

# Introduction

Philip Beesley

*...Would that I had wings, a carapace, a shell, -that I could breathe out smoke,  
wield a trunk, -make my body writhe, -divide myself everywhere, -be in  
everything, -emanate with all the odours, -develop myself like the plants,  
-low like water, -vibrate like sound-shine like light, -assume all forms  
-penetrate each atom-descend to the very bottom of matter, -be matter itself!*

- Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*

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- 1 Implying *hylozoism*: the philosophical conjecture that material things possess life

During 1995 and 1996, I worked for several months in collaboration with an archaeological team reconstructing a flank of the Palatine, the labyrinthine artificial mountain that overlooks the ancient Forum of Rome. This work focused on ritual deposits at the fortified boundary of the archaic city. The excavations seemed to confirm canonical texts that describe origins of the Eternal City in rituals of sacrifice. During the excavation work I encountered physical traces of mythic history—and the underground became the underworld. The deposits here included building materials, animals, and humans. My work concentrated on traces of a baby that was sacrificed and buried beneath the ancient fortifications. Several years of built and experimental work have developed from this experience.

My compositions since Rome have tended to concentrate on vital, seething qualities built up from intensive repetition of miniature parts.<sup>1</sup> The work tends to be dominated by practical technology while at the same time poetic cadences are latent: blood, soil. The large-scale field structures offer bodily immersion and wide-flung dispersal of perception.

The textiles in these installations have recently taken the form of interlinking matrices of mechanical components and arrays of sensors and actuators that respond to occupants moving within the environment. Lightweight lattice and geodesic organizations form a structural core,

employing digitally fabricated lightweight scaffolds that contain distributed networks of sensors and actuators. The structures are designed at multiple scales including custom components, intermediate tessellations composed of component arrays, and general structural systems. The current work focuses on integrating control systems with decentralized responsive intelligence. The work is based on gradual development moving toward applied architectural environments that include manufactured filtering and shading systems.

Reyner Banham cited a turning point early in the 20th century in the 'relationship of men—especially thinking men—and their machines; both were now stripped for action...'<sup>2</sup> I think the kind of Existentialist interpretations that Modernist writers such as Banham have favoured tend to isolate figures from their surrounding 'ground.' It seems to me that Modern critical voices often prefer a stripped void to the richly rendered sentimental environments of the 19th century. My work would doubtless fail those critical readings, because it is emphatically sentimental. In contrast to a modern lineage I find common ground with the heretic scientist Wilhelm Reich in his mid-twentieth century philosophy of *Orgonomy*. Reich described *bions*, vesicles charged with *orgone* life energy representing a transitional stage between non-living and living substance, constantly forming in nature by a process of disintegration of inorganic and organic matter. He said:

*All plasmatic matter perceives, with or without sensory nerves. The amoeba has no sensory or motor nerves, and still it perceives. Each organ has its own mode of expression, its own specific language, so to speak. Each organ answers to irritation in its own specific way: the heart with change in heart beat, the gland with secretion, the eye with visual impressions and the ear with sound impressions. The specific expressive language of an organ belongs to the organ and is not a function of any 'center in the nervous system'...milliards of organisms functioned for countless thousands of years before there was a brain. The terror of the total convulsion, of involuntary movement and spontaneous excitation is joined to the splitting up of organs and organ sensations. This terror is the real stumbling block...*<sup>3</sup>

## STANDING IN THE WORLD

A key term for my pursuit is empathy. My use of this term draws upon aesthetic theory that examines nuanced relationships involving projection and exchange. Combining terms of mechanism and empathy, I hope to develop a stance in an intertwined world that moves beyond closed systems. By drawing upon recent revisionist readings of cultural history, I want to develop a sensitive vocabulary of relationships.<sup>4</sup> In the terms of figure-ground relationships the figures I compose are riddled with the ground.

