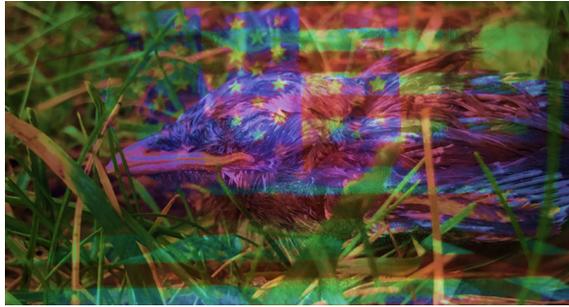


None of us know what the other side of this life looks like, feels like, sounds like. We are replete with fearful predictions, as historically the other side has looked a lot like this side, sometimes worse, and if not worse than only negligibly better.

There are desperate longings, for something, *anything* other than the molten sludge of despair we reside within.



A cruel spring has bled, quite literally, into a remorseless summer, and now we are on the cusp of a hopeless autumn. Too many things anger us, disappoint us, sadden us, too many bodies lost and not enough bodies putting themselves on the line because too many people are not angry, disappointed, or sad *enough*. The ratio of tears to days is incalculable. Nous sommes fatigués.

This urge to return to a sense of normalcy—an instinctive answer to overwhelming exhaustion—is nostalgia in its truest, most dangerous definition. Uncritical, awash with the wrong kinds of sentimentality, a violent, individuated response to a world that is moving in all the ways that feel antithetical to the life that was promised. Our resistance must come in a multitude of forms, but the collective refusal to return to any normative narratives is paramount to getting to the other

side, *after*, wherever it is, and that includes the cancellation of time and how it is understood and remembered. This is not a denial or disavowal of our memories but the rejection of a singular temporality and, in the words of Lisa Lowe, a *questioning of recovery*, which “combines the desire for freedom and a reckoning with the conditions of its foreclosure.”

For those whose knives sharpen with each passing year, there is no hope without terror, no desire without necessity. The other side, or the complete rupture of all systems and structures, of all relations, requires feeling every inch of memory in our bones as they break, but they *must break*, each and every last one. We have yet to properly contend with our present and by present we include everything that with regularity is associated with the past, what in actuality is *not over*. Settler colonialism, slavery, racialized expropriation, all the brutal catastrophes that are oft framed as historic to allow the present to be drawn into a portrait of overcoming. But what if the echo is also a tentacle?

As Lowe expands:

The phrase *questioning recovery*, then, names a broad critical project that scrutinizes the present as both aftermath and continuity and calls attention to the conditions of slavery and colonialism that infuse the conditions, memories,

and possibilities of the present. It foregrounds the persistence of unfreedom belying liberal narratives of progress that would triumphantly declare the present a time of freedom and asserts instead that the present is a time in which emancipation has not yet occurred, in which freedom is still yet to come.

Not after. *Yet*.

Lowe points to the impossibility of the present being an after, with so much left undone, while critiquing the impulse for and the very conception of *after* altogether. Our obsession with the future is rooted in a hunger for potential, for a site of possibility and freedom. The fixation is so great, however, that it reflects a weakness against struggle, of being unsettled. The more we pine for the future the more we forget the past and the convenience of letting go, obscuring, and constructing competing narratives of emancipation and historicization is too alluring. Acceleration to the *after* leaves a wake of erasure and omission in service of the something, *anything* other than.



after,  
mourning,  
remedy,  
release

Recovery  
of and a return to normativity reproduces  
dispossession and the current social order,

and within this framework an *after* unencumbered by the past is just another impossible. There is no articulation or understanding of *yet* that can exist without first mourning and attending to what was lost and what was never able to become. Where do we go? (Or, *when* do we go?)

To come back to now, on this day burning with hundreds of fires, we wonder if we will ever get to the other side. We ache.

