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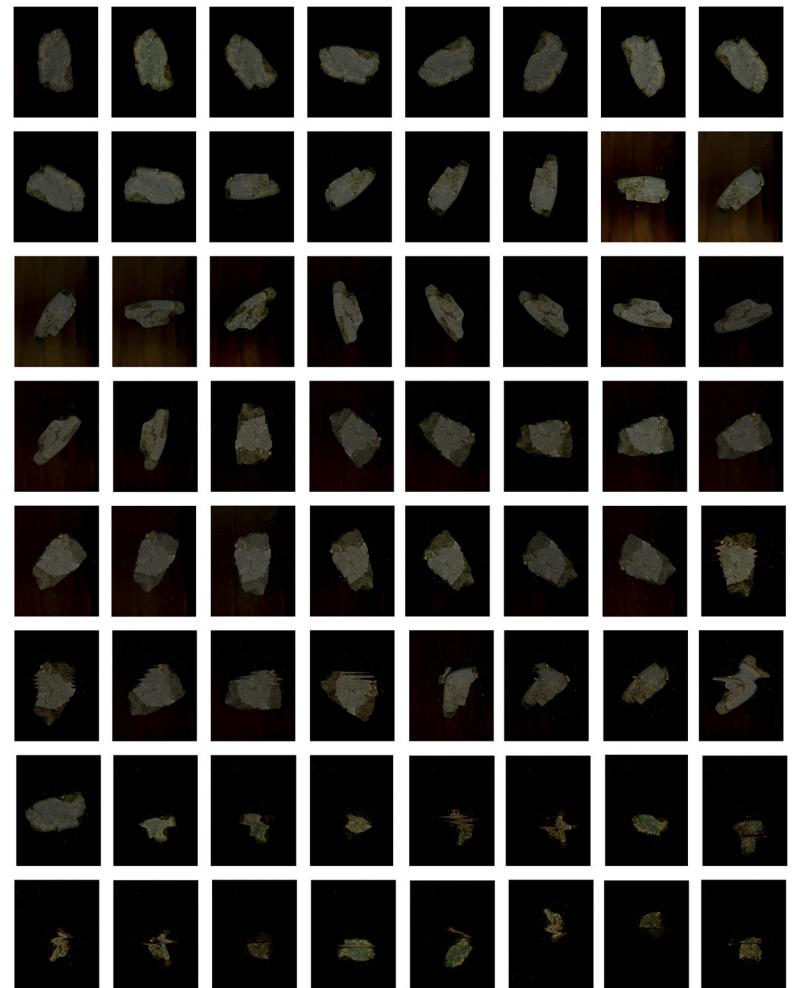


CHELSEA POLK

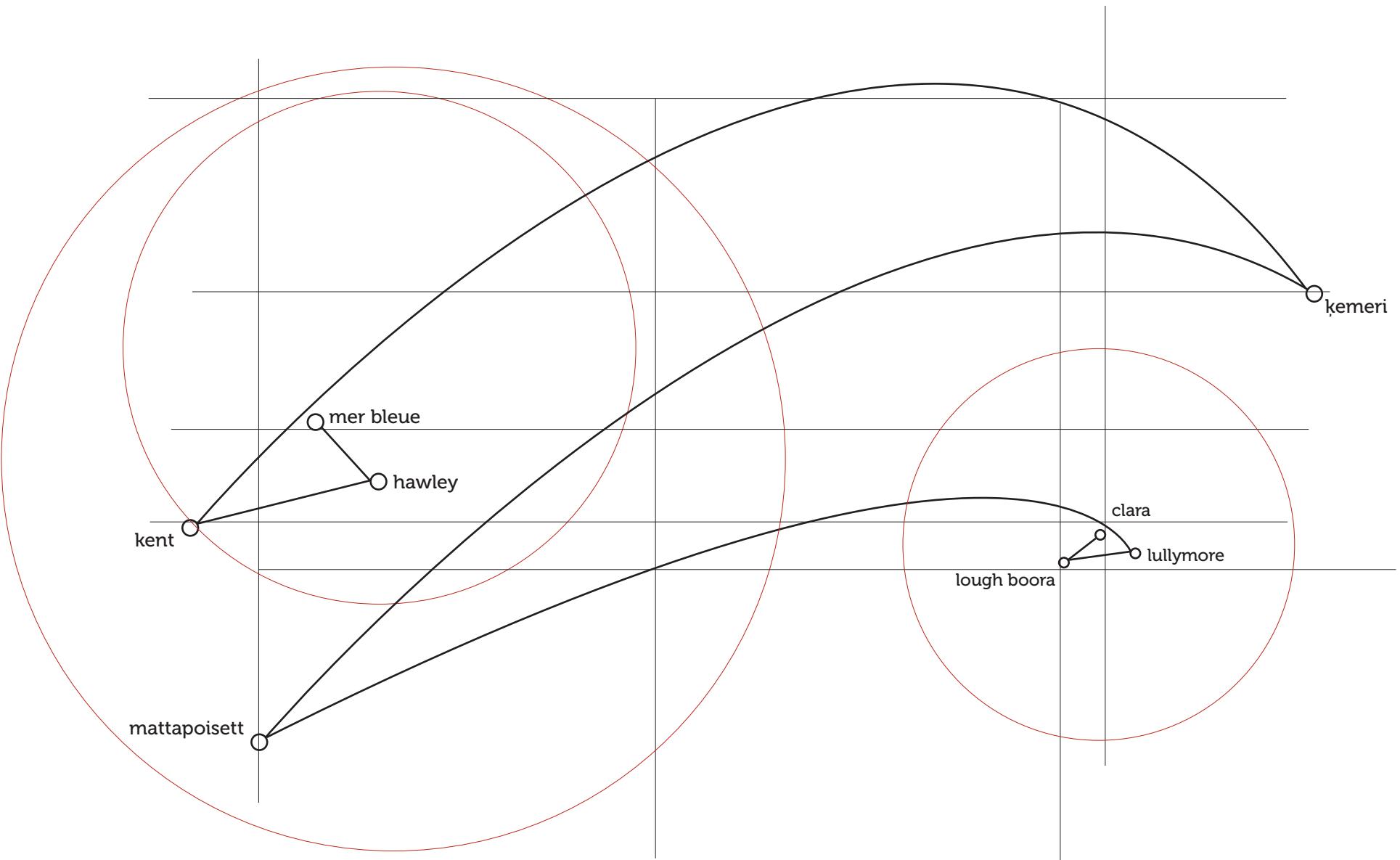
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This book accompanies my MFA Thesis Exhibition, May 4-19, 2019 at
Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.

Thank you to Buck McDaniel, my collaborator, and Jacob Kirkword (Buck's collaborator); Declan Maloney, for editing; Bea Aldrich, for visiting Ireland with me and interviewing bog experts; Cleo Miao for building the website 44320.xyz; Zhidong (Jude) Zhang for installation support; Tim Wolf for carpentry; Dennis Svoronos for Arduino help; John Steiner for audio tech support; Evan Swinerton for driving 7 hours with me to go to a bog; Giorgi DeVito for coming with me to another bog; and of course, my cohort, teachers, and graduate staff at MassArt.



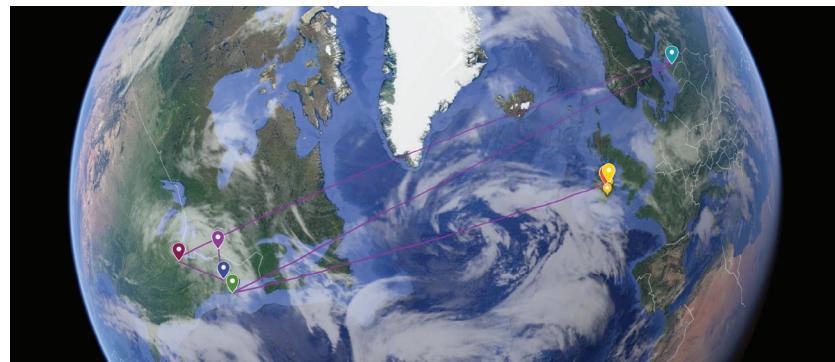
scan of peat 64 times



44,320 is the story of eight bogs.

It follows the paths between them,
diverges, and diverges again.

The stories exist somewhere between episodes of
a podcast and movements of a composition, poetic
and didactic, a travel log, and a manifesto.



This text is the basis for 8 audio pieces which can be listened to at
www.44320.xyz before, after, or while reading.

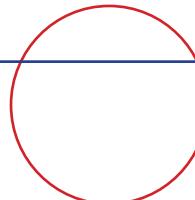
*The following eight bogs represent a set of fixed points which are
then interpolated.*

Interpolation

1. The insertion of something of a different nature into something else
2. [mathematics] The method of constructing new data points within the range of a discrete set of known data points
3. [classical music] Unrelated material inserted between two logically succeeding functions

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1.

CLARA BOG (INTRODUCTION)

Clara, County Offaly, Ireland

The indications of drought were fertile. Aside from the media coverage of the situation, most widely in context to garden hose ban for household purposes, the land was an old, dry sponge. It was caked with sphagnum, which can be imagined as a light and dull green snowfall, if snowflakes were stiff and enlarged, piled as sticks rather than sticking together, clumping and melting. “Peat moss” is its familiar name for Americans, who use it as a garden additive, a fertilizer. Elsewhere, it’s much more. But sphagnum is only the surface layer.

Central Ireland is abundant with peat bogs, a type of wetland comprised of dead and decaying plant matter (peat) which accumulates in areas where water at the ground surface is high in acidity and low in nutrients. As a result, the vegetation is slow growing, yet also more slowly decaying. In Ireland, peat, or turf, is cut from the ground as a source of heat.

