







"Why do the stars glow above?" – Skeeter Davis

Felon Herb Carl Gent

Multiplex was a durational project that ran at KELDER between 14 July and 2 September 2017. During this period the exhibition space was transformed into an absinthe factory. Each stage of the production was marked and made possible with both a live event and an associated pamphlet. The preparation of the first maceration of absinthe played host to a performance reading; the subsequent distillation of the first maceration took the form of a public workshop and file-sharing exercise; the collection of the distillate and preparation of the second maceration occurred during a sober dinner where guests ingested foodstuffs containing herbs and botanicals also present in the absinthe; and finally the decanting of the second maceration and drinking of the final body of liquid happened amidst communal singing of drinking songs.

Felon Herb is a collection of writings, images and resources collated in the wake of and under the influence of *Multiplex* and its output.

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Multiplex, 2017

Two month-manufacture of absinthe at
KELDER, July–September 2017

Multiplex, 2017

Vinyl paint on wall, inkjet print on tracing paper,
inkjet print on paper, drying of grand wormwood
stalks, herbs and spices, timber, pestle and mortar
and digital scales

Traddutore, Traditore, 2014–17

First maceration of absinthe with glass demijohn,
vodka, grand wormwood, green anise, sweet fennel,
coriander seed, lemon verbena, star anise, fennel
seed, sage, altered rubber bung with headphone
speakers, mp3 player and recording of Skeeter
Davis' 'The End of the World'

Testing the Receptor Affinity, 2017

Distillation of absinthe with copper still, hot plate,
rye flour paste, plastic tubing, water, ice, glass
drinks dispenser, hydrometer and timer switch

Shrew Tree, 2017

Second maceration of absinthe with altered
cider bottle with headphone speakers, absinthe
distillate, petite wormwood, white wormwood,
Russian wormwood, hyssop, lemon balm, mp3
player and ocean-floor sound recording from
Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster

Contagion Heuristic, 2017

Glass drinks container, water, ice, absinthe glass,
sugar cube and absinthe grille

Traddutore, Traditore (a new translation), 2017

First maceration of absinthe with glass demijohn,
vodka, grand wormwood, green anise, sweet fennel,
coriander seed, lemon verbena, star anise, fennel
seed, sage, altered rubber bung with headphone
speakers, mp3 player recording of Skeeter Davis's
'The End of the World' and performance

Testing the Receptor Affinity, 2017

Distillation of absinthe with copper still, hot plate,
rye flour paste, plastic tubing, water, ice, drinks
dispenser, hydrometer, timer switch, workshop
and transfer of files to USB sticks

Shrew Tree, 2017

Second maceration of absinthe with altered
cider bottle with headphone speakers, absinthe
distillate, petite wormwood, white wormwood,
Russian wormwood, hyssop, lemon balm, mp3
player and ocean-floor sound recording from
Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, sober meal
serving fresh bread with grand wormwood, za'taar
oil with fennel seed and coriander seed, petite
wormwood salad, mugwort (Russian wormwood)
soup, pierogi with sage butter, honey glazed
carrots with hyssop, lemon balm cake, star anise
ice cream, lemon verbena tea, iced water with
sweet fennel and discussion on poisoning

Contagion Heuristic, 2017

Serving and sharing of absinthe, performance of
drinking songs by Dusty Boners, Perple Celotape,
Sheaf+Barley, Chris Timms and Video Blue



homeoteleton i Carl Gent

A huge star fell from the heavens and it poisoned a third of the rivers and a third of the sources of the rivers. And the name of this star means Wormwood.

So, I was at the River. At a third of the River. I understood about a third of the River and I had this glass on me made of spun sugar. The glass is an exact replica of the la Rochere reservoir glass seen in *L'Absinthe* by Degas, except it has been fashioned from brown sugar. Accurate, but failingly. The condition of the tulips on the banks of the River will help to anchor me, temporally. They grazed my calves and the pollen spits skyward.

