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Steps Toward a Decolonial Feminist Ecology

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with Hamza Albakri, Asha Ali, and Arthur Dart

Introduction

View from Stoke Hill Farm, Exeter (UK); 11 September 2021

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This chapter is as much an imagining of *what we might do, who we might be* and *where we will have gone* as it is a story of *what we have done*. It is a tale of aspiration and interruption, of deliberate design and letting go, of walking and wondering.

We invite you to walk with us—to meet students and storytellers, organisers and educators, dreamers, activists and cherished friends. The pages before you recount a journey with creative pedagogies, where ruptures make possible emergent educational futures—new ways of teaching and learning, connecting to each other and the land, and working toward material and epistemic decolonisation. We begin with a module designed to centre project-based learning, whose intended trajectory was upended by a period of industrial action. While strikes seemingly threatened to limit our experience of the course, we became open to meaningful spaces of education that enable us to reach toward an ecological politics and practice. By taking a broader view of our roots and routes, we understand this ruption to be an important step toward developing a decolonial feminist ecology, grown locally in the wild/er spaces just beyond our door. The story in this chapter tentatively conceptualises our practice, though it can only be an attempt to trace the contours of something not yet fully formed.

As the principal author, I (Katie) write from the position of having structured our teaching and learning, as well as possessing embodied knowledge of the wooded trails that became spaces of education and community. I know the paths, trees, plants and hillsides not through reading or research, but from regularly moving upon and within the landscape. With each step and season I have gained an understanding of this natural world—I know which creek beds hold the most delicate wild garlic, just as I know where to find the wood anemone that sparkle like starlight in the dusk of early spring. I learned this through sense and feeling, by opening to wonder and discovery through touch, sight, smell, sound and taste. By being on and of the land. Yet I also write as a student in the space/time of a collective pedagogical and activist practice. Throughout this chapter the narrative voice moves between 'I' and 'we', reflecting a shared journey. With Asha, Arthur, Hamza and others,

I am becoming attuned to how sharing paths, stories, practices and knowledge in less structured and more unpredictable ways opens us to educational futures that nourish political organising. These activities feed and sustain resistance, while offering moments of rest, joy and solace.

In the pages that follow, we build on a practice begun in the spring of 2022 with students on the course 'Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Palestine/Israel' at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. We glean lessons from a single springtime walk, introduced as a break from the difficulty and weight of study—a rupture in classroom-based teaching and learning—that unexpectedly drew us deeper into grappling with the meaning and materiality of colonialism. By taking steps beyond the classroom, we are compelled to consider how our feet fall upon land marked by colonial violence and to ask what decolonisation means in a context where coloniality is obscured.

Through bodies and minds in motion, colonialism, decolonisation and anticolonial struggle emerge as terms within a lexicon of transformation—grounded in land-based praxis and connective modes of study. By colonialism we mean a history of interaction and model of political organisation characterised by practices of invasion, settlement, extraction, exploitation, domination and elimination of territory and indigenous populations (Young, 2001; Wolfe, 2006; Mignolo, 2007). We understand Israel to be a contemporary settler colonial regime that violently exerts power over historic Palestine and Palestinians, just as we acknowledge and experience Britain as a state of ongoing coloniality. British colonialism cannot be relegated to a historical past limited to the sixteenth–nineteenth centuries. Rather, the structures and privileges of colonialism endure through present-day politico-territorial control (e.g., over the north of Ireland), as well as through narratives of Western modernity and nostalgia for empire (Mignolo, 2017). Decolonisation responds by recognising and taking action to redress the powerful ways that colonialism shapes the past and present through territorial, political, social, economic and cultural conquest. At the same time, this practice and knowledge project entails a commitment

to new futures—decolonisation refuses colonial structures and logics to build anew based on principles of justice and self-determination (Lugones, 2010; Mignolo, 2017; Vergès, 2021). The work of anticolonial struggle is a shaking off of domination: '[…] rebuilding and re-existing under new conditions and modes of existences that are your own' (Mignolo, 2017, p. 44).

