

No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rang in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me: the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on it with pleasure.

‘Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had greatly lessened, when I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink, and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. I began also to observe, with greater accuracy the forms that surrounded me, and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

as told by Victor Frankenstein’s daemon  
in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein





it incites a visceral discomfort. it is visible in different conditions to differing degrees. but the steadiness of it, its passivity & stoicism lent it both a weighty history & a timeless patience, which makes us, as bald and blinding flighty creatures unaffected to the subconscious creature. as a very long exposure photograph, say tracking the life of this mast in its watery resting place, we wouldn't even register. so the value of hugging an object that we have characterized as its own creature has value only as story, only as anecdote and self-discovery/self-assurance. facing it as a fear, a task, a symbolic attempt to comfort.





we had scouted the mast several times before, from the removed position of the canoe, and gotten increasingly comfortable with its presence. the first sighting was surprisingly unsettling--- this stoic sunken object, creature, holder of history. after several visits it became less scary but still mysterious. approaching it in the water, however, felt like an incredibly different relationship. removed from the safety and distance & perspective of a metal canoe, we were liable to physically bump into the mast with our own soft and blinding flesh. we took different approaches to the scanning---- visibility was not great, increasing the chance that we'd literally have to run into the object in order to find it. I found it in a quiet float and immediately felt apprehensive. somehow the made the mast feel powerful, dangerous, knowing & capable of harm. I can't say exactly what made it quite so startling to swim by the mast--- perhaps it's the forced recognition of submerged objects existing in the murky water beyond the mast. it's certainly the myth surrounding shipwrecks, implying skeletons and buried treasure boxes and dark dark rotten interiors of boats. it's partly the work it does to force you to recognize the unknown depth of the water, & the unyielding forces that hold up this ancient wood. anyways, we circled it, tested the camera, adjusted our goggles and Gail bravely made the first hug. I shot some images and slowly warmed up to the action myself, eventually even enjoying it.



Engaging in history. Historical deviation. Exercising historical deviations pt. 1 Exercises in engaging a historical object. Sensual and loving engaging of a history attached to an object. Mothering. Nurturing the ruinous. Nurturing a ruin pt. 1 Engaging in nurturing is not accepted. Vulnerability. Nurture actions. Permeating action. Permeating history and narrative of an object. Historical nurturing actions. Softening a lore. Permeating and softening an object with a rigid lore or stiff historical significance. Overcoming the untouchableness of the object. Engaging in the untouchableness. Act of knowing

then not knowing. Uncovering a mysterious feeling.  
Anticipating = mysterious? Unknown feeling revealed.  
Resolving an unknown. Convincing Julia to dissolve anxiety  
around the object/action. Why was it so scary?



We walked to a dock that was much closer to the location of the mast and submerged ourselves into the water. The water is very scummy towards the edges of the lagoon. I found myself wanting to quickly swim out into deeper and clearer water. I now am remembering to mention that we had previously found flotation devices so that we could steady



our bodies on the surface in order to view our documentation and clear the condensation from the inside of our cheap goggles. We began to search for our 'old friend' – the mast. I should say that we formed a sort of bond with the mast prior to our more bodily/direct confrontation. I found myself feeling very anxious and frantic in our struggle to relocate the mast. Why? Being near the thing suddenly without the safety or rather separation that the canoe had previously provided. I felt fear and anticipation. I began to rationalize the mast because I wanted to work my mind out of anxiety.



two young healthy ladies bathing in black bracing themselves against sun, sludge, waves, wind, lack of oxygen, cold, uncertainty, fear. how did that all shift when the actual embrace happened? what is that natural motion/emotion that the hug produces which allows us to forget for just a second what we are hugging----- the algae becomes the soft moment of a caress & in the short time between finding your grip and running out of air, it seems very normal.



I began to tell myself what the mast was made of – a large piece of wood (oak?) that was stuck in some mud in the bottom of a lagoon. Somehow relieving my thoughts of the lore and history of the object made it easier to approach – less scary anyway. I touched my hand to it and all of the fear and anxiety and pushing away of the history dissolved or rather I was able to blend my previous rationalizing of the mast as simply an object with the lore.



horizon

above water

below water

at bottom of lagoon

breeches of the surface remind us of the plane

it's a line calculating a slope between the surfaces



(written after reading a selection from *Collective Actions: Audience Recollections From The First Five Years, 1976-1981 from Trips Out of Town* organized by Andrei Monstyrski)

We purchased goggles at the *Dollar General*. We needed to be able to see under water while in the lagoon. We arrived back at camp and changed into black, one-piece bathing suits. We felt that there needed to be consistency in the documentation – an aesthetic decision that was made early on in planning the interaction. We took photos of each other in these costumes or outfits or actions suits or whatever they should be called. The goggles were an important part of these photos as we had only viewed the mast from a canoe from the surface. We were breaking this previously established relationship on purpose.