



Ways of Becoming

Hayley White

WAYS OF BECOMING: TRANSFORMING THE
SELF AND CONNECTING WITH NATURE
THROUGH SOMATIC CREATIVITY

Mémoire / Object of Memory
Hayley White 2021

A transformational journey of the self; a story of personal discovery and Becoming. In this auto-ethnographic narrative art, philosophy and theory become critical, reflective and relational tools in a search to understand the body, the self and nature. Inspired by a medical condition (fibroids) and feminist theory (post feminist) I have established a new methodology of somatic creativity; placing the materiality of the female body and my lived experience into art. Through narrative storytelling, life experiences, poetry, somatic creativity, artistic references and philosophical ideas, I explore self awareness; unknowing, discovery and knowing.

This book is a creative return to the body, where art, the body, nature and the self are constantly evolving and transforming; in a cyclical, inter-relational and ongoing Becoming.

Fig 1. Hayley White *Portrait of Transformation*, 2019, photograph. (Cover)
Death & Decay amulets (somatic sculptures) made from beach combed organic natural materials and artists hair and bound together with thread. Created in a meditative haptic and tacit process focusing on replication of cellular and bodily materiality and natural ergonomics, placed on the eye sockets of a plaster replica of a face. Symbolising optical and learned knowledge through the eyes and the absorbing of information. Also referencing death masks common from the middle ages until C19th.

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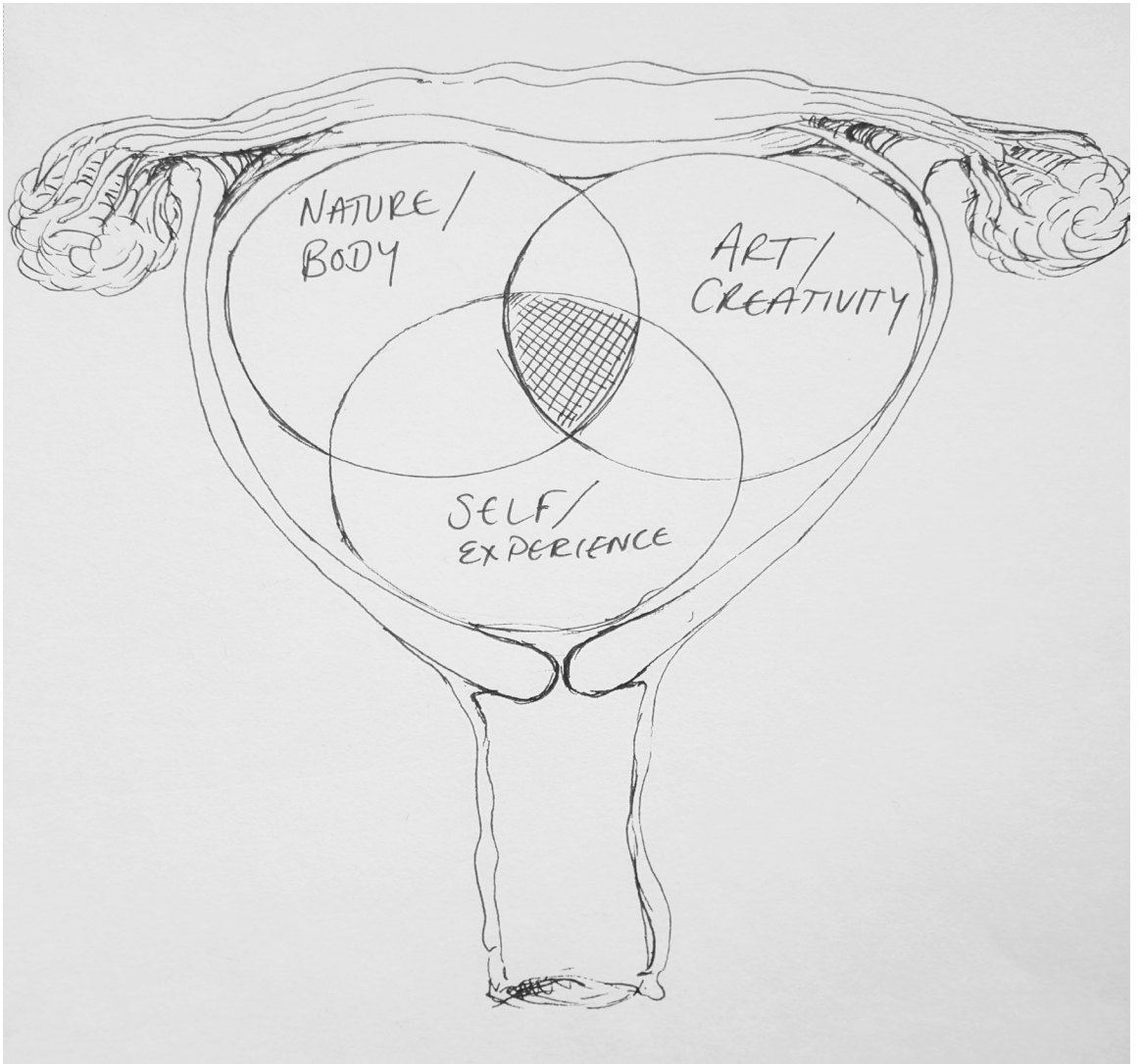


Fig 2. Hayley White, *Gestation*, 2021, photograph of drawing.



Introduction; Becoming

Art is a vision of the unseen - Plato

Welcome to my Becoming; my creative, somatic and feminist Becoming. In this book I present a written journey of discovery. I am using a series of words, collections of thoughts, artworks, some musings on connected theories and philosophies. It is a type of one-sided semi-chronological conversation; a monologue. A view into my inner world and the relationship I have with my body, both literally and metaphorically. I invite you, the reader, to breathe, sink in, lightly notice your body, slip between a focused and defocused state, pause, reflect and hear my words. Make any connections you wish to make, and maybe it can be your Becoming too. Are you sitting comfortably? Good. Then let me begin.....

In the beginning, the transformation started with the deconstruction of the self and my creativity both in mind and body, both method and philosophy. More significantly it began with a search for new knowledge and a willingness to enter into a state of vulnerability. On the precipice. On a cliff-top looking back at a flat terrain of the past, ordered, logical and rational. A heavily worn path is taking me to a hilltop. A rich, lush valley lies ahead, the organic, fluid, unclear maze of trees leading to a shoreline and out to sea. A changing and evolving world of nature. There is no clear path, no exact destination except the fluid and vast expanse of the sea on the horizon. The sea is a place that changes quickly and symbiotically. A mirroring and joining of elements. A sky that reflects the sea, and the sea that reflects the land. One moment still, calm and reflective - contemplative. Another turbulent, churning and rough - emotional. A constant dynamic Becoming between these two states of being; emotional and contemplative. As we traverse this landscape, together within our bodies, the artworks act as beacons or landmarks in the liminal spaces between nature, concepts

and ideas. We are observing our internal and external worldly experience of our bodies, my body, in tune with Gaia.

In this liminal landscape of Becoming, the literal making, dismantling and critique of artworks occur. In parallel the deconstruction of a lifetime of my artistic methods and processes is happening. The purpose of this journey is the comprehension, reassembled presentation and transformation of the self. It is a narrative. An auto-ethnographic telling. Using art as a method of corresponding with myself, my body, my mind, society, nature and you the reader. It is a journey of sidestepping the masculine structures, social constraints and politics of repression of my past and moving to new ground. Specifically inward to the unknown and the unknown body for connection and understanding, searching for new knowledge or wisdom.

The Becoming and transformation happens through creativity, self-awareness and understanding my past and present. It happens when observing nature and reading philosophy, via changing methodologies and reflection; a lot of reflection. Every action, every word surrounded by crippling emotional reflection; this can be seen in the poems which start each chapter. The artworks and text explore discovery through creative practice and theory. I am using creativity to develop a visual language of my own through the body as our living experiential filter for the world. I am moving on from male epistemology into a rejection of material feminism leading to more fitting post-feminist paradigms. Where theory and practice are altogether more complex but resulting in more simple solutions of Becoming (Braidotti, 1993, 2002). This Becoming provides creative agency and autonomy of discovery, and dare I say, originality and a move towards nature or female epistemology.

Enter my journey of past, present and future concerns of Becoming a woman. A Becoming which never ends much like creativity, much like life, much like Gaia.

***It must to some extent break with the past, keep the memory of the past, while inaugurating something absolutely 'new'....
(Derrida 1997)***

[A]ll becomings are already molecular. That is because becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone. Nor is it to proportion formal relations. Neither of these two figures of analogy is applicable to becoming: neither the imitation of a subject nor the proportionality of a form. Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfils, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movements and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes.
(Deleuze 1987 cited in Braidotti 1993)

Hayley White
Artist & MA Student
The Margate School / Woolworths
3 High St
Margate
CT9 1EA

21 Oct 2019

Dear Hayley,

Re: Difference modes of Thinking and Mental Capacity

I have noticed a change in thinking over the last week, at least the amount of time thinking about the MA course, creative work, french and philosophy. All of which seems all consuming creative divergent thinking? A lot of time and mental space spent joining obscure dots that perhaps were never meant to be joined? This is unsettling and defies logic. Continuing in this way undermines the happy status quo we have established of work life balance. It is creating conflict and is it worth it? You are not even being 'creative' by spending time reading academic papers..... If you were being creative I could rationalise this as 'life' but I/ we have seen very little of this. Try harder, get more joy from this otherwise it is not worth doing. We could be earning money instead.

Have a think about it - I know you will be doing little else.

Yours



Hayley White
Project Officer Ellington Park
Thanet District Council
2nd Floor
Cecil Square
Margate
CT9 1XZ

Royal Mail
16-12-2020
Mail Centre



HAYLEY WHITE
ARTIST + M.A. STUDENT
THE MARGATE SCHOOL
3 HIGH STREET
MARGATE
CT9 1EA

Fig 3. Hayley White, *the conversions i have with myself*, 2019. Digital scan of a letter.



Against the Body; The Conversation

The conversation began with the cohort on the MA; the professors and sharing new knowledge.
Margate and The Margate School; the built environment, the Woolworth building, the revival of the high street.

ESADHaR; the conversations in French.
The political conversation within the UK; our neighbours - the EU.
The public and private conversations of people and politicians.

The distortion of algorithms, filtering news on social media; sharing with strangers desperate for a response.
A one-way conversation; a digital monologue.
The process of sharing knowledge; assimilation of information and forming a response.

A dialogue.
Barriers, miscommunication, intention, fear and prejudice; conscious or subconscious pose problems in engaging in a balanced and equal exchange.

A discourse.
Didactic and dialectic; assumed power and knowledge challenges the democratic principles to a conversation.

The conversation I have with myself; the struggle to connect, knowledge, experience and creativity.
Divided by social pressures of a convention to home-maker, professional work and myself as an artist.
Conversations with my partner; a gender-based struggle to communicate and share ideas.
The problems I have vocalising my needs.

A voice, words were never spoken; self judged before aired.
A million words said; few ever heard.
Anxiety kills contribution.
A shout; silenced with a look.

Longing for love; opinion lost.
The desire for acceptance; cuts articulation.
A whisper lost in translation.
Under-represented without authority.
Agenda's never change.
The conversation continues.....

White, H. (2020), *The Conversation*.

***Ecriture feminine writes that for which there is
no language - the feminine which has been re-
pressed by patriarchal 'culture'.
(Phoca and Wright 1999)***

1/1 The conversations I have with myself

In October 2019 I discovered new feminist territories with my female words. I found myself having three challenging and different types of conversations; discovering new verbal frontiers. First, was an interpersonal gendered dialogue with my partner (he/him/his). This being my first long term, cohabiting, dangerously 'codependent' and traditional monogamous arrangement. After two long years of not being heard; it was a conversation I could no longer continue and I ended in November 2019. Second, a new academic, creative and philosophical discourse; following my acceptance on the MA in fine art at The Margate School. Third, the ongoing conversation in my head; my internal monologue (fig 3). The latter two conversations continue.

I am anxious about my conversational contribution; my positioning and my clarity. My words don't seem to carry the same weight; they and I are easily crushed. The power balance is off. My agenda is missing and my meaning is lost in someone else's. I search for personal meaning; validation, compassion, connection and acceptance through conversation; I rarely get it. I am full of anxiety and this 'anxiety risks killing my 'contribution'. I am surprised at my own emotion, the powerful feeling in my observation of the self. *The Conversation* poem White (2020) is an intense personal reflection of my struggle with these conversations.