Stepping forward, this chapter first follows the imprints of those who have gone before us, whether in redefining study or engaging with the natural world as a space of learning, community and resistance. We (readers and writers, together) will walk with scholars, activists and organisers whose work increases access to the land and raises questions of power, privilege and violence. Following these guides, the chapter then traces *landlines* across the space/time of teaching and learning as an embodied relational practice. Here we meet students whose paths cross continents and communities, converging momentarily in Devon. By moving together through local woods, lanes and fields, we begin connecting the (present-day) coloniality of Britain with legacies and trajectories of colonialism in other contexts—in ways that insist on accountability and action.

Rather than arriving at a destination, the chapter closes mid-journey to reflect on how these imprints and landlines might lead us toward a politics and practice of decolonial feminist ecology. Drawing from their work on 'planetary humanism' and 'planetarity', we turn to walk with Paul Gilroy (2000, 2004) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2013, 2015), who suggest that our relationship to the environment and the more-than-human necessarily connects us to each another. With them, we consider how *ecology* is not purely the management of systems—in which humans are embedded—with the aim of creating and sustaining balance, but the practice of cultivating and nourishing relationships. Moving, breathing and sensing open us to new forms of encounter and collectivity, which ground us in a broader ethic of care and sense of shared struggle.

Imprints and Footsteps

Walking tomorrow!

by Katie Natanel - Thursday, 3 March 2022, 11:54 AM

Dear all,

Just a quick note to say that the forecast looks good for our walk tomorrow! For those who wish to stroll the lanes behind campus, let's meet in the IAIS atrium just after 11:30 - I'll be coming straight from teaching another class, so may need a few minutes to put on my boots! 🙂

The plan is to walk and be together, in conversation or silence - however the day takes us. I'll bring along some poetry and we will start with breathwork, but apart from that I want to leave the time largely unstructured. Please feel free to bring writing, songs, images, objects... anything that you may want to share or feels restorative. I can't emphasise enough how important it is to slow down, to rest and to recover (somewhat!) from the intensity of the academic term.

Please wear suitable footwear (boots, trainers) as no doubt we will encounter mud! Dress in layers and grab a waterproof or water resistant jacket if you can. But really we won't venture miles away - so come as you are. Do bring a bottle of water and a snack or sandwich, as we will be walking over the lunch period. And you know I can't go without food...

See you soon! Looking forward to this.

All the best,
Katie

Permalink Edit Delete Reply

Message posted to our virtual learning environment in preparation for a 'rest and restoration' session

I did not know what to expect as I laced up my boots, but really that was partly the point. A reminder sent to the class the day before our planned walk revealed both my excitement and my determination to let things unfold—to see where the path would take us, literally and metaphorically. In previous writing (Chappell et al., 2021; Natanel et al., 2023), I detail how the course 'Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Palestine/Israel' was meticulously re-designed in 2018 with a colleague from the UoE School of Education, Professor Kerry Chappell. During the first year of teaching in 2017, I had the almost painful sense that a lecture-style format failed to do justice to the complexities of violence, resistance and

everyday life in Palestine/Israel, no matter how committed we might be to dialogue following the taught portion of a given week. A radical redesign pivoted the course to emphasise project-based learning, shifting students' creative work from a form of assessment to the driver for study.

In the years since our redesign, I have grown to understand *study* in the sense proposed by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013, p. 110):

> …[S]tudy is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it 'study' is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. These activities aren't ennobled by the fact that we now say, "oh, if you did these things in a certain way, you could be said to have been studying." To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice. What's important is to recognize that that has been the case – because that recognition allows you to access a whole, varied, alternative history of thought.

Harney and Moten alert us to the creativity, playfulness and relationality that underpin knowledge as an already living practice—it ceases to be a static object that can be held or attained. Instead, knowledge is *what we do* and *who we become* with one another. It is active, unfolding and unfinished. It exceeds and even refuses the confines of an institution, becoming more than the structure can hope to capture and deliver.

