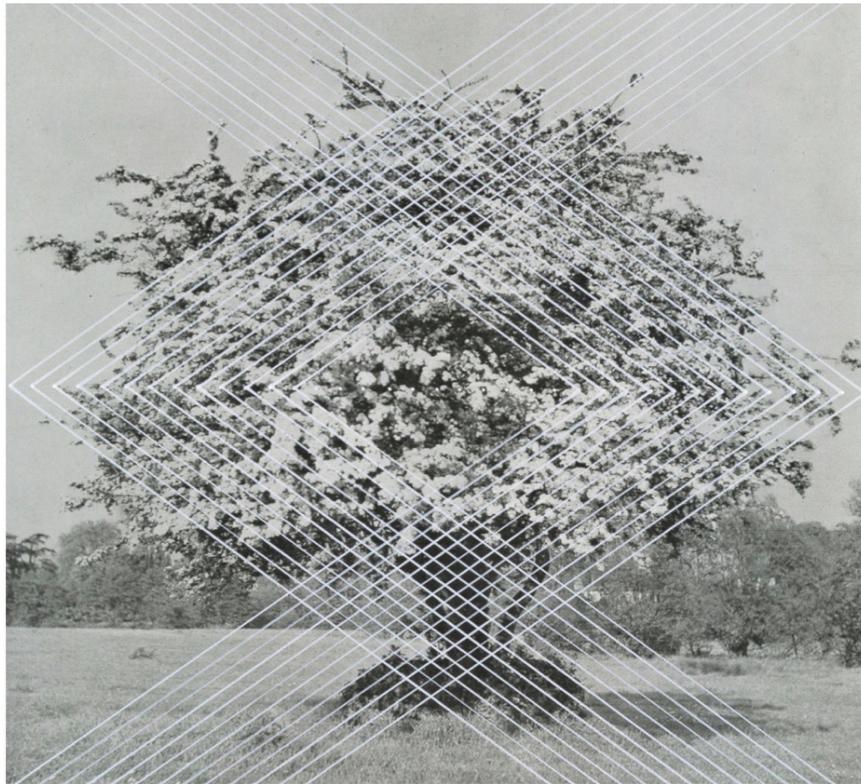

Fieldwork Gallery Sessions

Haarlem Artspace



Hawthorn Drawing,
Tazelcar Stevenson

Voices

Catherine Rogers
Livvy/Olivia Penrose Punnett
Mary/Muff Wiltshire
Penny Newell
Chris Thornhill
Helen Jukes
Eva Knutsdotter Vikstrom (Fourthland)
Isik Sayarer (Fourthland)
Anonymous participants

That Which Was Heard

Motorbikes
Birds
A squeaky chair
Laughter (various)
Modulations in tone (various)
Hums
Anonymous participants

Transcription (Voice and Sound), Referencing and Editing

Penny Newell

Fieldwork Gallery Session 1
“History and Myth”
Haarlem Artspace

Facilitator

Catherine Rogers

Speakers

Livvy/Olivia Penrose Punnett

Mary/Muff Wiltshire

Penny Newell

In the downstairs gallery at Haarlem Artspace, wooden chairs fan outwards on the wooden floor, in a wonky spiral. The deep-stone walls are brilliant-white in the August sun. A jug holds flowers on a table strewn with mugs and the remnants of lunch. People lean attentively toward our speakers. Penny and Mary/Muff have just introduced their work. Mary/Muff is a local historian who recently published a history of Wirksworth. Penny is a poet whose PhD looked at concepts of the ecology. Livvy, the curator, introduces the themes of Fieldwork. For some reason, halfway through her introduction, Catherine remembers to make a recording of the event . . .

Referenced: Livvy

... so, thinking about “what is the rural?” is really pertinent in this geographical location because we’re in the first ever coal powered mill—ever—right now,—Mary, yes, disputed, but it *is*...

Heard:

[noisy laughter, as if everyone is relieved to make a collective sound]

Mary Wiltshire and Anton Shone, *Wirksworth, a History* (Bannister Publications, 2016)

And just down the road from Cromford, obviously an Arkwright Mi—. So to quote you, there is a description of Wirksworth in 1806 as “lying in a bottom eternally overhung with smoke from the lead and calamine works, the principal covering being here and there broken into pillars of white smoke from smelting mills”. So it’s just this dark dinghy picture of this really industrial place, which we are now calling “rural”. So at what point did this turn rural and not industrial? And, capitalism... I,— I saw a Jeremy Dellar documentary the other day about dance music and he made an off-hand comment about how capitalism hadn’t ever managed to take hold of rural traditions. And something made me go, “hmmmmm”, because the enclosures act is where it *began* and that is so clear in our landscape... is it Mary?

Jeremy Deller, *Everybody in the Place: an Incomplete History of Britain, 1984–1992*
“There is no commons without commoning”, Instituto Procomum, Brazil, <https://www.procomum.org>

But it’s clear in our landscape that we see now, what we *associate* with rural. So there’s this kind of paradox and the commons is this big issue in perhaps trying to find a way *out* of this. This came up in a residency that we did earlier in the year called “Collectivism” where Penny was resident and we had three Brazilian artists come and join us, who practise the commons in their studio at Instituto Procomum in Brazil. And it’s all of these questions that I wanted to ask. And David, the reason that you just said, about not feeling like your work sits very well *rurally*, is exactly the reason that I wanted to put your work on,—because of that idea of “this is what you see in a city centre space” and “this is what you see in a rural space”. And, as I was saying to Eva and Isik [Fourthland artists] earlier, there’s a lot of academ,—academic work and text about this idea of “contemporary art and the rural” but not so much actual,

[she pauses, and a handful of people laugh sympathetically]

[the distant sound of a motorbike]

[the distant sound of a motorbike grows louder]

practical *what* that looks like now. We have an idea through art history in terms of Andy Goldsworthy and key environmental artists that we associate with “art and the rural”. But now I feel we need to break the mould a bit, “embrace the willow” and, kind of, like...

