to share a visceral experience.

An alumna of the Berlinale Talent Campus, Kessie has participated with her upcoming feature debut screenplay, formally titled 'Unbalanced', at Produce au Sud Script Studio, Open Doors Co-production Market, and Durban FilmMart. She has exhibited her moving image works at the National Geographic Society, Carthage Film Festival, Iowa Public Access Television, American Dance Festival, Dance on Camera Festival co-presented by Film at Lincoln Center, the Carnegie Museum of Art, and the Museum of Impossible Forms in Finland.

Kessie lives and produces work across the USA, Ghana and parts of Europe. Currently based in Southern California, she continues experimenting with unconventional ideas to explore an understanding of mental health and self-liberation from a marginalized point of view through her production company, Sankofa Pictures.



Decolonial dreaming – death dreams

Ama Josephine Budge

I've always romanticised the notion of an obituary

To sit down upon a morning

over coffee and eggs

or oatmeal

Or cigarettes and cod liver oil -

To open up the last Newspaper on earth who could still afford to print pages on real actual paper

From actual dead trees

Dead

Pulped

Porous

Memories

Painted over with stiffly deciphered fake news in a prudish font

To spend the hour pouring over election campaign tactics

Another embarrassingly low football score

And the six foot long marrow grown by

Margery of Kent

All whilst the weak tea cools to a flaccid clime
and you belatedly realise you're out of teabags

Only to stumble at last upon the obituaries

- a morbid addiction -

But in place of the familiar endorphin rush

- oh the wonderous fuckery of being alive to right the wrongs of the world, to send the emails, to kiss the butches, to fuck the systems this or that poor sod can no longer attempt, the second chances at greatness you pour into the great sack of your body, a reason to get up in the morning, only to find yourself all spilled out again, leaking and threadbare at the end of the day -

A knee right to the vulva, a gut punch where your superiority used to be

A familiar name in the place of a stranger

Perhaps a lover, or colleague or university lecturer

Someone you got high with when you were fourteen and lived in the countryside for a year

- You know they'd remember you because you were the only Black kid in the school -

An old friend you fell out with over a poorly written email, or a drunken racial slur neither of you could quite get over.

Or even – best of all – the love of your small, intense life, who was only waiting for a child to grow up, or a promotion to be had, or a spouse to pass away before declaring their undying love for you after all this time and wooing you with French pastry and jerk chicken patties

Only now it's all too late.

I used to fantasise about obituaries – their ephemeral possibilities

That I'd have done enough of my part to change something in this world that White Supremacy literally could not have more royally fucked for all living things including eventually itself, that I'd get a whole picture printed in a small box of black and white

- I know obituaries are mostly done online now, but in my dreams there is no internet, only fat unwieldy blocks of mobile phone technology, because did romance ever really evolve after the 90's? -

I used to dream about worlds where words festered and bloomed out of nothing but a "healthy imagination"

I used to write with generosity

And a desire to connect with others

Lacing every syntax with carefully hand-laid blood vessels

Like the veiny writing on love heart candies

I used to write in dreams

Rather than armour

Laced with potential

Rather than pain

Rather than exhaustion

I used to romanticise the notion of an obituary

To be read by those that had loved me

I used to dream of being loved

Wanted

Cherished

Of being important

Of changing – something

- anything really –

For the better

I used to dream of making worlds

Now I just dream of being here

A Black, queer, lesbian artist

Becoming an elder of the field in my 30's

I dream of being here

Long enough to grow old

Long enough to grow wise

Long enough to be accountable for my fuck-ups

Long enough to evolve

Long enough to infuriate and inspire a whole host of baby queers

A Black brood who too will do more than simply survive

I dream of being here long enough for printing presses to stop printing on paper

So that my name must be whispered and savoured

Held under the tongue like scotch bonnet communions

To bite

And sting

And be remembered

By descendants who are not born tired

I dream of being an ancestor

With a face more cracked and wrinkled than an ashy elbow

I dream of wanting each day, not only the desperate hopes of tomorrow

I dream of doing so, so much more, than any obituary could contain

And I also dream of doing nothing

Just breathing

Deep

and

Full

Of

Just

Being

Here

And that being enough.

Ama Josephine Budge / Ama Josephine B. Johnstone is a Speculative Writer, Artist, Curator and Pleasure Activist. She is a PhD Candidate, Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck who's research is focused on "Pleasurable Practices for Climate Colonialism Resistance" (2018-2022). Ama is also the Planetary Fictions Fellow researching Pleasurable Ecologies - Curation as Future Building (2020 - 2022) with Curatorial Frame (Helsinki) & EVA International (Limerick); and the Keith Haring Fellow in Art and Activism (2020-21) with Bard College's Centre for Curatorial Studies & Human Rights Department.

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Trying to dream what we can't yet dream of dreaming

Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (SMK), Maryan Abdulkarim (MA) and Sonya Lindfors (SL)

SMK: A lot of things I'm dreaming about are also about a feeling – the feeling of being secure, in many different senses – but more than just safe, something deeper, and more permanent.

I've been thinking about just how profoundly impacted our nervous systems are by us not feeling safe in the world. And as much as we might be able to mask or survive it on the outside, on the inside, our bodies literally do “keep the score” as the title of that book goes. But yeah, also thinking about the type of care we can show each other and how to make each other feel that, despite the larger systemic un-care/care-lessness/negligence etc that we face.

MA: That's true, the body does remember and react and I suppose constant fear is trauma in itself. How do you think care alleviates or helps?

SMK: I suppose care is about creating the conditions for another person/people (or actually also yourself) to feel supported? Or to feel seen? Or to feel that their pain, or their wounds are valid. And creating the conditions (with the capacity we have) to alleviate and tend to that (lots of my thinking and wording around this is inspired by Azeezat Johnson, a fellow member of the GEM Collective).

I guess it's sort of like, whilst we push for system-change and world-change, we also have the ability to create worlds within worlds, where through e.g. sharing labour, we create capacity for someone to rest; or through sharing stories and love, we create capacity/conditions for someone to feel seen and heard and validated... it's weird, because in words, those sound like small things but I think they're actually really important... it's hard to almost describe what care is. What do you think?

MA: Thank you for that, now I understand. I was thinking “how does care help, if it's state violence that causes fear?”, but you're right, of course. The things you mention I imagine would help.

I think care is as you've described many things, but it ultimately comes from a place of love and will to nurture.

SMK: I completely agree. I think it can be derided as something so small because it's often such a gendered concept, and care-work also so often falls to women of colour in particular, or migrant and precarious women around the world. But care and its root, love, are actually a powerful force in themselves.

When I think about it, I actually think that resisting state violence, or resisting capitalist violence (both being interlinked/inseparable of course), also has to come FROM a place of care. Like resistance is the manifestation OF love in many ways. It is because we love, and care and feel deeply that everyone deserves a world in which we FEEL cared and are cared for, not maimed and harmed and violated, that we resist, too. I think... at least to a degree.

MA: In a world where you would feel safe, what would you do? Who would you be?

SMK: Wow. That question made me let out a sigh! I think I would be so much bigger, louder, fuller... I'm not sure what it would even look like. I would leave the house without worries, I would feel able to walk wherever I want at whatever time, or to take up whatever space I felt I wanted to. I think I could spend more time thinking about all the things I wish I knew more about like learning about things, or, like cooking, or laughing...

It's actually weirdly difficult to imagine because I think so much of how I act in the world is predicated on unsafety. What would you do? Who would you be?

MA: Subhanallah, this is insane but yes, that's what I think too. I would be bigger, louder, fuller :) I feel caged in some ways by the world in which I live, and the body, and all the things that come with it, and I think it makes me MAKE myself smaller to fit in. So yeah, I'd definitely be bigger, I'd write fictional stories about happy people because that would be something I could totally do, and maybe gardening... or then I would try painting.

SMK: That's sort of devastating to hear and also exciting at the same time. Like, thinking about the ways we make ourselves small to keep ourselves safe, but knowing that sacrifices so much of who we could be, or all that we might be (again, a phrase I borrow from Azeerat Johnson).

I love the notion of writing more fiction, too. I think in that world, I'd also feel so much less of a burden to "get it right" when I speak or write on something. I'd feel it's more okay to mess up, to be a little bit self-indulgent and not feel that your words will be read "on behalf of" anyone, or that you have the task of making sure you write with as much nuance as possible, or represent a character with as much nuance as possible, just so that nobody can misinterpret or project onto it. I feel, in a world of safety, those worries wouldn't be there so we could all be so much more creative!

MA: YES!!! Yeah, I really have nothing more to add to that. I just strongly agree.

SMK: Haha, I'm also sensing something in what you said about time... as in, there is a sense that in our current world there is a connection between not being safe and having a lack of access to time to do the things we want. I'm not sure what you think about that? Like, if we weren't splitting our time between trying to be safe, and e.g. selling our labour/time to pay for roofs over our head and food etc, then we would also have more time. I'm not sure where I'm going with that, but just something that you wrote made me think about.

MA: Well, at least the Western conception of time and its connection to capitalism can create a situation in which you keep reliving the same day, i.e. you wake up, work, do chores, go to sleep, wake up, and repeat, and as the labour gets more emotionally draining there is less capacity for thinking/dreaming/doing anything else.

SMK: Western notions of time are also inherently secular in our "modern" world. And I think about the way that actually that cycle is disrupted even by the idea of e.g. a day revolving around five prayer times, right? As though in doing that, we recentre something other than capital. AND we create space or capacity in the day for a type of dreaming, I think – because prayer is a type of hope/ask that is really about what we believe to be possible, and asking even for what we believe might be impossible – because outside of secular time, the impossible is so much more achievable.

SL: One of the best things about these sessions has been to just have time to think and dream collectively. These kinds of moments seem so scarce in our everyday lives, even though one would think that should be the core.

SMK: Yeah, for sure, this is a great technique. We're often so time-poor with other things going on that we don't have the chance for this.

I've been thinking about the gap between what we dream and what we do, and how we might lessen/shorten it. As in, what I said earlier about theoretically knowing how toxic and unhealthy norms of productivity are, but also in dreaming of another world, still holding my body to account by this world's toxic standards, if that makes sense? Thinking about how to shorten the distance between my embodied reality and the dreams.

SL: Yes! We have been working with the exact same things. I come from choreography and dance, so in our dreaming sessions (the live ones that we had before covid) we were working with speculative body practices. Asking questions like:

What would my body feel like, if I were free? How would I breathe? How could I talk about my own body as I would talk about a loved one's body? How would I touch my body if I would touch it like I touch the body of a loved one?

And then, not merely thinking and imagining those things, but also spending time with them, working through them as body practices. These kinds of practices have given me a lot of space. And hope.

The potentiality of speculation is real. Being able to dream of things that we don't yet know how to dream of. To go through things that are not yet possible, but then try to still live through them.

SMK: Wow!

That sounds amazing. I would love to experience that sort of session with you in person one day, maybe! But I have been doing a lot of thinking in parallel to the sorts of things you've mentioned there, and thinking in particular about how we've trained ourselves to "cut off" from our bodies in order to hope that others will "see" us solely for our "minds". Or to "overlook" our bodies as "hindrances" to our knowledge. Which is so sad, and the effects of which we are now trying to undo. So I love the way you begin the questioning with what the BODY would feel like in freedom. I think that's such an exciting way to think about questions that we often contain, or limit to the mind-space.

