

# Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees - Writing

Knowledge in the Arts #2 30.3.2021

Annette Arlander



I INTRODUCTION



## Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees

Project blog

<https://meetingswithtrees.com>

Project archive on the  
Research Catalogue

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/761327>

Background:

**Performing with Plants**

artistic research project

by Annette Arlander

[https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/  
316550/316551](https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/316550/316551)

2017

at Helsinki Collegium for

Advanced Studies,

funded by Kone Foundation

2018-2019

at Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH)

funded by Vetenskapsrådet

(The Swedish Research Council)



## **Residencies during 2020:**

ARA (Arts Research Africa) residency in Johannesburg in February-March

<https://meetingswithtrees.com/ara/>

Including Nirox sculpture park (a few days) <https://meetingswithtrees.com/nirox/>

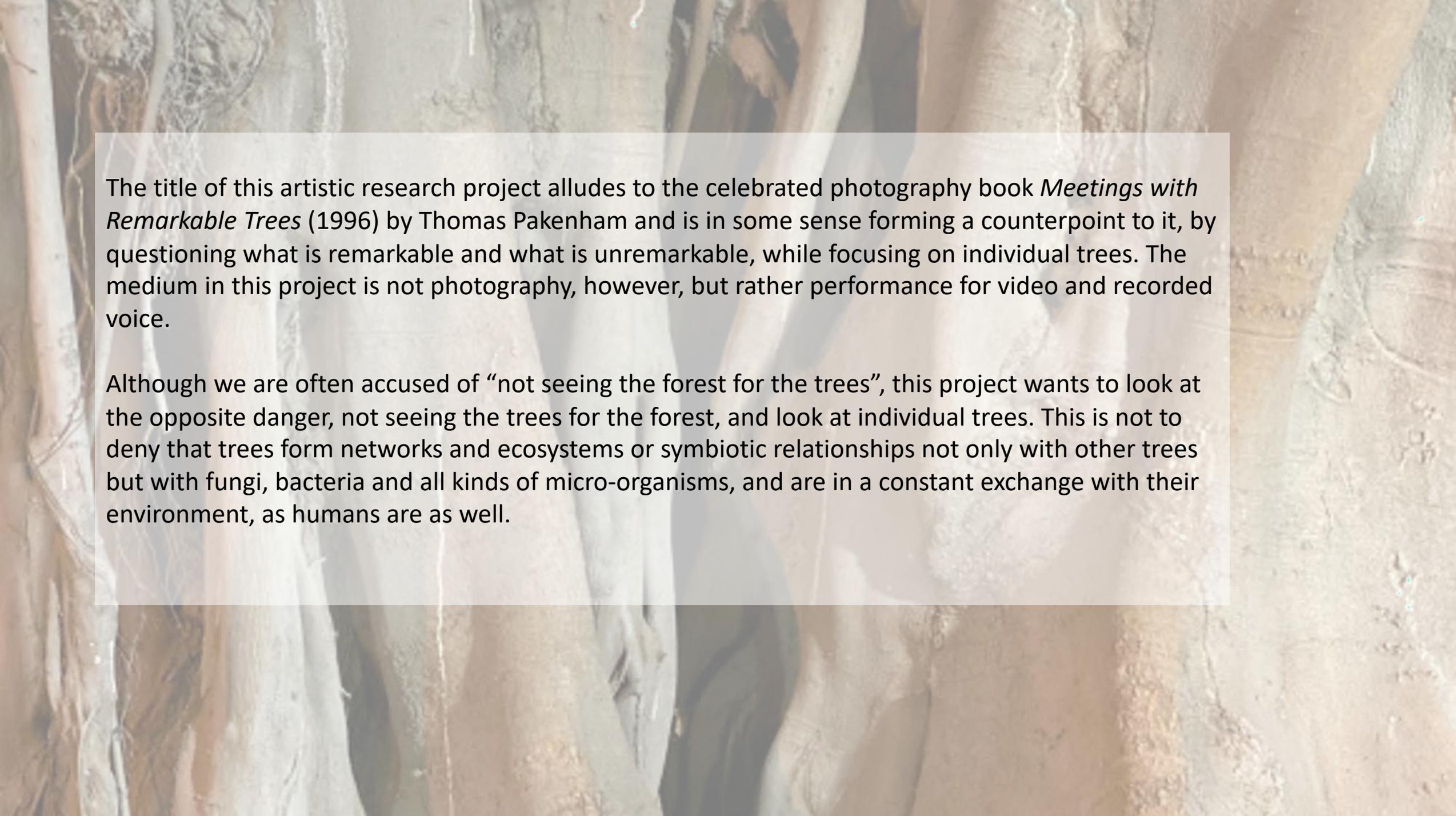
Mustarinda in Northeastern Finland in September

<https://meetingswithtrees.com/mustarinda/>

Öres on Örö Island in November

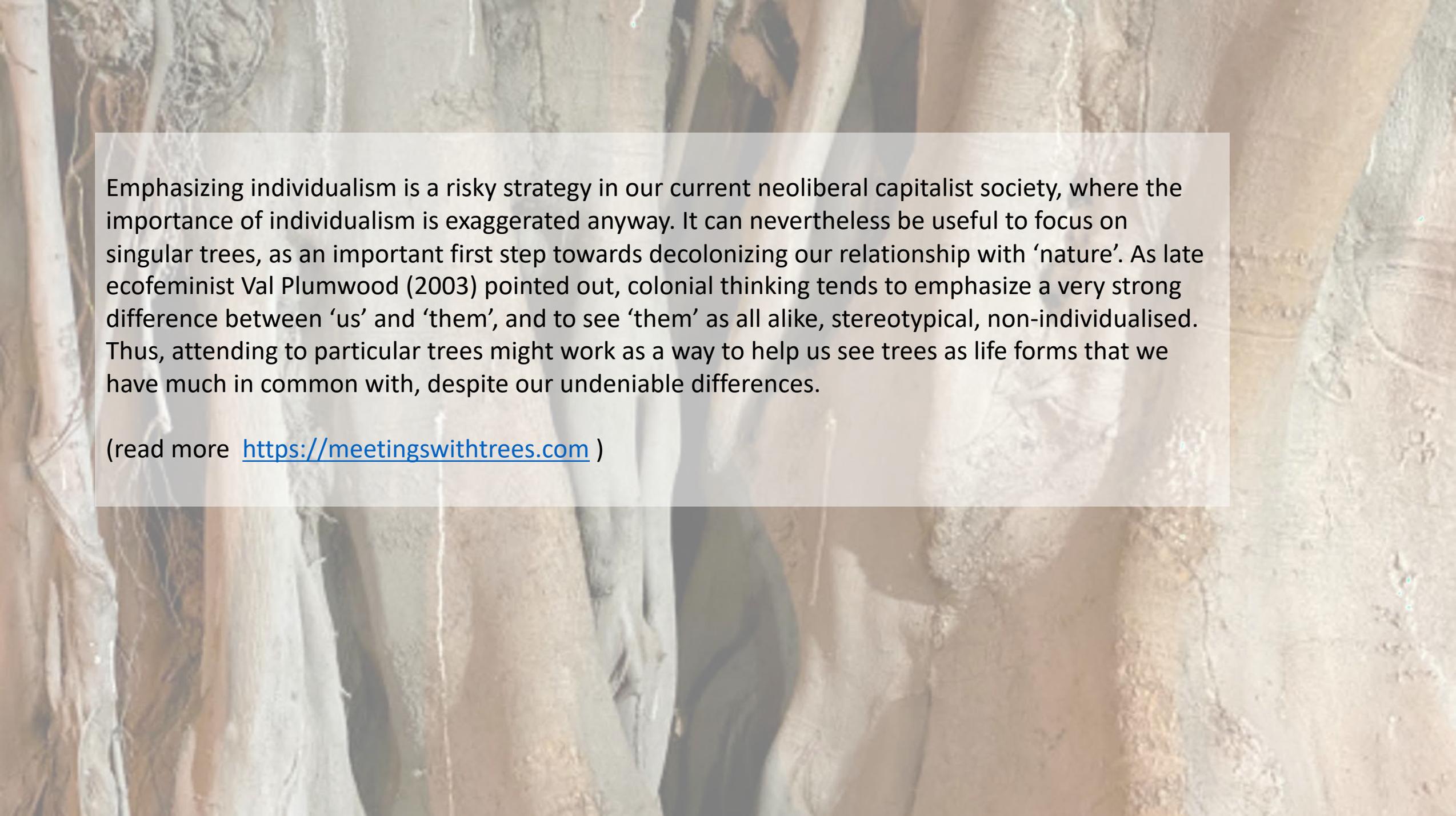
<https://meetingswithtrees.com/ores/>

(beginning the year in Stockholm, not able to return there, and then working as usual on Harakka Island )

The background of the image is a close-up photograph of several tree trunks. The trunks are light-colored, possibly bleached or weathered, and show various textures and patterns of bark. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing two paragraphs of text.

