

Pastures: An Exploration of an Aging Queer Woman

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Abstract

This paper accompanies the culmination my installation entitled, “Pastures.” “Pastures” was featured at The 519 community centre in Toronto, Canada in May 2023. It showcased pastoral cyanotype patches on denim and leather jackets, inspired by queer DIY punk motifs, nature, and the aging queer woman body. In this paper, I expand on themes of aging as a queer woman, including issues of invisibility and irrelevancy, transitory environments, and the nature of space, memory, and mourning. I also detail the artistic journey and reasoning that led to the final iteration of the “Pastures” installation, and its possibilities for the future.

One of the many questions “Pastures” asks is how environments resonate with, and respond to, the personal. “Pastures” is inspired by my own journey as a queer woman and my search for a sense of belonging, vibrancy, and worth. In conversation with a theoretical framework that includes, visual arts practice, queer ecology and environments, and queer aging, “Pastures” central question posits: In a world that pushes queer woman bodies to the periphery, or *pasture*, where does my body belong?

Foreword

Leave me something.

Leave me something to live.

...

Ah, damn, goddamn, goddamn, goddamn.

Here I am.

Patti Smith "Privilege (Set Me Free)"¹

The culmination of my Master's Research Project is a visual art installation entitled "Pastures." "Pastures" was featured at The 519 community centre in Toronto, Canada in May 2023 and is an exploration of the queer woman body and the transitions – and revelations – that happen as part of the aging process.

To support my installation's theoretical framework, I focused on three areas of study: Visual Arts Practice, Queer Ecology and Environments, and Women and Aging. In this paper, I will show how these areas of study have helped to inform "Pastures" and contribute to its growth. I will detail the artistic production process, including the various paths taken to its final iteration. Finally, I will provide a reflection on the project - what I have learned and the ways in which the installation will continue and transform.

¹ Smith, Patti. *Easter*. Arista Records, 1978.

Dedication

For Sandy and the other ungrievable exits.

Acknowledgements

Óir thug sé ordú da aingil i do thaobh:

Tú a chosaint i do shlite go léir:

Lompróidh siad thú lena lámha sula mbuailfí

Do chos in aghaidh chloiche.

Satlóidh tú ar an leon is ar an nathair:

Gheobhaidh tú de chosa sa leon óg is a dragan.

Psalm 91:11-13²

Thank you to my advisor and supervisor, Andil Gosine, for the trust and support.

² As sung in Sinead O'Connor's song, "Never Get Old".

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“Pastures” in Conversation with Theory

Women, queerness, and aging is an underserved, and often invisibilized, area of experience and academic research and discovery. Prior to my work as a MES student, I created a series of projects, in collaboration with various organizations, institutions, and persons (including Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Sherbourne Rainbow Health, and The 519), that centred the bodies, knowledges, and experiences of queer elders. I did so to counter the societal instinct to push aging queer women narratives and bodies to the periphery, or *pasture* as it were. The projects I co-create generated much-needed spaces, dialogue, and knowledge-sharing between queer elders and youth. Projects including the workshop series and eventual mainstage play, *The Youth/Elders Project*, and the subsequent *Youth/Elders Podcast*, were successful in that they had a direct impact on the development, health, and wellness of the local queer community – particularly for the queer elders who expressed a renewed sense of appreciation, recognition, and relevancy. Personally, they supported a subconscious desire (and anxiety) I had to ease a transition between two separate queer experiences: from queer youth to queer elder.

In an essay entitled “There’s No Road Map for an Aging Lesbian”, writer Chris Beam grapples with the aging process as a (white, cis) lesbian, an experience that lacks representation and guidance, and one that for Black, trans, and/or racialized lesbian communities is even more challenging. To decipher or pin-point her central fear, Beam lands on a phrase and sensibility that struck me and relates to the root of “Pastures” as a similar method of queer aging excavation: “Just like I’ve had a queer way of being young, I want a queer path forward into growing older.”³

“Pastures” is inspired by my own experience as an aging queer woman and the environments that have cultivated and nurtured my body. As a youth, queer urban nightlife allowed me to discover my queer woman body in a safe and electric environment. The late nights, parties,

