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Super Lyrical Sunshine: Playing Solar Imaginaries in Contemporary Poetics

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This creative-critical article explores intersections of video game environments and lyric modes as the basis for theorising a poetics of 'lyric solarly' in exemplary works by contemporary poets. Lyric solarly is a poetics in which solar imaginaries are linguistically mediated and refracted through the close rhythms, affects, sensoria and arts of noticing found within everyday life. Drawing from Dominic Boyer, Imre Szeman and Rhys Williams' recent work on solarly from the field of petrocultures and the energy humanities, I consider the oil spill aesthetics and solar accumulation of Nintendo's 2002 platform game, *Super Mario Sunshine*, as the basis for reading tensions of solar totality, infrastructure, singularity and agency in works by Dom Hale, Sean Bonney, Verity Spott, Anne Lesley Selcer and Ed Luker.

This article is a speculative exegesis on the critical, ethical and ecological affordances of lyric solarly, which I examine in dialogue with what Reza Negarestani calls 'the blobjective earth [...] nurtured by petropolitics'. While the blobjective offers a limited and often apocalyptic vision of resource conflict, I take up Dominic Boyer and Timothy Morton's notion of 'hyposubjectivity' to show how lyric solarly might offer an expanded and radical horizon for ecological thought. I argue that the infrastructures and relational architectures of lyric solarly, as a continuum of affects, aesthetics and political possibilities, may think beyond the thought-regimes of petro-modernity and towards alternative kinds of postcapitalist and queer desire, play, temporal orientation and abundance.

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As a child, my first encounter with *Super Mario Sunshine* (2002), a 3D platform game developed for Nintendo GameCube, was one of elemental rapture. Set on the tropical isle of Delfino, the game's story begins with our hero, Mario, wrongfully convicted of vandalism while on holiday. It seems his Jungian double, Shadow Mario, has been spraying the island with graffiti 'goop', and Mario is ordered to clean up the toxic mess. The player spends most of the game blasting colourful slime with the Flash Liquidizer Ultra Dousing Device (F.L.U.D.D.) and collecting sun-shaped objects called 'Shine Sprites'. The more Shine Sprites are recovered, the more sunlight is restored to Delfino. Framed in the genres of combat, quest and cartoon noir, *Super Mario Sunshine's* latent 'toxic consciousness'¹ speaks to a kind of 'climate change "unconscious"'² whereby the horror of oil spills and energy crisis leak into the game's dialectical imaginaries of sunshine (health) versus pollution (danger). For Cynthia Deitering, 'toxic consciousness' is an epochal shift registered in the fiction of the 1980s, in which Americans begin recognising 'complicity in postindustrial systems, both personal and national, which are predicated on pollution and waste'.³ Decades later, the manifest 'waste' is not just the literal garbage which Deitering close reads in the trashcans and machine debris of the contemporary novel, but a more abstracted expenditure: energy. When the earth transforms into 'toxic riskscape',⁴ how might an early encounter with the virtual representation of such a riskscape pave the way for imagining beyond it? In the long shadow of Romanticism, I want to think with Daniel Veller's concept of the 'ludic sublime',⁵ from the plazas of Delfino to contemporary poetry. I explore solarly in the ecological affordances and semiotic play space of lyric, taking my cue from concepts of 'toxic consciousness', 'the blobjective' and 'hyposubjectivity' as manifest in embodied memories of virtual encounter.

I adopt the term 'affordance' from Caroline Levine, who writes that 'Affordance is a term used to describe the potential uses or actions latent in materials or designs', allowing us to think literary form in terms of its organising connection to social arrangement.⁶ Certain games, from platforms to RPGs, share an affinity with lyric poetry in that much of their play, (inter)action and emotional resonance is focused on a singularity: an avatar, protagonist, an 'I'; the reader or player navigates a 'world' through the interface and orientation of this subject. In this essay I explore the 'blobjective' logic of *Super Mario Sunshine's* gameplay before drawing on Afrofuturism and cyberfeminism's approaches to the slime form, and then turning to lyric as a mode capable of taking seriously Georges Bataille's claim that poetry is itself a form of 'expenditure', signifying 'creation by means of loss'.⁷ I consider lyric's metabolic economy of desire, dissolve and sensation in relation to broader claims about solar affordance.

Super Mario Sunshine's game dynamics and lush, abundant landscapes, its cascade of rays, oil and ocean spray, accord with expressions of solarility elsewhere, alongside what Joyelle McSweeney calls 'the necropastoral': 'the manifestation of the infectiousness, anxiety, and contagion occultly present in the hygienic borders of the classical pastoral', whose 'premier celebrity resident [...] is Death'.⁸ As McSweeney's own writing on the necropastoral is 'protoplasmic, spectral', gnawing parasitically at linear or hierarchical models of 'literary lineage', this essay will constitute a hypercritique⁹ of many 'strange meetings'¹⁰ between texts, slipping through portals drawn as by Shadow Mario in the marbling wefts and warps of culture and critique, time and place. 'The denizen of the necropastoral is always in motion, walking the Möbius strip, never arriving, always tending to excess'.¹¹ Lyric solarility does not choose between the Sun and the Earth, Life and Death, but acknowledges the complex, spectral enmeshment which Dominic Boyer calls hyposubjectivity: 'my best advice would be to love the whirling lifedeath of our subscentent¹² mesh, to revel in its hallucinatory ecodelia'.¹³ The necropastoral forces us to encounter our own enmeshment with the oily regimes of late-capitalism and this epoch of planetary damage we are calling the anthropocene. And to seek a kind of luminous jouissance or 'ecodelia' in the process. To frame solarility through questions of lyric form is not to essentialise its presence and possibility, but rather to admit that 'what the form frames', in McSweeney's words, 'is something else that gapes away from it'.¹⁴ Solarility as promise and failure.

I adopt the fledging term 'solarility', offered by Rhys Williams, Darin Barney, Imre Szeman and others within the energy humanities 'to refer to the social, political, and economic configurations of possible solar-powered futures'.¹⁵ Our study of solarility, Szeman argues, should focus on 'the active, participatory, and conscious creation of a relation to the solar',¹⁶ which is the field this essay pursues. I'm interested in solarility as a continuum of affects, aesthetics and political possibilities, and especially how sunshine is registered in contemporary lyric poetry. My wager is that the infrastructures and architectures of the lyric may think beyond the thought-regimes of petro-modernity and towards new kinds of postcapitalist desire,¹⁷ living, temporal orientation and pleasure. I want to bounce from video game to poetry because both offer kinds of infrastructure: in the case of Mario, this is held in a 3D environment with certain ambient qualities (light, sound effects, vibrations), gameplay affordances (run, jump, spray) and devices (in-play controls of F.L.U.D.D. and real-world controls of the GameCube controller); with poetry, this is held in form (structure, prosody, address, orientation and tense, white space and so on).