There's a funeral down at the mouth of the River and I am scared that the current will grab me, I will drift and become horribly visible to these creatures that are not my own. I will be poisoned before inevitable punishment lands but – respect, no?

Maybe it is not a funeral.

I'll have an idea. I'll test it with a friend. I'll get some funding. We'll get it published. We'll publish it to the timbre of the times. We'll be disproven, but our song will have been sung. If it rhymes well enough, if it catches, it will persist. So the idea and its enunciation must be good enough.

Glow-worms in the ground,
are shining through the dirt.

This bit of Earth started facing away from the sun a good few half-hours ago. The sky has been very dark a good few half-hours ago and the soils were glowing a good few half-hours ago. Glow-worms underground (which is weird) bright enough to make the soils shine.

The planets and stars too, bright enough to shine. The glass in my hand see-through enough to brown-filter the shine, that glass that is mine.

So, the ground is already pulsing with this slow moving yellow light and this is bouncing back off the underside of the tulips, most of which seem to be black so there's this shimmering purple backglow on the soil that is itself backlit by these worms and then there's this other light that seems to come from backthere.

So, turning around there it is and it is SLOW and spinning. But falling. Flat out down. It's a colour I have not seen before, so I cannot really see it properly. Somewhere between straw-yellow and daysky-blue. Between raw yellow and radiant blue? Somewhere between yellow yellow and blue. More hybridity, from the skies now. The name of this star means Wormwood and it sinks into the ground, inelegantly. It forces its way through the mud, inelegantly. And the River begins to boil. Hm.

The maybe-funeral continues unphased as I slip down the slipway breaking many valuable tulips en route. The boiling ends but the glow-colour of the glow-worms has shifted towards the glow-colour of the star whose name means Wormwood, I'd say by about a third. It has also dimmed, approximately a third. I slip the brownsugarspun

glass into the River and, disturbed, all sorts of weeds flood in. As the ground, and therefore the tulips, and also the sky are darker now, after Wormwood's arrival (I still see her, glowing down there), I can only just see what's going on. This is also due to the proliferation of this new colour (which is still here, flowing 'round here). The glass is slowly dissolving into and around itself but very slowly. I think I have a good half-hour before I can drink no more so I settle myself (a still scene steer slowing sounds h.) and rest. My back hurts.

The journey had been worth it. This was the finest River I will ever taste. The star was still there, as she always has been and the weeds and the sugar will all work in concert with each other. As I supped deeper and the liquids became more steeped in the weeds, the effects grew. I couldn't work out whether this was due to a higher concentration of weeds + sugar to River proper, or whether the effect was cumulative. The River, being divisible, held its sway within each body of itself, whether attached to the parent delta or divorced into whatever receptacle you care to use. To drink one draft of River on top of another was additive, would have a cumulative power. But I couldn't recall whether that worked in different draughts from the same vessel. Plus, my vessel was very much becoming the drink here, as the sugarglass will dissolve. Plus, sliding over my hands and solidifying as it did, the vessel had encased me too. And then there were the weeds which were now only visible in either this darkness and that new hue. Some shades between, plus. I recognised their flavour but not their effect.

Literally a third of the creatures of the sea died,
those possessing souls.

The sea began to boil again but I was too slovenly to move, the heat gave my glass goblet hand a crisp burnt sugar smell and I closed my eyes to it all, but it will be no use. The new colour was in my eyelids too, inelegantly, and the tulip pollen smelled of it.

I could now hear the glow-worms writhing. Slapping in their silt.

The Star was singing too. Something between singing and speaking but in a tongue foreign to me. Strange. Where was this Star from? After about a half-hour I could discern a rhythm and a rhyming pattern, but nothing else.