Yet at this point in my journey as an educator, organiser and researcher, it is the final sentence of this passage that strikes me most. If we approach study in the manner suggested by Harney and Moten, we become sensitive to a history of thought previously denied recognition as *knowledge*. Those who guard the gates of theory and epistemology (see Million, 2009) are knocked off balance, ambushed by a cadre of dreamers, workers, musicians, healers, artists and organisers whose ways of knowing *have always been here*. In a (re)new(ed) practice of study, we are opened to being, sensing, feeling, moving and doing as inherently intellectual

activities—parts of a larger and longer story made un-known and unknowable through the institutionalisation of heteropatriarchal white supremacy (Smith, 2020).

This story reveals that there is nothing radically new about the realisation that a walk in the woods might usher in a deeper, more meaningful mode of study. The notion that our class could break from the active—and difficult—work of learning only makes sense if education is framed as something to be done in specific times and places, for particular reasons. This assumes that teaching and learning are practices that we can turn on and off at will. Instead, if study is a speculative practice that we undertake in pursuit of understanding, growth, pleasure and community, then walking must surely be a conduit to new meanings and modes of action.

A Braided Path

On that bright March day, we followed the footsteps of those who studied and walked before us—not only in Devon and the UK, but also in Palestine and beyond. Our journey intertwines with paths traced across distant places and struggles, honouring how ways of knowing, being and doing might meet and be woven together in a 'braid of stories' that enables us to imagine different relationships with each other and the world (Kimmerer, 2020, p. x).

I felt my way with the session in its first incarnation, attending to intuition and responding to my own need for breath, space, reflection and motion. At the same time, I drew upon existing actions and initiatives—lived experiences and collective imaginings—that reassured me of the value in taking our class out of its institutional setting. I reached not for peer-reviewed articles or monographs published by university presses, but to memories, conversations and my own practices of movement in my effort to follow an active 'alternative history of thought' (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110). This history is largely absent from scholarship on project-based learning, though the intersection of walking with decolonial pedagogies is an area of increasing academic exploration (see, e.g., Wane et al., 2004; Butterwick & Selman, 2012; Batacharya & Wong,

2018; and WalkingLab, 2019). We must search elsewhere, whether due to epistemic omission or the deliberate design of practitioners who exercise their 'right to opacity' (Glissant, 1990/1997, pp. 189–194)—the right to not be grasped.

Our path leads immediately to Palestine—the focus of our course and the primary inspiration for moving our bodies toward the land. Years before designing the module and just prior to fieldwork for my doctoral research, I learned about the work of Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer, human rights activist and writer who published *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*. I eagerly read his account of walks that took place between 1978 and 2007 (Shehadeh, 2008, p. xii), seeing through his eyes how the landscape has been altered by politics and violence. Here I mean expulsion from villages; annexation of territory; construction of settlements; destruction of homes; devastation of arable land and crops; killing of livestock; prohibition of harvesting wild plants; and control of water. Yet Shehadeh (2008, p. 206) also shows readers the beauty of Palestine and Palestinian land, richly layering his stories of legal, territorial and material harm. For example, he writes of walking with a friend (Louisa) who had recently moved from Edinburgh:

> We arrived at the spring of A'yn El Lwza (Spring of the Almond Tree), the abandoned *qasr* a little distance away. Across from us was the beautiful rock that early in the year is studded with cyclamens. The spring itself still provided much-needed water for the flocks of goats and sheep that grazed in these hills. The water had made a small, murky-green pond in which we heard frogs and saw thick growths of spearmint and the common reed. But the meandering path nearby was almost totally obliterated, blocked by the large boulders that had fallen from the terrace when this illegal road had been built in 1992. A beautiful spot that had remained unchanged for centuries had been destroyed with no one raising a storm. I sat down on the dislocated rocks, trying to recall how it used to be, silently lamenting the destruction of our once-beautiful valley. I wondered how it must all seem to a newcomer like Louisa, who had not known this valley before its ruin.

Shehadeh insists that we see, hear and feel the spring, the rocks, the plants and the animals—that we begin to understand the delicate relationships

that connect them and the world they sustain. That we understand what has been lost and what is at stake.