My thoughts, feelings, needs are hidden deep; disguised by internal conflict. My response is lost in a conversation's quick fire nature. Six years of 'journalling' morning 'pages' from Cameron's *The Artist's Way* (1992) and the impact of Katie Patterson's unanswered letters on the death of a star (Patterson, *the death of a star letters* (2011 - present)). I am inspired. I write to myself; to find and understand myself. (Fig 3). I am in ongoing correspondence with myself through letter writing, art and creativity and in this text here, with you, on these pages.

'Auto' writing from my desk at my dayjob in local government, the letters document my decision to study art and place creativity at the centre of my life. They are harsh, judgemental, clinical and cold. Written from the logical, assertive and ego driven 'professional' self (the masculine) to the vulnerable artist self (the feminine) who never answers. The letters are full of societal judgement brought into a personal rhetoric; creating more questions than they answer. I permit myself to vent and to be silent. I find strength. I open up and expose

my internal monologue; a tug of war between ego and doubt, social conditioning and personal desire.

This correspondence provides a shift in my creative practise and a rich body of documentation and research. Contributing the script for a film project of the same name. (Fig 3 & 5). I am marking the start of my new creative Becoming.

Švankmajer's *Možnosti Dialogu / Dimensions of Dialogue* film (fig 4) came to me like an epiphany. My conversational struggles and fears created in art, as some type of eating contest. Each opponent is breaking down and consuming the other, on repeat. As the film moves on figures become male and female. The dialogue turns to sex, a clay baby's birth and ends in violence. Framing the sexualisation of the female and her inability to participate in a conversation in the male domain without being sexualised. No doubt a source of my personal anxiety.

Characters morph into two identical older men, who collaborate with domestic objects; helping each other with daily survival. Sometimes at accidental odds, but the conclusion comes without violence, unlike the male/female sequence. Similarity creates a synergy and a collective agency. Reminding us that due to the bias in society and the exclusion of difference and otherness (Braidotti 2019) conversations are most successful with people most like ourselves; limiting societies ability to change the dialogue and include 'others'. Perhaps these older men are even making history at the exclusion of 'others' (females?); the never changing agenda of the patriarchal power of the white male (Beard 2017). The resonate image of the absorption of words, digested and assimilated and vomited up, re-presented. Reminds me the cycle goes on, 'agendas never change' and 'the conversation 'continues' White (2020, lines 36-37) stuck in the same restricted patriarchal rhetoric.

Becoming consumed by the patriarchal rhetoric **is not** the Becoming I am seeking.



Fig 4. Jan Švankmajer, *Možnosti Dialogu / Dimensions of Dialogue*, 1982. Photographic stills from the film / animation.

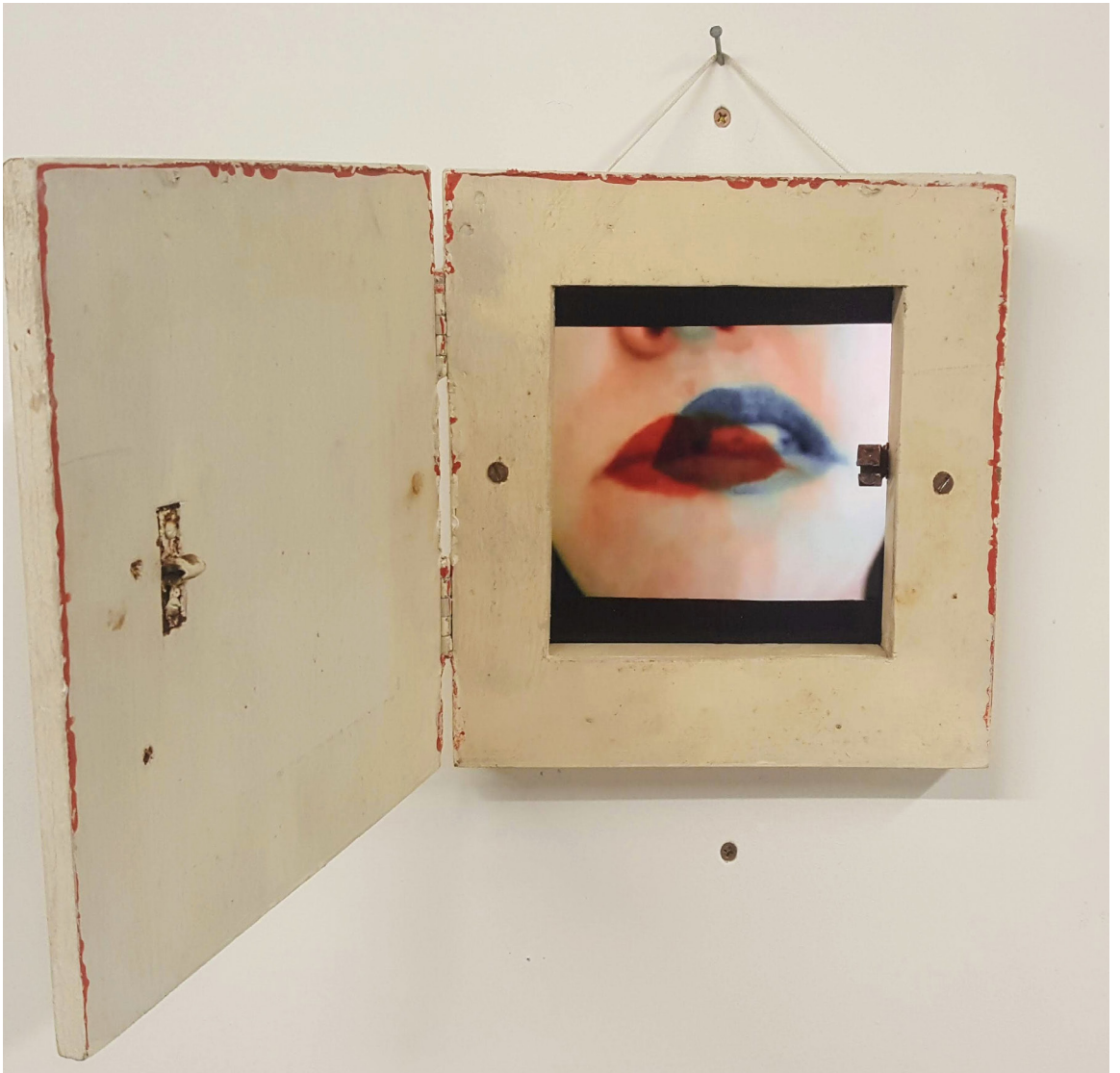


Fig 5. Hayley White, *the conversations I have with myself*, 2020. Photographic still of film/ installation. The film script was taken from 8 letters (fig 3) written weekly October to December 2019.

Women have always been defined as a subjugated difference within a binary opposition: man/woman, culture/nature, positive/negative, analytical/intuitive. (Derrida 1978 as cited in Alcoff 1989)

1/2 The Problems of Language

'Longing for love; opinion lost.' *'The desire for acceptance; cuts articulation.'* White (2020 lines 32-33) I am searching for a reason for my conversational anxiety. A reason beyond the self, something which resonates wider. Perhaps something beyond the dismissive 'people pleasing' conversational attributes of the feminine.

I contemplate the power of language and its origins. I make a discovery. Problems with language **are** gendered and long-standing. Structuralist and post - structuralist Strauss, Lacan and Derrida have pitched males as the 'primary' where knowledge and significance of language rests in opposition to the female who is situated in 'absence'.

'Male - female

Presence - absence

Spoken - written

White - black.' (Phoca and Wright 1999)

Feminist and post-feminist reading opens up to me. I discover my experience is paralleled in history. It becomes grave and humorous simultaneously, with the phallogocentric present male and female more noted in her lack, her absence. I am absent even by my own determination. My emotional creative self is left out; even in *the conversations I have with myself* (fig 3). My experience is not singular and unique to me. I discover; the primary mode of communication is based within a male epistemology and ontology. In academic and historical terms all intellectual conversation and language have been the privilege of the white male domain; a male reading and domination of history. (Beard, 2017).

I realise I am worn down by judgement into absentia and it is connected to my body, my female form. To hold power the feminine has to leap over the dualistic divide to the 'binary opposite' male and become more masculine. Akin to the patriarchal mimicry of Margaret Thatcher (UK female Prime Minister 1979-90) lowering her vocal register with the aid of a voice coach to assume masculine power (Beard, 2017).

Becoming male **is not** the Becoming I am seeking.

I am against my body and trapped in a conversation with it and society at the same time. My female body has placed me in a trap. I realise my previous artworks have created a distancing and disassociation from the body; my female body. I can lower my register but I am still female. I can make artworks about my struggle but I am not in the conversation. I am an imposter in the patriarchy. I am trying to escape the female yet not Become male; left in a genderless no 'man's' land. I created a film (fig 5) repeating and over layering the letters I had written to myself. Layered and obscured to depict the confusion of my internal monologue; disguising the words and meaning. The push and pull of acceptance and rejection, male and female, present and absent, valid and invalid. My current state of mind. The film takes references from *Not I* Beckett (1972) (fig 6). Conversations overheard, cut up and laced together. Performed with speed and veracity - over-enunciated. Staged with only the mouth seen. A close up of a mouth should be gender-less yet somehow it remains inescapably female.

Fig 6. Samuel Beckett, *Not I*, 1972. Photographic still from a film of the performance.



1/3 The Patriarchal Artist

I make a sculptural piece referencing Greek mythology; the story of Philomela (fig 7). After being raped by her brother in law and emperor, he rips out her tongue to silence her. Here I present my ripped out tongue offered to the deity of the patriarchy on a ritualistic plinth. It is a literal representation to the absent female voices in history and the oppression of the female. Narratives and stories lost in a silent scream. The work was born out of frustration and it confirms the symbolic order and phallogocentric hierarchy (Derrida 1997; a representation of a dismembered phallus (Freud). It is an emotive piece referencing my own experience of society's oppression where I have lost the authenticity and power of my narrative. I am rendered in a silent scream, absent and unable to participate in the conversation. Judged by my gender, my body has betrayed me before I utter a word.... The words resonate again..... 'A million words said, few ever heard.' And more specifically 'a shout silenced, by a 'look' White (2020 lines 29&31).

The work I have created and discussed in this chapter (fig 2 to 8) holds an angry rational objectivist narrative which subsumes it. The work and I are painfully self-conscious. Which invades the intention, process, language and the outcome creating something of activist art. It is so obvious in its concept, aesthetic, form and materiality; ironically aggressive in its maleness. Heavily influenced by male epistemology, my narratives and artworks work to a patriarchal methodology and outcome. Trapping me in a cycle of victim based anger; easily dismissed as a angry feminist and therefore absent. Rejected from the conversation; yet desperate to be heard. I don't identify with the work. It seems distant from my lived experience and indeed against my body as female.

Becoming a patriarchal artist **is not** the Becoming I am seeking.

I reflect and discover that since puberty I have stood violently and angrily against my body, its femaleness. My body as biologically 'different' and 'lesser' (Spelman 1992) a betrayal to my acceptance and equality. I subconsciously choose equality over my body. Acting 'male' seemed the only option. Victimising and oppressing myself and other women, to distance from 'lesser' and 'weaker' animals. Working against my female knowledge, experience and expression; distancing from, ignoring and against my body. The art work in this chapter is almost exclusively within a



male epistemology; using a creative language which is object driven and dissociative of experience. A realisation which brings the opportunity for acceptance and transformation; the beginning of the Becoming has arrived. I am searching for my subjective, whole, felt and of the body (somatic) position in the world.

Becoming against my body **is not** the Becoming I am seeking.

Bodies have been seen as the source of epistemological uncertainty, mortality and lack of freedom, whereas the minds have been seen as offering the possibility of certainty, immortality and freedom. On this view, our bodies are what humans share with the 'lesser' creatures, whereas our minds are supposedly what elevate us above them.

(Spelman 1992 cited in Jaggar 1994)

Fig 7. Hayley White, *The Conversation - Philomela*, 2020. Sculpture, plaster and latex. (main image - Completed sculpture. Smaller images - photographs documenting the process of making).



Fig 8. Hayley White, *the inward turn*, 2020. Photograph of collage and drawing.

