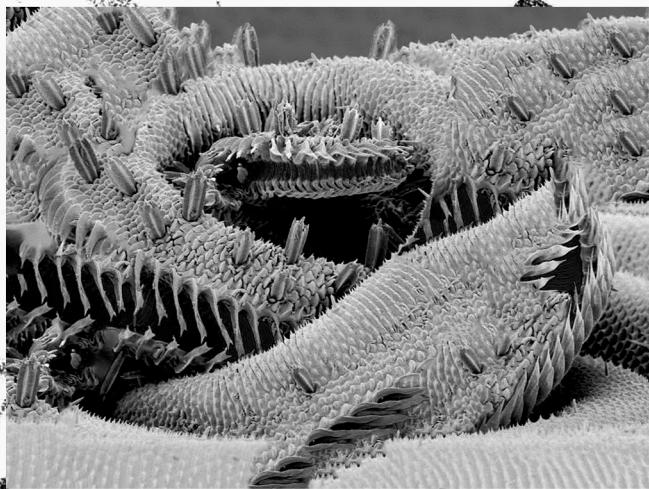




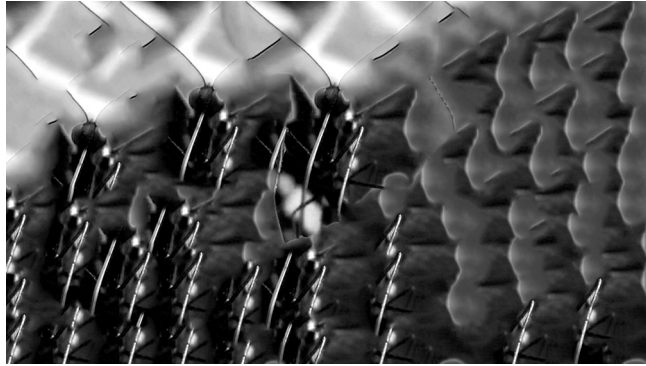
what is the butterfly not

alexander iezzi





**I'M ON A WILD BUTTERFLY CHASE**  
**WHAT IS A BUTTERFLY NOT?**





I enter your home, I eat your children, and I leave sexually matured.

I am a large blue butterfly. I am the Large Blue Butterfly (*Phengaris arion*). I bend over and I smell the butterfly. It smells of orchid. I'm standing within a wet and warm butterfly habitat in a dry, arid, desert city. It's hard to breathe in here. I see faces in awe, a room full of massive butterflies - fluttering and flapping out of boxes sent from the far reaches of the world to a small glass environment in Tucson, Arizona. It is not a Large Blue, I am not so easy to come by.

As a fully-matured butterfly, my lifespan is only around two months. In these two months, the fluttering Blues spend their adult life searching for a mate in order to repeat their life-cycle. We begin on the leaves of the wild Thyme plant, where the fully-formed Large Blues lay their eggs. When the eggs develop into larvae, the larvae begin life by eating the shell in which they grew. Following this, the young caterpillars feed on their host plant, the thyme, and finally drop to the ground to begin their next stage.

(Witek, et al,  
2008)

This part of the life-cycle is where things become surprising, where my interest has been directed. The caterpillars, now on the ground, under the leaves of the thyme plant, emit a pheromone - a fragrance - imitating that of an ants' larva. Because of this olfactory excretion, a particular type of red ant (*Myrmica sabuleti*) picks up the caterpillar, thinking that it is one of its own colony's larvae, and carries its much larger body into its brood's birthing chambers, and thus yet another chapter of the Large Blue's cycle begins.

This is where I become a large, blue parasite.

There are two distinct techniques that the caterpillars utilize within the ant colony. In the first technique, the caterpillar, once in the ant colony, finds a place to hide away from the brood area where the ant larvae are feeding. When hungry, the caterpillar periodically enters the brood chambers to binge-eat the baby ants until it can eat no more and returns to its hidden, safe space. (Sielezniew, et al, 2008)

In the second technique, the caterpillar stays in the brood area that it is initially carried into and employs more tricky behavior. It begins to mimic the movements of the ant larvae and allows the worker ants to feed it as if it was one of their own brood. The worker ants are completely convinced of the caterpillars being their own larvae that they feed its body (which is immensely larger than their own young) until it is ready to enter the next stage of its cycle. In either case, the caterpillar can remain within the colony for anywhere as long as 9 to 22 months.

The caterpillar then pupates, the stage of change and unknowing that occurs between caterpillar and butterfly. The pupa lies within the confines of the ant colony, safe in its hard, dense, shell-like outer. The body becomes liquid and begins to re-form within the pupa. When the metamorphosis is complete, an adult butterfly emerges from its protective sleeve. The butterfly slowly and carefully crawls out of the ant colony until it finally emerges above the ground. Here, after its tireless journey, it is finally able to pump blood into its wings and begin to fly. It can live the rest of its now short - only a few weeks - life fluttering about, collecting nectar, and reproducing until the cycle of the large blue will begin again for another generation.

The path from the nursery is dangerous for the butterfly. One must put themselves in close proximity to potential predators in order to grow. The red ants could easily devour the large blue caterpillar that they host if they knew better. If you are a fortunate traveler, navigating the indeterminacies of this life-cycle, you will make it through. Some decide to blend in with their surroundings while others brandish a coat of armor, we all have our means of survival.

What can we learn from the life-cycle of the Large Blue? And what can we learn from this sort of deception? This deceitful duty done by the butterfly - papilionoidea's colored whimsy has a darker side. Here I become our storyteller. Fluttering this and that way, as always, as the story does as well.

# MELTING BODY

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## DISINTEGRATION PROCESSES



In its roots, "the butterfly effect" is a linguistic trope of causality. The tenet holds that very small differences or changes in an initial state can have large effects at a later time. No matter how abstract this causality may become (i.e. the flapping of a butterfly's wings the cause for a hurricane) and no matter how much unknowing is held in between events, there is always a linear path of cause and effect present in the concept.

This path is mirrored in the biological processes which occur during butterfly pupation. The caterpillar forms its hard outer shell, and the rest of the body disintegrates. Over time, amidst the large amount of unknowing that comes with the melted body, a butterfly is formed. Researchers have recently discovered that butterflies are able to retain memories from their lives as caterpillars, even through the radical biological processes they undergo when becoming a butterfly. The paradox here is that a certain type of knowledge is actually retained amidst processes which remain opaque in the middle. The cause and effect rationality is corrupted in this process.

In Carl Jung's *Synchronicity, an Acausal Connecting Principle*, he develops an idea in opposition to causality which he refers to as "synchronicity." In thinking of causality as a pure cause and effect relationship, he states that in an acausal system, "'effect' cannot be understood as anything except [a] phenomenon of energy. Therefore it cannot be a question of cause and effect, but of a falling together in time, a kind of simultaneity." In this he comes to define synchronicity as a logic where meaning is found without cause, indeterminate of reason and linearity.