Super Mario Sunshine's evocation of polluting viscosity as the encroachment of atmospheric gloom is symptomatic of a blobular, or blobjective, view of the universe. Dominic Boyer describes 'blobjectivity' as 'an oily way of thinking, a kind of mental lube for the articulation of petropolitical truth claims'.¹⁸ Claims about the slick flow of capital enabled by oil are the self-fulfilling, insidious means by which oil ensures easeful passage in our cultural psyches. Blob, according to Dominic Boyer, is a vitalist entity which 'ripples everywhere' in the form of everyday plastic objects: 'Blob is conspiracy and paranoia', 'is impossible sticky connectivity'.¹⁹ A blobjectivist account of our intimate, consuming relation to petroleum, to plastic, features the horror of dissolve into formlessness, dependency and a 'here and now' which is 'rendered eternal and universal', rather than the 'multiple and fertile' temporalities of history, geologic encounter and quotidian experience.²⁰ Along these blobular lines, petropolitical thought is premised upon the nervous or eager, speculative jolts of market forces (often subject to 'bubbles' that surge and burst); the ontological division of Man and Nature; modernity's addictive, cyclic dependency on what Andreas Malm calls 'fossil capital'.²¹

The word 'blob' as a verb expresses 'the action of the lips in producing a bubble',²² and also constitutes 'a collection of data in binary form [...] stored as a single entity in a database management system'.²³ Blob makes simplicity of complexity; blob loves to spit. The blobular is close to the globular, imagining something like this as the anti-sun spit of apocalypse, a gob of anonymous mattering, shadow, or what Georges Bataille calls *l'informe* ('formless'): 'affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit'.²⁴ A blobjective language is one of secretion, overflow, projection. It is an abject imaginary, part of the delicate, oft-gothic filigrees in which our anthropocenic unconscious is caught and wrought. 'At form's most intense edge, | formlessness'.²⁵ In various mythologies, Blob acquires many names — from 'the Tellurian Insider' to 'Black Egg', or 'the rotten corpse of the sun'.²⁶ In lieu of these sinister, rococo names, Boyer opts for the comparatively neutral term '*Blob* because of its kinship with *bubble*, an onomatopoeia that means to form and rise to the surface. One thing known about Blob is that it is constantly bubbling upward'.²⁷

Blob is a psycho-geological substance of *thingliness* and consumption. Writing about Irvin Yeaworth's film *The Blob* (1955), whose villain is a carnivorous, amorphous mass that goes around 'absorbing people indifferently into itself', Freddie Mason notes how the blob dramatises Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of 'slime':²⁸ 'the viscous forces itself into the channels that have been assigned for light as if demanding you give it the same attention'.²⁹ The slimy does not symbolise any psychic attitude *a priori*; it manifests a

certain relation of being with itself'.³⁰ This blobjectivist perspective is anthropocentric (human-centred) in the sense that it evokes the *human* horror at encountering *things-in-themselves* as a kind of revenge of the object upon the subject, in which our own subjectivity is threatened by the potential to be absorbed in the object. As Mason puts it, 'When honey drips off your fingers, you sense an uncanny continuity of yourself with the world. To touch the viscous, we risk, it feels, becoming viscous'.³¹ Contact with *Super Mario Sunshine's* goop causes damage to Mario, but it also threatens to subsume him into the slimy world, where players lose temporary control of their avatar's operation as he slips and slides around when covered in it. Furthermore, the goop creates 'goopies': little bubble creatures that emerge from the paint and in their wanderings, spread more paint, which in turn might spawn more goop. The blobular ontologies of the game threaten to harm, subsume, proliferate and stain its surroundings and characters.

Goops, blobs and other viscosities threaten the bounds of what (self-)defines us as human entities; if we are used to absorbing light to live, then the flipside horror of this is a world where the light is subsumed by amorphous, congealing shadow. Within the blobjective is a totalising threat of *absorption*: whose definition is something like an 'austere realism': one which doubts the 'existence' of 'putative entities' with bounded compositions, whereby 'only one material object: the entire cosmos (the "blobject")' exists; 'not homogenous', but defined by '*spatiotemporally local matters of instantiation*'.³² What happens when artworks evoke a certain idea of blobular encounter? I linger on the game because it represents an experiential threshold of discovery in my encounters with telluric ontology and solar expenditure, but also because its elemental imaginaries find affinity with Romantic conceptions of poetic inspiration. As Lord Byron described poetry as 'the lava of the imagination'³³ and William Wordsworth 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings',³⁴ lyric in the Romantic era is figured as an erupting media of passion and expression, rather than mimesis. Yet as Meyer H. Abraham points out, the presence of the mediating 'Aeolian lyre' in the work of Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, along with William Hazlitt's imagery of the mirror and the lamp, suggest that 'poetry is an interaction, the joint effect of inner and outer, mind and object'.³⁵ As metaphors of poetic composition fashion the poet-figure as an instrument, the poet is both turning a mirror to the world but also casting light upon it. In the words of Hazlitt: 'The light of poetry is not only a direct but also a reflected light, that while it shews us the object, throws a sparkling radiance on all around it'.³⁶ Such 'radiance' deploys an image of abundant imaginary: poetics figured as the luminance of energy. We find this in Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850):

An auxiliar light
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
 Bestowed new splendour³⁷

The light of the poet's mind is thus supplementary to the sun itself: sparkling radiance susurrates in the 's' consonance that flows from 'setting' to 'splendour'. It isn't knowledge, however, which the mind bestows upon the world (as in Enlightenment rationality), but the gift of 'new splendour': a kind of rapture that is closer in etymology to 'shine'. As we will see in my readings of contemporary poetry, the 'auxiliar light' of the Romantic lyric 'I' becomes something more complex and distributed, resonant in turn with solar whose 'very nature' as an energy source is 'decentralised'³⁸ despite its totalising associations with the sun. I want to question the binary of dark | light by which the blobular becomes 'solarity's nemesis',³⁹ the binary which enables totalising conceptions of history (c.f. the neo-reactionary Dark Enlightenment movement) and fascist adoptions of enlightened salvation set against apocalyptic rhetoric.⁴⁰

That Shadow Mario's tool is a goop-emitting paintbrush speaks to the danger of expenditure lurking within art itself: to draw, to paint, to write 'out of bounds' is to engage in the dangerous ma(r)king of material signature, with much ink composed of resins, lubricants and solubilizers.⁴¹ If the game yearns for solar restoration and narrative closure in the form of emoji-like symbols, Shine Sprites, are we to see writing as a trembling pharmakon (poison and cure, oil or water), capable of clearing or further tarnishing the earth? For Jacques Derrida, the pharmakon is both 'substance' and 'antisubstance': 'matter' subject to 'alchemy' and something 'indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity':⁴² an excess and absence tucked within the thing itself. This impossible play of petro-script and its ludic erasure operates through what Derrida calls 'seduction': for who would not, in the radiance of the game, look back into the 'spellbinding virtue'⁴³ of the sun? At the heart of *Super Mario Sunshine* is this experience of 'ludic sublime': what Daniel Veller calls 'a crucial aesthetic moment in the player's engagement with a game, defined by the player's drive towards mastery of the game coming face-to-face with the impossibility of obtaining complete, direct knowledge of the underlying system'.⁴⁴ The ubiquitous goop is the residue of the unexplainable lubricant whose clearance brings the sun again, in the seductive, token logic of Shine Sprite accumulation. Even as a child I felt uneasy at the binary of good and evil; as the plot began to unravel, I could not accept that Shadow Mario wasn't sprung from the psychic loins of our familiar Nintendo hero himself, in some solar antiszygy.