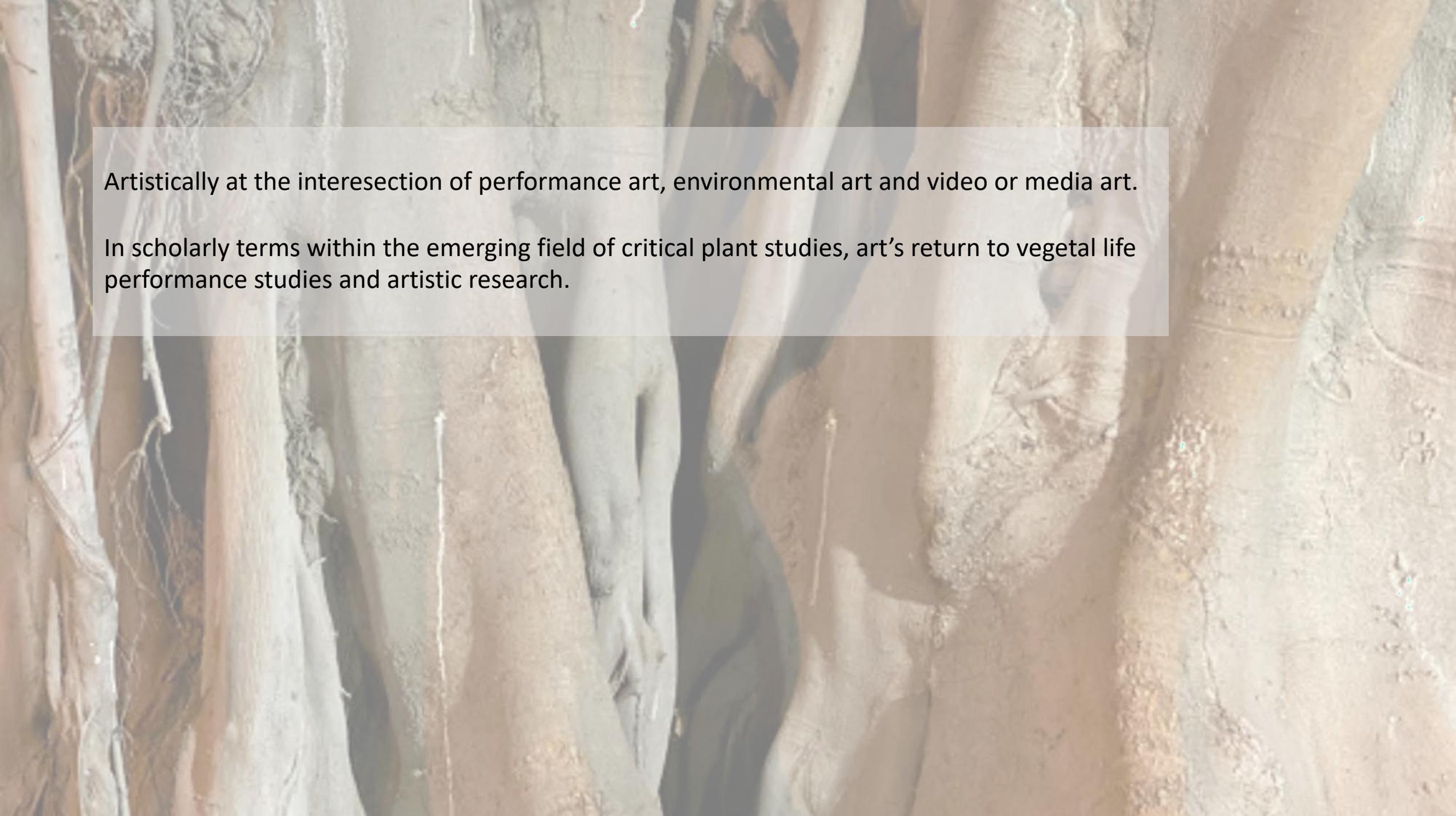
The title of this artistic research project alludes to the celebrated photography book *Meetings with Remarkable Trees* (1996) by Thomas Pakenham and is in some sense forming a counterpoint to it, by questioning what is remarkable and what is unremarkable, while focusing on individual trees. The medium in this project is not photography, however, but rather performance for video and recorded voice.

Although we are often accused of “not seeing the forest for the trees”, this project wants to look at the opposite danger, not seeing the trees for the forest, and look at individual trees. This is not to deny that trees form networks and ecosystems or symbiotic relationships not only with other trees but with fungi, bacteria and all kinds of micro-organisms, and are in a constant exchange with their environment, as humans are as well.



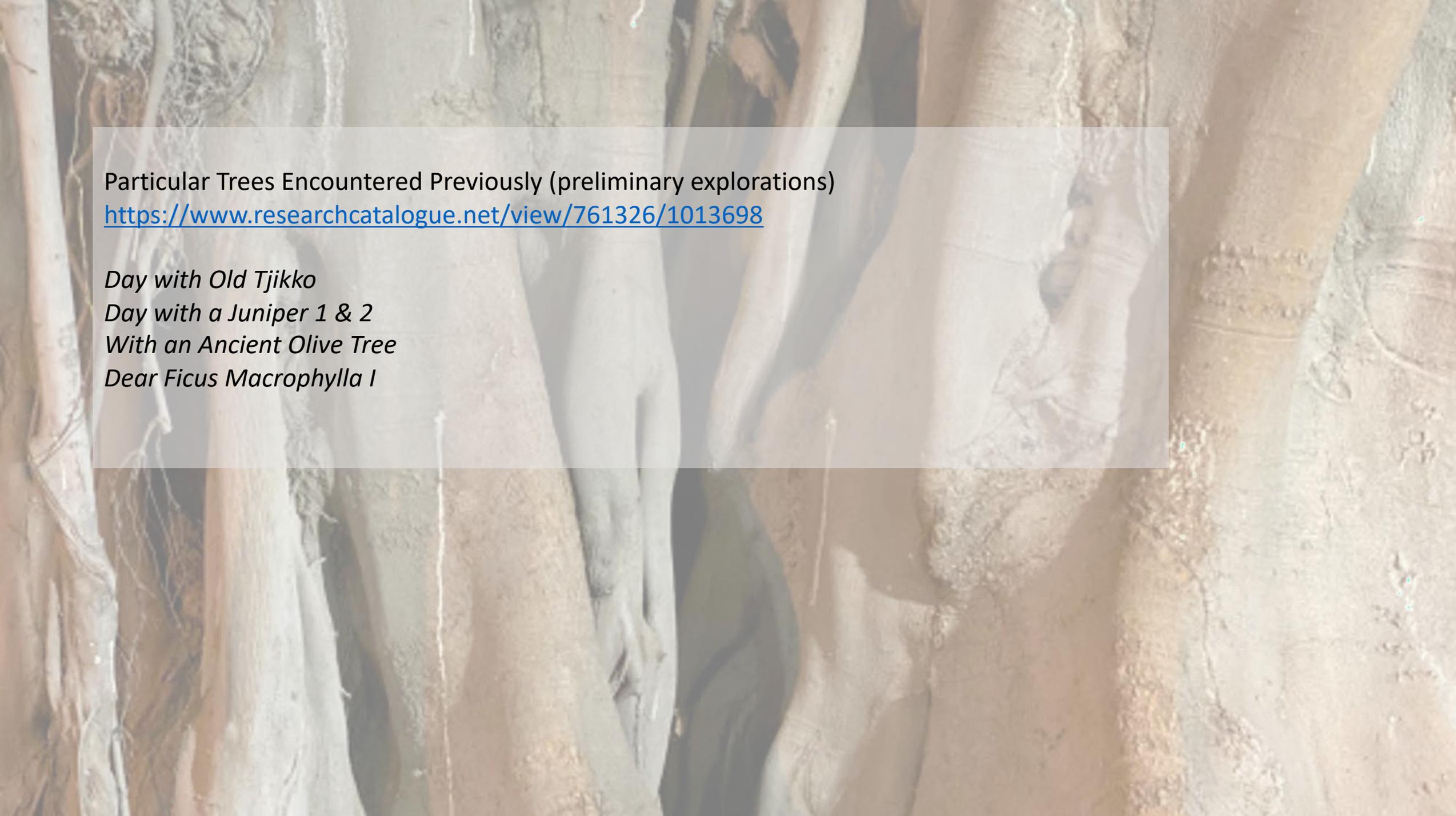
Emphasizing individualism is a risky strategy in our current neoliberal capitalist society, where the importance of individualism is exaggerated anyway. It can nevertheless be useful to focus on singular trees, as an important first step towards decolonizing our relationship with 'nature'. As late ecofeminist Val Plumwood (2003) pointed out, colonial thinking tends to emphasize a very strong difference between 'us' and 'them', and to see 'them' as all alike, stereotypical, non-individualised. Thus, attending to particular trees might work as a way to help us see trees as life forms that we have much in common with, despite our undeniable differences.