A brief review of canonical images can illustrate this. One centuries-old attitude that tends to reinforce boundaries is embodied in Lorenzo di Credi's *Annunciation* tempera painting of 1480.<sup>5</sup> The figure of the Archangel Gabriel and Mary stand against an array of landscape and buildings. Their free, relaxed postures are amplified by drapery that swirls around each figure as if caught in the lightest of breezes. The world stretches away behind them, organized by radiant geometry—an inner shell of buildings, with alternating apertures making

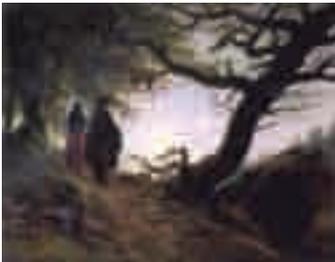
2 Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, second ed. (MIT Press/Architectural Press, 1960) p.11. But Banham is arguably a transitional figure whose interest in architectural mechanisms distinguish him from canonical Modern architecture.

3 Wilhelm Reich, 'Orgonomic Functionalism', in *Selected Writings: An Introduction to Orgonomy*, 1960 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961)

4 Organicism forms the context for this approach. While organicism is sometimes viewed as a late 'Romantic' mode opposed to Modernism (among canonical works are Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, 1908), this movement can also be seen as an ongoing tradition embedded in the 20th-century and contemporary culture. My views owe much to Christine Macy and Sarah Bonnemaïson's book *Architecture and Nature: Creating the American Landscape*, 2002, and Detlef Mertins' "Bioconstructivisms" essay in Lars Spuybroek's *NOX*, 2005.



5 Lorenzo di Credi, *Annunciation* (1480)



6 Caspar David Friedrich, *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (1824)



7 School of Fra Angelico, *Madonna and Child* (mid-15th century)

a gridwork filter that opens out to the surrounding; and an outer natural world, manicured in ordered arbours and garden rows. Mary and Gabriel are confident actors here, expressing vivid freedom and mastery. To them, the world is a servant that offers a reliable stage for their own action. This view holds striking similarities to a confident, Modern cosmology of progress.

Caspar David Friedrich's *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon*<sup>6</sup> embodies an opposite world. Two travellers stand exposed at the edge of a precipice. Around them at the edge of this uncertain space is a turbulent thicket of branches and giant boulders, relics of upheaval in the ground. Heavy clothing pulled tight around them makes dense silhouettes that contrast with glaring light stretching out into the void beyond. Their stark, outward gaze implies great personal resolve, but no certainty. This space contains powers vastly larger than any human domain. However, while Friedrich's pensive atmosphere might seem opposed to di Credi's confident world, the terms of reference that both artists seem to use have some similarity. This Romantic space, like di Credi's, builds upon distinct divisions between nature and culture and between freedom and order.

A third painting takes a different approach, offering a hybrid world in which those distinct elements combine. The anonymous mid-15th-century artist from the school of Fra Angelico, who created the *Madonna and Child*,<sup>7</sup> painted a glittering veil that makes a great sheltering canopy for that scene. In the background and foreground, volatile forces twine together into turbulent clouds that imply the dawn of creation itself. Mother and Child sit sheltered within the veil, their gestures speaking of vulnerable intimacy. The veil is shot through with embroidered patterns in deep relief. The deep red and gold rendering of this textile is almost identical to Mary's golden hair and crimson inner tunic. The outer blue cloak that flows around that inner layer spreads out below, collapsing and funneling out into the great clouds of the nascent world beneath. Above, Mary's inner tunic, golden hair, and encircling halo seem to extend into the brocaded canopy. The veil acts like part of Mary's body, an extended physiology.

The veil in the *Madonna and Child* and Wilhelm Reich's vision are, to me, connected. In similar ways the projects that have developed in this series imply an intertwined world.

## NATURE

Perfection is a value that seems to often accompany thinking of nature. For example, the eminent nineteenth-century biologist Ernst Haeckel documented radically new dimensions of natural life by arranging species on his illustration pages in glorious, radiant symmetries that gave a picture of confidence in a balanced, perfected universe. Sometimes, when I am in places that are thriving, I feel full of such confidence. I remember the Puskaskqua wilderness on the north shore of Lake Superior where humidity-thickened atmosphere was shot through with hanging moss and butterflies and where the ground was a succulent sponge, layer upon living layer. The living world swept over me there and rendered me tiny. In such a setting, urban anxiety about adulterating nature seemed self-obsessed, adolescent.