Beyond the GameCube, viscous substances bubble up in Afrofuturist and cyberfeminist approaches to technology. We can turn towards evocations of slime which resist the totalising lubricant of oil in favour of what Aimee Bahng, after Donna Haraway, calls the speculative fabulation of ‘plasmoidal impropriety’.⁴⁵ Studying the works of Octavia E. Butler’s fiction, Bahng notes Butler’s interest in the queerness of slime moulds, which comprise amoeba-like, multicellular entities of both singular and plural existence. Bahng’s feminist and decolonial reading of Butler ascends to the ‘admirable openness, queering and querying the limiting politics of either individualism or collective action’⁴⁶ at work in her fiction. Where in the gameplay noted above, I am limited to the humble avatar saviour of Mario, Butler explores alien morphologies of tentacular creatures and structures which communicate through ‘biochemical signatures and feedback loops’, which embody ‘femi-queer notions of collectivity and nonhierarchical social formations’.⁴⁷ The figure of slime resurfaces in VNSMatrix’s ‘The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century’ (1991), a ‘bodily text’ which ‘articulates feminism on the internet as viscera—related to viscera, slime, wetware, and birth’.⁴⁸ Frustrated by the blobjective energy logics of *Super Mario Sunshine*, I long for some feeling of subjectivity-in-plural. My notion of lyric solarility emerges from the necessary multitudes of cyberfeminism: what sensory residues recalled from adolescent gaming inform the following close readings of Dom Hale, Verity Spott, Sean Bonney, Anne Lesley Selcer, and Ed Luker. The poet as solar panel is not a mere mirror, but a photovoltaic redistributor of energy, affect and sense.



If *Super Mario Sunshine* exists in the present unfold of play, the imminence of solar restoration, what kinds of horizons might poems offer? As Deborah Cowen reminds us, ‘Infrastructure is by definition future oriented; it is assembled in the service of worlds to come. Infrastructure demands a focus on what underpins and enables formations of power and the material organisation of everyday life’.⁴⁹ Taking infrastructure as a metaphor for the holding of time, space and materiality, as well as a thematic concern, let’s consider what affective futurities might be made possible by lyric solarility.

Rhys Williams has done considerable work in establishing the speculative imaginaries, problems and potentials of solarility’s functioning within the recent phenomenon of solarpunk. Solarpunk is not a specific literary genre, but rather ‘a richly elaborated speculative solar energy imaginary’:⁵⁰ one which draws from existing modes of the speculative and fantastic and gains momentum from the affordances of online community spaces such as Tumblr. Crucially, ‘Solarpunk is a “world” first and a set of narratives second’.⁵¹ World-building is a phrase often applied to video games and

narrative fiction, though here I apply it tentatively in relation to poetry, and my own citational assemblage of such a ‘world’ from different texts, theories and conceptual modalities. While occasionally picking up on tendencies Williams identifies in the fiction, poetry and paratexts of the solarpunk universe, I will mostly be developing an understanding of solarity within occasional examples of contemporary Anglo-American lyric poetry.

If lyric is the poetry most associated with emotion and expression, often positing a single speaker engaged in intimate forms of address or intensity,⁵² lyric solarity is a mode in which solar imaginaries are mediated and refracted through the close rhythms, affects, sensoria and arts of noticing found within everyday life. Lyric solarity enacts a poetics of dissolve, exposure, surplus, saturation and residue: it offers a way of turning towards the sun, while helping us make ‘commitments to reshaping’ the ‘existing infrastructures’ which underpin access to and distribution of energy.⁵³ I am thinking here with Daniel Albright’s sense of lyric poetry as ‘a dissolving and an uncreating’ of ‘a writhe of feelings and notions, sensations unattributable to no one in particular’, so much it seems ‘as if the poem could generate its own little organs of sense’, ‘improvis[ing] a body’.⁵⁴ Contemporary lyric, as understood by Albright, refuses to be contained in the singular avatar of the pronoun ‘I’ and overflows sensation across subjects, objects and varying grammatical spacetimes. Its architectures are at once the wetware of human sense and the elemental grammars of language.

This essay is by no means an exhaustive exegesis on lyric solarity but rather a glimmer of research to come, yolking the expanding field of energy humanities with recent innovative and often small press poetries. The works I look to may not explicitly thematise solar power, but they reimagine energy and solarity as a relational dynamic in ways that resonate with my reading of *Super Mario Sunshine* as a gothic, kitsch and ‘weird’ ecological text. Solarity bears a pharmakon logic of poison and cure. On the one hand, solar unites ideas of abundance and promise; on the other, its infrastructures require ‘dirty’ extraction of rare earth minerals, the ‘dark’ side of labour and the afterlife of materials which refuse to easily decompose. I want to think here with the figure of the writing body as one of maxed expenditure, a ‘transporting voice [...] around which flesh accrues and decomposes, a text that does not choose life but might acquire it alongside Death’.⁵⁵



If voice is to be transported, in Dom Hale's *Solar Panel* (2019) it's travelling by crowded air. Recalling Wordsworth's evocation of 'auxiliar light', what might such 'splendour'⁵⁶ resemble in a solar poetics of the twenty-first century? *Solar Panel* begins:

Accolades of aerospace
 Loaded w/ future molecules, these
 Nodules and collocations, meshing like
 A thought of power.
 It's whatever.
 Gladed clutter bystander
 Gets merked
 To reinstall
 Or snoop on
 Rhapsodic sophisticated inequality
 Polity of void clauses__
 Accolades of air⁵⁷

In this Raworthian cascade of clauses, wry accolades pile up literally and the currency of pastoral lyric ('Gladed' and 'air') form part of a 'meshing' where language and the body are different 'Nodules and collucations' of lumpen meaning, dropped into the (non)identifying shrug of 'whatever'. We are invited to wonder if it is the poem, the poet (or some engineered combination), which forms the titular solar panel. This poetry comes 'Loaded', a post-internet shorthand of truncated speech, origins and molecules uncertain. The 'air' of the solar panel's song is suffused with emptied-out value systems of political speech, syllables tumbling into each other ('Rapturous sophisticated inequality') making 'Polity of void clauses'. While the poem hints at the Romanticism of rhapsodic sublime, its senses are distributed not from a singular light source, the lyric 'I', but drift in the non-identity of 'A thought'. The poem as grid of responsive flows, short-circuiting capital with solar dissolve, the half-life of lightfast thought, charge, defeat.⁵⁸

Where Hale's lyric spits in machinic starts, a logic of slippery plurality inhabits Verity Spott's *Hopelessness* (2020). Spott's speaker navigates carefully between pronouns ('I', 'you', 'we', 'they') to situate various kinds of undecidability, dependency, tension and affect within poetic relations that are variously human, technological and more-than-human. As Mario's F.L.U.D.D. performs in the game by the supplementary logic of device (we direct it with our controllers, controlling Mario who controls it), there is a kind of 'nozzle' that appears among other medical and infrastructural images of tubes in *Hopelessness*:

As you become awake your arm falls over your body to study the nozzle. The button on the side of it lights the display. A message that says “As this is near the limit, please ensure you have enough available to pulse at the nozzle”: You fear the nozzle.⁵⁹

The second-person address incorporates and positions the reader within the object-relations and architectures of the poem. My arm becomes the virtual arm; I am reading the ‘dis-play’ as the person summoned and depicted at once. The nozzle that is studied is twice-studied by the character, the ‘you’ hailed by the speaker, and by us, the readers, studying its presence in the poem. As Spott deliberately hyphenates ‘dis- | play’, broken over the line, we might begin to think of this extract as a kind of *negative* play: it offers the potential for agency, sabotage and collaboration within the drama of the poem, the intimacies of lyric; but perhaps there is a kind of suspension or limit to, a *negation* of that play within the poem’s architectures, which manifest those dominating systems of late-capitalism, austerity, fascism and ecocide which the book tackles as its prevailing themes. As ‘display’ implies, this is also a kind of (re)visioning of the manifest scenes of these systems: poetry as messaging, lyric as transmission, poetry as a device for interrogating the *scenes* of the anthropocene.