When I awoke it was to the following scene:

A woman, one-thousand furlongs tall, her eyes and hair and skin, all related hues to the colour I couldn't name. She was fighting every human, every demon and every angel on planet Earth. Her left leg was in the River, her right in the Sea. Her shins were being attacked by the creatures of the sea, those without souls. Her calves were being attacked by the creatures of the sea, those with souls. And her feet were being attacked by the creatures of the mud, those with and those without souls. Armies had amassed but, time being what it was, what it is, I knew my life would not linger long enough to see the outcome of this battle. Everyone was moving incredibly slowly.

I do not think I will survive to even see where her weapons land. I believe I only have a half-hour, or two left. The insignia of the different armies also adorned the giantess that they were aiming to destroy. I didn't understand nor did I care to. I cannot look at her too long, made, as she is in the colour my head hurt to see.

My hand was encrusted in, had become sugar. The weeds had taken root in my tendons too. They fed down into the River, thriving.

I looked at my leg to see that it had been eaten at some point by an angry creature. Or possibly a tulip-farmer. Distressingly the stains where I had bled were in the new colour too. River. Along with the concomitant queasiness came a relief. Nice to be awake after so long and also to be receiving this River intravenously, filtered through these self-weeds that feed down to the River, thriving. The River will pass into me and leave me this colour.

Was the star whose name means Wormwood still glowing down there?

I looked up at the warring woman again but still no progress on the arc of her attack. I looked at her skin again and its pulsing was more than a result of my optical illiteracy. She was coated in the Seas. They were flowing over her and some measure of filtration was occurring. But the waters came from above too, as did the attacks. Unable to rise above the tulips which were by now an above-ground rhizomatic flowerform, I pulled at the weeds linking me to the River and managed to turn my head skyward see. I saw the land where the sky should be. And the globe inhabited inversely.

Hm.

Time almost being up, I thought on what has happened and during my musings I realise I recognise the rhythm of things a little. I remain unknowing and uncaring of what is going on but the pace of it I will recognise from the star whose name means Wormwood's song.

Thirsty, I pulled up the last draft of River into my weeds and gazed up at the action. The woman looks at me with a furious solidarity, as she does everybody. The sun set again and the last glow-worm, who had met the size of the World (that shrank? or *it* grew?) illuminated us all in its sickened hue. Violent armies only discernible as shadows against the colossus they slew humiliated everybody. And the petal palace, glacial, too numerous? Too few? reanimated us all and let the world renew.

