

*“We talk about accumulation of wealth but what about accumulation of knowledge? Is it fair for us to accumulate knowledge if we’re not going to share that with people who don’t have that access?...”*

*So it’s not enough to disseminate ideas but we must provide tools to bring that about?”*

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*Speculative Futures, The Crested Tit Collective*

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In our collaborative manifesto for Rewilding, assembled via a Zoom call in the height of the first UK lockdown, an issue we kept circling around was that of access. Who has the access to speculate on a future both personal and global? Is the ability to speculate *at all* a privilege? In the context of a global pandemic, this felt particularly astute. The posited question central to our discussion was, “what is the future you want to see beyond this lockdown?” As Cat Chong pointed out to us, what about the physically vulnerable in their private containers? What about those who had and would lose their lives? Was this a manifesto or an elegy?

Speculative Futures was an opportunity for us to pause on (and dismantle) the associated bombast of the manifesto form. It opens with a direct, active political statement and moves through iterations of personal and private engagement with the world - at times reaching points of despair - until finally resting on the open-ended optimism of Tese Uhomoihi’s “Yes and...” and I think that’s a crucial sprouting place in our engagement with the climate crisis. It is often disheartening, impossible, hopeless even, and it’s important to acknowledge that. Yes and we must keep going. It is an issue of

politics yes and there are things we can do privately yes and we must campaign strongly for clean energy yes and shoot for zero waste yes and plant trees yes and stand up for the most vulnerable yes and we must write yes and speak yes and yes and yes and...

Eco-philosopher Donna Haraway has in *her* SF (science fiction, speculative fabulation, string figures, speculative feminism, science fact, so far) created a conceptual tool with which to illuminate how necessary it is that we figure our way through the interconnectedness of the climate crisis. As poets, as womxn who have benefited from glorious access to the academy, we call on community and the dissemination of ideas as our particular knot in the web. There is no one way of taming this beast and for some there is often not even a way into the fight. So, readers, poets, artists and scientists, we hope this accompanying workbook is a jumping off point that moves you out into the world, and we hope it encourages you to share your ideas with your loved ones, allies and enemies.

- Chloë Proctor, *The CTC*

Note – the following two sections are inspired directly by issues raised and practices used by poets in *Rewilding*.

## **Something to think about.**

- What does “Rewilding” mean to you?
- What is the function of our contemporary digital landscape in tackling or hindering the climate crisis? Are there ways we can/should be communicating? How do coding, hashtagging, SEO and metadata all alter our environmental lexicon?
- How can we encourage close engagement with the small organisms (coral/individual tree species/bacteria/insects)?
- Consider the impact of the concepts of “paradise”, “holiday islands”, and tropical tourism. Island nations see our global damage first and most severely.
- What outlets do/should we have to mourn deceased species?
- How does your environment change you? How you it? What is the conversation you are having with the forest you traverse?
- How does this conversation change when in a truly unspoiled environment? Consider “wild”. To what extent is your experience of “nature” artificially engineered?
- What aren’t you seeing? What’s moving beneath your feet? To what extent do you understand natural life processes (What does a rhizome do? What is happening in the soil on a cellular level)?
- Consider physical safety. What do you need around you to feel refuge? How can that differ across borders/bodies/species?
- Consider your private habits, your rituals, the repetitive ways in which you engage with the world around you. Can something be introduced? Something that nurtures another organism?

- How can we make healthcare ecologically equitable while protecting the people made most vulnerable by these overlapping systems?
- When does an animal stop being cute? When it is ugly? Aggressive? Road kill? Is there a hierarchy established when you look at a live thing and say “awww”?
- In what ways does the/your environment bring you pleasure? Can we have green pleasure practices? Is our pleasure at risk?
- How would you experience the natural world in a different body? What makes your body “able”? What if you were to traverse and receive the world in ways other than what your body permits?
- In what other ways can you enjoy a natural landscape that is *not* picturesque?
- Interrogate the role of artists and makers on a cluttered planet. What are we bringing forth into the environment that is of value and what should we leave to the abstract?
- How can we utilise models in the natural world to interrogate gender further? Do “femme” and “masc” really exist beyond our species?
- How can you bring irreverence and joy to climate activism?

## **Exercises for writing and living.**

- What is a “wild” text? Explore this practically.
- Have a conversation with somebody in which you refer to the natural world only in the past tense.
- Plant seeds and roots from table scraps – try it out – things will grow and things will die – be witness to the whole process – watch mould form and fungus grow. Let the dead things rot and complete their cycles.
- Next time you feel inclined to photograph a landscape, consider how you could put it into words.
- Write a witness statement.
- Carry out Tese Uhomobhi’s *Forest Project*.
- In the style of Ariana Benson, hold a funeral for the Earth.
- What are the freedoms and limitations of your movement outside in the world? Choreograph this.
- Construct something utilitarian from natural resources. Construct something beautiful from litter.
- Go for a walk and write down the organisms you encounter. Redefine them. Write a dictionary.
- Write the genealogy of your engagement with nature. What words did your mother teach you? How did your granny teach you to taste?

