



*Axon: Creative Explorations*, Vol 10, No 2, December 2020

## WRITING WITH SWAMP: AN E-CO[ll]LAB MANI-FE[A]ST[O]

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*This manifesto is a feast and distillation, a momentary concretisation or sedimentation. Virginia Barratt, Ashley Haywood and Nick Taylor are a sprawling swamp-writing collaboration. We have been writing together since 2015.*

*We take the following concepts as starting points: Mary-Beth Dempster's proposition of sympoiesis; complex evolving semiotic-material systems; and resistance to the 'anaerobic' nature of lone authorship. We believe we are always writing-with in life.*

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We are an e-co(l)lab of multiple cursor *l-mouths* writing [insert preposition] *Swamp*. Our *l-mouths* flash across the virtual page-as-*terra*. Our text is alive! and evolving at the speed and depth of our engagement. We are happening right now — [simultaneously] terrified, and electric in every way — becoming a sympoietic (making-with) mani-fe[a]st[o].

### Bracket Key

(round): whispered  
aside,  
extension,  
explication  
[square]:  
interlocution,  
forced  
*readingmeaning*

As we mani-fe[a]st, or make-with [*terror-form*], we are thinking-with and learning-with in this space. Our e-collaborative swamp is both testing ground and compostable waste, lyrical *muddle* and field manual. We can be turbid like an estuary, or glean as new shoots that may or may not survive another *l-mouth*. Discontinuities feed continuity; that is, endings in here, as in out there, are rich in semiotic-material beginnings. What we want is to keep the text warm, fertile and sediment-rich: of multiple textual layers like humus. *Swamp* is a breeding ground as long as we continue to question [be] our inter- and intra-acting bodies.

We (*I* and *all*, or *possibility*) are an e-ecosystem who is mani-folding, mani-fe[a]sting with/in a virtual

map, *always-already* programmed by adventitious *algaerithmic* growth, and, as in life, we evolve.

Our methods are biologically informed: *Swamp* is receptive to the generation of textual *oddkin* emerging from sur-prising collaborations and re/combinations with/in our living textual compostable body. Brackets can be lips, and lips can be ho(spit)able. *Swamp*, or any e-co(l)lab, is necessarily *open* to disturbance, *recursive* in process — to accommodate encounters with alterity — and *emergent*: concepts evolve with our *responsiveness* to each other, *with* each other, *in* each other's mouths. The blinking *I-mouth* is an invitation, a portal within portals, and, with a sigh, ready to fall apart/in/under, we gather our mouths around one another: mouth around mouth around mouth.

What does that feel like? *Knotwork*.

With/in knotwork we are praxis/poiesis (thinking/doing) in a state of perpetual unraveling/remaking/re-knotting/re-knowing. Knotwork is metaphor, method and toil/tool. We learn the shapes of knots with our tongues. We follow the materiality of thread, the loops and flows of text and bodies, in order to recognise their structural power, their horizontal, mycelial-like potential, then, we unravel them in our *muddle-guts* as the text unravels us.

There are many beginnings [this is another one happening now]: we are adventitious-in-crisis, exploiting possibilities for a body of I-openings: involutions, mouths, folds, threads, patterns, lexical *algaerhythms/rithms*. Each opening/incursion is rich with life; the jostle of growth bursts forth and becomes another mouth, tongue, text, sound, scaffold, manifold. Only in process can we really start *thinking-with* the patterning of our *oddkin*, these wor(l)ding patterned forms in continuity [discontinuity (surprising folds, feedback loops)]. This anti-structure of perpetual patterning may be held up, deformed, destroyed, embellished, entangled, fermented, self-eaten, forgotten — for we are compos(t)ing *being* which is both real and virtual: molecular, textual and code.

The *why* of our doing and undoing, of our knotting and unknotting this body of multiplicities, is to test the limits of its epistemological expression — structure, patterning, form — as an e-co(l)lab body writing *into* itself to know itself, and to *be* this body is to be *environment*: a complex, non-individualised, intra-acting, evolving (learning) body. (I [we] suspect microorganisms are writing through me, their cellular bodies vastly outnumbering any other cell in this body.)

What is the knotting/patterning when it becomes entangled? When it becomes an unknowable gordian that our mouths can't shape, that our tongues cannot tongue apart? We welcome the gordian, and feed it more threads to eat! This is when the e-co(l)lab body exceeds itself, hacks its own *lexical algae-rhythms/-rithms*, rejects habits and makes new trouble. Entanglement (un)tangles habit. We throw ourselves into the *muddle* until we are entirely undone, until the thread-code iterates new forms, and the knots we make with tongues and text extrude [untie] (un)thought and the inconceivable — novelty forged of crisis.

Our turbidity is in perpetual Brownian motion. Sedimental folds comprise this unstable bedrock, held before tides by air-breathing roots. It is important to build on tremulous ground, in troubling discomfort and with the heat of experimentation — we are becoming-with in crisis and excitation, exhilaration and *terra!*

I, who is *no-body* in here, give up my text to hungry god-like cursors, the *I-mouth* — this text [*form*] is my offering in real time (and timelessness) — and [*I desire*] you swarm. Dare I say, **Rewrite me!** Dare we attend to shock-inducing otherness, tacitly attend to *them* with our parted lips, enfold *them* into our virtual body. The cursor *I-mouth* is a critical *portal* to the mu-(l)tiple/-table e-biome (they/we/I) of *mani-feasts*.

This is what we know for now.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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URL: <https://www.axonjournal.com.au/issue-vol-10-no-2-dec-2020/writing-swamp-e-colab-mani-feasto>

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Published by  
The Centre for Creative & Cultural Research  
University of Canberra  
Canberra, Australia  
ISSN: 1838-8973