When burned, a warm, wet aroma is given off. It's savory and dense, like a dank, earthy bacon. Those who have grown used to the smell would be able to pick up its nuances, and likely would disagree that it had any associations to bacon. For visitors and newcomers like us, it was difficult to smell the differences, but in context, had assumed only peat could be as potent and lasting. A car driving through a long stretch of farmland road carried the smell with it for four to five minutes. Perhaps the smell never left those who trekked on foot. Due to the drought, the land was far drier and burned faster. A couple of turf cutters said that this increased the smell's intensity.

On Clara Bog in County Offaly—and many others for that matter—the smell of burning peat even in a drought is entirely absent. In 1987, after 7 years of industrial extraction, the National Parks and Wildlife Services decided on protecting the land through prohibiting turf cutting after many requests by local naturalists. A few years later, Clara had the potential of being declared a World Heritage Site by the UN, but was ultimately rejected because of those 7 years which compromised the land. Clara today, or officially, the Clara Bog Nature Reserve, rests opposite the street to its visitor center. The building's facade is a curved, deep grey concrete with a series of long windows—a sleek and almost brutalist take on the single-pile housebarn residencies which surround it. Inside are interactive exhibits, educational videos, and an attached library which contains archives of bog and peat-cutting histories. The spot is a popular destination for class field trips, where schoolchildren take home brochures and posters of local birds, like the curlew, and other bog-dwelling wildlife.

Across the street from the nature center is the Clara Bog itself, humble in contrast. It was mid-July upon visiting and this particular day was far cooler than the prior 10 or so. The two-week long hot and sunny drought finally ended, here at the bog, and the spongy bog mat absorbed not only the rain but the sound of the rain, as if it were falling snow. The wood boardwalk of course became soaked and eventually slippery. The loudest sound was that of our own footsteps which was amplified in our recordings, as was the wind—despite deadcat usage—and passing vehicles. The words “bog butter bog bog butter” continually ran through my head in rhythm, replacing the Fiona Apple lyrics “if I’m butter, if I’m butter, if I’m butter, then he’s a hot knife.” Her words “if” and “I’m” blended together as one syllable, warranting to be replaced by “bog.” In addition, bog butter was an occurrence in and of itself. Thousands of years ago, bog dwellers somehow discovered that peat’s acidity, lack of oxygen, and release of polysaccharides was the perfect mixture to allow organic material to be preserved. They created their aged-animal product

delicacies simply by storing them in the bog. That, or giant hunks of cheese somehow slipped into the bog. One of these 2,000 year old hunks was found a couple years ago, weighing 22 pounds—the most artisanal cheese in the world.

The preservations extend beyond animal products. Thousands of human bodies and extraneous limbs have been found in bogs, so well-preserved that the skin, hair, finger and toenails have remained in tact. The oldest fleshed bog body is Cashel Man, found in 2011 in County Laois, dating back to 2000 BCE. One of the most famous bog bodies, the Tollund Man, discovered in the 1950s in a Danish bog, was found with a noose around his neck. Numerous more bodies found clearly were inflicted with some sort of violence, as researchers speculate was due to punishment for crimes, accidents, and even kinship rituals. Notwithstanding Tollund’s violent death, he carried a peaceful and undisturbed expression. These preservations were likely not as intentional as the bog butter.

After the rainfall, we spoke with the educational director of Clara, who we joked was Ted Danson’s bog expert look-alike. He wanted to know what it was like having Trump as a leader—a common inquiry we received on our three-week stay. I don’t exactly remember our reply but it was something along the lines of “worse than you can imagine.”



The first time I heard this word used was in Sound of Music. How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?

How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?

Will o' the wisps, also known as *ignis fatuus*, or foolish fire, are short trails of light found moving elusively through moonlit bogs. As you moved, the will o' the wisp followed, but as you approached them, they vanished.

These light trails became sinister in European folklore, translated to headstrong characters who haunted the bogs, seducing travelers only to leave them blind in the dark. One of these characters, appropriately called Willy, the blacksmith, is awarded a second chance at heaven's gate by Saint Peter, only to later succumb to the Devil. The Devil gives him a single burning coal for warmth. A second protagonist, Drunk Jack, or, Stingy Jack, carries his single burning coal in a pumpkin for use as a light source, the basis for the widely known, Jack-o-lantern.

The logical explanation for these foolish fires is the oxidation of three substances:

1. phosphine
2. diphosphane
3. methane

These are produced by the organic decay present in peat, which causes photon emissions, and leaves behind an oily, viscous moisture.

I first read that phrase as vicious moisture, which in turn might be more apt.



2.

LOUGH BOORA (PYRAMIDS)
Tullamore, County Offaly, Ireland

As an exercise, I wrote down three meanings of the word “bog,” forgetting, or rather not yet knowing, its connotations in British slang. A bog is a toilet, and additionally, “bog-standard” is the equivalent of “no-frills.” Toilet paper = bog rolls. Last Tuesday, I texted my British friend, “The bog was amazing!” once again forgetting its connotations.

Upon visiting Lough Boora, I was not aware of this information. Lough Boora, or Lough Boora Discovery Park, in full, rests on Boora Bog. The land has been owned and exploited by Bord na Móna, the largest peat production company in Ireland since the 1940s. Although Boora Bog continues to be used for agricultural gain, Lough Boora is masked as an educational experience for tourists, complete with a sculpture garden, biking paths, and a café. It is well masked, being vast and tranquil.

In the 1970s, remains from the Mesolithic period were found in Boora Bog, including stone axe heads, arrow heads, and other tools dating to 6800-6000 BCE. These were discovered during peak extraction years, when a railroad cut through the bog to transport peat. In 2002, artists were commissioned to produce site-specific sculptures relating to this history.

In result, many of the works took on Stone Age era designs made out of discarded train parts and tracks, as well as bog-wood—semi-fossilized wood that was buried in the bog. A couple of these designs contained triangular shapes, vaguely referring to the structures of the Mesolithic era finds or the pyramids themselves, being burial monuments.

If we consider the historical connotations of the structures of pyramids, we loosely find that they are representative of society's relationship to the land and its essentials—light, life, and the resources we obtain through the two. The pyramids were thought to resemble the shape of sun rays, housing dead rulers as a sort of resurrection vehicle. Made of stone and resembling mounds, they were on one hand, holy exploits of land, and on the other, the precise understanding of living—and dying—on earth. It is not unlike Lough Boora Discovery Park, whose aesthetic pamphlets' QR codes link to educational videos about peat extraction and climate change. The evidence of over-extraction is before our eyes, but our trains are temples. The structure of knowledge has more than three points or four sides, depending on your dimension. It still can't resurrect any better than a pyramid.



The second exercise was to find three meanings of the word “bug,” though I couldn’t recall if there was any connection to the word “bog.”

At the top of the two-dimensional pyramid was “surveillance,” imagined as a multi-sided camera with enough lenses, or channels (no less than 24, but close to 64) to see all dimensions of a given space. It is the Eye of Providence, a god, worshipped by us as it monitors us—a symbiotic relationship. Some resent the eye like a problematic child they birthed, but still love the child because their eyes are reflected in the child’s eyes. The child, unaware of itself, may know more than the parent thinks. They are not blinded by the desire to point a lens at the sun. This desire makes the parent forget that the child is still the bug they birthed. They point to its achievements—the pyramids and the nature reserves, and again forget that these are only masks. Do not take the mask off.

At the bottom left of the pyramid was the word “men,” like a bedbug infestation, ever-present but the damage is beneath the surface and at the surface is your inviting and comfortable bed. It was the men who pointed their lenses at the sun, and the others rubbed their rocks together. They both created fire but the men created the block between us and the sun.

We can no longer look directly into the sun.

The literal definition of “bug” was at the bottom right of the pyramid. The placement of this can be interpreted literally as well. As part of Lough Boora’s child-friendly activities in between two trees is the dollhouse-sized “Bug Hotel,” constructed of wood and bricks with rows of tiny holes, wood chips and discarded cardboard bog roll tubes. There was not a single bug in the Bug Hotel. There are also no longer any untouched bogs in Ireland, and rather exist as great attempts, masked attempts, or something else entirely. If anything, Clara Bog was closest to the sun itself, and Lough Boora, a sophisticated attempt to be the sun.

This attempt was further masked in November of 2018 when Bord na Móna announced that it was closing 17 of the 62 active bogs it had been extracting from. The remaining 45 will close within 7 years. Tom Donnellan, the CEO of Bord na Móna backed this decision with stressing the need for decarbonization and a shift towards renewable resources. Granted, Bord na Móna already had plans for phasing out peat with biofuel by 2030. Bog conservationist Catherine O’Connell, and head of the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, argued that Bord na Móna’s grand announcement was profit and appearance driven. “It’s genius what they’ve done. They’ve come out of this looking green. But they’re miners – they remove the living surface of the bog and dig down. Death by a thousand cuts.”

A death by a thousand cuts does not seem as heavy when the cut pieces are rearranged and precisely sculpted into monuments above the surface. There were the *Bog Tracks*, a series of bogwood sticks in the shape of train tracks. They somehow both praised the precious materials of the land and the industrialization of those materials. The *Lough Boora Triangle* was a sculpture designed as an alcove for meditation. An iron frame housed tall stacks of bogwood logs which became the three walls and thus formed an open roof. From the small seat in the enclosure, it became a triangular cut out of sky. *Earth and Sky* had a similar effect with the same meditative and spiritual connotations, but instead was cone-shaped with a circular opening at the top. It was constructed in the same way as a tipi but lacked a canvas covering. Its associations to indigenousness are poorly planned, a vague recognition of ancient land of course would contain the pyramids, the arrowheads, the tipis, and... the *trains*?