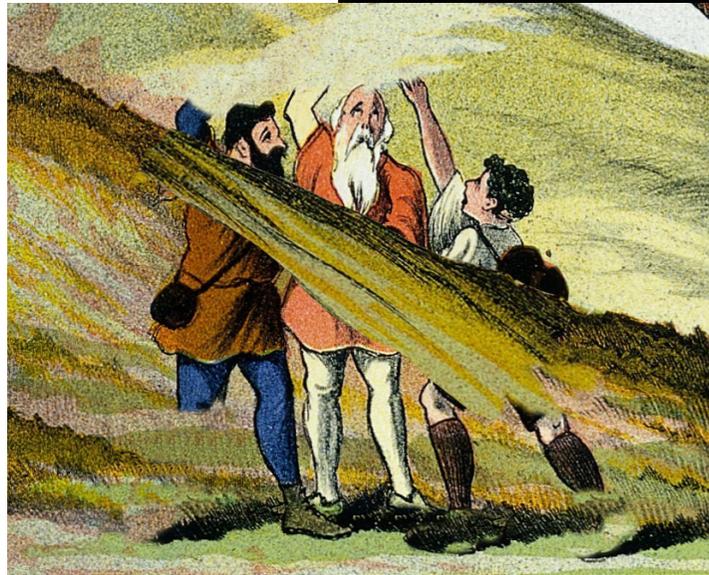




Artemisia herba-alba Asso

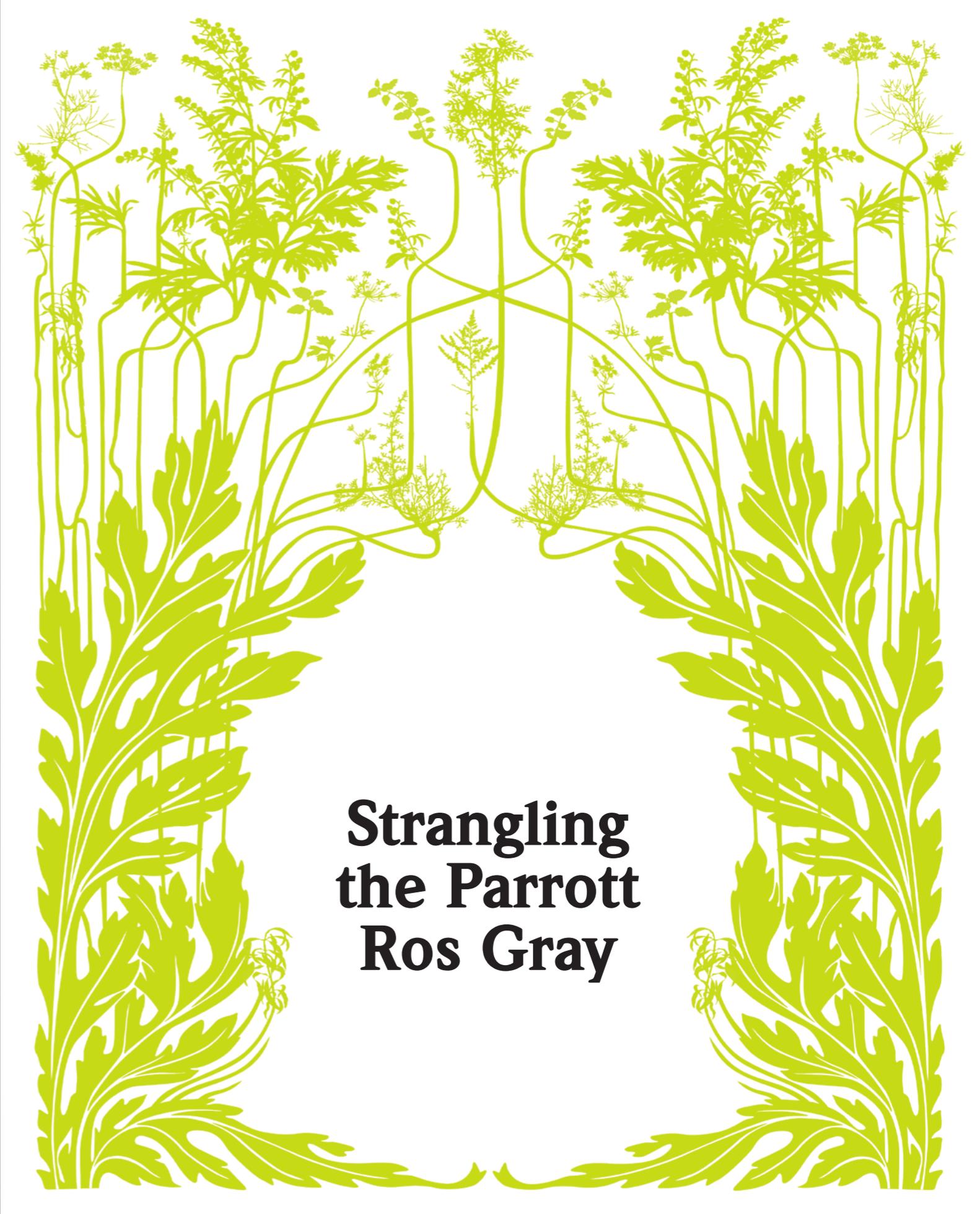






Fidelity, 2014





**Strangling
the Parrott
Ros Gray**

A flock of green parakeets converge at a feeding station in my garden in south east London. They form an unruly, squabbling queue that descends through the overhanging branches of a neighbouring plum tree to where the sunflower seeds hang temptingly from a wrought iron pole. Green parakeets are much reviled in this vicinity for their loud squawks, and are accused, sometimes xenophobically, of scaring away smaller 'native' birds. But I am seduced by their bright green plumage and red beaks, and I love their acrobatic eating and the symbiotic relationship they have with the plump woodpigeons that waddle below, pecking up the debris of scattered seeds. Urban myths about their provenance abound – that they all descend from a pair that Jimi Hendrix released in Carnaby Street in 1966, or from birds that escaped from Ealing Studios, where Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor filmed the historical pageant *Cleopatra* in 1963. It seems appropriate that this now commonplace urban bird had its moment of arrival at a time when 1960s psychedelia fully embraced the exotic and Hollywood's 'mass ornament' had reached baroque proportions. Once the parakeets have sated themselves, they depart in a flurry of shrieks, and the smaller birds move in – blue tits, goldfinches, sparrows, a robin, a wren. Every few days I take down the containers and sterilise them. *Passarine salmonellosis*, *finch trichomoniasis*, *aspergillosis*, *paridae pox* are all avian diseases spread at overcrowded feeding stations.¹ While ostensibly supporting wildlife threatened by the ongoing insect Armageddon, the birdfeeder is also a device offering a certain kind of spectacle that brings different species into an 'unnatural' anthropocenic proximity, an ideal situation for unleashing pathogens. Delight turns to doubt: exactly what kind of 'feral proliferations' am I enabling?²

In her sketching of the figure 'Enlightenment Man', who stands at the heart of the 'Anthropocene', Anna Tsing tells a series of tales about exploits carried out in the name of 'modernisation', 'civilization' and 'efficiency'. The Anthropocene is 'patchy' precisely because, in Tsing's account, these 'machines of replication' (pig farms, Fordlandia, the timber industry), which engineer simplified ecologies for the sake of maximising profit, have often resulted in eruptions of disease that sometimes destroy the very enterprises that accidentally facilitated their spread.³ One of the things we

