radii

SUPERTERRANEAN

OSMOSIS

SurreyHillsArts

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

First edition

Published 2024
Osmosis Press: Berkshire, England; Glasgow, Scotland

Printed and bound on recycled paper in the United Kingdom

Occasions when my heart was touched

Jade Hainsworth-Walsh

Red Kite, also known by its scientific name as *milvus milvus*.
Wingspan: 57-61"
Characteristics: Deeply forked tail. Pale patch underwing. Reddish plumage. Wings held at dihedral for silent, powerful flight.
Habitat: Prefers woodland and areas with scattered foliage. Nests in trees, sometimes in old crows' nests.
Location: Surrey Hillside, Dorking.

1. I've often wondered what it would be like to grow wings. To feel my arms splinter into fragments, smaller branches and barbules breaking out of my bones and piercing through my skin to unfurl into feathers. To feel my body contract and curl in on itself, my legs shrinking to become scaly talons and my head snapping back to melt into my spine. My nose and mouth pulling into a curved and gleaming beak. Feet unfit for the ground, I'd launch off the hill and into the sky.

2. Depending on your beliefs, the red kite is an omen of good or bad luck. A harbinger of doom. She is a messenger between our world and the spiritual. A psychopomp, she shepherds souls between this realm and the next.

3. Why are bird feathers hollow? I've picked one up and wondered if I could whittle it and play it like a flute. Would it make the sound of the wind? Are its bones hollow too? Could I take a bird corpse and play it like a harmonica?

4. I don't collect feathers. But I do collect fragments of people: books, scraps of paper with your handwriting, holiday cards, favourite poems, and I keep them close when I feel the beating of the red kites' wings.

5. I look at her circling over the Surrey hillside and wonder what she's hunting. Clearly the vineyard grapes aren't of interest. There are rabbits, moles, voles, an escaped chihuahua from the wine estate that she can catch. They are mostly carrion feeders, so I look for the dead. Maybe the road and the train tracks provide enough.

6. The skull of a red kite reminds me of the universe. The global shape that hides the brain could contain a galaxy or a black hole. If I peer into the orbit, maybe I'll see the stars.

7. As I stand below, the pattern of feathers underneath her wings are two giant eyes watching me.

8. The red kite has a dihedral wing formation, angled slightly to ensure swift and silent flight. She has a long, forked tail which she twists to change direction. Fix your eyes upon on the sky, you'll soon see her circling in hypnotic patterns.

9. Binoculars: cracked glass, fractured blue.

10. She hears the shivering soundwaves emitting from the trains; they're imperceptible to us, but they sometimes make the back of your neck prickle. She can hear Moldewarp shift the earth as he turns in his sleep, and Peter Labilliere buried upside-down scratching his way to hell. At night, she listens to the bats, their rapid clicking and the flap of their wings.

11. I have thought about what it would feel like for the red kite to take my soul. Our eyes are the window to our soul, or so the saying goes. Would she swoop down quietly from above, the last thing I see and feel are her talons piercing through my skin, hooking around my eyeballs and pulling them free? I suppose that leads to a bigger question: can you live without your soul? Would I wander, bloody and eyeless, until my body gave up?

12. Peter Labilliere is a liar. The red kite told me so, when she sits on my chest and whispers to me at night. He didn't have his eye gouged out by a tree; she tried to take his soul and he fought back, pulling out a fistful of her long, reddish feathers in the process. She shows me the place where the missing feathers are still regrowing, even after all this time. That's why the Devil came for him instead.

13. At night and in the early hours of the morning, she whispers to me in your voice.

14. I imagine looking into the mouth of the red kite, into the dark, fleshy tunnel that leads under the earth into a well of deep time. I need to find some way out.

15. Two bottles in, I tried to jump. I wanted to drift on the wind, to distract myself from the absence of you, forgetting I didn't have wings. But she grabbed my hair, sinking her talons into my scalp and pulled me back from the edge, left me bleeding and covered in cigarette ash.