The many references to the Mesolithic era throughout Lough Boora were met with the discussion of Celtic religion. They are cited as the origins of Ireland, having migrated from mainland Europe as early as 1200 BCE. However, the Mesolithic era, or more generally—the mid Stone Age—occurred a good 5,000 years earlier. 5,000 years is merely a slice of time in

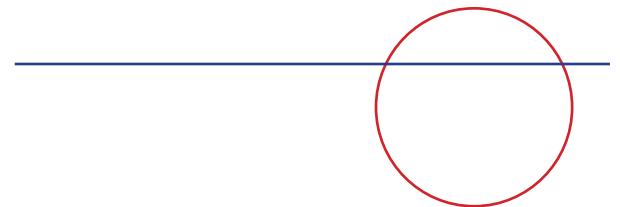
the grand scheme of humanity, but it's enough for areas to populate, communities to establish, form and reform as generations go on and die out. Since the Mesolithic era, more evidence documents the inhabitants of the Neolithic age, where the climate warmed and art emerged, and structures and mounds were built. Many of these still exist today. One of the most notable is Newgrange, a giant burial mound encircled by a stone wall. It is older than Stonehenge, and even older than the Egyptian pyramids.

These builders, however, are still vaguely referred to as hunter-gatherers—little is known about their origin. We can surmise they were Phoenicians, who were known to have sailed to the British Isles, or possibly Taureg Berbers—Moors—from Morocco. In old Irish mythology, those living in Ireland upon Celtic colonization were “Fomorians,” or literally, “dark of the sea” and depicted as barbaric demons. It is likely a coincidence that the word “moor” is another, older word for peat, but its associations to earth and ground potentially link to the original people of Ireland. The Irish word for peat, *móna*, as we see in *Bord na Móna* (peat board), is even more similar.

A historian would likely say these claims are sweeping, but this story is not unlike any colonization.

1. Claim the land as your own despite it clearly being inhabited by others for at least 4,000 years before you
2. Think the other people are evil because they look differently than you
3. Steal from them, start wars, and claim their words as your own, naming the very foundation of their lands they once lived on after them as some sort of skewed, derogatory honor
4. Take the resources from the land itself because everything is yours to have
5. Build a society, forgetting that the land was ever inhabited by anyone but you
6. Take the resources from the land again
7. Take the resources from the land again
8. After probably another 2,000 years, realize that you were not the first to inhabit the land but it mostly becomes cognitive dissonance because you don't want to admit that your entire life is a lie
9. After some more time, realize that the land's resources are not unlimited, but you're running out of time, and your life will end before that happens anyway, so again it becomes cognitive dissonance
10. Aid in that cognitive dissonance by building beautiful parks which support your honorable history and make it seem like your life and your ancestors' lives were lived honorably

We all did it, us Europeans.
It was A* Search No Longer Considered Harmful.



3.

ULLYMORE (ECOTOURISM)
Lullymore, County Kildare, Ireland

Many statisticians would agree that, had it not been for reliable information, the construction of the memory bus might never have occurred. In fact, few systems engineers would disagree with the exploration of the Turing machine. UdderLumen, our new application for write-back caches, is the solution to all of these grand challenges.

A ball pit
Pitch 'n' putt
Choo choo
Petting zoo
Fields
Fields
Light
A good place for a cow to calve

The last line is the slogan of Lullymore, a small village in County Kildare. At one point, Bord na Móna positioned one of its many peat briquette factories in Lullymore. However, this particular one closed in 1992. Once peat is cut out of the bog in rectangular pieces, it is dried and processed through a press, shaping it into small, geometric logs. The finishing touch is the imprint of the signature, in all caps—

B. N. M. You can buy a 4-pack on Amazon, unfortunately, there is no option for Amazon Prime.

b n m b n m b n m b n m b n m b n m b n m b n m b n m b n m

According to the infinite monkey theorem, if a monkey were to type randomly on a typewriter for an infinite amount of time, the monkey would almost surely type the complete works of William Shakespeare. However, the probability of even Hamlet being typed out within hundreds of thousands of orders of magnitude longer than the age of the universe is extremely low. Still, not zero. Obviously, the monkey would die, the typewriter would die, the earth would die, and the universe would likely die before this (in an order to be determined). The monkey is merely a metaphor for endless random information generators, like the sample of one at the beginning of this chapter. SCILgen, as its called, is a random computer science essay generator produced by three students at MIT. In 2005, their paper was accepted into the World Multiconference on Systems and Information. The randomly generated paper as a part of this chapter had a poetic and somehow appropriate title, A* Search No Longer Considered Harmful.

*One search becomes a metaphor for many examples of ecotourism

Returning to Lullymore, there are two major existing uses for the bog today. On Bog of Allen, which populates the majority of Lullymore, is the Lullymore Heritage & Discovery Park, as well as the Bog of Allen Nature Centre. This “heritage park” is a tourist site designed particularly for children. It includes an 18-hole pitch and putt course, which is an Irish in-between of golf and putt putt, amongst many other attractions such as a petting zoo, a train, and an indoor playground. On Google Streetview, the only two available spots on the bog are (1) a view from inside the ballpit and (2) the road leading up to the park. The contrast between them is not unlike the differences between the park and the nature center. Other than being located on the same bog, their purpose and existence as next-door neighbors is hilariously dissonant, as if Bog of Allen was being co-parented by divorcees. The two parents had polar opposite views on how they wanted the child’s life to play out, though, they were equally invested in the child.

At the nature center, we were able to interview Catherine O’Connell, who I previously cited as the spokesperson for bog conservation. She is the CEO of the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, with the part of Bog of Allen under her jurisdiction as the prized example of a well-conserved bog. No ball pit and no train—only a boardwalk to distance tourists from the fragile bog surface. We were given a tour of the small museum and garden by Cormac, who had a real-time understanding of which pieces of his lecture should be cut out in our recording. Off the record, or, for the record, both him and Catherine were incredibly kind and informative.

Bog of Allen that day was hot and sunny, still a part of the two-week long drought which dried Ireland. The sphagnum was yellowing and the bog grass browned. The bog cotton, a white fluffy substance, moved slightly in the mild wind. Everything else stood still, emphasized by the occasional passing car or tractor. There were only three small clouds in the sky and the sun was as powerful as it could be. Allen still and Clara silent, they were humble. They were unlike Lullymore Heritage Park, whose only indications of bog was a view from the petting zoo—a brown field with pronounced markings in the ground. It was clear a vehicle had ploughed through only days prior. It lacked silence and stillness, sphagnum and cotton. Louder than that, it moved in a way it should not have. But the bog on Lullymore was designed to be ignored in the shade of the playpens and the geese.

There are four or maybe five types of people who visit these bog sites: the locals, the children, the relatives, the tourists, and occasionally—the searchers. Only some ignore the bogs. There’s the locals, who have been before but no more than a handful of times, despite living relatively close. There is only so much you can do on the bog. They want a day outside, a pleasant outdoor experience. Closely linked are the children, who might have local or tourist parents. They move between groups because they see the bog both as what it is and as what their parents see—as significant and otherwise. The relatives are those who see the bog with more familiarity than anyone else, invested in how the bog changes in a morning fog versus dusk. They are aware of the amount of precipitation differences from this year to the past year and spend the majority of their time in and around the bog. Regardless of whether they cut from the bog or do everything they can to stop the cutting, the relatives know.

The tourists are a group that normally ignore the bog. They are there because the bog is a worthwhile expense, both monetarily and experientially. If they are ecotourists, then their time and money must be spent in places that (1) aid in environmental efforts and (2) benefit the local economy. It is unclear if Lullymore Heritage Park provides both stipulations, but the Bog of Allen Nature Centre certainly does. When considering the ecotourists, we begin to overlap with the searchers.

For context, while ecotourism in the US by definition began in the early ‘80s, its roots are arguably in the early 1900s when environmentalism became recognized by the US government—conservation acts emerged, the National Park Service began, and the Sierra Club led hikers on backcountry journeys through the Sierra Nevadas, emphasizing our duty to protect our land. It wasn’t until the late ‘70s when Héctor Ceballos-Lascurain coined the term ecotourism and founded the Mexican Association for the Conservation of Nature. This spread to the US in the ‘80s and was picked up by environmentalists such as Megan Epler Wood, who is currently the director of the International Sustainable Tourism Initiative at Harvard.

As we search for a way to make tourism sustainable, a profound lack of understanding of the concept of earth and land acts as a roadblock. The road which runs through Clara Bog, and the pipeline that runs through the Wayne National Forest in Ohio serve as indicators. Travel and earth only collide as we continuously refer to the land as ours. Let us quickly not forget our local transcendental grandfathers, Thoreau and Emerson—who, despite flaws, still 150 years later have a better understanding of nature than we do. Walden was surely not Thoreau's pond to begin with, but with diligence he remained stationary. Looking at the same water and fifty trees each day he developed an understanding we will never have from the mass of densely-packed traffic in rush-hour. We spend a profound amount of time in transience and in communication, as if the invention of ships, trains, cars, and planes allowed us free rein on the earth and its people. Space-shuttles allowed us to send our junk into the universe, so we have now even colonized space. But our search is no longer considered harmful.

Clara and Allen, and maybe even Lullymore, want to transcend. It's a romantic idea that we can restore the life of the bogs. In part, I romanticize too, however, it can't be that simple anymore. Emerson included critiques of capitalism in his writings, and I too agree we cannot move past ecological turmoil when we refer to ourselves by our careers as if life had no other meaning. In post, meaning can certainly not be found through any basic search. And yet the majority of my sources begin with typing into Google, excluding the physical bogs. I can find thousands of images of the bogs and sounds that sound like bogs but those exclude the romance. It is not about romance in the intimate sense but romance in the embodied sense.

The searchers are the group who you can generally categorize as miscellaneous. They possess qualities of each of the other four groups. Searchers also can be closely related to other groups or also migrate from group to group. For example, searchers have the same desire to be in nature as the locals do. A* searcher can be a** local.

*To be a searcher does not have positive or negative connotations because there are not enough searchers in existence to have a widely formed opinion

**The term local only denotes being in proximity, but not as close in proximity as the relatives, to the bog

Searchers may possess qualities of children, as they are interested in something that other adults might not take seriously. It takes a small dosage of a childlike perception of the world in order to access a situation, write, or create newness. Jadedness has its perks, but only children can be truly excited. It may be caused from a lack of understanding or an ignorance, but it is pure ignorance. Ignorant adults are only dissonant, and not in a geniously juxtaposed situation, like Scriabin's mystic chord. When

the chord sounded, it was said to cause dizziness and fainting. Upon awakening, new senses emerge as if the listener was a child again.

