

## The Matter of Mapping Multispecies Entanglements of Mourning—A Manifesto’s Shout, An Orca’s Tour of Grief

Jacqueline Viola Moulton

Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1344/jnmr.v2i1.33376>

### Abstract

Mapping entanglements is work—work of care, maintenance, and mourning. This project utilises a new materialist methodology inherited from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who follow lines of becoming to track compositions which compose worlds. To map (non-linear, temporal, and situated) lines of loss across multispecies landscapes is material work of more-than-human mourning. The New York City-based performance artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles—alongside scholars such as María Puig de la Bellacasa and Donna J. Haraway—reorient configurations of work and care, which enable these lines to be followed into more-than-human worlds. Mapping lines of mourning into multispecies worlds is material work of the aesthetic-ethical response within shared and troubled landscapes. The key storytellers within the narrative of mourning and joy woven into this paper are the Salish Sea, the Lummi Nation, the Chinook Salmon, and the Southern Resident killer whale; the voices and cries to which this project, in work and care, is dedicated.

### Keywords

Ecology; philosophy; mourning; aesthetics; materiality

## Lines

The sleek and powerful black marine body, with its bold offsetting markers and dashes of white conjure forth the readily recognisable figuration of the orca whale (*Orcinus orca*). This easily identifiable cetacean body often obscures the more particular nuanced markings which designate differences within orca whale categorisations. The Southern Resident killer whales, who occupy specific waters in the Eastern North Pacific, are distinguishable both in behaviour and marking patterns. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that “resident whales have a variety of saddle patch pigmentations with five different patterns recognized” (Varney, 2005). Markings, patches, tracings, flows, striations are all comprised by lines; lines which are not purely linear, singular, or of a cohesive trajectory but are rather, as philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari iterate, conjunctions, multiplicities, and complex continuations along other lines. As they write: “[W]e said that we are composed of lines, three kinds of lines. Or rather, of bundles of lines, for each is multiple” (1987, p. 202). To follow the lines which craft the sleek and discernible markings upon the orca out into heterogeneous interrelations is to behold a multitude of entanglements and particularities. These lines map through an earth-in-trouble—revealing loss, death, extinction, and the human’s place and responsibility therein, as contemporary urgencies.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the “animal elegance” of a fish etched across by lines—its unique markings, the crisscross hatchings along its body. These lines, undecipherable to the human eye, become cast aside from human conceptions and iterations of shared worlds; and “thus disorganized, disarticulated,” they world “with the lines of a rock, sand, and plants, becoming imperceptible” (1987, p. 280). These lines, markings, hatchings upon other-than-human bodies and their environments do the work of both aesthetic and ecological worlding—of creating cohabitated worlds, worlds which are at stake to and with one another. These lines upon the orca are more than passive markers; they are lines which go to work, threads which build worlds. The lines and markings upon the Southern Resident orca whale, both unique and patterned, reveal their particularity and situatedness within time, space, and its entanglements of interdependence and cohabitation. They are lines of great multiplicity. Mapping lines of entanglement is work—work of the discursive and the material. Work that moreover builds and (re)builds worlds as acts of becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 280) write that “making the world a becoming, is to world, to make a world or worlds”. These worlds are worlds in trouble, ecologies in emergency, landscapes in crisis.

These worlds-in-trouble call and cry out in other-than-human languages and craft the ethical claim of liveability through both historical and contemporary time. To whom, to what, and how can the human equitably respond? Ethical claims and responses are composed of lines, threads, strands, pathways. These form an enlivened assemblage itself—a generative and participatory entanglement, entanglement(s) imagined as wild, risky, and performative mappings. This paper reads entanglement (Barad, 2007) alongside the idea of mapping (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The idea of entanglement this paper promotes is a conception and praxis which weaves interdependent threads into assemblages, maps, and worlds. Karen Barad, theoretical physicist and feminist theorist, writes that agency itself is relational and that “agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements” (2007, p. 33). For Deleuze and Guattari the map is “open and connectable” and “has multiple entryways” (1987, p. 12). Their conception of entanglement is thus a map and a mapping of relational assemblages. “The map has to do with performance,” they write; a performance wherein these relational entanglements of lines and threads perform the map(s) which build and create more-than-human worlds (p. 12). To follow lines of entanglement within worlds-in-trouble is to encounter great loss and death, bringing multispecies concerns within the realm of mourning.

The lines of becoming amongst shared and cohabitated worlds vibrate with agency. Within these generative worlds, creatures, kin, landscapes, machines, animals, and human are brought together in a web of assemblage—an assemblage which experiences both grief and joy. Human exceptionalism enacts poor thinking and thus creates stories that officiate dichotomies and binaries between the human that speaks, uses languages, thinks, weeps, builds worlds, and the non-human that supposedly does not. Mourning disrupts the regimes of thought, language, and of unimaginative ethical configurations. This deconstructionist nature of mourning crafts a wild and open map of weaving and unweaving threads—threads that we can follow to tell, to listen, and to behold rich and complex stories of entangled worlds. Feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway writes (2016, p. 39), “grief is a path to understanding entangled shared living and dying; human beings must grieve *with*, because we are in

and of this fabric of undoing”. Mourning is both the material cry of an earth-in-trouble as well as the materiality of the ethical response; a response of the of work, care, maintenance,<sup>1</sup> and art. How do we think through burdened and troubled words, such as care, work, mourning, and maintenance, in imaginative and equitable ways? Within these words themselves smoulders a deconstructionist and transfigurational force. Pulling at the edges of these opaque and transcendental signifiers is matter and materiality—the materiality of mourning which is a grieving-with. A mourning, albeit situated and temporal, which is shared, procreative, and made interrelational along traversing lines of difference and loss.