(Jung, 1960,  
pp. 19)

Let us consider this as a backdrop for the process of some practices I will point to later. Like the trope of the butterfly effect, linguistic provocations can yield similar, radical effects by inducing a state of unknowing, the same unknowing that is pushed towards by a question, and the same unknowing produced while engaging with practices which rely on a chance experience to produce interpretations.

The body dissolves, morphs, reshapes and reassembles. Let us not use the metaphor about wings, this is not a metaphor about the ability to fly. No longer contained in its awkward form, it can soar to new heights. Let us not use the metaphor about flying. Let us destroy language and return to a pre-verbal, therefore pre-hegemonic place. The body has turned to mush, to soup, and language will follow. Is it now possible that we can hold the pieces together with a butterfly?

**TITLE**

**DISTURBANCE IN SPACE**



It is important to note that we can discuss the potential of the butterfly's mimicry not only for the purpose of protection or defense. Rather than being fixed, there is evidence which shows that butterfly patterns and aesthetics have slowly evolved over time, seemingly more akin to what we would consider changes in fashion trends. Through his research, Roger Caillois determined that insect, and thus butterfly, mimicry is an aesthetic show that many lifeforms engage with.

Caillois's idea of lepidopteran mimicry is described as a "disturbance in the perception of space." This disturbance requires others from this species, as well as the ones which exist in its assemblage to restructure their perception within the assemblage. The mimic functions as an interruption of an ever-changing, ever-interrupted system. From the beginning of his essay 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychastheina,' Caillois denotes that interpretation is a mode which "threatens to be misleading." In an ever-changing system such as butterfly mimicry, it is precisely this misleading which produces a constant array of change and interruption.

(Caillois, 1984,  
pp. 28)

(Caillois, 1984,  
pp. 16)

The result of this receptive, outward analysis is determined to be a depersonalization. The self is lost in the space which surrounds it, becoming its surroundings. The inanimate is rendered lifeless by its acquisition into the body, and professional resemblances are formed with living and non-living things of all kinds.



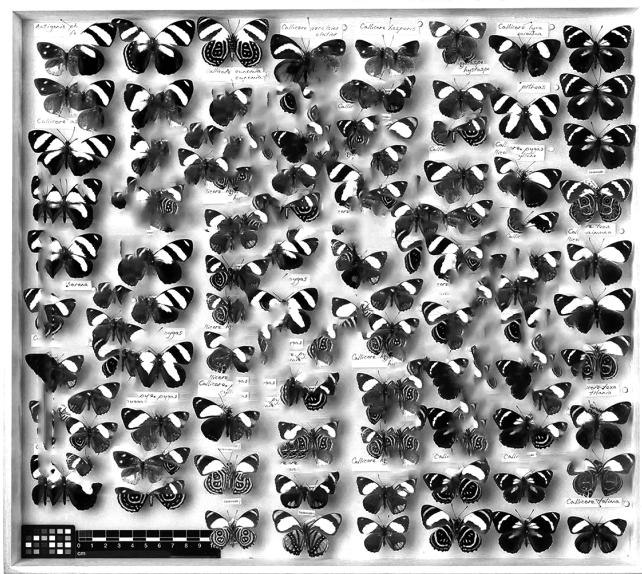
Let us consider the cuckoo. The Large Blue is a cuckoo parasite. When a species is said to have a cuckoo-type parasitic style, it means that the parasite mimics the host. It takes the name from the Cuckoo family of birds, experts which lay their eggs in the nests of different avian species, tricking the other birds into tending to the eggs until they hatch.

To look enough like something is enough to create a trick. In this trick, disruptions occur. Because these disruptions can seem so irrational, Caillois determined that mimicry is incredibly close to magic. Natural systems are disrupted by the magic of the mime. Birds take advantage of each other, and butterflies take advantage of ants. The linearity of their systems becomes creased down the middle, and new structures begin to emerge from these coexistences.

# WHAT IS THE FEELING?

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## HOARDING



With such skills in all areas, it is no wonder that butterflies have attracted the eyes of many artist-cum-collectors. Vladimir Nabokov famously admired their “mysteries of mimicry,” describing them as showing “artistic perfection.” But he also noticed something else in their mimesis, that which he describes as a behavior showing “subtlety, exuberance, and luxury far in excess of a predator’s power of appreciation.” Nonetheless he saw them as magical in their “intricate enchantment and deception.” Their behavior brought out the same in him, as he became not only a collector, but discovered and named many species as well.

But the mimicry is not all there is to focus on. In his short essay ‘Invitation to Transformation,’ Nabokov asks, “what is the feeling of hatching?” I ask, how is it this question can be answered? It is not a human who can experience re-birth — we lack any biological or cognitive ability of being able to perceive such a thing as a butterfly would. Shifts in consciousness may be the closest we can equate to such an experience, and this is possibly why so many have been fascinated by the idea of metamorphosis.

There is often an obsessive quality in collecting. “One may start from the fact that the true collector detaches the object from its functional relations,” says Walter Benjamin. He likens it to the idea of keeping memories, and sees in them a capacity for telling stories or even themselves becoming allegorical.

There is a fine line of distinction that separates the collector and the hoard. *New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter is unsure of this distinction when he is reviewing an exhibition called 'The Keeper' held at New York's New Museum in 2016. The show hosted a collection of Nabokov's butterflies (as well as a rock collection belonging to Caillois) presenting them among other collections within an art context in order to rethink the possibilities of the act of collecting. Like Benjamin, Cotter writes, "The real point of collecting, though, may lie beyond practicality, or desire, or accident. People surround themselves with things to compensate for perceived deprivation past, and as a hedge against fear of future want." A power is given to all of these objects no matter how mundane or useless they may seem to others, someone has granted them a new reality by making them a receptacle for stories and memories. (Cotter, 2016)

But the practicalities of collecting can be more pointed and more revolutionary than an act that is likened to that of keeping a scrapbook. Bob Black, in his book, *Nightmares of Reason*, describes hunter-gatherer communities as transcendent of state and capitalist realities. He uses the forager - a type of collector, living from the refuse of another society - to frame anarchist communities in ways that disrupt and exist outside of the boundaries presented by capitalist systems. (Black, 2010)

(Benjamin, 2003) In a text called 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,' Benjamin gives an example of this same fluttering existence, collecting and living on the refuse of the capitalist society in which he exists. He uses the city's ragpicker as an archetype created by capitalist society, the one who is able to live off the refuse that the system produces. Benjamin later in his work, *The Arcades Project*, re-thinks the act of collecting as a world-making project and states that "it must be kept in mind that, for the collector, the world is present, and indeed ordered, in each of his objects."

(Benjamin, 1999, pp. 207)

To this end, it is possible for the forager to begin making new worlds, which from inside the system can destabilize the dehumanizing and antisocial realities that are at the foundation of capitalist society.