(read more <https://meetingswithtrees.com> )



Artistically at the intersection of performance art, environmental art and video or media art.

In scholarly terms within the emerging field of critical plant studies, art's return to vegetal life performance studies and artistic research.



Particular Trees Encountered Previously (preliminary explorations)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1013698>

*Day with Old Tjikko*

*Day with a Juniper 1 & 2*

*With an Ancient Olive Tree*

*Dear Ficus Macrophylla I*

Day-long time-lapse videos

*Day with Old Tjikko* (17 min 45 sec & 19 min 35 sec)  
performed on 14. May 2019 every hour between 10.30 AM and 7.30 PM on Fulufjället, Sweden

Day-long time-lapse videos



*Day with a Juniper 1 & 2 (21 min 56 sec)*  
performed on 3. August 2019 every hour between 7 AM and 9 PM on Utö, Finland

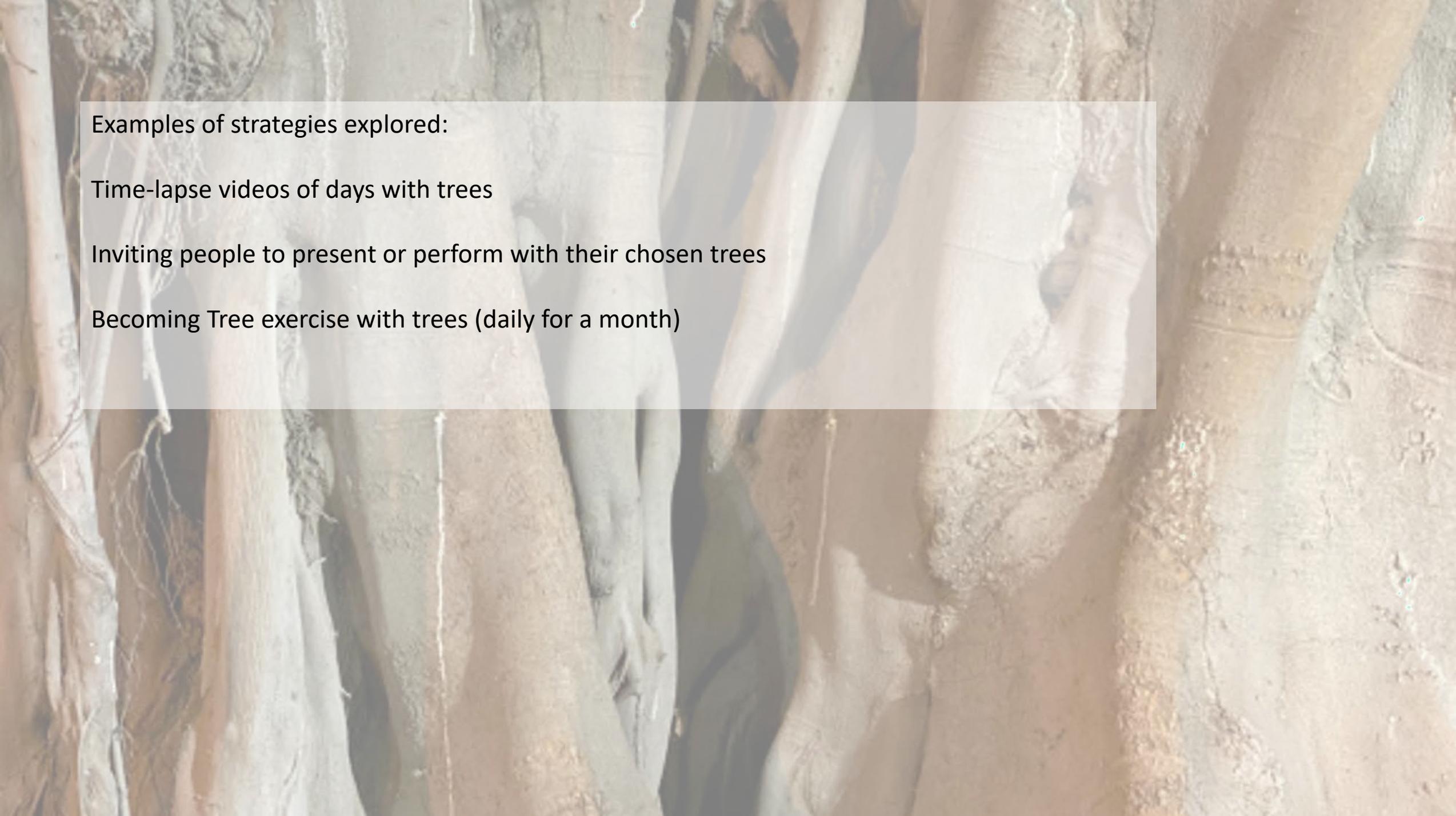
Trees at the end of 2019

*With an Ancient Olive Tree (19 min)*  
performed on 19. December 2019 Ulldecona, Spain

Trees at the end of 2019



*Dear Ficus Macrophylla I* (19 min 30 sec)  
performed on 25. December 2019 in Alicante, Spain



Examples of strategies explored:

Time-lapse videos of days with trees

Inviting people to present or perform with their chosen trees

Becoming Tree exercise with trees (daily for a month)



Becoming Tree exercise

*The Pine's Apprentice* (53 min & 13 min 50 sec)  
performed daily with a pine next to the residency house on Örö, from 2.11.2020

## Writing letters to trees :

The Pine on Hundudden (in Stockholm) – not completed

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/771644>

*Dear Firethorn Rhus*

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/822442/51/603>

*Dear Firethorn Rhus II* (in Nirox)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/822442/51/2128>

The Pine in Brunnsparken

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/831544>

The Spruce on Harakka Island

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/844990/0/0>

*Dear Spruce, Dear Birch and Dear Deceased* (in Mustarinda)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/982302/20/3334>