Searchers are related to relatives, as most of them search for an understanding that the relatives have probably possessed their whole lives. Thus, searchers may seek out the advice of relatives. However, searchers generally come to their own understanding of the subject. They do not always understand why they are searching or what they are searching for. Such an understanding may never occur, and if it does it is after the search is over. It is possible that the search never ends and only takes on other forms outside of Lullymore & Allen.

Most people are not searchers, but Lullymore makes us believe we are. It's not a genuine search, only a marketing ploy—a profit-driven search to make it seem like we have something to seek. What are we missing? It might be an understanding of a place, like the relatives. Without being tied to a place, we have only the trains to lead us in a continual transience. Searchers may find comfort in the search and the travel, and perhaps there are searchers who search within the train cars themselves.

Tourists may be confused as searchers. Yet tourists know too keenly what they are searching for. Their search ends at the destination, like our day ends at home. There is no room for the childlike wonderment or the deeper understanding of place. The only difference between tourists and ecotourists is that ecotourists have a slightly more eco-friendly search. The only difference between an organic factory farm and a regular factory farm is that the organic one doesn't use pesticides. It's better, but still as large-scale.

As a warning to those who may search, searching can lead to dissatisfaction if you do not find you are looking for. However, as previously stated, many times the search can lead to a discovery that you never knew you were looking for. The search itself can be the drug, and the find is secondary. And yet for others, the find seems so attainable. External forces uncontrollable to the searcher prevent them from finding what they want. So they must search elsewhere. We have not yet found what we are searching for.

If we analyze Scriabin's mystic chord, we first must note that it is not possessed by Scriabin. He did use it as the basis of many of his later works, but it was used by other composers as well. The "mystic chord" by definition was coined in 1916, the same year as the creation of the National Park Service. It was also known as the Prometheus chord, as it was first used in his major work *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*. Scriabin was drawn to the mysticism of Theosophy, a Russian occultist group that formed in the US in the late 19th century, closely following the writings of Helena Blavatsky. The mystic chord was the chord of the pleroma—a totality, or fullness of divine powers. It was like Wagner's

Gesamkunstwerk, or total artwork—the beginnings of multimedia.

Scriabin designed the chord “to afford instant apprehension of—that is, to reveal—what was in essence beyond the mind to conceptualize.” This is the exact nature of the searchers. The searcher is (1) unaware of what they do not know (2) driven by the unknown (3) in the revealing of information only becoming aware of the extent to which they will never know and (4) occasionally, possessed by hidden powers (Scriabin went on to say that the chord revealed not the thing that is hiding but the fact that hidden things were plentiful).

After listening to 24 preludes, 12 etudes, and two poems of Scriabin, Spotify automatically began playing other modern Russian pianists. After four or so hours, it divulged to throw in the occasional classic piano piece, including variations of Bach’s *Ave Maria* nearly 4 times over the course of half an hour. One of these variations was a contemporary young Icelandic pianists’ *Bach Reworks*. As the recording began, a light tapping emerged in the background to which was first thought of some sort of atmospheric nature sounds later realized as the sound of the the pianists’ fingers tapping the keys. It was arguably recorded on a keyboard, concluding that there were at least two additional microphones—one close miked to the position of the hands, and another to pick up the reverb of the room. Or, that was just an effect. By the end, the fingers were so real, like an ASMR session.

Scriabin’s mystic chord and Vikingur Olafsson’s ...*And At the Hour of Death*—the retitled *Ave Maria*—mix well in the contemporary pond. The mystic is a quartal hexachord, meaning it consists of six notes, a series of various fourths, including an augmented fourth, a diminished fourth, another augmented fourth, and two perfect fourths—in that order. As Scriabin said, it is a totality which reveals that we do not know. With the mystic chord already in our pond, we have everything. But we are in a post-everything pond. To add in the revisiting of Bach, we have classics and we have an allusion to sound itself. To forget we are listening to music is only something Bach can do, but today we must remember, like the tapping of keys, that we are listening to a recording of a contemporary take on a classic. There is another aspect amongst an almost surely infinite amount of ingredients for the contemporary pond recipe, and especially in the consideration of bogs—the song *Peat Bog Soldiers*.

Peat Bog Soldiers, or *Die Moorsoldaten* is a song originally composed in German. It originated in Nazi concentration camps as a protest song. In Nazi moorland in Lower Saxony, Germany, prisoners of concentration camps were banned from singing existing protest songs, so they wrote their own.

The English translation of the song begins:

Far and wide as the eye can see,
Heath and bog are everywhere.
Not a bird sings out to cheer us.
Oaks are standing gaunt and bare.

The chorus repeats twice:

We are the peat bog soldiers,
Marching with our spades to the moor

The song was later picked up as a protest song in the Spanish Civil War. From there, it became one of the most popular protest songs as a symbol of the peace movement—like Woody Guthrie’s *This Land is Your Land*. Unfortunately, that song was hijacked by American elementary schoolers in their general music class performances. Was Woody Guthrie missing the point too? This land is not our land.

It was never our land, but since 1916 the National Park Service had its longest shutdown during the longest American government shutdown which ended after over a month on January 28, 2019. News released the day after the shutdown announced that the damage to a number of the parks, such as Joshua Tree, will take 200-300 years to restore.

The peat bog soldiers continued their search elsewhere by ending the song on as positive of a note as they could, resolving from minor to major:

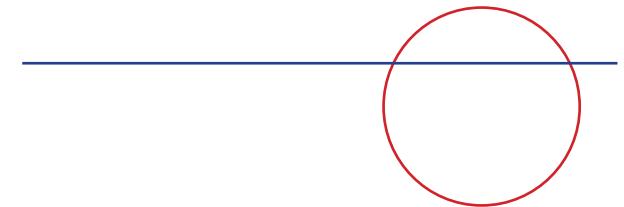
But for us there is no complaining,
Winter will in time be past
One day we shall rise rejoicing,
Homeland dear, you’re mine at last.

No more the peat bog soldiers
Will march with our spades to the moor.

Today the song has hundreds of versions, covered by Irish rock bands to American folk singers and Australian jam bands.



We have not yet found what we are searching for.



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4.

THE BOGS (INFESTATIONS) *Mattapoisett, Massachusetts*

It became a game for myself to explain that I research bogs but not quite in a scientific way. After Ireland, and a coincidental invitation to a bog in Latvia, I set out on a pilgrimage. I call it a pilgrimage because it was something unexplainable, or possibly inextricable, that was driving me. Before Ireland, I never considered peat. It was a word I associated casually with moss, something bought in a bag at a garden center for indoor plants or at a craft store for a child's diorama project. Becoming aware of the many cranberry bogs in Massachusetts, my perception of the land changed. There were bogs in my backyard. YIMBY!

75% of Boston's land is artificial. Prior to this, its coastal body was a series of wetlands including swamps and bogs. By building up the land, the city continued to expand. A number of coastal bogs and wetlands still inhabit surrounding areas, including a series of bogs appropriately called "The Bogs." Once used for commercial cranberry production, they are now protected as part of the Buzzards Bay Coalition. Wild cranberries still grow. Despite this only being the fourth chapter, The Bogs were the last bog I visited—the end to the pilgrimage which resembled a release, or a cleansing. The land echoed this, as it was announced two weeks prior that the coalition found a method for allowing a large portion of the cranberry girdler population, an infamous berry-eating pest, to exist peacefully on the bog without causing an excessive amount of destruction. By introducing only a minimal amount of tobacco plants, the cranberry girdler population was kept at lower, but sustainable numbers. Tobacco leaves are toxic to girdlers, and girdlers conveniently camouflage with both cranberry plants and tobacco plants. In larvae form, they have orange-red heads with white, translucent bodies. In their fully-developed moth state, their closed wings drape like robes—a beige eggshell in color.

In an upright position, a girdler vaguely resembles a cardinal's red-orange and white vesture. Cardinals are privileged to wear this vibrant hue as it symbolizes blood—a loose representation that they will die for their faith. The girdlers, seemingly, will too.

It was clearly less about the Catholicism for the cranberry girdlers, but they followed the plants and died for the plants with a similar dedication. It was possibly too much of a coincidence that the Cardinals themselves wore girdles, the belts which close their long robes. It was perhaps an 18th century New England farmer who termed the girdlers, apparently deciding that the pests looked like them. It was an unusual anthropomorphizing of a species so hated.

After being on the bog, it was clear that this must be a new solution for pests. As our perceptions of pests are subjective, it goes without saying that we should not kill off all pests or even any, but rather accept the pests for what they are, and consequently, see the pests as something else, something better. They were never pests to begin with. Suddenly, the parasitism that was once so apparent is now symbiotic. The cleanse was never about ridding the substance but learning to live amongst it.

In 2018, the official exorcist for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis received 1,700 requests by both phone and email. This was far more than he had ever received in any year prior, and after discussing the issue with exorcists in both local and international practices, it was apparent that

these numbers suggested a trend. A possible explanation provided by religious historians cites natural fluctuations of institutional faith v. occult. When support of the major institutional faith decreases, in this case, Catholicism, alternatives rise. Increased depictions of witchery in media and the popularity of tarot and zodiac amongst Millennials is likely in response to the recent blunders of the Catholic church, including anti-gay propaganda and sexual abuse scandals, notably occurring amongst priests in Boston. To seek exorcisms within the church is the natural outcome, the safe and more socially acceptable pathway of ridding oneself of demonic oppression and possession.