**BECOMING IS FICKLE**  

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**SHAPE-SHIFTING**



The butterfly is constantly on the move. It flutters between flowers, mud, collecting nectar and pollinating as it goes. Between destinations the butterfly will search for a mate in order to continue the cycle of its species. The symbol of the butterfly denotes the same, it is fickle, variable, and unstable.

These very descriptors fit neatly into a discourse that is critical of purely formal/aesthetic trends such as fashion. However, the biggest difference is that the butterfly's "fashion" is a trend which has slowly evolved over thousands of years, rather than modern fashion which trends change rapidly. Today, fashion collections are often delivered more than 12 times a year in order to keep trends at a maximum.

In Jean-Paul Gaultier's Spring 2014 couture runway show, the butterfly was used repeatedly to change the shapes of his models. The bodies were contorted by tight corsets on the waists - mimicking the butterflies small chassis - and protruding wing-like garments were extruded outwards from the thin fashion models. The outfits changed the human forms, inspired by butterflies, but turning them into something new. Gaultier's collection highlighted certain limits of the human body by engaging with a less looked at bodily form. According to his own website, Gaultier's fashion practice is one which focuses on "systematically calling into question clichés, standards, codes, conventions and traditions. He turns, shifts and flips them around - even destroys them - in his bid to reinvent them."

(Gaultier, 2017)

Likewise, feminist-queer theorist Stephen Seely writes extensively on fashion's potential to "problematize the privileged Western binaries." Like Caillois, Seely sees this being achieved through forms which near the limits of visibility. Expanding Deleuze and Guattari's theory of "becoming-animal," Seely notes the potential in restructuring gender, sex, and human-centric ideals based on the body's becoming-nonhuman. In the same vein as Caillois's "depersonalization," there is a becoming which occurs through contact with something external. This is capable of destabilizing the structures in which the human body is viewed. Seely notes the body's capacity for transformation due to the human's affective capacity. That is, we are in constant bodily transition because we are receptive and affected by other bodies we encounter. What Seely calls "affective fashion" is a clothing which harnesses and realizes the potential for the "body to become-otherwise", such as Gaultier's making of human-butterfly hybrids.

(Seely, 2012, pp. 249)

(Deleuze and Guattari, 2016)

The effective result of becoming is an escape from hegemonic, dominating social and cultural views of the body. In becoming-butterfly, the body is released from the dangerous ideals that much fashion is intertwined with creating. The fashion industry is fickle as I have already stated, but it is also capable of dominating the ways in which human bodies are to look and to be looked at. Therefore, affective fashion effectively engages with destabilizing these regimes of power by offering a body which is becoming non-ordinary.



The limit of this becoming is death, an affect we can never embody while alive. If death is the unreachable limit, then Walter Benjamin declares fashion a “provocation of death.” This is why it is constantly shifting — prodding towards something new. This provokes me to return to the butterfly’s ability to so closely resemble death in the pupation phase. Death and unknowing is what links back to our butterfly. It is exactly this type of unknowing which such fashion becomes close to. However, when this unknowing becomes referential through language, it can be thrust back into the same systems that create the hierarchies which were initially opposed.

(Benjamin, 1999,  
pp. 833)

In Roland Barthes’ analysis of pattern recognition, he states that “the danger of pure chance is that it can be just as effective at producing logical sequences.” In his discussion on Dandyism, we see a similar parasitic relation to the Large Blue on more practical terms.

(Barthes, 2013,  
pp. 20)

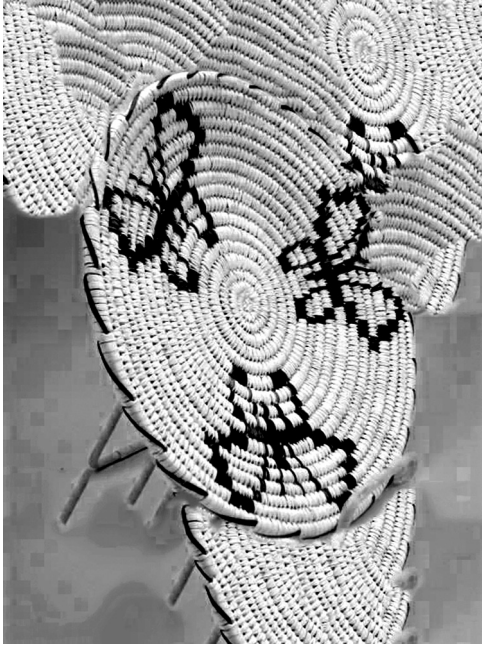
The ability to slip through social classes based on careful aesthetic distinctions makes the dandy a shape-shifter - the same magic imbued in the butterfly. The techniques of the dandy and the power of signification in dress allows it to act as a interruption in the class system - it is a mimicking of class. This functions as a mirror to the techniques used by Large Blue caterpillars when they interrupt the social hierarchy of the ants’ colony with a sonic or olfactory, rather than visual, mimesis.

The dandy, like the butterfly, becomes a wholly receptive character, miming other classes through the act of an urban foraging. Being the product of culture and the city, the dandy returns to the nature of the collector, both removing the signifying ability of the garment and inverting it simultaneously. The dandy creates new worlds which become the collected allegory of the city, all while transgressing the boundaries between middle-class and aristocratic social hierarchies.

To return to Barthes, “one could say that it is the signifying function of dress which makes it a total social object.” In this light, the dandy can be seen not only as a middle-class parasite, disrupting the social hierarchies, but also as a performer whose process is incapable of functioning without an audience. The dandy’s exuberance and need to be seen mirrors both Nabokov and Caillois’s readings of Lepidopteran mimicry. It would be one thing to hoard the fashion of the upper-classes and aristocracy in private, but as is true in the nature of parasitism, there must be an other present for this mode of socializing to affectively incite change.

(Barthes, 1975,  
pp. 11)

**ELDER BROTHER STORY**  
**SONGLESS BIRDS**



The Tohono O'odham are a nation indigenous to the same region of the Sonoran desert that I am native to.

Legend:

(Erdoes and Ortiz,  
1984)

Butterflies are a product the Creator. Creator collected all the beautiful colors of the desert. Creator took the cornmeal, the Saguaro flowers, prickly pear cactus fruit, the blue sky, the sun, the Gold-poppies, Sonoran rock lichens, the bark of the Palo Verde tree, the red from the sand. Creator placed them into a bag, along with all the songs of all the birds. When he opened the bag, hundreds of butterflies emerged, brilliant in colors and singing the songs of the bird. Jealous Song-Bird approached the Creator. Song-Bird told the Creator that butterflies have already been given so much beauty, why should they also be given the lovely songs of the birds, for each bird was given its own unique song. Creator took Song-Bird's words into account and took the songs away from the butterflies, leaving them in silent, fluttering beauty.