16. I dreamt of the forest. A pair of red kites plucked strange music on giant heart strings between the darkening sky and the glowing light from Dorking. I run into the gaping trees, stumbling in the blackness until the thick, viscous spider webs trap me and I can no longer escape.

17. Harbinger of doom. I should have known the day I first saw her.

18. I want to press the red kite between the pages of your book, cover your words with blood and viscera and feathers from my body.

19. I cradle her in my arms as I step into the grave I've dug. Her yellow eyes are resigned to the fate she has assigned us. Here on the hillside, we'll lie in peace for a thousand years until the earth thrower churns up the world and we can see the sky again. Instead of flowers, feathers will grow in the soil above us.

Speculative Frequencies

Briony Hughes

/

To begin at dusk – light has dappled and the shadow of Box Hill is cast in all directions. Catching your breath as you carry the typewriter toward Radius. Crickets sounding, or the rumble of a distant jet – upwards, an apricot or magenta or cobalt paint-scape. The knowledge of chalk beneath each step.

There will be bats tonight. The heat persists. A moth taps against your shoulder – the recognition of last light.

/

When Donna Haraway says, 'we have never been human', she refers to a cross-species co-shaping of the self. Of daily encounter, of sensory entanglement with more-than-human kin, of consumption and cohabitation. But what of contact zones that are out of reach or beyond the gravity of sight or sounding? What happens when you hear a bat on the plastic monitor? Look up or sit down or wait for an acoustic rupture.

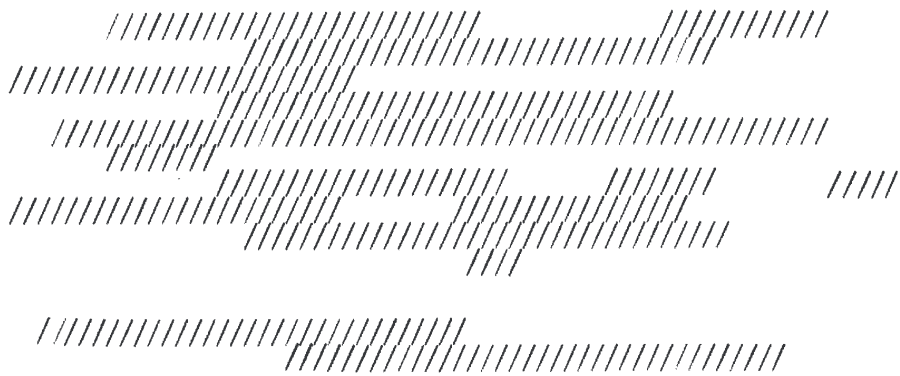
Ground becomes clover-mottled desk. Lamp becomes the curve of moonlight. Notice a drone.

/

Earlier, the GPS led you past Westhumble. You're reminded of Autumnal swarms. A necessity for low rainfall. You're reminded of urban explorers. Habitat theft – noted as east gallery, tin-can chamber, south system. You're reminded of what it means to be human misplaced as bat.

Despite a new route, everything remains familiar. Same gradient. Same owl-call, same intensity. 'Are you still thinking of the moon?' (Elizabeth-Jane Burnett)

* unidentified frequency (9:03pm)



/

Then, a sounding behind your nape. A pip pip pop tune in to a knock knock tab tab tab spit silence.

This moment as techno-mammalian flirtation. The 'enchantment' (Jane Bennett) of complete impossibility. Body becomes attuned to monitor becomes attuned to bat. You map a directionality. Ancient woodland edge - geometric runs of vine - borders rewilded.

/

Expansion of social circle to another or 'significant other' (Isabel Galleymore), plucked from thin air. To be grouped is to be a colony, a cloud, a flock, swarm, or cauldron. Language dances at the periphery of species, of weather systems, and fairy tales.

Tab tab tab tab knocking into pip pip pip pip distant pip pip gone.

You return next week to the same rhythm.