SL: Yes!

In another discussion that I had with a Black queer friend of mine, they were describing how Black and Brown bodies in the Western narratives do not feel pain. Or feel less pain. Because they are seen as less human.

We are seen as less human.

And I was thinking about all the different times I have suppressed my body's signals, because I've learnt that I have to be twice as good and strong as my white peers. It's heartbreaking how we have learnt to constantly marginalise our own bodies, push our needs aside. All the layers of internalised racism, misogyny and other forms of oppression. The combination of that all is, well, deadly.

Oppression really permeates everything. Our breathing, how we treat ourselves, how we touch our bodies. Is there space for pleasure? Are there spaces where our bodies can really relax, like really, really relax? And since it is often not possible in the everyday, I tend to turn to art and artistic practices.

SMK: Ahh ok! So much is coming to mind as you write! What you just said is so... painful, but so true. A Black friend of mine was talking about – it's connected to an Audre Lorde quote which I can never remember specifically – the idea of self-neglect also as a form of continuing the brutalisation the world already does of her.

Mmmm, “are there spaces where our bodies can really relax”, is such a key question. A friend of mine is a visual artist (Alaa Alsaraji) and recently ran an exhibition called Spaces of Sanctuary, where she basically interviewed Muslim people around London and asked them simply what space they felt safe in, and then she illustrated the spaces. It was so simple, but so beautiful, and I think in each case it was clear that safety and the body feeling tension-free were so connected.

I love the idea of turning to art and artistic practices as ways to also resist the violence.

SL: I love the name, Spaces of Sanctuary :) And with Maryan, we have been really trying to work in this in-between space of art and activism, speculative dreaming as a radical decolonial subversive practice, trying to imagine ways of being and existing that are not mere survival but something beyond. And then trying to really embody that.

For me, that is what is so magical about making art. It is both fictional and real at the same time. Dreaming is powerful. If you e.g. go through a body practice where you try to imagine what freedom would feel like, that moment really becomes a part of your lived life, your lived

experience. You lived through that! Even if it was fictional, even if you still don't really know what freedom feels like, you dreamt of feeling it. You have some kind of a feeling or hunch of what it could feel like.

SMK: I really love that and feel it's so under-appreciated as a necessary part of our work with activism and everything else.

I feel like poetry and metaphor really help me in that way. But I definitely want to think about pairing that with body practice and writing out the exact sensations that safety would feel like.

SL: How to practice deep listening, both to oneself and the world.

SMK: And to each other!

SL: But yeah, we have been working a lot with questions, and also with impossible questions. Maybe Maryan shared with you earlier the Sun Ra quote that has been guiding us:

The possible has been tried and failed, now it is time to try the impossible.

SMK: You said this one in our meeting. I LOVED it! So true and so exciting in all that it holds!

SL: Yes, so we have been working with questions like:

Try to imagine a space where there is no center and no margins.

What if this were that space?

What if we would have the concept of an individual "I"? What if I would always include those around us, people, animals, plants, other living and non-living things?

How would our thinking change? How would the no-longer-I, but the "we" operate?

SMK: These are such beautiful questions.

Wow, I imagine that would have such a significant impact on the answers you thought about. Even if we take a “simple” question regarding “if you woke up tomorrow and everything in the world had changed in the ways you believe it should, what would that look like?” – when “I” is not just “me”, that suddenly creates a whole range of priorities that is just... exciting!

I’m just quite wowed by this.

SL: No, I do think it is amazing as well!

This practice has given us a lot of life and joy and also space.

Things are only impossible until they no longer are.

SMK: In itself, that is also so beautiful too, right? Joy...

For sure, the impossible should always be followed up with questions such as “according to who?”, right? Because our realities are often “unimaginable” to the hegemonic imaginary already. So if our lives, our realities, our bodies, our loves, our joys, our ways of resisting, our care, etc... are already unimaginable/impossible, then I feel like we already have the advantage of knowing that the impossible is only termed as such. It is really at our finger-tips already.

SL: Exactly. Another colleague of mine (by the way, we have a lot of amazing people around us, such a blessing) talks about weak structures, invisible structures, unrecognisable structures, that don’t have words, terms, language to describe them, and are thus rendered invisible.

SMK: I love the notion of the unrecognisable. This reminds me of something I once read about resistance and organising, and how so many of our communities of colours’ forms of organising/resisting have gone unacknowledged due to being unrecognisable or illegible to a white imaginary.

But I love the notion that you’re implying that we can also play with the invisible to our own benefit. In building the GEM collective (<http://gemcollective.org/>), we’ve been thinking a lot about how to build collectivity without replicating the sorts of structures that we see around us. We were speaking about the collective like a tent – but then realising we don’t want to be a tent at all, we want to just lie under the stars, and that may not be seen as a collective, but

there is collectivity that we want to think through that is less legible.

So I love what your friend has said! These are all such rich ideas and provocations.

SL: How to dream of a collectivity which is not the kind of collectivity that comes from oppressive white patriarchy?

Sometimes I try to do this with art projects. Not trying to make a work that looks like the works that we know (as in not trying to replicate how we understand e.g. a contemporary dance piece, or what is recognised as a good contemporary dance piece) but trying to approach the process through speculative questions.

I made a performance called Cosmic Latte in 2018 and the framing question was:

It is year 3018, there is no longer racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, nor any other oppressive structures. We have moved beyond capitalism and the climate crisis has been resolved. What kind of work would a group of Black makers do then? What would we do with the stage? What kind of dances would we dance?

It was so hard at first, we really had to stay with the practice of trying to dream of things that we don't know yet how to dream of, but still practicing that dreaming.

So basically it was dreaming of dreaming of dreaming.

SMK: Wow, that's actually so fascinating!

I sometimes facilitate poetry workshops and I like to pose this question or this scenario where – because I feel a lot of us feel we can only write “in response” to the violence that we face, or we can only name ourselves through it – a scenario where I basically ask what terms they would describe themselves with if they were just born today, and so, e.g. had no knowledge of the structures they're seen/read/racialised/gendered/etc through.

And it's so fascinating, because people also really struggle to even know how to see themselves or perceive themselves/ourselves beyond the terms of a colonial world-system that has already named us before we get to name ourselves.

So I can totally imagine your performance sounds incredibly challenging but such a vital space to move in and it's exactly that.

Trying to dream what we can't yet dream of dreaming.

It reminds me of, or seems to also mirror, this historian who says that we cannot remember what we cannot remember, which is part of the pain/violence of coloniality.

SL: Ah yes, I truly felt that. All the histories, experiences, narratives, dances, poems, songs that have been erased and forgotten.....

Whose words are we using to describe ourselves? Why are we always referred to in relation to whiteness and coloniality? When we actually began this practice with Maryan in 2018, I was at first, really devastated to realise how racism had played such a huge part in the way I identified myself. It was really heartbreaking....

SMK: Exactly! No, I completely hear that. And it's a pain that I think we continue to sit with even though doing our best to try to re-assert who we are on our own terms.

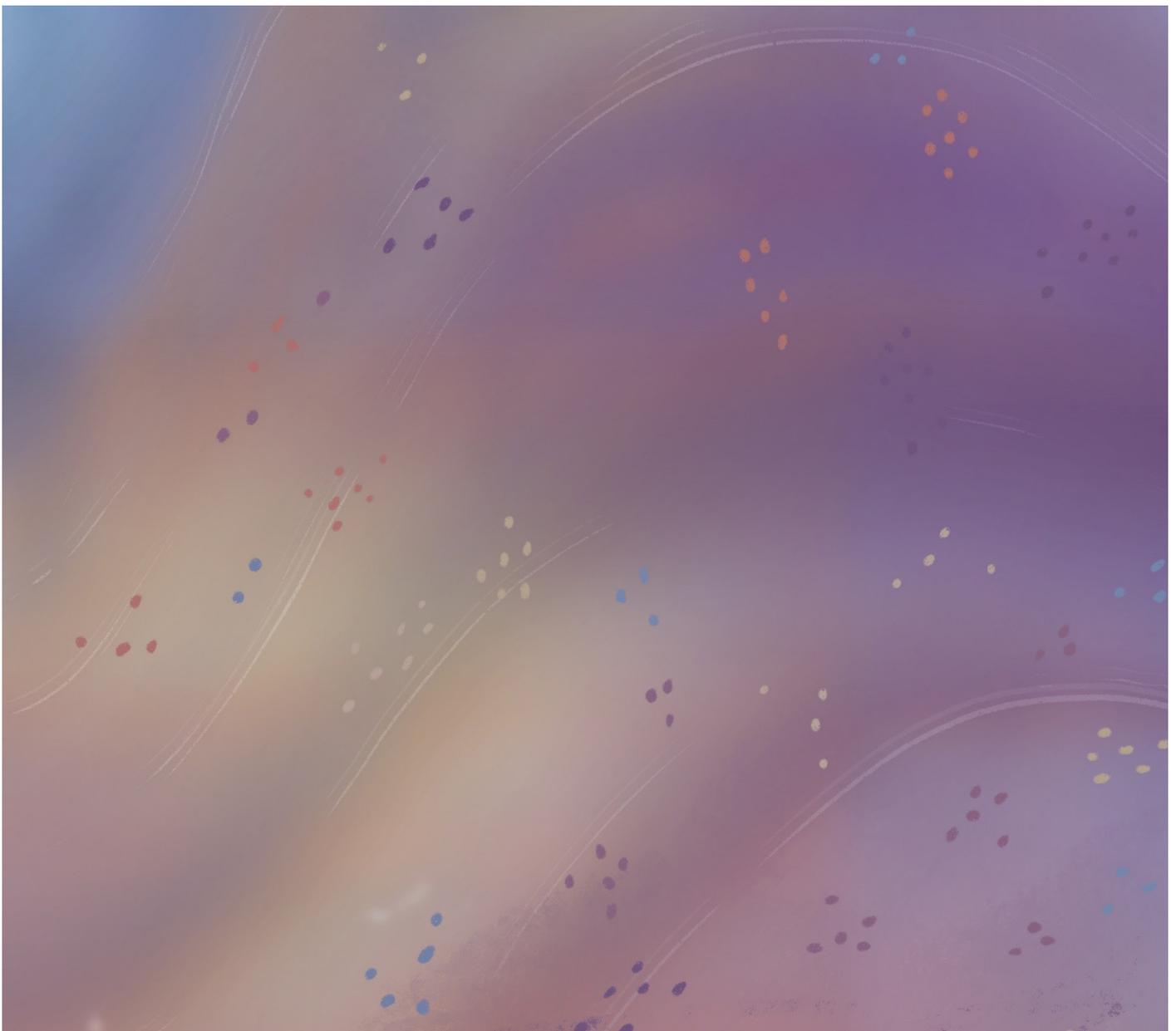
I made a performance back in 2019, actually, called *The End of Diaspora* which was about sort of thinking beyond ourselves/myself as always "from" elsewhere – not in a way of trying to claim, or hoping to claim the British nation state (ew), but more in a sense of asking, "When do we get to stop being obsessed with/forced to obsess over belonging to land, but at the same time get to have love and nostalgia for it?" I don't know, it's tricky, but it was one of those questions that I also felt was so difficult to separate from the fact that we have only learnt to identify ourselves through otherness and racism. So I hear you!