This new materialist approach of mapping lines and threads of mourning through and into shared more-than-human worlds is inherited from Deleuze and Guattari’s lineage of lines, striations, flows, and flights that craft an assemblage—an ethical-aesthetic response as assemblage within the troubled worlds we share. This project is rooted in the scholarship of science and technology studies scholar María Puig de la Bellacasa and wishes to define and exemplify the matters of care that involve “affective, ethical, and hands-on agencies of practical and material consequence” (2017, p. 4). This narrative-driven, philosophical assemblage furthermore follows in the footsteps of the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Ukeles is a New York City-based performance artist and an unsalaried artist-in-residence at the New York Sanitation Department since 1976. In 1968, Ukeles became a mother as well. She therefore started struggling with the hierarchies crafted within the dichotomies of work, the work of art versus the work of maintaining life and the work of the home. Ukeles guides this narrative through her (re)worlding of work, of care, and of maintenance—crafting threads, lines, and striations which are enabled to flow outward into more-than-human worlds. The animal lines of elegance, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe it, are followed from the work of Ukeles and into the lines which form the patches and markings upon an orca whale, the Southern Resident killer whale, the Coast Salish Nations, the Chinook Salmon, and the marine biologists who work with attentive care towards them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ukeles (1969, p. 2) defines two systems of work, one is development and the avant-garde, and the other is the work of maintenance—all that which is required to maintain life; “clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash the baby’s diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, mend the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinking garbage...”

## Care / Work / Maintenance

The word “CARE” is handwritten in large letters, layered in blue and black pen ink on the top of the typed proposal, written by Mierle Laderman Ukeles entitled *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* (1969). This document is part proposal, part manifesto. “MANIFESTO!”—handwritten as well—are the words most atop the document; the first of many bold declarations of intent, philosophical thought, and material iterations.

Under Point I, titled “IDEAS,” Ukeles writes that “the exhibition of Maintenance Art, ‘CARE,’ would zero in on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art, and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues” (1969, p. 2). The word *care* here conjures forth historical, philosophical, and socioeconomic hauntings through which Ukeles (p. 2) elucidates the inherited imbalance of both care and work, as she states, “Housewives = no pay”.

The underlying structure and theoretical engine driving this “MANIFESTO!” is the push/pull between the idea of the pure, creative, omnipotent, singular individual versus the communal, the relational, the entangled, and the vulnerable—all that which requires work, care, and daily sustenance is maintenance. Maintenance work, Ukeles writes, in contrast to development (or pure individual creation), is to “keep the dust off the pure individual creation; persevere the new: sustain the change” (1969, p. 2). Maintenance work is the work of the home, of putting dinner on the table, of doing laundry—conjuring forth oppressive gender binaries (and the divisive essentialisms contained within). In the words of Ukeles (p. 3), “I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc.”. Maintenance work, which often consists of free labour, is work which is not considered art in itself, but rather work which is required to sustain the avant-garde and the “pure individual creation” of artistic production. Maintenance work is the work of maintaining life; the work of care.

“Care, caring, carer. Burdened words contested words. And yet so common in everyday life, as if care was evident, beyond particular expertise or knowledge” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 1). With these words, Puig de la Bellacasa opens her book on care—a text that begins by laying out a specific trouble, namely, the trouble of language itself. Words are not passive or pure objects but are rather laborers, performers, gesticulators, historical haunted houses, and wily subjects who, in part, build worlds. As Deleuze and Guattari write (1987, p. 76), “language is not life; it gives

orders. Life does not speak, it listens and waits". These burdened words of care, work, and maintenance give orders and craft worlds—yet we recall the worlds which flow outward from the lines of “animal elegance” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 280) which are marked upon the orca whale. These lives, lines, and worlds are, from an exclusionary human perspective, perceived as silent and without language. How do we, as humans, learn to attune our sensibilities, imaginations, and ethical questions toward the cries calling from outside of human-centred language and worlds? Language gives orders (and builds worlds), and as such, words themselves perform the work of human exceptionalism. And they do so by marking the borders of where the human ends, and all that which is the non-human, begins, thereby dangerously separating the worlds of humans and the worlds of animals and their environments. The perceived capacity for world-building inherent within the usage of language begets a dichotomy which Ukeles’ *Manifesto* (1969) identifies as well; that is, a dichotomy between the ideal of the pure individual (the human—the king of creation and almighty being, development, progress, change) and the subordinated collective as well as all modes of otherness (the non-human, the communal, maintenance work, care). Alongside language, mourning and grief, as Ukeles would have it, should become apprehended as something that operates between and across human worlds and non-human worlds. Yet, *National Geographic*, in an article discussing a video of a group of elephants taking time to touch and smell the deceased body of their matriarch, asks of the elephants, “do they have the human characteristic of grief?” (Parker, 2016, n. p.). The ability to mourn, to grieve, and to be affected by loss is aligned, alongside language, as an exclusionary and hierarchic human-only mode of expression.

