

I am ash

There is something Promethean about ceramics. Infernal.

What is the point in the thing if there is no god in it?

We are all thieves. Even if we have not engaged in shoplifting, robbery or housebreaking. Or trespassing. We are still thieves in the small and large ways we take what is not ours. Or what is meant for us. Time, space, opportunities, affections, attention. Because it is hard to know what is meant to be ours – who makes these rules, and what is the system of ethics we are using? – and we have all these desires. Which are supposed to be holy. All of which disturb everything else, in their redistribution of energies, means, resources; of our share, or what we are told is our share.

Cutting good pieces of peach from the bruised fruit, the purple ones only being any good when they fall. This fruit is fruit I cannot buy, as it is unsuited to cropping – it does not keep or travel – but when I help myself to fruit from an empty section, am I stealing? Not from the tree. What about picking Golden Queens from the back yards of empty houses, waiting to be gentrified? Many agencies are involved here.

Thief can be a term for someone (too much) who takes what they need, given that things are stacked against their capacity for ownership, independence, power, validity, voice.

Animism is a term that normalises the idea that only humans are properly sentient, alive, with spirit. Trees, animals and ghosts are more important in a pagan past. Pagan is a term used by others who are sure of their beliefs being the correct ones, like secular.

The artist says they are a thief (a word I find myself wanting to write 'the-if'). They collect images and forms from the body of things already made for their own work. Things they cannot take for their own, they go home and make. But it is more than this, it is the use of force on material, the changing of the state or being of things.

It is their sense that the malleable materials already contain forms and life, and that they pull these creatures out into the world. Is this a form of theft? Dragging them out into the light of our dimension without consent? Giving them form here and now could be seen as a disturbance, as taking something that is not ours – making decisions for another, making another subject to our will.

Or are we forced to receive things? And is that a kind of theft by imposition, being made to take something that is not ours? I wondered this watching Justine Triet's *Two Ships*, a film about two awful people and their brief encounter, for which romantic, amorous, sexual are not quite the right words. Transaction? One of the leads observes to an associate, "Love is giving what people don't want."

Fiction, fantasy – pejorative othering terms for helping creatures to be released from rocks, from c-c-c-clay. Long chains of information connect us to the past, and like fibre-optic filaments, we are lit up by what we attend to.

A glazed tower, the scale of a teapot or ashtray – for the hand to hold, and it has handles like a trophy. Its body is a dark brown, crepuscular, and it has a little lid that is like those small ceramic bridges and pagodas in greens and pinks that used to sit in pot plants when my mother was a child. It looks like it is on a sheet of concretised corrugated cardboard, and on it is a creature stretched between two stones, its face like a tiny capybara, except the whole white-grey bisque thing gives it the impression of being a fossil. Underneath the lid are two small spaces, rectilinear, but enough for a ring or two (left) and a few pills (right). Its base is stippled like pitted coral, home to a throng of tiny organisms, polyps.

There is also a lamp that is a ship, a grotto, part of a teeming reef. When it is on, its insides are bathed in yellow light, an effect created by the licks of marigold (or is it a flamey pastel mandarin?) on the back cave wall, and on the cowed head, hands and feet of a seated figure that sits behind some sort of cane barrier as if on a balcony, pointing in the manner of a medieval mystic upwards the heavens. It also lights up the heads of the two humanoid figures that stand on the top of the cave's exterior, its hill, balanced on/with horses or wolves. There is another animal, rearing, its two front legs ruined stumps. It is brown, the object, but the cave's outside surface seems to be scaled, as though the landscape is somehow reptilian. The brown twisted cloth-covered cable is connected to the light fitting fitted into the bottom of the 'cave', and the light comes out the top of the 'hill' because a rounded section is sliced out and bent upwards like an opening shell or the lid of a can.

In case you were wanting notes for looking without your eyes.

Deeds cannot dream what dreams can do. Or so said ee cummings, but I am not sure I agree.

I think Elizabeth Bishop had it better: "The armored cars of dreams contrived to let us do so many a dangerous thing."