SL: Yes! And that is, of course, the challenge with dreaming. Once we leave this writing session and go out to the world, or once we leave the theater space, we are immediately "put back in our places" with constant microaggressions (or MACROaggressions).

So there is a lot of friction... on so many levels.

SMK: For sure :/ for sure... but I take hope and courage from the fact that we ARE still dreaming – so many of us, separately and together and known and unknown to one another, that really heartens me <3

Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan is a writer, poet and educator disrupting understandings of history, race, knowledge and violence. She works to equip herself and others with the tools and faith to resist these unlivable conditions and work towards another reality. Suhaiymah is co-author of *A Fly Girl's Guide to University* (Verve Poetry Press, 2019), author of *Postcolonial Banter* (Verve Poetry Press, 2019), and *Tangled in Terror: Uprooting Islamophobia* (Pluto Press, forthcoming 2022), as well as host of the *Breaking Binaries* podcast (currently on hiatus). She has essays in *I Refuse To Condemn* (Manchester University Press, 2020) and *Cut From The Same Cloth?* (Unbound, 2021) and has written for *The Guardian*, *Independent*, *Al-Jazeera*, and *gal-dem*. Suhaiymah's poetry has millions of views online and has featured across radio and TV stations. She was the National Roundhouse Poetry Slam runner-up in 2017 and is currently a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Geography at Queen Mary University of London (2020-2022) and Writer in Residence at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (2021-2022). She has written plays for *The Royal Court* and other theatres and is currently under commission with *Kiln Theatre* and *Freedom Studios*. Suhaiymah is also an active member of the Geographies of Embodiment (GEM) research collective.



What kind of society do we want to live in?

Veronica McKenzie (VM), Maryan Abdulkarim (MA) and Sonya Lindfors (SL)

VM: I am thinking about a time I felt part of UK society. When Labour won the general election, it felt like we were a country that was very united with black people, the LGBTQ+ etc, all celebrating this win. We thought we were on the verge of a new – almost utopia! The promises the politicians made and the general mood was upbeat and optimistic. We had a lot of faith in the system. We thought big changes were ahead. That was 1997.

Looking back, I can see how we were overly optimistic. We wanted the dream. More recently, that vision has turned sour. I wonder what it would be like to have an equal society that lasts?

MA: 1997 is a while ago.

VM: Yes. It was the last time it felt like the UK was a positive place, outside of the Olympics in 2012.

MA: What changed? I mean, if people felt united and there was change that brought faith and sense of unity...I wonder, what happened to bring division and uncertainty?

VM: It's hard to say. It was a slow process. Firstly, the newspapers started to change. I think it took a few years. I think the government taking us to war with Iraq was a turning point. Over a million people marched, but the government didn't listen. I think people started to get disillusioned about the country. I felt so let down, as this government was supposed to be the people's government. So many of us started to feel out of step once again. I think marginalised communities started to feel the effects of cuts as services were cut. For me, as a creative, I started to write about the history of the black community to find stories about unity.

ML: To go back to your question about what it would be like to have an equal society, I think

it would be built on trust and solidarity, but I haven't seen or experienced one yet, so I can only imagine. The war in Iraq – and later, Afghanistan – was a moment in history for western societies (and the world, I suppose) that caused a lot of friction. Writing the stories about black communities and unity, what have you discovered?

VM: I think that war was the first time we, as individuals, started to see the 'machinery of war' and the disregard and different ways that humanitarian causes were stated. We saw how some people were worth 'rescuing' and others left to suffer. In trying to find stories about activists who had campaigned for change, I discovered people like Olive Morris, Dennis Carney, and others who started black women's groups, black LGBTQ+ groups and cooperative movements to challenge how society is formed. I mean, they wanted to put in place an idea of what equality looks like. An example is how the growth in the cooperative and squatting movements meant homelessness was less of an issue, and the focus on community encouraged more inclusivity.

MA: That sounds inspiring.

SL: How to recreate that today, how to get the sense of a "we". What kind of tools or practices would we need?

VM: I know that there are small groups of people who are trying to form cooperatives and communal living communities. This is partly a reaction to very high living costs, but also a response to the individualisation of every aspect of life. So, I've seen that by starting with fundamental questions such as, "does everyone want to live alone or in a nuclear couple?" That is pushed as an ideal here but many people, especially the young are rejecting that. Likewise, the job market is changing, with many people working freelance and exchanging services. That is also a reflection of the growing 'gig economy', which has a negative side. I'm not sure, but I do believe the first thing we need to ask is what kind of society we want to live in, and how?

SL: YES! And then, when different people have different needs, how do we try to dream of an inclusive "we", and have a sense of a community where there is space for diversity? But I totally agree with everything you said, that the realities that fellow freelance colleagues are going through, with the increasing individualisation, gig economy, higher living costs, competition, and the neoliberal meritocratic narratives (e.g. that one could overcome depression or racism with mindfulness)... It really doesn't encourage a sense of we.

VM: That's a really crucial point. It's a fallacy that if everyone has access to the same tools, then their lives can be improved. This doesn't take into account structural issues, and so it's framed as a lack of will or drive in the individual. Such a good point, Sonya. It reminds me of that famous image of a row of people looking over a fence. Some people have short steps, and others have a long ladder, so of course they can reach the fruit!

SL: Yes, I remember seeing that image. But Veronica, coming back to the question that you posed earlier.

What kind of society would you want to live in, and how? And how concrete do we need to be? How wide can we imagine or dream? That moment that you were describing in the late nineties, when you felt utopia could be close. Was there a concrete and articulated wish, or was it just a feeling?

VM: The UK had been through a recession. I think the reality was that it was the last time that things such as student grants were readily available, so anyone could go to study. Housing was available and cheap. There was an air of optimism. I think I felt that the spectres of racism, sexism and homophobia were receding, in that a lot of work had been done by activists in the late eighties and the pushback was over. There was a willingness to accept people who were part of different 'tribes', so socially we had people grouped round different music, etc, as usual but there was no nastiness about the other. Maybe I didn't feel as 'othered' as I had been, so felt that change was coming.

SL: Ahhh... Hope! Having basic things, access to housing, being able to study. Not having to use energy on those things... People would maybe have more space and tolerance for frictions, diversity and difference... Like Lauryn Hill says :) It's funny how money changes a situation.

VM: Yes! Bus fares were cheap! So people could go out and get a night bus home. Little things like that made life so much easier. Over time, every element has been squeezed. I think we used to live and let live. There was no media or social media to drive hate and division, so maybe a concrete step forward would be to stop fake news. We had the space to dream and now people are working to survive. Different energy.

SL: That is exactly what this project is somehow about. Trying to create that space for dreaming, create space and air there where there is none. And it is really tricky.

VM: There used to be physical spaces where I felt free, accepted and safe. I don't know if they still exist. Within the family unit, when we are reminiscing, that's a comfortable feeling. Safe. But I feel so much has been pulled away and corporatised. Nowadays, it's only in friend's houses. Saying that feels sad! Because that is a major change in society. Do you have safe spaces?

SL: No, not that many. As you say, within my family (or some of my family members), in some friends' houses, but most of the spaces I work in are predominantly white. Also, living in Finland as a Black person is just a constant struggle. A few years ago, in a report, Finland was listed as the most racist country towards Black folks in the EU.

But I feel these dreaming sessions, really trying to imagine how I would feel, how would I breathe, how would my body feel, or who would I be if I would really feel safe and free.

I try to imagine myself floating in warm sea water, sun shining on my skin, feeling light and held. Or imagining my toes in warm sand. Trying to relax my nervous system... Even though the actual spaces are often not safe, art and dreaming and dancing can sometimes make me feel safe.

VM: I can imagine being in a situation like yours. Living in a predominantly white environment, with little regard for true diversity or acknowledging your particular experience is an added level of stress which is always there at a low level. That in itself would be heavy, so I can see how dreaming of lifting this cloak of 'other' would be liberating! I know it feels heavy even here where we are more diverse. Dreaming is the space where we are not looked at. Almost being able to just go about our business without anyone staring at us, or noticing me or looking closely in that way of scrutinising – like looking for fault.

MA: The safest and most loved I've ever felt was with my grandma. So I try to go back to that, how she looked at me, hugged me.

VM: I loved my family kitchen. It reminds me of big family gatherings. Recently I went to visit my aunt in New York. I hadn't seen her for years and it was my first time in NY. As soon as I walked into her kitchen, I became so emotional because all the smells and furniture was just like home.

SL: Sounds so lovely... Our dreaming often starts from an impossible task, a "what if?" question.

So now I would like to ask you, Veronica: what if you would feel safe and free? What if the world was (as we talked a bit last time) one without structural oppression, without racism, sexism, classism etc. The climate crisis would have been resolved and we would have moved beyond capitalism.

What would you do? Or how would you do it? Would you still make art? Oh, and where would you be? :)

VM: Absolutely! I make art because of, and also despite, the society I exist in. If free from oppression, I would make art about how we can connect differently based on our spiritual needs and our interests. Everyone would have the time and space to explore their own creativity, because I believe we all have something inside us that we can contribute. There's a famous saying about the number of dreams in the cemetery because people don't get the chance. It's seen as a privilege to be creative but it shouldn't be – we are all co-creators of this world, ideally...we could have time to just stare at the sky and see what comes:)

SL: Ah, just reading this gives me so much joy! We have been thinking about this as well... or dreaming :) that maybe there wouldn't be a separate profession for artists any more, because everyone would be expressing themselves. Everyone would have that space and encouragement to explore and create... Yes, and just stare at the sky <3