A recent edition of the standardized psychology text, the DSM-5, added a "possession-form" subset of dissociative identity disorder. It acknowledges that many religious practices understand abnormal mental experiences within a spiritual framework. Demonic possession also can be a response to extreme climate conditions and political turmoil. Frequently in media depictions, demons take the physical form of disease and infestations—like bugs crawling out of the skin, swarms of flies, rats. We also see infestations in the context of infections and viruses, epidemics and pandemics. A positive feedback loop is in place when the societal conditions that lead to epidemics—institutional racism becoming drug crisis, for example, which then are heightened as a response. To rid oneself of the pest, or clean the dirt out of your pores completely, only leaves you more susceptible to dirt and pests. Immunity only occurs through the introduction of the pest.

Not unlike Catholic exorcists, the red-hatted Cardinals become the cranberry girdlers as they perform, channeling the demons by speaking the devil's language. The spiral of silence, the both negative and positive feedback loop, works to keep silent voices silent and loud voices loud, and thus, the income inequality gap is heightened. But through personification of what is seen as a pest, the spiral of silence is intercepted with a triangle or a rectangle. Silence can be amplified using a loudspeaker, or it can exist as a series of structure-borne vibrations. We can feel a booming bass by connecting a bass-shaker to the chair we are sitting on, though it is still silence.

Perception of a sound is an important factor, if not the most important, as is perception of a space we inhabit. A sound fills a room through vibrating air, and a sound alters a room through vibrating objects. By altering an object's physical position, sound is then clearly represented visually. However, pitch is more pure than imagery. This is represented through the restoration of the missing fundamental, or otherwise known as the phantom fundamental. For any single sound wave of a given pitch,

what we will call the fundamental, a series of overtones also vibrates, creating an infinite pattern of waves. This system of fundamentals and overtones is always harmonious and is represented by a mathematical equation, which can be understood on similar terms as the golden ratio. This system is so inviolable that when the fundamental was removed in a research project, it came back—as a phantom.

This theory was tested on a barn owl, notorious for its strong sense of hearing, using Strauss' *Blue Danube*. Researchers attached electrodes to the neural auditory system of a barn owl's brain and played a recording of the waltz with the fundamental notes removed. With many of the resulting vibrating overtones indistinguishable to the human ear, the recording didn't sound like much. However, when the electrodes were removed and the recording of what the owl heard was played back, the fundamental existed. This phenomenon is not exclusive to owls. Upon further research, it was concluded that this feature developed early on in evolution and is thus a part of any living creature that can hear.

Unfortunately, that leaves out a large population of individuals. Using the outdated “if a tree falls in a forest” dilemma, that tree might not make a sound if only perceived by someone who cannot hear it. The tree is felt, like the bass-shaker attached to a chair, excluding the nuances of pitch, diction, and timbre. Despite the phantom fundamental, sound is not universal, and neither is perception. However, there are methods for translating the ability to perceive sound through alternate channels. A phantom can be seen as a positive or negative, like a pest, but there is a phantom of touch, a phantom limb. There is nothing, or perhaps less missing when the missing object is perceived as a space to fill.

The methods for filling a space, a void, are similar to that of accepting a pest. An empty room can signify an absence of something. A forest after a fire is certainly a loss. There are no more trees to fall, and no sounds to be heard, other than the sound of the air whistling through hollow wood and hole-ridden bark. As snow falls, its resulting whitish greyish bed blankets extraneous sounds. Following this, the absence of sound goes unnoticed. There is nothing to hear.

On the contrary, sound is an unavoidable infestation when it is unwanted, and to cancel it out, additional sounds must be added. Like dithering in audio, to reduce the unwanted distortion of low-amplitude signals, noise is added. White noise, as opposed to black noise. Black noise refers to a silence with an intermixing of random frequencies above the 20khz range. The human spectrum of hearing ends at 20khz, but as we know from the missing fundamental frequency, it is possible to perceive these notes as

ghosts. While white noise is a flat static at a specific frequency, pink and brown noise have a different distributions of frequencies, utilized for masking specific sounds. If white noise is static, pink noise is a waterfall, with an equal distribution of energy in each octave. It is more airy than white noise, existing in a room filled with sound above the white floor. Below the floor is brown noise, low-frequency sounds that rumble consistently as a warm, grounding pattern. Green noise has no scientific basis but was used by audio companies that used more sustainable materials. Green Noise™ went out of business in 2014, as all of its products failed to produce a high-quality sound on the low-end spectrum.

Synesthetes may cite more examples of noise colors, for instance, blue noise, which is representative of a combination of whole tones, and yellow noise, which contains only high-pitched frequencies. Through the introduction of yellow noise, bothersome high pitched noises can be cancelled out. Yellow noise therapy, is an experimental method for reversing tinnitus—ringing in the ears. It is not yet determined if yellow noise therapy has long-term effects on treating tinnitus or if only a temporary solution.



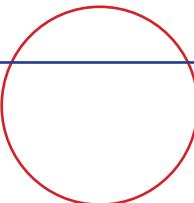
Back at The Bogs, there was nothing missing. They were infested with the noise color spectrum, creating a mystic chord of their own, unlike Scriabin's, whose mysticism caused fainting. After walking across a large, open bog field, there were a series of connecting paths which led into a covered forest. It was cold and windy, but sunlight peeked through the canopy, casting trapezoidal shadows over vivid green sphagnum. After actively searching for cranberry girdlers, I decided they probably were not as present in the winter. The cold forced them to burrow beneath layers of peat for warmth, amongst histories of footprints, preserves, and brown noise sheddings. It was a site of convergence—the other seven bogs' reflections shown in the water. Nearby The Bogs was the Bog Ice Arena in Kingston, Mass, obviously titled for its proximity. A brigade of teenage girls practiced their figure skating.

Other things to convene at the bog were state troopers—a perfect site to hide away from the main stretch of traffic and arrest passing speeders. Dog walkers also frequently convened. In 2017, Area woman on a summer's morning walk with her dog discovered the body of a man half submerged in cranberries who was driven off the road by another vehicle, resulting in his death minutes later. His car was found nearly 100 yards away, so it was

concluded that he walked straight into the bog. The cranberries were in full bloom.

The man's name was Adam, and a statement from his sister announced that he had previously spent 4 months hiking in Sri Lanka, ending his journey with a trek up to Adam's Peak, or Sri Pada. This place was again a site of convergence and even coexistence, as it signifies a meeting of religions coalescing in a "sacred footprint" at its summit. To Buddhists, it is the footprint of Buddha, to Hindus, Shiva, and to Islam and Christianity—Adam. Adam, the man in the bog, had a dedication to this place as he too was on a pilgrimage. He posted a picture of himself with the footprint only 3 weeks prior to his death. Like the Cardinals and the girdlers, he died for his faith. He was buried with a cranberry red tie.

Upon visiting The Bogs, I did not know about Adam, but felt a strange connection to his story afterwards. His death was unwarranted and tragic, but his journey was completed only weeks prior. His desire for uncovering something, a search through his trek up Adam's Peak was well-respected. Was there a coincidence between his name and Sri Pada? It seemed too easy to want to visit a place because it shares your name, but Adam and his peak went unquestioned. Although it was impossible to know if Adam found what he was searching for, it certainly felt like he did.



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5.

KEMERI BOG (SURVEILLANCE)

Pavasari, Latvia

The fourth result in a Youtube search for “bogs”—titled “Estonian Bogs”, begins as follows.

“Hello, my friends. My name is Artur Rehi, and I am in Estonia, but I am not just in Estonia, I am actually in a very special place, in Estonia and in the world. It’s a very rare place, a very old and mystic place. It’s called, in Estonian, *raba*, and in this video we are going to talk about what is *raba*, or bog, in English, what it is for Estonians, what does it mean, what are the stories and the meanings behind it because it’s not just a physical place for Estonians, it’s also mythological, spiritual—it has a big place in our cultural history.”

Artur spends the next 9 ½ minutes guiding a virtual tour of the bog. He sits on a dry patch which supports his weight, explaining that if he were to walk over to a slightly greener patch of bog, he would sink deep down. During World War II, tanks were swallowed whole by the many bogs in Eastern Europe, most notably in Estonia and Latvia. Artur surmises that these tanks could be buried directly below his feet. Kneeling, he punches the dry island of heath and rips out fistfuls of sphagnum.

CUT TO: ethereal female vocals over sweeping drone shots

So, we begin with a place. As Artur implies, our relationship to a place and to a particular environment is so special that we must honor it. We take a video of ourselves with the land. Naturally, we post the video online. We really have to show our audience what it feels like, so we punch it, because it has such a unique surface quality! We get a drone so that we can get those real panning nice shots. Then we edit the video and add that ethereal music to paint a sonic landscape. We, as the audience, view the video, relate to it, laugh at it, think it's pretty. We, as artists, re-edit it, use it for projects, and the cycle continues.

I was in love with the place, in my mind, just as Artur was. Ķemeri Bog, outside of Riga, Latvia, in particular, was something of an outlier—likely because although it was furthest from my home, it was closest to my lineage. Or, it could have been its scale. Ķemeri warranted drones, but it was also more nostalgic and humble than the other bogs, rid of signage. It still was a nature preserve, and locals visited it for similar reasons. We joyfully intervened—with sound installations and a bus tour.

The unofficial, yet non-virtual tour of Ķemeri made it clear how differently regions utilized peat. Despite the hour long “peat n’ treat” we got on the outskirts of Clara, peat was not normally found in Irish spas. However, Latvians harness a material below the peat—sapropel—for skin and digestive treatments. Like peat, it lacks oxygen and is rich in carbon. Quite literally, sapropel is the combination of the Greek words *sapros* and *pelos*, or putrefaction and mud. Not unlike the preservations of organic material in Ireland and other parts of Europe, sapropel has powerful preservative, and in this case, healing powers.

These characteristics of peat and sapropel were commercialized in Latvia as early as the late 18th century when a large-scale bathhouse, Ķemeri Resort, opened for public use. It utilized the land for its mud baths, in addition to tapping into a nearby sulfur springs’ supply. In 1818, the first chemical analysis of mineral water was performed, revealing that it could ease ailments relating to nerves, bones, joints, and muscles. The resort popularized during the Russian Empire—an electric tram ran directly from Moscow to Ķemeri. It reached the peak of its success just before World War I with as many as 9,000 annual guests. After battles between Russian and German forces, the resort and the tram which led there were left destroyed.