³ Beam, Chris. “There’s No Road Map for an Aging Lesbian.” The New York Times, April 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/08/opinion/aging-queerness.html>, June 2nd, 2023.

dance floors, alleyways, patios, bathrooms, and stages created a powerful, intoxicating elixir of youth, vibrancy, queerness, and sex, of which I drank whole. Now at 43 years old, I am on the precipice, the lip of something else – a transitional space to another, older version of queer, of woman. Wrapped up in this transition are questions and feelings of relevancy, mourning, knowing, and appreciation. Like Beam, I long to fashion a connective tissue from my queer youth to my queer aging self; “Pastures” is an attempt to do that. In a world in which aging queer women are “set out to pasture” - a place of invisibility and irrelevancy - how can I create a space where my aging queer woman body belongs, and finds vibrancy, refuge, nourishment, and alignment with the world?

In Nancy C. Unger’s article, “From Jook Joints to Sisterspace: The Role of Nature in Lesbian Alternative Environments in the United States”, Unger declares: “Place matters. In times of oppression and intolerance, there were few spaces that allowed for lesbian sisterhood.”⁴. Nature, Unger argues, has historically been a space for communities of queer women to experience freedom, safety, and self-reliance. And while many of the historical “back to the land” movements have ranged from imperfect to violent, exposing the often racist, classist, and transphobic roots of many feminist lesbian movements, I feel a great deal of resonance with the idea that many queer women view natural environments as a place of refuge. As a young queer urban woman in the mid-aughts these engagements were annual 3-day gatherings in a farm field outside of Meaford, Ontario and consisted of tents, potluck meals, bb guns, instruments, astrology, mushrooms, and inflatable pools. While the city life was wild and fun, the natural environment offered something different, something spiritual – a high-def world of bonding between queer women who felt safe to (literally) frolic in farm fields without fear of judgement, harassment, or violence. At the time, it felt frivolous, but I look back now and acknowledge the power and freedom we had in that environment – not because we were dominating anything or anyone, but because we felt as though we were working with and/or through a semi-divine vibration generated from the natural environment. In 2020, a few years

⁴ Sandilands, Catriona, et al. “From Jook Joints to Sisterspace: The Role of Nature in Lesbian Alternative Environments in the United States.” *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2010.

after I had my daughter and moved from Toronto to Hamilton (and separated from my close-knit queer community and family), I began hosting an annual gathering of aging queers at my cottage in the Dysart et Al area of northern Ontario. My stepfather, an immigrant to Canada, bought this piece of land in the late 60s soon after his arrival and it served as a refuge from his traumatic childhood filled with war, trauma, and loss. His death last year only served to remind me of the incredible gift (and privilege) this land offered and how thankful I was that it continued to serve as a refuge for a community of outsiders.

In the Introduction to the book *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, editors Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson offer a summary of what “queer ecology” is: “...the task of queer ecology is to probe the intersections of sex and nature with an eye to developing a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and its biosocial constitution, and an environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world.”⁵ Queer ecology and the politics of natural space has been a relatively new area of theory for me but, as noted above, has (unknowingly) been an integral part of my journey as a queer woman. Nature has, in its own quiet way, allowed me to question my position in society. Its disconnection from the urban environment has provided me an alternate space to reflect on the ways in which I navigate the world. With age and access to space, I have reflected upon the ways my queer woman body has embodied systems – of power, of privilege, of gender and sexuality - and the disorienting balance I’ve struck at being highly visible and/or invisible depending on the environment and the audience. With “Pastures”, I have been forced to grapple with my embodied experience as a queer woman and where it sits, where it is *placed*. Place matters, I am reminded, and my body is as much a part of the earth’s roots as it is its politics. In this current transition, I wonder: How does my perception and engagement with the world shift based on this placement?

⁵ Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2010, p. 5.