**MUD-PUDDLED**  
**NOTHING HAPPENS IN NATURE**



Drawing from research and parables made around Matsutake mushrooms, Anna Tsing is able to diagnose that it is indeterminacy that makes the life of this species possible. In her book, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, she declares that “without collaboration, we all die,” an insistence that all life is inherently reliant on sociality. Tsing tracks a relationship where this specific species thrives in areas that have been deforested. The causality would follow as such: since the forests in these areas have been stripped bare, the Matsutake mushrooms flourish.

(Tsing, 2017, pp. 28)

Tsing offers the indeterminacy of this relationship — that Matsutakes have, by chance, evolved to flourish in areas that could be seen as contaminated — in conjunction with the precarity of the livelihoods which exist in the trade of these mushrooms. Tsing asserts that “precarity is the condition of our times” and notes it for its ability to shift social analysis. Through an acceptance of indeterminacy and precarity, she acknowledges that “this won’t save us — but it might open our imaginations.” It is this opening of imagination which creates new meanings outside of simplified, logical systems of causality.

(Tsing, pp. 20)

(Tsing, pp. 19)

I strike a parallel with Tsing when she discusses the reasons why preindustrial livelihoods are overlooked. Foraging and stealing (I shall add parasitizing as well) are not considered to be part of progress, saying that “they show us how to look around, rather than ahead.” This looking around represents a non-linear way of being in the world. The metaphors presented by the butterfly serve as a similar perpendicular transit to this linear logic, showing that chance actions and non-progressive modes of being can begin to destabilize that logics that fasten us to normative modes of engaging with the world around us.

(Tsing, pp. 22)

To link back to a butterfly species which is not the Large Blue, researchers examining the rare Frosted Elfin have discovered that this specific butterfly, once thought to be near extinction is actually finding its home near multiple US military training sites. Apparently this is due to controlled burnings of the site, and possibly a taste for loud, explosive sounds, the species is thriving in these specific places. Again this creature defies logical linearities that would seem most obvious; it is not the Matsutake alone which finds a home in indeterminate space.

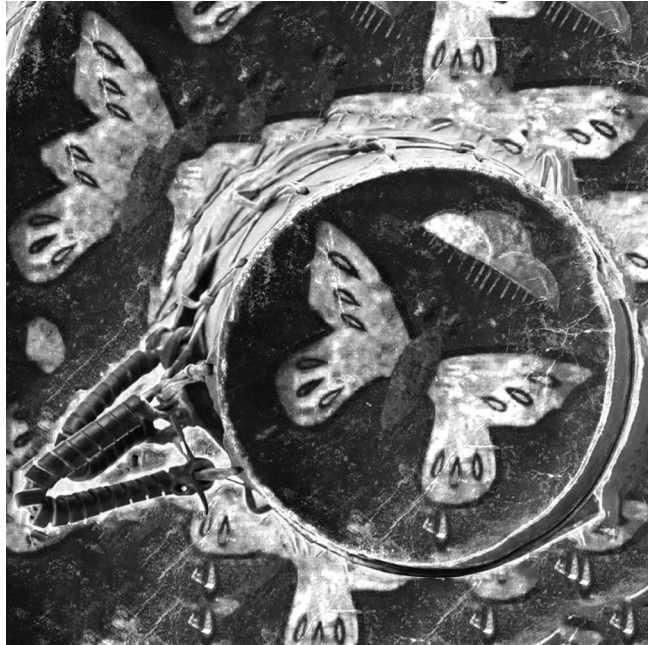
(Ferster, et al,  
2008)

By offering a counter to reason, just as Benjamin and others offer counters to capitalism, the butterfly shows us possibility to overcome symptoms of living in antisocial societies. The fluttering motion of the butterfly again mirrors non-linear philosophies and illustrates the possibilities of chance, randomness, and redemption to be accepted and fostered. The butterfly's long-lived parasitic beginnings and transformation allows this redemptive quality to be harnessed.

The quip of nature's sameness comes to haunt us. From Spinoza's perspective, "nothing happens in Nature which can be attributed to any defect in it, for Nature is always the same." Then it is nature itself, as Tsing points as well, that shows its workings to be chaotic, non-linear, indeterminate and hospitable to parasites of all kinds.

(Spinoza, 2008,  
pp. 492)

**BLOODY POWERHOUSE**  
**(DRUMMING)**





*I said: Yeah, it's going to be much different.*

*She said: They all work as a collective.*

*I said: The self, or our subjectivity, is somehow changed by being in conversation with other people and non-humans as well.*

My shaman's practices are those which attempt to engage with non-ordinary reality, and is often referred to as "magic" by resistant skeptics. In shamanism the ordinary reality experienced by our senses is the middle world, but we can also journey to another dimension of this same realm. In practice, subjects are asked to journey from the middle world into both the higher and lower worlds alongside their healer.

*She said: Your soul probably knows its possibilities.*

*(Drumming)*

*She said: A beautiful transmission came through for you. How did you feel?*

To do this, an alternate state is reached through meditation guided by drumming and a clear intention of who or what will be communicated with during the journey. The higher world comprises the world of spirits, and the lower world, the world of "power animals". It is asked that these non-ordinary worlds are explored, and finally discussed on the return to ordinary reality.

*She said: Have a go at it, and as you're drumming just call in whatever sounds you feel like calling in.*

*I said: I would like to bring in the sound of the butterfly.*

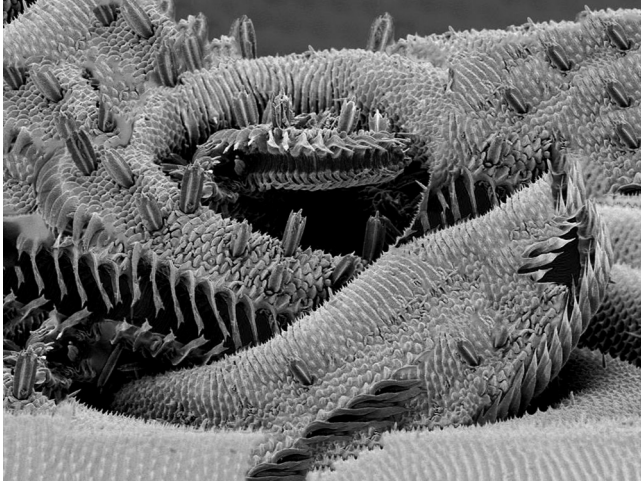
*(Drumming)*

*She said: You are a bloody powerhouse. Oh my god. I had this whole feeling that the butterfly collects all the missing parts and puts them back together.*

Change is an obvious symbol associated with the butterfly but also as a potential outcome in both shamanistic practices as well as psychoanalysis, by my own experiences. It is no surprise that many contemporary psychoanalysts have begun using the practices of shamanism in the treatment of patients. The access to the unknown parts of the self can prove to be extremely helpful in treatment of patients. Encounters with non-ordinary practices can push us to a state of openness — one which can prove to be difficult to access through quotidian structures. In this state, new meanings can be encountered through interpretations made through non-linear logics.