We might assume the nozzle in this context is some kind of medical, perhaps respiratory device: the instruction message seems to suggest its precious contents are scarce. Should we fear the nozzle as a supplementary apparatus to biological function, or because of its apparent proximity to limit? What if the nozzle carries toxicities instead of life force? The panic we feel when approaching resource limit within a game (losing health in the form of damage or hit points, spilling coins or rings, losing Shine Sprites) might be an accelerated manifestation of scarcity and precarity in general. As hyposubjects, the promise of revolution, resistance and utopian imaginaries comes up against the potential ‘dis- | play’ of capital, labour fragmentation, necropolitics and the carceral structures of life in our emergent, crisis century — ‘What is | normal, being underpaid, not being paid’.⁶⁰ Achille Mbembe’s term ‘necropolitical’ conceptualises the forms of ‘organised destruction’ and ‘sacrificial economy’ which accumulate power through ‘an implacable logic of separation’ and infinite multiplication.⁶¹ After Spott’s study of the nozzle is an image of gross solar surfeit, of being ‘now drenched up to your throat in | sunlight in the teeming meadow, you’ve moved into the | home’,⁶² implying a kind of excess sublime in the late-stage of life, retirement, in the nowhere of the meadow, in the home. What forces of solarly can lyric afford as care, as solace, and which manifest as violence or terror? What political and socioeconomic relations occur between the sun’s excess and the depletions of a wage?



Literature can render invisible the infrastructures that power a world, a system, or it might expose them in surprising ways. Think, for instance, of the constant presence of electricity's crackle and fissure in David Lynch and Mark Frost's *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), where electrical currents seem also to provide conduits for demons and ghosts, zapping through any frail membrane that remains between the living and dead, past, present and future. Solar power offers a curious dynamic whereby the sheer proliferation of solar technologies and their potential for architectural integration (in the form of solar panels, PV paint and so on) may lead us to 'a time when we cease to notice solar infrastructure as infrastructure in urban areas at all' — there is perhaps a latent 'amnesia' within solar imaginaries, forgetting their historic 'depth' in the wake of shiny, reflective technologies and aesthetics.⁶³ Pharmakon logic: to build every luminous micro-utopia, capital requires a sacrifice zone of racialised labour inequality, expropriation and material upheaval.

In Sean Bonney's poetry collection *Our Death* (2019), the speaker's intense consciousness of necropolitical proximity (in the form of police violence, austerity, historical conflict, encountered in the wake of the 2010 coalition government) is often felt in relation to a solar personification which figures the sun as a totalising or brutal figure of authority. Bonney's fixation on the sun, that 'solar cop',⁶⁴ extends from the shadowplay of lyric collectivity, brought to bear in his work through active, archival practices of citation, translation and epistolary form, not to mention his speaker's somnambulant, strung-out drift across the city (recall McSweeney: 'The denizen of the necropastoral is always in motion').⁶⁵ In 'Approximations of the Solar Enemy', Bonney's speaker compares the sleepless 'Black rings under [his] eyes' to Shelley's "gigantic shadows that futurity casts on the present"⁶⁶ — a quote that Timothy Morton often invokes to describe the futural orientation and mass distribution of hyperobjects.⁶⁷ But if the future, as Bonney suggests, presumably invoking Mark Fisher via Franco 'Bifo' Berardi via Fredric Jameson,⁶⁸ has 'been cancelled', what role left has the sun to play in casting shadows?⁶⁹

There might be many reasons for Bonney's invoking of the sun as a 'solar cop' or 'Solar Enemy', not least (and it seems important to mention, given that *Our Death* is largely set in Berlin) because the sun (specifically Black Sun), has been appropriated in the context of neo-Nazism and Nazi Germany.⁷⁰ In the limited space of this essay, we might also begin to think about the shadow side to solar's excess here in terms of both exhaustion and extinction (recalling Bataille's notion of poetry as 'expenditure').⁷¹ As Williams warns, while some images of solar harmony are utopian, the sun 'also threatens [...] to totalise. The sun promises and threatens to subsume everyone and everything beneath it, as much a symbol of beneficence as an emblem of tyranny'.⁷²

You have Mario's arch-enemy Bowser orchestrating the dark, guerrilla rein of Shadow Mario from his 'Corona Mountain' at the same time as Mario collects up Shine Sprites in a cute intimation of resolving solar insolvency. Perhaps the gigantic shadows that the sun casts on Bonney's speaker's eyes are of ghosts, and the Sun's manifestation in many of the poems of *Our Death* is often as a symbol of cultural, political and technological overwhelm in a world of state violence, paranoia, substance abuse, economic oppression and ecocide. As Mau Baiocco notes in correspondence over this essay, perhaps we might connect Shadow Mario with Bonney's midday darkness, what Baiocco calls 'the problematic of the eclipse' or even 'solar occlusion as a possibility'.⁷³ 'My five senses I leave to the invisible moons of Pluto', writes Bonney, 'like a cluster of burst and eclipsed stars, like the city's swifts, flickering in and out of calendrical time'.⁷⁴ Here, the human sensorium is willed to occluded celestial bodies of a dwarf planet, humble Pluto, named after the god of the underworld. In the 'cluster[ing]' ornamentation of image, Bonney connects the everyday appearance of 'the city's swifts' with the mass, scalar traversals of the solar system and beyond.

To be eclipsed is to be obscured, to experience a loss of significance or power in relation to some other entity. Virginia Jackson points out that lyric, 'from its inception' was 'used to describe a music that could no longer be heard, an idea of poetry characterised by a lost collective experience'.⁷⁵ Bonney's eclipses necessitate a different imaginary of solarly beyond the symbolic reign of some totalising force, oriented around the clock-time of capitalist regimes of labour. His antiwork poetry ascends to Malm's point that 'in a warming world, there is good reason to privilege labour as the pivot of material flows', given that labour is the site of 'large-scale fossil fuel combustion'.⁷⁶ Bonney's overwhelmed lyrics dramatise the exhaustion of late-capitalist labour as the site of environmental, social and psychological atrophy, scaled up to the planet. Lyric solarly pulsates at the molecular level of Bonney's burst stars, the spitfire lament of his offhand cadence. If starbursting is caused by unstable modes of galaxy rotation, perhaps this speaks to the necessity of hyposubjective temporal sabotage: we must riot at the level of the sundial, the alarm clock, the timesheet, the noise and sonic pollution which glitches the migrations of swifts and other life-forms. But if stars are light years away from our big star, the sun, perhaps the metabolic force of Bonney's poetics is powered by the lyric volatility of more localised energy, felt in the manner of aleatory: from the entropic, 'potentially fatal doses of amphetamine' to a 'meteor of pure plutonium smashing into the intersection of Parliament Square and Kottbusser Tor', to that elliptical, scripted excess of 'etc'.⁷⁷ In the intense, pressurised atmospheres of *Our Death*, many of the poems held in tightly justified, prose poetic shapes, what we face, what we turn to, what we carry is the 'glare' of interference,

of a heightened, deranged sensoria — of something distant, possibly to-come.⁷⁸ The personified sun overshadows *Our Death* as a conceit of cultural expression, trembling and bursting under the existential pressures of the twenty-first century's errant landscapes, bubbling up from those of history and secreted within the ellipses and eclipses of seditious, lyric speech. And yet it feels trite to just say that. As though I still had all this sun in my mouth, still anguished by the sprites I didn't collect. The shadows blasted back from my laptop, whose retina display automatically adjusts to sunset.