Catherine

... move forward...

Livvy

... move forward, and ask again all of these questions, from the point of view of “okay, a lot of stuff hasn’t worked, environmental issues haven’t always... the movement’s *been* there and it’s been—I heard this word the other day—it’s been “*de-fanged*.” We see Greenpeace merchandise now and we think, “ah that’s a nice rainbow stripey thing”. Same for queer culture. It’s the “de-fanging” of the actual rub of these issues.

[laughs sensitively]

Am I making sense?

[understanding laughter]

Catherine

Fantastic. I’m getting anxious because I’m suddenly doing my “time-keeping”. I’m gonna push it on and, hopefully... we’ve got time for people to respond. I’ve got a few connections that I made listening, but I do want to make sure that *everybody* has chance to refer either to something that they saw this morning or something that, through the time that we’ve been together, they want to respond to.

[a third motorbike comes into and out of ear-shot... or is it a fourth? no one can remember.]

Or again, any of the speakers, if there’s something that you just want to point out... I know you [Mary/Muff] want to ask about the enclosures act...

[gestures to Mary/Muff, who laughs]

Voice from Amongst the People

I was going to ask about the commons. Can you elaborate on that?

Mary/Muff

Okay. It’s much more complicated than Livvy makes out, I’m sorry to say. If you can imagine a countryside or a landscape which is unenclosed open woodland pasture. Some parts of it are ploughed up for arable, fenced off with some brush-hedging, which keeps the cattle out or the sheep or the horses or whatever, while the corn is growing. Similarly for the hay-crop: a temporary fence around it that can be thrown open at the end, and once the crops come off, the cows and horses and everybody come in again and graze it off. It becomes open common grazing at that point. There are always areas in the landscape—and certainly around Wirksworth I would know areas—that were “commons”, and because they were unsuitable for haymaking, unsuitable for crop-growing, they were *always* commons. The lovely thing about Wirksworth is there is a 17th-century document that tells you all of the people that lived here, and you have these encroachments on the commons and the encroachments are little people moving in and taking over a patch of land. This happens on Gorsey Bank. It happens up the Dale. It happens at Wash Green. It happens at

Warmbrook. And you get this funny little higgledy-piggledy building up of houses. You go the Dale and you can still see it. You go up Gorsey Bank and you can still see it. And so this is the progression forward, away from a very tight little community down and around the church in Wirksworth—which was a very important church—and other little bits are growing. The town is expanding, so it's becoming less rural—ha!

Through the 17th and 18th century other people were enclosing bits of land in all sorts of places. Like over in Shining Cliff Wood—that was enclosed very early on. It was a medieval Deer Park, and a wall enclosed it. It's beautiful, and it's preserved it as the most fantastic piece of nature. And so with local landlords: you'd have a strip of a field here and a strip of another field there. And you'd swap them around, and then you could put your three strips together, and put a hedge around it, or a wall. If you go up to Bonsall, Chelmorton or Middleton, you can see that process has happened. Now, there was no complicated, parliamentary enclosure act. There was just people talking to one another saying, "I've got this bit of land, you've got that bit of land. If I swap you this bit for that bit, I'm gonna have two bits together, and I could have a slightly bigger field." You can see that in the landscape all the time. It's lovely.

[someone has a very squeaky chair; everyone ignores it and continues to listen]

Eventually in the 19th century—

Catherine

And was that without money?

Mary/Muff

I don't know about that. I've never found a document that said, "I'll give you tuppence-80 for it or whatever". I think it was just a genuine exchange.

'An Act to facilitate the Inclosure and Improvement of Commons and Lands held in common', CHAPTER 118 8 and 9 Vict, *Inclosure Act* (8th August 1845)

... so eventually in the 19th century you get this parliamentary Inclosure Act which tidied up the commons and the common-grazing that was still knocking about. In Wirksworth that was the Wirksworth Moor, basically going up towards the Malt Shovel. There are maps of how people were allotted bits of land because they used to have grazing rights on that moor and now they're going to enclose it. So *you* get *this* field because *that's* worth two cows per-year, or "beast gates", as they're called. The names are wonderful.

Two other things I want to say not to do with enclosures. One is that water is always important and Wirksworth is particularly important for its water. I don't know if any of you ever noticed but we have a Warmbrook and a Coldwell Street. And the Ecclesbourne is the river by the church. Wirksworth church is a very important church. The river, well stream—just outside the door here—runs up the valley in very close proximity to the church. Where it joins the Derwent down at Duffield there is another church and this is the Eccles. Eccles means church.

Catherine

Eccles cakes are church cakes?

[the room clamours; people mutter]

Mary/Muff

Eccles,—it’s the same word. Eccles is a place, and it must have had an important church. Anyway, there are two churches at either end of this Ecclesborne. Umm anyway that’s enough from me.

One other thing about the Wirksworth landscape and then I’ll shut up. We also found out when we were doing the Wirksworth history book that there are burial mounds—and this is the myth-y magical bit of my . . . I’m not a very myth-y magical person, I’m a practical person—but around Wirksworth there are a number of burial mounds. They’re called “lows” but they’re high. There’s one just up here. It’s called Chewlow. So there’s Chewlow, Ravenslow, Penlow, and they’re all around the town.

Livvy

Where?

[in disbelief]

Mary/Muff

I’d have to show you on a map.

A Voice

Are they Iron Age or Bronze Age?

Mary/Muff

I don’t know. I don’t know whether they’ve been excavated. Some of them certainly haven’t. In fact, I don’t know that any of ones around Wirksworth have been excavated, to be honest.