Although the town of Ķemeri flourished in the early 20th century, before it was annexed by the larger city of Jūrmala, Ķemeri the bog is flourishing now. Sure, it had seen brighter days before the tanks, but it swallowed them quickly and assuredly. Ķemeri protected its citizens and its citizens

protected it. During foreign invasions, Latvian soldiers would hide on bog islands—dry patches separated by small lakes. The terrain was unbeknownst to invaders, who considered it merely a bog.

After weeks on bog islands, the soldiers began to eat the plants, discovering that a particular one had hallucinogenic properties. It is called sookail, and resembles a flowering bog cotton. It lacks the fluffiness, but is purer in color, a bluish white with tiny, protruding hairs. The stalks are the Baltic versions of sphagnum, an eclectic mix of pine needles and green, stiff snowflakes. The soldiers eventually stopped eating sookail when they realized the bad hangover was not worth the prior day’s trip.

Our bus trip included musings of technology, with the hottest discussion point being whether it would lead to the ultimate demise of our society or our salvation. As part of a combined art and science conference, lectures included internet art about Edward Snowden, the unknown social advantages of AI facial recognition, a cyberpunk science fiction retelling of Russian conspiracies, and Afrofuturism. While a few lectures mourned our loss of naturality, many of them embraced insanity and disjunction. They were a celebration of what was there. It might have been cognitive dissonance, or a sort of distraction. We were likely high on the sookail and mesmerized by the lights. One man set up a forest noise show, and we listened to beats in the rain. It was swamp radio.

It stopped raining after about two hours, and the sky opened just before golden hour. The view from the boardwalk, leading up to a three-story overlook, was pink and orange. The horizon reflected in the lush creamsicle bog grass, and vice versa. Deep indigo lakes contrasted.

Ķemeri got its name from a family that owned a local estate. It is related to the Kemern name in Germany, but the meaning of the name is unclear. Its crest is a dolphin. Though it is likely unrelated, a 1969 science fiction classic *The Left Hand of Darkness* used the word “kemmer” to describe a period of sex and fertility. An androgynous, near-human species, Gethenians, only take on feminine or masculine characteristics during kemmer, and are otherwise equally burdened and/or privileged. The author, Ursula K. Le Guin did not combat a problem with a solution but rather posed a world beyond it. This could be interpreted as escapism, or a false sense of relief. However, this narrative was something to hold on to as equally as any other narrative.

On the other side of the Baltic Sea is Finland. It is difficult to forget if we are talking about bogs. The Finnish name of the country is *Suomi*, and although it is frequently disputed, is perhaps derived from *suoniemi*,

meaning fen cape. Fens, as in lowland bogs, and cape, as a protruding sea headland. It is credible, as the country itself is a patchy and holy expanse of green. Finland considers peat a slowly renewing biofuel, and its use of peat as energy is only second to Ireland's. Despite the flux and vitality of boglands, Finland's use of peat contributes to greenhouse gas emissions as equally as the combined emissions from all passenger-car traffic.

I can only credit Google Maps, Wikipedia, and Youtube for my knowledge of Finland, first discovering Nordic regions as a thirteen-year old from a video of a family that kept a moose as a pet, letting it sleep beside them in their bed at night. The video was appropriately called "Pet Moose," and was set to what I would later discover was a Finnish banger and meme sensation—*levan Polkka*. The song—frequently misspelled with an "L" instead of an "i" because of their uppercase/lowercase similarities—was first written in 1938, and since has had nearly 100 released covers and remixes. The tune was also interpolated and set to a GIF of an anime-style girl swinging a leek. Called "Loituma girl," after the band who first popularized the acapella version of the song, her mouth moves unsynced but equally enduring to the circular rhythm of the song, with Finnish female vocals eventually turning into a relaxed scatting. Underneath, a deeper, male voice repeatedly mimics the bass, chanting (phonetically)—"pol, pall, pol, pall" on each beat and occasionally switching it up with "ey, oi, ey, oi."

The meme became representative of the internet "rabbit hole" for those who fell down it by way of the continually swinging leek—possessed by centrifugal force—and the persisting vocals. The actual content of the song seems divorced from its sensation, which made its way globally and into multiple genres of music, including black metal, Melbourne bounce, and free jazz. The original lyrics are written from the perspective of what seems at first like an unbiased bystander detailing the account of a young woman, leva, who goes out to dance the polka against her mother's wishes. She goes out, and as an English translation reads, "cause what does it matter what the old folks say, when we're all busy dancing to and fro!" Halfway through the song, it is revealed that a "handsome" young man who hits on her was the narrator the whole time. We were rick-rolled. He takes her home and makes a snide comment to her mom. But it's all okay, because "we're all busy dancing to and fro."

We should be busy dancing the polka, or at least busier dancing when bombarded with this information. Capital "S" surveillance, as detailed by the Freemasons and the Eye of Providence at Lough Boora, was about where it started. Now, it is far past that. Surveillance, on one hand, is a method of control, and on the other, is something we continuously implement. Rather than viewing it as a positive or a negative, it can be

seen, or unseen, as what it is. It is the American way to find the tech to solve it and put a bandage on a larger issue. That was only ever a dream, and to stop pretending we don't know what is lost is [not] a problem to solve in and of itself.

There is [not] a way that is [not] a solution or an escapist tactic. To address what is lost would mean writing a list of the mistakes. The land will never be the same, but that does not mean that exploitation should continue without consequence. To mourn the loss of land, and to embrace what is left, is [not] a solution. We're [not] high on peat, and we're [not] distracted, but we can [heal].

Salivili hipput tipput täppyt
Äppyt tipput hiljalleen

Hiljalleen

Hi- lij- al- leen

HI- LIJ- AL- LEEN

CUT TO: YOUTUBE VIDEO OF LEONARD COHEN'S HALLELUJAH

CUT TO: YOUTUBE VIDEO OF JEFF BUCKLEY'S COVER OF LEONARD COHEN'S HALLELUJAH



6.

MER BLEUE BOG (INFILTRATING) *Ottawa, Ontario*

There will be at least one more attempt to use the bog's resources, implemented this time by Ontario, Canada. Outside the small city of Ottawa sits Mer Bleue, which is named for its appearance during a morning dewy fog blanketing the bog surface like a blue sea. In a deathly cold, January afternoon, Mer Bleue was surprisingly still inhabited by dozens of visitors, children and elders alike, who were all dressed appropriately for the weather. Though my friend and I were not unfamiliar to cold temperatures, growing up in Ohio and Maine, respectively, we wore every cold weather piece of clothing we owned and still nearly got frostbite. It was on this bog that I finally understood the harsh reality of what frostbite actually is—your flesh, frozen.

Naturally, the January weather brought snow, and Mer Bleue was entirely covered, feet deep. Underneath, the bog makes for the best known preservative, because what is better than a high-acidity, oxygenless, organic material for preserving? A frozen cold, high-acidity, oxygenless organic material. Someone put some butter in there! In 2000 years, a near-human species will discover our ancient bog ice cream. Or, better yet, for all the wealthy people who get their bodies put in freezers, they can simply, jump (or be thrown) into bogs! It's absolutely free, for a limited time offer, while supplies last.

In addition to it being a particularly cold week, Mer Bleue was a uniquely cold ecosystem despite how far south it is located. Due to its stunted black spruce, tamarack, and bog rosemary populations, as well as its convergence with an ancient channel of the Ottawa River, Mer Bleue is technically considered a boreal—or subarctic—ecosystem. There were a number of signs that discussed this, as well as various vague suggestions of using peat as biofuel. They were written in a way which advertised the bogs, both as the beautiful preserves they were and as green sites of renewable resources. If Canada could not look to Ireland for a warning against burning peat, perhaps the similar boreal forests of Finland could set an example. While Canada is a million steps ahead of the US environmentally, it is still clear that peat is barely renewable, that is, if you consider 5,000 years (the average length of a single bog formation) to be renewing. Sure, it is, as Finland says—slowly renewing.

There is a diligence about Mer Bleue and its inhabitants that is respectable, like an attempt to infiltrate the system by which the weather controls our environment, a system by which we, perhaps, blindly follow that can be altered. It is not such a diligence to ignore the weather, or try to control it in ways that it cannot be controlled. It is similar to the cranberry girdlers and their personifications with added accountability for one's actions. Entering Mer Bleue on the coldest week of the year, snowshoes and all, was a way to dance the night away without disturbing your neighbors.

In hydrology, infiltration is the process of groundwater entering the soil. The porosity of the soil affects the rate of infiltration. While small pores resist gravity, thus slowing the speed, even smaller pores quicken the rate of infiltration through capillary action. Bogs have a unique relationship to infiltration, as they fill in ancient lakes whilst simultaneously absorbing groundwater. Without groundwater, bogs would have never formed, and with the absence of groundwater, like in the recent Irish drought, for instance, bogs stop thriving.

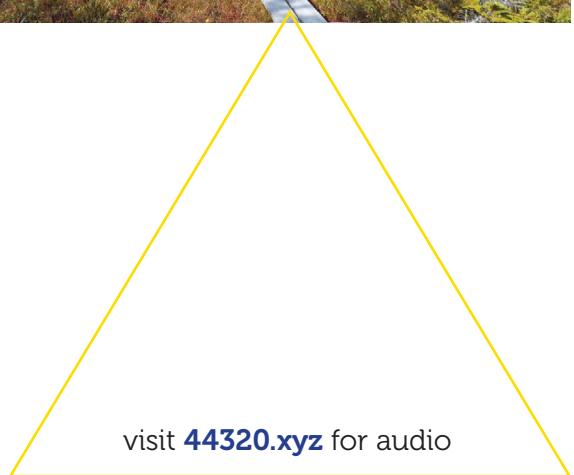
Outside of hydrology, infiltration suggests some sort of permeation, undercover actions, secrecy, or foreign invader. In many contexts, infiltration beckons a movement beneath the surface with attempts to uncover hidden information. During the Occupy movement, an increased amount of FBI informants infiltrated individual groups, organizing illegal anti-government schemes by preying on impressionable young activists. In Cleveland in 2012, a group of young men, which later became known as *The Cleveland 4* were entrapped into a May Day scheme to bomb a bridge in Brecksville, a southeastern suburb. The explosives, provided by the 38-year old informant, Shaquille Azir, were fake. Azir was instructed by the

FBI to develop a friendship with the four, Brandon Baxter, Connor Stevens, Josh “Skelly” Stafford, and Doug Wright, who at the time were barely adults—Baxter as young as 19. Azir befriended the group over a course of 8 months, providing them with alcohol, drugs, and the occasional place to stay. Many of them reported feeling coerced into the plan by Azir and attempted to back away multiple times. Nevertheless, the scheme was enacted, only to be stunted by their premature arrests, and eventual prison sentences of 9-11 years.