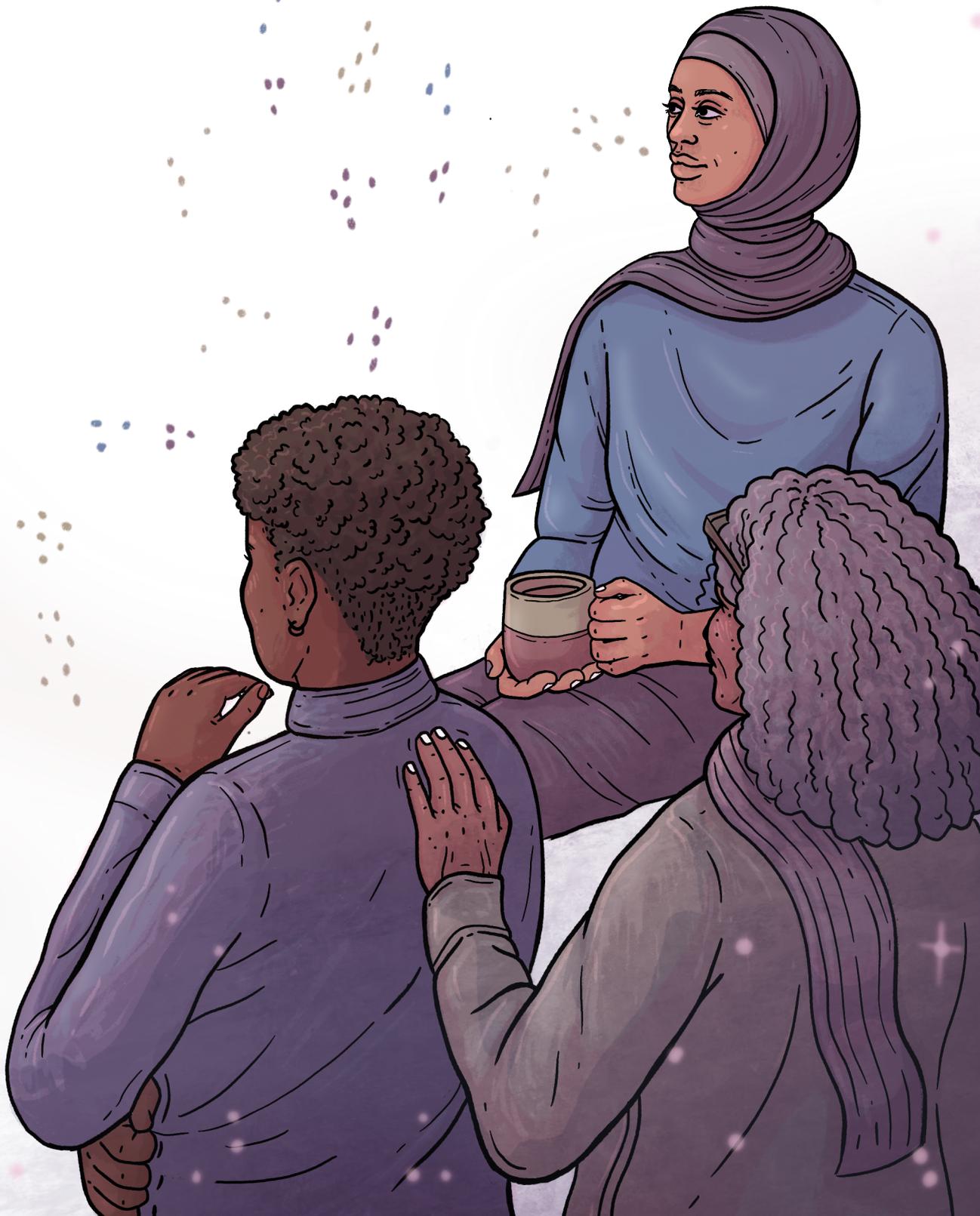
VM: And feel accepted.

SL: I think that is really vital. Coming back from that dream to this world, I often wonder how we could practice accepting each other with all our differences. Really trying to build a 'we' that can be a diverse, polycentral and polyphonic we? How could that be practiced or built? (maybe this comes back to what we were talking about the separation taking place right now)

MA: I think acceptance of others is connected to accepting ourselves, the more we know ourselves and are at peace the easier it is to accept and allow space to others, and this society doesn't support self love, so I guess it goes back to love of self.

VM: Great point, Maryan – this society and capitalist societies actively work against self love because we need to be made to feel 'in need of' something that will fix/improve our lives. So if we practice self love it means we may spend less money and time on distractions and instead just chill with each other and talk and learn from each other.

Veronica McKenzie is a writer, director, curator, and budding historian. Her work includes 'UNDER YOUR NOSE' (2017) about UK's black LGBTQ+ history and 'NINE NIGHTS' which won the Pan African Film Festival Narrative Feature Director Award 2019 and is currently on Amazon. Veronica has just completed *HARINGEY VANGUARD* a 2 year funded BAME LGBTQ+ history project in partnership with the London Metropolitan Archives. She is currently developing several film and TV projects.



What if, sometimes, I just want to give in?

SERAFINE1369

I use my dream log as an oracular tool for reflection and insight - into now and the before and after - assessing the somatic and psychic resonances of the things that surface or connect there in my subconscious. The dream log asks for more sleep and shatters any illusion of sleep as rest, of dreaming as fantasy. Rest is maybe what comes next.

What follows are fragments of dream journeys and visions from November 2020. I am taking this invitation as one to reflect on, and to look below, things that rise to the surface, as a practice towards wilfully dragging myself into my own present. What are the conditions needed to feel safe or protected enough to imagine something not rooted in fear and anxiety? What do the things that haunt me in dreams have to say about my environment and the ways the values of society can take root within me?

November in the northern hemisphere is a time of ghosts and haunting and loss and transformation. Karmic amplifications.

Part I

Navigating intimacy. Sensation of standing left foot slightly to the side on a trampoline-like surface and someone is tracing their finger from the top front of my head along the central line to the back of my head, repeatedly. I can hear the sound of my hair under their finger. This feels so good. My face is touching some leaves of a small tree in front of me but I don't move.

They say that Wednesday is Mercury's day, the planet of communication and ideas, travel, contact. This touch that describes my cranium feels like a gift and I wonder about being divided in two. I think about Patti Smith singing-speaking about his hands inside her cranium - tender openings, internal subtle trembling of relation. A proximity that asks me to be still and to feel movement rather than to do it, enact it, make it happen. Forces acting on me - is this receiving? What are the messages?

My flatmate has had a party without letting me know. In the night, as I was sleeping, three women tried to make their way into my bed. I am furious and scared and annoyed and also just tired. I feel myself drawing my body to stillness/paralysis as the strangers slide into my

bed. A lack of communication inspiring undesired contact and violating proximity that makes me feel so overwhelmed that my system resorts to shutting down - another kind of stillness.

Part II

I am sitting in a large hall or a huge dance studio. The floor is grey. I am sitting opposite (but quite a way away) from a man. He is familiar to me, has just called me over. He has a drum and he is going to teach me to drum. Drumming in the dream is somehow also singing. I think of Bimwili trapped the Zimwi's drum and wonder about what makes the striking of this taut skin so voice-like, in the way that singing is also between the beats, is the breath and internal dance of the guts and diaphragm and ribcage and all of it... I understand that the drum is somehow living, maybe in the way that ghosts live. He says it will help me with my connection to this place, he spits or some gesture that means similar, over his right shoulder. To this earth. He says. He is talking about England. He is not from here. His drum is about 30cm high and 30cm wide, the skin that covers it is pale. He bangs the drum on the right side and left side and the sound that comes is so strong. He is somber and I am curious about him. I move closer forward along the line in the space that is marked out between us. He sits cross legged. I ask him if he would stay here (in England, Babylon) longer, he says "definitely" in a slightly mournful way. He is wearing a white t-shirt.

I didn't realise that my problem could be that I don't have a strong enough connection - or assert myself enough - in 'this place' or that this place could be more than a repellent surface, ready to tell me to leave at any moment. I realise how rootless I feel, my actual 'roots' feeling like cut umbilical cords and me an orphan on this land. But it's a matter of perspective. I think I think that I must remember this on waking.

This is the first dream that hasn't made me sweat in a while. Jupiter's day is said to be about expansion and learning. Let's take the dreams of this day as spiritual pursuits... Many ex partners come to me through this day's dreams. I wonder about the possibilities of intimate interrelation as spiritual pursuit. The themes are about losing things, distance, longing and eventually surrender, giving myself over to something larger.

I am with my familiar, walking along roads with terraced houses. I hear my lover's partner shouting at them in despair, everyone can, they are shouting saying, "how could you do this to me?". I arrive at a long and narrow fancy hotel, I am with an ex. I have lost my red suitcase and green handbag - I left them on a train. There are free batteries of all sizes in the hotel room. There is energy here but I am not prepared, not relaxed, not equipped.

Later, I keep having to walk around this beach/river bank and the water is really strong, like a

kind of suction and I keep gravitating towards it and wobbling and it is scary and precarious every time to get close to it but I have to go close to it because it is part of - or through way to - my house. I am afraid of large bodies of water, of being submerged and overcome. In a similar way, I am also afraid of time - because of the things they keep and the things that they take away. I think, "Why am I working so hard and always almost failing?" I release this continual effort to protect myself and go with the water. The water is a portal that takes me to another dream.

I wake to discover a crystal in the room has smashed in two. I wonder about this fear of immersion and about water as emotion, feeling, and how it can become impossible for me to do anything when I am feeling a lot. And doing has been important. I think about my ancestors that died in the middle passage, about how I feel so much that I owe it to them to survive, to persist, to not be overtaken or overcome...I wonder about precarity and control and the way that I know myself in relation to the ground - as a vertical being formed through relation to gravity and concrete. In the aliveness and neutrality of water, this changes, I change.

SERAFINE1369 is the London based artist and dancer Jamila Johnson-Small. SERAFINE1369 works with dancing as a philosophical undertaking, a political project with ethical psycho-spiritual ramifications for being-in-the-world; dancing as intimate technology.

SERAFINE1369 has a relational, cumulative and often collaborative practice, and works in various constellations, at different scales and in different roles to build spaces for communing/attuning/communicating through dancing, performance, writing, listening and conversation. Their work is informed by a research into 'visionary somatics' through tracking movement, using dance as a tool for divination for decoding messages from an oracular body, and reading these messages on personal/structural/symptomatic/somatic/psychic levels.

SERAFINE1369 is the 2021/22 Artist in Residence at Gropius Bau, Berlin.

Cardamom & human capital

Tamara Al-Mashouk and Ranya Al-Mashouk

Mona Deena	
The wind	
Hamra	The work day
Bougainvillea	The work week
Jasmine	The weekend
You	Vacation days
140 Beacon	Sick days
Allspice + Cinnamon	Company loyalty
Cardamom	Human capital
Food	Academic merits
Shakshuka; that simple kind with just onions and tomatoes	Monetary awards
The light in winter	Resume gaps
and the sunsets and the Athan and that perfect sensory moment	Language tests
Jallab and pine nuts	Recommendation letters
Dust storms	Institutional endorsement
Warm winters	Credentials, certificates, credits
Sandra and Bahrain	Wellness week
Lama and rage and drawings	Standardized tests
That strings section in Fake Empire	
The pool	Health insurance number
The pool room	Applicant specification
Your dark red room	Banks statements
shame	invoices
guilt	payslips
desire	Social security number
The sprinklers, the waves, the sea	Visa
My left hand	Permanent address
Holding my right hand	ID card

Backwards and forwards into a world that centres care

Tamara Al-Mashouk (TAM), Maryan Abdulkarim (MA)

MA: What would happen if we listened more to our bodies and needs? And what would a society that allowed that look like?

TAM: I think we must. Especially as POC (I hate this term, I was trying to figure out another way to say it that wasn't 'non white' because that's an anti-. This is another convo, perhaps we can dream up another term for us) women functioning in often exhaustive and draining environments. I often wonder if, with every invitation I've accepted, I should also include terms and conditions or a disclaimer: *subject to postponement or cancellation due to mental health day.

I'm joking, but I have actually thought about having an understanding with friends that on the day of our plans, let's check in and see how we're feeling. Because often the idea of postponing and the shame causes more anxiety than the act – and if the person on the receiving end can't understand your need for a mental health break, what are they doing in your life?