Curiously, the title “Pastures” is layered with queer undertones in relation to the history of ecological politics. Referencing the movie, *Brokeback Mountain*, Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson state that having the actors play shepherds “locates the film in a long history of pastoral representations of male same-sex eroticism” and that “gay scholars and authors have used this [pastoral] homoerotic literary and artistic tradition to imagine a queer history, a queer space, and indeed a queer nature”⁶. My main association with pastoral literature is John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a book I would argue, is about transitions, and perhaps embodies (unknowingly?) a more feminist, queer interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve than I had initially realized. In an article entitled, “The Pastoral Day in *Paradise Lost*”, author John R. Knott, Jr. notes: “Milton traces the growth of Eve’s self-awareness by showing her increasing lack of concern for subordinating her activity to an unquestioned routine. Her supreme act of self-assertion is more clearly a sin against the order of nature because it comes at the time when the rhythm of the day demands a suspension of activity, a period of mental and physical relaxation. The unanticipated effect of Eve’s indulgence of her pride is that her life and Adam’s are thrown into confusion”⁷. Eve’s “self-awareness” and “self-assertion” against God’s “order of nature” shows Eve’s bucking of the “unquestioned” hetero-normative concept of nature and order, which subsequently opens a portal into a “fallen” world of arguably more freedom for Eve (and Adam), including sexual liberation. Knott Jr.’s emphasis on the role of time, rhythm, and routine in *Paradise Lost* as a pastoral literary technique – with labour being spent in fields humbly harvesting the garden according to the natural day’s rhythm – resonates deeply with an element of aging for me. My sense of routine and of rhythm has become central to my mental, physical, and spiritual health – particularly as I enter perimenopause. Further, the concept of time has played a large role in the creation of “Pastures”, as I grapple with the ideas of the past, memory, and the future. In her article, “Telling Time in Feminist Theory”, author Rita Felski looks at how the female body and experience relates to historical, societal, white man-made notions of time. In the section *Time as Repetition*, she notes that “Repetition is linked to the

⁶ Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2010, p. 4.

⁷ Knott, John R. “The Pastoral Day in *Paradise Lost*.” *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1968, pp. 168–182., <https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-29-2-168>.

everyday, and the everyday to woman. For feminists, this connection can be a problem or a source of strength.⁸” Repetition, for some feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, reduces us to our biological form (specifically for cis-women and pregnancy/menopause) and confines us to a life of mundanity, stifling creativity, where “repetition is a sign of women's association with immanence rather than transcendence.”⁹ Felski, argues, that the “modern discomfort with repetition has a lot to do with its feminine associations.”¹⁰ Repetition, for some feminists, is connected to a past-leaning perspective and one that ignores innovation or the future. Felski notes: “For many women, feminism meant above all a conviction that they would not repeat the lives of their mothers.”¹¹ This last idea feels particularly devastating, complicated, and perhaps, true. My life as a queer woman has been the opposite of my mother’s own experience. After reading Felski’s article, I have reflected on just how conscious or unconscious this carving out of space, of experience, has been. I reach back to Chris Beam’s struggle and consider the lack of paths for aging lesbians. For aging straight cis-women like my mother, the paths, however undesirable, are well-worn. The paths I have in front of me are scattered and muddy.

All of this makes me wonder about my concept of, and experience with, time itself. In Sarah Jaffe’s article, “Queer Time: The Alternative to ‘Adulthood’”, an alternative, “queer” practice of time is introduced. Jaffe quotes queer scholar Jack Halberstam who argues “that queer uses of time and space develop... in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction...[and] that queerness itself is an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices.”¹² Jaffe notes that queer time is “inflected by time-warping experiences as diverse as coming out, gender transitions, and generation-defining

⁸ Felski, Rita. “Telling Time in Feminist Theory.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, p. 25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149213>.

⁹ Felski, Rita. “Telling Time in Feminist Theory.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, p. 25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149213>.

¹⁰ Felski, Rita. “Telling Time in Feminist Theory.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, p. 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149213>.

¹¹ Felski, Rita. “Telling Time in Feminist Theory.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, p. 23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149213>.