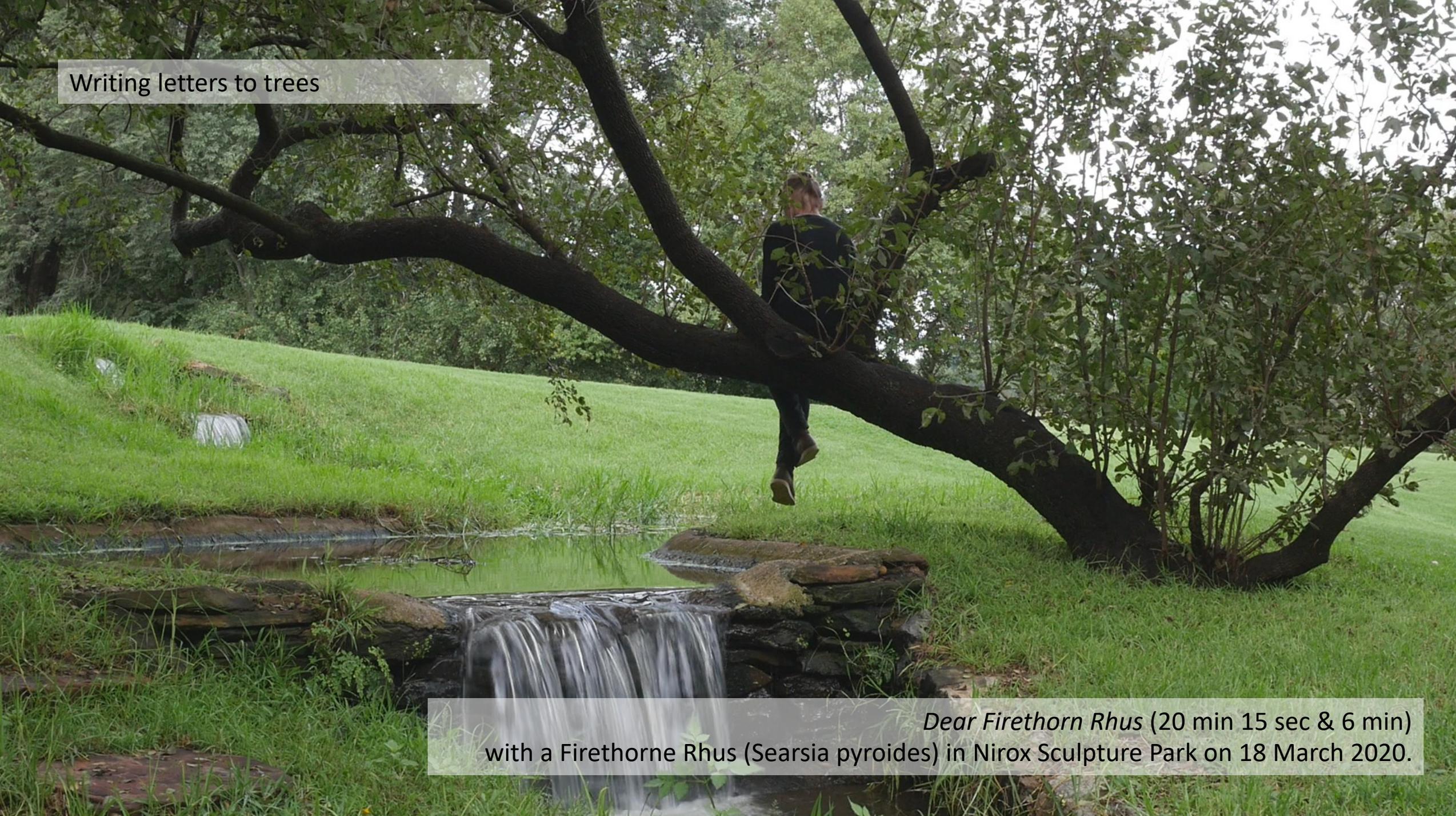
*Writing with a Pine, Writing in a Pine, Dear Pine, Pines by the Path etc.* (on Örö)

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1036306/182/2455>

Writing letters to trees



Practice begun with a Pine on Hundudden in Stockholm on 7. January 2020...

A person with long hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, is sitting on a thick, dark tree branch that extends horizontally across the frame. Below the branch, a small waterfall flows over several large, dark rocks into a pool of water. The background is a lush green landscape with a grassy hill and dense foliage. The scene is captured in a soft, natural light, suggesting an overcast day.

Writing letters to trees

*Dear Firethorn Rhus* (20 min 15 sec & 6 min)  
with a Firethorne Rhus (*Searsia pyroides*) in Nirox Sculpture Park on 18 March 2020.

Writing letters to trees

*Dear Firethorn Rhus II* (20 min 15 sec & 6 min)  
with a Firethorne Rhus (*Searsia pyroides*) in the Nirox Nature Reserve on 19 March 2020.

Writing letters to trees

*Dear Pine – Kära tall 1-7 (12 min 30 sec - 20 min 32 sec)*  
between 30. March and 6. August 2020 with a pine in Brunnsparken, Helsinki.

Writing letters to trees

A person wearing a dark jacket and a beanie is sitting on a rocky, grassy hillside. They are looking down at a book or notebook in their lap, appearing to be writing. To their right stands a large, tall spruce tree. The background shows a clear blue sky with some light clouds and a few bare trees in the distance. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

*Dear Spruce – Kuusi Hyvä 1-7 (c. 20 min 50 sec)*  
between 10. April and 25. August 2020 with a spruce on Harakka Island.

Writing letters to trees

*Dear Spruce – Rakas Kuusi* (20 min 15 sec & 5 min 47 sec)  
on 25. September 2020 with a spruce near Mustarinda

Writing letters to trees

*Dear Birch – Kära Björk* (20 min 15 sec & 5 min 50 sec)  
on 29. September 2020 with a birch near Mustarinda

A person with glasses, wearing a dark jacket and pants, is sitting on a large, weathered log in a forest. They are holding an open book and writing. The forest is filled with trees, some of which are dead or have fallen, creating a dense thicket of branches. The ground is covered in moss and small plants. The lighting is natural, suggesting daytime.

Writing letters to trees

*Dear Deceased* (20 min 15 sec & 6 min 26 sec)  
on 29. September 2020 with a dead spruce near Mustarinda

Writing letters to trees

*Writing with a Pine II & Writing with a Pine (with text)* (20 min & 12 min)  
performed on 10. November 2020 with a pine on Örö

A large, gnarled pine tree with thick, twisted branches dominates the center of the frame. A person is visible climbing the trunk of the tree. The forest is filled with other tall, thin pine trees. The ground is covered in moss and fallen branches. The sky is overcast.

Writing letters to trees

*Writing in a Pine* (13 min & 5 min 20 sec)  
performed on 16. November 2020 with a pine on Öro

Writing letters to trees



*Dear Pine* (10 min & 4 min 30 sec)  
performed on 18. November 2020 with a pine on Öro

Writing letters to trees

*Pines by the Path (Kära tall)* (16 min 20 sec & 4 min 5 sec)  
performed on 1. December 2020 with two pines on Örö

A person wearing a dark hat and jacket is sitting on a large, moss-covered pine tree trunk. The tree is situated on a rocky shore next to a body of water. The sky is overcast with soft, diffused light. The water is calm, and there are some logs and rocks visible in the shallow water.

Writing letters to trees

*Tala om det för Tallen (Tell it to the Pine) 1 (8 min 50 sec)*  
performed on 11. January 2021 with a pine on Örö

A person is sitting on a large, gnarled pine tree in a snowy landscape. The person is seen from behind, looking out over a vast, flat, snow-covered area that extends to a distant horizon. The sky is overcast and grey. The pine tree has a thick, reddish-brown trunk and several branches with green needles. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, with some small rocks and patches of snow visible. The overall scene is quiet and contemplative.

Writing letters to trees

*Tala om det för Tallen (Tell it to the Pine) 2 (9 min 20 sec)*  
performed on 20. February 2021 with a pine on Öro

Writing letters to trees

*Dearest Pine (with text)* (15 min 45 sec)  
performed on 21. February 2021 with a pine on Örö

A large, gnarled pine tree with a thick trunk and many branches. A person is climbing the tree, visible as a silhouette against the trunk. The tree is set in a landscape with other pine trees, rocks, and patches of snow. The sky is overcast.

Writing letters to trees

*Esteemed Pine Tree* (16 min 15 sec)  
performed on 23. February 2021 with a pine on Öro

II VIDEO





*On the Edge I* (9 min 27 sec)  
performed on 3. November 2020 with a pine on Öro

III NOTES (epilogue)