(Hammerman, 2008)

SUCKING  
MOISTURE WANDERING



External world collected by my butterfly.  
Body straw, continuous sucking;  
the connoisseur of dung.  
The experiences hoped for may be rich,  
but there's not pressure change for such residue  
to be picked up by the pump alone. Need it more moist,

more and more and more moist.  
Like the eye-dropper in the butterfly  
head. Inhaling isn't enough for the residue,  
capillary-action becomes the motor for sucking.  
And a greater engine for the thinking of rich  
thoughts. Without forgetting the dung.

This lexicon reminiscent of dung.  
I only the want the most moist  
Lepidopterological words - rich  
and descriptive. Mud-puddle, butterfly  
party. Thousands of boys come for the sucking  
of sweet, sweet residue.

Dashing ever forward toward that nutritious residue  
found in carrion, mud, dung.

Just as I'm sucking,  
the metaphors remain moist.

My petite tool: the butterfly  
continues leading me. I'm puddling on the rich

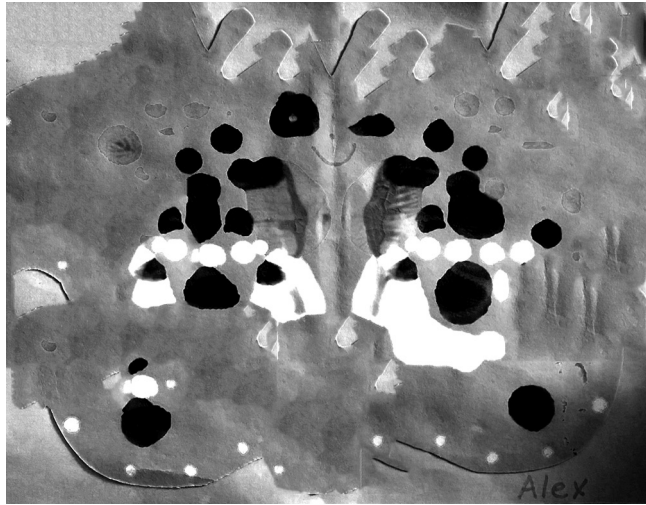
projections I pump into. Rich  
reverse pharyngeal pump. Which residue  
is left after I've sucked the butterfly  
from all but the dung  
it hinges onto. Creating of manic moist  
and limitless surface possibility. Wandering sucking.

I sit sucking that surviving residue.  
Hoping for rich analogies. The dung  
continues to sit moist after I've taken what I need from the butterfly.

**IEZZI BUTTERFLY BODY**  

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**THE DESERT**



I was socialized in a desert of the American West. I spent time outside, playing among the cacti, the lizards, and ever more treacherous creatures. However, the one creature that seems most out of place in this harsh environment is the butterfly. Here it remains the most magical creature, due to its existence in a place where much of the wildlife seems to hold hostility, not just against one another, but the environment as well. The desert is not always a peaceful place, but a multitude of butterflies can be found throughout the arid region, fluttering around the desert in constant search for food. I was socialized with the butterfly.

I started with a search for an answer to a childhood ailment - episodes in which I could clearly hear familiar voices in my ears, but without being physically near to the people whose voices I was hearing. Searching for a logical solution as a child, I went to a pediatric physician whose only diagnostic was that I was “sniffing too much snot into my brain.” From this point, I came to realize that indeterminacy can be so powerful that the short-comings of science can begin to leap out at you. I kept this anecdote with me through my life, speaking to many people about possibilities of such episodes. I decided that I would meet with a shaman with the hope of being able to re-experience these episodes. I did not in fact re-experience them, but new turns began revealing themselves.

In late 2017 I began meeting with the shaman. Based in London, she describes herself as an alchemist and shaman specializing in “the ability to open various inter-dimensional gateways ranging from the planets to the trees, to help others to connect energetically and to learn and transform.” I met her with an open mind, although I had no previous experience with this kind of healing, and I found conversations of the practice often leading back to terms of causality - for instance, someone goes to the shaman because they are trying to relieve a fear or discomfort of wearing scarves, and the shaman, during a journey to the lower world discovers that someone in this persons family had been strangled, thus the cause and effect of the fear is determined.

However, I also see potential in the indeterminacy presented by the practice as well. It is understandable that if you are preoccupied with a techno-scientific linear logic of life, you will want to understand your questions through causalities, even when engaging with something as non ordinary as a shaman. It can be difficult to be told that events just unfold and happen by chance. The practice may be approached by a causal concern, but I believe that much more is opened up by allowing yourself to fully immerse in a shaman’s drumming, to allow yourself to engage with lower and upper worlds. In my meetings, the shaman often told me to allow meaning to come to me, rather than searching for it through cause and effect. She told me to speak to the things that appeared and ask what they are.



I wonder what the power animal encountered in my own shamanic practices has to do with this. Is there any surprise at this point that I've seen a butterfly? Mine was large, yellow, and could mimic any other form, first appearing as a yellow spider before revealing itself as a butterfly. The yellow butterfly may have brought me here. In Arizona I visited a natural desert spring that became my point of entry to the lower world. I went through my parents garage and pulled out a large box full of childhood drawings. A majority of the work in the box is drawings and paper cutouts of butterflies. Why is it that I drew so many butterflies at an early age? A mud-puddle hiding in my childhood home.

I CAN'T CHANGE  
FINDING A REASON



(Scott, 2017) Have you noticed in the hip-hop song “Butterfly Effect” by Travis Scott he never mentions a butterfly aside from the title?

Do you think the symbol itself is strong enough to stand on its own, solely in a title?

Why do you think he started the song with the lyrics “I cannot change”?

Do you think he was directly referring to the inherent change occurring in butterfly bodies?

Do you think stories mirroring the life-cycle of the butterfly surround us deeply?

Would you say the name and habits of our fluttering friends can often be seen referenced in culture?

(Alien, 1979) Did you see the film *Alien*?

Remember when the characters first encounter the alien species’ eggs which parasite a crew member of the ship by using a their body as a host body?

Did you think that the face-hugging alien gave the human body a life support while at the same time using his body has a pupa?

Did you think the alien resembled the egg, the larvae (caterpillar), and the butterfly?

Did anyone ever tell you that the butterfly easily captures our imagination?

Did they mention that the transformations can be larger-than-life?

What did they mean by this?

Do you think it is not only the mimicry of the butterfly which captivates us, but even more so the massive transformations that these bodies undertake to become fully formed?

Do you think it's necessary to find a reason for why the butterfly is symbolically important?

Would you find it more or less meaningful to know the cause of the butterfly's popularity?