Bonney's poetics are often also of solar cacophony, forging ambient ecologies of memory whose soundscapes vibrate with multiple times, moments of potential and failure. The detritus of history becomes a fractal infrastructure and haunted sensorium for thinking the city as an iteration of incidents and wounds across time:

And they make sounds, those incidents, and they sound like the endless grinding teeth, the fingernails of ghosts, decommissioned utopias, locks of hair, receipts, letters, documents. If I wasn't so superstitious I'd smash it all up and leave the pieces at random spots across the city. The reflections would be preposterous. Abandoned factory architecture and the bathroom floor all split and entangled into a sheer beam of spectral anti-light [...].⁷⁹

This is a carnal archive of the (un)dead chorus of bodies and structures, pushed to ironic extreme, futural blueprints lain to rest, the haunted media of past and future arrangement always on the brink of its own burning. What does it mean that the speaker cleaves to his superstition and does not, in the end, 'smash it all up' and distribute these sonic incidents 'across the city', like the eerie crackle and glitch of a Burial record zonked up to a thousand decibels? What power are they potentially imbued with? It might seem strange to imagine the presumably dusty artefacts as solar detritus; but isn't that scream, the grinding of teeth, *a sound like the sun* — in its billioning particles of streaming light? There are 32 mentions of 'scream' in *Our Death*; it's a howling text, influenced by the gothic intimations and derangements of Baudelaire and Rimbaud. And in one hopelessly fan fictive gesture, couldn't I imagine the smashed-up pieces as a kind of nifty, Situationist distribution of solar panelling, refracting the wounded commons of 'decommissioned utopias' and all the bodies set to inhabit them? What might the panels, the pieces, bounce back? To think those reflections is somehow beyond thought, 'preposterous', as if you were blinded by the sun to think them.

And yet the infrastructural comingling of public and private, bathroom floor and factory architecture, the hollowing out: somehow the howl they admit is a 'spectral anti-light', which I want to think about as an abject lyric solarity. Walter Benjamin's

‘secret heliotropism’,⁸⁰ a turning towards and away from the sun in that breath of a line which is ‘A piece of carnal glass’, a sliver of poem, ‘an impossible syncopation’ of time out of time.⁸¹ In the world of Berlin that is *Our Death*, it’s ‘very dark’ at ‘mid-day’: the architecture of the city is ‘burning’; the sky is ‘black’ and ‘enormous’, ‘one enormous pit of cancelled language’.⁸² The whole collection is a struggle with the futurity and anti-futurity of (non)light wrought parallel to the (im)possibility of expression itself: solarly figures the cosmic residues of past trauma felt in the body which has borne too much, which must turn away even to bear it. In Bonney’s work, I am completely struck by the ironic *weight* of the solar: it’s not just light, but the heavy pressure of modernity and history; lyric as a fraught device for spectral conversion.

In discussion with Stephen Collis, Bonney admits: ‘I felt like I was dealing with a pack of ghosts, or rather, the spectre of communism as collectively that was alive, that had always been alive, but had been made invisible’.⁸³ Harnessing an abject solarly within the heightened sensorium of his fricative lyric, Bonney summons the dead and buried back into the light in ways which disrupt the striated, temporal architectures of reproduction and labour, while exposing the kinds of state and otherwise conflict – ‘Fistfights with cops and fascists’, revolutionary ‘defeat and war’ – which cause history to leak into a transient here-and-now through citational tags and cut-ups of archival history (with quotations from Baudelaire, dedications to journalists, poets and Dadaist artists). Moving against the present’s ‘stopped clocks’, borne along in the olfactory petroscape or ghost trace of ‘glue’, ‘petrol’, we have a ‘a barely audible electric speech’ and ‘boiling bleach’ which threatens ‘the abolition of all memory’, like the final going-down of the sun.⁸⁴ If Bonney’s lyric solarly tends towards the shadow, the eclipse, the apocalypse etched ‘into our retina’,⁸⁵ do we turn away from its burning, or is this an injunction to a more communal metabolism of available energy: an alternative solar rotation, a kind of additive, beaming transfer? ‘Movement’, Bataille writes, ‘is a figure of love, incapable of stopping at a particular being, and rapidly passing from one to another’.⁸⁶ Solarly as commons might have a viral potential in its figurative ascent to love’s intensity, if we think in terms of infrastructural relation rather than domination, in generativity rather than extraction, depletion.



Solarly as commons hinges on a promise: ‘Solar names the promise of clean energy; it is also the promise of infinite energy’.⁸⁷ Unlike the earthly resources of fossil fuels, the sun in some sense cannot ‘run out’ or, at least for the next five billion years, reach ‘peak’ as oil has. A poetry of solarly is one which implicitly dwells upon the promise of sociality

and ecological relation: of alternative scales and temporalities of energy infrastructure and organisation, felt within the speaker's human sensorium. The promise of infinity is something akin to that of utopia: it is a processual, to some extent *impossible* gesture towards expansion, relation and infrastructure that might happen apart from existing, capitalist definitions of growth and the grid. A promise is not *guaranteed*: as Jennifer Rushworth reminds us, paraphrasing the work of Jacques Derrida, promises 'are thinkable only [...] under conditions of uncertainty and doubt, and every true promise is therefore [haunted] by the possibility of failure'.⁸⁸ 'Promises', she argues, 'are by nature excessive and in constant danger of coming to naught'.⁸⁹ The hopeful risk of lyric solarly is that it offers the infrastructural imaginary of cognitively and bodily orienting the singularity of a speaker, an addressee, within an alternative or hypothetical 'non-place' of contingent ecological relation. 'I binge on infinity', announces the speaker in Anna Lesley Selcer's 'from *Anomie*', 'I cannot achieve generality | I ride myself into the sunset'.⁹⁰ The anaphoric force of Selcer's 'I' functions as a kind of avatar self, driven in the dis-play of action and event, caught as the debris of the metanarratives of the anthropo-*scene*, 'projected', as in filmic particles of light, 'into extinction'.⁹¹ Cinematic (often in the Western genre) tropes of sunset-as-telos are figured as only the flickering potential of closure: if the poem ends with a sunset, it is only through lyric iteration, and even then, 'generality' is not achieved. The poem's infinity is perhaps contained in the singularity's 'ascending trap' within 'the crooked time of work'; the recursion of failure, the illumined 'rejoinder' of our solar story.⁹²