At the time of writing, this piece remains incomplete. We do not know how it ends or even if it begins as it did. We imagine it to be a secret or a key, with iconography to be deciphered using a vernacular out of our repertoires. Or is it a message or remnant from the era of the unresolved? The work itself is the materialization of its own making, adapting and shapeshifting each week and again every month when the world decides to slide beneath our soles for the eight hundredth time. It will land far from where it began (as will we).

Giving a spine to this pandemic era is perhaps an embodiment of what Raymond Williams refers to as the *structure of feeling*. Sensations and sensibilities that are pre-articulation and without discernible form yet still construct consciousness, determine relationships, and establish trajectories. The affective narrative

precedes developed thought and creates a foundation for new formations of thought to emerge. We are feeling this work, as we are feeling this time, before it fully comes into being.

yet, surrender, courage, dread, and and

What are the conditions required for transformation? To become? How do we exit this time into another? A bird falls out of the tree and something is set into motion. As the seconds unravel we recall the panic and paranoia, the onslaught of loss, the loneliness, finding a way back to joy for it to slip through our fingers again, the softness that undergirds our fury and the fury that fortifies our softness. What is broken is sewn together, what cannot be sewn is a light. Melancholy begets hope which beflowers dread as this nation crumbles around us, as our chests feel the pieces come apart one stripe at a time until only the stars remain in the sky. We are ruined, we adapt, we remake, we remember. We live without time, without place. We grieve.

But, love. No immense sorrow without tremendous love. This era is wrought with all the things we do because we love each other, not because we want to be loved. An indecent and irrational love that binds us to one another and allows

us to endure, to dream of a *yet* not for ourselves but for everyone unmet we hold dear. It too will waver and dissipate, with no guarantee of being reborn, but we must believe it to be resilient and eternal regardless. Even with our eyes closed we feel the colours wash over us. A warmth unfelt since before, or *before* before, it is uncertain, we have abandoned all our clocks and we have done away with recovery anyhow.



This time may have all along been a tremble. A capacious moment that opened all the portals and

propelled us to refuse recognition from the present, to *feel* to the point of depletion everything that came before. There is no going back.

The pathway to *yet* remains unwritten. We are witnessing this in real time, living this unfastened life in which everyday is like no other day. Even still, we are seduced by feelings of progress and continuity because it is part of our survival. We think about how we will be with one another again and how we will be *for* one another (truly, fully). What we do know is that on this course we carry everything with us—the misery & the tenderness & all that remains unfinished, with a past

that functions like albatross and armor,  
as we work towards absolute estrange-  
ment; of this logic and these patterns,  
of these bodies, of this life. Every day  
another fracture that splinters the system,  
another inch closer to complete collapse.  
We are terrified, we are exhilarated.

A goodbye to the life we had, a quiver  
before sweet surrender.

–Kim Nguyen



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*Sound Composition:* Tristan Shepherd

*Recording/Mixing/Additional Instrumentation:* Ryan Howe

*Percussion:* Diamond Anderson

*Violin:* Francesca Caruso

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Jeffrey Gibson (b. 1972, Colorado, US) is an interdisciplinary artist and craftsman based in Hudson, New York. His work references various aesthetic and material histories rooted in Indigenous cultures of the Americas, and in modern and contemporary subcultures. Gibson, a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and of Cherokee descent, is forging a multifarious practice that redresses the exclusion and erasure of Indigenous art traditions from the history of Western art as it explores the complexity and fluidity of identity.

Gibson's previous exhibitions include, Jeffrey Gibson, *LIKE A HAMMER*, organized by the Denver Art Museum, and *This Is The Day*, organized by The Wellin Museum. Other notable solo exhibitions include: *The Anthropophagic Effect* (2019) The New Museum, New York; *Look How Far We've Come!* (2017), Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee; *Jeffrey Gibson: Speak to Me*, (2017), Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, Oklahoma City; and *A Kind of Confession* (2016), Savannah College of Art and Design Museum, Savannah. Gibson is a recipient of a 2019 MacArthur Foundation grant.

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