In Baxter’s sentence, he was charged with multiple terrorist counts of intentional use of weapons of mass destruction. In his 2016 clemency, he wrote “I played lookout the day we set the fake explosives at the bridge... I never touched the devices or the detonators. You couldn’t have paid me to touch them. I’m not saying that in the end I wasn’t there, in the middle of the night, under that bridge, but how we got to that point doesn’t follow the FBI narrative of a simple sting operation.”

These infiltrations and entrapments extend beyond the Occupy movement. In 2011, the FBI had as many as 15,000 employed informants. After reviewing a sample size of 508 prosecutions, it was reported that 49 of those were led by an informant instigating terrorist action. *The Cleveland 4* case was a time when the infiltrator was infiltrated, and the original confrontation of the big banks’ corrosivity only led to further stinging.

Through infiltration of this bog narrative, Mer Bleue can then infiltrate its own water. It is related to interpolation, as discussed prior to the beginning of the narrative. As interpolation is the insertion of something of a different nature into something else, infiltrating surely involves an amount of interpolation. Both of them require outside forces and an amount of force, but interpolation only occasionally involves secrecy. There is a way to send a message in secrecy, like onion routing in hacking, where the original message sender is intentionally unseen, coded deep into multiple layers of encryption. Without knowing there was a secondary message, it would never have been delivered. What are the keys to look for? Intentional awkward intonation, and the breakdown of words? I already told you this was a manifesto, but you probably didn’t read the first page anyway.



7.

HAWLEY BOG (FAKE NEWS) *Hawley, Massachusetts*

(Deep, slow, poetic)

The conditions under which the most sound sleep can occur are produced by the introduction of particular sound—that is, the light tapping of fingernails, a soft and slow, feminine voice, hushed to a whisper, regardless of what is being said. In some people, these triggers result in a pleasurable tingling sensation which begins at the crown of the head and flows downward through the body, like swimming through warm spots of a cold lake. The phenomenon is referred to by some as a “brain orgasm”—a “braingasm.”

(Getting faster, more clear, enunciated, informative)

These sounds are distributed as videos which include footage of the tapping fingernails, as if the listener’s autonomous sensory meridian response, or ASMR, was discerning to the source of the audio.

Given the possibility, we can imagine someone’s neural function as a wine connoisseur, with each pour possessing notes of particular qualities. I taste that this sound was created in a tropical climate—such fruity undertones! If I told you the following sounds were produced on a bog in western Massachusetts, you can assess my credibility.

(Slow and heavy)

Do these sound authentic? Your system is autonomous.

(Clear and informative, “NPR” voice)

I used my nails to scratch and tap a post, a particular sign at Hawley Bog which warned visitors from stepping onto the fragile bog surface, being sure to remain on the boardwalk. Due to the preservative qualities of the bog, one footstep could leave an impression lasting for 15 years. Below the impression lies a 30ft thick mat of peat which floats on the open water of a deep glacial depression. Your distinguished ears will note that near the bottom of the mat is Ice Age-era pollen. Perhaps, you would even know that last year, a previously undocumented ant species was discovered.

The rise of ASMR and these “supertasters,” led to the need for sound authenticators, that is, those who proved or disproved the supposed origins of a given sound. Naturally, the more specific a sound, the more authentic, and thus the more valuable. ASMRtists travelled more remotely to document distinctive sounds, the sound a wild tiger walking through snow in Northeast China was worth approximately 124 times the amount of a zoo tiger in North America.

This virtually shattered the Foley industry in film, as listeners were keen to understand that sounds of an on-screen waterfall were actually just a foley artist in a bathtub with a bucket of water, for instance. In these audio/visual discrepancies, narratives no longer made sense, and, fell apart.

Eventually came the emergence of hackers with advanced sound engineering technologies. By embedding lab-grown sounds, those made using algorithms which mimicked natural qualities of a particular environment, even the most advanced “superlisteners” struggled to distinguish authentic origins from algorithmically modified sounds.

In another case, a group of rightwing sound hackers in an unidentified location were able to convince members of the British royal family that Trump had not in fact defended the photographer who used an expensive zoom lens to sell nudes of the Duchess of Cambridge to a French tabloid magazine, despite his 2012 tweet which blamed her for sunbathing.

And this was all for a deep sleep, a “braingasm.”

How long would it take to write out 44,320 sets? Or type it? It could be some sort of tactic, an absurdist punishment. Tonight, I can sleep for 12 hours, 18 minutes and 36 seconds.

N1: NREM

N2: approaching REM (light)

N3: deep

N4: deeper

N5: deepest

N6: deep

N7: pulling out

N8: light

Sphagnum

Iphagnum

Idhagnum

Ideagnum

Idengnum

Identnum

Identium

Identitm

Identity

Sphagnum
Iphagnum
Idhagnum
Ideagnum
Idengnum
Identnum
Identium
Identitm
Identity

Sphagnum
Sdhagnum
Sdeagnum
Sdengnum
Sdentnum
Sdentium
Sdentitm,
Sidentity
Identity

Sphagnum
Speagnum
Spengnum
Spentnum
Spentium
Spentitm
Spentity
Ipentity
Identity

Sphagnum
Sphngnum
Sphntnum
Sphntium
Sphntim
Sphntity
Iphntity
Idhntity
Identity

Sphagnum
Sphatnum
Sphatium
Sphatitm
Sphatity
Iphatity
Idhatity
Ideativity
Identity

Sphagnum
Sphagium
Sphagitm
Sphagity
Iphagity
Idhagity
Ideagity
Idensity
Identity

44,320

$8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 =$
possible sets

Sphagnum
Sphagntm
Sphagnty
Iphagnty
Idhagnty
Ideagnty
Idengnty
Identnty
Identity

Sphagnum
Sphagnuy
Iphagnuy
Idhagnuy
Ideagnuy
Idengnuy
Identnuy
Identiuuy
Identity

It took 864 steps on the bog trail to return to my starting point. Each step made a footprint, each sound had a footprint, an identity. **Be cautious** because its identity can be altered, but act quickly as first impressions are key.

Sphagnum touching sphagnum.
My finger touching sphagnum.
I can say anything, and still induce a deep, glacial, sleep.



8.

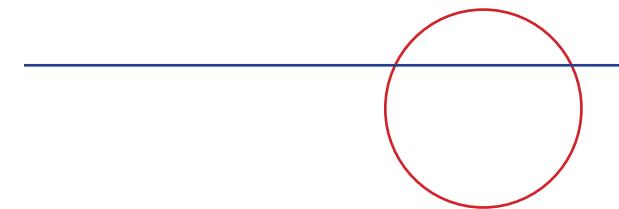
KENT BOG (RETURN, COLLAPSE)

Kent, Ohio

Inscribed on the boardwalk at the Tom S. Cooperrider-Kent Bog Nature Preserve in Kent, Ohio is the word hallelujah with an extra E, capitalized and hyphenated as it is written below:

HAL-LEE LU JAH

This inscription is amongst hundreds of names, donors of the bog, which appear every few steps of the boardwalk. It could have been that this donor felt a particular connection to the song, with the separation of syllables mimicking the rhythm in which it is sung. Another possibility is that they are two very clever donors, Hal and Lee, respectively. Before the boardwalk path is a introductory sign with a large, black and white photo of the supposed founder of the Kent Bog, Dr. Gordon F. Vars. After further investigation, I discovered that Dr. Vars was not the founder—that part was already clear—but rather, an educator at the local Kent State University. After his death in 2012, the bog was dedicated to him. As an educator, he became known for his interdisciplinary pedagogical style and became well known as a radical late 20th century pedagogue following the wave implemented by the Black Mountain College in the '50s.



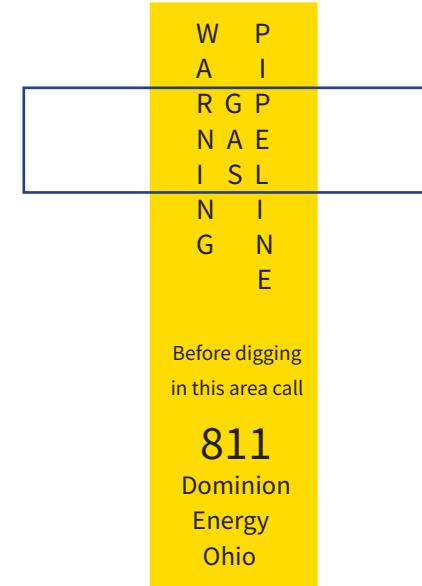
Kent State, on the other hand, is known for the May 4 shootings, where four students were killed by members of the Ohio National Guard during a peace protest against US bombing of Cambodia in 1970. This was 32 years and 3 days before the Cleveland 4 arrests. The days leading up to May 4, 1970, were met with continual demonstrations against the Cambodian Incursion, including a burial of the US Constitution to symbolize that Nixon had killed it, peaceful hippy-led protests, and arson of a campus ROTC building. The arsonists were never found and no one was hurt. Ironically, one of the students to be shot down two days later by the guard was a member of the ROTC.