- Map the unorthodox green spaces in your city. Where are the flower beds? Where is the overgrowth? Where are the cut flowers on dining tables, reception desks, shopping centres? Observe the blank spots. Fill them.
- Write a letter to an organism. Try to write in words/symbols/gestures they'll understand.
- Write the identity of yourself as an Earth dweller. What is your planetary identity?
- In what ways are you living “wild”/ “overgrown”/ “unkempt”? What can you learn from nature about rebel narratives?
- Take an inventory of what is nonhuman on, in and near your body right now. Coconut oil? Cow's milk? Lavender? Is it thriving? Rotting? Multiplying?
- Go on a dictionary deep dive. Take a word (algae), what words are used to describe it? What are the synonyms? What is its linguistic history? Where does it lead? Keep a record of each diversion.
- Make a visual poem outside only with what is around you. Will you document it? Will it last? What will “read” it?
- Visit a site again and again. Document each visit. Take pictures. Take samples. Observe the wildlife. Scrapbook a site.
- Is there another use for your non-recyclables?
- Do you speak another language? Are there words for natural things in one that do not translate to the other? Start an archive of untranslatable environment.

- Repair something broken. Stitch up a crushed leaf. Clean a diseased root. Make do and mend.
- Draw a diagram of an ecosystem. Assign its parts (noun, verb, adjective) in a sentence. Write the system.
- Write your own version of Speculative Futures. Do it alone or frame it as a conversation with others. Record and transcribe. What are the shared aims and where do they differ?

## How can you be a good climate activist?

Honestly, we have no idea. It's terrifying. But perhaps we can all rest on that admission and start spit balling? Here are some suggestions.

- Keep up to date with what is passing through your government. Use <https://calendar.parliament.uk/> (or your country's equivalent) to keep an eye on those issues that pass through the cracks. Be very vocal about them. Contact your MP and encourage others to do the same. It takes a couple of minutes on <https://www.writetothem.com/> to fire off something saying "Hey, you better be voting on this because..." Shame them if they don't. Really. Truly. Publicly shame them. They work for us.
- All those annoying online petitions DO WORK. The government has to read petitions with a certain amount of signatures so keep at it.
- Donate to eco-charities if you can. Platform them if you can't. Volunteer if you want.
- Read. Analyse. Share. Repeat.
- Support, platform and learn about those who are more vulnerable to the shifting climate. Climate change is a race and a class issue. Social politics are absolutely part of the beast.
- Think about the way you're interacting with others online. Are you educating and uplifting? Or are you locking somebody out?
- Care for climate requires care for ALL species. If we can't care for our own, how can we expect to be considerate of endangered

species?

- Don't overload yourself. What are the aspects of climate activism that are most personal to you? Pick a couple (maybe even just one) key issue. Become a specialist in it. Be its biggest cheerleader.
- Maybe there are public spaces in your local area that aren't particularly functional. Contact your local council. Can you grow something there? Install something? What's the smallest community vegetable patch you can squeeze in?
- Consider donating parts of your private green space to somebody who has none. Maybe they just need a quiet place to sit. Maybe they can teach you how to grow a meal.
- Force feed that documentary, film or book to your friends and family. Ask them questions about it. Make them engage with it.
- Protest and pressure! Never underestimate the power of the collective voice.

## Recommended reading and links

<https://iseechange.org> - A communal forum for documenting changes in climate and wildlife where you are.

<https://beyond-coal.eu/take-action/> - A helpful list of key ways to get involved with the movement towards renewable energy.

<https://blockfossilsout.com/> - A browser extension which blocks out the pages and social media content of European coal, gas and oil companies, and allows you to send a message to those companies notifying them that they are blacklisted.

<https://poetsfortheplanet.org/> - They're poets! For the planet!

<https://www.seasonforchange.org.uk/> - Events inspiring climate action.

<https://www.intersectionalenvironmentalist.com/> - A platform for resources, information and action steps to support intersectional environmentalism.

<https://www.dailyclimate.org/> - News!

<https://grist.org/climate-energy/> - An independent news outlet with a solid section on climate.

<https://ourislandsourfuture.org/> - Take action against oil drilling in the Bahamas.

<https://abolitionjournal.org/> - A journal and community of Radical Theory and Practice.

<https://sensible-sustainability.com/> - A sweet blog which journals approaches in sustainability.

<https://novaramedia.com/> - An honest and well researched news outlet deeply rooted in socialist values.

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/go-beyond-politics/> - XR have a multitude of helpful resources which directly engage with activism.

<https://eco-age.com/magazine/how-be-climate-activist> - “How to be a Climate Activist”.

<https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/> - A global voice for sustainable food and health.

<https://www.ethicalsuperstore.com/> - Buy ethically.

## **Some favourite texts of ours covering issues in and around climate.**

Drift - Caroline Bergvall | When the Sick Rule the World - Dodie Bellamy | The Undying: A Meditation on Modern Illness - Anne Boyer | Silent Spring - Rachel Carson | Dark and Unaccustomed Words - Vahni Capildeo | Reliquiae Journal - Corbel Stone Press | Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene - Donna Haraway | Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives - Susan Howe | Flèche - Mary Jean Chan | Dorothy - Briony Hughes | Bodies of Water - Astrida Neimanis | Zong! - M. NourbeSe Philip | Green Blues - Karen Sandhu and Nadira Clare Wallace | Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene - ed. Matthew Schneider-Mayerson | Eco-poetics Journal - Jonathan Skinner | Well Then There Now - Juliana Spahr