“The sour ball of every revolution: after the revolution, who’s going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?”, asks Ukeles (1969, p. 1). At the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, in Hartford, Connecticut, Ukuleles performed maintenance art and for an eight-hour day cleaned the museum floor, steps, and display cases, revealing the silence, disparagement, and overlooked nature present within this type of work. “The culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs = minimum wages, housewives = no pay” (p. 2). These philosophical proclamations within Ukeles’ manifesto are situated within the 60s and 70s labour and feminist movements. Progress has been made since then, but the world remains enrooted in the oppressive regimes and ideologies of

racism, sexism, xenophobia, and exploitative labour practices that constitute late-stage capitalism. A global pandemic currently is sweeping across the world, and COVID-19 seems to reveal the active presence of these same delineations and hierarchical discourses of care and work within ethical thought, within the labour market, within socio-political and economic landscapes, and within the home. Ukeles' revelatory statements of the world's apparent disdain for maintenance jobs and workers becomes the question of 2020: Which workers and what types of work are deemed as essential? Who bears the brunt of having to work within the home? Whose lives are viewed as expendable and disposable? Whose voice is heard and who is silenced? These dichotomies within human configurations between development and the individual versus the silence of maintenance work bleed out into the multispecies configuration of shared worlds. The lines between human and animal inherent these same patterns and exclusions between who is granted a voice and who is silenced. These modes of silencing, oppression, and otherness lead into the wild and disruptive plains of mourning.

## Muteness / Mourning

During an interview with *Art in America*, Ukeles is asked the following question: "In 1968 you had your first baby?" She answers as follows,

Right. Yes. And when people would meet me pushing my baby carriage, they didn't have any questions to ask me. They didn't say 'How is it, to create life? How can you describe this amazing thing?' There really weren't questions. It was like I was mute, there was no language. (Ukeles in Ryan, 2009, n. p.)

There is both a mourning in muteness and a muteness in mourning. Within the experience of muteness due to socio-political exclusion, one is excluded from language and expression causing the pangs of grief and isolation. "It was like I was mute" (n. p.), Ukeles says in the same interview, revealing the muteness in mourning, as mourning disrupts the perceived clear and concise nature of language and modes of expression. Muteness, within exclusion, casts its subject outside of language and into the wild and transformative plains of lament. Lament ruptures cohesive significations and renders the subject that is experiencing it outside of hegemonic modes of meaning-making. Mourning disrupts meaning itself. Mourning is matter that

disfigures and reconfigures thought, expression, language, worlds. The mourning inherent within the muteness due to exclusion brings the work of mourning into materiality, thereby transfiguring modes of grief into wailings, cries, moans, silences, and tears—the embodied and generative matter of mourning.

Mourning, often a response to death or loss, ruptures meaning-making and knowledge-producing schemes; schemes that, as Deleuze and Guattari warn, often think for us. “We call any specific formalization of expression a regime of signs, at least when the expression is linguistic” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 111). Mourning is matter that disrupts these regimes of signs in upending patterned human habits of thought, of praxis, of imagination, and of language. These signifying regimes, which think and speak for us, block, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, lines of flight (see 1987, p. 508). The threads of mourning are these very lines of flight; lines which emanate from more-than-human worlds and present therein a pathway outward from fixed territories. “The function of deterritorialization,” claim Deleuze and Guattari (p. 508), “is the movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory”. Our shared worlds are aggregates, weavings, and art performances of care, work, maintenance, assemblages—*assemblages* which “are complexes of lines” (p. 505).

These complexes craft a map wherein the function and force of mourning is one that disrupts and ruptures cohesive tapestries. This allows for thinking and language to become opened and reimagined alongside beings and places of difference. Ukeles herself, brought into the warp and woof of maintenance work through childbearing, was cast out from question, from language, from voice. In her 1969 *Manifesto*, Ukeles’ silence-cum-mourning becomes transfigured into poetic matter and expression. Mourning strides against our cohesive, rational, and regime-like modes of language, of work, and of care—an aesthetic-ethical pathway and assemblage of lines moving outward from exclusionary territories and into the wild spaces of shared worlds.

The cries, calls, and articulations, especially of that which cannot be expressed, of what the human ear does not decipher as language—the calls of the earth, of multispecies communication, of the terra and the sea—also fall prey to this demonstrative muteness. The philosopher Martin Heidegger notably distinguishes the human from the nonhuman via the operations of thinking and language. He writes, “because plants and animals are lodged in their respective environments but are never placed freely in the clearing of Being which alone is ‘world,’ they lack language”

(Heidegger, 1977, p. 230). Anthropocentrism, as a limiting and exclusionary apparatus, erroneously perceives otherness as muteness and precludes that which is other-than-human from the relational work of world-building and world-sharing. Heidegger underlines this when stating that “the stone is without world” (p. 229).