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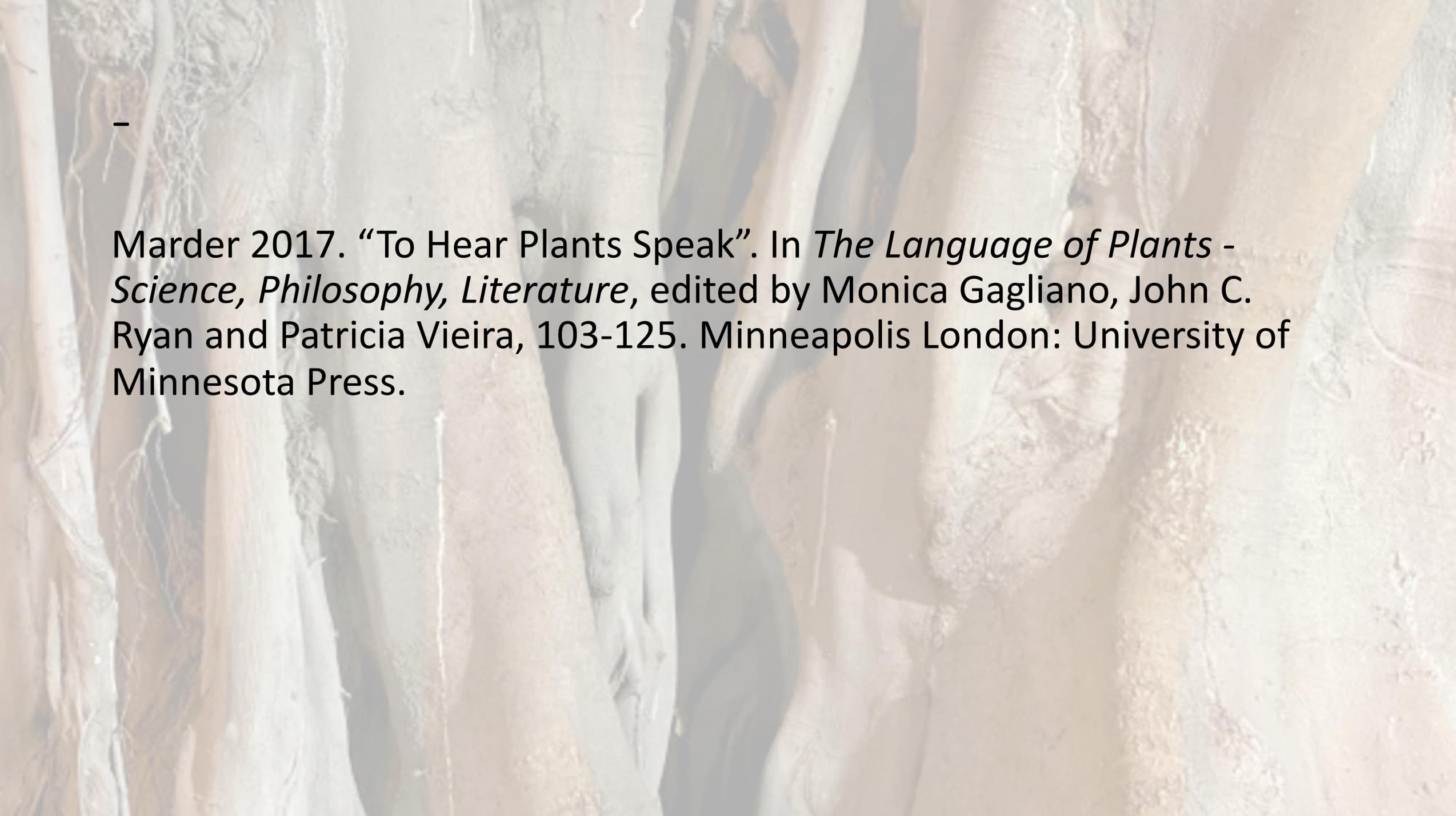
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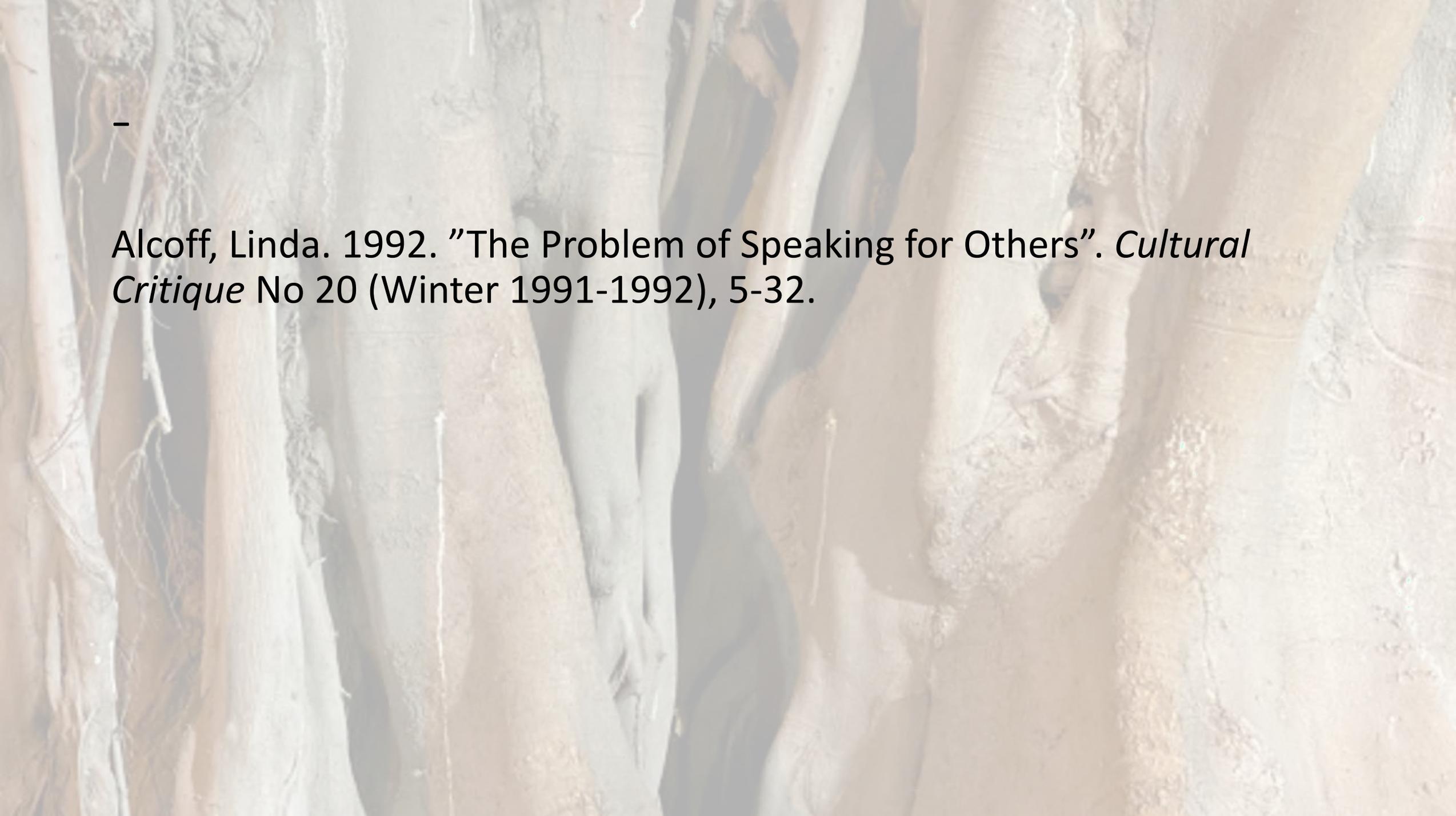
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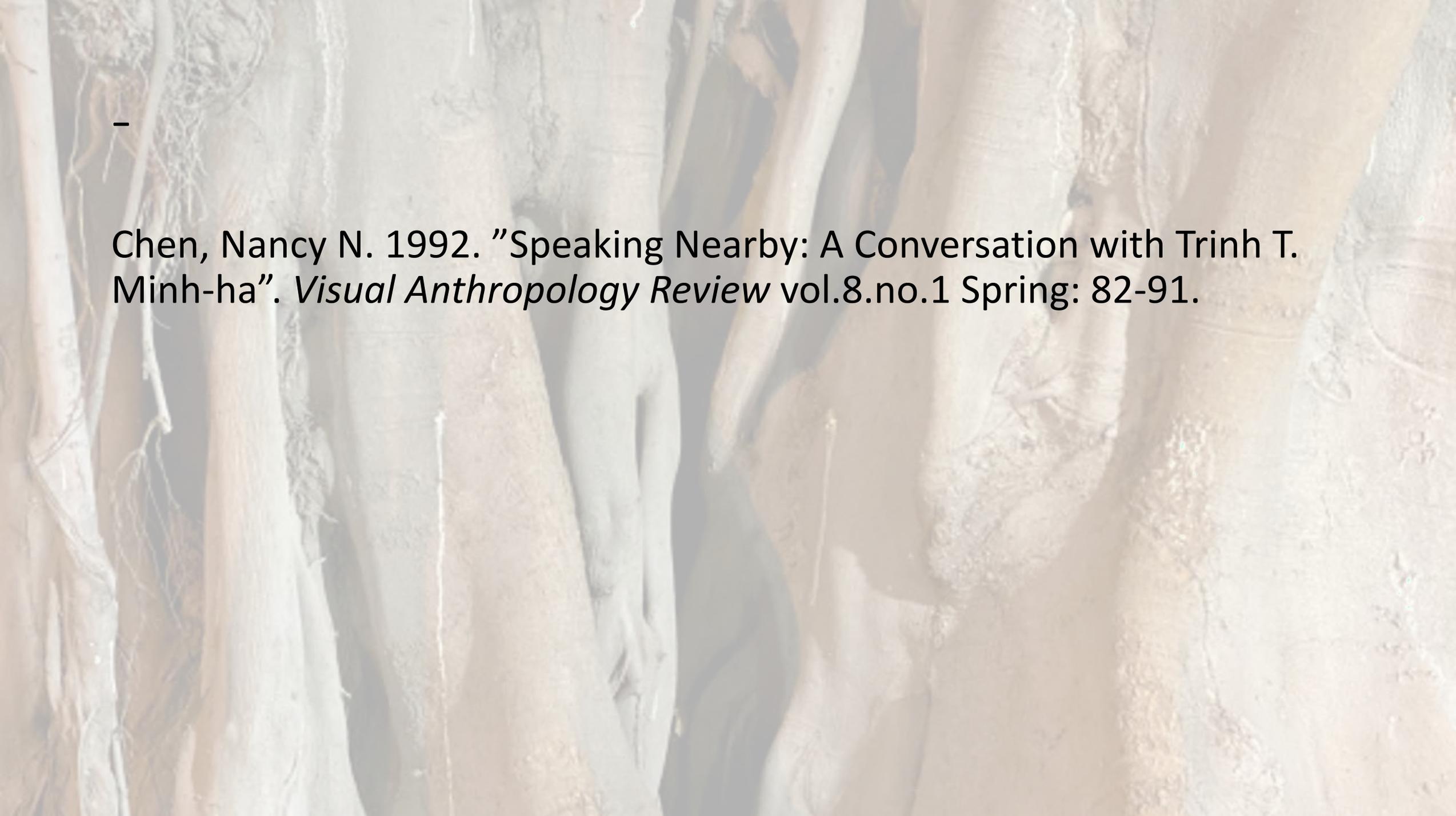