A number of my installations have been inserted into natural environments. They work to catch and inject matter, accumulating density and eventually forming a hybrid turf. Like ill-fitting clothes, this work has an uncomfortable relationship with its natural host. The relationship of these object-assemblies contains layers of violence: the violence of a foreign colony imposed on a living host; the forces of dismembering and consuming; the force of will, violating the ethical boundaries that maintain nature as an untouched sanctuary.

The physical assemblies in these projects employ a series of natural laws involving energy flow, nutrient cycling and dynamic balance expressed in distinct functions.<sup>8</sup> For example, the snap-fit of a plastic tongue into a mating socket needs just enough friction to grip its mate while staying flexible enough to avoid collapsing the whole surface. The design approach to sub-units is in pursuit of a balance of refinement and economy. This approach is circumstantial and dominated by quite flexible, practical judgment, far from a picture of perfection. The textile strategies I use make intensive labour for adjusting individual parts impractical. There are tens of thousands of parts, so tooling and fabrication motion used in making each piece is compounded. This requires an economy of means.

The primitive cycles of opening, clamping, filtering and digesting in the artificial assembly are affected by some of the same natural forces that make a coral reef work. Building upon simple motions embedded within individual elements, accumulated actions produce turbulent wave-like reactions. The contemporary philosopher Manuel DeLanda speaks to living systems arising from inert matter in his 1992 essay *Nonorganic Life*. He describes some elements as

*...catalysts interacting with various other elements and thereby allowing them to transform each other chemically[. T]hey enable inert matter to explore the space of possible chemical combinations, in a nonconscious search for new machinelike solutions to problems of matter and energy flow. It is as though catalysts were...the Earth's own 'probe heads,' its own built-in device for exploration, and indeed, to the extent that autocatalytic loops and hypercycles were part of the machinery involved in the 'discovery' of life, these probe heads allowed physicochemical strata to transform themselves and their milieus into completely new worlds.<sup>9</sup>*

The basic relationship is prosthetic, alien appendages to nature's body. Prosthetics are always accompanied by some tinge of revulsion. An artificial heart causes the host body to recoil and attempt to reject the intruder, no matter how 'good' the addition is for the host's health. New burn technologies involving delicate nutrient-infused lattices that strengthen the skin and allow new skin to grow depend on drugs to mute the rejection impulses that we react with.

These forces are precarious. They may work for the defense of an existing system and the exclusion of new systems. And they may work as catalysts that transform an existing world—opening possibilities of hybrid survival and of extinction. Vertigo.

8 *'...every static law is in fact either a law of falling, the first type, or a law of disintegration, the second type.'* Michel Serres, *The Birth of Physics* (Clinamen Press, 2000) p. 77

9 Manuel DeLanda, *Nonorganic Life, in Incorporations*, ed. Kwinter et al (Zone, 1992)

- 10 Andrea Carandini, *La Nascita di Roma: Dei, Lari, Eroi e Uomini all'alba di una civiltà* (Giulio Einaudi Editori, 1997)



- 11 Substitution burial votive, Etruscan c. 5th century BCE



- 12 Porta Mugonia, showing first and second city fortifications with burial deposits

- 13 Review of the literature: Joseph Rykwert *The Idea of a Town: The Atropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (MIT Press, 1976)

- 14 Portions adapted from Beesley, *Surface Design Journal* (1998)

## BURIAL

I studied a flank of the Palatine Hill with archaeologist Nicola Terrenato and a team working under Andrea Carandini<sup>10</sup> on the excavation and reconstruction of the original foundations of archaic Rome during 1995 and 1996. The focus was a site identified as the Porta Mugonia, one of three original gates to the city dating from its founding in the eight century B.C. The gate is situated on the flank of the Palatine and forms part of a boundary defined by layers of massive tufa boulders and large bastions. Two burial deposits were discovered at the site, one directly beneath the threshold and the other to one side. Both contained traces of the bodies of infants, apparently sacrificed and buried beneath the ancient wall.<sup>11</sup>