As with the negative prefix in Spott's 'dis-| play', Selcer's infrastructures of the possible are held in an anthropomorphised, paratactic grammar of address, modulation and refusal: 'Dear Sun: Do not fall as golden change into my mouth. Do not establish yourself in paint [...] Do not ludic loop. Do not blandy and obscure. Do not a thousand flames'.⁹³ Golden change and solar paint⁹⁴ imply notions of surplus value recalibrated for a solar economy premised on infinitude: to write 'Dear Sun' is to apostrophise promise, for the sun will be five billion years yet in the receiving — if it is possible for the sun to receive at all. The very idea of receiving disrupts the one-way flow of solar absorption, or the Wordsworthian projection of 'auxiliar light';⁹⁵ Selcer offers a messier, reciprocal circuitry of lyric transmission and elemental correspondence. The repeated 'Do not' forms an incantation of the absent-presence operations of a lyric solarly, as the title 'Solar Rejoinder' playfully invokes the poetic tradition of the aubade and its anthropocentric address to the sun. Unlike those poems of momentary occasion, Selcer's 'ludic loop' implies infinite recursion in the space of play, nevertheless proximate to other outcomes: the obscuring eclipse, the catching fire on a terrifying, Biblical scale. While the promise of solarly for some might be the glut of infinite 'golden change' (to

be cashed in for capitalist value), holding close to a complex, solar sensorium in this ‘descriptive’, atmospheric poetics, Selcer never forgets the shadow of failure within the lyric performative of the promise.

As a reader, I experience something akin to Veller’s ‘ludic sublime’ in the form of Selcer’s own ‘ergodic textuality’: as in ‘digital games’, where ‘the player always has a sense of the contingency of her own experience’ amidst many possible pathways.⁹⁶ To ‘binge on infinity’⁹⁷ is to desire the impossible experience of consuming all the options, all the futures, all at once: a form of ludic sublime which makes perceptual emulsion and temporal spectrality of narrative cognisance. In Selcer’s ‘Ghost Story’, ‘The front of the dream | is blown off | leaving the picture like a giant sunspot’.⁹⁸ Even the ethereal realm of dream is violently incorporated into the necropastoral of solar intensity (sunspots are areas of strong magnetic field). Emotion and memory are cast into alchemical, durational process. Selcer’s necropastoral residues of excess, becoming an ambiguous, futural gift of abundance, are also felt in ‘Largess’, ‘gigantic balloon’, repeated ‘thousand’ and ‘supersaturate[d]’ ‘fruits’.⁹⁹ According agency to the personified sun, Selcer creates a speculative infrastructure of lyric correspondence between the material now of solar technology and the variable imaginaries incubated within its social, elemental and political promise — surely the communist resonance of ‘a red impasto travelling left’.¹⁰⁰

In 1996, David Schwartzman put forward a notion of solar communism, contending that moving to a solar-based economy is necessary for achieving planetary communism.¹⁰¹ In this solution, the sun is not a symbol for the violence of capitalist, workaday time, nor the personified ‘Busy old fool, unruly sun’¹⁰² bossily trying to wake poets up from their dreamtime, but a near-boundless source of the alternative. His article offers utopia framed in practical language, bargaining on the promise of ‘soon-to-be-developed technologies of information and renewable energy’ for nothing less than ‘a plausible vision of future global civilisation’.¹⁰³ While many solarpunk futures represent an aesthetic of ‘lightness’, forming ‘a kind of weightlessness that comes with absolution and freedom from responsibility’, Williams reminds us that our ‘lived future’ will likely be ‘heavy with ecological attention and care’, not to mention ‘burdened by the carbonised weight of the past’, its ‘effects unjustly distributed’.¹⁰⁴ Bonney’s work pushes much closer into this weight: his is a lyric (anti)solarity of confluent struggle, the sun interrupted as a source of life, twisted into capitalism’s rhythmic determinations. His poetry, as Andrea Brady puts it, ‘expresses the difficulty of enduring conditions of catastrophic political defeat, while listening for the momentary counter-rhythmic interruption’.¹⁰⁵ Even as his own ‘esoteric’ prosody attempts a “‘countertime”” of revolutionary thought and tradition (perhaps a secret, disrupted heliotropism, turning

from the sun's – and by metaphoric extension, the police's – organising rhythms and regulations of state and capitalist time), his speaker retains a 'dialectical pessimism' about poetry's potential to break this.¹⁰⁶ Selcer's work moves this struggle with dialectical pessimism into the realm of a potential solar plenitude (glut) and ascent, framed within the atmospheric dialogue of 'Solar Rejoinder' and the narrative, dream-time operations of play in 'from *Anomie*' and 'Ghost Story'.



So much for the sun, and so much for time. I'm looking back at the tension between exposure and concealment implicit in Benjamin's 'secret heliotropism', wondering what forms of necropastoral bubbling and congealing might be found elsewhere. In his poem 'Fail Sun', published in summer 2020, Ed Luker nudges at the form of aubade to stage the speaker's frustrated yearning for a time *other than this*. In this sense, lyric fulfils a compensatory function akin to its lost origins in song. There's a scarcity and silence in Luker's lines, but also a sarcasm. 'Fail Sun' riffs on the internet vernacular term 'failson', meaning a socially and financially entitled descendent who has been unsuccessful in life and business, despite his privileged origins. The poet as Romanticism's failson laments utopias of solar image, lingering in its horizon as a kind of ambient possibility. Albright argues that lyric poets embed their poems with 'a feeling of absence' 'where music would be'.¹⁰⁷ The sun comes up to signal present-tense, but *rising* is not always positive ascent: when Luker writes 'How every day | it keeps going | up, with no | end to sight',¹⁰⁸ he could be writing about Covid death tolls (given the time of publication) or carbon emission rates, but he's also just writing about the sun. 'O, the blonde son, | pull you in to | the earth' plays on the poetic hubris of somehow lassoing a lifegiving solar entity (here figured as the golden boy) into the patriarchal, blobjective metabolism of accumulating value and social inheritance: 'all the costs | and the expense'.¹⁰⁹

When the present is unbearable, and the cost of living is just too much, what's so good about the sun going up? That endless rising resembles a swelling bubble about to burst. Maybe that's why the speaker of Selcer's poem rides themselves into sunset, over and over. How do we do solar theory in what Andreas Malm calls 'this warming world'?¹¹⁰ Luker's sun takes on a similar role as Bonney's solar cop, standing in for a kind of expectant, attention-demanding capitalist god, or craven landlord of affect: 'Put all your | feelings | in the sun's pockets'.¹¹¹ Solarity's promise of infinite energy can't just be about capitalist growth or familiar models of development, wealth accumulation and corporate ascent. Luker's poem ends if not on a note of hope then perhaps a more determined challenge and anticipation (whether of change, fulfilment or apocalypse

itself, as in Lord Byron's poem 'Darkness', where the sun really does go out for good): 'I am staring | right at you, | waiting'.¹¹² There's a bathos to this determinism which empties the ludic sublime of its pockets, questioning whether the mystery, the wait and weight of the unknown is worth it. Lyric solarity here is a kind of broken utopianism premised on failure and survival, withdrawal and presence, carrying it despite the working week's reset, the hinge of 'Sunday morning'.¹¹³ As if the addressee themselves is the sun, stared at directly, what more could we do but shower ourselves in warmth, resistance (searing) and solidarity, requiring a certain intensity that would allow us 'to see otherwise', as 'to access queer visuality we may need to squint, to strain our vision'.¹¹⁴ And how do we feel into the blind spots remaining?