/

We make up what it means to be bat. An oscillogram can chart approach, social buzz, and roost return, but this feels artificial. Sound-see moth. Sound-see bat. Sound-see hedgerow. After several crossings you become attuned to the performance - ear, body, and breath. Tabbing into pat pat pop pop knocking into pip pip pip pip, then distanced. The heat continues to hum through your knees to the pacing of wing and throat. Annette Denzinger notes the importance of 'anecdotal observation' - you move the carriage to the beginning of the next line and continue to type.

* between woodland roosts (9:25pm)

//// /////
/////
tabtabtabtabtabbatbattabtabtab
tabtabbattabtabbatbat
bat bat bat battab tab tabtab tabtab
tabtab tab a bat a bat
batbat tab tab
tab battab bat bat tab
//////////////
//
tabtab bat tab
batbat
///// tab
//////////////////////////////
////////////////////////////////

/

'We cannot imagine being bat' (Victoria Mason), but is the sentiment reciprocal? Or might the head, the shoulders, an arm, or other remain as unprocessed sound. You note an unfamiliar frequency and turn to a new direction. Say spotted-wing drosophila. Say fruit fly. Sound-see fruit fly.

Puncture becomes embedded larvae becomes fruit collapse. The analogy is familiar. You read to your new community. You anticipate echo-song in each pause and inhale. To begin with we. 'We are all' (Juliana Spahr).

/

Again, you're connected. A knock knock knock tab tab tab knock tab pip pip from left to right facing Leith Hill. The camera tracks a blur, but the page is persistent. Flick eyes to the green light and note a frequency – 33 kHz. Between barbastelle and Nathusius' pipistrelle, or is this another myth? Battle of Dorking becomes bats of Dorking becomes fact. Say Chiropetra. Say unfamiliar language. Sound-see the unfamiliar. We sound-see the unfamiliar. Encounters begin to swarm in memory.

/

You begin to draft a prose essay on noise and perforate your left eardrum. The two acts are unrelated. The disquiet becomes unquiet becomes ambient tinnitus and three working days are reported missing. 'Noise gives the listener duration as an artifact' (Lisa Robertson).

You compensate this loss as a refraction of sound. You choose to inhabit a new reverberation.

* 34 kHz sequence above Radius (9:48pm)

x x / /

batbat tab tab

tabtabtab tab bat tab

x x x x x x x x x x / /

bat pat

a bat a tab

/ / x x / / x x x /

tab bat

/ / / / / x x

batbatbattab tab tabbattab tabtab

bat

tabbattab

tab tab

batbat a bat a tab

/ / x x / / x x x x x / x / x /

bat bat tab tab batbat tabtab

bat

tab

/

‘Knock knock pip pip knock pip pip becomes artifact, or commodity. Translations of sound arch and twitch without guidance. Suddenly you overuse language: muffle, rupture, ringing.

/

Instead, you dream the swarm. Of microclimate and hibernation. You count viable roosts along the M3 before closing your eyes. You count the ways the surface camber could be an analogy for wingspan. You count the days since the last visit to Radius. Twenty-one. You count the typewritten poems. Seventeen. You rest with an ice-pack pressed to your ear.

/

* occasional frequencies (10:04pm)

x x x x / x x / x /

batbatbatbat tab batbattabbattab

bat x x / / x x

/ bat/tab tab tabtab

x / /

tab tab tab

tabtab

x x x x //

batbatbat bat tab tab

tab tab

/ / x x

tabbat a bat

/

a tab

Bibliography

- Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, *The Grassling: A Geological Memoir* (London: Penguin, 2020)
- Annette Denzinger et al, 'Echolocation by the barbastelle bat, Barbastella barbastellus', *Journal Of Comparative Physiology* 187 (2001)
- Isabel Galleymore, *Significant Other* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2019)
- Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)
- Victoria Mason, 'Echoes in the Dark: Technological Encounters with Bats, *Journal of Rural Studie*s 33 (2014)
- Lisa Robertson, 'Disquiet', *Nilling: Prose Essays on Noise, Pornography, The Codex, Melancholy, Lucretius, Folds, Cities, and Related Aporias* (Toronto: Bookthug, 2012)
- Juliana Spahr, *well then there now* (Boston: Black Sparrow Press, 2011)