During fieldwork in 2010–2011, I was based not in the occupied West Bank where Shehadeh's feet meet the trail, but in Tel Aviv and West Jerusalem where my Jewish Israeli research participants resided. I felt myself very much inside Israel, though I know it to be historic Palestine. A quality or texture emerged through language, social interaction and relationship to the land that confirmed my location *elsewhere* (if the abundant Israeli flags were not enough to tell me so). Yet on occasion, I would feel myself in Palestine. This was not always a matter of crossing material borders, though indeed checkpoints, barriers and soldiers marked division in political, social, economic and spatial terms. Rather, the feeling of *being in Palestine* materialised through language, symbols, cuisine, behaviour, architecture and landscape (Natanel, 2016). Palestine was always already present, despite the concerted efforts of the Israeli state and society to demolish, erase, obscure and assimilate. Within the borders of Israel and its largest cities, I increasingly found that I could move through an alternative or parallel geography once attuned to people, places, encounters and sensations.

This ability to travel—to exercise my right to movement—enabled me to join a walking excursion near Ramallah after giving a talk at Birzeit University in the occupied West Bank. We gathered at the trailhead just after dawn with rucksacks, boots and sustenance, listening to the volunteer leaders as they described our route. Once walking, it came as a surprise to me that our pace was unhurried—due in part to the children among us, but also openly declared as an intention. Our aim was not to clock miles, but *to be on the land* in the fullest sense. We were encouraged to share stories, to stop frequently for plants and flowers, to help each other pass more difficult sections of terrain. In this way, I learned about wild herbs, terraced farming, signs of passing seasons, ephemeral sources of water and the stunning scale of abundance. So too I remained aware of how settler colonial violence marks land and lives, as if journeying again with Raja Shehadeh. Walkers' stories revealed different degrees of constrained mobility, with some able to cross (with permits) between Jerusalem and the West Bank, while others were confined to the immediate locality. I was gently asked not to photograph the Israeli settlements

that appeared on distant hilltops in blocky formation, oozing across the landscape in a way that underlined their permanence. If someone were monitoring us from a distance—settler or soldier—the act of photography could have serious repercussions.

Thus, while our walk was certainly for pleasure, health and community, it was also an insistence on presence: *"We are here, together."* Moving through the land was a means of teaching, learning, being and doing—study—rendered necessarily political given the struggle for liberation from settler colonisation. However, we did not need to name or mark our walk as *political* for it to already hold this 'incessant and irreversible' quality (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110). We could rest and share sage tea under the cover of olive trees, knowing that the nourishment sustained much more than contented, weary walkers.

* * *

Stepping onto the wooded path in Devon with students years later, I brought this embodied knowledge of Palestine with me. We carried it, together, as we walked. Yet we also found inspiration in other initiatives, experiences and imaginings, braiding these modes of activity together with each footfall on the dampened earth. When first designing the session, I drew on the wisdom and vision shared by Sabah Choudrey, a UK-based trans youth worker and psychotherapist whose love of walking and wild spaces I first encountered on Instagram. Sabah visited Exeter in January 2022 to launch their book *Supporting Trans People of Colour: How to Make Your Practice Inclusive* (2022) and generously agreed to facilitate a day-long workshop for LGBTQ+ young people (Exeter City of Literature, 2022). Based on their experiences of building and supporting community in part through nature, Sabah designed a day of activity encapsulated by words such as 'opening', 'walking', 'exploring', 'documenting' and 'sharing'. They attended to differing degrees and modes of mobility as best they could given the terrain, plotting routes that provided access to wild spaces on foot and by wheelchair. For all, the day's practice included breathwork, writing, reading, feeling, sensing, moving, eating and drinking—studying and nourishing. I watched as young people arrived with nervous excitement, just as I registered their reluctance to leave at the end of the day with windswept hair and muddied boots or

wheels. I heard participants describe what they had found on the path: greenery, community and new horizons of possibility.