There is much at stake in the need for co-practices of re-building and re-weaving worlds. Narratives, ethics, and philosophical configurations need to be continually rewoven to allow for the stone, the plant, and the animal to be bodies and beings which matter within epistemological practices of mapping lines of connection. These are lines that configure worlds, and as such, should be mapped with care. “It matters what worlds world worlds,” Haraway also writes in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016, p. 35). As such, being a *being* in the world requires aesthetic-ethical ways of being acutely aware of the worlds that world the worlds we co-inhabit.

## **Southern Resident Killer Whale**

On July 24, 2018, an orca whale, known as J35, gave birth to a female calf in the Pacific waters along the coast of British Columbia. Tragically, within half an hour, the calf died. This poignant moment reveals the multiplicities within the nature of loss and mourning. Encountered in this story, is both the singular loss of one calf to a particular orca (J35) in a body of water, as well as the larger narrative of struggle and loss in the interrelated and dynamic world(s) of the *Orcinus orca* species.

According to the Center for Whale Research, the Southern Resident killer whales had not had a single successful pregnancy in three years at the time of the loss of J35’s calf (see Chiu, 2018). Loss, and the response toward it, is comprised of the one and the many, the singular and the general, the material and the transcendent—revealing the deep and abiding interconnectedness and relationality within worlds. The loss of J35’s calf is a singular story within a larger world and narrative of landscapes in trouble, of death, starvation, and risk sweeping across the species itself. The animal-elegant lines from the markings on J35 align to her dead offspring and flow outward along lines of history, time, space, all the way to the human and back—creating a map of threaded interconnectedness that show how worlds are worlded. In February 2006, the NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service declared that the J-pod, of which J35 is a member, alongside the K and L pods (collectively called the Southern Resident

killer whales just referred to), was a distinct population segment (see Varney, 2005). The distinct population segment (i.e., DPS) proclamation for the Southern Resident killer whales allows for these orca pods to be officially declared as endangered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For a DPS to be considered categorically endangered rather than threatened, means that the Southern Resident killer whales must be “at risk for extinction” (Varney, 2005, n. p.).

To map lines of grief across multispecied landscapes is to follow specific, temporal lines of connection and entanglement; it is both a weaving and an unweaving of the ways in which worlds world worlds. Or as also emphasised by Haraway (2004, p. 299): “Lives are built; so we had best become good craftspeople with the other worldly actants in the story. There is a great deal of rebuilding to do.” The designation of the Southern Resident killer whale as a distinct population does more than just linguistically position them as endangered, it allows for resources and operations to be put into place for their protection, sustainability, and liveability, as well as elucidating the ethical questions and modes of responsibility revealed through their situated lives. The foregoing allows humans to see how lines of loss and mourning reveal our relational entanglements with more-than-human worlds.

### **Southern Resident Killer Whale / Chinook Salmon / Salish Sea / Lummi Nation**

“Orca Mother Drops Calf, After Unprecedented 17 Days of Mourning,” reads the *National Geographic* headline on August 13, 2018 (Cuthbert & Main, 2018). J35, also named Tahlequah, garnered national attention as she carried her dead calf for an extraordinary 17 days traveling over 1,000 miles. These many days of work and mourning are called in the press and by the biologists who accompany her, a “tour of grief” (“J35,” 2018, n. p.).

The lines of grief from J35 and her dead calf reach through, across, and within other beings, places, and times—creating a patchwork of communality and interdependence with the Chinook salmon, the Salish Sea, and the Lummi Nation. To follow these lines is to encounter a confluence and proliferation of threads which is an aesthetic-ethical mapping of connection, maintenance, care, and work. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 12) write that this map is “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with

the real;" a map which is "open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification". The loss and complexity of mourning revealed through a singular killer whale opens up a wider world within the relationality of grief, of space, of narrative—illuminating a great and consequential interconnectedness along lines of entanglement. The West Coast Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), upon whom the Southern Resident killer whales feed almost exclusively, are in trouble themselves. The NOAA Fisheries list two species of Chinook salmon as endangered, seven species as threatened, and one species a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act ("Southern resident," 2020, n. p.). As the climate warms in and around Puget Sound and the Salish Sea, the salmon, upon whom so many are dependent, are moving farther north to Canada (Fears, 2015, n. p.). As the sea suffers, so too do the Chinook salmon, resulting in the starvation of the Southern Resident killer whale population. Kathryn Brigham, chair of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, points out the devastating and pervasive consequences of colonialism in the quote below. Colonialism does not only strip land away from its original inhabitants but also seeks to dominate and eradicate cultures; cultures which work in harmony with the sea, the coast, the salmon, and the orca:

The salmon survived for centuries in the presence of one group of humans: Native Americans. Before the non-Indians came, tribes managed the natural resources and protected them. We were taught that if you take care of the land and the resources, the land will take care of you. (Brigham quoted in Fears, 2015, n. p.)