2/

With(in) the Body

Simpler times
Androgyny of youth
Connected and reactive
Linear cause and effect
Be and being - my body
Unknown unconscious
Knowing innocence
Impressionable canvas
Body and mind entwined

Blame becomes visible
Changes and recedes
Hormones drive decisions
Confusion becomes Fear
Physicality becomes injustice
Mind focuses awareness
Observing becomes obsession
Fairness questioned

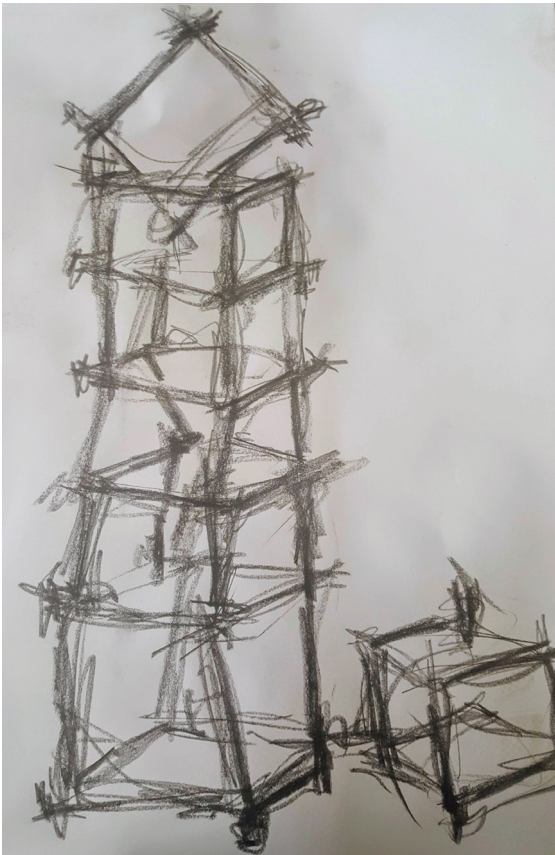
Subservience and resistance repeats
Unnatural patterns form
Sensing feelings retreat
Innocence fades away
Layering of lies
Dermis DNA relay
Si-naps charged to snap
Cells and saline
Blood, piss, shit, spit
Listening awareness literal
Functioning silence prevails
Vessel for alienated mind

Unending rhythmic pulses remain
Disrupted by aliments
Cut short by emotion

Drawn out by experience
Internal unconscious filter
World experienced with(in)
Experience creates understanding
Wisdom rises unease
Source knowledge questioned
Discovery beyond the mind
Conscious and unconscious reunite
Soma the silent sage

White, H (2020) *With(in) the Body*.

This interiority no more precedes the material arrangement of the human body than it results from it. What if our eyes were made in such a way as to prevent our seeing any part of our body, or some diabolical contraption were to let us move our hands over things, while preventing us from touching our own body? Or what if, like certain animals, we had lateral eyes with no cross-blending of visual fields? Such a body would not reflect itself; it would be an almost adamant body, not really flesh, not really the body of a human being. There would be no humanity. (Merleau-Ponty 1964)



2/1 Not my body; the inward turn

The flesh of my body; my own flesh and blood do not seem 'alive' to my conscious mind. My body is an inconvenience; a mass of unconscious and continuous activity. A singular organ. A vessel for my brain or a bell jar for my thoughts; a thought vessel. In Ponty's notion; where was my humanity? Did puberty fragment my body? Making me 'body blind'; rejecting my body, nature and humanity?

The renaissance nudes are distanced from my own experience; romantically depicted, over saturated and heavy with gendered debate (Beard, 2017). My body is a sexualised object or negative space holding my brain and organs in gravity. Trying to escape the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) and my own layered patriarchal gaze; I see my external body in a kaleidoscope of dissociation with many changing objective and subjective conditions placed upon it.

Until now I had not truly considered my body. Only as a container that operates; breathes, eats, sleep, shits, bleeds, has pleasure, has pain, gets ill and well again. *With(in) the body*, White, H (2020) charts this emotional journey of body disassociation. The shock of puberty; as a 'natural' development I move away from a child like 'androgynous ideal' (Firestone, 1970). I have been resisting my nature, my wombs life giving status and thereby my connection to humanity and the feminine. Becoming a sexualised object through puberty, devoid of self-ownership and governed by external forces of maleness driving my sexuality. Instructed by the media on how to become the 'perfect' woman.

Becoming a nude for the male gaze **is not** the Becoming I am seeking

The relationship to my external body is complex. I began to turn inwards; into an unknown interior of my body. The female hu(man)* body; a secret world of my own to explore. The intimate turn can be seen in the photographic documentation of making the work *the inward turn* (fig 8 & 9).

* Hu(man). I have created my own language distinction to the word human to remind myself and the reader of the disconnection of power between male and female hu(man)'s. To acknowledge the legacy of the male dominated world (man). All documented existence is primarily the male hu(man) experience. As the 1st to 4th wave of feminism will attest the female experience is less expressed and encapsulated in history and the forming of language (Beard, 2017).



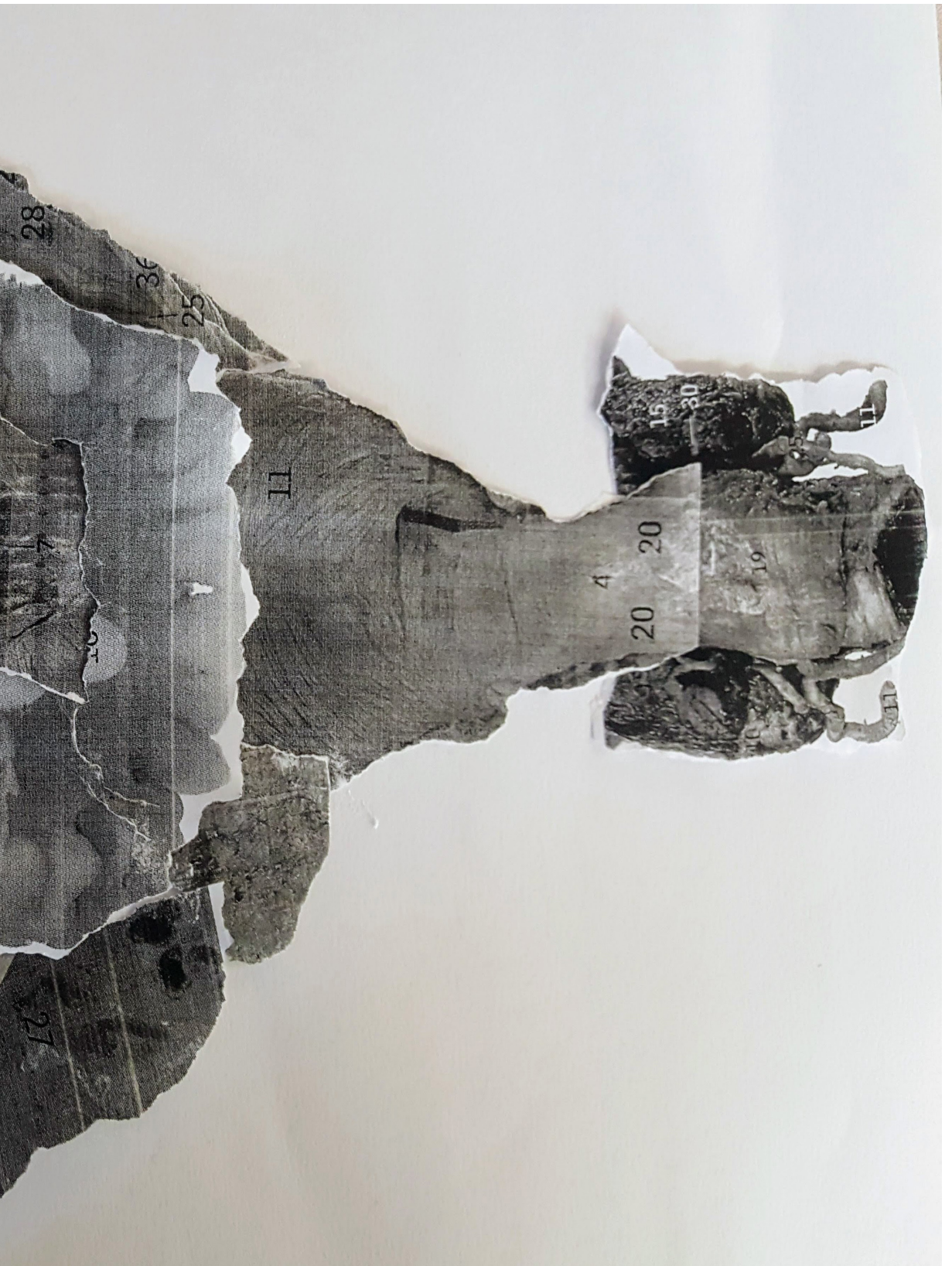




Fig 10. Hayley White, *Unknown Organ I*, 2020. Photograph of drawing & collage.

Fig 11. Hayley White, *Unknown Organ II*, 2020. Photograph of collage.

Fig 12. Hayley White, *Unknown Organ II*, 2020. Photograph of collage. (previous page)

That is what deconstruction is made of: not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break. The condition of this performative success, which is never guaranteed, is the alliance of these to newness.
(Derrida 1997)

2/2 Deconstruction & Reconstruction

I draw a phallic representation of a man-made sculpture. I take joy in ripping it up, rearranging and drawing over it; making it into an organic bodily form (fig 8 & 9). Representing the internal body; organic, textured, with tendrils and veins, an organ-like collage and drawing. Created without predetermining the outcome; without making an overt statement or political arrangement of concepts and ideas. I read deconstruction found in Derrida - 'double movement: both disordering, or disarranging and also 'rearranging'' (Phoca and Wright, 1999). Artistic process and methodology has become as necessary and important as the work itself; for the first time. Intuitive play is present. As quickly as the work appeared before me my self conscious embarrassment began to dissipate. A new way of exploring creativity without the 'mind's' interference; without (self) conscious knowledge. I am building in confidence; I do not have to 'try' so hard to be an 'artist'; I am trusting my intuition that the 'right' work will emerge.

Becoming less creativity self conscious **is** the Becoming I am seeking.

I turned to biological and medical anatomy with *Unknown Organ I & II White* (2020 fig 10, 11 & 12). Using deconstruction and reconstruction of anonymous anatomy images from medical journals. Creating a fictitious, fake, impossible organ, without gender or judgement. Strangely disassociated from my body; an organ in a different situation. Its 'newness' is a new interpretation of the body; an authentic part of my hu(man) anatomy. I am getting closer to my body; a fascination is building.

I am in search of hu(man) bodily meaning beyond sex and gender. De-constructed to a cellular abstract level; fragmented and distanced from judgement. A 'reduced performance', a reclamation of self-hood, 'a low-energy opening out beyond the frame of ego indexed identity' (Braidotti 2019). I am in search of the 'unknown' body creating a surreal and obscured lens to view and connect through art; discovering the unknown internal world with new meanings.

Artist Helen Chadwick focuses on the materiality of the body, a representation of nature and connection between hu(man) and animal / non hu(man) (Braidotti, 2017) (fig 13 & 14). A female artist owing the body, representing her internal body, yet she can't remove the sexual objectification. Almost



Fig 13 & 14. Helen Chadwick, *Loop My Loop* (1991) (top) photograph of installation Richard Saltoun gallery and *Eat Me* (2003) (bottom) close up photograph of installation Zelda Cheatle Gallery.

as if it is present in its cellular make up, its DNA; its core is gendered and sexual.

I am growing in trust, with(in) my body, My work feels more honest from this place. From Švankmajer a more ancient wisdom is at play. I am making an intimate return to the body; searching for a '*Discovery beyond the 'mind'*' a search for '*Soma the silent 'sage'*' White, (2020 lines 39 & 41) *With(in) the Body*, Poem.

Becoming with(in) the body **is** the Becoming I am seeking.

If you are trying to decide what is more important, trust the experience of the eye or the experience of the body; always trust the body, because touch is an older sense than sight and its experience is more fundamental. (Švankmajer 2006)

The feminist efforts have been more often than not caught in the logical trap set up by [a] paradox. Either they have assumed that 'the subject,' like 'man,' is a generic term, and as such can designate equally and at once the female and male subjects, with the result of erasing sexuality and sexual difference from subjectivity. Or else they have been obliged to resort to an oppositional notion of 'feminine' subject defined by silence, negativity, a natural sexuality, or a closeness to nature not compromised by patriarchal culture. (Lauretis, 1984 cited Alcoff 1988)

A gender-bound subjectivity seems to force us to revert women to the body and to sexuality as an immediacy of the biological, as nature. (Lauretis 1984 cited Alcoff 1988)

2/3 New Material Feminisms; Post feminism

I am drawn back to the precipice of the cliff which marked the start of this journey; this Becoming. A deep ache inside my womb; my body and the fibroids making themselves known. Before me an opportunity to reconnect with my being and my body; to be drawn deeper into the art of, and about myself and my fibroids. Yet this is not an easy choice. I have already struggled with the fully formed body, breaking it down to bite-size pieces; finding simplicity in androgynous organs (Fig 9 to 12).