This experience of land-based praxis—communal, intellectual and political—became woven with the vision of other organisers and initiatives whose work is made knowable through social media. Self-expression and representation on platforms like Instagram enabled us to learn from groups such as Land in Our Names (LION), a grassroots collective that pursues reparations for Black people and people of colour in Britain. LION connects racial justice with food, land and climate justice, confronting colonialism through increasing access to the land and challenging its concentration—as property—within the hands of the privileged (white) few. As a collective they build capacity and networks among growers, developing 'ecologies of care' that enable healing and promote land stewardship (Land in our Names, 2023). LION are clear that their work is *by* and *for* Black land workers and land workers of colour—like the space held for queer youth by Sabah Choudrey, these initiatives are not about integration within existing structures of privilege and violence. As Sara Ahmed (2012) and Sarah Keenan (2013) remind us, representation and participation do not mean radical transformation. Instead, LION and Choudrey insist on access to rights, knowledge, community, security, justice and land—existence—on their own terms. Shared by other UK-based groups such as Gendered Intelligence, Queer Botany and Sole Sisters, this work demands that we pay attention to the histories, conditions and trajectories of heteropatriarchal coloniality, and at the same time refuse them as totalising.

To our dissent line (Smith, 2012, p. 13) we also added the visions and actions of organisers based in the United States, taking inspiration from Rising Hearts, Pattie Gonia, Brave Trails, The Black Foxes, Brooklyn Bell and Alison Mariella Désir. These athletes, artists, activists and community organisers differently confront the logics and effects of American settler colonialism, particularly in shaping access to the outdoors and wild spaces. The colonial past and present are often engaged directly but sometimes obliquely, signalling the development of a politics-in-becoming. As dialogue within and across these groups makes clear, resistance is imperfect—it is a process of striving, responding to criticism, confronting limitations, adapting, renewing and resurging. The work of

these organisers was again made knowable through social media, where following an account on Instagram or Twitter/X revealed a universe of aligned activities and imaginations of the future. Whether under the name of an individual or grounded in a collective, these initiatives point toward an intersectional politics capable of transforming social norms, political policy and even global circuits of power.

This critical labour demonstrates how racial, gender and environmental justice are inextricably entwined—one piece cannot move without the others. Yet so too this is collective work of joy and pleasure, from the feeling of recognition and community that comes with staging a Pride March in Yosemite National Park to the healing that might emerge when we ask "Whose woods *are* these?" and move through them together. It is strengthened through rest and recovery, as much as through activity. Here we take lessons from The Nap Ministry, whose mantra 'Rest is Resistance' initially gave us permission to pause—to breathe and to be, to step back from institutionalised teaching and learning (Hersey, 2022a). To reach for something deeper, something more. As Tricia Hersey (2022b), founder of The Nap Ministry, reminds us:

> This is about more than naps. It is not about fluffy pillows, expensive sheets, silk sleep masks or any other external, frivolous, consumerist gimmick. It is about a deep unraveling from white supremacy and capitalism. These two systems are violent and evil. History tells us this and our present living shows this. Rest pushes back and disrupts a system that views human bodies as a tool for production and labor. It is a counter narrative. We know that we are not machines. We are divine.

Then we come full circle in our story, following braided paths that reveal study to be a layered practice of *doing*—where we meet despite structures that seek to divide and exploit, where time is recursive, folded and polyrhythmic rather than linear (Rifkin, 2017; Allan, 2018). From this place we position walking as an invitation to teach and learn in decolonial ways, where an ecology emerges that connects us to each other, to the land and to a shared struggle for justice.

Landlines

Stag sculpture at Stoke Hill Farm; 4 March 2022

"I want you to close your eyes. Feel the ground beneath your feet, the air moving softly across your face. Listen to the sounds around us – what do you hear? Register all of this. Hold it gently and let it go.

We will breathe together, present with each other and on this hillside. Three times, in and out.

Breathe in one … and out one.

Breathe in two … and out two.

Breathe in three … and out three.

Be still. Feel. Open your eyes when you are ready.

We are here."

To begin the walk I led our class in grounding, an exercise that would be integrated within all teaching sessions the following year. In March 2022 breathwork enabled us to become present in our journey, to register our intention and to feel ourselves in place—on the land within a wild/er space just beyond the university campus. It enabled us to let go and take up the invitation that walking extends: to think, move and be differently. Grounding set the tone for sensation and intimacy to be the basis of our experience, rather than ways of knowing whose epistemic value must be fiercely fought for within academia and Higher Education. For two hours, embodied and felt knowledge could be the centre.