In January 2019 J17, matriarch of the Southern Resident killer whale J-pod, and mother to Tahlequah (J35), was reported to be malnourished and starving. The death of the matriarchal figure within orca familial pods is a devastating loss. An aerial image by NOAA Fisheries of J17 revealed a "very poor body condition on May 6th, 2019," noting "the white eye patches that trace the outline of her skull due to a reduction in fat around the head" ("Aerial images," 2019). In 2020, the Orca Network listed J17 as missing and since she was no longer sighted with her family, presumed her dead ("Southern resident orca community," 2020). The Southern Resident killer whales and the Chinook salmon reside within particular seas, waterways, and ecologies which enfold these species alongside the impacts of human presence into a cohabitational space of entanglement and dwelling—here, in the waters of the Salish Sea.

The Salish Sea's name pays homage to its first human inhabitants, the Coast Salish. The title of Coast Salish references linguistically related Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. The Coast Salish designation indicates more than a dozen languages and dialects used within many different Nations and Communities along the lands bordering the Salish Sea: Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands, Gulf Islands, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Strait of Georgia, and the Pacific coast of Washington and northern Oregon (Coast Salish people). Within the larger world of Coast Salish is the Lummi Nation, the original inhabitants of the Puget Sound lowlands and southern British Columbia. The Lummi Nation (*Lhaq'temish* or People of the Sea) depend physically and culturally upon the annual migration of the salmon and have so for centuries. From spring to fall, the Southern Resident killer whale lives within the waterways of the Salish Sea, sharing a coast with the community. The Lummi Nation's chairman Jay Julius says the following of these orca pods: "We've fished alongside them since time immemorial. They live for the same thing we live for: family" (Julius as quoted in Yong, 2018, n. p.). Squil-le-he-le Raynell Morris as quoted by Pulkkinen in the Guardian claims something similar: "[W]e as Lummis learn pretty early on who our relations are, and we are taught that those are our relations under the waves. We see them as part of our family, part of our community" (Morris in Pulkkinen, 2019, n. p.). Human impact and relation thus come to bear upon the liveability of the salmon, the orca, and the sea.

Thinking through a changing world, Guattari in *The Three Ecologies* (2000), notes that "kinship networks tend to be reduced to a bare minimum" (p. 17). To follow, thread, weave, and map the lines within worlds, is to encounter both kin and otherness along new pathways of thinking, imagining, and putting into practice our entangled tapestries. This is also underscored by Haraway when she says that "the task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick presence" (2016, p. 1). These are potent, vital, and urgent lessons, moments, and events of care, of liveability, of work, of maintenance. These are openings within our cohabitated and threaded maps, where mourning can allow us to reimagine who is our kin and what our responsibility is therein. These lines of loss which weave assemblages and entangled maps through the worlds of the Southern Resident killer whale, the Chinook salmon, and the Salish sea both reveal

and imagine the work of maintaining life as an aesthetic-ethical response to landscapes in trouble.

## **Mourning's Materiality**

Throughout the deep entanglements of the Salish Sea, the Coast Salish Nations, the Chinook salmon, and the Southern Resident killer whale, the materiality of mourning is revealed. Kinship across differing landscapes and species enables mourning to be more than just the psychoanalytic matter of the human psyche: mourning is an interdependent multispecies map of world-building, of care, and of work. To unequivocally designate J35's response to the loss of her calf as mourning is to risk the pervasive habit of anthropomorphism; a habit which could lead to humans turning a blind eye to the magnificent rupturing presence of difference.

To place an exclusionary human-only rubric upon the behaviours and responses of a different species is to silence them again, ignoring their unique and situated meaning-making practices within the worlds they inhabit. To read all otherness and multispecies accounts through the lens of the human renders our ethical and creative responses toward difference thwarted and stunted. Yet, to denote all expression and response to loss as a characteristic only belonging to the human misses the point as well. For mourning to be characterised as a privileged human response is to miss the immensely important sensibility required to attune human thinking and doing toward a grieving-with diverging lines, differing species, and worlds of difference. Mourning and grief—as responses to experiences of loss—are not exclusive to human beings. Mourning, woven through multispecies landscapes, is matter that matters. Mourning is matter that weaves entangled lines across differences of ecology and being, crafting a relational map and assemblage of entanglement and responsibility. To speak of entangled lines conjures forth another realm of kinships within these maps of communal ecologies, namely, the tangled lines of technology, the relations and impacts between human, animal, earth, and the inorganic critters of screen, machine, wire, signal, and electricity. The vast impact, role, and interrelationality of these technological critters and kin are not explored in this article but I acknowledge their abiding presence and thank them for their service. I also would like to remain curious, open, and questioning of the binds that we as, humans, make with such machines

and, in extension, the binds and relations enacted therein between animals, environments, and the technologies used to study them.

It is clear that within the apparatus of human exceptionalism, there is a tremendous urge for the human to speak on behalf of what, within our shared worlds, has been silenced. Perhaps mourning can be transfigurational within shared worlds, as the multiplicity within the materiality of mourning is aware of its own limits and boundaries—the limits of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. Mourning operates as openings within co-created maps of entangled lines and worlds. Mourning operates as both materiality and work which extends beyond human exceptionalism and the hierarchical delineations between types of work itself.