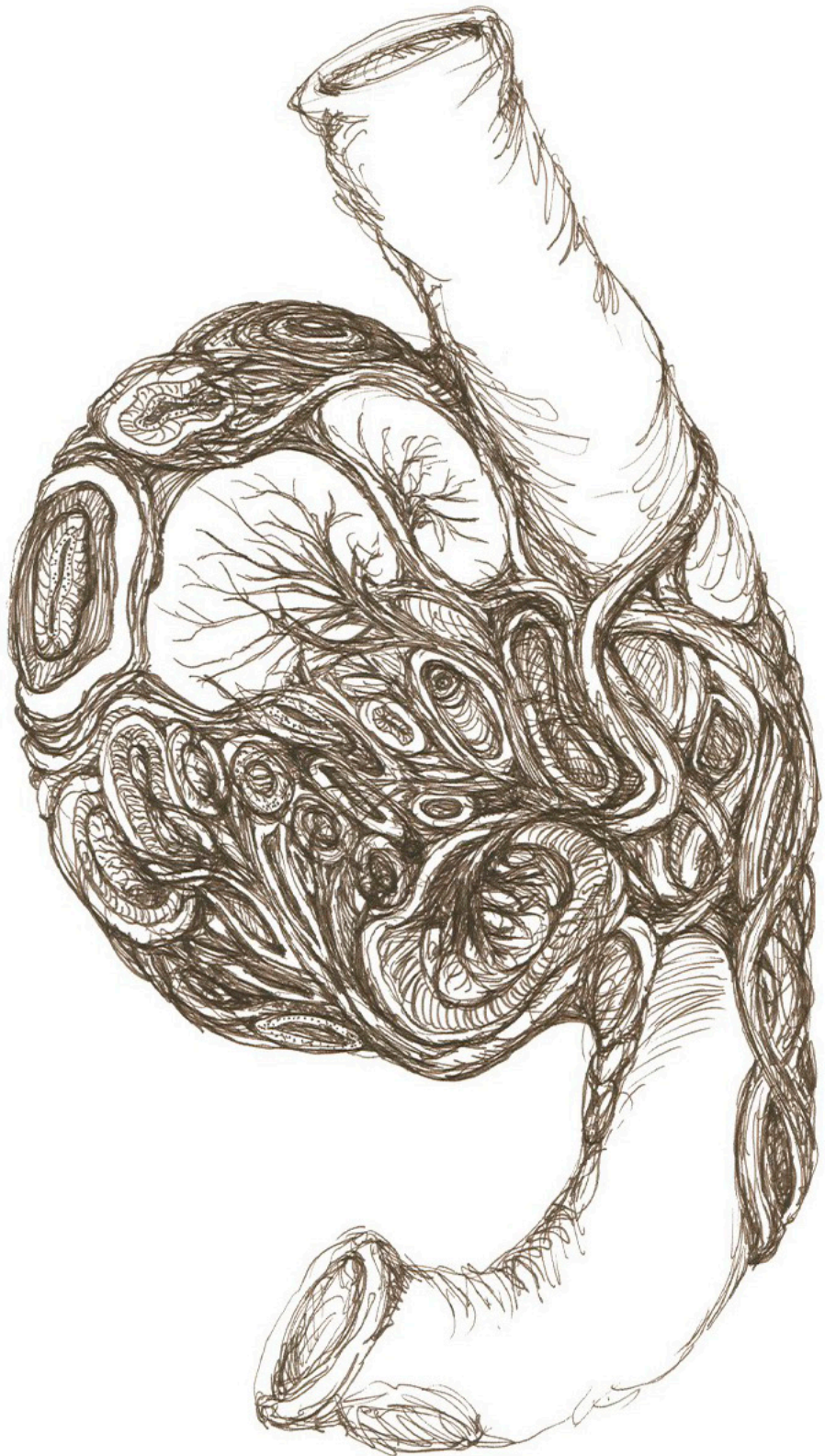
It is a bumpy, twisted and less ventured path to accept the female body. Perhaps a generalised interpretation of material feminism* is to blame? If I accept my body's materiality, I agree to the male/ female biological and sexual divide (Lauretis 1984) and turn my back on equality? Is equality possible if we perpetuate 'negative static differences' between male and female bodies? Do I have to subjugate and submit myself to being lesser; the second sex? (de Beauvoir 1949). I refuse.

'Negative and different bodily materiality' narrative has led to the problematic disassociation of my body; in art as experienced in life. I have historically retreated to the mind as a place where equality between the sexes could potentially be achieved (1/ Against the Body). The white elephant in the room remains. My womb with its messy life giving blood, my vagina and breasts; my femaleness. My body's materiality is screaming out to be cared for, accepted and learned from.

I find optimistic solace in the army of post feminists (Harroway, Braidotti et al) and finding a new material feminism. Reclaiming the body, its materiality and nature (and connection with nature- 3/ The Body and Nature). Our difference is valid, transitory and positive. Our lived embodied experience of the materiality of our world is not separate to our minds or even unique to gender. As referred to as Cartesian dualism it's not a distinct mind body separation or difference, they are integrated and they come together in order for us to see and understand how we experience the lived world. 'Difference is an imminent, positive and dynamic category.' (Braidotti 2019)

Becoming trusting in the positive difference of my body **is** the Becoming I am seeking.

* Early material feminism is problematic. I have rejected this in favour of post-feminism. These problems are most noted in the 'trans' debate and binary gender identities of male vs. female, with limited acceptance of difference.



2/4 Unknowing, Discovering, Knowing

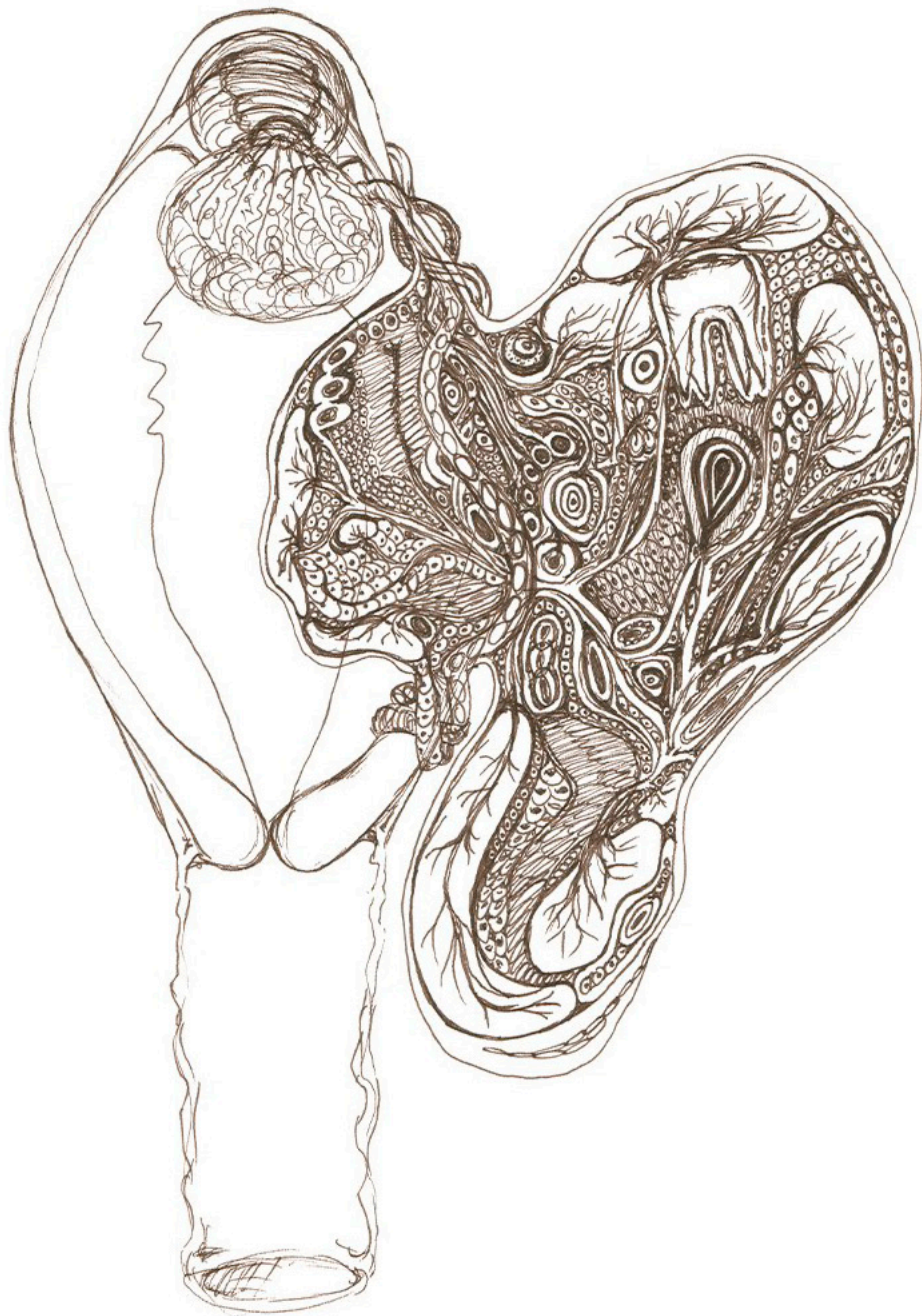
Something is wrong. I am diagnosed with fibroids, an internal organ deformity; abnormal fibrous growths in and around my bodies centre - the womb. I have been aware of increasing problems over the last 5 years; challenging conversations with my body were growing more pointed. Bodily functions disrupted from the norm; increasingly strange, more pain, more blood and more urine, total exhaustion, distended stomach and constantly feeling full. I am often asked if I am pregnant; expecting. Over fertile womb and influx of estrogen; leached into my milk from a Bos Taurus (diary cow).

I leap from the patriarchal precipice into bodily materiality, I am exploring an anatomical, sensory and intuitive knowing of my body. The process happened by accident, but not without intention. An intention to know and bring knowledge hidden deep in my body to consciousness; to understand what 'can't' be seen or touched only felt. I draw to correspond with and to discover the nature, makeup and 'feel' of the internal landscape of my body and the fibroids.

A series of conversations, scans and an MRI; medical language in detached conversations with consultants. Conversations which seem more important than the conversation I have with my body. I remain unaware. I get a disk containing digital copies of the scans. I 'don't' look. I 'haven't' looked; mainly out of fear. A concern for what is growing. Not wanting another reason to dislike my body; another reason not to trust it. My curiosity is killing me. I 'don't' look I draw.

The page is the frame; my viewfinder to my internal world. The paper is suspended in space and time. I imagine my womb, uterus, fallopian tubes, bowel, bladder and blood. Imagination and innate knowledge create a visual image in my mind. My internal self is a place I know. We have grown, changed and collaborated for 39 years, but its mysterious workings remain out of touch and sight. My visual knowledge is coming; a bodily narrative. Fast into focus. Memories of childhood textbooks superimposed on a quiet sensing knowledge of my body. Here. Now. Present.