MA: I've started using political minority, but I'm not sure if it's better than POC. Ahah and yes, I guess with personal relationships, this is something we can negotiate and normalise.

TAM: Or perhaps in a post-capitalist world, or rather, a futurist world, we wouldn't even need the clause because it would be inherent to how we treat each other. Thinking about clauses for care made me want to blow the whole thing up and go simultaneously backwards and forwards into a world that centres care.

MA: So would Arabfuturism look anything like Afrofuturism? Going back and moving forward at the same time sounds familiar, and I think in so many ways, we do need that, to look beyond the colonial time to what was before and bring that into now and the futures ahead.

TAM: I'm sure there would be similarities, because I relate to Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, Angela Davis...there are ways our families are set up (respect for elders, importance of community) that are quite parallel to one another. Though when I read these powerful authors, there are nuances that are, of course, different between our cultures. Our histories, for one, are very different. I'm actually currently researching Afrofuturism with the intention of researching/writing about/creating within Arabfuturism.

How did we get here? We can't go back, but we do have to go somewhere new.

How are you?

Today, my body aches and I'm exhausted. I'm at war with a white man about a carving of space.

Now what?

Now I make a decision. It feels like we are in a place where placating and accepting less than isn't enough anymore. But we weigh, we weigh possibilities vs teaching lessons. And I make a decision that has tied my insides into knots.

Thoughts

What would you be outside of reactions?
Breaking up with the colonial gaze, done making art for the west.

What do you dream of?

Space, freedom, never having to ask for permission.

Tamara Al-Mashouk is a London-based Arab artist and organiser. Through multi-channel video, performance, and architectural installation, her work explores the movement of people across societal and geographic borders and negotiates the relationship between home, identity, and memory. It examines resistance as a site of potential and engages with the epigenetics of place and matter.

100 Things to recolonise

Minna Salami

The indigenous Waorani activist, Nemonte Nenquimo, wrote in an unforgettable Guardian Op-ed titled This is my message to the western world – your civilisation is killing life on Earth, that,

“You forced your civilisation upon us and now look where we are: global pandemic, climate crisis, species extinction and, driving it all, widespread spiritual poverty. In all these years of taking, taking, taking from our lands, you have not had the courage, or the curiosity, or the respect to get to know us. To understand how we see, and think, and feel, and what we know about life on this Earth.”

Her words summarise colonisation, the process of occupying land without regard for existing inhabitants and their economic, sociocultural and psychological realities.

Decolonisation is, consequently, approached as a process of “reversing” colonisation. The prefix “de” typically implies to undo or reverse an action: to decaffeinate, defrost, deindustrialise, dethrone, demythologize, detoxify and so on, all connote a reversal, a backpedalling.

Yet when it comes to colonisation, the innocuous seeming prefix “de” cannot be taken literally to mean undo or reverse, as neither is possible when it comes to colonisation.

What is possible is to reimagine and reconceptualise a way of being in the world. Nenquimo ends her Op-ed by saying, “It is the early morning in the Amazon, just before first light: a time that is meant for us to share our dreams, our most potent thoughts.”

In that spirit I share below some dreams and potent thoughts which involve reconceptualisation. Language that needs reclaiming. Things that we should recolonise.

A colony does not, after all, only connote a place occupied by violent and destructive forces. A colony is also a place to grow vegetables, and flowers and fruit, as well as community and ideas. These one hundred prompts are not intended as a procedural guideline but rather as a reimagining.

100 Things to recolonise

1. Gaze
2. TLC
3. The possibilities of language
4. Sexual freedom
5. Ageing ungracefully, or however the fuck one wants to age
6. One's own life
7. Sensuousness
8. Multitudes
9. The Centre
10. Your body
11. New ways of thinking
12. Movement
13. Utopias
14. Sustainability
15. Islands of possibility
16. Play
17. Wildness
18. Landscapes
19. Frolicking
20. The dissolution of patriarchy
21. Landscapes of love
22. Critical interventions
23. Rage
24. Leisure
25. The space between illusion and deception
26. Authenticity
27. Honesty
28. Non-heteronormative complementarity
29. Poetry
30. Rationality and reason



31. An ethics of caring (thank you, Patricia Hill Collins)
32. Circles
33. Gratitude
34. The expansion of science
35. The beauty of eternity
36. Honest relationships
37. Deserved goodbyes
38. Passionate conversation
39. The enchantment of reading stories
40. Humaneness
41. Nature's comradeship
42. Nonconforming beauty
43. Pausing
44. Tabula rasas
45. Breathing deeply
46. Awareness of the cosmos
47. Attentiveness
48. Learning from children
49. Learning from elders
50. Conscientious objection
51. Meaning-making
52. Subjectivity
53. Being present where you find yourself
54. Expanding the mind
55. Lovemaking
56. Consciousness raising
57. Political solidarity
58. Uncommercialised feminism
59. Uncertainty
60. Cuddles
61. Sexual stimuli that isn't sexist

62. Deep time
63. Lost chronicles of women chroniclers
64. Flowing with nature's rhythms
65. Shadows
66. The difference between gluttony and appreciation
67. The power of kindness
68. Tolerance
69. A tenderness toward one's own eccentricities
70. Discernment of public opinion
71. Lightness
72. Unwritten pages
73. Open-mindedness
74. A mind and body that resists becoming a machine
75. Stepping out of the familiar
76. Self-awareness
77. Fearlessness
78. The lessons of grief
79. A playful attitude
80. The realisation of the stark reality of the climate emergency
81. Inventing new gods
82. Dancing from the soul
83. Intellectual agility
84. Creating hope
85. Ending denialism
86. Entertainment that isn't oppressive or capitalist
87. Dialogue
88. New archetypes
89. Banter
90. Non-dogmatic prayer
91. Existential lust
92. Acts of generosity

93. Borderlessness
94. Unhierarchical relationships
95. Nonpatriarchal kinship
96. Informed inventiveness
97. Stillness
98. Opening doors of opportunity
99. Disturbing claims of inherent objectivity
100. Making a place for imagination.

Minna Salami's writing and research focuses on the inner and external worlds of women in the 21st century. She is the author of the internationally acclaimed book *Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone*, a critical collection of essays exploring universal ideas with an Africa-centred, decolonial and feminist perspective and translated into several languages. She is co-director of the feminist movement, *Activate*, and a Senior Research Associate at *Perspectiva*. She sits on the advisory board of the African Feminist Initiative at Pennsylvania State University and the editorial board of the *Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Sahel* and the *Emerge* platform. Her blog *MsAfropolitan* has won several awards.



[Decolonial] dreaming as [ever-distant] practice

Sarah Devi Chander

Recently, we asked a room of anti-racists: what would you do in a world without racism? After a long silence, a few nervous laughs and some slightly petrified stares, the room relaxed. Without intending it to be so, the exercise became a light, sort-of-ironic, unserious game. We got some fun (if not very tame) answers, like ‘knitting’ and ‘gardening’.

It was like all in the room, without voicing this theory, had decided that our answers could be as frivolous as we liked – because we didn’t think such a world would be approaching anytime soon.

I am interested in the power of dreaming as a necessary step for achieving social change and justice. On the one hand, dreaming can ground action, to bring clarity about what we are building toward, instead of building against. However, on the other hand, our inability to dream can be paralyzing; bringing an acute awareness of how colonial structures have inhibited our deepest freedom, the capacity to imagine, or dream beyond.

To get past this, we have to reckon with why imagining alternatives and dreaming beyond oppressive structures is not a common feature of social movements, and in particular racial justice and anti-imperialist activism. What is the function of dreaming and what do we miss when we can’t? If we need it, how can dreaming become practice?

Why can’t we dream?

Writing in the ‘Against Genocide’ edition of the *Funambulist* magazine, writer Karim Kattan articulates how the Israeli apartheid wall in Bethlehem as a monument of domination is connected with a broader impact on peoples’ memory and imagination.

“The wall is arguably one of the most monumental aspects of the occupation: it is, in many ways, iconic. It manifests the occupation’s brutal dominion over land and horizon, and, by extension, over time and history. It reshuffles all futures into precisely patterned impossibilities.

...One of the functions of the wall, and of settlements, is to remove all imaginations of possibilities, and to naturalize domination.

“Colonization excises the territory, and amputates our imagination, our relationship to time and space.”

Karim Kattan, Imagining Palestinian Futures Beyond Colonial Monumentality,

The Funambulist 37 September-October 2021 – Against Genocide

Oppression is precisely the constraint on our capacity to dream. For many of us, the impact of racism, capitalism and colonial or imperialistic structures is the exact impossibility of understanding what could be there otherwise. These structures are fundamentally designed to prevent us from dreaming beyond.

I’ve seen and felt the effect of this intentional, constructed, wall operating on, and in, our minds. It’s there when we don’t feel at home in our communities because they can’t see past the homophobia that the British installed. When we can’t imagine ‘going back’ because racism robbed us of pride in our languages. When we can’t conceptualise what freedom would look like for our parents, because we don’t see them ever being able to leave precarious work. When we can’t imagine safety because we’ve never felt truly safe on the streets. When we can’t conceive of broad and effective movements because we’ve been funded along racial, gender, and national lines, with divide and conquer constantly showing up.

It’s there when we can’t imagine what, where or who we might have been if we were free. When we can’t imagine justice, freedom, liberation in any way that is not negatively defined, an absence of one or another manifestation of devastation. When we can’t think ‘otherwise’, of a world without all of this.

Oppression has created tunnels in our imagination. The more we are materially contained by these structures, the more intense the barriers to dreaming become. How useful, then, is dreaming as a practice of liberation? Is it a luxury for those of us in the condition to try it? Is it simply an exercise of utopian delusion? Or is it a necessary, but ever-distant practice?

To dream; to nightmare

In English, we can use ‘dream’ as a verb – an active process of imagining – but the word ‘nightmare’ is usually a noun. Nightmare is not used as a verb; it stays in a fixed state, existing only in opposition to ‘dream’, its unpleasant alter ego.

It’s almost as if we assume that to think up a nightmare doesn’t have the potential that dreaming does. A practice of decolonial dreaming offers us a potential to unlock truths, states, worlds that might have been, but not for the empires that crushed so many and so

much of us – languages, dances, places, economies, scripts, feelings, modes of loving and expression, freedoms. As commonly understood, nightmares aren't so liberatory. And yet, I believe some of the most revolutionary dreamers practiced by actively imagining nightmares.

Octavia Butler's work is the best example of this. Writing the *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* in the 1990s, Butler extrapolated her present world's racism, capitalism and division to dream up a dystopian future – a world of extreme class inequality, completely malfunctioning social systems, extreme capitalist 'company towns', a redundant police force that only answer the calls of the super rich, and tech-enabled slave collars.

During the pandemic, many have looked back on Butler's novels as a prescient warning – all a little too similar to our present-day reality. Her vision of the 2010s onward, Butler imagined [or predicted] an Apocalypse, 'the Pox', that coincided with 'climatic, economic, and sociological crisis':

"It would be more honest to say that the Pox was caused by our own refusal to deal with obvious problems in those areas. We caused the problems: then we sat and watched as they grew into crises."