In an interview, Ukeles (in Finkelppearl, 2001, p. 8) says the following: “People would ask: ‘Do you do anything?’ I had never worked so hard in my whole life as when I had a little baby. Ever”. Deborah Giles, Science and Research Director of the non-profit *Wild Orca*, describes the Southern Resident killer whale Tahlequah (J35) “as an incredibly attentive mother that played with her first calf, Notch (J47), more than most orca moms” (Giles in Long, 2018). These two lines of narrative elucidate the complexity inherited through human ideas of care, maintenance, and work—work that is moreover often gendered. Ukeles pinpoints to the dichotomy of the constructed notion of gendered work: “I learned that Jackson [Pollock], Marcel [Duchamp] and Mark [Rothko] didn’t change diapers” (Ukeles in Wetzler, 2016, n. p.). These ideas of women’s work evoke the essentialist narrative of gender, which produces proliferating lines of oppression and exclusion. Humanity perpetually repeats a great and dangerous binary not only related to labour but also between rationality and emotions. This historical and philosophical inheritance can be found in Plato’s text, *The Phaedo* (2002), which describes the last moments and death of the ancient philosopher Socrates. After drinking the lethal libation to end his life Socrates becomes upset at the sight of tears from the men who were present.

‘What is this,’ he said, ‘you strange fellows. It is mainly for this reason that I sent the women away, to avoid such unseemliness, for I am told one should die in good omened silence. So keep quiet and control yourselves.’ His words made us ashamed, and we checked our tears (Plato, 2002, p. 99).

This idealist legacy hierarchically divides knowledge and emotions and renders mourning as a less-than and debilitated mode of experiencing, knowing, and creating worlds. This Socratic legacy does not imagine or allow for mourning to be a radical, wild, and differing epistemological pathway but instead defines mourning as a weak, subordinate, and gendered position.

Mourning is a relational and entangled response to loss, a destabilising of the secure and self-sufficient 'I'. Ukeles identifies the vacuousness behind the omnipresent and omnipotent 'I'; "it was a total phony thing. It had an evil underside of autonomy, only the 'I'; not acknowledging who holds you up, and who supports you, and who's providing the food" (Ukeles in Finkelpearl, 2001, p. 8). The inheritance of the pervasive human 'I' allows us to ignore our inherent relationality and interdependence, it is an 'I' which builds poor worlds with shallow stories. As J35 carried and mourned her calf for seventeen days along one thousand miles, her journey was work she did not sustain alone. The work of mourning this calf, of attending to the life of J35 herself, of sustaining familial ties was work and care which the J-pod shared. Jenny Atkinson, director of the Whale Museum on San Juan Island reports, "we do know her family is sharing the responsibility of caring for this calf, that she's not always the one carrying it, that they seem to take turns" (Atkins in Goodyear, 2018, n. p.). J35 dedicated seventeen days to carrying a dead calf, an endeavour of mourning she did not undertake alone, providing not only care, but also mourning work. These markers of emotionality, of the varied responses to loss, are matters of shared world-building, worlds of care and work, and of ethical responsibility in the presence of a world facing devastating extinctions.

## Silence / Lament

Philosopher Walter Benjamin notes that "it is a metaphysical truth that all nature would begin to lament if it were endowed with language (though to 'endow with language' is more than 'to make able to speak')" (Benjamin, 1996, 72). For Benjamin, this lamentation is twofold: nature laments language itself and also mourns its perceived *silence*; its *speechlessness*. Ukeles identifies the muteness and lament one experiences when cast outside of the cultural and socioeconomic parameters of language and meaningful work: "I was doing work that's so common, yet there was no

cultural language for this work” (Ukeles in Ryan, 2009, n. p.). Ukeles, who worked within the oft-ignored and oft-silenced realm of maintenance work was perceived as without-voice and so too is the orca whale, within its designation of animal, perceived as without speech and silent.

The visceral display of J35’s mourning work is visual and palpable, and it moreover reveals the more subtle lines and traces of grief which remain undecipherable to human sensibility: the warming of the waters, the copious deaths of the salmon, the slow starvation of the orcas, the ongoing legacy of sustained trauma to the Coast Salish’s First Nations tribes, and the communities who first inhabited these coastal lands. To hear what does not cry out in human voices requires imagination and creative response and responsibilities; it requires ethical listening and thinking alongside a dedication to grieving-with. Haraway’s (2016, p. 39) idea that “grief is a path to understanding” finds resonance in Benjamin’s work which identifies mourning and lament as an epistemological rupture and divergent pathway; “lament, however, is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language” (Benjamin, 1996, p. 73). Benjamin upends the linearity and rationality of language and of privileged modes of mourning, or as he puts it, “even where there is only a rustling of plants, there is always a lament” (p. 73). The lament of nature ruptures closed cohesive, and hegemonic narratives of human exceptionalism. The nonlinear weaving and warping lines of grief running through the Lummi Tribe, the Salish Sea, the Chinook Salmon, and the Southern Resident killer whale, are rich and storied stratifications. These stratifications upend the oppressive narrative that nature is silent and awaiting human words and worlds. To be listening for and learning how to attune the human ear to the stories and voices of other beings across topographies of difference, means we can begin to (re)imagine narratives, work, and equitable worlds outside of human-centric worlds which have consisted for too long of mainly human-only voices.