**BUTTERFLY SOCIAL**  

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**THE RUBBING OF ORGANS**



Social Butterfly is a term that often gets used to describe a person who is capable of socializing with many various groups. Although the term may be reduced to a dislocated socializing – the idea that a social butterfly cannot truly integrate into any community because it only touches the surfaces of many – it also has implications of a hyper-social being. We cannot ignore the sociality of the butterfly.

When seeing language as a social phenomenon, we encounter again the sociality of the butterfly. And to continue with butterfly themes through language, and the closeness to death, we can again take from Barthes his construal of the term “La petite mort” (*the little death* in English) which is most often associated with the physical sensation of a sexual orgasm. Barthes takes this term to describe the feeling one should feel when experiencing great literature, or that is, the use of language in an utterly satisfying way. The butterfly’s little death is of course its melting-body before transformation. (Barthes, 1975)

However, one must not forget the re-birth that happens after the butterfly's little death. Here we can flutter back to Kristeva and her re-thinking of Plato's "Chora" as a conceptual space we inhabit just after birth. It is a space we occupy before we are to learn the systems described by language. All language exists within and describe structures that surround them. Before we have learned to speak, we are free of any of these structural inheritances of language. To take from Russell West-Pavlov's dissection of Kristeva's conception of Chora, "this realm prior to language can only be hypothesized, but not genuinely known, precisely because it comes before the language which would be necessary to report it." It is hard to conceptualize this central paradox of the Chora because of our reliance on language as a mode of transmitting knowledge and understanding.

(West-Pavlov,  
2009, pp. 39)

But here I go...

The Chora must return us back to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming-animal. What this concept does is actually return us back to a space which is closer in resemblance to the Chora than to one of more substantial structure. Language is situated as a part of life, rather than at its essence, giving implication of an existence that is possible outside of it, mirroring the core of the Chora as a pre-linguistic space. But they take it further, to become but flesh, that is the "body without organs" or the body without structure. By end of their chapter on the becoming which is simultaneously a coming-undone, they come to discuss the potential they find in becoming-insect, citing their buzzing. In their words a becoming-insect is "better able to make audible the truth that all becoming are molecular... The molecular has the capacity to make the elementary communicate with the cosmic." Like the butterfly-effect, this concept closely fits with the idea that small changes have large effects. Eventually these changes resonate with ideas presented by my shaman, who is engaged with considering the vibrations of everything in the universe as part of a cosmic communication which is constantly unfolding.

(Deleuze and Guattari, pp. 340)

Is the Chora the space that the Large Blue inhabits once it has re-emerged (been re-born) from the ant colony? Perhaps the Chora related to the freedom and magic that is so often associated with these flickering critters. Again the butterflies cause an interruption that becomes an illustration of structures we find ourselves within and become a symbol for self revolution and re-creation. Through all the butterflies becomings and metaphors, we see that the butterfly is nestled closely to acts that destabilize and deconstruct various hierarchies.



QUANTUM CHANGING  
ASKING A QUESTION



*How much change is possible in a therapy practice?*

In psychotherapy it is possible to measure change in terms of a client's symptoms, or changes in social functionality. Change often comes slowly in the process, but there is also the potential for more fast-paced revelations. Referred to as "quantum change," these are epiphanous moments in which new insights into personal realities may manifest themselves, potentially leading to changes of symptoms in a psychotherapeutic context. (Bien, 2004)

*How do you open a mind?*

In ancient civilizations, dreams were considered to be supernatural transmissions passed through the heavens. Sigmund Freud's obsession with clients' dreams was to do with the idea that dreams were connected to the subconscious. In his construction of psychotherapy as a form, he believed the unconscious governed our consciousness in waking life, and the only way to heal these was to make the unconscious conscious. To do this, his practice utilized a talk therapy which included the interpretation and analysis of his patients dreams. (Freud, 2010)

*What is a question?*

(Kristeva, 1995) Following Freud, Julia Kristeva's use of the question as form is a provocation of the treated subject to be in a constant state of unknowing. By a barrage of questions directed towards the patient, a therapist is affectively able to push the subject into less ordinary reality in which the retrieval of questions can reveal exciting and potentially healing results. The proper questioning by a therapist can lead to free-associations, thoughts which appear to come from nowhere, or from somewhere deep inside the psyche. Her theories actually place psychotherapy and shamanism closely together far before therapists were interested in introducing such techniques, as they both engage with an allowance of unknowing and indeterminate connection through their varying systems.

*But why?*

(Kristeva, 1995, pp. 89) Kristeva has stated that a question "opens the discourse of the discourse of the infans and enables [one] to employ speech and to approach an infinite horizon." This "infans" related directly to the Chora. That is, the question pushes us back into the trans-linguistic space where hegemonized systems can be forgotten - even if only for a moment - in order to near the infinite plane of unknowing which she describes.

*Doesn't this reproduce another cause and effect relating of meanings and events?*

The practice of questioning relies on an indeterminacy of meaning making. While the outcomes of questions can be placed back into causal systems, the engagement with such provocations refers to the same opening of imagination that Anna Tsing refers to when thinking through acausal systems. The ability to form an epiphany through chance may again be pushing into a causal logic of pattern making as referred to by Barthes, but it is the very employment of the indeterminate system that has potential to retrieve the epiphany which may result in a quantum change.

**BUTTERFLY DRINKING**  
**FROM THE TEARS OF A TURTLE**



Further research into the Large Blue actually begins revealing other interesting information. Just like a shaman uses the drum to create a different system, it has been discovered that the large blue caterpillar actually produces a sound in the colony which mirrors that of the red ants' queen. We see the capability of sound to effect thought. This sounding enables the caterpillar to induce superior treatment from the worker ants on which it relies for food.

(Thomas, et al, 2010)

At the heart of the Large Blue is its parasitic nature. From the Greek *parasitos*, parasite's etymology literally means "one who is beside (*para*) food (*sitos*)." The word is communal in its nature, implying the parasite is one who eats food which is not its own. There is always an other in this relationship.

In his book *The Parasite*, Michel Serres discusses parasitic forms as a parable for exchanges of subjectivity. In this, Serres later argues that all "independent" subjectivity is inherently intersubjective, as there is a constant becoming through the interactions with subject and environment, living or non-. He declares "the parasitic relation is intersubjective," because of the de-centering of the subject which occurs within the relation. This thought punctures all historic, human centered, narcissistic philosophies. Serres sees parasitism at the center of all systems, a constant taking advantage of someone or something else. The indeterminacy of intersubjectivity allows for chance interactions to open up unknown shifts in consciousness.

(Serres, 2013)

(Serres, 2013, pp. 8)

(Serres, 2013,  
pp. 10)

In Serres' discussion of subjective exchange, he uses the word parasite (also meaning "static" or "noise" in French) as a way to describe interference that exists within channels of communication. He uses the metaphor of noise interrupting, thus disturbing the system itself, to also describe what the parasite does socially when interacting with its host. Serres gets close to the butterfly when he says "we live in that black box called collectivity." He implies that sound has the possibility to induce change in systems.