Blueprints for Nectar

Nathaniel King

England has lost more than 80 per cent of its chalk grassland which is devastating to pollinators and insects. We are facing a pollinator and insect crisis, with 41 per cent of insects facing extinction. Surrey has some of the fastest declining wildlife populations in England, with one third of its species now either extinct or in danger. This includes local extinctions of some bee species, such as the shrill carder bee.

welcome to the radius

dead carpenter bee tipped onto

a china plate & served

with mother-of-pearl smog

i am picking up a gossamer wing

& running at high speeds towards you

through a candlelit cemetery

in my best funeral suit

carrying this bespoke matchbox coffin

through a field of crushed bluebells

slide the dead carpenter bee

out of its cosy cardboard apartment

& kiss it once on the thorax

i have been told i have an attentive sensibility

by several self-proclaimed empaths

like a buddha renouncing earthly glamour

i have surrendered my overshirts

mistaken destitution for enlightenment

placed this matchbox coffin squarely

at the altar of the orphaned world

down on my knees

gardening

we were accused of bringing rubber bullets

to mediaeval summer

of hexing our exes

with actual spells

we tore the brown paper bag

softly encasing the malt liquor

& stood in a foursquare field at twilight texting

tracking chemtrails over the tennis courts

soft-serve cumulus over dorking cemetery

we were fracking the arboreal dark

with ice-cream spades

feeding each other glittering shards of fibreglass

at vespertine

while the blood moon rose

beauty is in the eye of the bee-holder

asking every stranger

on dorking high street

would they like to hold my bee

& feel beautiful

it's okay let it all out

here take this ramekin

tears are never wasted

precious nectar for the colony

the daffodils are getting a little shuteye forever

barbastelle bats in button down twilight

carpenter bees docking

on the lunar surface of sun-gored apricots

like orchard batteries

i'm feeding fibreglass to a run

of plush bunnies

my feeling for you is authentic

& therefore inexpressible

ersatz cloud berries on a ring cushion

herbaceous perennials

all fructified with suffering

they had a very fine day at box hill

making mountains out of mounds

of crushed-up penicillin

milky light blushing beneath parasols

miss bates tried to drown in the abundance

of cathedral shade from her sermons

the white carriage is smothered in ivy

& lost to late afternoon shadowtackle

mr knightley takes a surgical knife

to the soft flesh

of an artificial showroom peach

spilling pulp on the picnic blanket

cuts it into segments

& promises they will never hurt gain

i'm carrying a lantern through vineyards at dusk

a swarm of pepper moths bursting

from a bundle of pressed sheets

pressing their furry casements

to sun-bleached glass

emma made us this final gift

of their decaying splendour

it sounds like the fall out from a screaming nebula

the whirring mechanics of a million

tender follicles

lint rolling a lightbulb

in my most charitable moods

escorting the deer out of headlights

into procedurally-generated woods

sober to death & pixeldeep in evergreens

sky flushed with weird constellations

while you are drinking fruit punch

outside the surrey oaks

i'm ordering etsy pawsecco in the slammer

painting my room drunk tank pink

sobriety pass me the scalpel

help me prize the cold blue light

from a roe deer's brain

Monoculture provides bees with one nutrient source which results in poor bee health, increased transportation of hives, increased use of pesticides on crops and stress to search for diversity in food. It is imperative to increase crop diversity in order to decrease bee colony deaths. Together, genetically modified bees and monocropping contribute to habitat loss, reduced food diversity, and increased exposure to harmful chemicals, driving the collapse of bee populations in areas like Surrey. The decline of bees is alarming because they are essential pollinators for many crops, and their loss could have devastating effects on local ecosystems and food production.