Arriving later to the metal stag at Stoke Hill Farm, we were flush with energy, stories and ideas—new knowledge that emerged as we marvelled at the diversity of green and growing things, laughing at our failed attempts to avoid the deep, sticky mud. As we walked, we talked across Devon, Cornwall, London, Palestine, Kashmir, Dubai, Germany, Wisconsin and Colorado, connecting our lives and learning through the ground beneath our feet. Landlines appeared with each step and word, materialising in my mind's eye as shimmering, silvery threads that spread behind and before us—a snail's trail of memory and imagination. These lines followed the contours of our stories and the topography of the land, creating a new kind of map that we sensed might be ephemeral but hoped would be lasting.

The activity of drawing landlines made us breathless and happy, even as it opened uncertainties and old hurts—such is the promise of study, as Harney and Moten (2013) propose it. The substance of our exchanges and observations was not written down that day; we did not record it as 'data' to be kept for analysis. Instead, our teaching and learning was stored within hearts, leaving us with a feeling of what had transpired. An imprint lovingly placed alongside those shared above.

As we paused beneath an oak tree to listen to poetry, I understood that walking was much more than the break that I had planned for our class. It was an opportunity to rest and restore, but it was also a means to resist and connect. We resisted the neoliberal capitalist drive for

individualised productivity by insisting that pleasure had a place within our module, that a week framed by an invitation to wear suitable shoes and pack refreshments was as valuable as assigned readings or an assessment deadline. Following the route along lanes, through woods and across fields as a nascent public, we accessed land in ways that defied notions of private property and ownership. We resisted heteropatriarchal white supremacy by tracing landlines that made us aware of how race, gender, class, ability, generation, religion and location shape our everyday lives and experiences of nature. By sharing stories and poetry as we moved through the countryside, we named the forces that constrain opportunities and foreclose futures. Walking was an exercise of mobility that provided a language to describe often violent inequalities; at the same, it became a practice of equity as we claimed the right for all to roam.

On that day, we planted the seeds of a decolonial feminist ecology—a way of relating to each other and the land that attends to power and violence, but at the same time enables us to rehearse *the world that might be*. The promise of *what we might do* and *who we might be* shone brightly on the horizon, casting a golden glow on the rolling green hillsides that filled our field of view. Our study was diagnostic and world-making. Knowing was doing and being, together.

Ruptures

Yet as the introduction to this chapter foreshadows, ours is a story of interruption—of hopes upended and beginnings unfinished. We could not know it then, but these tentative steps toward a decolonial feminist ecology would meet obstacles that meant suspending our practice in the spring of 2023. Intrigued—and admittedly awed—by the lines that had unexpectedly emerged, I intended to deepen and extend our walking sessions with a new cohort of students. This time, our module would include a week on *land* that was taught not in a university classroom, but in the wild/er spaces previously explored. We would

explicitly ask what connects coloniality in Palestine with other contexts, struggles and communities in hopes that our landlines would gain thickness and permanence. This experience would come early in the course, enabling us to regularly return to walking as a lens to engage and understand subsequent topics, from embodiment and control to emotion and futurity. Our presence on, in and with the land would not be a break but the driver of our study—the centre to and from which all landlines flowed.

This imagining of *what we might do* was ruptured by a period of industrial action that lasted the duration of our academic term. Instead of exploring and connecting in expansive new ways, we focused on consolidating—making the most of the limited time in which we could meet for teaching and learning. My energy went toward recuperating rather than speculating, trying to enable the module to do the powerful work that I knew it capable of. Gone was the session on land and with it the invitation to develop walking as a means of exploring a decolonial feminist ecology. We grieved these changes to structure and content, just as we mourned lost opportunities to simply think and be together. We focused on *what we could do*, given the conditions and the stakes.