A Different Voice

Can I ask... the enclosure of the common ground caused lots of disputes—

Mary/Muff

It certainly—

That Same Voice Again

... and problems, all over the country. Were there any around here?

Mary /Muff

Not that I know of. But you often do hear about things because of disputes. Umm yes, yes.

A New Voice

It also cut people off from where they gathered by a wood—

Mary/Muff

Yes.

The Same Voices Goes On

... from their connection to the native plants which were gathered for medicines. So it was the beginning, really, of cutting people off from the land.

Mary/Muff

But in some places, Crich for example. . . people in the manor of Crich had an earlier right to go and collect stone. In Crich there's quarries all round, and there were quarries actually in Crich. The manorial tenants in Crich had a right to collect stone, and when the enclosure took place, they left places where they could still go and get stone to repair houses and things. So it's not all bad—ha!

Catherine

I think I saw another question. . .

Bev

Umm, when. . . ? When? *When?*

Mary/Muff

When was what happening?

Bev

When was the enclosures?

Mary/Muff

Umm late eight... 19-hund. . . umm—

Bev

I'm just thinking it's—

Livvy

Enclosures. . . “act” sounds like—

Mary/Muff

... it's varied,—very different times—

Bev

It's just. . . it brought to mind when the Romans came to Britain and the way the army was disbanded. After an army sergeant—well, it wouldn't be a “sergeant”, but someone in the army that had served their duty—they were given a parcel of land that was un—*unused* land. Somewhere out in the region. There's just parallels, history repeating itself, to some degree. . .

Livvy

Well I just read the other day,—Oh, can you remember the percentage? One percent of land—

Bev

... one-percent of land is owned by—

Mary

Oh, yes—

Livvy

... is owned by—

Rob Evans,
'Half of
England is
owned by
less than 1%
of the
population',
The Guardian,
17th Apr
2019

Bev

One-percent of people own—

Catherine

One percent of the population—

Livvy

... own half the land.

Mary/Muff

But people didn't own it. Years and years ago the manorial law, and then the Duchy of Lancaster—they owned it, and you, you—

Livvy

... let it—?

Mary/Muff

Ye-es. . . You had to perform duties for them. You had to go out ploughing for them. You had to go out collecting firewood for them, as well as for you. You were allowed to go and do stuff like collecting firewood or hedge trimmings, or whatever, but you also had to “do” a whole load of other stuff as well. There were very few “free” men, if you like.

Bev

Well the same happened with the Romans. Because it was actually about sending out your Generals to retirement on bits of land that possibly needed someone there with authority, to keep an eye on what was happening and send back word.

Mary/Muff

Yes.

Bev

And you would get word back from your supporters on what was happening, and it was a way of actually controlling it—

Mary/Muff

controlling it.

[echoes]

Bev

Hmm.

Mary/Muff

Yeah, it was a very controlled landscape.

[hums of
acknowledgement gather
through the room]

Catherine

I have a question which I'm gonna try and articulate. It's just picking up on things that people are saying around the idea of what we think of myth. I think everybody has used the word. And you

[Mary/Muff] said, “I’m not into myth or magic, I’m much more of a practical person.” I’m interested in our perception of “what is myth?” . . . Penny used myth in a very, I would say, very modern . . . as questions into what we see as *mythologies*, using it slightly differently. And David referred to folklore, or people who embrace folklore, as being perhaps more open. And we had this little discussion in Haarlem about myth, where we were talking about, “what do we mean by myth, and can we challenge our definition of what we think of as myth so we don’t place ourselves in one camp or another?” So, what camp are we placing ourselves in?

I’m gonna ask you Penny, to talk a little bit about how you describe myth because there’s something quite new to me in looking at myth that way, because I guess I have sat in a camp where it’s *all about* myth and it’s *all about* the folklore, and in fact I’ve been challenged in that way—

Penny
... I’m gonna say something quite radical—

[more shared laughter, yet more sound-relief]

Catherine
That’s why I asked... That’s why I put it to you Penny,—ha!

[now the laughter has become nervous giggles, rippling around the spiral of chairs]

Penny
... for me, history is myth. They’re the mythologies that we live by as if they were fact, and it’s how we mythologise the past,—that’s for me what history is.

I guess that’s just the Foucauldian in me.

[chuckling]

Michel
Foucault
(1926–1984)

Catherine
Go into that a bit more.

Penny
It’s the archive. . . the social archive. . . It’s what we put in the book, and what we choose to put in the box under the bed,—and the thing that goes in the book we choose to call “history” and the thing under the bed we call “myth”—

Catherine
Okay, yeah.

Penny
... and they’re not two discrete things. It’s just how they’re treated. It’s how they’re coveted. It’s which one gets put under lock and key with a guard on the door and you have to get your British Library card to go and look at it, while the other one is in the basement of SOAS and somebody is trying to make you read it. It’s where things get placed, for me. It’s actually quite literal. It’s which building it goes in. It’s who chooses to try and claim it. Whether we go to another country and bring it back to Britain and put it in the British Museum. . . Then these “things” become history.

In that sense, when I talk about *mythologies* or how things get *mythologised*, that's almost a different question to myth. Mythology and mythologising, for me, is more about how we narrate things to ourselves—

Catherine

That's my next question: about narrative.

Penny

Mm—hmm.

Catherine

Cos I think David asked, or spoke about that as well. It's something that I'm interested in, because I'm really interested in traditional narrative. What does that mean and where does it come from? I guess I'm also interested in the “one story”... but... I feel like that's being unpicked because the “one story” I love ... oh... as a female white English woman from quite a privileged background, my one story is a different one story, but where's the root and where's the similarity... and how do we... help people, help ourselves with a narrative... because I think narratives are really important. And we've been taught that a narrative is a linear thing... but it's not. I'll challenge that and say that I don't think it is—

[is it that no one thinks to move, or does the room know to go still?]