this bee was produced *au naturel*
namely without the traits we desire
last seen orbiting the slender neck

of a homegrown sauvignon
at a blood donor's picnic
in medicine green fields

last seen knocking against panes of glass
in gothic rain
this bee is donating its fermented arteries to denby's

opening soft veins of ortega grape
irrigating crops with all this weird fluorescence
micro dosing on monocrops

on the memory of floral diversity
this one is a designer bee
it can recite passages of kierkegaard

this one just loves pepsi
it can teddy pick a hummock of nectar
from the mouth of a funeral tulip

it can count all its dead
brothers & sisters
but it'll never give up the colony

short of fumigating i'm at a loss
about what to do with all my feelings
& what about the crickets
sent here to disrupt the peasants
endless siestas
what about
the abandoned wedding carriage
filled with actual flowers
smog pouring from the funnel of an exterminator's
mouth
like a swarm of pretty black cicadas

the scarecrow feasts on overripe fruit in the cornfield
blackcurrants
pears
& pumpkins
who will tell emma
carving her initials into a flowering knoll
with a dollhouse knife
that the smoke billowing
towards her
isn't smoke

another atonal requiem for insects

thrift shop splinters

playing this accordion of last year's fashion

accordingly

met my cursed doppelganger

at the flea market of desolation

in a drought holding the last

dime store bag of watersnake

pedalling this swan-shaped paddle boat

through darkening spruce

while cannibals close in

wearing *meat is murder* dinner bibs

the perfect disguise

thought i'd muzzled these bees

who super-glued their wings back together

while i was reading knock knock jokes

to a decomposing clown

whose final wish it was to be lowered

into a bath of himalayan pink salt

when all i had was table

in those days all laughter sounded like applause

in those days i believed in change

in the life-altering potential of balloon arts

now i just think about revenge

but the ache still holds me in the small hours

the rain on sundays still moves me

a glittering parcel of palm-shaded snow

carried syntactically through

the corridors of a womb-brite forest

to get closer to a silk august sentience

of lux nectarines

scrubbed verges on the bluish world

gouache the air-conditioned groom

to experience the verges of civic liberty

outmoded actual forms

grow like melancholy spores

all over this fluttering

softly pencil me into the almanack

as hazel catkin at hermit's Christmas

ordering a hand-cranked juice press

on the shopping channel post-watershed

applying factor fifty by candlelight to avoid moonstroke

hiding a dozen coffee rings under a single coaster

spent the summer simping for untraceable moths

swarming in slack jawed light

reading the fortunes of strangers who

believe in viability of agave honeycomb

i'm extinguishing all my miniature pharmaceuticals

the season's last insect drowning in plum juice

while the first draft remains the purest distillation

of their suffering

what if the carpenter bee is spoken for

last seen copulating with a sunflower

i'm speaking on the bees' behalf here

what if the honey is laced

with barbiturates

as their tender agent

gentleman gravedigger

i'm thinking it's best we put these husks on ice

wearing wayfarers to the world's wake

hiding our herbaceous tears

from the trust kids next door

how the light paints us like barnacles

another bee's nest wrapped in a couture ball gown

to feel at most temporarily pure

or preternaturally still

you're a dutch still life of lobsters

i'm a sable stuffed & glinting behind museum glass

as if we could somehow pause snow

husks of white insects falling from the sky

a pair of twigs lodged in the propellor

of each blizzard-churned moment

in the hard intervals & latifundia

of the surrey downs

in the parlance of vertigo

i guess i'm falling

heart so full right now

cheap little box of bespoke

coffin glow worms

worm eaten yellowjacket

tearing the soft flesh of a bruised apricot

warm wind italicising trees

dumb weirdo shaking another

rabbit out of a black hat

in buttondown woods

arranging prop bones

on soiled junkyard furniture

tying a single length of red ribbon to the chandelier

uncorking a champagne bottle of kinetic white bees

in the penthouse suite of suffering

sorry but this silver dinner service is late

& almost ninety-nine percent alphabet spaghetti

rip to the carpenter bee
carried out on a miniature
doll-house stretcher

you've been a bee
i've been your starving host
while my wagamamas lies in ruins

this will be my final will & testament
needling you with this weird branch
i found in the cemetery earlier

needling this branch with this weird you
i carry over the white plains proudly
usually i would advise against

putting your entire fist through
the confession booth's
partitions of tattered honeycomb

but what if we all got matching tattoos
of the carpenter bee
& lived forever