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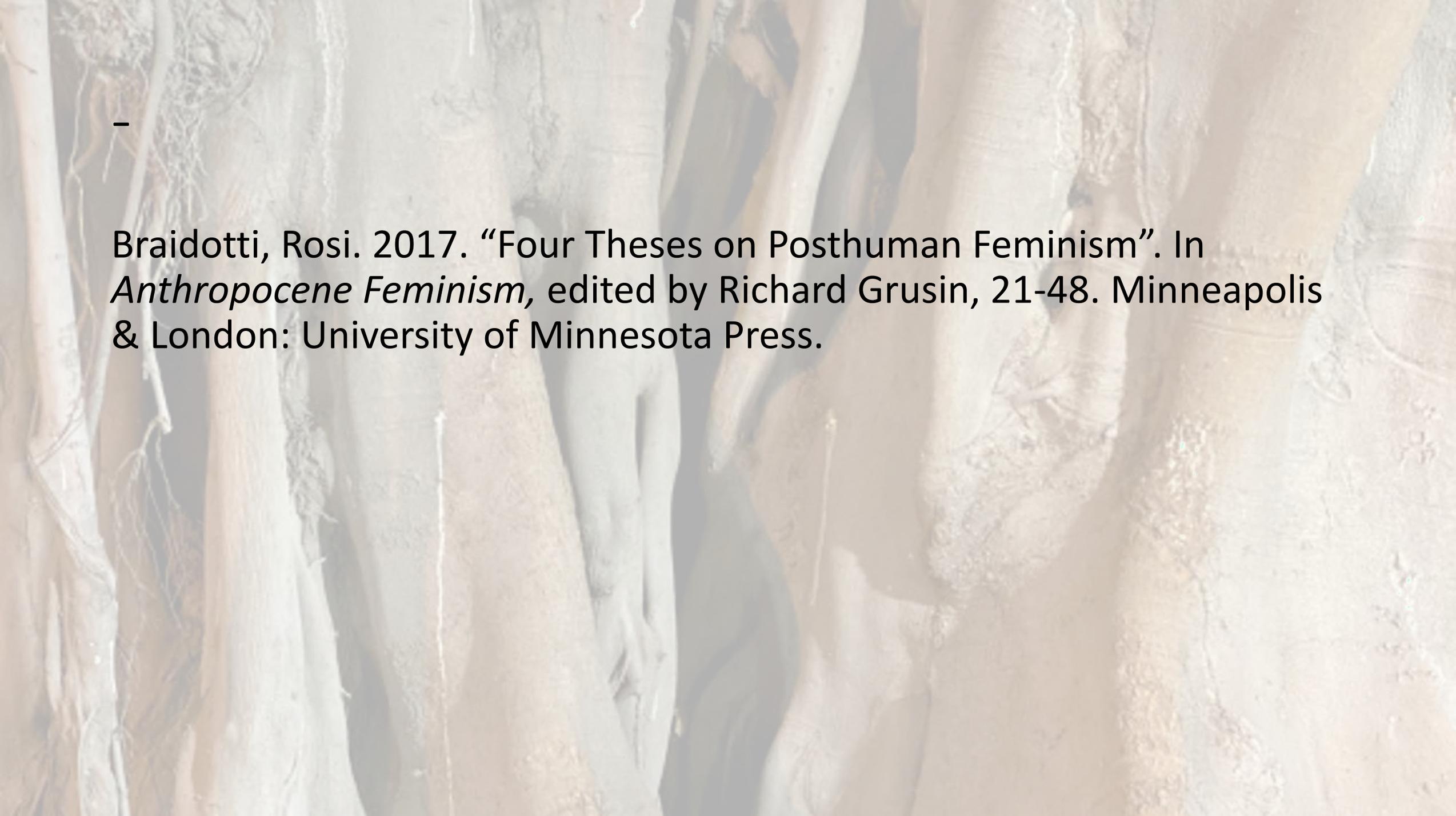
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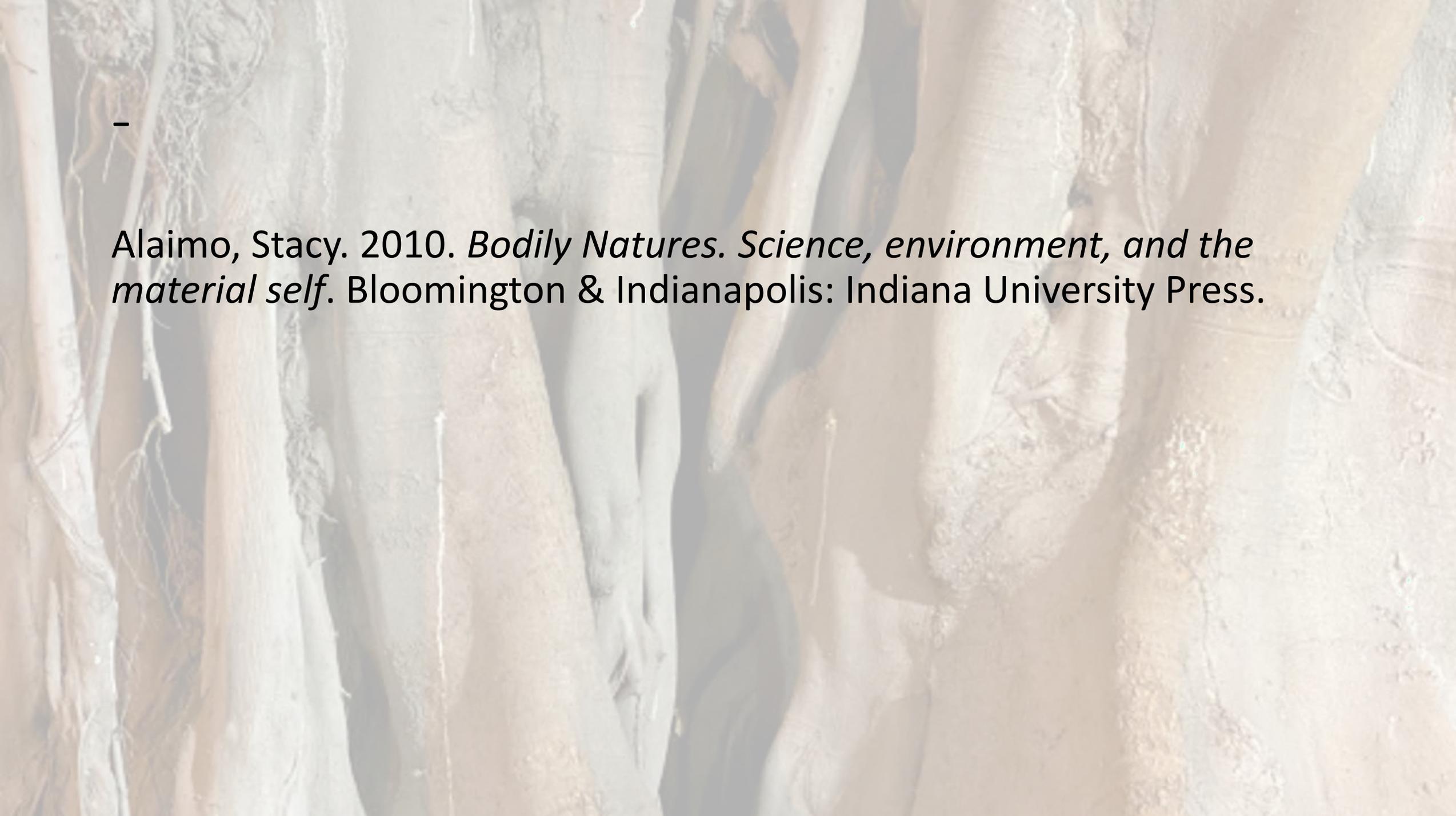
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