## Earth Maintenance

Part three of Ukeles’ *Manifesto* (1969) is called “Earth Maintenance.” Her performance art document proposes that containers of polluted air, river water, and ravaged land be brought in every day to be “purified, de-polluted, rehabilitated, recycled, and conserved” (p. 4). Ukeles expands the ideas of maintenance work to extend beyond

the home and labour market discourses to reach into the configurations of how we both think about the earth and how we respond with care towards it. Care, as Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p. 5) states, is not just theoretical thought but the “concrete work of maintenance, with ethical and affective implications, and as a vital politics in interdependent worlds”. Mourning work is the work of care, of maintenance, of aesthetics, of ethics—an interactive and collaborative ethic of map-making from the lines of mourning and interrelation which comprise our shared worlds. These weaving lines that create maps, maps that, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write, are full of openings, modifications, reversals, and questions. Ukeles, faced with the silencing inherent within the apparatus of maintenance work asks herself the question of liveability in order to (re)learn how to survive as both an artist and a mother. In an interview, she describes these questions that she must ask of herself, “how do I keep going? ... What do you have to do to keep alive? How do you get from minute to minute? (Ukeles in Ryan, 2009, n. p.).

Within the delineations of specific worlds, species, or types of work as groups that are speechless and silent, the ethical question becomes the question of liveability. To ask with curiosity and care along lines of difference, “*what do you have to do to keep alive?*” is to ask the ethical question. Ethical responses and responsibilities are formed by the quality and equitability within the questions that are being asked. Anthropocentrism perpetuates human thinking and imagination to be what speaks for, instead of learning how to ask questions of. “*How do we keep going?*” becomes the interrelational and aesthetic-ethical question of response and responsibility. J35’s carrying of her dead calf, her tour of grief is a multispecies iteration of this very question. How do we furthermore keep going along and with one another in entangled responsibility, care, and equitable liveability? This becomes the question of grieving-with and of the work of mourning—a work never finished nor closed. To live into these questions themselves is the very pathway of mapping the lines of grief. To live asking curious, risky, and open questions, and to live as if the earth is asking as well these same questions of care, work, maintenance; asking us how it can keep going, overburdened as it is.

The seventeen days during which J35 carried her dead calf required great exertion, care, and work. Deborah Giles explains,

If you're a whale or a dolphin, it means you have to go down and pick that animal up as it's sinking, bring it to the surface, hold your breath for as long as you can and then basically dump your baby off your head in order to just take a breath. (Giles quoted in Chiu, 2018)

J35 struggled against the tide: her breath was heavy, and she was eating less (Mapes, 2019). J35 was putting to work not only a response to loss but the maintenance of her familial bonds; the ways and means Southern Resident killer whales uniquely keep going. About one month after the loss of her calf, J35 was seen no longer carrying the calf's body and was, as the Center for Whale Research reports, vigorously chasing a school of salmon alongside her pod-mates, her behaviour being noted as "remarkably frisky" ("J35 update," 2018). J35 found a way to keep going. The threads of mourning can bring its inhabitants, critters, and kin into the opened thresholds of resilience, liveability—and perhaps, even into joy. The joy of the lines which flow and arch. The joy and freedom of a remarkably frisky orca in all its animal elegance.

Tahlequah's liveability, mourning, and her livelihood is tied up within the complexity of entanglement—the entanglements of sea, salmon, and human impact. We are always connected, not to all things but to specific things, and these situated lines form maps of worlds, full of material ties and strings which trace lineages and legacies of loss and mourning. For Ukeles, the "Earth Maintenance" portion of the *Manifesto* was to construct the image of the earth as a "needy and finite place," to reveal that "taking care of the planet could grow out of ancient work-wisdom" (Ukeles in Finkelpearl, 2001, p. 13). Care, work, and maintenance are multispecies questions to live into; an ethical imagining and (re)imagining of our world as shared. Lines of loss are traceable and connected, temporal and situated. To follow them, is to follow striations of care, to ask ethical questions, to formulate aesthetic ways of listening, and thereby to craft the work(s) of mourning. Flowing through the Salish Sea, the Lummi Nation, the Chinook Salmon, and the Southern Resident killer whale are such lines of loss and mourning, revealing how we can transfigure our all-too-human ideas of care, of work, of maintenance.

## An Ongoing Epilogue

A new thread forms. A new line emerges. The dorsal fin of an orca takes up to a day or two to straighten upwards from the bent-over positionality it receives when in the womb. Jutting up above the waters of the Salish Sea, a sleek and newly upward angled dorsal fin emerges. On September 4, 2020, J35 gave birth to a “healthy and precocious” calf (“J57,” 2020, n. p.). Our tapestry of both mourning and joy thereby expands. Our worldly assemblage becomes a bit wilder. Welcome to the world, J57. As we welcome you, you welcome us...

## Bibliography

Aerial images document Southern Resident killer whale j17’s continued decline. (2019, May). NOAA Fisheries.

[https://archive.fisheries.noaa.gov/wcr/stories/2019/15\\_05152019-srkw-j17.html](https://archive.fisheries.noaa.gov/wcr/stories/2019/15_05152019-srkw-j17.html).

Barad, Karen (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.