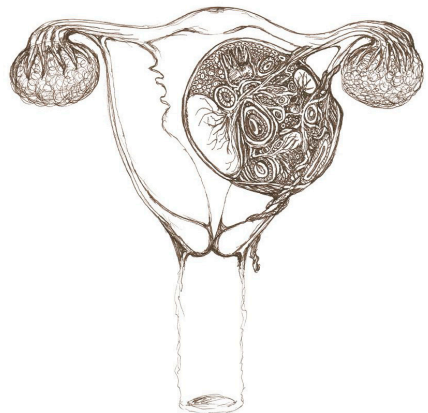
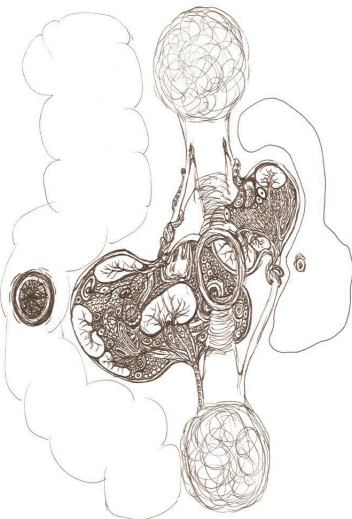
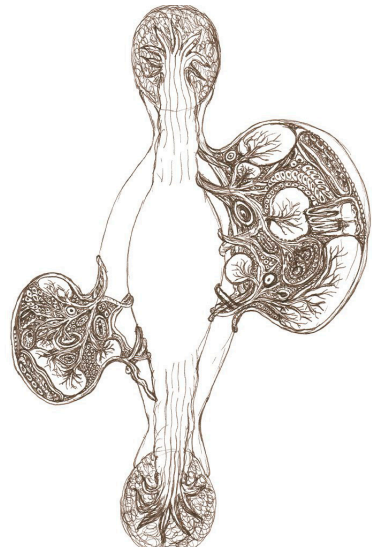
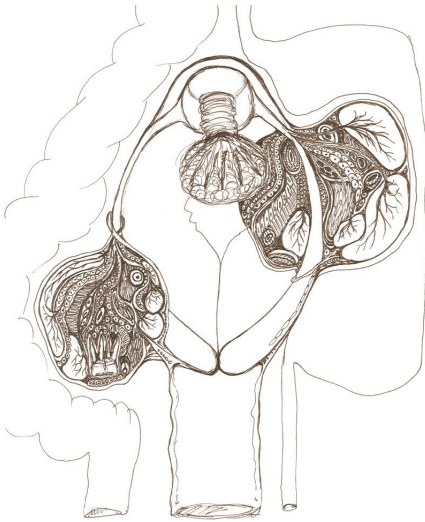
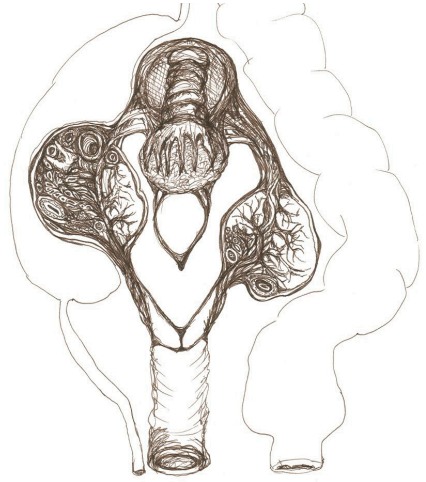
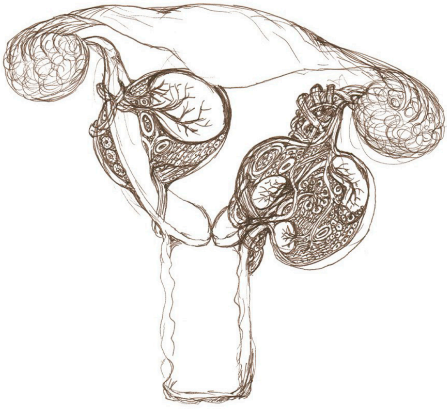
I am scanning the internal landscape of my body; imagining, feeling and sensing. To experience from within and bring out into the light; into life. I am drawing what my body senses, a cellular distillation of the knowing body.



I sketch the outline, placing organs or a cross-section of them on the page. I am silent and focused – in communion with the growth. I work inwards to the fibroid placement, the pen gets heavier, lines denser and the shape is in filled. Time lapses and the drawing is complete. Time has passed unnoticed, one, two, three hours... the need to urinate urgently builds. Nothing else matters except completing the drawing. No distractions; a meditative concentration. I push my bladder to its limits; I forget to breathe.

***There is more wisdom in
your body than in your
deepest philosophy -
Nietzsche***

Fig 16. Hayley White, *Subserosal*, 2020. Digital scan of a drawing.



I spend many hours obsessively looking at the completed drawings. (fig 15 to 23). I photograph them. The drawings are a type of correspondence with my body. I post them to Instagram out of fascination. When people like or love them – I question; what is it they like? Fascination for the drawings and my internal body seems to grow. A doctor; a fibroid consultant from Portland USA commented.....

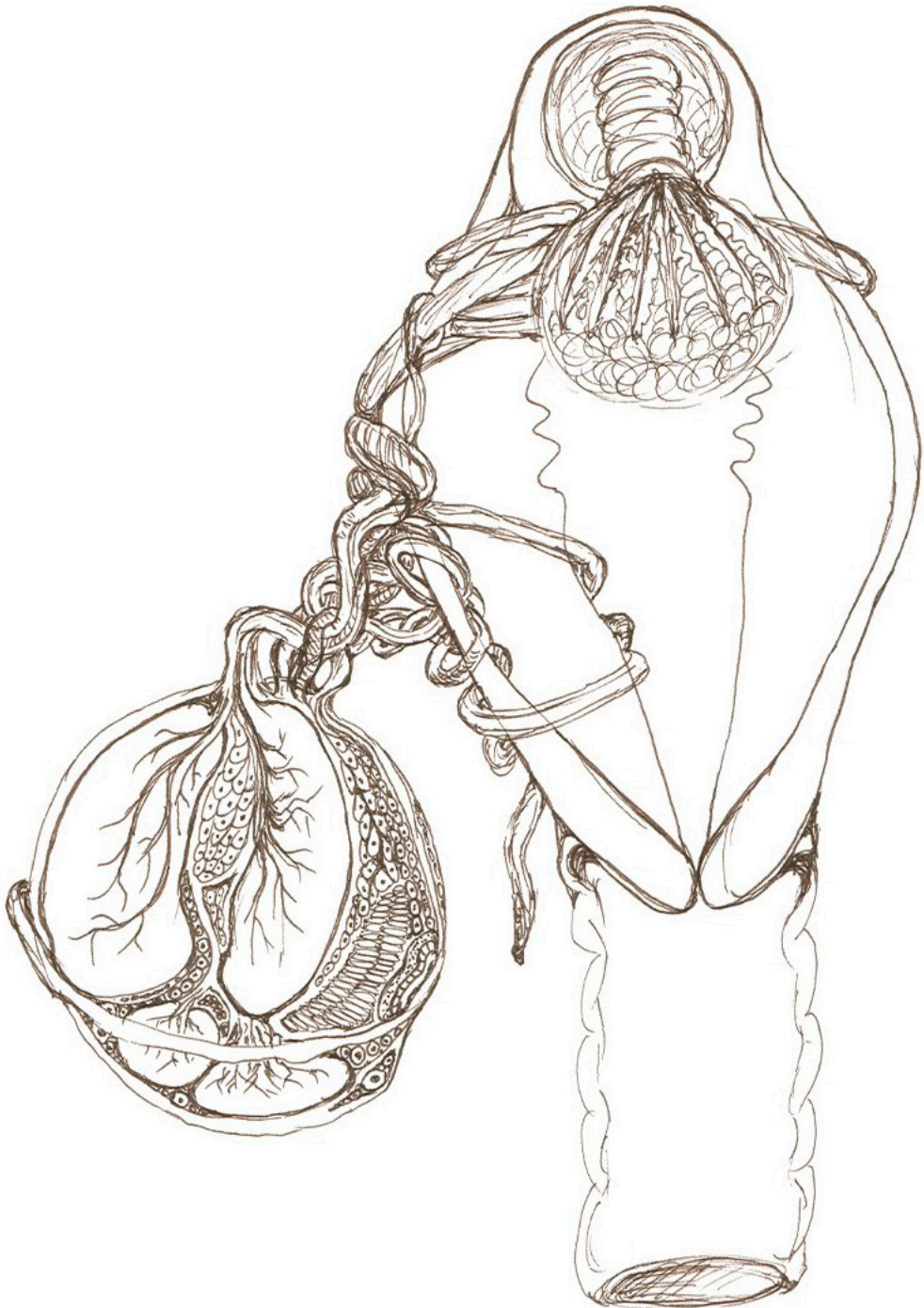
This is so anatomically perfect! I'm an interventional radiologist, dedicated my career (since 1999) to fibroids/UAE. I would LOVE one of these drawings for my office. Fibroids are complex, vascular, and this drawing really captures the dense, complex nature of a fibroid. Do you sell any of your work? I would love to purchase one of your drawings! Such a talent!!
(Costantino, M Dr. 2020)

Fig 17 to 22. Hayley White, (from left to right top to bottom) Twins I, Twins II, Twins III, Twins IV, Submucosal; Unborn. 2020. Digital scans of drawings.

Acknowledgement is difficult; it transfers subjective to objective, qualified by someone who sees, feels and touches my daily mystery. This knowledge has moved through my body from unknown to known, into science, verified into being.

I have ignored my condition and growing symptoms for five years; waiting for it to worsen until it can be operated on. I could not avoid anecdotes that some fibroids have teeth and hair; unconsciously sketched in the drawings (fig 16 to 23). Some fibroids are out on a stalk from the uterus (Pedunculated Fig 23). The drawings look like the fibroids feel; dense, weighty, moving, active. They obstruct my organs, disrupt my bladder and bowel. They are alive and 'performing' connecting their own blood supply; they are established 'unknown' organs. I 'can't' seem to get close enough to them.

I am confused at how I came to 'know' these abnormalities so accurately? Unconsciously deciding, deciphering and decoding knowledge from my body; sensing and feeling what was inside? How could I draw something I have never seen and will never see? Does my body have knowledge my mind doesn't? Is there a type of somatic /bodily knowledge or perhaps better word is wisdom? Where does this type of non-linear, non-learned knowledge come from?



2/5 Knowledge & Somatic Creativity

The discovery of the fibroids through drawing led to an inquiry into alternative sources of knowledge and wisdom. I have defined a new term to express my artistic discovery, method and endeavours; which I have called somatic knowledge and more specifically somatic creativity, somatic drawing and sculpture.

somatic
/sə'matik/

adjective

1. relating to the body, especially as distinct from the mind.

"patients completed a questionnaire about their somatic and psychological symptoms"

BIOLOGY

relating to the soma.

Since the beginning of hu(man) consciousness there has been a quest to understand knowledge. It seems that the pursuit of knowledge is at the heart of philosophical and artistic enquiry. The calculations of science, experiments into cause and effect, evidence and facts lead to an assertion of 'irrefutable' knowledge; borne out of the need to have certainty and definitives beyond doubt. Yet this seems an impossibility. Since the epistemology of knowledge is subjective to the changing social conditions, environment and culture / nature in which specific ideas and knowledge are developed. The pursuit of knowledge is circular; unending, variable and changeable. By the time we have reviewed; the epistemology of epistemology, the ontology of ontology, the epistemology of ontology and the ontology of epistemology the landscape and indeed the world in which the initial search for knowledge began has changed. The original premise has evolved and we have to start over again. Our experience, ourselves and our environment is transient, ever changing, always Becoming.

***No (wo)man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and (s)he's not the same (wo)man. Panta rhei ("everything flows")
Heraclitus c.535 – c.475 BC***

The academic debate on knowledge is endless. I am interested in the less formal or less factual knowledge; the opposite of ‘truths’ which have to a greater or lesser extent been proven. A search for knowledge (and uncovering the unknown) where ‘empirical’, ‘procedural’, ‘conceptual’ and more importantly ‘meta-cognitive’ knowledge (Krathwohl, 2002) intersect in the body or somatic. A personal journey into the unknown in a state of flux or flow (‘panta rhei’); a dynamic place where I can build personal wisdom and understanding with intuition. I search for ‘knowledge’ developed through experiences and haptic and tacit sensing; beyond knowledge which can be ‘learned’, instead known through the body somatic. Throughout my research, thinking and practice I have been sketching out a seemingly unending list of two different types of knowledge; relating to my personal experience and understanding. My ‘materiality and its intra-actions’ (Haraway 2004), where ‘complexities and multiplicity’ (Braidotti 2018) intersect.

**Onto-epistemology—
the study of practices of knowing in
being—is probably a better way to
think.....
(Barad 2003)**

Knowing (of the Mind)	Unknowning (of the Body)
Conscious	Unconscious
Learned / academic	Wisdom /intuition
Ego	Empathy
Of the mind (rational, process)	Of the body (haptic, tactic)
Intellectualised	Experienced
Socially conditioned	Socially free
Judgement	Awareness
Science	Art
Dialogue	Felt / emotions
Determined	Discovery
Predictable	Risk
Predetermined	Fluid / flow state
Planning/process based	Meditative
Male / Testosterone	Female / Estrogen
Evidence-based	Process-based
Competition of things	Interconnectedness of things
Singularity	Multiplicity
Arrogance	Inquiry
Focalised	Defocalised
Order/ Rules	Chaos/ Complexity

Becoming unknowing to find knowing **is** a Becoming I am seeking.

Restless with my new discovery of the fibroids through 'blind' drawing and a growing understanding that knowledge is not always prescribed and learned; there are other ways of knowing. Something exciting bubbles away within. Freedom to seek new knowledge in ways connected to who I am, my body and my experience of the world. Authenticity. Originality. Complexity. Leaving behind a world of right and wrong; away from text book based knowledge and understanding into a philosophical embracing of mystery and unknowing. Reassured that through creativity I can search and discover. That discovery has merit.

Becoming authentic, original and complex **is** a Becoming I am seeking.