Original details of foundation deposits at the fortified boundary of the city<sup>12</sup> were reconstructed by building digital models from a combination of hand drawing and photographs. Site research at a larger scale drew on records gathered from archaeological teams working on excavations across the Palatine Hill. Section drawings were generated showing the topography of the hill stretching from the Roman Forum to the Circus Maximus. The sectional study clarified the original nature of the hill as gentle, rolling agricultural terrain surrounded by marshland. Fortifications were built at the foot of the hill to secure an inner herding area. Dense layers in the following millennium transformed this landscape into a synthetic precipice towering above the Forum.

The traces of the buried children appears to confirm many fragments of foundation rituals described by many ancient writers<sup>13</sup> in which 'first fruit' of the first family of the city was sacrificed at the gate, protecting the boundary of the city. Making sacred. A mundus, a little world offered instead of the world around. Beneath the wall at the edge of the city, a pit was dug into the volcanic mud-stone tufa, fitted to the clay dolium vessel enclosing the tiny body. Sifted linings filled in the spaces closing the void between the vessel and the stone. Tiny fragments of the burial remained: a brooch; a tooth. Laid bare. What material could be adequate for covering this place?

Each link of the fabric net received special details. Inside was an anatomy of transparent vessels cushioned by sprung tenons and terminated by serrated hollow needles to puncture and drain. Toward the outside, angled crampons bent back for springing and grasping set up with hair-trigger antennae. Around, a spread of open joints with outflung guides to catch and link with neighbours.

Each of these protozoan links was thin and meager, but by linking and clumping together they made mass and thickness. At first a bare lattice-work controlled by the geometry of its elements then increasingly formless and growing darker as it ingested decomposing matter. Thicker, and fertile, enveloping the wire implants and making a complete turf. This cover was finally dense, redolent with growth. And within that vital new earth, a convulsion glimmered—a poise telegraphing through from the sprung armature deep within.<sup>14</sup>

Lorenzo Romito, of Rome's *Stalker* collaborative, described this work as:

*...a look towards the invisible, beyond the din of everyday, where in the silence the voice of the earth is still audible, telling [...] the sacred act of founding. A vase containing the bodies of children is buried under the gateway into the city. It is a warning, only if the traversing of the threshold is understood in its profounder significance – as Romulus killed his brother Remus when he trespassed the torn furrow of Rome's foundation. It is a threshold between inside and outside, between life and death, between man and earth. This was a past of evident differences made distinct by heavy and compact walls like those of the antique cities, constructed by inhabitants who had always heard this warning with sacred fear. Today, where can this threshold be crossed? It seems lost in a city that expands without limits... There is an insect, its belly swollen with blood, there are many others, they join, lose identity and they become one structure, a net, without an inside or an outside, each link a connection and a limit. The net becomes metal, even though it may still be the border of the city it does not enclose like an antique wall, but rather it crosses it, divides the daily spaces from the 'other', the abandoned spaces where things transform without the need of representation, spaces that penetrate into the earth of the city but do not belong to it. [Beesley] reveals his net no longer as a found testimony, but as a forged instrument...an extended territory that allows itself to be traversed without a 'via maestra.'*<sup>17</sup>

## FOREST

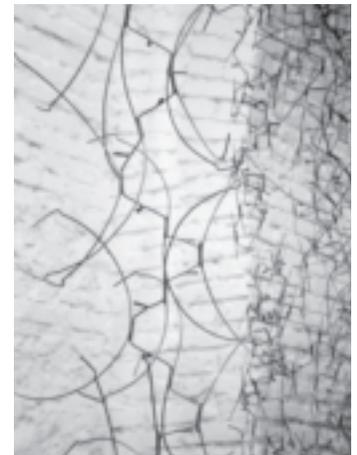
The edges of this consciousness<sup>18</sup> seem, sometimes, distinct. Not distinct as with a hard boundary, but distinct as capable of being lost. The abbot at Wat Pah Nanachat called it *absorbed*. He said that I was slipping.