Butler's horrific future was not far-fetched dystopia, but intimately connected and relatable to our current world. Reading Butler shows us that if we do not seriously reckon with the full potential of the world's current harmful structures, they will grow into catastrophe and we will have caused them.

Oppression has stunted our ability to think beyond the wall of what could be, to imagine something better. However, inaction and reformism might be even worse. Often, they cause us to repeat the same struggles over and over, and make us take for granted just how high the wall could go. This complacency brings us ever closer to dystopia, such that we resemble it more than we know.

More than simply envisioning a utopian future, dreaming requires a detailed understanding – and feeling – of how the structures of oppression currently work, how far they can go and how bad they can get, before we start to imagine how things could be different.

Decolonial dreaming

Rarely is dreaming – in any of these forms – considered practice. More often than not, dreaming is dismissed in activist spaces, framed in opposition to "practicality", threatening conversations and ideas that are 'unrealistic' and 'out of scope'.

But that the content of our dreams seems unrealistic is precisely the reason why we must build a practice of decolonial dreaming.

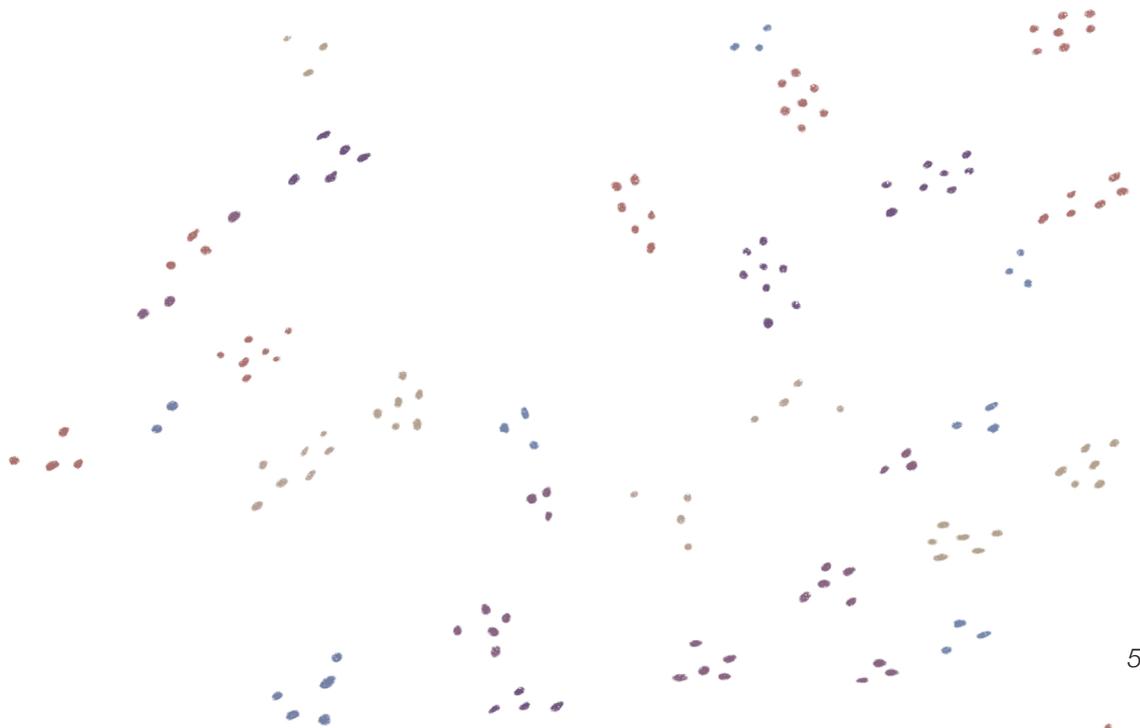
That practice is not merely imagining in abstract, forgetting the past and present structures that contain us. Instead, it requires a detailed knowledge of the mechanics of oppressive systems and an intricate understanding of what is going wrong now.

Beyond 'hope', it can be a dystopian practice, of active nightmaring, to show us how much worse things could get, as a warning against band-aid solutions and misinformed reformism. These nightmares, whether happening now or in the future, provide the motivation for dismantling the structures that don't allow us to dream.

Ultimately, a practice of decolonial dreaming must not only encourage oppressed peoples to dream, but rather try to create the conditions under which we can do so.

Knowing intensely the features of the dystopian futures we head to, such a practice would look to untangle them by creating anew. How could we get to a space where we have enough freedom to conceive these worlds of otherwise? What conditions, spaces, structures would enable us to dream? Build them.

Sarah Devi Chander is co-founder of the *Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice*, a poc-led coalition of activists and actors organising for racial justice. She has been engaged with various movements for racial justice, against immigration detention and for queer liberation. She is also Senior Policy Adviser at *European Digital Rights (EDRi)* where she advocates on digital legislation and also aims to build resilient coalitions to contest discriminatory and oppressive technology practice. She is thinking of the various ways infrastructures of oppression are built and can be destroyed, and how we can dream otherwise from within their midst.



Afrofuturistic dreams - soft steps towards revolution

By Maryan Abdulkarim (MA) and Sonya Lindfors (SL)

“Freedom? You’re asking me about freedom? You’re asking me about freedom? I’ll be honest with you. I know a whole more about what freedom isn’t than about what it is, because I’ve never been free. I can only share my vision with you of the future, about what freedom is

The way I see it, freedom is-- is the right to grow, is the right to Blossom. Freedom is-- is the right to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do--”

A Song for Assata - Common

SL: Why should we be dreaming? Or what are you dreaming of?

MA: Looking at the world today, what else can we do but dream? I dream of freedom, like actual freedom. What about you?

SL: I guess I have been practicing dreaming before I even was able to name it as such. I was pulled towards dancing exactly because of a longing for feeling free. A sensation of liberation from the structural obstacles and sorrows of the everyday. When I was dancing, I felt free, but still connected. I could be anything, I could be many, the world made sense. A horrible cliché, of course, but at least when I was younger, this feeling was very real.

MA: Right! I think the juxtaposition of different kinds of freedoms, like e.g. the need for freedom from structural oppression and then the need for artistic freedom is interesting. In the Finnish art context, often when there is a demand for artistic freedom, it is used as a way to silence critique from marginalized voices. In our Nordic welfare state it seems that “artistic freedom” is an endeavor to maintain a hierarchical status quo instead of defying it.

SL: Words are sometimes confusing. We might be using the same word, but we might be meaning totally different things. Freedom is, of course, always relative, so are we talking about freedom to do something or freedom from e.g. being excluded?

Whose freedom are we interested in? Whose freedom matters in the end?

How would you define freedom, Maryan?

MA: For me, the freedom of one entity ends where the next entity's freedom starts, so it's not freedom to but rather freedom from. Free from the definitions from the outside, free from demands to conform. Free from being complicit in normalizing the erasure of your own lived reality.

SL: Coming to Afrofuturism I think the urge for freedom is a key element. For those less familiar, Afrofuturism is a term coined by Mark Dery in an article called "Back To The Future" in 1993. Dery writes:

"Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture - and, more generally, African - American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future - might, for want of a better term, be called "Afrofuturism". The notion of Afrofuturism gives rise to a troubling antinomy: Can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?"

Dery was defining a particular strain of science fiction, but in a wider sense, Afrofuturism can be described as a philosophy or cultural aesthetic that addresses themes and concerns of the African diaspora through technoculture and speculative fiction, encompassing a range of artists and intellectuals with a shared interest in envisioning Black futures that stem from Afrodiasporic experiences. The readers might be familiar with, for example, Sun Ra, who stated "Space is the place!", Parliament Funkadelic, Janelle Monae, Octavia Butler or Jean-Michel Basquiat, who are all considered as Afrofuturists. And if these names don't ring a bell, then at least the movie Black Panther popularized the concept.

MA: I loved Octavia Butler's book 'Kindred' The way she connects past and the present, imagining action and causality. It's not a happy story, but then again, the history it discusses is grim and traumatic, so looking back from a specific position and joining the pieces, recovering one's history. It's definitely Afrofuturistic work.

SL: But how is Afrofuturism relevant to us right now? Quoting you, Maryan, "looking at the world today, what else can we do but dream?" Afrofuturism seems especially visible and relevant right now as we are faced with multiple global disasters. Climate change, the rise of extremist right wing politics, a mass extinction of fauna... even thinking about all these things makes me feel hopeless and powerless. Dreaming of better futures helps me keep going.

MA: For me, Afrofuturism is, in fact, collective dreaming. Yes, it has the prefix Afro, but this does not mean exclusion, but actually radical inclusion. Inclusivity demands equality and the Afrofuture dreams exactly this. Activist Fannie Lou Hamer stated during the civil rights movement: “Nobody is free until everybody is free!” Historically, the African continent and, more specifically, Black people from the continent have been dehumanised and systemically categorised as less than entities with body, mind and soul of their own.

SL: So, imagining futures where people of African diaspora can exist, and that existence can be one outside of struggle, not defined by a subordinate position or whiteness, imagining futures where all those groups that have been dehumanised are no longer oppressed, then we would finally have equality.

MA: As is already probably visible, Afrofuturism is not one, but many. There are different understandings and visions and futures. It is complex and plural. Afrofuturism escapes stagnant definitions; it has a playful and collective, yet fugitive, nature. It is polycentral and polyphonic.

SL: Afrofuturism has given us a frame for our dreaming that connects us with the long lineage of dreamers before us. We want to acknowledge them. We are not alone.

Afrofuturism has also gained visibility in the fields of theater, performance, dance and choreography. Maybe this is proof that the field of art is slowly becoming more diverse. For example, choreographer and scholar Thomas DeFrantz’s work and writings have been life changing in how they articulate Black experience.

“Black performance arises within and through contradictory flows of information that are ultimately irreconcilable; recognizable only through the posthuman condition produced centuries ago by the brutalities of the slave trade and its aftermaths. Slavery, Colonialism, and Apartheid; named by Mbembe as the three devastations that have shaped Black life and formed Black Reason, become the circumstance or situation from which Black performance proceeds. Conceived at its start to be outside the human, Black life epitomizes the posthuman, and its stretching beyond known and knowable characterizations of civil societies.

To imagine possibility in this circumstance of outsidersness and abjection, we turn to the afrofuturity. A speculative space that combines science fiction and fantasy, afrofuturity operates as an anecdote to the afropessimisms that define Black histories as disavowal, with a call to imaginative rendering of an afrofuturity rife with possibility and diversity.”

Thomas Defrantz, Blackness & the Postmodern - publication 2018

Dreaming for healing

SL: Afrofuturity imagines a new starting point. Not only does it imagine futures, it imagines different pasts in order to have different presents. In fact, it denounces the whole linear understanding of time.

MA: Author and social justice commentator Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie talks about this new starting point in her TedTalk named “The Danger of a Single Story”. She asks what if we would start the story of Africa, not with the moment when Europeans first arrived, but with all the cultural success and richness of the continent, or maybe the ancient kingdoms which were thriving when Europe was still in the dark ages. That would give a totally different story of the African continent. A story of life, energy, great civilisations, histories, heroes and success and not a one of just sickness, war and misery.