The black and the gold. The shiny black and the matt black – a viola player that wore black velvet so black it made the rest of the orchestra look like they were not wearing black. Three objects sit on a glass table, plants–animals–ruins, and at first sight, the base of one made me jump, for I did not know what I was seeing. Its forms curled inside itself, but splitting open to reveal seeds, eggs, stones, tiny peas of pleasure, pearls, seeing eyes. Neptune's necklace. A creature rises up out of the slick to scale a trunk, or is it a leg? The surprise and not-quite-recognition is a little sickening, like vertigo.

The whole object is like a Jasperware teapot had mated with coins and obsidian, and a princess became the gold of her crown. It has the madness of an inherited family curse or ancestral ghost. Or karmic debris.

I knew someone once who used to prop his front door open with an enormous chunk of obsidian, larger than the size of a human head. That was madness, the energy of it. He was the only person who could handle living with this energy weapon – maybe on some level, he liked how it repelled visitors, but to me it felt like its own generalised psychic attack, or an opening through which entities might pass.

Another of the three figures is a bust of sorts, whose face is gold from kissing, looking and thought.

The third is a fragment of a forest scene in which a golden dog is guarding a child's praying – entreaties that are working wonders behind their backs. Something powerful is growing from the stumps of trees to protect and comfort them, and to shine more gold into them. Is this a diagram of faith as the inverse of fear?

With clay are made physical memories from past and parallel lives. I am a thief. A complete thief. The form is inside the rock, inside the clay, and it's in charge. The animation comes out, the entity. This is proof it's not inanimate but a live substance, full of forms, on a chemical level.

Writers of ourselves, of new presents, we are oriented towards the past. Colette wrote about this in her story *The Rainy Moon*. Here, she tells us of a writer who was visiting the woman who typed her manuscripts in her home for the first time, and realises that the apartment is one she had occupied in a hazy past. "...just as I was leaving her, a little blister in the coarse glass of one of the windowpanes caught a ray of the sun and projected onto the opposite wall the little halo of rainbow colours I used to once call the "rainy moon". The apparition of that illusory planet shot me back so violently into the past that I remained standing where I was, transfixed and fascinated."

Colette goes on to write to us (as intimates) that "It is neither the true concern nor the natural inclination of writers to love the future. ... And when it is the turn of the past to emerge unexpectedly, to raise its dripping mermaid's head into the lights of the present and look at me with delusive eyes long hidden in the depths, I clutch at it all the more fiercely. Besides the person I once was, it reveals to me the person I would have liked to be."

I am that witch in a bog in Ireland, making icons, an iconographer making Kali gods in India – that is even further back. We have severed ourselves from our familiars, from our souls – animals and plants. The work is a remembering of that past. Every work is a remembrance of that severance.

A child was given a Dune pop-up book by a chorus of non-binary seers during the time they harboured us in our escape from one world and to another, burning up on re-entry, like the goddess Hecate (this time perceptible as multiple) who dwells at crossroads. There is a descent, a transmutation in the fires, and then there is a rising.

She really did introduce herself, “I am Ash.

Sculptures ask me should animism not be normalised, rather than be thought of as alt-worldview, as contrast to the more sensible belief that only supposedly sentient beings have spirit – what about animals, plants, materials? And they say to tell ourselves everything isn't going to be alright, but we will cope; to harden up. Even if we are out of sync with the seasons, and things are flowering and fruiting at the wrong times.

The type of doom we are in is called samsara. It is like a washing machine for the soul, our incarnations, our suffering, our lack of skill, and we involve forms in our struggle as beings to imagine our existences.

I am thinking of the Greek chorus of souls in George Saunders' *Lincoln in the Bardo*, all intoning during the night Abraham Lincoln spent in his dead child's mausoleum after his interment. The souls of the dead in the tomb hoped that the fellow stuck spirit of a young girl would encourage Lincoln's young son to pass through the maelstrom of the in-between place of the Bardo to the other side that is death proper (a cosmic recycling centre):

I called out to her and asked her to speak to the lad. About the perils of this place. For the young.

The girl was silent. The door of the furnace she was at that moment only opened, then closed, affording us a brief glimpsed of the terrible orange place of heat within.

