

I would like to acknowledge and thank the lands in and around places commonly called Berlin, Germany and Helsinki, Finland for holding practices of landing, which inform and shape these words.

CURTAINS

A curtain does not face a single direction; the inside and the outside are not easily distinguishable.

not a wall not a fence not a keyhole
a porous boundary-keeper
temporary soft and fluid structures
veils of shifting realities
moveable and informative
perceptive functions

Take for example, the Wizard of Oz. Ominous proclamations of “the great and terrible wizard” turn into appeals, “pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” The curtain hides the mere mortal whom everyone has believed as the all-knowing, all-capable power.

Consider the iron curtain; an immaterial and very real divide of an entire continent along national, ideological, and governmental divides. Infrastructure then rising to meet this division of minds. That curtain gave birth to the Berlin wall, its remnants lying nearby where I write this.

The curtain is intimately wrapped up with many gazes; the how of looking. That gap in the curtain, like the hole in the wall through which a voyeur peeps. A silhouette behind the curtain, suggestive but elusive. It is a membrane of mystery.

There are probably curtains on your windows. Look at them.
Architectures of light and sight, concealing and revealing at will.
 some translucent
 some rigid
 some flowing and soft
 others are heavy limp bodies

Of course, we know that thick, red, regal curtain of western theatre. That luscious drapery that exposes the odd and enchanting world of the stage, drawing you in only to put you back in your seat, back in your place, when the curtains close, reminding you that this was temporary and Other. This curtain reifies the stage as a separate, indulgent fantasy. Don't be fooled into realising that it never really began or ended and that you may cut the rope that rules this curtain.

The curtains we place through our perceptions are a matter of choice; as soon as we step within their containment, things may shift. Perhaps then comes the next curtain. The curtain could be an extended vestige of our bodily sense organs, of perception and communication with the living world of whom we are part.

I believe in a kind of performance that exists behind, within, or maybe as that curtain. A performance that opens inwards as much as it shares outwards. A performance that happens behind the curtains of the eyes and the mouth, disregarding presentational habits, and dismantling the false binary between inner and outer. A performance within the container of this curtain blurs the borders of human senses through inwards sight and site.

As a gardener, I like to dig up the roots of words, finding them partially exposed, shaken up and transplanting them elsewhere, in associative reformulations. The term 'curtain' came to be the hanging fabric we are familiar with from an old Latin term which referred to a round vessel or cauldron and to an enclosure. This shift in meaning is possibly attributed to the curtain that hung in the threshold leading from a house into the outdoor courtyard; the crossing from inner to outer realms. Once a curtain contained, then it divided, and now what?

Along these lines, the term 'cohort' may be a cousin of curtain through their shared root system. Cohort, which refers to a group engaged in a shared endeavour, is composed of 'co' meaning with/together and 'hortus' meaning garden. The term 'hortus' is attributed to the root 'gher' meaning to grasp or enclose (echoing through words like choir, court, and courtesy, among others.) Alternatively, 'gher' means to like or want (composing other terms of desire such as exhort and yearn.)

What if a garden was lived as a place to be together rather than a privately designated space of exclusion? What if we lingered in that liminal crossing, transforming the territorialisation of these words and the spaces they conjure?

Let's return for a slightly deeper look into the story of the Wizard of Oz. A girl and her non-human companion go on a journey, searching the entire time for their way home. Throughout most of the story, all allure and motivation is wrapped up in the great Oz, just to ultimately reveal a simple humbug operating the machinery behind the curtain. He controls the facade which all the populations they encounter believe in, an intimidating but prevailing hope for help. (Apparently, L. Frank Baum the original author as a child used to hide behind a curtain at Christmas time and speak as the Christmas tree to the family gathered.) When the system malfunctions and the curtain is finally pulled back, a simple human is exposed. He is ashamed, embarrassed, and tries to find a creative way to help them. Finally, Dorothy wakes up and realises it was a parallel dream world. It has been the power of her imagination which took her there and brings her back, recognising the family around her as the made-familial ensemble she gathered along her journey.

Perhaps secular society could cynically take this as a symbol that all we believe in is actually a facade, but I would not be so quick to dismiss it, or conclude that human manipulation is behind that which we attribute to magic. Rather, we could consider another intention for the use of this curtain. There is a humility that comes with exposing the man (no coincidence of gender) behind the curtain in this case, for everyone involved to see that they have been projecting their wishful pride into something larger than themselves, as if they forgot they could fly. Once this man is exposed, the team comes to understand

that it has been their banding together, their cooperation and faith and their processes of overcoming the presumed failure to live up to what has been ascribed to each as their stereotypical 'natures' in the reductive sense of the word. It is the entire journey to Oz (the supposed destination of rescue) where the real content of transformation lives.

In a way, the curtain that eventually is exposed as tangible material, existed in the minds of everyone in this story the whole way through. The story portrays the conditioned disconnection between all of the characters' own capacities to find their way and return 'home', which is itself a complex dynamic especially considering that possibly Dorothy never truly felt at home? Perhaps that is why she departed into a parallel world. Maybe the turmoil at home was too traumatic, from her dog being taken away by a wicked neighbour to the cyclone storming through their town, she needed to explore alternatives. Or perhaps it was her gift. Her journey allowed her to bring these insights from the 'otherworld' into her home reality.

There are so many kinds of invisible elements in the world. Some are concealed and we are left to wonder how to support processes of encountering them without falling into territorial traps and patterns of manipulation, control, and ownership? This is the movement of the curtain; understanding the inner workings of invisible creative processes.

So, what if we are the curtains? What would it mean to embrace ourselves within these curtains and really value the insightful, inward-seeing capacity that can turn back outwards in communicative exchange? What might this mean for performance that lives behind or within the workings of such an embodied curtain apparatus? How might this guide us towards ways of living in this garden on earth?