He sees the rationalist, Western, linear logic as a process which creates dualisms. This is a battle of balance — there must be two sides. Two distinctly separate sides like two separate wings held together by a small body. But Serres is convinced that randomness is what destroys this process — indeterminacy as the breaker of binaries. There is a logic to formally describing complex systems – this rationalizes them so they can be turned into patterns, and patterns can be studied in a linear fashion. Serres uses the figures of the parasite as an invisible "third man" in this system, constantly breaking any logical patterns that can be conceived.

**BLACK BOXED**  

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**SEEING SWITCHING**





You stood above me behind me  
saying I love butterfly clips  
trying to say something else  
maybe  
butterfly clips and causal relations  
mimic each other aesthetically  
big wings big ideas  
small body

Watching people pass  
drinking tea  
we saw a man walk by  
butterfly on his cheek  
somewhat  
there must be a reason  
for the hole in his face

You placed you hands on top  
of my knee two parts held together  
in your hands or my knee  
probably  
a fly landed on your tea cup  
I wondered if I should tell you  
butterflies are basically flies  
with the best wings  
evolved defect

Forgot to mention  
butterflies in my stomach  
they're not causal  
actually  
acausality  
is love meaning  
without cause  
no reliance on linearity

Decision the darker spaces  
were best for entering  
pupae perfect for understanding  
scientific black-box  
maybe  
What goes in and  
what come out  
we see but  
don't see it switch

A line cut down the middle  
a causal rift  
opaque unknown  
we agreed it would be best to accept  
the unknowing that  
it makes things more interesting  
probably

# PROMPTED RETRIEVAL

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## CHANCE INTERPRETATIONS



Not only do we see correspondences between shamanism and psychotherapy, but the three worlds of shamanism - the lower, middle, and higher - also mirror the set up of a classic spread, or reading, of the Tarot. In the spread, three cards are drawn to associate with the subconscious, conscious, and superconscious respectively. The drawing of cards produces interpretations based on a prompt from cards that function as upheavals of unconsciousness becoming conscious.

Divination systems such as Tarot and I-Ching are processes that rely on an acausal system, rather than a determinate one. These processes have similar self-attaining ends as the ones I found to link the practices of shamanism and psychotherapy. That is, access is given to experience systems of logic that cannot be reached through linear rationalities. In the I-Ching - while declaring a clear intention - a set of three coins are thrown six times to create a reading from a total of 64 possible hexagrams. Each hexagram corresponds to symbols, numbers, and a message written in the form of a poem which is to be interpreted in regards to the intention or advice that is being searched for. Thus, chance is used to provoke an unknown meaning to surface through interpretation.

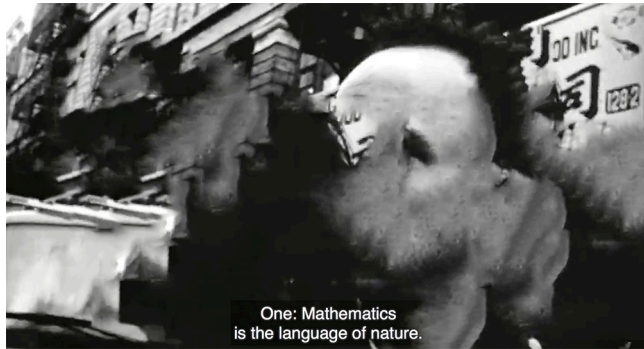
In his introduction to the I-Ching, Carl Jung discusses his conception of the Chinese system, saying, "If we leave things to nature, we see a very different picture: every process is partially or totally interfered with by chance, so much so that under natural circumstances a course of events absolutely conforming to specific laws is almost an exception." Jung sees the ritual's reduction of causality being its most basic tenet. Causal relationships are broken down by the chance that is inherent in the I-Ching ritual, the coins are tossed to achieve this chance interpretation.

(Jung, 2010, pp. 3)

(Jung, 2010, pp. 3) “An incalculable amount of human effort is directed to combating and restricting the nuisance or danger represented by chance,” Jung says in his introduction, determining that the minds of people socialized with the ritual are more preoccupied by the chance aspects of reality and less with linear causalities. Therefore, these minds may be more attuned to an indeterminate mode of meaning making.

In all of these modalities, change is brought upon by a linguistic provocation, whether it is a question, a poetic text, an intention, or a set of cards. With this provocation, room is left open in the participant to make interpretations and feel impressions from thoughts they may experience. These interpretations destabilize a cognitive relationship that only functions on determinate, logical, linear terms, again allowing the epiphany to create a quantum change.

LANGUAGE OF NATURE  
LOGIC OF SAMENESS



One: Mathematics  
is the language of nature.

Because of this link offered between shamanism, divination, and psychotherapy, I will describe them both as non-ordinary, or better yet, non-causal modes of attaining meaning. These two modes cannot be the limit of what constitutes possibilities of the non-ordinary. To offer a counterpart, I will say that the search for reason — a mathematical, scientific approach to life — is the normative mode of being. This is the dogma of the technocratic structure. Western reason takes the driver's seat.

(Pi, 1998) "Nature is everywhere the same" says Max, the central character of Daron Aronofsky's film *Pi*. As the film progresses, Max is driven into madness as he continues to search for mathematical reasoning that can solve the workings of the New York Stock Exchange. We see the character slip into a psychosis due to his insistence on causality being the only way a system can function. He becomes obsessed with finding a cause and effect relationship that can determine the workings of the market.

In Jamie Peck's *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, as done by Max, logical reasoning is assigned to the very foundations of free-market capitalism. That is, it is considered perfectly reasonable by people in dominant positions to declare that this type of capitalist economy is the most efficient way for a society to function. That is, society is meaningful because it is efficient and reasonable. Peck's critique of neoliberal reason situates it as a completely antisocial practice, one which constantly exploits and separates its participants. (Peck, 2013)

It can be seen that anxiety easily pervades as the new affect of living in capitalist society. Anna Tsing's notion of precarious living is the natural partner of this anxiety. The effect of these antisocial practices, except to those few who are in control, is to feel isolated, unbalanced, and useless. This is the same logic which pits us against one another, rather than supporting meaningful communal modes of becoming, sharing, and non-ordinary practices of dealing with our external world. Indeterminate intersubjectivity comes forward as a possibility of lifting the anxieties caused directly by this system.



