
drawn out: notes for a (k)new world

“take what you need, ‘it’s free / because it’s yours’.”
Revolutionary Letter #15 - Diane DiPrima

In a struggle for freedom where what we need is always something we already have:-
dignity, personhood, memory, the right to make a world for ourselves, etc.
The act of drawing is simply an act of drawing out, of pulling things out and in... or down.

In these conditions, a drawing body meets the (re)markable surface with no concern for, or interest in, creative invention. Exhausted and indifferent to any promise of the new, the mark-making body arrives ready to join what is already there. Longing to join whatever worlds are waiting in the crowded space of the drawing surface, not here, but there. And in between.

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi.

In colonial relations of power, we realise that what constantly needs to be produced anew is most often that which is already known, a (k)new thing. Known but relegated to a status of non-knowledge: known but unknowable. Against this epistemic background, in Africa (and for people of African descent), what is new is also always a veil for some old news: new technology, new ideas, new solutions, new definitions of who or where or what is (human) and their concomitant rights are all a genre of the status quo in disguise. Each novelty inevitably retreats to its core stabilising function: to reinforce the world as we’ve *been* knowing it.

Linear time and the myth of progress camouflage the intrinsic stasis of social life vis-à-vis black liberation. That is, every new thing introduces no newness into *our* lives. Where anti-blackness is the conservative principle of progress, it can be neither destroyed nor created, only more or less transformed and transferred. This is the old game of colonial difference (the difference that makes no difference). However we, on the other side of this equation, require the radical destruction of anti-blackness as a prerequisite of any possibility. A condition where being black in the world (rather than anti-blackness) is the principle of worldly possibility is both an ordinary condition of everyday life as well as the thing we must struggle everyday to make anew. In this struggle the future is only the possibility of what we already have and have long had - but also lost and are losing.

The drawing body is an extension of the human body under these inertial conditions. More precisely, it is a prosthetic transformation of that body in conditions where acting becomes a type of inaction: a game played against time, or put simply: planning. The drawing body is called into being wherever an apparatus is put to work to draw out, as a matter of practice, a (k)new body in violation of colonial assumptions of linear time and normative value. Some kind of mark-making instrument that shivers and trembles, and moves forward only in indeterminate scribbles. This drawing body is the inverted agency of a planning exercise performed in a situation where consequences must precede their causes.

The drawing body meets the drawing surface as a tool of reverse archaeology. Where archaeology is the romantic practice of excising artefacts from the body of the earth in order to make the past available in the present and for the future. Reverse archaeology can be thought of as returning the future to the body of the earth in order to make it radically available in the past and for the present. Which is to say a drawing body has the unenviable task of putting the future behind us. A planning exercise for finally placing the past ahead of us.

The mark-making body exercises power through making marks but is also a body marked by making, it is already a victim of the very power it deploys. Which is a sneaky reminder that the drawing body is not a neutral body. To simplify, the pen is not a tool until it acts and is acted upon by some colluding force: the hand and the heart and a few hundred years of surviving, or not. A gathered restlessness. These ancestral forces momentarily assemble in an act of drawing, and drawing out.

Let’s call these *geopolitics*.

To draw is also, simply, to equalise. As in 1-1, a draw.

To draw is to equivocate, in the abstract, such that what is drawn can stand for what is not.

Thinking about the drawing surface, a ground, we imagine that it is safe to assume that what is geographically inscribed is a fair representation (and representative) for what is there, in the world of rock and air and water. This assumption credits the act of drawing with strange powers. An authority to apprehend the world but also to create it, not simply to know or to be known by it, but to change it.

Read the physicist's claim: "what I cannot create, I cannot understand" (Richard Feynman) and see an equivocal epistemology in action, that understanding is in isomorphic relation to phenomena, to change one is to fundamentally alter the other, and without this relation understanding is not possible.

Read the indigenous researcher's warning: changing place names, imposing colonial symbols and delegitimising oral histories also requires the breaking in of the land, the alienation and fragmentation of lands through legislation, the forced movement of people off their lands. (Linda Tuhiwai Smith) and see that understanding is a material object with resistance.

Lets call these *psychopolitics*

In a binary system, to draw as a measure of equality could be notated as 0-0 (or 1-1), as in a sport match, or more precisely 1=1.

Whereas drawing as an act of pulling (dragging) can be notated as 0-1 (or 1-0) , an inequality, or differently 1>0; 0<1.

This crude transliteration of expressive language into assembly language relies on fracturing complex meaning into a low-level notational form (0-0; 1-0; 1-1; 0-1). In this procedural disintegration, some poor impulses in drawing and writing are brought into awkward correlation. The possibility of understanding depends on a gap between two positions of knowing irreducible to one another: that a thing must always be both itself and something totally different.

We have to relinquish something true, for example, that pixels on screen are just a few thousand flashing lights, in order to gain another true thing, that all these flashing lights are also a meaningful image. Indeed the apparatus of the screen labours to render this gap imperceptible. Between the graphics processor, the pixel density, the fps and the resolution of the image, the screen renders its tiny flashing squares invisible - and yet, their visibility is the necessary condition of the image the screen renders. To forget that these pixels are present, or to imagine them as dumb lights can always only be a partial and temporary amnesia. The image is drawn out of the lights, and so one neither precedes nor follows the other.

In this scheme the space between the new and the (k)new is thinkable through an immanent logic of nonsense translation. An extra-rational program of apprehending time in a place where there is none or little, or at the very least where the flow of time defies any demand for linearity. Here the gap between the world and knowledge of the world is filled with varying degrees of rephrasing.

Trying this, trying that. Making space by saying things differently, making time by seeing things otherwise. Again and again, again and again. Where to be any particular thing is to be drawn out, and drawn through a series of recitations.

These are exercises for a performance that has already happened: it's something like a tool for planning a route home, which only exists when you are already home, and have no intention of leaving.

A drawing body is a rehearsing body of some kind, an object of practice where each exercise moves us closer to no particular place.

BREAK

BREAK

I've been working on a 2 word poem called entropy, empathy. The notational structure of this poem is 1-0x 0-1x; 0-0x 1-1x. The major challenge in completing this poem is the question of sequence.

entropy, empathy;

or

empathy, entropy.

BREAK

The question of world building has at least two dominant poses (and posse's) - the one world posture, and the many worlds posture. The universal and the pluriversal.

In the one world posture, world building is a project to remake the world as we know it. The colonial foundations of the world as we know it is based on the projection of a single universal onto-epistemology onto the planet. World building in the world as we know it is, partly, a struggle over which onto-epistemology we could (should?) project onto the planet. And tends to rely on the accumulation of [enough] power to challenge hegemony, to destroy, and replace the previous hegemon) (see Gordon Lewis on 'two positions of right'; Steve Biko on 'a more human face').

In the many worlds posture, world building is a project to build a world outside the world as we know it. The colonial foundations of the world as we know it are mutable before they are destroyed. Without labouring the point, we could say that world building outside the world as we know it is then, partly, a project of loneliness and incompleteness. Yuguru work. And tends to work through nurturing interfaces, membranes, portals and the places where worlds meet, or not(see Jared Sexton on 'radical passivity'; Amiri Baraka on 'un earthly hollering').

The decolonial obligation is to resist resolving the false binary and rather, to hold as many options as possible. To make space and assemble these ancestral forces for a little while in an act of drawing, and drawing out. To plan, with grace.