SL: What if Africa weren’t defined as the opposite of Europe, as everything Europe is not? Sociologist Stuart Hall explains in his text “The West and The Rest” how this narrative of Africa as stagnated and uncivilized was created through the violent encounters of Europeans with the continent and was finally cemented in the era of enlightenment. At that time, Africa, as well as people of African descent were categorised as inferior and nonhuman in order to justify the colonial project.

What if colonialism had not happened?

What if Africa was the centre?

MA: Dehumanising, being displaced, slavery, rape, murder. There is so much trauma that being Black carries within. How to cure from trauma? Afrofuturity has provided a space for healing. It has given a powerful counterforce for dehumanising by giving us stories with

Black heroes or sometimes just regular people living regular lives. It looks beyond the chains and the colonialism, digging up history longer and richer than what is taught in the West. Afrofuturism has given us back our memory. Black expression was never born out of distress, slavery and pain; Black expression survived despite all this – and thrived. That’s how deep the roots are.

SL: Maybe the freedom we are longing for is a freedom to exist without the trauma. To heal. But how to move forward? This is where we come back to our practice of dreaming.

MA: I remember us having a discussion about reactionary practices some years ago. That we were both tired of just reacting to oppressive structures. Artists and activists around us were exhausted. We were afraid that we would never move past the fight, we felt we needed a new strategy, a restorative and subversive practice.

SL: During the last few years we have had several dreaming sessions with Black activists. I think one of the most shocking discoveries was that many of us didn’t know who we were without the struggle. Our daily lives have been so informed by the racist society that we had not had the space of imagining an existence outside it. Who would I be in a world not defined by racist, imperialist, capitalist patriarchy?

If there were no concept of race who would I be?

Who would you be?

SL: And if the answer is “I don’t know”, how could I practice dreaming about that? It is a kind of double hop, dreaming of dreaming of things that I don’t know yet how to dream of. And trying to stay with the unknown. This is very complex because we are kind of trying to shake the very ground under our feet.

MA: At first, this might sound a bit controversial, a little bit like “I don’t see color, we are all equal”, which is, of course, dangerous. So, we want to make this very clear: we acknowledge that the world is a violent and hierarchical place in which people suffer every day. Identity politics is a crucial driving force for social change; we need it. We root for it. That is our foundation. Structural oppression is real, racism is real, sexism is real, homophobia is real, transphobia is real. Audre Lorde said: “We cannot dismantle the master’s house with the master’s tools”, but even when inside the master’s house, dreams allow us to imagine different houses.

The dreaming practice doesn't aim at devaluing or diminishing people's struggles, but to acknowledge them AND make a space for dreaming of another kind of existence. This is especially important for marginalised groups, who don't get any breaks from oppression. How to move on from this place of constant struggle into a collective future, where we can co-exist without the need of coherence? Well if we can't dream it, we sure can't build towards it.

SL: And Sun Ra said: "The possible has been tried and failed, now it's the time to try the impossible". Dreaming inside the structures, inside the struggle is vital, but we need to practice also dreaming outside the struggle.

Basically, the dreaming practice is an impossible attempt to learn how to think beyond. It is a strategic deviation that uses the power of art as a platform for miracle making. These speculative fictions and mind games that we play become a part of our lived realities and they open up potentialities. I don't know what true freedom feels like, but I can dream about it and that changes me. And then maybe the changed me can change something else in the world.

MA: Dreaming gives a break from the constant fighting, but it is also hard work. We are trying to unlearn to make space for something else. Also dreaming doesn't give a discharge from the actual need of dismantling structural opponents. "Oh, we have dreaming so we don't need real measures towards structural change!" NO! We need both actual change AND we need a space for dreaming. Institutions and people in positions of power need to keep working towards inclusivity and equality.

Try to imagine a space where there is no centre and no margins?

SL: Afrofuturism and the practice of dreaming has influenced or actually changed the way I approach my artistic work. The Finnish art field is extremely homogenic, exclusive and white, so a few years ago I felt I was somewhat losing my faith. But now I feel that the stage is a platform for utopian dreaming where I can imagine things that don't yet exist. Cosmic Latte, made in 2018, tried to imagine the year 3019, where oppression would no longer exist, where a Black body on the stage would no longer signify difference. This was very abstract, but sometimes the dreams are more concrete. In a previous work, Noble Savage, made in 2016, one of the dreams was, what if there were people in the audience who looked like me? For a white colleague this might feel absurd, but I have been working as an artist for almost 20 years and most of the time the spaces I work in are all white. So, starting to make work from a dream where art institutions would be inclusive and diverse was revolutionary, working from these dreams changed me.

MA: I feel that! I often feel many art spaces do not expect me to be there. This is how norms work. The whole European art field is based on a very narrow white Eurocentric point of view that excludes even Europe's own vast cultural diversity. Art spaces are made to measure for a very exclusive and homogenic group of people. This is a vicious circle. Since there are no diverse representations in the art field, people with diverse backgrounds don't feel welcome, and thus the institutions can justify the exclusivity with a "hey, anybody can come, but they are just not that interested". Art is shrunk into what is recognisable as art by very narrow definition. So maybe we could redefine art by dreaming?

What if all you had read were texts by African, Asian, south American and indigenous writers?

What kind of worldview would you have?

What kind of art would you make?

What would you recognise as good or interesting art?

SL: Let me rephrase this. For me, dreaming is a practice of both recentralising and decentralising. Trying to first recentralise Blackness and thus include it. Come out of the margins and claim space. This is dreaming inside the structures. And then trying to practice decentralising, and understanding that the centre is a social construct. Race is a social construct. Whiteness, Europeanness and Westernity are not centres, nor opposite to Blackness. Meanings mix like liquids. There is no centre.

MA: The dreaming practice, as well as Afrofuturism, actually proposes radical collectivity. They do not work with the logic of excluding, they aim for polycentrality. Dreaming together, collectively, allows us to dream into reality a future where there is not one but many, a tomorrow that would be inclusive, equal and free of hierarchies.

This text was originally commissioned by Black Box Theatre Oslo

<https://www.Blackbox.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Lindfors-Abdulkarim.pdf>

Conkies

Recipe by Claire Gilder

When I was little / in the early 00's my grandad would fly across the Atlantic with a suitcase filled with treasure / laden with goodness / filled to the brim with things from 'home'. Home was Barbados, and although I'd never been yet, it was also referred to as such / that's how I knew it. I still call Barbados home and people question me "but weren't you born in the UK", "aren't you from London?", "but you don't have an accent?". In another place, maybe, we wouldn't attribute home to the results of the birth lottery. Maybe we would allow people to self-define, to identify home however they like, irrespective of borders and where they are born and where the world tells them that home is. For me, there can be many homes, and one of mine is Barbados.

Back to the suitcase. Full of joy, cassava pone, turnovers, Aunt Cynthia's sweetbread, flying fish (frozen, wrapped in many layers of foil and newspaper), breadfruit, akee, 'proper' pear (aka avocado), eclipse crackers, hot pepper sauce, green seasoning, rum, and if it was November, conkies. If flying fish and cou cou is the national dish of Barbados (though the climate crisis has resulted in much smaller catches of flying fish and subsequently much higher prices), conkies are the national pudding. Served in November to mark independence. A conkie is a steamed pudding made of provisions (sweet potato and pumpkin) freshly grated coconut, cornmeal, sugar, coconut milk, butter, eggs, spices and raisins. Everything is mixed together into a sort of paste and then wrapped in a banana leaf and steamed until soft and delicious.

The conkie is not only a tasty (high in fibre, nutritious and delicious) snack, it also has a deep history. It is one of the few puddings with limited culinary ties to the colonisers (sugar being the link, for the sugar cultivation on Barbados came as a result of colonisation - cane was not indigenous to the island). Also, originally, conkies did not contain raisins - this was an addition made to the dish in later years, for reasons unknown (especially to my better half).

Its origins are associated with two west African dishes: kenkey - a dish consisting of fermented maize meal also wrapped in a leaf (in some places a plantain leaf) and steamed; and koki corn, another savoury dish, consisting of fresh corn, cornmeal, spinach and palm oil, again mixed together and steamed in a banana leaf. Yellow cornmeal was also already present in Barbados, and one of the staple foods of the indigenous Arawak and Carib people who lived on the island before they were almost exterminated by the British. Despite the fact that so much was stolen from those who survived the middle passage, the endurance of this food culture, and even more so the sharing of it, is testament to the fortitude of the ancestors

who preserved what they could of our roots. Even more remarkable given that such limited records exist even from recent history of the recipes and cooking techniques of our fore parents.

For reasons unknown, during British colonisation, conkies were made to mark Guy Fawkes day on the 5th of November. When Barbados gained its independence on November 30 1966, the conkie was repurposed to become the dish of independence, and though originally only made for Independence Day, it is now cooked for more of the month of November rather than on just one day. This year, 2021, Barbados will become a republic, severing the last of its colonial ties, relinquishing the queen of England as its head of state, and assigning its own figurehead president. As Barbados seeks to erase its colonial past and shape its future, I wonder if the essence of conkies will shift with it.

Much like independence, making conkies is a joyous event to be shared with as many folks as possible.

You will need

A box grater, a large bowl, a fork, a steamer (or a saucepan with a colander perched above water) and a group of friends.

Love

Willingness

Spirit of independence

Banana leaves (if you're in Europe, defrost if frozen, wipe clean and trim into 12 20cm x 20cm squares, if you have access to fresh leaves, singe them to make them pliable)

1 sweet potato finely grated (around 100g)

1/3 small pumpkin finely grated (around 200g)

1 coconut finely grated (should give around 200g flesh - fresh is best)

350g fine cornflour (yellow)

50g brown sugar

250ml coconut milk

170g butter (melted)

1 egg

1 tsp allspice

1 tsp nutmeg

I eyeball these things, so feel free to adjust the measures as

1 tsp vanilla essence

the spirits guide you

1 tsp salt

Raisins - as you wish

A generous pour of rum

Method

1. Once your friends have helped you to grate the sweet potato, pumpkin and coconut*, mix them together in the large bowl (use your hands, it feels nice).
2. Add the cornflour, flour, sugar and coconut milk, egg and butter, and give another good mix.
3. Add the spices, salt, vanilla essence and the raisins (if you're using them), and mix everything together again. by this time you should have a thick paste-like mixture that is soft but holds its shape.
4. Take a piece of banana leaf (or foil if that's what you're using), put two generous spoonfuls of mixture into the centre and shape it into a small rectangle. Fold the leaf up as though you're wrapping a present; first fold the right-hand side over the mixture, then the left, fold the ends of the leaves into a point and then fold them back into the centre of the small package.
5. Place the wrapped conkie in the steamer and then repeat the process with the rest of the mixture until it's finished.
6. Steam the conkies for about an hour until they are cooked through (take one out of the steamer to test at around the 50 minute mark - you'll need to let it cool a little to firm up, it's fine to leave the others cooking in that time though).
7. Make a cup of tea and enjoy with the friends that helped you make them.