She rapidly transmuted into the fallen bridge, the vulture, the large dog, the terrible hag gorged on black cake, the stand of flood-ravaged corn, the umbrella ripped open by a wind we could not feel.

Our earnest pleadings did not good. The girl would not talk.

We turned to go.

Something about the lad had touched her. The umbrella became the corn; the corn the hag; the hag the girl.

In objects there is information, all made objects being *techné*, technical, forms of technology. There is information registered in ceramics, which is compounded by fact that are materially inert. They remain, prevail over decay, with the of patience of stones and the undead. The vampires of the art world in an eternal present.

A form of theft can be stealing life or health or the absence of pain from another. Can we steal from ourselves? I wonder. It is thought to be theft for one to not return a library book, even if its spiritual home might be with us. The concept of private property is so tiresome and unfairly implemented. It hampers an individual's ability to commit to something larger than themselves, unless they are already in a position of ownership.

In another sphere, there exists a creative commons, so-to-speak, upon which we can all draw, and be willingly drawn by. We may invoke and be invoked, all deities on earth. Squishing the past with our paws and claws and pincers. Making images and forms in our likenesses. We are all part of The All and our descent lines are showing through our clothes, softened and shined by wear. If you are looking.

A shrine to every waterfall... If we worshipped nature like we were meant to, we would not dig into her body as we do. If we lived like that, everything would cease to exist. Animism isn't a syndrome, it's an awareness. Tuning in, like a type of prayer; creating a collective consciousness – that is what making anything by hand is, as opposed to the scattering we feel (if we are not desensitised) when we do not know where something comes from.

I stop to put the peaches in bottles and remember that I wanted to tell you about going to the dead librarian's creaky old house. A fellow book stoner for sure. You could see all the empty novel-gauge bookshelves in the real estate photographs, and through the windows. I dug up a clump of naked ladies from the back yard, and sadly looked at the silver birch tree, raining gold coins onto the footpath.

Seeing ancient fragments of faces, hooks, objects is like a memory of things I had made myself. In a museum, a cabinet of medieval cups – all I can hear is them crying. A zoo full of caged animals being tortured. In the alcoves, by the huge doorway, with the raven-king statues are never dusted, and they are swaying, wanting to be put back in the... Where are they from?

The screen of the laptop is reflecting the sunlight coming in the window and casting a purple blob of light onto a facing wall that is painted a very pale pink. The purple form is like a diagram of a cell or an amoeba or a nucleus, or a thought-form to a spiritualist.

The purple form moves from the wall to the stippled ceiling.

I pause to turn in my seat quietly to film my sleeping cat, his quiet snoring just audible above the hum of the heat-pump. The morning light he is resting in on the bed catches his long white whiskers that are pointing straight up on his right side. He is curled, back facing towards me, and from his breathing I can hear that he is dreaming. His body and face are twitching, and his whiskers show how his dreamed snarls curl his tiny brown lips. I wonder if his dreams are prophetic.

Mystic thought has it that we have lost the facility to connect with the prophetic nature of dreams. In the flood of information from communication technologies, we can't perceive the information the dream has for us, or often (over-stimulated, distracted, attention shot) we cannot even have the dream, let alone receive or recognise its information or blessing. Our connection with something much larger, more ancient and mysterious outside of us, is interfered with or cut.

It is now late in the day. The huge liquidambar over the road has sucked the bright red out of the brick house behind it. The sun has moved so it is no longer casting a purple patch on the stippled ceiling. The boy cat has opened and closed the door several more times. The other cat, the female, singing ('the singer of songs'), has brought me a present, a semblance of a mouse (she prefers representations), and jumped on the bed. I take her photo; she, blinking in the sun. A model with her eyes closed.

Shapeshifting in our dimension, science fiction, requires a different kind of (non-)thinking, a new attentiveness. The oxygen and nitrogen molecules are excited near the poles by the radiation, and this trips the colours, green–pink–yellow–red within the spectrum visible by the human eye. *It is a strange realism, but it is a strange reality.*

A rat has chewed a hole in the black plastic cover of the compost heap. The perimeter has been breached, I think, as I take the peach trimmings out – a greater volume than the pieces kept and cooked.