But still something powerful happened in those weeks, a kind of teaching and learning that attuned us more sharply to the work of decolonisation and its relation to ecology. Despite the cancellation of classes, students continued to show up—on picket lines and in teach outs, rather than university classrooms. We danced *dabkeh* joyously on the campus boundary, following the careful steps and tuition of Hamza Albakri. A doctoral researcher, musician and theatre practitioner from Al-Khalil (Hebron) Palestine, Hamza taught us how to place our feet and find rhythm through the knowledge that *dabkeh* mimics the act of planting on Palestinian land. A hand extends downward to release a seed, a jump moves us forward to repeat and create a row—a field is sown through collectivity and care, through cultivating and sharing knowledge. Our synchronised steps momentarily connected lands and peoples, dissolving the distinctions between here and there, memory

and futurity, even as more immediately they brought us pleasure and release. Days later, Arthur Dart and Asha Ali invited us to walk from that same site—our picket line dance floor—into the wooded valley below. They led us over a turnstile and down a thin, muddy path to reach the narrow brook that runs the length of Hoopern Valley, a wild/er space previously unknown to me despite six years of residing in the city. With the university campus barely visible through dense tangles of branches, Arthur and Asha told the valley's story as a place of community and refuge—for students and for travellers. Traces of the previous summer's encampment could be seen nestled among the wild garlic: the stream had been widened and deepened to provide a basin for washing; a pallet reading "Want change, not change" spoke to a sense of politics; the stump of a felled tree bore signs of use for cutting and cooking. Our guides—walkers, researchers, organisers and teachers from Devon and Somalia—encouraged us to imagine and claim this land as 'the commons': a resource belonging to all (see Right to Roam, n.d.). And for which we all must care.

Through an experience of rupture we continued to move toward something, tracing new lines that radiated not from the limits of the university or its classrooms but from the land itself. Thick, silvery threads extended from our relationship/s to the natural world and to each other. These landlines did not draw us back to institutionalised teaching and learning; they were not the product of redesigning course content to better capture a feeling that threatened to slip away. Rather, these were lines of resistance, connection, rest, care, pleasure and transformation *in action*—meaningful and powerful in their/our defiance of structures, boundaries and categorisation. Landlines mapped a mode of study that grew in the following months to include foraging, cooking, singing, playing and giving; so too these lines were drawn through grieving, supporting and healing. Our 'various modes of activity' enabled us to rehearse the world that we might build together, 'walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering' (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110)—while refusing to be contained.

Whose Woods Are These?

Stoke Hill Farm, 15 October 2022

A strip of eucalyptus bark. Tangled hair. Flushed cheeks. Steady heart-beat. Calm.

I opened the door to my office after our walk in March 2022 unable to take in all of what we had experienced, but sure of its significance. Something had happened—we had been somewhere, done something. We had moved and been moved. We returned changed.

Our landlines shimmered in the woods, lanes and fields where feet and words had taken us. They called us back, up and out of the university, with the promise of new knowledge—of breath, adventure, storytelling and connection. Yet they also traced through our campus, spilling from the ridge into land cultivated as *property*. Distant views and wooden gates disappeared at the university fence line, where a sign claimed private ownership and warned against trespass. And still our lines glimmered—down paved paths, beneath towering buildings and past tags naming trees by

genus and species. It was here that I stooped to pick up the rough piece of eucalyptus now held in my hand. For some reason, I opted not to bring back a sign of the wild/er spaces in which we had journeyed. Instead, I collected this shaggy remnant—an indicator of campus biodiversity curated in the 'excellent mix … of original exotic [tree] species introduced in the middle of the 19th Century' (University of Exeter, n.d.). Native to Australia, growing in Devon and gathered during a course on Palestine, the eucalyptus conveyed a storied life—it spoke of colonialism layered across space and time. But it also told of study, walking, rest and resistance.