I am not alone. Once I begin looking there have been seemingly endless surprising 'discoveries' in history where knowledge has been uncovered using this informal, bodily or somatic knowledge; accessed via creativity. Including the recent discovery in 2005 by Mr Francis Wells (a heart surgeon) on reviewing Da Vinci's 500 year old heart valve drawings (fig 24 & 25). Dr Wells has developed a new repair for the mitral valve in present day heart surgery '*What Leonardo was saying about the shape of the valve is important. It means that we can repair this valve in a better way.*' (Wells 2005 cited in Roxby 2014).

Creativity sits between knowledge and unknowing, it is an investigation and interplay between the mind and the body, losing the ego where the 'creative 'attitude' constitutes 'being lost in the present' and 'fusion of person and world.' (Maslow 1963, 1993)

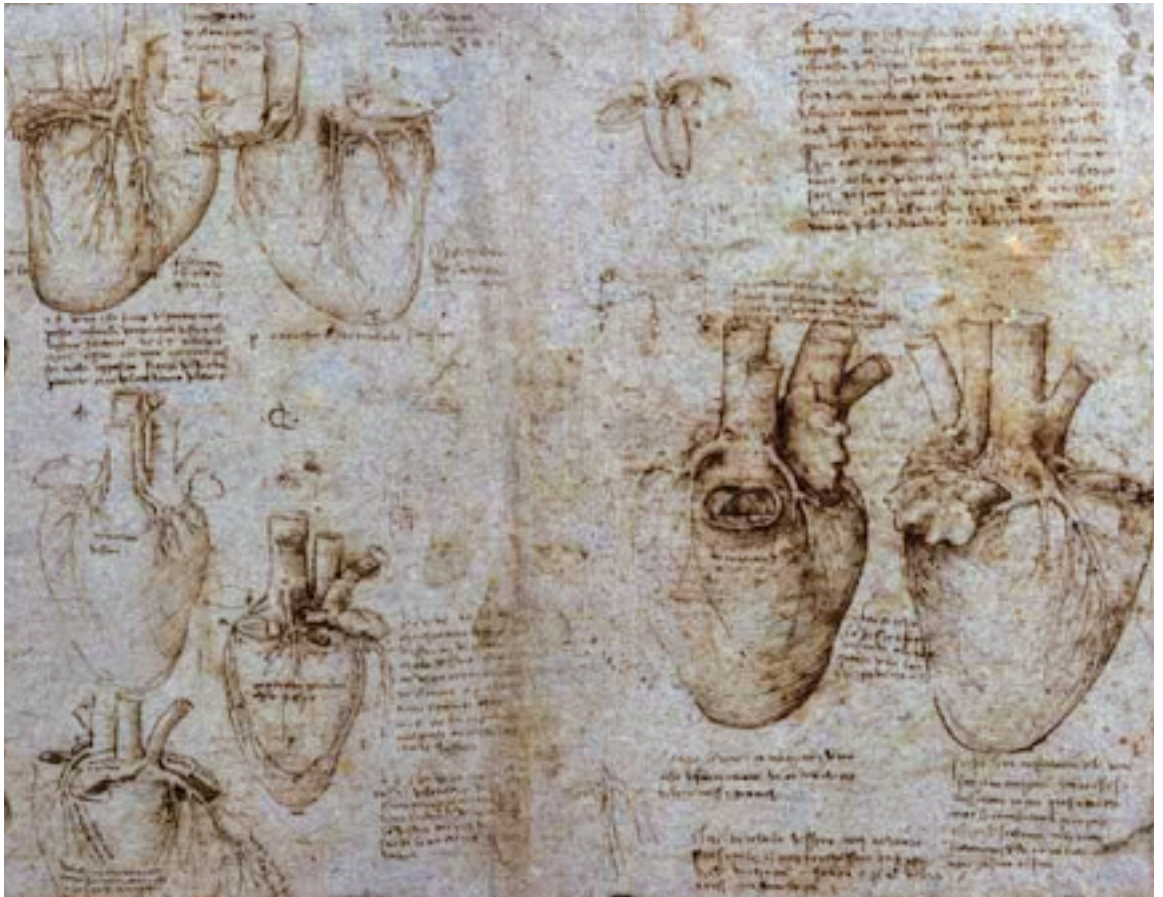


Fig 24. (top)
Leonardo Da Vinci,
Sketch book
- anatomical
depiction of the
heart. 1510. Windsor
Folios, part of the
Royal Collection,
held at Windsor.

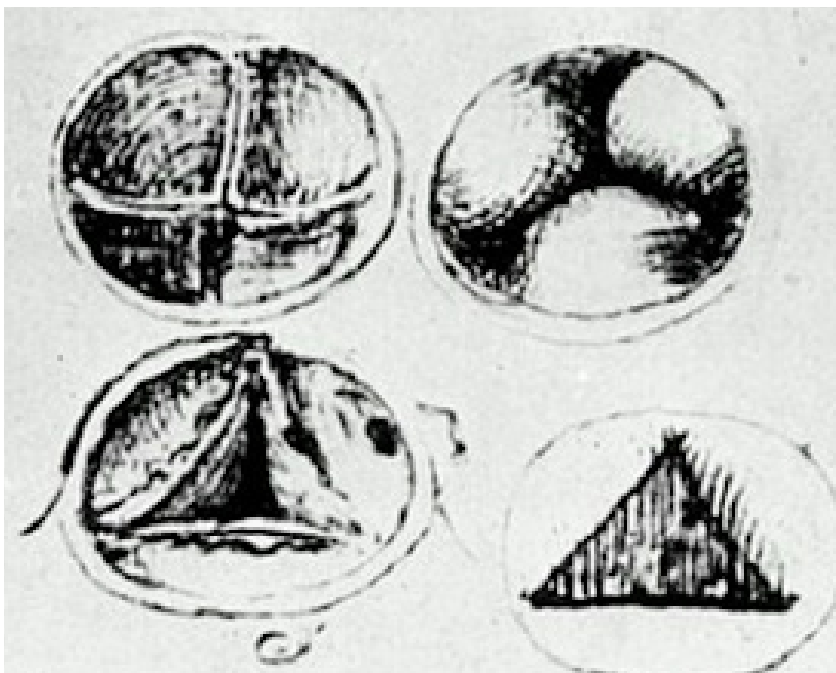


Fig 25. (left)
Leonardo Da
Vinci, Sketch
book - anatomical
depiction of the
heart valves. 1510.
Science Photo
Library

The discovery of Wells via Da Vinci's drawings mirrors my own experience. Not only a embodied sensing anatomic discovery (perhaps obsession), but using drawing as the method of discovery. A drawing is purely a ocular vision, a knowledge of the mind, without a hand to execute into knowing representation (Ingold 2011). The 'haptic hand', the world made sense via the median nerve colloquially known as the 'eye' of the 'hand'. My mind leaped to a visual known as the Khamsa or Hand of Fatima symbol (fig 26); seen throughout the ancient spiritual, religious and mythological world (Nozedar 2010). It epitomises my experience of somatic 'blind' drawing; a combination of focused optical and haptic knowledge. Symbolised by the hand where knowledge is combined with interpretation; a collaboration between touch and sight. Like the baby reaching for everything in sight to touch and feel; to understand not only with the eyes and the mind but also with the body, hands and mouth.

...the opposition between the optical and the haptic cross-cuts that between eye and hand: besides optical vision and haptic touch we have optical touch as well as haptic vision. (Ingold 2011)

It takes a symbiotic relationship between body and mind to truly know. I am establishing this practise without conscious thought. My meditative method established a going inward and the imagination of the 'mind's' 'eye' to draw out the somatic knowledge. In Narby's research in *The Cosmic Serpent - DNA and the origins of knowledge* (1995) the hardened anthropologist (Narby) looks to alternative shamanistic knowledge sourced from the natural world. Narby makes many discoveries including the method of 'focalised' and 'defocalised' states of thinking and investigation; proving his hypothesis that 'DNA in particular and nature in general are 'minded' (Narby 1995). Moving away from anthropocentric definitions of knowledge in the post-human/ post-feminist paradigm (Braidotti, 2019); if nature knows (are 'minded') then perhaps my new methodology of somatic creativity can be applied to nature. I look to explore connections between hu(man)s and nature.



Fig 26. Nozedar (2010) *Hand of Fatima / Khamsa* (Talisman) *The Illustrated Signs & Symbols Sourcebook*. UK, Harper Collins.



Fig 27. Hayley White, *Unknown Amulet I - Alive, Living & Hope Amulet series*, 2020. Sculpture, found objects and artists hair.

3/

The Body and Nature

Fibroids are nature's fate
My body is nature's pulse
Tides of the sea
The pull of the moon
Unborn estrogen blooms
Growth grows a foetus in absentia
Life lives on and nature prevails

Fibroids echoed in Flint
My internal world in a rock
Scans barely distinguished from stone
The patterns repeat
Cellular and cynical
Similar or the same
Connection and interconnectedness
Cosmos to cells, spirit to specific
Marble in a giant's pocket
Nature creating continues
Oxygenation breathes life over stagnation
Gaia sustains, upkeeps and maintains

Species revolution excused by Darwin's evolution
Symmetry and sequence of systems breaks
Fibonacci broken with contaminates
Anomalies in food chain, toxic losses and gains
Pollutant rebound leads 'Gaia's' viral adaptation
Hu(man) fate echoes nature's death, destruction, decay
Production, consumption, pollution, extinction?
An amulet, empathy, belief suddenly stepping into relief
A higher self, prevailing nature, a new way?
Trust in mother nature that night will follow day.

White, H (2020) *Nature Prevails*, Poem.

3/1 Embodied Immersion in Nature

Gaia, Mother Earth and Mother Nature; it seems the planet is gendered to the feminine. The womb echoes the complete environment of our hu(man) and non hu(man) other existence (Braidotti 2018).

My connection and empathy for and towards nature increases as I follow a ritual of sea swimming. The cool saline washing over my flesh revives me; sharpening my focus and making me forget all at once. Immersion into a bodily experience where the cold shock releases endorphins and adrenaline. The wash of the sea brings magnesium and minerals absorbed through my skin. My haptic and tacit working overtime and my ocular absorbing my surroundings; cliffs, waves, sea birds and the sky. My skin and eyes drink in nature - we are at one. On a very cold day from December to March, the sea is so cold it enlivens you; making you feel reborn as you submerge and re-emerge coming back to warmth. The bodily sensation becomes complete and consuming; the exhilaration, the joy, the refresh and reset.

I started sea swimming when I moved to the coast four years ago and every time is both the same yet vastly different. The tiny variables; the volume of seaweed, the level of sand and plankton in the water making it thin or dense. The temperature and waves controlled by the tides and elemental forces. The exhilaration of a naked full moon sunset swim in a thunderstorm I will never forget—a powerful reminder of mortality, being of nature and at one with 'Gaia'.

Other sea swimmers claim the routine supports mental health, replacing prescribed medication with regular sea swims. I consider how it silences my mind and forces the body's awareness on the somatic experience. There is a connection between my salty water sea ritual and my search for bodily knowledge; the process of opening myself up to new experiences which cancel out the mind-body divide.

Sea swimming becomes urgent for my sanity and my freedom. Alongside walking it is the only permissible 'covid-safe' exercise. When I swim I beach comb for creative inspiration, a quest to find answers in nature - perhaps to the virus? Or perhaps to understand my body and its abnormal growths?

* The global pandemic of Covid-19 affected / infected the globe and UK in 2020. The government enforced many 'lock-downs' and severe social distancing measures in a effort to contain the spread of the virus.

Knowledge was organised according to systems of likeness prepared by nature itself, and revealed in the proximity of one thing to another, in affinities and analogies, in similarities and antipathies between various beings. The world was an enormous text: held together by signs and known by reading the marks on its surface. (Foucault 1966 cited in Germana 2007).

Fig 27. Hayley White, *Unknown Amulet I - Alive, Living & Hope Amulet Series*. 2020. Sculpture, found objects and artists hair.

The Covid-19 virus and my fibroids; has Gaia gone wrong or is it all part of her strategic plan? A memento. I am seeking to own a piece of nature to remind me of 'Gaia's' and my bodies ability to sustain life in adverse conditions; to give hope and belief (Lovelock 2006). Seeking objects, assembling and sculpting from nature becomes a somatic experience. I am applying the same meditative unknowing, non-judging and 'defocalised' flow state to understand nature.



3/2 A Meditative Imagined Somatic Interlude.

These art works aren't finished until you participate. (Johnson 2020)

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE / ARTISTS INSTRUCTIONS

Step into my methodology and engage in a meditative
imagined somatic interlude by following these
instructions.