SING SING  
THE BUTTERFLY SONG



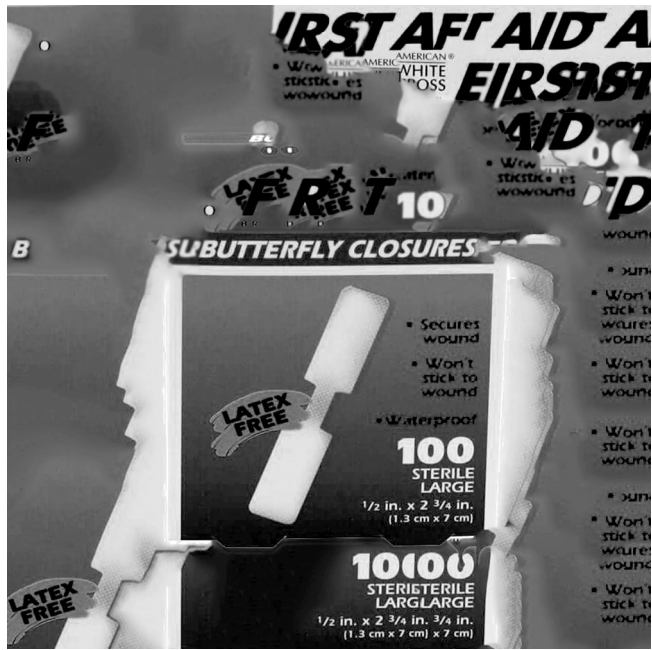
Although teetering on being human-centric, it is clear how Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious fits neatly into our utterly social paradigm, and how his theories rely on an extinguishing of Western reason in many ways. This sort of collective consciousness was expanded by Jacques Lacan who takes it further to say there is no personal unconscious, only an "intersubjective" space that exists socially. Again we are back to the queer intra-actions of Karan Barad who actually presents this paradigm scientifically. If intersubjectivity exists as an experience that is outside of reason, Barad - using the causal logic of Western science - queers intersubjectivity to determine scientific reason as an intersubjective experience. It is actions within environments which collectively shape subjects. The mimicry and social paradigms with which we engage are in an ever-shifting moment of metamorphosis.

It is the butterfly's mimicry and reproduction of a particular sound that enables its shift within the structured hierarchy of the ant community. The super-organism of the colony is deconstructed simply by this noise entering their communication system. So, let us sing the song of the butterflies, as insisted by the O'odham Creator of the butterflies. Or perhaps this is a song we are already singing, that many of us are already engaged in.

The butterfly model of refusal and resistance: sociality, receptiveness, acausal meaning making, becoming-otherwise, self-evaluation, quantum change – these are the declarations of the butterfly. But is this character necessary for the argument? I haven't put enough time into pumping other critters full of metaphors to find out if they all lead me towards a destabilizing of causal relations, so I can not make an argument for something else to stand in its place.

# CLOSURES

## AGAINST STERILE MEDIUM



Metaphors begin to fail. I've stretched them thin. I'm collecting the metaphors in the same way that I would collect butterflies in the desert as a child. But I cannot use the butterfly suck pump to truly talk about collection in a larger sense, and I cannot bring the butterfly to symbolize everything I want it to in terms of refusing causality, because really it's not that spectacular. The butterfly can collect from many surfaces and this is about as far as my metaphor will take me. It's in the nature of the metaphor to connect disparate ideas and unify them, but of course there must be a limit to this practice, a limit in which the language destabilizes itself. The insistence on sticking to linear logical meaning of the metaphor must be left out.

We think of someone covering something - metaphorically - with a bandage as someone who is not really dealing with their deeper internal issues. But the image of the butterfly pervade even in medical and culinary terminologies. In both cases it is used as a modifier. In the medical definition, a strong bandage is used to bring together two areas of skin which have come apart from each other, without the use of stitches or other intervention. In the kitchen, the term is used to describe a modification in which a piece of food, usually another animal, is split evenly down the middle and spread along its center-line. But let us move beyond this, remember the bandage is meant for healing, and is not permanent. Let's use the butterfly to heal. We shall use this type of modification as a means for more, and explore its aesthetic implications, because the butterfly has become a visual metaphor to be toyed with.

The visual is where this butterfly will finally come to rest. As an artist engaging with visual, auditory and written practices, the butterfly becomes a key to unlocking the potentials of finding meaning within work that refuses purely linguistic modes of representation. The visual arts and music can be an indeterminate intersubjective space where the viewer enters into a interaction which is capable of opening the imagination into new ways of meaning making. Poetry then, as well, becomes a mode of pushing language to the limits of understanding in an attempt to decenter the very structures of linguistics. If ordinary linear logics are seen as a sterile or neutral way of engaging with meaning, then there is potential in these modes and aforementioned practices to create an indeterminate space where connections are held together like butterfly wings attached by a small unknown body.



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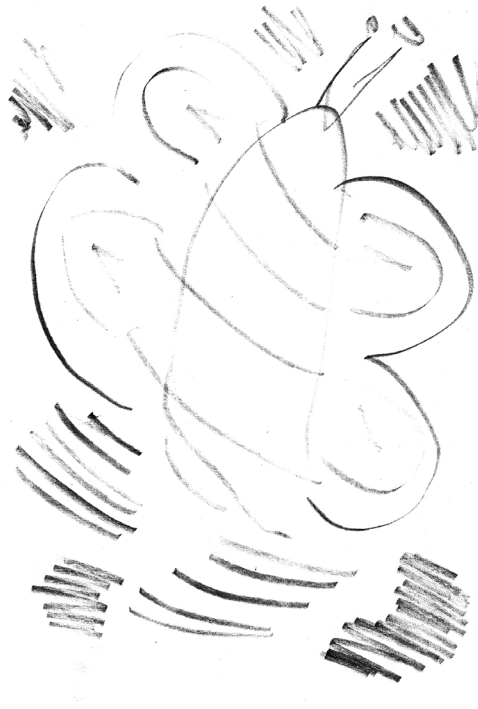
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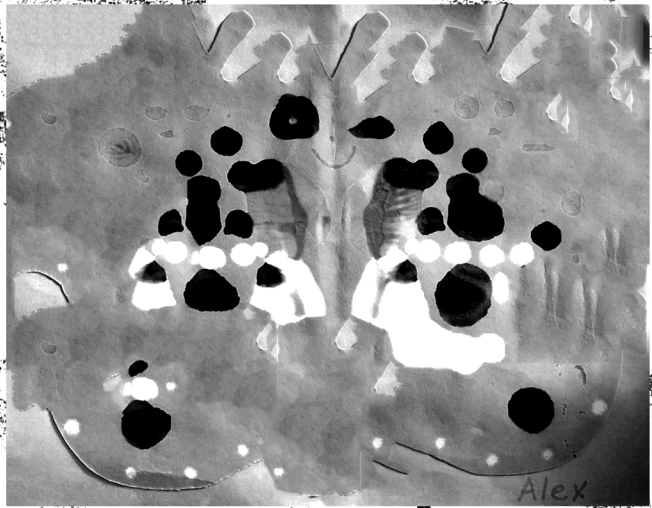


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y o u  
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