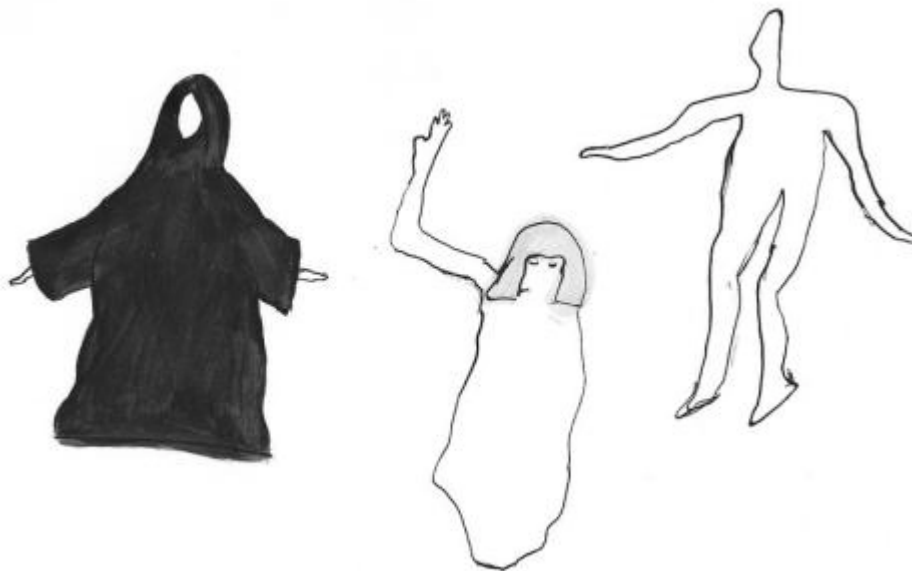


Radical Mapping: A Becoming | Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice

Author's Note

We are all continually and intimately in relationship with the spaces we inhabit, a sense of place that informs self-revelation and self-love—shifting our perception of the self as we forge new paths made visible, and reflect on old lines of being. This piece builds a map to offer a geography of healing—inviting movement, observation, an unfolding, and ultimately, transformation. As social workers, we recurrently cultivate an awareness of self that integrates an understanding of our multidimensional positionalities—this work offers a space for this process that is inclusive of queer potential and personal memory.



(Life's a Long Undressing)

I am from strong women,
Honeysuckle laughter,

Open fields meet ocean breeze,
Suburban sprawl, motionless clock with nothing to do.

I am from strong women,
White skin, white wealth, white privilege;
Dismantle, decenter, deconstruct.
Empower, build up, sprawl—

I am from strong women,
Butterfly dances and spreading limbs,
Mindful actions, transformation
Open, yourself the door

I am from strong women
On stolen soil,
Communal blood spilled in capital conquest;
Dismantle, decenter, deconstruct . . .

Life's a long undressing. I came across this line the other day in a book by experimental filmmaker, James Broughton. He took this line from Walter de La Mare's tale, *The Return*, and now I take it from him—our geographies intersect, shared space of knowing. I envision myself walking the length of life, unraveling layers of self through movements between places. Life's a long undressing. Each day we are closer to its end, and each day we become intimately more aware of ourselves and the spaces we occupy.

It is not death I fear,
but the demise of being;
?
?
the slow unravelling of self

I wrote this note one year ago but now see its error. This process of unwinding, rather than demise, is one of *emergence*: removal of the excess to be made whole. Remove: societal norms, trauma,

expectations. Liminal, luminous, boundless: words we are taught to describe our manifold existence.

Space: Chicago, red city,

sun's embrace:

warmth of clay earth reflected in stacked bricks—the buildings

whisper, “come in ...

a r e y o u

h e r e ?”

Beckoned to move forward with acceptance of self, you feel it then, the natural rhythm calling you h o m e along geographical lines that map your identities.

The lick of the wind *becomes* the Earth's warm breath whispering: *I love you*—permission given from the universe of things to open yourself to multiple ways of being.

then I understood—

unavoidable quiver;

queer potential, undulating,

echoing absence in the lives I'm not living.

Present full self, embodied.

Endless.

I think of moving pieces, the here and there, human connection in cross-sections of mapped trajectories. I think of a run in my tights, torn existence, running between trains, these enamel blue walls. The reflection of myself meets the gaze of the reflection of them

mystification of gaze in reflection,

shadow world, other, parallel planes,

parallel us, caught in this moment of queer time

reflected back to reality, reflection is reality,

observation cut through.

If we chart our own planes of being, superimposed, does this create a new map of the world, unbound from Other's expectations?

I recently read José Esteban Muñoz's introduction to his great work, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*.

Muñoz borrows from Oscar Wilde, and I borrow from Muñoz now, *A map of the world that does not include utopia is not worth glancing at.*

Words borrowed ensure co-construction of queer utopia made true. Queer identity is our utopia, that radical space of softness that holds potential for future freedom. Queer utopia is our threshold into new worlds, this world reimagined.

This essay gave voice to my queer identity, one I don't always make space for. As my map of being continues to unfold through the process of becoming (this liminal process of examining the where, the what, the who) demarcations are being made to point to my own signs of queer futurity.

... I am going home, warm love;
Hazy corner lit by green glow of Neighbor's house;
Distant resonance, snow-lined corridors,
Whispering laughter while sleep falls.

I am going to the Open space,
Dismantled dominance, revolution;
Awakened
With a queer understanding.

I am going to be a woman,
Who defies the expectation
Of what it is to be Woman;
Gender haunts, radical softness.

I am going to resist
Narratives I didn't write.

I am becoming,
More than I was, then.

References

Broughton, J. (1971). *Life's A Long Undressing*. San Francisco, CA: Jargon Society.

De la Mare, W. (1910). *The Return*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

Muñoz, J. E. (2009). *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: NYU Press.

EM CREAHAN is a second-year master's student at the School of Social Service Administration. Her interests include investigating the relationship between art practice and social work to expand the application of art practice as a mode of healing from trauma, at both the individual and community levels. After completing her social work education Em intends to continue engaging in community organizing work in spaces that integrate and elevate place-based, collectively expressed creative processes. She holds a B.A. in international studies and a minor in nonprofit leadership from the University of Florida.