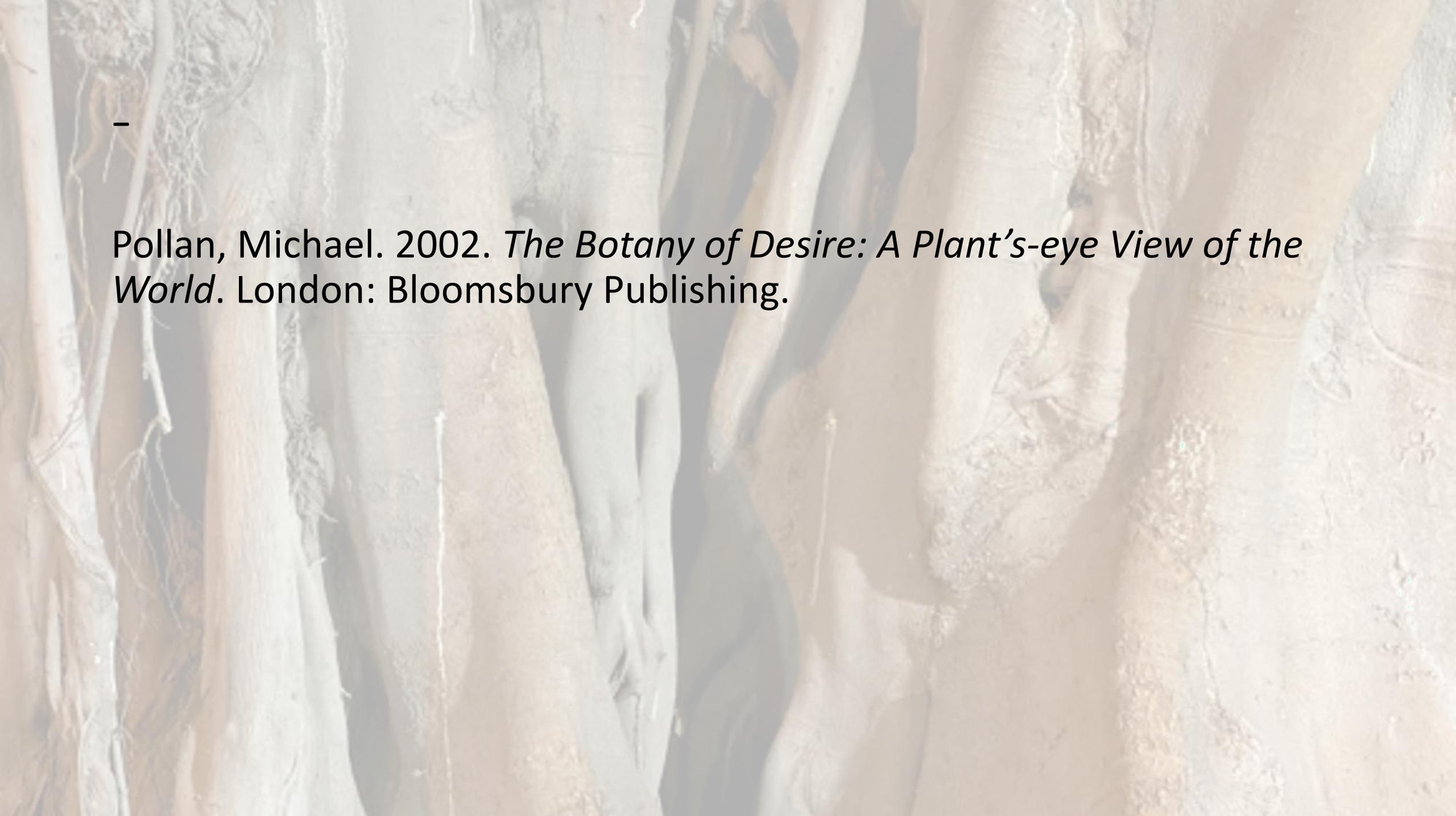
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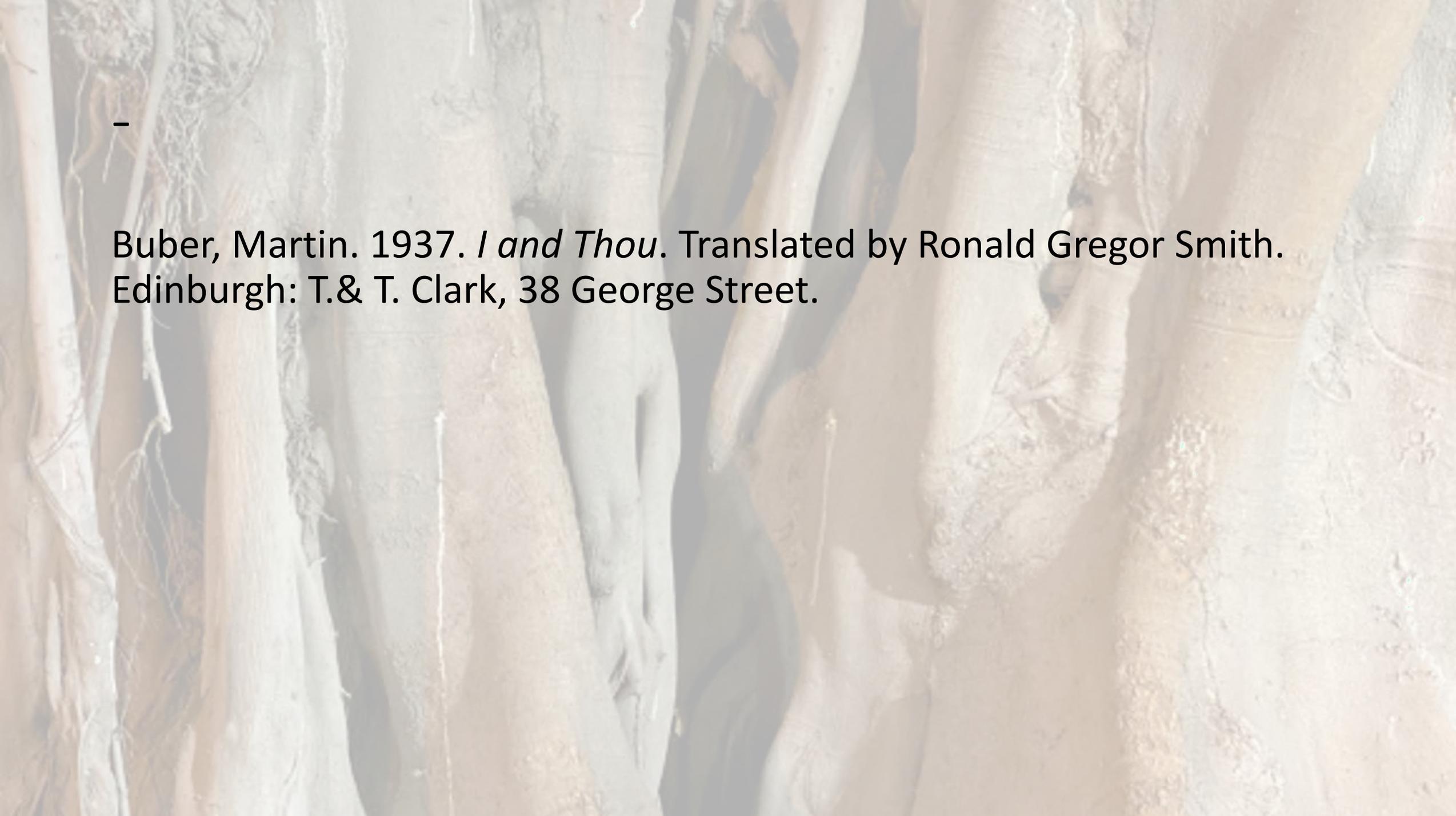
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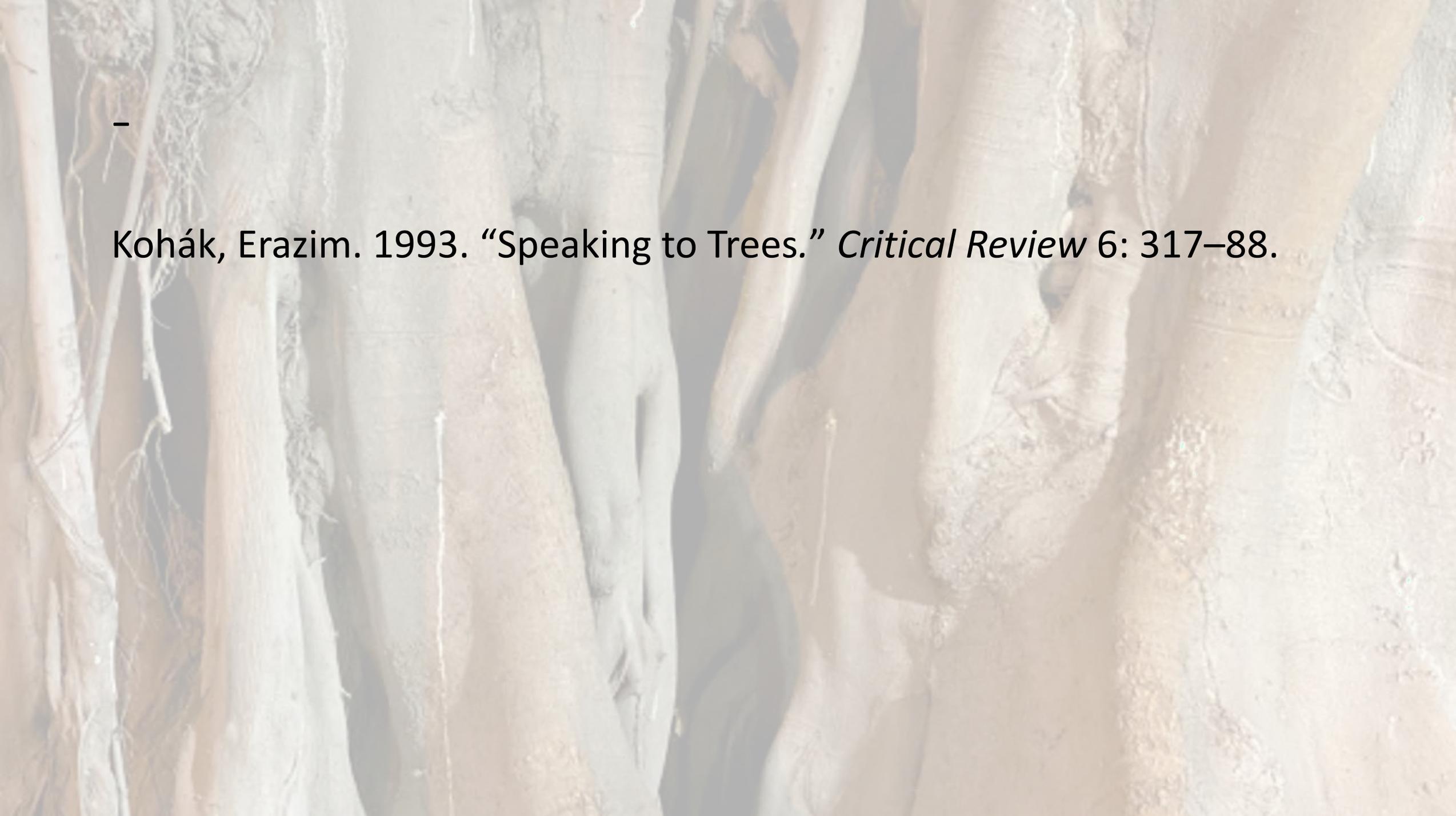


