

(RE)WILDING PRACTICE OUTPUTS – Autogamy v.1

Grief, Mourning and Underworld Ecology

When I first conceived of a self-burial sub-project, I wrote up the following proposal:

“Autogamy/Katabasis: This sub-project will involve an ecofeminist critique of katabasis through emphasis on autogamy (or self-planting) disinterested in the hero’s human return from the underworld. Instead, it will focus on the emergence of vegetal life which has benefited from the decomposition process, while offering a unique viewpoint for autoethnographic research concerning intersections between personal grief/loss/death and ecologically minded transformations of affective intensities.”

This proposal captures my early attempt to theorise the work in advance, before the limits of such an approach became evident through practice.

Following a series of sessions exploring the forest floor in autumn, I continued to feel drawn into the vegetable phenomenon of planting—a zone where death and germination inextricably overlap. Originally this piece was scripted into a narrative, but I then recut it to reflect the improvisational aspects of the practice. This improvisation was set out to address my research questions (at the time) in three main ways:

- 1) By embodying the intensities of grief as they have impacted my life through physical trauma response.
- 2) By placing myself in the earth, I expose myself to the shared “experience” of corpses in decay, seeds in germination, and the shared living space of insect/microbe/fungal/vegetable communities and allowing these contexts to intermingle with the various affects of grief and physical disgust as well as traces of abjection.
- 3) By considering the corruption of the earth/soil resulting from industrialisation and my own complicity therein, including, to some degree, the performance itself.

Ultimately, this iteration would prove a failure as a practice output within the larger scope of the project. However, it makes an interesting landmark in its demonstrably anthropocentric mode, despite a belief at the time that I was working ecologically. Through hindsight, the iterative outputs allowed me to see how far I was moving in that direction over subsequent years.