Mary/Muff

In defence of history...

[heady, symbolic laughter from the gathering]

I'd like to point out that we called our book Wirksworth, “a” History, because we knew there were lots and lots and lots of histories. So this is one narrative Anton and I put together, “a” story of how we thought that people might like to see Wirksworth. But it is “a” history, and that was deliberate, absolutely deliberate.

Penny

Yeah, plurality for me is really important, and I think this links to what you were saying about “the” rural. There's a real shift at the moment where everyone's talking about “the” rural. What is “the” rural? Is there one rural? That's a kind of mythology, isn't it? That's a classic mythology. I think when you put that definite article in front of anything then you are doing this kind of mythologising.

A Voice from the Middle of the Room

If we were in the middle of Scotland, it would be a different rural, wouldn't it? It might not actually be rural—

Mary/Muff

Lincolnshire would be a different rural—

A Different Voice

Thinking of the veil that you mentioned, Penny. Every time there's this thing of: this is that... and then... you mentioned the veil... I think there's another veil—

Penny

Right and that's what "the" does as well. That's "the" rural. "the" puts that kind of veil.

Yet Another Voice

You asked about narrative and it's really interesting because when I think about narrative I think of voice, so who's doing the telling?

All

Yeah, yeah.

That Same Voice

There's no such thing as one narrative. I work for the National Trust, and yesterday I was a Speke Hall for the slavery Remembrance Day event, and traditionally we've told the story of Speke Hall from the position—from the perspective—from the voice of the owner, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was a slave owner. We've never told that slave story, we've told the story of him and how he built Speke Hall and the wonderful treasures within it. But now we're being challenged, quite rightly, to look at different voices, and to express the narrative in lots and lots of different ways. So absolutely, there's not one narrative and it is all about trying to listen to and express different voices.

[REDACTED] purchased a slaving ship in 1793 and arranged for the trafficking of 549 Africans to Jamaica (539 survived the journey). Source:

UCL *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* database, <http://www.wdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/per/son/view/2146635641> [accessed 3rd September 2019].

Catherine

Thank you.

A New Voice

I'm more comfortable with the idea of narrative as I think it's a bit more inclusive than just saying myth because it can include myth, fiction, factual narratives... the whole range of them. In some ways here I feel that language is a barrier... if it's phonetically delivered... we have a particular structure that we adhere to and a very particular meaning carried, whereas narratives carried by artefacts are much more open to interpretation of the beholder. I'll stop there because I could ramble on for hours.

Catherine

Thank you.

Isik/Fourthland

I was gonna say something that I think links those things. When we were once walking and gathering our narrative and our myth and our practical tasks were actually very interwoven and the words that we use to describe those things—which is the not the English that we speak now—was much more connected directly with the poetry of that experience, and our actual lived experience of what it was to be an extension of that landscape. So when we are on this "quest" of the rural, I kind of feel like it is this quest of that interconnectedness within our way of speaking, somehow. And there was this wonderful storyteller who we met with in London and worked with on a few projects, and she did this performance of the story of going on a bear hunt and we all know the story, it's really fun, and when we tell it in our Western gaze, there's a bit of mud and there's a bit of splashing, but the bear is a main feature of the story. She told exactly the same story from an indigenous perspective and you hardly notice the

Michael Rosen,
We're Going on a Bear Hunt (1989)

bear because everything else is as epic as the encounter with the bear. And it was really one of those moments where I was like, “wow, that’s very profound”, in terms of when we continuously separate ourselves and Other everything. When something’s taken away or a task that once was a connective flow is now behind that fence or over that railing, what happens to our whole orientation?

Eva/Fourthland

If I could just... I really feel that the terminology “myth” has been really displaced, and it’s become quite hierarchical. It’s been thrown about because it’s one of these trendy words “happening” right now. For me, Joseph Campbell is an amazing person if you wanna go really deep into myth. There’s this beautiful quote where he says, “dreams are private myths and myths are public dreams”. For me, what a myth is, are those inner images that connect us through the ancient deep rootedness of all humanity, and I feel like those myths are really important and they will always change: ways of describing them, ways of experiencing them, because everything around us is changing, but that inner experience of having that interconnectedness goes through all history and all time. For me, that’s where the myth of these inner images of the archetypal becomes really important because we are still connected, it’s just that we’ve been a bit displaced from it.

Joseph Campbell,
Myths to Live By
(1993)

Catherine

That’s so... I’ve just got chills down my spine. If we can leave it with that because the next part of our discussion is “what we have lost”... with hopefully some of what we have, what we can, find. Thank you everyone, it feels like the real beginning of a conversation.

Fieldwork Gallery Session 2
“What Have We Lost?”
Haarlem Artspace

Facilitator

Catherine Rogers

Speakers

Chris Thornhill

Helen Jukes

Eva Knutsdotter Vikstrom (Fourthland)

Isik Sayerer (Fourthland)

The sun is fractionally lower in the sky, and people are sitting in six or seven rows facing four speakers, Chris, Helen, Eva and Isik. Where before they leaned inwards, a new arrangement of chairs has the effect of making people lean back, or shift side-to-side to see around heads and shoulders. Catherine is vocalising concerns about this new seating arrangement, yet the room feels easy as ever, and the mood light and generous.

Catherine

... so we're all squished into the shady bit, we did change it a little bit. . . so it's become even more formal, so I hope,—I hope everyone knows each other enough now so that no one's intimidated by the fact that we've got rows and speakers at the front, and that everyone who wants to contribute and say something feels like they can—that's the main thing.