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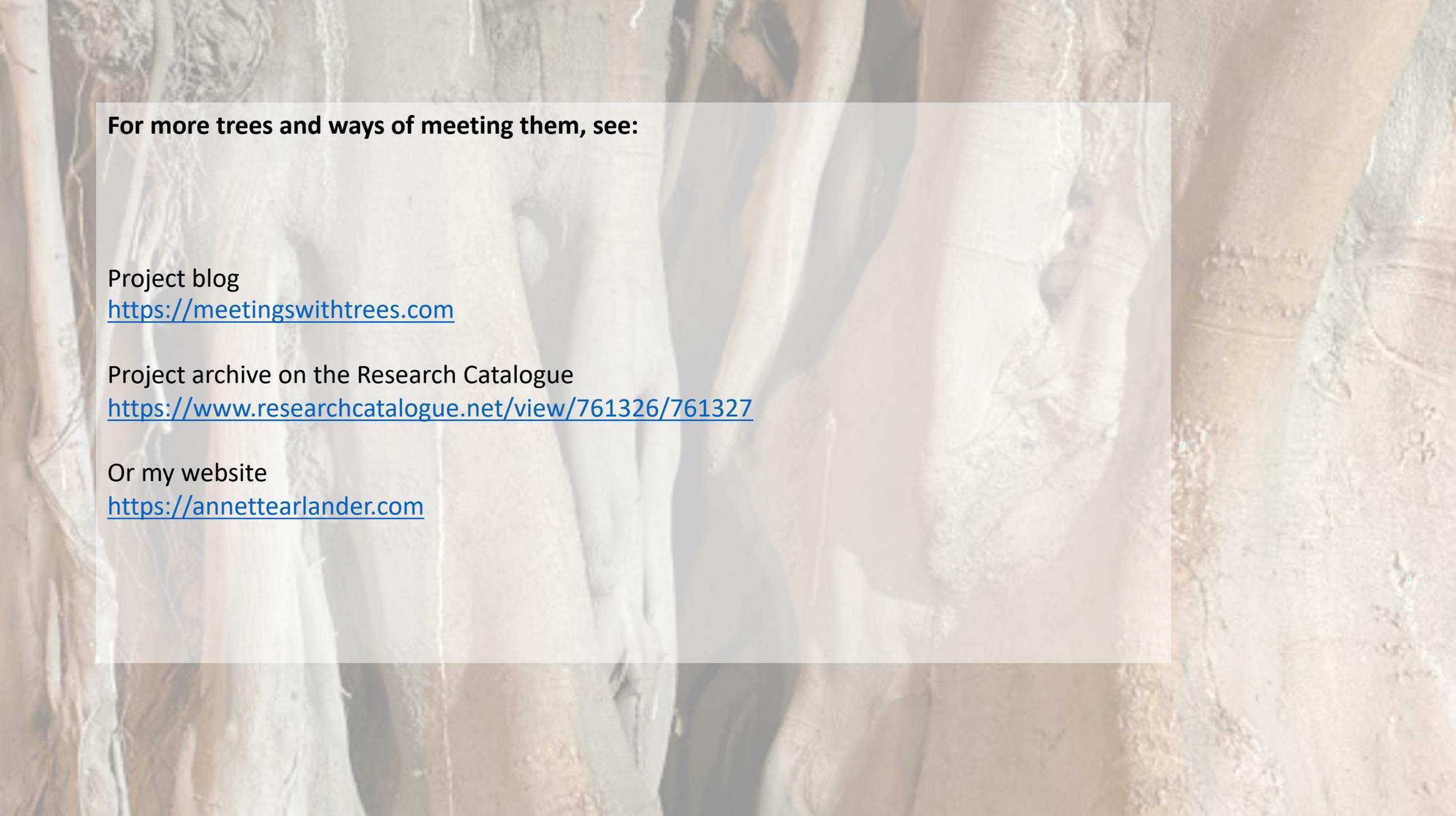
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**For more trees and ways of meeting them, see:**

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Or my website

<https://annettearlander.com>



Thank you for your attention!