

‘What do you do when your world starts to fall apart? I go for a walk, and if I’m really lucky, I find mushrooms. Mushrooms pull me back into my senses, not just—like flowers—through their riotous colors and smells but because they pop up unexpectedly, reminding me of the good fortune of just happening to be there. Then I know that there are still pleasures amidst the terrors of indeterminacy.’<sup>1</sup>

I had a chat with my advisor. ‘You should get out to the forest’. ‘Yes’, I replied. I took only a jacket and my phone. It’s urban, at first, walking through Trondheim toward Østmarka. I start to see loads of yellow: train cars for lumber, leaves, flower. And I recall this:

‘Our first step is to bring back curiosity. Unencumbered by the simplifications of progress narratives, the knots and pulses of patchiness are there to explore. Matsutake are a place to begin: However much I learn, they take me by surprise.’<sup>2</sup>

So I decide to notice the yellow. I watch rustling aspen leaves. I take in the little things. My shoulders relax as I get away from urban life and hear birds chirping. I find urban forest ...and a chainsaw. But thankfully, it soon stops.

I get out beyond houses, smell dirt and sea air. Walk through leaves, scan utforsk codes, and I am so glad to be outside. I think it’s my favourite place.

In my jacket pocket, the left one, several weeks later, I still have pieces of lichen. If I’m walking and my brain starts racing, those dry bits of lichen, these gifts from nature, help me relax.

‘Strawberries first shaped my view of a world full of gifts simply scattered at your feet. A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning. It is not a reward; you cannot earn it, or call it to you, or even deserve it. And yet it appears. Your only role is to be open-eyed and present. Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery—as with random acts of kindness, we do not know their source.’<sup>3</sup>

‘That is the fundamental nature of gifts: they move, and their value increases with their passage. The fields made a gift of berries to us and we made a gift of them to our father. The more something is shared, the greater its value becomes. ... Practices such as posting land against trespass, for example, are expected and accepted in a property economy but are unacceptable in an economy where land is seen as a gift to all. ... What I mean of course is that our human relationship with strawberries is transformed by our choice of perspective. It is human perception that makes the world a gift.’<sup>4</sup>

‘*Bir’yun*\* shows us that the world is not composed of gears and cogs, but of multi-faceted, multi-species relations and pulses.’ ... \*In his classic essay titled *From Dull to Brilliant*, anthropologist Howard Murphy discusses art in the Arnhem land region of north Australia.<sup>5</sup> His focus is on the Yolngu term *bir’yan*, which translates as ‘brilliant’ or ‘shimmering’. ... When painting has just its rough shape, the artists describe it as ‘dull’. The cross-hatching shifts the painting to ‘brilliant’, and it is the brilliance of finely detailed work that captures the eye. *Bir’yun* is the shimmer, the brilliance, and, the artists say, it is a kind of motion. Brilliance actually grabs you. Brilliance allows you, or brings you, into the experience of being part of a vibrant and vibrating world.’<sup>6</sup>

I want to share this gift, this world we have. I propose to explore a lexicon of outdoor life (native living beings, from lichen to birds to reindeer), combining places I’ve lived and languages represented therein (Sámi, Norwegian, Native American, English). Research cultural and linguistic similarities and differences. Learn practices of storytelling and knowledge sharing. I wish to weave these stories together in an illustrated book, a walk through the woods where worlds meet.

—The above text is taken from a short comic zine I created. Some of the sources have been expanded here.

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Howard Murphy, ‘*From Dull to Brilliant*: The Aesthetics of Spiritual Power Among the Yolngu’, 1989

<sup>6</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, *Shimmer: When All You Love is Being Trashed*, 2017