So we have some more amazing people for you to meet. I'm going to ask people to introduce themselves and the work that they do, before we get going. Chris do you want to say—

Chris

I hoped to go last.

Catherine

I can make someone go before you if you like.

Helen

No!

[with mock horror]

Chris

Okay, um. What do I do? I'm down on the programme as a Theologian. I teach Theology and Philosophy of Theology,—being sort of the philosophy of religion and of religions. I'm not a Theologian, truly. I'm not one of those people who extoll and exhibit a religious tradition, at all, but my training is using religious sources and ideas of religious texts and religious living in different settings. I'm particularly interested in—well, I'm particularly a student of—the Jewish and Christian traditions, particularly mystical traditions, the Kabbalah, and Medieval Christian mysticism, and my particular focus is on the natural world, and the human and the nonhuman within those traditions.

[friendly laughter follows]

My research life and my teaching life is about how artists and writers make *use* of some religious traditions of various kinds, whether it's ritual practice like movement, but particularly looking at using texts and text traditions,—to set out accounts of the natural and the nonhuman. Increasingly we are seeing more moving back to older ideas about the world and how it's made and put together and how it coheres or doesn't. Those interest me. I'm particularly interested in the idea of text. And in the medieval world there was the very strong idea that the world was a text to be read, in a sense, formed of language. So the Kabbalistic tradition has this sense that everything in the world is made out of the alphabet, essentially. It's written in a kind of code, the Hebrew alphabet, which to someone working in maths is also numbers. So there is this idea that there is a code, a logos, or a word in all things. So the idea of languages, and mark-making and intelligibility as a kind of negotiation of language is something that interests me. Medieval Christians had this idea of the book of nature, which you read alongside the book of scripture and it would tell you something about God, looking at medicines and that kind of thing,—is something I'm interested in.

My focus kind of as a creative person, as a poet, is looking at how we inherit those traditions, particularly through ideas of brokenness and ruptured text. We live in a world,—we don't live in Christendom anymore. So my research life is about how these ideas find their way into contemporary poetry and contemporary art. The poetry I make is often finding texts, finding fragments of texts, often in natural history books, and finding verse or poetry, from erasing or cutting up to make fragment-forms of once-complete texts,—this idea that we inherit this incomplete text, and what we. . .

Catherine

Mmm, thank you.

Helen

Wow.

[Catherine gestures to Helen; it's a gesture to speak]

I'm Helen, and I'm a writer and a writing tutor. I have always written about a relationship with the natural world and I wrote a book that was out last year about bees and beekeeping which was sort of an outcome of a very strange year that I spent in Oxford keeping a colony of bees at the bottom of my garden, and the mad obsession that comes with becoming keeper of a colony that is essentially wild.

Helen Jukes, *A Honeybee Heart Has Five Openings* (Scribner, 2019)

I got really interested that year in bee myth and folklore, and the history of our relationship with honeybees, which also seemed to me to be saying something about our history of nature, and our relationship with the natural world, and what we mean by “keeping” and what we mean by “caring”, and how we give home to another creature and how we enter into a relationship with other creatures, especially creatures that are very difficult for us to relate to or understand.

Something that was fascinating to me about honeybees was the question of whether you consider them to be individuals or a colony. We can think of them as a community of tens of thousand of buzzing bees or we can think of them as

a super-organism,—the colony exists as a super-organism itself. And I guess that was one of the in-between-y things that interested me about honeybees. Umm, and I'm now writing a novel that—is—exploring. . . Oh, I've never spoken about it in front of an audience. . .,—exploring ideas of scope and scale and landscape and it's a little bit about astronomy and stars and the earth.

Catherine

Thank you.

Fourthland

Eva

Okay, so I'm Eva and I'm part of Fourthland with Isik and our practise is a socially-engaged art practise and two terminologies that we have come up with that describes a little bit of what we do is this kind of excavation of what we call

Isik

... and I guess the work comes from that place of: we all have that connection to a magical realm, and that place is something that isn't actually limited by our gender, or culture, our kind of life-experiences. It's actually something which is deeper than that. It's something fundamental to what it means to be human. So we spend a lot of time thinking about what journeys or ceremonies or objects of performances we can do with communities in order for them to contact that space in themselves and each other, and then from that place: what happens? So sometimes what happens from that place is they might claim some land, and create a god in the inner city, and sometimes from that place they might join together and create a woman's circle or create a series of photographs that explain some of the things that you are saying, like: what is our connection with the natural world? But that connection is actually our connection with our-self as a mirror of that natural world. So, we're on various journeys with this as an idea—

“hand-held knowledge”. So, it's about bringing really large-scale subjects back into the body and back into our cellular memory, so going back a little bit into this idea of the inner archive of these archetypal imageries that we all carry as a human, we try to excavate these threads to work with people and places to create a sort of loom of experiences, that weaves new landscapes and possibilities of how to create communities, and potential new futures—

Eva

The other expression that has come to us recently from a writer who was writing about what we did – she said we are crafting the unknown. And it was really great because it's exactly, in a way, what we are doing. And we think about craft as: you craft a space, you craft a gathering, you craft an object, but you're never alone in that crafting – there's something about

.. and the idea of harvesting the commons is something that is really important to our work. Where the commons is not something that is owned or a physical thing like land, but is actually that commons as an energetic exchange. We've talked about the enclosures act and these things that have been taken away, but we all carry that potential of an energetic commons, and: how does that mingle itself to change things?

care and trust and time and this slow-time space – this crafting of slow-time space – that’s necessary or integral to the species, the cultures, the human and the nonhuman worlds, and as long as you have entered this deep space of listening whatever you create from that space will be like a “holding” for then what’s to occur. So we work from many different contexts, from multicultural estates in London, to,—we’ve just done a long project with a group of Syrian refugees in Cornwall that started last year, for a whole year, and we were just with them there now to bring some of the threads from last year into a new manifestation.