Earlier he had given a glowing vision. He had spoken to the assembled monks and the smaller group of visitors including myself. The hall where we sat was cocooned in darkness. Layers of shadows within the forest canopy cast in bare moonlight far from village electricity. Accompanied by a chorus of cicadas and bulbuls, he painted the sky as shot through with hovering benign sprite *devas* that cloaked the gathering. Embroidered dissolving cloak, suffused with starlight and punctuated by miniscule points from fireflies and glow-worms.

The surrounding world is benign, he seemed to say. Listening and probing the contours of the surrounding forest. Retracing, leaf by leaf, the fluttering texture. Leaf, hanging moss, vine stems trailing through, spun silk web with carapace, disarticulated wing. Moth fluttering below, dried leaf above wet leaf. The carpet of rustling banyan, oak and plane interspersed with viscous frangipani blossoms. Hard shell of cast cicada skins, viscous soft skin of larvae. Dampened shards beneath the topmost crust, holding slight warmth from earth below. Root tendrils, running through humid mass upward as well as down. Millipede, arcing amidst hundreds of legs moving in chained peristalsis. A colony of slugs, bodies pulsing in glacially slow swaths.



15 *Palatine Burial*, cryptoporticus installation (American Academy Rome, 1996)



16 Detail of *Palatine Burial* installation

17 Lorenzo Romito, *Stalker*, unpublished manuscript trans. Marc Bowditch (1996)

18 The following text documents a departure from a monastery on the northeast border of Thailand in 2004

Beneath the soft bodies of snails, glistening sheen of path exuded: cellulose, digested by microbes, aphids and mites, microbe boiling. In absence of light, a kind of chemical fire that works like acid, eating from within, spreading out into mass. Chorus of pools, each pulling softly into a centre, inter-ripples forming cross-woven agitations working in reverse of light, a rhythm of dissolving. Thickened blanket that arcs outward and down. The glimmering devas now tinged—I had projected gentle smiles into that cloak earlier. Tremulous edges to that, hesitating and then arcing downward into a grimacing smirk. The mouths open: pores set into each successive cellular ring of the corrugated tubules. The sinusoidal arc of each streaming flame combining into a net.

Mouths opening, a generalized hunger, pulling inward. Thickened lips hardened with salt crust, just enough to nip, not yet a bite. Pulling inward, intractable. Rows of mouths each surrounded by protein-braided strands that pull inward and down. Waves of opening and closing that crush by trickling degrees, clamping and pulling forward then clamping again, encircling and closing. Without pause. Irrigated by a bath of gentle acid that flows into the softened parts and riddles into new seams revealed by this massage. Cartilage first, easing into gelatine and then spreading into a brine.

Colonies of mouths populated by grouped tongues that push outward. From within, a flow of darker material extruded into fronds of individual viscous hairs, chorus of excretions, lactic acid in muscles after being emptied, dull tearing, blankness of black sky.

After that first wash of the earth—

Excruciatingly slow spasmodic hiccupping painted within my eyes and skin. Four or five stages, perhaps. Sitting with releases; sitting within a bruise-purple well. Analysis and schemae emerging, ceasing, and re-emerging.

First, sitting during their chants, unbinding releases. Letting go. Uncoiling spine, uncoiling pulse, uncoiling *sankaras*<sup>19</sup> releasing into an upward fluttering vesica flame. Breath stilling then fading, remaining whispers of current, then replacing quiet surges within a thickened meniscus about a foot out from skin pouring upward. Focus: letting go to allow *nimittae*<sup>20</sup> to emerge and in turn let go. Watching.

Upwelling from spine, upper arms, hip-coccyx. Revealing a stuttering turbulence that cascades up my neck, rolling around back of head and temples, releasing with a concentration at fontanel. Waves that breach muscles and spine, lifting them in turn, rolling upwards. Suspending, billowing as they pour outward: am I flying? Am I burning? Am I on the ground?