Perhaps this is the point to which we arrive: returning mid-journey to the places from which we departed, changed. Our landlines draw us out and in, gently insisting that we stop, listen, ask, share and feel. That we learn deeply of our connections to each other and the land/s we are not *on*, but *of*. This strikes me as an emergent kind of ecology, one potentially aligned with the ways of thinking and being made knowable by scholars like Paul Gilroy (2000, 2004) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2013, 2015) who argue that our fields of view, care and action must broaden in pursuit of the just world/s we might build. 'Planetary humanism' (Gilroy 2000, 2004) and 'planetarity' (Spivak 2013, 2015) alert us to the scale of our work, marking 'the limit to what we do' (Spivak 2013, p. 2). These frames suggest a kind of non-imperialising universalism that makes space for 'the geographical imaginations we bring to the planet become the very fabric, possibility and potential for progressive and humane (co)habitations of modernity' (Jazeel, 2011, pp. 83–84). Our landlines are world-making.

At the same time, a planetary awareness and imagination raises questions of alterity, attending to how otherness and abjection are produced, sustained and justified. We are urged to be wary of 'one-worldism' and its capacity for violence (Jazeel, 2011, pp. 87–88), not least in determining who is known, who is know-ing and who is know-er (Kilomba, 2016)—what is thinkable, writeable, readable, sayable and doable. In becoming hegemonic or claiming the universal these frames threaten to erase and eliminate, aligning with the colonial knowledge whose logics we confront and refuse.

Our grounding and connectedness bring us back from this edge. Concerned with the effects of 'belonging and its multiple ecologies' on political communities and solidarities (Gilroy, 2000, pp. 2–3, 328), planetary humanism envisions a future in which 'race-thinking'—manifest in

borders, identities and national cultures—is supplanted by deeper ethical and political bonds. If the planet is our horizon of possibility, humanism reminds us of the routes we walk and the stories we share. Our paths and histories are not universal; rather, they momentarily converge, brushing and overlapping in ways that permit experiences, sensations, memories, struggles, communities and visions to meet. In the space of a classroom, on a picket line, beside a brook, atop a hill—our landlines will lead us there.

A decolonial feminist ecology emerges from this confluence of energies. In developing this chapter, I began to doubt whether it needed to be written and, if so, whether I am the person to record it. It seems to me that a decolonial feminist ecology is a matter of *doing*—being, becoming, resisting and connecting in ways that will always be unfinished. A tension or ambivalence accompanies my attempt to capture it (imperfectly), as we sow our first seeds in Devon. And yet, Paul Gilroy (2000, p. 335) reminds us as a matter of urgency: 'We need to look toward the future and to find political languages in which it can be discussed.'

Then the steps traced here are indeed a rehearsal—study as a speculative practice that yields a grammar for the future. A decolonial feminist ecology is our way of talking about how our entanglement—the state and knowledge of being braided together—might move us toward a future in which care and justice underpin social organisation, political practice and economic policy. It begins to give breath and word to a way of life that does not seek balance, but acknowledges connection, flow, interdependency and mutual constitution. It is a language that attempts to describe how my future cannot be separated from yours or ours, and what is at stake in that relation. In 'Violence, Mourning, Politics' Judith Butler (2004, p. 22) writes,

> When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost "you" only to discover that "I" have gone missing as well. At another level, perhaps what I have lost "in" you, that for which I have no ready vocabulary, is a relationality that is composed neither exclusively of myself nor you, but is to be conceived as *the tie* by which those terms are differentiated and related.

A decolonial feminist ecology gently steps toward creating that vocabulary, recognising how our bonds extend to the land, the plants, the

animals, the rocks and the spring of A'yn El Lwza—the world/s that together we sustain.

Our landlines reveal *what we might do* and *who we might be*, as much as a story of *what we have done* and *where we have gone*. But perhaps more importantly, they make clear *that which will have had to happen* for a decolonial feminist ecology to grow—'a performance of the future that hasn't yet happened but must' (Campt, 2017, p. 17). This is our emergent educational future. Through ruptions and resistance, a decolonial feminist ecology becomes '[…] a creative, peopled re-creation' that requires us to ask 'How do we learn about each other? How do we do it with without harming each other…? How do we cross without taking over? With whom do we do this work?' (Lugones, 2010, pp. 754–755)—and to answer with reference to a planetary horizon. Walking and dancing, we move toward a practice and politics rooted in shared struggle and an ethics of care; in pleasure and community; in accountability to each other and to the land that holds us.

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