Catherine

So I’m going to ask—the theme that we have is “what is lost?” and my first question to you guys is “have we?” Have we lost something? And you’ve just begun to answer that question in a way, but do you think we have lost something?

Chris

I think we’ve lost all sorts of things. But I think falling into a cost-benefit analysis of the Enlightenment and Industrialisation is a worthwhile exercise but often we need to be attentive to specificities. And one of the things that we’ve lost is what Fourthland gave us back today, which is: time, the actual creative practices in our lives where we have an architecture of time. Everyone talks about attention spans being so short these days, and one of the things that I think capitalism does these days is undo time. Jonathan Crary wrote a really elegant book recently called *24/7* and he talks about the famous painting of Arkwright’s Mill which is illuminated at night, and that’s a horrifying image, because suddenly the pattern of living, the pattern of, if you like, work and leisure, is being seriously distorted and even worse. . . And this is how we live now: working life and consuming life have become the same thing, and we have to guard ourselves. I have to do this,—not responding to work emails outside of normal time. So the actual architecture of our life and the actual attention that we give things at hand, people at hand, is just always being undermined, always, all the time. And a lot of certain kinds of ritual practice, or approaches to our kinds of practices: creative practices, our work disciplines, family practices—are kinds of ritual in their own right, which require certain kinds of preparation, and time, and organisation, in order that we can properly comprehend what they are and what we’re doing it for,—is one of the things that I think we have lost.

Jonathan Crary,
*24/7: Late
Capitalism and the
Ends of Sleep*
(Verso, 2013)

Joseph Wright of
Derby, *Arkwright’s
Cotton Mill by
Night* (1782)

Helen

I also feel. . . I think I feel tentative. . .

It’s very easy to think too much about what we’ve lost. I think there’s a huge collective grief happening at the moment and it’s overwhelming to step too far into it. And maybe risky too, to be,—maybe it has something to do with mythology again, but we can start romanticising the past, and in actual fact we’ve gained an awful lot. I was thinking while you were talking that maybe we find what we’ve lost, partly, through practices that feel like remembering. Like the performances today, or beekeeping for me, or the way you spoke about bird watching earlier. Maybe we find practices that bring us back in touch with a part

of us that we've lost. And that's why I think things like this—Haarlem Artspace—are doing amazing things, bringing collectivism back in—

Catherine

... as a way of remembering. I wouldn't have been able to describe what it was that I was experiencing today, particularly during the performances, but calling it "a remembering" feels really right. Thank you.

Eva/Fourthland

I think that's a really nice thing to think about because there's such an illusion of knowing and this ability of things, where there's this sort of societal obsession of knowing everything and checking it on Google like: "oh yeah, we'll check it, we'll check it". So that we think we know, but actually, in most cases, most of the time, we don't know hardly anything, because this little thing can't really give you that experience.

And there's this illusion that we're not needing to connect with the mystery of being alive. And I think that is a thread and a thing we always need to be connected to, no matter what type of technology we are using. And I think we've lost an amazing—or well, maybe not lost, because I don't think we've actually lost it—we think we don't *need* the technology we already carry inside. So what we say about "hand-held knowledge" is: there is this amazing source of wisdom that we're just carrying, and just by touching something, or feeling something, or just by being very present, we have this inner knowing, that you can't really describe or put into words or put into a Google search, but it's a deeper knowing, and that certainly is the more important wisdom—but because it doesn't fit with the new systems of how we describe those things or the time-frames, that becomes seemingly lost.

Chris

If I could just make a quick comment which responds to both of your points? I think one of the things we are losing—and I think this is again the psychosis of late-capitalism—is our whole, if you like, "the binaries of past and present", what is "remembered", are all kind of churned or confused. And I think when you were talking about myth and history, we're very confused about what is myth and what is history, what is tradition and what is retrieval. Thinking politically, not creatively—looking at the world at the moment, what's happening in Brazil, or in the UK or in Trump's America—we all keep talking about it as if it's going back to imagined myth. And I really wish that lots of people on the Left would wake up and say, "there's nothing historical about this, there's no historical present, these people are the most progressive Libertarians out there." I wish people would stop talking about Rees-Mogg as if he's some sort of Just William character, he's much more of a Hunger Games character,—the kind of country he wants to create.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, Leader of the House of Commons (UK)

Dystopian sci-fi film adaptation (2012) of Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, book (2008)

[alert laughter,—has the tone changed?]

Isik/Fourthland

There's something really nice about the idea of what we are recognising in that. How do we recognise ourselves? So the aspect of ourselves that we

recognise in those beings, we've cast into the shadows for such a long time, that we'd never even go into it and admit that it was there. So something about this idea of what we've lost is our ability to recognise those aspects as important parts of our culture, as extensions where we can learn, and maybe welcome in, and see what happens.

[we were hearing birds before; we know they are outside; we were outside hearing them.]

And then I was really feeling when you were talking about the trees earlier, there's something that we have lost in that permission to be our full selves like the trees. We've had generations, millennia, of things that have come into the way that we section off aspects of ourselves. If we have a great idea we'll laugh and pretend we haven't. If we have a divine alignment with someone, again, it's like, "oh maybe that was some mad moment." There's all of these layers whereby we're actually not allowing ourselves full permission to be that expanded part of ourselves and make the roots and connections and actually honour that they're there for a reason,—we haven't imagined them, we're not in some sort of strange reality, we are actually sensing them as meaningful parts of ourselves and our experience of being alive. I feel that there is something in permission and something through persecution that has got us to this place of not allowing what is actually in us to be spoken.