CONTINUOUS INSTRUCTION 1. BREATHE.
INHALE. EXHALE.
DEEP SLOW MEDITATIVE BREATHING.
CONT....

CONTINUOUS INSTRUCTION 2. LISTEN.
USE STEREO HEADPHONES.
[HTTP://SOUNDCLOUD.COM/HAYLEY-WHITE-TMS/AMULETS](http://soundcloud.com/hayley-white-tms/amulets)
CONT....

CONTINUOUS INSTRUCTION 3. IMAGINE.
BEACH. WAVES CRASHING. OPEN SKY.
PEBBLES & SAND UNDERFOOT.
YOU ARE PLAYFUL, CHILDLIKE, INQUISITIVE.
YOU SEE THE SEA FOR THE FIRST TIME.
CONT....

INSTRUCTIONS

1. SEARCH. The shoreline looking for objects that resemble organs, cells, blood, sinew or other bodily concern found in nature.
2. SELECT. An object, hold it, smell it, feel the weight, touch its texture, register the colour and patina - the materiality of nature.
3. COLLECT. Objects with curiosity and wonder.
4. RETURN HOME. Wash your objects. How it was made? Over how long? In what environment? What makes it alive or dead? Is it similar to your body?
5. ARRANGE. For fit or synergy. Let them dry.

6. CONNECT. Materiality and texture. Nature's evolution. Is nature separate and unknown to us? Organic matter connects you to nature. You have an innate knowledge of being alive.

7. REPEAT CONTINUOUS INSTRUCTION 1.

8. FOCUSED SELECTION. Of two objects you are attracted too. Twine and scissors are to hand.

9. SCULPT. Rub and find ergonomic fit and material combinations. Allowing them to play, you play as nature seems to play.

10. BIND. Wrap meters of thread to secure. The object becomes heavier as it nears completion. A volume, a mass in its own right. They are Becoming.

11. CUT HAIR. Strands or balls of hair inserted. External or internal; hair buried deep within the heart of the sculpture. You, me and nature are one. Connected and complete.

12. CONTEMPLATE. Animated creatures from the unknown deep sea? Find an optical reference point placing them within a field of stored knowledge. Do they look like anything you have seen before? Are they art?

Breaking the academic conventions the above participatory somatic experience is an insight into my practise and a recipe for making somatic sculptures. The Fluxus style artists instructions (Fluxus was founded by George Maciunas 1960s/70s) produce a collaborative and performative coming together, sharing and creating. In this interlude I share critical ideas of unknowing, discovery and imagination; and we together have explored our connection with nature. The textural use of sound explores the materiality of the sculptures (amulets) and the making process. Using artists instructions and combining art and life; I am reminded of the huge shift from my early confrontational activist art in *1/Against the Body*. In creating a guided somatic experience I have invited you (the reader) to engage with and participate in my work; by doing so you have activated my method and my artworks. In this new correspondence and somatic experience you and I together have created a new collaborative practise. Together we are Becoming.



3/3 Drawing on Nature

I test the 'blind' somatic drawing method on nature, by drawing the somatic sculptures. My eyes absorb the texture, patterns and light; I consider how the amulet came to be. I put it out of sight. I draw the outline, patterns and shapes; or the absence of pattern, the negative space. I remember. I imagine. I recall the touch and feel. I know this object and I transfer this knowing to the page. I reunite the object with the drawing. I am astonished at the similarity, depiction, the materiality and representation. The capturing of the object through drawing without direct observation, using haptic and tacit knowledge, memory and imagination. They look as if they have been drawn from life. (Fig 28 & 29).

The objects, the nature-human assemblages resonate. They have a vibration and visual which is part of me and part nature; reflective of 'Gaia' on the micro and macro level. The making process is an attempt at connecting the Hu(man) into the world and into nature. By stuffing and attaching the hair, my hair, I am inserting the hu(man) into the natural world. I am struggling to find my fit; a synchronistic not destructive fit. The objects take on meaning and represent the development of my practise and the self. The search for knowledge or comprehension of how I fit in the world. This search for my 'fit' echoes the search to understand my fibroids; the relationship between the assemblages and the fibroids and the search for knowledge. I created them both. In a broad sense they are made of the same material organic matter.

The assemblages are mystical; familiar yet distant, animated yet still, an interaction between Human and non-human (Haraway 2004). They become external and internal at the same time. They focus on materiality, texture and concept of lost and fragmented internal body combined with nature; remade and returned as external adornment. The fibroids imagined external to the body represent the life, alive, living and growing (fig 16 to 23); they also symbolise the 'warding off' of 'evil' as a type of anatomical amulet made in the covid anthropocene. After a six month delay due to Covid-19 my fibroid surgery was completed in September 2020. Rendering the fibroids dead and withering away inside my body; to be absorbed by my system. I am driven to make the Deceased, Dead & Decaying amulets as a tribute to the fibroids, a memento mori. Remembrance in death (fig 30 & 31).





I catalogue the somatic sculptures (amulets) using analogue 35mm photography; exploring medial, measured, distorted imagery, documented and processed with alchemy of analogue. I create an archive, a legacy and my history or even herstory*. (fig 32)

* Herstory. A feminist language term used to denote a re-reading of history (his-story) reinserting the female into the historical narrative thus becoming herstory.

Fig 30. (this page) Hayley White, *Dead Fibroid - Death, Decay & Dying Amulet Series*, 2020. Digital photograph of sculpture, found organic materials and artists hair.

Fig 31. (opposite page) Hayley White, *Death, Decay & Dying Amulets Series*, 2020. Digital photograph of sculptures, found organic materials and artists' hair.



Fig 32. Hayley White, *Amulet Archive Series*, 2020. Analogue 35mm photographs.

The somatic methodology morphed into photography (as seen in fig 30 to 32 - Amulet Archive). Using the camera as an extension of my haptic hand it became my touch. Getting closer and closer, zooming in on nature to find and meditate/mediate. My experience is somatic even through the lens. After six months of not looking and not knowing the visual imagery of my MRI scans. I look. It is terrifying to see my inner world on a screen; anonymous but very familiar. I look again to nature to understand; to create comfort. Comfort that my being and my bodily in its visual and emotional Becoming is not a science fiction dream. I find it in nature. My internal world inside a flint; a stone. Bringing me back to a line in my poem where the micro and macro worlds and universes work inside each other. Creation and replication on a larger and smaller scale simultaneously; 'marble in a giants pocket' (White, 2020 line 16). I take many photos of the flint, in an effort to document the journey of Becoming, to collect visual markers on this journey; I create two artists' books.

The first *Map: Finding Fibroids* (fig 33 to 35) layers flints, fibroids and scan images. The cover is an image of the hadron collider (a large magnet and particle accelerator to create collisions between atoms at the speed of light) which resembles the MRI machine my body has been through. The book is a map, which visually replicates my journey to understanding; from unknowing to knowing and from internal to external worlds. The second artist book is an object; a handmade box at 8cm square - the same size as the largest of two fibroids found in my womb called *Box* (fig 36 to 38). The box is empty unless it houses one of the smaller amulets (fig 39), representing feminine and fibroid absence.

Somatic creativity as a methodology is providing me with a more honest access to my creativity; embodying and finding an innocent curiosity of the haptic and tacit experience. A discovery of the common ground between the materiality of my body and nature; my lived reality and my positioning in the universe, in Gaia. One which is relatable rather than theoretical field of vision and experience (Latour 2017). The enriching connectivity and process of somatic methodology reminds me of the notion of 'filling the well of 'creativity' and an artists' date from the Artist's Way (Cameron, 1994). A book I have studied and completed; each time it has created and instigated seismic change in my life. Recently my move to live by the sea, in Margate. I changed my world to include nature and the sea, as a daily inspiration. I can feel similar seismic change happening internally in this Becoming.

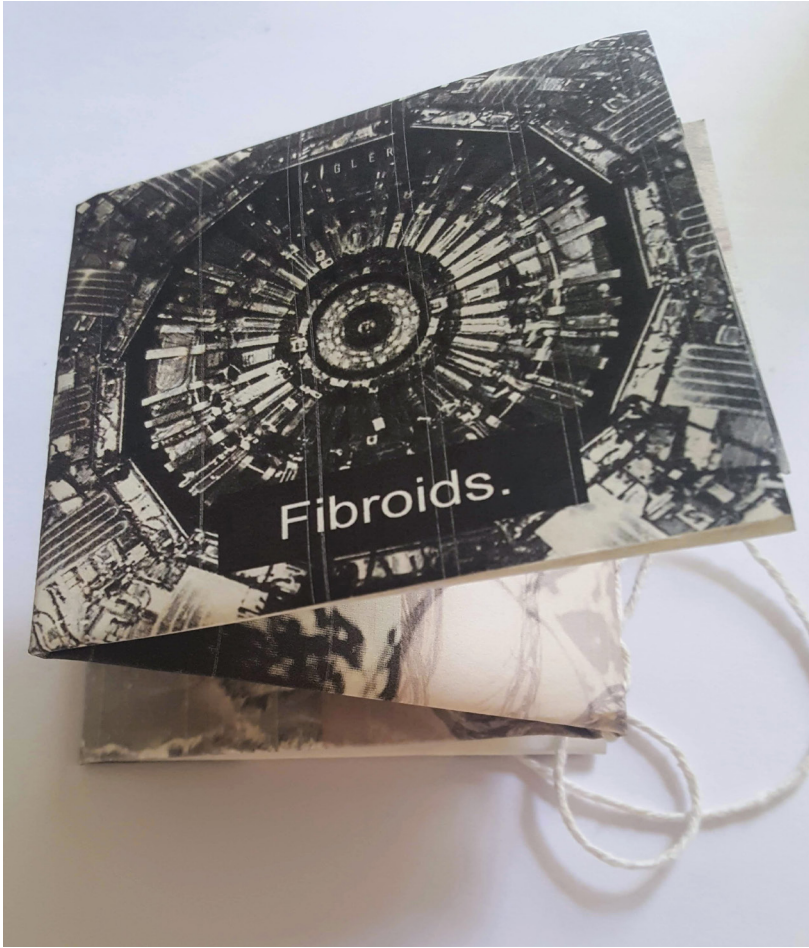


Fig 33, 34 & 35.
Hayley White,
*Map: Finding
Fibroids*, 2020.
Artists book.







3/4 Covid-19; A Natureculture Catastrophe?

What is a virus if not nature's intent? Our 'Bios' or 'culture' has caused 'Zoe's' or natures revenge (Braidotti 2019). 2020 will forever be known as the year of the Covid -19 virus. A global pandemic with a horrific number of deaths, high infection rate resulting in fearful and anxious people. Chaos in government and politics; scientists racing to a vaccine and the overwhelm of hospitals. Lock-down after lock-down. Social contact reduced to one and isolation to curb the infection. Lives reduced to a tiny social bubble.

I beach comb to create somatic sculptures and drawings: to finding meaning and answers in nature. I am searching and discovering 'specific material (re)configurings of the world,' (Barad 2003). *Breathe* (White 2020) where chalk and seaweed create a heart and lungs echoing the respiratory nature of the virus. Oxygenation is one of the primary life-giving systems of nature, our planet and our seas (Fig 40); reflected in a line of my poem 'oxygenation breathes life over 'stagnation' White (2020 line 18). The work becomes cyclical, perhaps it always was / is ideas cycling around until they become known, created, reviewed and reflected on; is this the process of making art? A process of understanding and bring together a world of man-made and of nature, known as the 'naturecultures' continuum (Haraway 2004) and the inter-actions of hu(man) and Gaia (Barad 2003). The second drawing is called *Missing* where a pebble is lost from the sculpture and drawing. Representing the 'missing' people who died as a result of Covid-19 or the missing antidote the world was searching for; the missing link in nature to cure the hu(man) race from the virus caused by our greed. (Fig 41).

Fig 36. Hayley White, *Box*, 2020. Artists book.
Fig 37 & 38. Hayley White, *Box*, 2020. Artists book documentation.
Fig 39. Hayley White, *Box & Amulet*, 2020. Artists book documentation photograph.

Classical distinction between Bios – human – and Zoe – non-human. Bios refers to the life of humans organised in society, while Zoe refers to life of all living beings. Bios is regulated by sovereign powers and rules, whereas Zoe is unprotected and vulnerable. (Braidotti 2019)



Fig 40. Hayley White, *Breathe*, 2020. Digital scan of somatic drawing of a somatic sculpture.



Fig 41. Hayley White, *Missing*, 2020. Digital scan of somatic drawing of a somatic sculpture.