Not quite a vertigo in the body compass, rather a mixed report of orientation with displaced partial instruments: here I am, Descartes' layers stuttering with great eroded blank spots, like the caterpillar-frothed leaves that make my forest floor. The report is itself displaced: ground seems to be at neck, or perhaps at cheeks; eyes and dome of upper head remaining above, balance below. Or perhaps not split but rather just the boundary I had been calling 'ground' having shifted, post-descent and release, now revealing

19 The contemporary Buddhist teacher S. N. Goenka describes the term 'sankara' as a bundled, tension-filled knot with traumatic origins

20 In Buddhist practice, 'nimittae' are hallucinatory states of mental formation embedded within breathing motions

itself only as a datum. Hovering, like an upper cloud layer, around my sinuses: amphibian. Split eyes, bifocals. Yes, a ground. When I make digital models I use reference planes that intersect at ordinance points.

Orientation in this hybrid ground, though, is washed away in upwellings. Like roaring fire currents that catch tendrils of ash suspended in the campfire, my body is surrounded by others and it floats and lirts and flutters. My whole-being vomits. Choking waves, playing out their chained motion, make spine and arm chains rise in quivering flowing whip motions, flagellae.

How much actual motion? 'Actual' is ironic. But to speak politically, how much motion might others have seen? The lifts were not crystalline. More akin to scholars' rocks: great lumpen bloated rotting masses sloughing off and washing away at hideously revealed cleavage points, like a massive interlaced bog of muck and stinking peat earth which has suddenly found a network of cleavage fissures dissolving through it while at the same time major parts of its masses remain impacted.

There was motion.

There was asymmetric motion.

The cycle of breathing was gone, but another cycle emerged to replace it. Part was familiar: a rising and falling magnetic pulse, contractile following anti-peristaltic valence. The reverse of breathing and ingesting. The reverse of building form by converting air and substance into flesh. Little fluttering motion residues. An elliptical field was revealed by moving eyes sideways to read a different kind of structure. Instead of the matrix narration of down and up, new eyes see the spinal-cord pulse field horizontally with calm centre as a sink and ephemerae at the edges. The shape of this in continual movement like a fire or a lapping shore or a flowing amoeba. The extensions of the bounding membrane are radical. Medusa, quietly seething, flares extend and billow magnitudes further than the diameter of the mass. Looking at that zone, the proportions compound themselves even further, fleeing.

In the centre, unutterable darkness. I am not referring to the centre. I refer to an infinitesimally thickened zone a third of the way out from the centre measured within the main stem, where released energy gives the field a lingering taint of viscosity—just a whisper of a valence, a proto-inclination akin to outer limits of the homeopath's stretched dilution. After compounded upon compounded tincture, when the potential has accelerated beyond absolutes, is there any underlying trace?

Material releases are peripheral. Black holes have a popular face, so this appearance is accompanied by a banner headline on the outer ciliated fringes, with innumerable blinking lights along with hyperbolic graphics.

Calm centre, although 'calm' implies presence. Free from presence. Dark. Light falls into this pool. Black, though, makes silence. Is it a pull? Is something ingesting, or is there a more silent reason? Just collapsing by looking. Falling away.

## TANGENT

I see the light that precedes the dawn just emerge ahead. The unthinkable large dimensions of the Pacific rise and show themselves, stretching across my view and arching across the surface of the sphere, air and cloud and water layers all hovering. I am riding at one layer, hazed. Above is a zone of nearly empty sky, thinned air melting into dark. Shot through with stars. Below is a slowly shifting ruffled skin of condensed white, wrinkling within its skins while great rifts show themselves between huge spiraling streams that arc away across the ocean. The light makes a searing cut now, while it divides and states no thing and thing: earth and sky.