With the epic, necropolitical fail of security in crisis, the poem asks us to 'recite [...] in a song | all together' in the midst of 'costs' and 'expense', all the 'restless | feelings' which seem to be carried by 'it', the sun itself.¹¹⁵ In the first Covid-19 lockdown, during which Luker's poem was published, the sun and spring arrived despite 'the lies of the rich'¹¹⁶ and the many unnecessary deaths, but this is no pastoral consolation. It's something to harness. What kinds of energy and 'power'¹¹⁷ can poetry redirect?



The poet Lyn Hejinian turns to everyday life as the site of 'counter-historical' practice, insofar as 'the everyday is resistant to any universal narrative'.¹¹⁸ Of daily life, she writes:

All-that-is-happening can only be thought as the substrate of a poetics of history, just as poetics is the constructive fantasy of poetry. Its products — strange kinds of knowledge — are not mere fantasy. The word "mere" is a semantic intensifier, and despite the fact that what we think it intensifies is triviality, what it intensifies, properly speaking, is the suchness of that which it qualifies, as the qualified per se — its being nothing more or other than what it is. The word comes from the Latin merus, meaning "unmixed," "pure"; its Indo-European root is *mer-, to sparkle.'

Here I think back to Derrida's notion of pharmakon as both 'substance' and 'antisubstance'.¹¹⁹ 'All-that-is-happening' offers up the stuff of daily life, all its paths and variables, into sparkling intensity, being for itself. Just as poetics — what I am doing here — constructs fantasies of what poetry does, history just scratches the surface of daily life. Light is not so much a symbol for rationality, empirical discovery or Enlightenment mastery of knowledge; it is giving off sparkle, radiance. It is both merely light, and the intensity of that triviality scaled up to the (merely) lifegiving sun.

What kinds of glimmering, elemental time do we want to create, demand and attune to in the face of planetary damage and necropolitical harm, neglect and oppression? This essay in itself is a kind of fail sun, unable to illuminate the rich tradition of solar invocation in lyric poetry, not to mention failing to put brilliant sun poets such as Etel Adnan, Frank O'Hara, Federico Garcia Lorca, Björk, Mayakovsky, Øyvind Rimbereid, Octavio Paz, Jos Smith, Will Alexander and Homero Aridjis, in the spotlight.¹²⁰ Still, my thinking with lyric solarly is attempting to move towards the event horizon of postcapitalist desire, in terms of surplus, exposure, blurred divisions of labour and leisure, dissolve and saturation. This is not to collect a certain number of poems like *Shine Sprites*, with the intent of restoring hope and light to what seems right now a very dark future, but rather to lean into the dynamics of play, cooperation and venturing which once underpinned my enjoyment of *Super Mario Sunshine*. Can solarly offer a poetics beyond the necropolitical, accumulative bobjectivism of petrocapi-talism, and does this also occur, occasionally, within the aesthetic realm of the necropastoral? Catherine Wagner writes, 'If everything is from the Sun why praise it',¹²¹ and we might ask: how can lyric explore solarly in a way that resists the totalising gesture of the sun as symbol of origin and thus semiotic closure?

Perhaps solarly, as a set of conflicted imaginaries and aesthetic, affective tendencies, is more about the processes of waiting, streaming alternative timescales and ecological attunement, as much as it is a summons to *Wake Up!* and seize time in the here-and-now of catastrophe's unequal shadowing, in the morning of the poem and its dailiness. I am thinking with Mbembe here, who introduces *Necropolitics* with the logic of elemental (re)mark: 'Every gesture of writing is intended to engage a force, or even a *différend*—[...] an element'.¹²² If the solar is a (virtually) non-exhaustive energy source, its study is both energising and exhausting. Alberto Toscano suggests that attention to 'exhaustion, degradation, and entropy' may 'serve as an antidote to the rush to establish the Anthropocene as the keyword of our present'.¹²³ If the Anthropocene recapitulates binary narratives of Man vs. Nature/Human vs. Geological History in its epochal drama, solarly complicates the logics of distribution, abundance and expenditure.

Ecological crisis is as much about a crisis of social reproduction as one of energy, environment and infrastructure. Queer theory has already considered this, just as Butler's slime moulds are already thinking the cooperative body metabolic of collapsing singularity/plurality. In José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and Now of Queer Futurity* (2009), a solar aesthetic runs through the invocation of queerness as a utopian state, always to-come like sunlight, always arriving in the event of arrival: 'We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon

imbued with potentiality'.¹²⁴ Lyric solarly makes of us receiving beings in a queer, heliotropic ethic of *the turn* and *the turning towards*.¹²⁵ This reception is by no means *passive* but an experience of opening, dissolve and potential overturn. Is the sun a 'solar cop'¹²⁶ or a 'comrade luminary';¹²⁷ in what kinds of affective relation, hospitality and movement can we think in solar futures?

By attending to lyric figurations of solarly, we can think the problems and potentials of solar futures through the real shadows and unequal burdens of history, while leaning into forms of togetherness, agency, embodiment, utopian feeling, growth and expenditure beyond those structured or offered by late capitalism. As Walt Hunter argues, 'the contemporary resurgence of the lyric is the poetic translation of a lost commons'.¹²⁸ Solarly is one channel for understanding the active, material thought-relations of hyposubjectivity's enmeshment: 'Another word for solarly', argues Szeman, 'might be the common'.¹²⁹ If objectivist thinking hinges on a universalised 'here and now',¹³⁰ a reductionist, apocalyptic narrative of impending dissolve, lyric solarly attends to the unique and localised energies, connections and pulsations felt within daily life, as we have seen in Hale, Bonney, Selcer, Luker and others. 'To critique an overarching "here and now" is not to turn one's face away from the everyday. Roland Barthes wrote that the mark of the utopian is the quotidian'.¹³¹ Perhaps Benjamin's 'secret heliotropism' constitutes the big and little acts of resistance practiced in the turns and swerves of the daily, often from the margins and shadows towards acts of risk and exposure in which we are constituted as political and ecological beings. And now to sleep. 'Writing so much about sun | it will get tired of me. | See you round'.¹³²