¹² Jaffe, Sara. “Queer Time: The Alternative to ‘Adulthood’ - JSTOR Daily.” *JSTOR Daily*, 10 Jan. 2018, [daily.jstor.org/queer-time-the-alternative-to-adulthood/](https://www.jstor.org/queer-time-the-alternative-to-adulthood/).

tragedies such as the AIDS epidemic. That is, queerness is constituted by its difference from conventional imperatives of time.”¹³ My struggle with seeing the pasture ahead, and any concept of an aging queer woman body, is feasibly a direct result of having experienced time differently than my heterosexual counterparts. And that, in having had what felt like a late start to queerness – and therefore life – the transition into aging feels *too soon*. And that, in having finally found a sense of queerness and self, I am once again entering a queer sense of space and time that feels *unknown*.

In “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies”, Mortimer-Sandilands introduces the idea of melancholia and its relation to the environment. Nature nostalgia, she argues, is a concept underlying much of the eco-tourism industry, where travelers visit endangered sites, lamenting the loss of the space while directly participating in the demise. This dissociative concept of loss leaves people unsure of what to do, how to feel, or even grasp precisely what they are experiencing and what has been lost. Freud summarizes this complex sense of melancholy by using the case of a jilted lover: “the patient is aware of the loss in which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he last lost but not *what* he has lost in him.”¹⁵ Mortimer-Sandilands notes that melancholia “is a state of suspended mourning in which the object of loss is very real but psychically “ungrievable” within the confines of a society that cannot acknowledge nonhuman beings, natural environments, and ecological processes as appropriate objects for genuine grief.”¹⁶ Nature nostalgia, then, is an industry driven by this complex state of melancholia and the “ungrievable” aspects of nonhuman beings (i.e., nature) via the prism of capitalism and consumerism. What I love about “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies” is how Mortimer-Sandilands extends this sense of environmental melancholia and connects it to the legacy of queer grief through a queering of psychoanalyses and ecology. By centring the queer community’s history with unacknowledged grief and loss,

¹³ Jaffe, Sara. “Queer Time: The Alternative to ‘Adulthood’ - JSTOR Daily.” JSTOR Daily, 10 Jan. 2018, [daily.jstor.org/queer-time-the-alternative-to-adulthood/](https://www.jstor.org/queer-time-the-alternative-to-adulthood/).

¹⁵ Freud, Sigmund. “Mourning and Melancholia”. The Standard Edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud. Trans: James Strachy. London, Hogarth Press: Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-1974. Vol. 14, pp. 245.

¹⁶ Sandilands, Catriona, et al. “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies.” Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2010, p. 333.

particularly during the AIDS epidemic, she posits: “how does one mourn in the midst of a culture that finds it almost impossible to recognize the value of what has been lost?”¹⁷ Queer bodies and queer loss is an experience relegated to our community – an experience that can feel untethered and “ungrievable.” Much of my process leading up to the creation of the “Pastures” installation has been spent thinking of my body - the invisibilizing of it and the slow irrelevancy of it. I have witnessed the dissolution of visible aging queer women bodies in spaces – particularly, in social, and artistic environments. I have observed local queer women artists be celebrated in their youth, only to have opportunities and attention dwindle as they age. I have seen the steady disinterest in aging queer women bodies as sexual beings, further alienating them from queer events and dating apps. I have felt the mild disdain of aging queer women’s experiences by younger counterparts, dismissing them as out of touch. I have watched the mass exodus of queer women artists to academia where they look for recognition and meaning based on their ideas, knowledge, and experience. “Pastures” is a response to what I have witnessed; The expression of the melancholic nature of aging as a queer woman – and the “ungrieveable” loss that comes with our exit.

¹⁷ Sandilands, Catriona, et al. “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies.” *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2010, p. 333.

“Pastures” as a Process

My journey to “Pastures” started off as a photography project for my supervisor, Andil Gosine’s Cultural Production Workshop: Image; “Nature’s Wild (On Animality: Sex, 'Race,' Ecology” class in the summer of 2022. Working with a series of artists and art practices, such as watercolour and cyanotype collage, I began to think of a project that would explore my experience as a queer aging woman body and its relation to the natural environment. As an intuitive artist, the title “Pastures” came to me before the project’s concept. The word kept repeating in my mind, and as the project’s concept grew, it became synonymous with my working towards creating a space to make sense and beauty of my queer aging experience. Robert Young, a guest lecturer in the Cultural Productions class, set the tone for my developing project by advising us to approach our art and creative process with the question: “If I were a God...”¹⁸. This triggered what would become the central ask and heartbeat of Pastures: *If I were a God, what would my pasture look like?*

Initially, I began taking photos on my daily life, including walks through parks, streets, and forests, documenting the beauty and rhythms around me. These daily photo sessions documented everything from curated found objects (Picture 1), food I consumed (Picture 2), and most often, flowers I encountered (Picture 3).