** There are two ways to open a hard coconut. The first way is to go outside and dash it on a rock. If, like me, you live in a rockless concrete jungle, take a heavy knife and repeatedly hit the middle line of the coconut with the back of it (be sure to hold it over a bowl to catch all the milk) it will eventually crack and you can pull apart the halves. Run a blunt knife around the edge of the inner flesh and the hard outer shell, prize the centre out and then hand it to a friend to grate.*

All the love to Kris and Shane for the joy and wisdom of this recipe and being a home away from home, to mum and grandma and grandad for making sure I was firm and strong in the knowledge of my roots, and to Sarah for her patience, love and eagle eye x

Claire Gilder lives in brussels, and keeps pieces of her heart in London & Bridgetown. During the so-called working week, Claire masquerades as a political advisor, giving guidance on all things cultural, youthful and educational (as well as occasionally sporting). For the rest of the time, she works in the kitchen, sometimes her own, sometimes that of others, cooking and baking and writing joyful things about food in all its glory. Her passion is sourdough, but her cooking and dreaming takes on all forms. She loves collaborations and is always on the search for taste testers. You can find her on instagram @claireylovescake.



Words make worlds - how to hold language gently

Justina Kehinde (JK), Sonya Lindfors (SL) and Maryan Abdulkarim (MA)

SL: What stayed with you from our last dreaming session? What have you been dreaming about lately?

JK: I suppose the main thing that stayed with me was the knowledge, the concrete knowledge, that I'm not alone in my wrestling. That there are women who look like me, who may even move through the world in a similar way to me who are also asking questions, wanting to tear down the structures that have been hurting us and who also don't 'know' how to do it, but are willing to try, and ask. That stayed with me the most. Have I been dreaming...I struggle to dream, to be honest. I'm a lucid dreamer, which is weird, and I used to have awful nightmares as a child, like I'd wake up screaming. I often say it's because I have a hyper-active imagination, but I think lately, if and when I dream it's more day-dreaming. Sometimes I day-dream dystopian futures and catastrophise (I feel like the world forces us into this mindset, tbh), but other times I let my mind wander and just consider the notion of 'what if...'. But dreaming scares me, in that sometimes I'm afraid I spend so much time dreaming and not enough time 'doing'.

SL: I really recognise that, but simultaneously I am thinking that dreaming should be thought of as active doing as well. It is so much work (Side note: in Finnish, we actually have two separate words for the dreaming you do when you sleep, and then the dreaming that you do when you fantasise, speculate, day-dream and hope).

JK: That is so interesting. I find language so powerful in terms of framing our lives, our actions. I speak French and I'm learning my father's language (Yoruba) and often find that the English language can be very limiting – it can create a limited world view, not because it doesn't have the dexterity but I think because we don't use it to its full capacity. How would you translate the different verbs for dreaming? I wonder if they provide a new way/another way of considering what that action/process is/does?

SL: Well that is exactly it, it is kind of untranslatable.

MA: I have, lately, been trying to be more active in my dreams (when asleep) because a friend of mine told me this is possible, that you can actually have control within the dream. I haven't been successful yet but I am getting better at recognising or remembering the dream sometimes.

Language, I suppose, exposes creators' and users' needs/aims? There are so many words in Somali that describe things that I cannot find Finnish/English translation for.

JK: I wonder what that says about how we build a new world.

As in, what is the language that we articulate our hopes and dreams in? If we think that, for so many years, the world has been shaped by the English language, culture, point of view and, by extension, the English people in their...purest isn't the right word... Whitest, in their whitest sense. There's a type of colonisation that happens and might be even more violent when you cannot articulate yourself because there is no language to explain the world/the feelings/the ideas that you see and feel and dream in, when you can only communicate in the language of, in this example, the oppressor. Because I think dreams become powerful when they can be communicated, so how do we communicate the revolution to as many people as possible? What does that look like, and how might the idea(s) change (for better or for worse)? Can dreams get lost in translation?

SL: Yes. Words make worlds. And coming back to the question you posed, Justina:

Can dreams get lost in translation?

I remember us having conversations about this in our previous dreaming sessions several years ago. Can I dream outside of language? What if I want to dream of an existence or future that the colonial languages cannot enter? Non-binary existences? Fluid and transgressive existences? Of course, this is fascinating for me, since I am a choreographer and ways of non-verbal communication are also a central part of my work.

What gets lost in translation when we try to explain with words, write down, reimagine the dreams, vivid, holistic, deep, shaking, physical, spiritual dreams that we have dreamt. How language is always narrowing...or maybe not narrowing, but maybe just like you said Justina, something gets lost in translation.

JK: Yes, the inability to speak one's indigenous language is a recurring problem amongst presently and formerly colonised peoples. But I wonder if it's more than being able to speak a language. Of course a lot of indigenous truth, of course multiple perspectives and ways of being exist in how we name things and what those names mean, etc, and I personally am passionate about learning my native tongues and many others, but perhaps the pessimist in me is also like – a lot of people aren't or won't be able to, for various reasons. Instead, what I'm (right this minute) thinking about is the curiosity with which we approach language and how lightly we hold definitions. For example, we tend to treat the way something is named as fact, rather than an artistic attempt at capturing part (but never all) of something. We have this issue in theology and many other areas of life, and this is often where conflict and the need to dominate comes from. This is blue, and this is what blue means, and nothing else can describe the sea except for the colour blue. But in some cultures the word (or even idea) of blue doesn't exist because they use colour in a different way and the symbolism of naming with colour refers to something else which, if we had the capacity to hold language gently, might open us up to something, if not deeper, then at least different, but no less true to a part of the nature of e.g. the sea. Does that make sense? We're all trying to grasp at something, but if we hold our attempts lightly and with greater curiosity – to come back to the idea of dreaming – perhaps that is how we can first be open to others' dreams and, in time, understand part of, and then create, some of them....?

SL: That sounds so beautiful. How to hold language gently? What would the world be like? Or how would the world feel like if this happened... Ahh.

Also what you are saying, or this example about the word blue associated with the sea, makes me think about the categories and borders that these words create. Words that are, as you say, human made, artistic attempts to capture something, and they work, of course, on some level...but we do forget that they are created. But maybe, by dreaming, these lines and categories and boundaries can become a bit blurrier? Maybe that could be the practice of holding language gently.

Blackness, womanhood, happiness, art, dance, contemporaneity as leaky categories with blurry lines, that could contain histories and stories, people and identities, but there is still space for movement, change, transformation and growth.

(Funnily enough, I really seem to struggle with my English today)

JK: I was going to say earlier that I'm impressed and humbled that you and Maryan are literally doing all this dreaming in a second or even third language. That is RANGE. And I'm sorry that, even as we write, your dreaming is limited because of me, but I appreciate it. I

appreciate how, right now, we are trying to express ourselves, our ideas in languages that are not our mother tongues...so I guess it's possible.

MA: Yeah, and thinking of the boundaries, etc, I reminded how Somali Bedouins, for example, have a different relationship with time or dates, etc, like we literally use English names for the months, which tells you we don't talk about months in Somali, it's different seasons, and this relates to how we relate to world around us. But colonialism introduced borders and a Gregorian calendar. Well, actually, Arabs came first with the Hijri calendar, but even that is more related to culture than business.

JK: That is so interesting and is a similar-ish thing to the Zulus. Not in terms of calendar months (I don't think) but in terms of their concept of time. Apparently (as I was once told) the Zulus don't have a cause and effect relationship to time and space. E.g. European thinking says if today is Tuesday tomorrow must be Wednesday.

But for the Zulus, while today is Tuesday, tomorrow is still unwritten.

It could be Wednesday, it could be Sunday. It can be a bit hard to get your head around, but it opens up so many possibilities; what does it mean when we call a day Wednesday, and what could it mean? But also, if tomorrow is unwritten, if tomorrow is not certain, how do we approach today? How do we live in the moment? If things don't necessarily happen BECAUSE of something else, or perhaps they don't happen because of what we think has affected them – I dunno. It's a paradigm shift, though, and it just changes the concept of possibility, the future, what can be. The problem is that colonial rule has made a system where, if you don't think in the way of the oppressor, YOU are labeled as mad, or not intelligent, etc. Your way of being is discarded, and that's literally happening across education systems the world over. So when we consider radical dreaming we also have to ask ourselves: is there space for the radical dreamer, or will their dreams (as we've seen time again in history) be sidelined, marginalised because they don't fit inside the system? Just as at the top of this chat, before we can start dreaming fully and freely, we have to consider a) what are the conditions? and b) how do we create and maintain the conditions where dreaming is safe and possible, where dreams will be welcomed?

MA: That's powerful, and something I'll have to sit with for a bit. Thank you for sharing the story about the Zulus and I agree with your questions. But damn, I really have to sit and think of this concept of time where tomorrow is unwritten (so beautifully described).

SL: I agree! The relationship of time and coloniality is so complex. Our understanding of the future, or time as linear and progressive, always getting 'better', somehow, which also makes us disregard histories and knowledge from the past. Like Maryan said, there is a lot to think about there.

I am, yet again, trying to imagine myself on a beach. Looking at the sea. Not living in this system of twelve months and seven days. Who would I be? What would I do? How would I look at the sea and not think blue? Maybe the sea would consist of the sand and me and the fish in it and that feeling. And maybe... maybe there would be this space that was described, a safeness, a feeling of weight and rest and lightness simultaneously.

I am also acknowledging how amazing it is (the meta layer) that we are, right now, in this practice of trying to dream of dreaming. Dreaming of how to dream in different languages, in different contexts, trying to understand how the context we live and work and survive and imagine limits us, pushes us or guides us to certain directions.

How to deviate? Maybe it is exactly this: tomorrow is unwritten.

Justina Kehinde is a writer, director, actor and poet interested in exploring the unheard stories of those in the African diaspora. Prior to her transition into the creative arts, she was a programme assistant for an African women-led advocacy and campaigns organisation, where she developed a policy paper on sexual violence in HE institutions, and helped to facilitate trainings across East Africa and the UK equipping young women to be advocates against sexual and gender-based violence. In 2019, at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Iceland, she performed a bespoke poem for the inaugural international #MeToo conference in Reykjavik.



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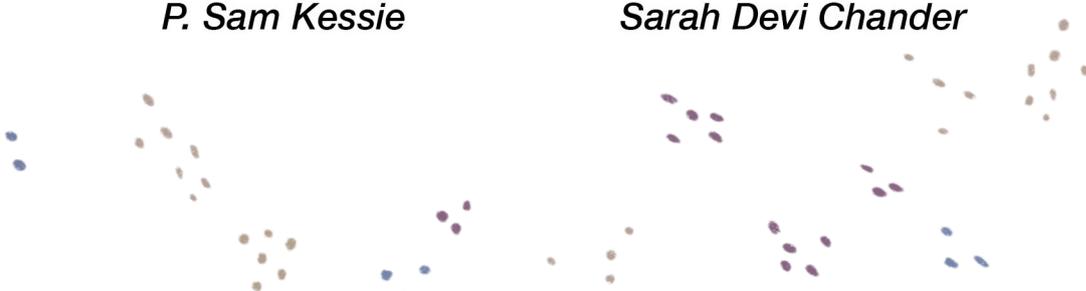
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