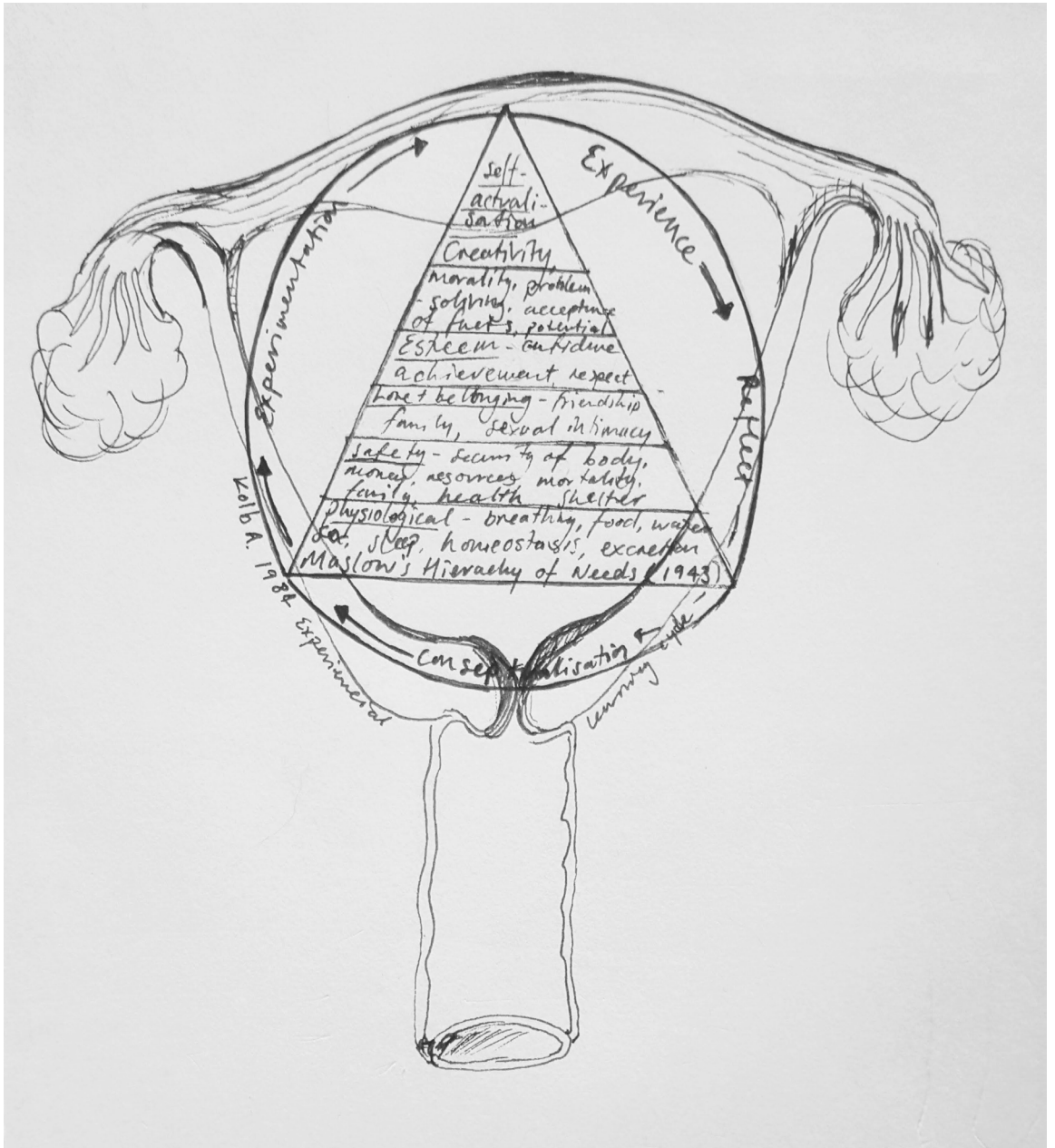


Fig 42. Hayley White, *Womb of needs and reflection*, 2021. Photograph of drawing.

The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse. Onto-epistem-ology—the study of practices of knowing in being—is probably a better way to think..... (Barad 2003)

4/

Conclusion

Scarred and bruised from my journey I return to the landscape. I am on the cliff top overlooking the wide expanse of the sea. Behind me is the rough terrain of the theoretical and creative jungle; I have traversed. It is from this new precipice with my new embodied lived reality I make new artworks. Through this journey I have created a place where my body and mind are in harmony together and with the natural world. Where my lived experience can be extracted through somatic creativity. My personal knowledge and experience is valid; I am making art from a place of 'ontopistem-ology' knowing in being (Barad 2003).

I feel war torn but for the first time I have agency; I trust in my creative process. Theory filters into my sphere as frames of reference to validate or rub up against my new experiential materiality. Yet it is not of others teachings. It has been a journey of corresponding with myself and my needs (fig 42) through writing and art; against, with(in)/ with and to my body. To discover meanings which are personal and subjective and found through creative practice and critique.

Becoming is an ongoing state of discovery. A transitory 'flow' state where answers are not predetermined; they are open to accepting difference and transpositions which allow transformation (Braidotti 2019). Through the three chapters I made discoveries of what I am and not seeking.

Becoming 'against' and disassociating from the body (1/) **is not** a Becoming I am seeking. Becoming a patriarchal artist to get my voice heard or becoming male are **not** the 'Becomings' I am seeking. Rejecting and separating from the body's experience and its lived reality removed the validation of my person; by my own determination, within art, within creativity and even within society. Separation of the image of the body and its lived experience creates a risk

of 'negative difference' and a split in mind and body; a crisis of authenticity and the self. Society has to begun to accept that difference is something to be valued. 'Difference is an imminent, positive and dynamic category.' (Braidotti 2019) a more positive opposition to early material feminisms (section 2/3).

Becoming With(in) the Body (2/) **is** a Becoming I am seeking. The inward turn and studying fibroids has shown me the body has knowledge. A great wisdom; much more than previously perceived through my 'knowing' mind. Body abnormalities led me to somatic creativity as a new creative method and a new acceptance of my body. A way of finding connections and knowledge felt through bodily experience; has the potential to influence medical science and allowed me personal and social comprehension of the body, its materiality and feminism. Becoming unknowing to find knowing **is** a Becoming I am seeking.

Becoming of the Body and within Nature (3/) **is** a Becoming I am seeking. Somatic creative inquiry in the context of Covid-19 has allowed me a deeper connection and empathy with nature. I am in correspondence with nature through art and my lived somatic experience. Like most Hu(man)s I am recovering from a disassociation with 'Gaia'. Discovering nature's patterns and synergy with(in) my body means I now see myself as an inclusive part of 'Gaia'. This empathetic discovery is echoed in the post-feminist 'naturecultures' continuum (Haraway 2004); who are reducing the distinctions between Bios - human and Zoe - non human (Braidotti 2019). Attempting to unite the hu(man) experience with nature is potentially our only hope of combating the era of the anthropocene.

I have used my body and womb to guide me on this journey. It seems appropriate to situate the *womb of needs and reflection* White 2021 (fig 42) as a summative and reflective illustration which is at the journeys core. This diagrammatic series of ideas is a at the cornerstone of my theory and my practice. Within the womb is Maslow's hierarchy of needs; a long standing idea about the psychology of hu(man)s and how we transcend different stages of life. Our basic needs need to be met before we can transcend into self actualisation and creativity. How do we/I arrive at this position when our bodies are judged; body and mind are not united and we 'don't' feel safe and connected in our being? Placed in the womb these needs are essential to our / my being.

We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because "we" are of the world..... the universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming. (Barad 2003)

The womb and its needs (fig 42) is encompassed with Kolb's learning cycle; where experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation happen on repeat. This is the process of art and the process of writing but also the process of living, growing, developing, changing and Becoming. It is an ongoing self awareness cycle within our body and mind; a critical part of our daily life.

On this journey I have traversed my own material, objective, realistic, multiplicity (Braidotti 2019). I have increased my understanding of myself and my body; while engaging with a cannon of theory around feminism and knowledge. I have found creative confidence and new qualitative 'knowledges' and methods; which are personal and related to my creative and lived experiences. I have forever changed my view of myself. I have found a personal and honest meaning and place in the world.

My Becoming is a dynamic, somatic, creative, gaia inter-relational existence; exploring new 'knowledge' and creating new meanings. This is my way of Becoming.

I run towards the sea. Stripping myself bare as I tumble down the cliff to the wide open expanse of the liminal space between the beach and the sea. I am alone and afraid but renewed. I reach the sea. I look around. Nature surrounds me. I dive in. Organic and at one with nature. With(in) my body I have a new creative and sustaining way of being; my ongoing cyclical Becoming continues.

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it's caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But, because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself.
(Merleau-Ponty 1964)

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- Fig 2 Hayley White, *Gestation*, 2021. Photograph of drawing.
- Fig 3 Hayley White, *the conversions I have with myself*, 2019. Digital scan of letter.
- Fig 4 Jan Švankmajer, *Možnosti Dialogu / Dimensions of Dialogue*, 1982. Photographic still from film. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-gGpWpra-g> accessed 10/01/2020
- Fig 5 Hayley White, *the conversations I have with myself*, 2019. Photographic still of Film. Script was taken from 8 letters (fig 3) written weekly from October to December 2019.
- Fig 6 Samuel Beckett, *Not I*, 1972. Photographic still from a film of the live performance. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4LDwfKxr-M> accessed 06/02/2019
- Fig 7 Hayley White, *The Conversation - Philomela*, 2020. Sculpture, plaster, latex.
- Fig 8 Hayley White, *the inward turn*, 2020. Photographs of drawings & collage - documenting a process.
- Fig 9 Hayley White, *the inward turn*, 2020. Photograph of drawing & collage.
- Fig 10 Hayley White, *Unknown Organ I*, 2020. Photograph of drawing & collage.
- Fig 11 Hayley White, *Unknown Organ II*, 2020. Photograph of collage.
- Fig 12 Hayley White, *Unknown Organ II*, 2020. Photograph of collage.
- Fig 13 Helen Chadwick, *Loop My Loop*, 1991. Photograph of installation Richard Saltoun gallery & 14
and *Eat Me*, 2003. Close up photograph of installation Zelda Cheatle Gallery
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- Fig 16 Hayley White, *Subserosal*, 2020. Digital scans of drawings. Fibroid Series.
- Fig 17 Hayley White, *Twins I, Twins II, Twins III, Twins V, Twins IV, Submucosal; Unborn*, 2020.
to 22 Digital scans of drawings. Fibroid Series.
- Fig 23 Hayley White, *Pedunculated*. 2020. Digital scans of drawings. Fibroid Series.
- Fig 24 Leonardo Da Vinci, *Sketch book - anatomical depiction of the heart*, 1510. Windsor Folios, part of the Royal Collection, held at Windsor. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/science/leonardo/gallery/heart.shtml> accessed 10/02/2021
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- Fig 26 Nozedar (2010) *Hand of Fatima / Khamsa* (Talisman) *The Illustrated Signs & Symbols Sourcebook*. Uk Harper Collins. Publication.
- Fig 27 Hayley White, *Unknown Amulet I - Alive, Living & Hope Amulet Series*. 2020. Photograph of sculptures, found objects and artists hair.
- Fig 28 Hayley White, *Unknown Amulet II - Alive, Living & Hope Amulet series*, 2020. Photograph of sculptures, found objects and artists hair.
- Fig 29 Hayley White, *Somatic Sculptures / Amulets & Drawings - Alive, Living & Hope Series*, 2020. Photograph of sculptures and drawings.
- Fig 30 Hayley White, *Dead Fibroid - Death, Decay & Dying Series*, 2020. Photograph of sculpture, found organic materials and artists hair.

- Fig 31 Hayley White, *Death, Decay & Dying Amulets Series*, 2020. Photograph of sculptures, found organic materials and artists' hair.
- Fig 32 Hayley White, *Amulet Archive Series*, 2020. Analogue 35mm photographs.
- Fig 33 Hayley White, *Map: Finding Fibroids*, 2020. Artists book photograph.
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- Fig 36 Hayley White, *Box*, 2020, Artist book / object photograph
- Fig 37 Hayley White, *Box*, 2020. Artist Book / object documentation photograph
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- Fig 39 Hayley White, *Box & Amulet*, 2020. Artists Book documentation photograph
- Fig 40 Hayley White, *Breathe*, 2020. Digital scan of somatic drawing of a somatic sculpture.
- Fig 41 Hayley White, *Missing*, 2020. Digital scan of somatic drawing of a somatic sculpture.
- Fig 42 Hayley White, *Womb of needs and reflection*, 2021. Photograph of drawing

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