Notes

- ¹ Cynthia Deitering, 'The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in the Fiction of the 1980s', *The Ecocriticism reader: landmarks in literary ecology*, ed. by Cheryll Glotfeldy and Harold Fromm, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 196–203.
- ² Tom Cohen, 'Trolling "Anthropos"—Or, Requiem for a Failed *Prosopopeia*', *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, ed. by Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016), pp. 20–80 (p. 29).
- ³ 'The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in the Fiction of the 1980s', op. cit., p. 197.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 200.
- ⁵ Daniel Vella, 'No Mastery Without Mystery: *Dark Souls* and the Ludic Sublime', *Game Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2015). Available at: <<https://gamestudies.org/1501/articles/vella>> [Accessed 1.7.23]. Note that 'ludic' will be used throughout as an interchangeable word for 'play'.
- ⁶ Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 6–7.
- ⁷ Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 120.
- ⁸ Joyelle McSweeney, *The Necropastoral: Poetry, Media, Occults* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), p.3.
- ⁹ Maria Sledmere, 'Hypercritique: A Sequence of Dreams for the Anthropocene', *Coils of the Serpent*, Vol 8 (2021), pp. 54–79.
- ¹⁰ *The Necropastoral: Poetry, Media, Occults*, op. cit., p. 3.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 10.
- ¹² 'Subscendence', according to Timothy Morton, is a way of undermining the monotheistic structures of ecological holism by exploring how 'the whole is always less than the sum of its parts', and thus foregrounding the importance of specific life-forms with which we find solidarity in meshed relation. Timothy Morton, 'Subscendence', *e-flux* [online] October 2017. Available at: <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/85/156375/subscendence/>> [Accessed 12.4.23].
- ¹³ 'Blob', op. cit.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 159.
- ¹⁵ Rhys Williams, "'This Shining Confluence of Magic and Technology": Solarpunk, Energy Imaginaries, and the Infrastructures of Solarity', *Open Library of Humanities*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2019), pp. 1–35 (p. 4).
- ¹⁶ Imre Szeman, 'On Solarity: Six Principles for Energy and Solarity', *Stasis*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2020), pp. 128–143 (p. 134).
- ¹⁷ A phrase I am borrowing from Mark Fisher. See *Postcapitalist Desire: The Final Lectures*, ed. by Matt Colquhoun, (London: Repeater Books, 2020).
- ¹⁸ Dominic Boyer, 'Blob', *Society for Cultural Anthropology* [online]. 31st October 2018. Available at: <<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/blob>> [Accessed 5.1.21].

- ¹⁹ Dominic Boyer, 'Blob', *Society for Cultural Anthropology* [online]. 31st October 2018. Available at: <<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/blob>> [Accessed 5.1.21].
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Andreas Malm. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016).
- ²² 'blob, n.1.', Oxford University Press, *OED Online*, March 2023. Available at: <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/20337?rskey=WV1TSE&result=>> [Accessed 1.7.23].
- ²³ 'blob, n.3'. Oxford University Press, *OED Online*, March 2023. Available at: <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/103781577?rskey=WV1TSE&result=3>> [Accessed 1.7.23].
- ²⁴ Georges Bataille, *Georges Bataille. Vision of Excess. Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 31.
- ²⁵ Anne Lesley Selcer, *Sun Cycle* (Cleveland: Cleveland State University Poetry Centre, 2019), p. 25.
- ²⁶ 'Blob', op. cit.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ 'The slimy does not symbolise any psychic attitude *a priori*; it manifests a certain relation of being with itself' — Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (Washington: Washington Square Press, 1992).
- ²⁹ Freddie Mason, *The Viscous: Slime, Stickiness, Fondling Mixtures* (Santa Barbara: Punctum Books, 2020), p. 80.
- ³⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (Washington: Washington Square Press, 1992)
- ³¹ *The Viscous*, op. cit., p. 75.
- ³² Terry Horgan and Matjaž Potrč, 'Bbjectivism and Art', *Realism Materialism Art*, ed. by C. Cox, J. Jaskey and S. Malik, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015), pp. 145–150 (p. 146).
- ³³ Lord Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by L. A. Marchand, vol. 3, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 179.
- ³⁴ William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (Milton Park: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 307.
- ³⁵ Meyer H. Abrahms, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 51.
- ³⁶ William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), p. 4.
- ³⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; an Autobiographical Poem, 2nd edition* (London: Edward Moxon, 1851), p. 39.
- ³⁸ Herman Scheer, *The Energy Imperative: 100 Percent Renewable Now* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 88.
- ³⁹ 'Blob', op. cit.

- ⁴⁰ See Klaus Vondung, *Paths to Salvation: The National Socialist Religion*, trans. by William Petropulos, (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2019).
- ⁴¹ For instance, Indian ink is made from carbon black (finely divided forms of amorphous, carbon derived from partial combustion of hydrocarbons). Intriguingly, a recent development, 'AIR-INK' is made from the captured particles of air pollution. As developer Anirudh Sharma explains, "The black colour in the pen you use is made by burning fossil fuels to make ink. But you shouldn't need to burn new fossil fuels just to make ink. Fossil fuels are already being burned". Rachael Lallensack, 'This Ink Is Made From Air Pollution', *Smithsonian Magazine* [online]. 23rd May 2019. Available at: <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/ink-made-air-pollution-180972212/>> [Accessed 14.1.21].
- ⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 70.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ⁴⁴ 'No Mastery Without Mystery: *Dark Souls* and the Ludic Sublime', *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁵ Aimee Bahng, 'Plasmoidal Improprieties: Octavia E. Butler, Slime Molds, and Imagining a Femi-Queer commons', in *Queer Feminist Science Studies: A Reader*, ed. by Cyd Cipolla, Kristina Gupta, David A. Rubin, Angela Willey (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), pp. 310–325.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 314.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 315–316.
- ⁴⁸ Claire L. Evans, 'Feminist Worldbuilding in the Australian Cyberswamp', *Rhizome* [online]. 27th October 2016. Available at: <<https://rhizome.org/editorial/2016/oct/27/cyberfeminist-world-building>> [Accessed 1.7.23].
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- ⁹⁴ Solar paint is not just a metaphoric invocation, but perhaps also refers to a type of paint that generates renewable energy from water vapour through solar effects.
- ⁹⁵ *The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; an Autobiographical Poem*, op. cit., p. 39.
- ⁹⁶ 'No Mastery Without Mystery: *Dark Souls* and the Ludic Sublime', op. cit.
- ⁹⁷ Three poems', op. cit.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
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- ¹¹⁸ Lyn Hejinian, *Positions of the Sun* (New York: Belladonna*, 2018), 79.
- ¹¹⁹ *Dissemination*, op. cit., p. 70.
- ¹²⁰ Some of these poets and more were kindly recommended by friends and fellow poets including Charlie Baylis, Alex Campbell, Vahni (Anthony Ezekiel) Capildeo, Fred Carter, Ruthie Kennedy, Douglas Pattison and Pratyusha.
- ¹²¹ Catherine Wagner, *Nervous Device* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2012), p. 71.
- ¹²² *Necropolitics*, op. cit., p. 3.
- ¹²³ Alberto Toscano, 'Antiphysis/Antipraxis: Universal Exhaustion and the Tragedy of Materiality', *Materialism and the Critique of Energy*, ed. by Brent Ryan Bellamy and Jeff Diamanti, (Chicago: MCM Publishing, 2018), pp. 471–499 (p. 473).
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- ¹²⁵ That *turn of the plough* at the Latin root of 'verse': a line breaks the edge of the field. With 'turn' I am thinking back to Benjamin's 'secret heliotropism' but also Juliana Spahr's use of the lyric *turn* in relation to Occupy protests in *That Winter the Wolf Came* (Oakland: Commune Editions, 2015), Nicholas Royle's *Veering: A Theory of Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) and David Farrier's anthropocenic image of quantum survival in the clinamen, where 'Life insistently swerves towards life', in *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep-Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p. 90.
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