¹⁸ Young, Robert. “Guest Speaker: Robert Young.” ENVS 6350 Socially Engaged Art Fall 2022. ENVS 6350 Socially Engaged Art Fall 2022, 6 Oct. 2022, Toronto.



Picture 1: Found Objects



Picture 2: Fruit Bowl



Picture 3: Blush Flower

In the fall of 2022, I focused on capturing images of the natural elements, such as the flowers, tall grass, and trees I encountered. With the flowers specifically, I began to pay attention to their ability to withstand the shifting weather, change forms, and return season after season –

each stage more beautiful than the last. I was documenting but also developing relationships with natural objects and their systems of being.



Picture 4: Dying Peonies



Picture 4: Dead Bird, Picture Picture 5: Cherry Blossom, Picture 6: Snow Rose, Picture 7: Bark

While I continued with my daily photography, I also took crafting classes at the Hamilton Craft Studio. I was re-introduced to sewing, embroidery, and textile art, and learned artistic methods such as printmaking, fabric dyeing, appliqué, and block printing. It was through these classes that I introduced the idea of fabric dyeing, printing, and textiles into “Pastures.” Textile is rich in meaning and history in the queer community, particularly in my experience as a queer woman. In Morgan Sung’s article, “The ‘queer aesthetic’ is deeper than rainbow merch”, Sung explains that queer style “is a subversion of heterosexual norms.”¹⁹ A queer woman’s ability to play with gender and sexuality through textiles like denim and leather - textiles historically worn by straight cis-men – have always been a powerful and playful element of queerness for me. With leather and denim, there could be a gender ambiguousness/androgyny at play and/or a signaling of a sub-queer identity, I.e., High femme leather stilettos or a butch leather vest. To incorporate these textiles and continue the legacy of their use as cultural signifiers felt right. Mixed in with these ideas, I also began thinking of my love for, and roots in, queer DIY punk motifs. Similar to my other creative role as the lead singer of VAG HALEN, a queer feminist art rock band, I enjoy subverting heavy metal/punk aesthetics, like leather, fishnet, and fetish, and re-centring its queerness for an audience. Just as director and artist John Waters does, I love to play with the heterosexual mainstream’s conceptions and preoccupations with “bad taste.” “Pastures”, however, has felt softer in nature, and I was intrigued to look for a way to meld some of these edgy foundational aesthetics with the natural elements of the photographic images.

It was at this point in the process where I began to incorporate cyanotypes, a photographic printing process that uses treated fabrics and the sun to develop photos and/or object images (I.e., Flowers, cut-out shapes, etc.) Since I was using digital images, I had no access to negatives (which you need for cyanotype printing). So I created my own negatives by inverting the digital images (changing to high contrast and black and white) and printing them on transparent paper. I initially experimented with cyanotypes by using pre-treated fabric patches. I learned

¹⁹ Sung, Morgan. "The 'queer aesthetic' is deeper than rainbow merch." Mashable SE Asia, June 13, 2021, <https://sea.mashable.com/culture/16154/the-queer-aesthetic-is-deeper-than-rainbow-merch>. June 1st, 2023.

quickly that the exposure process is temperamental and impacted by the time of day and how strong the sun exposure is; Other elements like, wind and humidity also affected the process. Sometimes my cyanotypes would be outside for only 5 minutes and be overexposed, and other times, it was closer to 10 minutes to have a perfectly exposed image. As the images began to appear, in their electric blue saturation, I became excited, and a new project element began to emerge. The pre-treated 8.5" x 11" fabric squares that I was using began to mirror a large patch – like one would wear on jackets in the heavy metal/rock/punk/queer DIY scene. After serving as a guest lecturer in my supervisor Andil Gosine's undergrad class (where I spoke about "Pastures"), my instinct was validated when Andil remarked that he could see some of the images as patchwork. It was at this point when I decided "Pastures" would be an installation featuring my denim and leather jackets with pastoral cyanotype patches pinned onto their backs.