Catherine

Do people have any thoughts or things they want to say about this?

A New Voice

Surely, yeah. . . I sense a really strong tension between our rational thirst and our curiosity to know and to uncover and disclose things, and the fact that actually, there's also lots of things that over time we have hidden—we've occluded them. I'm thinking it's particularly clear in archaeology. You see, perhaps, when a burial site is excavated there's a wonderful cache of all sorts information about a culture. But that site was not made as a cache for us, of information for the future. It was closed forever for other reasons that we probably don't fully understand and we never will. And what right do we have to actually destroy that spiritual, ceremonial artefact, in the pursuit of our knowledge? I find it increasingly difficult to deal with that.

Catherine

Before taking another one. Because I just very recently read Helen's book—I would encourage anyone who has not—there's something about that, something in Helen's book, in this pursuit of knowledge—

Helen

Mm-hmm.

[does another motorbike pass? no one remembers]

Catherine

... and what you were doing with the bees. That tension that I think you were just describing, I really felt you describing that in your book. I wondered if you had an experience to share? I mean, you weren't an archaeologist, but you were looking and exploring and hearing about people who are learning about bees, through history. So part of the book is your own experience and part is what other people were doing, often to the destruction of the bee.

Helen

Yeah, that's interesting. I guess it's been a bit of a tension all through the day, because in the last discussion there was—it's Muff isn't it?—bringing a knowledge based on research, a very rational, logical, huge and admirable study, against really different approaches and knowledges, and I guess it's maybe finding the balance between—or finding space—for all of those to exist. And I guess for me with the bees there was a sense that—I guess the whole book came from—the feeling that there was something I was wanting to uncover, that there was something, a kind of potency to them, and lots of connections and meanings gathering around the hive for me, and I just had this real, single-minded obsession that I really wanted to learn as much as I could. And that's amazing. That's a really very human attribute: to want to understand and learn. But I was thinking also—when you were talking about archaeology of deep, deep drilling into the—of reading an article recently about drilling into the biosphere, which is this new expl,—. we're kind of drilling lower than we've ever drilled before and finding all of this life that we never knew existed,—and wondering, is that? Can we allow ourselves that knowledge? And are we allowed to disrupt the earth that deep. . .

[she hunts for the memory of the article]

See, perhaps:
Deep Carbon
Observatory,
<https://deepcarbon.net/about-dco>

Catherine

can we allow ourselves that knowledge. . .

[echoes]

Helen

It's an interesting tension to think about.

Chris

I think what's happened is—and when I was reading your book, which is good—the discussion of when you're looking at historical apiarists, and their approaches, it really goes hand-in-hand with a discussion of what's changed in the West with regard to philosophy and the sciences, and what that word that you use “knowledge”, actually means. And it becomes about kinds of utility and reduction. Which it did not mean before. Knowledge from Plato and before in Ancient Greek texts, has an erotic quality. It should not be jeopardised with any kinds of violence or power-struggle, in that sort of sense. And I think that's one of the things that we've lost. To know something is to have control of it—to manipulate it.

Another Voice

I think also the suppression of the feminine. I'm not talking gender, I'm talking feminine. The intuition, the imagination, the inner-knowledge, the sixth sense. All of those things became something that was not allowed, was actually mad. And women particularly were put away for that kind of madness. And okay we don't have that now but it's still around, it's still kind of around. We don't value our intuitive responses and our inner knowing. Well, many of us do, but it's sort of breaking out of that suppression.

Eva/Fourthland

And it's interesting how we accept the idea of instinctual knowledge, when actually, the intuitive and the instinctual are actually quite different. Of course there is a relationship, but this idea of “oh no, it was instinctual... I know what

that means. It's this sort of primal, survival mode..."—that kind of thing, but intuition is something else. You might say it comes from another type of... but again, we haven't been given the guidance or the language or the educational system to help us describe what that is and make it normal.

The Same Voice

It's still not considered to be of importance.

Isik

We made a film last year and it was an outcome of working with a group of people over a ten-year period on a London estate, and the title of the film was "I feel like doing this", because that's what seemed to make sense. And it was amazing how subversive those words are. It's like: "what do you mean you just feel like it?" Because it's almost like when you say that you're not paying enough attention, you've not listened, you're almost being slovenly, and you're just "doing" something. But what we were trying to refer to was that undercurrent which says: I am an embodied being, and this is what I do in response to that as a learned action of being in the world. But we had so many discussions where people wanted to over-analyse this idea of intuition and say it was irrational. It was very interesting.

Fourthland with
Rosalind Fowler and
Wenlock Barn estate,
I feel like doing this,
film (2017)

Eva

And I just want to say, about that line "do we have the right to this knowledge?" because I think, again, if we had another way to adapt to large-scale processes of excavating that knowledge, without actually excavating it, that would be great, because of course there is a knowing of all of that life, but because we haven't made it visible to that sense, we sort of pretend there isn't or it hasn't been put in a category where it's defined, like: that's checked, ticked. Again, it's different methods.

Catherine

I feel there was another person who wanted to say something, but I moved on really quickly.

A Voice from the Central Row of Chairs

If you take the Western end-point of Reason—thinking of the Hadron Collider, quantum mechanics, and understanding the world on that level—it actually feels like it's going back full-circle to some of the indigenous beliefs, and through intuition, to a different type of awareness. A lot of people, a lot of things that have been said today,—we're at a kind of cusp-y point. I'm interested in the extremes of Western thought and Western science, in that we are discovering things that—

Helen

... we knew already—

That Voice from the Central Row of Chairs

... beliefs, intuitions, y'know "hippy dippy" stuff but that's kind of real, but hasn't been explored in that particular light.