Benjamin, Walter (1996). *Selected writings volume 1, 1913-1926*. (M. Bullock & M.W. Jennings, Ed.). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Chiu, Allyson (2018, July 27). An orca calf died shortly after being born. Her grieving mother has carried her body for days. *The Washington Post*.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/07/27/an-orca-calf-died-shortly-after-being-born-her-grieving-mother-has-carried-her-body-for-days/>.

Coast Salish people & languages. (n. d.). *Burke Museum*. Retrieved May 18, 2020.

<https://www.burkemuseum.org/collections-and-research/culture/contemporary-culture/coast-salish-art/coast-salishpeople>.

Cuthbert, Lori & Main, Douglas (2018, August 13). Orca mother drops calf, after unprecedented 17 days of mourning. *National Geographic*.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/08/orca-mourning-calf-killer-whale-northwest-news/>.

Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. (B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. Originally published in French 1980.

Fears, Darryl (2015, July 30). As salmon vanish in the dry Pacific Northwest so does Native heritage. *The Washington Post*.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/as-salmon-vanish-in-the-dry-pacific-northwest-so-does-native-heritage/2015/07/30/2ae9f7a6-2f14-11e5-8f36-18d1d501920d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/as-salmon-vanish-in-the-dry-pacific-northwest-so-does-native-heritage/2015/07/30/2ae9f7a6-2f14-11e5-8f36-18d1d501920d_story.html).

Finkelpearl, Tom (2001). *Dialogues in public art*. MIT Press.

Goodyear, Sheena (2018, July 31). Orcas now taking turns floating dead calf in apparent mourning ritual. CBD News. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-tuesday-edition1.4768344/orcas-now-taking-turns-floating-dead-calf-in-apparent-mourning-ritual-1.4768349>.

Guattari, Félix (2000). *The three ecologies*. (I. Pindar and P. Sutton, Trans.). Bloomsbury. Originally published in French in 1989.

Haraway, Donna J. (2004). *The Haraway reader*. Routledge.

Haraway, Donna J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Heidegger, Martin (1977). *Basic writings*. (D.F. Krell, Ed.). Harper San Francisco.

J35 update (2018, August 11). *Center for Whale Research*. <https://www.whaleresearch.com/j35>.

J57 (2020, September 11). *Center for Whale Research*. <https://www.whaleresearch.com/j57>.

Yong, Ed (2018, August 14). What a grieving orca tells us. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/08/orca-family-grief/567470/>.

Mapes, Lynda V. (2019, July 2019). Mother orca Tahlequah and her dead calf, one year later. How did she change the conversation? *Seattle Times*. <https://environment/mother-orca-tahlequah-and-her-dead-calf-one-year-later-how-are-the-southern-residents-doing>.

Parker, Laura (2016, August 31). Rare video shows elephants 'mourning' matriarch's death. *National Geographic*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/08/elephants-mourning-video-animal-grief/>.

Plato (2002). *Five dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*. (2nd ed). (G. M. A. Grube, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. (Original work published ca. 360 B.C.E.)

Puig de la Bellacasa, María. (2017). *Matters of care: Speculative ethics in more than human worlds*. University of Minnesota Press.

Pulkkinen, Levi (2019, April 25). A pod of orcas is starving to death. A tribe has a radical plan to feed them. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/25/orca-starving-washington-feed-salmon-lummi-native-american>.

Ryan, Bartholomew (2009, March 18). Manifesto for maintenance: a conversation with Mierle Laderman Ukeles. *Art in America*. <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/interviews/draft-mierle-interview-56056/>.

Southern Resident orca community demographics, composition of pods, births, and deaths since 1998 (2020, January 28). *Orca Network*. [https://www.orcanetwork.org/Main/index.php?categories\\_file=Births%20and%20Deaths](https://www.orcanetwork.org/Main/index.php?categories_file=Births%20and%20Deaths).

Southern resident killer whale priority chinook salmon stocks - questions and answers (2020, February 14). *NOAA Fisheries*. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/endangered-species-conservation/southern-resident-killer-whale-priority-chinook-salmon>.

Ukeles, Mierle Laderman (1969). *Maintenance art manifesto 1969*. Queens Museum. [https://www.queensmuseum.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles\\_MANIFESTO.pdf](https://www.queensmuseum.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf).

Varney, Robert (2005, November 18). Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants: endangered statues for Southern Resident killer whales. *Federal Register, NOAA*. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2005-11-18/pdf/05-22859.pdf#page=1>.

Wetzler, Rachel (2016). Meet the artist who called out a museum by scrubbing the floor for hours. *Timeline*. <https://timeline.com/mierle-ukeles-cleaning-museum-64d274a0a19c>.

## Author Information

**Jacqueline Viola Moulton** ([jmoulton@idsva.edu](mailto:jmoulton@idsva.edu))

Jacqueline Viola Moulton is a Ph.D. candidate studying philosophy and aesthetics at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts. For the last ten years, Moulton developed and ran an art and writing program in Seattle (United States) for those who are experiencing homelessness. Moulton is an interdisciplinary artist, poet, and zine maker. Jacqueline's zines are composed and disseminated under the moniker *The Depressed Waitress*. *The Depressed Waitress* is a performative and experimental art and philosophy publication that focuses on fluid, fissured, and cyborgian identities—working within posthumanist, new materialist, and queer theory.