Picture 8: Inverted Blush Flower

With this final installation in mind, I continued to use the pre-treated fabric sheets to experiment with which images would work best. I also began to treat my own fabrics, like light cotton-based textiles like chiffon, and use them in the cyanotype process. This method was much more time intensive and temperamental, but I thought the contrast between the light

fabric, the image, and the different hues of blue that would emerge would work well as patches against leather and denim jackets. In the end, I narrowed my patches down to three images and chose three of my favourite jackets to showcase. A well-worn vintage black motorcycle jacket – a gift from a friend who received it as a gift from her former lover, a white jean jacket, and a blue denim jacket. The three images I chose to use as patches were: Blush Flower, Dead Bird, and Dying Peonies. All three of these images represent what “Pastures” attempts to convey: that there is beauty in all stages of life and decay, and that transitions are moments worthy of replication and representation.



Picture 9: Leather jacket with Dead Bird



Picture 10: White denim with Blush Flower patch



Picture 11: Blue denim with Dying Peonies

The “Pastures” installation was held at The 519, a 2SLGBTQIA+ community centre in the heart of the Gay Village. This is a place where I have history, I was a placement student at the Older Adults drop-in program, a volunteer with the larger Older Adults support program, and organized many intergenerational gatherings and parties. “Pastures” was in support of the conference Congress 2023 and accompanied my supervisor Andil Gosine’s keynote presentation. The jackets were hung on a standard, rather innocuous clothing rack in a central part of the room. The jackets were visible but largely unnoticed by most participants – a perfect embodiment of what “Pastures” has sought to explore. For me, however, their presence felt powerful, in that it represented the culmination of a long and winding personal, academic, and artistic process of research, excavation, reflection, and doing. To have articles of mine, *of me*, featuring my art, was a moment of vulnerability for me and felt like an act of radical space-making.



Picture 12: "Pastures" installation at The 519



Picture 13: "Pastures" installation at The 519

Reflection of “Pastures”

“Sometimes one has to know something many times over. Sometimes one forgets, and then remembers. And then forgets, and then remembers. And then forgets again.”²⁰

Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

“Pastures” has been a real-time exploration of a queer aging woman thinking about being a queer aging woman. It’s about space – the spaces I have occupied and no longer do (youth), the spaces I have frequented that have disappeared (urban queer woman spaces, bars), the spaces that are in the midst of disappearing (patriarchal standards of beauty), the spaces that are shifting (home, aging parents), the spaces that are opening (motherhood, aging), the spaces that are healing (nature, community, art-making), and the spaces that are my future (unknown). It’s about queer politics, issues of relevancy, and how I am re-negotiating and re-orienting my relationship to environments, including the natural world.

“Pastures” has been a solitary undertaking, with only rare (and cherished) conversations with my supervisor Andil Gosine. I have coveted this time of introspection to engage with such beautiful art, spaces, process, and literature. As life wills it, it has also been a melancholic process as I lost two friends to suicide during the “Pastures” journey, one of whom is a queer woman. Her suicide note reflected up on her feelings of irrelevancy as an aging dyke in world, and the perplexity, anger, and hurt over how this happened. It was if she was screaming: *How did we get old?* I reach back to Mortimer-Sandilands who spoke about the queer community’s experience with pain and grieving the “ungrieveable” – and how this pain, this texture feels so specific and so known to a queer aging woman body. I think about Beam and her yearning for

²⁰ Nelson, Maggie. *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press, 2016.

well-worn paths of queer lesbian elders and their experience with aging. It's as if she's wondering: *How do we get old?*

"Pastures" has made me think about time – the nature of it and how we engage with it. The threading of my past and my present in the installation's pieces has opened new doors to how I am thinking of, and approaching, the future. Time and space have become an embodied experience – one that I hope to continue and expand through future different iterations of "Pastures"; This may take the form of larger patch work installations or in a multi-media format via projections and/or film.

If I were a God, what would my pasture look like?

To be continued.

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