Within the cut is exquisite light, whispers of rose and magenta forming first as inclinations toward hue within silent blue. Purples concentrate and promise: flesh, and knowing. They stand as hungers at the edge of the world. The cloud skins stretch and flex in an increasingly muscular tangle as the light grows. Sheaths of mist, shells of water. The clumping grains are oriented into flow directions, coalescing. Indicators of place, like the morning mist that hovers in the valleys and pits of a country road and plots out the layer of cold and the residue of heated air as I drive through Algonquin Park, or the flickering wind place of northern lights that illuminate the magnetic forces cascading outward from earth-size plates. Indicators but at the same time bodies and flesh themselves: I speak of the world, and I am the world. Is there a difference? Nor am I intending to hold to those shriveled and blooming crusts. Is it possible to speak of mixtures? Is it possible to work with many things?

We are a little lower now. On the horizon, outside this taut body. I turn away to watch the dawn break over the clouds. As I look from front to back, in front and crossing along the arc of the horizon to the rear, I see a shift. In front I see the white of the sun approaching us, turning the deep blue of the sky and melting it into light. The surface of the clouds and earth beneath this rim of light is shaded grey-blue, dark against the sky. As I turn, faint rumples and wrinklins of the sheets of clouds. Along the edge, at no place in particular, I see a new dark emerge. Where does Lucretius's *clinamen* arise precisely?<sup>21</sup> Neither here nor there but at any place. Shifting and sliding, a place of dark. This layer streams back and as I look towards the rear it grows into a distinct layer, a streaming wedge of darkness lifting out from the tangent and becoming a place, raining. I am looking at the shadow of the earth. In front, light. In back, void.

The clouds telegraph the shadow, speaking less dark and more dark and relief and detail. The curve engine, polished ellipse, speaks the shadow too, expanding the edge into a wide fading zone that stretches between gleaming light facing the sun and dark shadow behind, but pulsing and shifting as the airplane rolls in the current, tiny gentle rolling swells, hundredths or perhaps thousandths of a degree of pitch and yaw made visible by this floating compass.

This exquisitely calibrated instrument, measuring the *clinamen*, speaking of the Medusa cloud.

21 Titus Lucretius Carus (ca. 99 BC–ca. 55 BC), *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*). Lucretius treats the *clinamen*, the angle of minimum derivation, as the origin of life. The angle of a tangent to a circle is a *clinamen*.

## FORCES

Later, after the releases, I lay in a bowing posture for awhile, forward with head to the ground. A practical and mechanical answer to release. This allowed greater silence. What happened? Released from description. There was an unbounded yes of ceasing, noun fused with verb. Calibration schemae presented themselves as names of things: blood, earth, cognition, fire, community, the operation of forces and results. Simple, underlying patterns: what makes the world, what structures it. I remember thinking about the bow, and the fundamentals of earth, and cognition that arose after cessation.

When the others started to leave and walk back along their forest paths, a more gradual surfacing. I found everyone had gone except for two monks, one on the ground and the other ahead sitting like the statues at the front. I was lying sideways, as the learned one recommended. Grasp, elbow, metatarsal, phalange, extend, contract. Eventually I got up. I remember feeling great cheer, although cheer implies someone feeling it. I remember a smile. Sufficiently complete to be able to be free from strength.

Below there were other gales and clouds of visible things, living skins. And the simple voice of the forest, murmuring in every drop of water and rustle of leaf. And, in the dark, alongside murmurs and whis-pers, the rise and fall of the candle flame that accompanied me as I packed to go.

I remember how a spine sense rose too. I remember listening to some of the voices and those that sat on my shoulders and that which rested behind my neck and further behind in the dark woods. I looked at the candle, and saw that it rose and fell and that I rose and fell with it. I remember listening to the rain drops and the wind. What could I see, and what could I not see? What could I see specifically and precisely? What pictures were inventions and which were real? Amid the pleasure of realization I realized my psychosis: that only some of them were there. Others were not there. I sat with a tissue of murmurs, mixed. I realized that I could not tell the difference. I remember sitting with the rain and listening to the voices, the end of it.

Later, I think of the dark core that replaced breathing after that had disappeared. Instinct pulses located within the nerve field. Riding within panic swells, I saw myself die. Silky soft, that was easy. It was distinct, and full of coarse choices: world, body, others. Rising back up, reconnecting each synapse, naming a fresh mask.