Chris

Terry Deary,
*Horrible
Histories*, book
series (1993–
2013)

People have been writing about these affinities between the Natural Sciences and Eastern philosophy, particularly Indian philosophy, for quite a while. Some of it does go too far into the “hippy dippy” for me, but I think what is a re-discovery is the ability to deal with chaos and indeterminacy. I think it’s an incredibly short-sighted and self-satisfied, “horrible histories” kind of view to think that people in past were simple and wanted everything,—that they needed gender binaries, needed indoors and outdoors, needed sacred and profane. I don’t think people lived like that. People of the past in rural settings, wherever, had much greater knowledge of the messiness, the confusing, and the mysterious, in every sense. Mysterious in terms of wonderful, mysterious as horrifying and actually quite difficult to deal with. I think these discoveries of sub-nuclear physics are undoing everything which Western scientists of the 17th and 18th century did,—that everything is basically like a Lego kit, that can be organised, taken apart and put back together in different ways.

Livvy

The thing that I’m getting from that “cusp” and from one of my favourite bits of your book Helen, where you have put the hive at the end of your garden and the bees are in there, and you’re looking out the window at it and there’s nothing you can do. And I felt this “oh god, there’s nothing she can do”, and I felt for you. And it’s that thing of,—it’s faith, I think. Faith is a lot of what’s being discussed. Because there’s nothing apart from having faith that the bees are gonna do the thing that bees do, and they will be okay. Do you know what I mean? It’s the difference between knowledge, and needing to know, but then sometimes we just can’t know. Sometimes you just have to have faith.

Catherine

So my next questions—and I hate again to be the clock-ticker, but we’ve probably got about ten minutes—is about “doing”. There have been some words that have been used. I think you just used the words “ability to deal with chaos”.

Chris

Yes.

Catherine

And in the sense of “what have we lost?”: “what have we found?” And “what can we *do*?” And then there is a question of language. Chris, I know this is your explanation as well. We don’t actually have the language to do the “do”. And so what it is that we need to do? I don’t think we have the language. We’re unravelling it, and I love that somebody just used that, somebody said “undoing”, and you [Fourthland] are also doing your “unravelling” in your performances. So I’m going to ask you all an incredibly difficult question, and this is for everybody: in terms of that action, is there an action that we can take that is not about “dealing with” or doing-using-the-language-we-are-very-used-to-using, which I think is not necessarily the language,—that will help us get to the next stage?

It’s a very difficult question but—

[apprehensive, or perhaps, anticipatory laughter around the room]

Eva

Mike Boxhall,
*The Empty Chair:
The Teaching not
the T-Shirt* (Book
Guild, 2012)

... there is a really nice quote by a man called Mike Boxhall. I don't know if anyone has heard of him? He's a Buddhist psychotherapist, who recently died, and he's written a beautiful book called *The Empty Chair*, and he says in his book that we're so busy conceptualising everything,—but conceptualising comes from doing—so he said “we need to stop doing, and we need to start being, and then after we've started being, then we can begin to do again, but first we need to be”. That came to me because we are like “what can we do, what can we do, what can we do?” We are on this deadline constantly,—and in that time-frame, we can't “do” anything. We could probably do loads of things but they wouldn't “do” anything.

A Voice from Below the Window

I was thinking the exact same thing. It was being on holiday with my kids, at the beach, and all the adults just wanted to be like, “look at this, look at this, look at this”, and they were just standing there trying to look at everything. And before one person had shown them something the other people would be showing them something. I just said, “just let them be, let them wander off”. And then they found their space to just sit, and look into the rock pool, and then just experience it without everyone showing them, “this is this, and this is that”. It's just that experiencing things rather than having everything thrust at you and thinking that that knowledge is more important than feeling it yourself.

Isik/Fourthland

And just remembering that language came from that silent space of beingness. That's how it was cultivated. And there are many ways we can re-turn or re-remember that. And if we do it long enough new words will come.

Bev

To add to that: when the “being” is being “done”, calm and togetherness. Coming from a very personal perspective, there's a real value in that.

[lovely hums]

A Voice Yet to Speak

Source unknown.
See simil.: Phil
Jupitus, *Being
Bored: The
Importance of Doing
Nothing*, Radio 4
feature (2019)

Can I just say, there was a recent discussion on Radio 4 about apathy, and whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, and the conclusion of that was that in that space of being apathetic, ideas are allowed to form. When you think of someone being apathetic, you attach laziness, “can't be bothered”, but actually, sometimes if you come across a problem or you're in a traumatic place, and you just can't move, you're stuck, being apathetic, thinking “there's nothing I can do”, then an idea will come, to help you move forward.

Chris

W.B. Yeats,
'Crazy Jane
Talks with the
Bishop' (1961)

Thinking more positively about trauma is important. To throw another quote in there, I think of W. B. Yeats saying, “nothing can be whole, that hasn't first been rent”. And I think about this in matters of culture, in terms of my art practice,—which is often about ripping up texts. I think a lot of the apathy comes from the idea that you have got to restore Arcadia somehow, that you've got to get back. I'm not a “get back to anything” kind of person. I'm about reconciliation. And I think you can cultivate that kind of wholeness once you—move forward—once you retain the memory of the trauma. Not in a definitive way. Don't let that trauma be definitive, on a personal level, on a social or

cultural level—that's bad for individuals and bad for communities, to be defined by trauma in that way. But it is an important part of completing a narrative, I think.

Helen

Yeah, that's great. . . Hmm. . . I find myself coming back to Penny's idea of veils, and thinking of vigilance, and thinking. . . I don't know. . . I kind of want to end on your point. . . I was thinking about anger, and radicalising, and the,—importance of vigilance. . . hmmm, shall we end on yours?

[some people giggle; they can sense the irony of ending this way]

An Ending