Meanwhile, back at the bog, the sound of a leaf blower approached, moving closer until a man emerged from the shrub that overcame the small boardwalk path. He passed, and the sound of the leaf blower gradually faded until it was turned off. It seemed unnecessary to leaf-blow a bog, especially in late December, but he was thorough, with only two or three leaves remaining on the walk back.

Kent Bog is a kettle hole—a chunk out of the land which was extracted by the melting of the Wisconsin glacier nearly 10,000 years ago. It then filled with water, becoming a kettle hole lake. As temperatures continued to rise, mosses and other plants populated the bottom of the lake. This melting perpetuated until the lake disappeared, becoming the giant sponge of bog that it is today. Ancient waters and plants still thrive nearly fifty feet down the sphagnum.

This melting continues to perpetuate with the rising climate, and today causes increased threats to the environment. The world's largest bog, located in Western Siberia, is the size of France and Germany combined. Warmer temperatures here have caused the permafrost layer to melt and release billions of tons of methane into the atmosphere. Particular pockets of methane in the ground have resulted in underground effervescence—trampolines of earth. These erupt at random as explosions of methane.

Situated in between Kent Bog and the main road is an abandoned stable and a gas pipeline. This is typical for Ohio—farmland, run-down industry, and the enduring fossil fuel industry. The pipeline was marked by thin yellow, vertical signs which read:



The NO TRESPASSING sign nearby was so faded it was illegible to anyone who couldn't assume what it read. After fifty or so yards, the pipeline led into a forest, a large pathway intersecting the expansive backyards of a few houses. Another faded NO TRESPASSING sign stuck out of the ground at an angle next to a rusted bear trap.

RGP, NAE, and ISL were the resulting acronyms of the warning gas pipeline sign.

resource
global
professionals
national
association of
evangelicals
indian
super
league
run
good
program
not
an

egg
instigate
slaughterhouse
labels

row
ghana
prague
nebula
acne
erie
isle
slay
labyrinth
rock, standing
goalie
penalty
nevermind
alpine
ethers
I
si
love + luck

Despite the bear trap being a fair warning, as children—or as an homage to childhood—we continued on. We did not find what we were looking for, and we will not. The mask was removed here, at Kent Bog, and underneath was chipping paint. A second abandoned stable, which appeared after a hundred more yards, was met with chunks of bees' nests scattered on the wooden flooring. Each individual cell of the stable had patches of chipping, yellow and blue paint.

After returning to the car, Google Maps routed us back to the city. We added a stop for a local state park, as the sun was still up and illuminating our backs. The woman's half-soothing, half-aggressive voice led us down a couple of dirt roads. There were only a couple of minutes left of the drive, but a long, yellow metal gate interrupted the road which took us there. It was a small path, with a ditch to the left and a fence to the right, so we put it in reverse. Before meeting the main drag, we turned around in a part-gravel, part-woodchipped driveway. A man emerged from behind the

house of the driveway with a golden retriever. As they walked towards the car, we debated whether to engage in conversation or give a friendly wave, but the closer he got the ruder it was to leave him. Upon approaching the vehicle, we noticed his piercing blue eyes which were almost pearlescent in the sun. He questioned us, wondering what brought us to his property. We explained the map situation, and he complained that it was a scheme amongst the state park rangers and Google—intentionally routing visitors away from the park to eliminate the amount of trash they had to pick up. He routed us in the right direction. Watching us as we pulled out, the golden retriever barked and took a seat at his side.

A similar situation occurred even before Hawley, before Clara, when the idea of bogs—landscapes so rich in history and flat in appearance—was not yet considered. At Quabbin Reservoir, the storage facility for Boston's water, four abandoned, or “discontinued” towns sit underneath 412 billion gallons of water. In 1938, one of four towns, Dana, threw a party before its intentional flooding, its demise. The houses were destroyed, but the railroads and sculptures remain. Like the bodies in Ireland, the tanks in Latvia, and the glacier waters in Ohio, the Quabbin buried its history underwater. But the bogs preserved it better, beneath layers of acidic sphagnum, stories and diverse uses for peat.

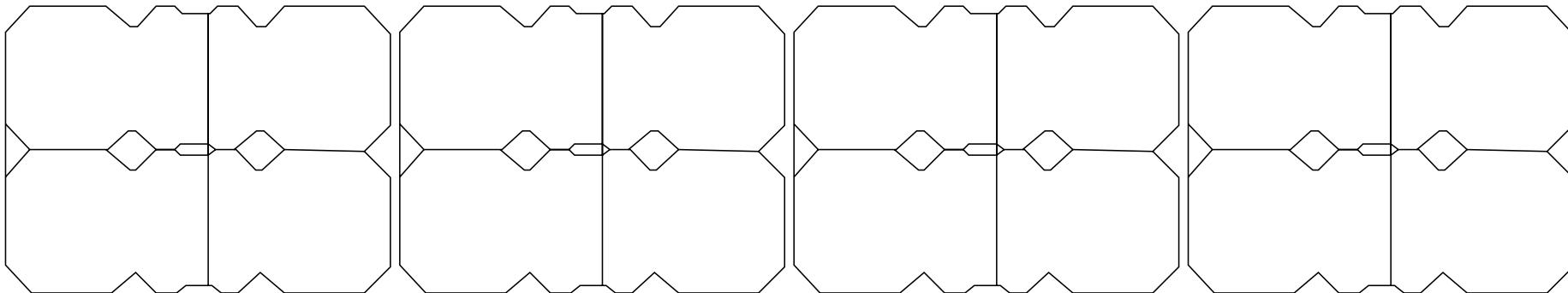
In most land, including bogs, there have been losses. There must be an equal mourning and celebration of these mossy patches, oceans, lakes, and even reservoirs. Thousands of years ago, upon formation, there were parties on the bogs, deaths and sacrifices on the bogs. After eight chapters of information and surmising, words on top of words, meaningless phrases and associations, cheese and bog butter, there could be—and must be, a result.

If it's not a removal of the mask, it's a death. It's a loss of innocence and ignorance, or an acceptance of what is. There is an ongoing search for something in words and images, but what remains is the history. Not the history itself, but the narratives of the history, the narratives which continue to be made with every remaining word. We can talk ourselves into silence, but the bogs do not talk themselves. There was a communication between the eight bogs, with or without our words. It was a holding of hidden information, a hiding which became illuminated through layers of green snowflakes.

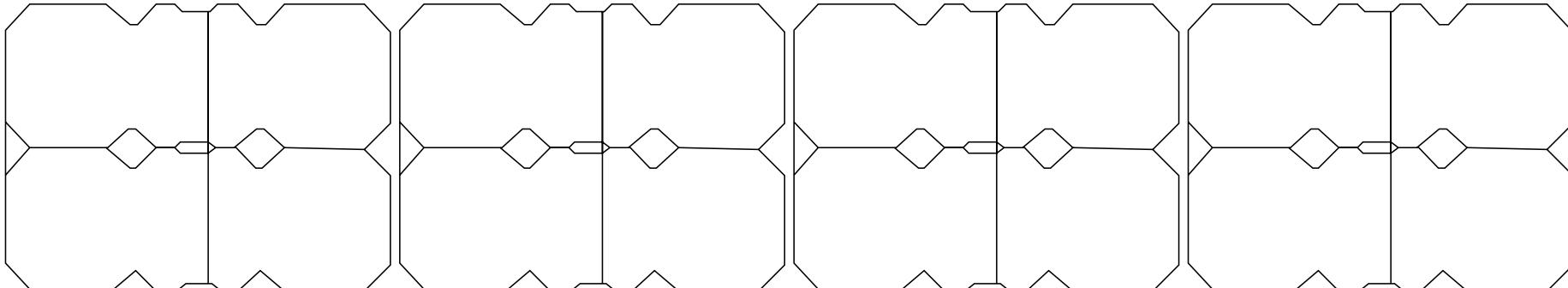
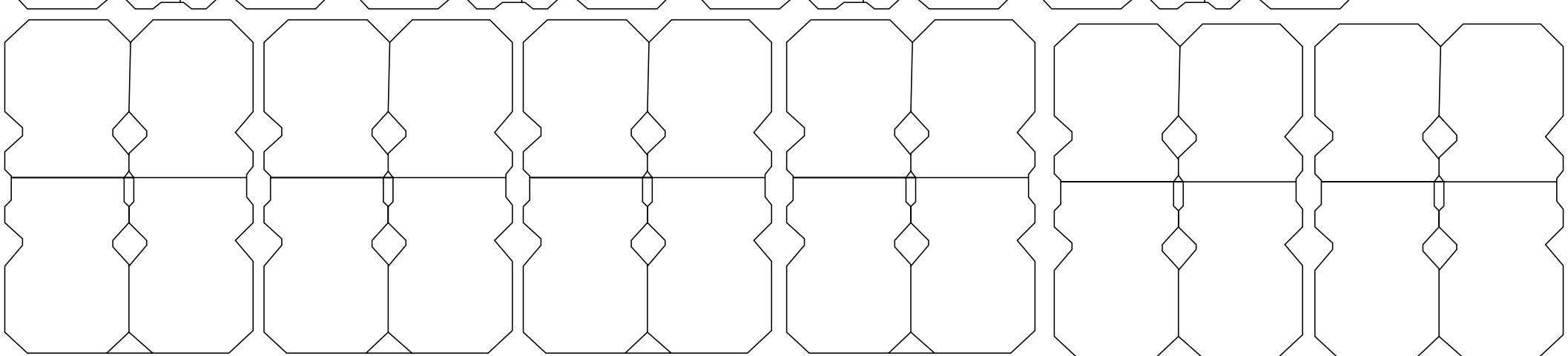
An ode to bogs, and an ode to sounds that words make.

CLEAR A
LOW BOAR
A GOOD PLACE, MORE
MOOR
FERTILE,
A BLUE SEA,
HOWL,
AND COLLAPSE, RETURN (TO DC)

DC AL CODA 



peat briquettes



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