1 'Garden bird feeders help spread disease among wild birds', *The Guardian*, Monday 20 March 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/12/garden-bird-feeders-help-spread-disease-among-wild-birds>. Lawson et al (2012), 'Emergence of a novel avian pox disease in British tit species', PLOS ONE, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0040176>, British Ornithology Trust: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/publications/papers/disease/lawson2012b>.

2 Anna Tsing (2016), 'Earth Stalked by Man', *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 34, 1:

3 Tsing (2016)

learn from Tsing is that the history of 'Man', often pictured metaphorically as a stage in which 'Nature' is the static backdrop, has never been so singular as it was previously imagined, at least from Eurocentric perspectives. Rather, the stage of history once thought to be the realm of great men, their words and actions, has always been an entangled, multi-stranded, raucous, criss-crossing, emergent, more-than-human ecological story in which insects, plants, fungi and pathogens play important roles.

Take, for example, the emergence of absinthe in the nineteenth century. The drink was first made in Switzerland by Henri Louis Pernod in 1797. Pernod distilled the beverage out of the plant *Artemisia absinthium*, also known as wormwood, mixed with ethyl alcohol, anise, fennel, lemon balm and hyssop. The chlorophyll in these leaves gives absinthe a lurid green colour, which disappears on serving the drink when it is diluted with water and sugar dissolved in a spoon that is balanced over the glass, a process called 'louching' that creates a cloudy effect. It was taken as an anti-malarial and as vermifugal tonic to ward off intestinal worms by French soldiers fighting colonial campaigns across Northern Africa in the 1830s and 1840s. The soldiers took a liking to its pleasant aroma and psychoactive properties, adding it to their drinking water to make it palatable. They returned to France with a taste for absinthe, which could contain as much as 80% pure alcohol. Absinthe's reputation took dramatic twists and turns, becoming first a patriotic tippie for the bourgeoisie, who associated it with the military, then a substitute for gin among the poor, and hallucinogenic poetry for bohemian artists and writers. Oscar Wilde was famously quoted by Ada Levenson describing his experience with absinthe:

Three nights I sat up all night drinking absinthe, and thinking that I was singularly clear-headed and sane. The most wonderful flowers, tulips, lilies and roses sprang up and made a garden of the café. 'Don't you see them?' I said to him. 'Mais non, Monsieur; il n'ya rien.'⁴

It became such an infamous cultural phenomenon that 5pm was named *L'Heure verte*, the 'green hour', when artists would leave the solitude of their studios to drink in the bars of the Parisian boulevards. Its vibrant green glow gave rise to a number of nicknames – 'The Green Fairy', 'The Emerald Mask', 'The Parrot'. To imbibe a glass or two of the green stuff was referred to colloquially as 'étouffer un perroquet' – to strangle a parrot.

The ascendance of absinthe coincided with a crisis in the wine industry in France precipitated by the proliferation of an aphid-based infestation named phylloxera that

4 Oscar Wilde and Ada Levenson (1930), *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde*, London: Duckworth.

decimated the vineyards. The wine industry fought back with a propaganda campaign that broadcast its toxic properties: absinthe was responsible for the ruination of the Third Republic, for madness, decadence, even murder.⁵ A new term, 'Absinthism', came into circulation to describe a condition that was thought to be far more serious than alcoholism. What was once hailed as a substance offering medicinal protection from parasitic illness, now threatened degeneracy. The drink became implicated in the creative mania of Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Edvard Munch, August Strindberg, Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe, among others, but also in the excessive episodes that fuelled myths about the relationships that raged between some of these figures. As if a whole host of social ills could be remedied by outlawing The Green Fairy, by the time it was legislated against in France in 1915, Jad Adams notes, 'the French high command was sending 1000-litre barrels of wine to the front to sustain troop morale'.⁶ Absinthe was the *pharmakon* exemplified – at once cure, poison and scapegoat.

Green – the colour for all things environmentally friendly and wholesome and at the same time one that symbolises our most shameful feelings and sickly states – jealousy, gullibility, dread and nausea. How fitting then, that the aesthetic most readily associated with the *fin-de-siècle* cultural moment of absinthe is Art Nouveau, a claustrophobic decorative style now recognised as a form of 'imperial modernism' that features fey young women presented as sexually available and entangled in foliage and flowers.⁷ They lounge in spaces of artifice and ornamentation that are strangely ungrounded, at times suggestive of interiors or of a garden, intoxicating dreams that could at any moment slip into the realm of nightmare. Art Nouveau panels decorated the cafés where absinthe was drunk, and Art Nouveau advertised the new commodities of modernity – cigarettes, soap, theatrical performances. It also decorated the houses of the French and Belgian elite, whose fortunes were often tied to the African colonies, where genocidal violence created vast riches for Europe through the extraction of natural resources such as timber and minerals. Banisters that crept up marble staircases like plant tendrils, exotic birds that perched around lampshades, sgraffito façades depicting women with billowing hair and voluminous drapery off-set

5 In 1905 a Swiss farmer, Jean Lanfray, hanged himself in prison after being convicted of murdering his wife and children after a drinking binge in which consumed two and a half litres of wine, two and a half litres of *piquette* (homemade red wine), several brandies, cordials and one or two absinthes. Lanfray pleaded innocent, claiming his actions were due to absinthe delirium. Jad Adams (2004), *Hideous Absinthe: A History of the Devil in a Bottle*, London: I.B. Tauris.

6 Jad Adams (2004): 214.

7 Debora L Silverman (2013), 'Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism, Part III', *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design, History and Material Culture*, 20, 1: 3–61.

the angular forms of African masks and sculptures stripped of their original social function to become trophies of empire. Absinthe delirium and the fantasy world of Art Nouveau might both be understood as a passage of escape from the horrors of the dark side of European modernity.

Much of Art Nouveau is now inescapably kitsch, but it retains a fascination that has led to numerous subcultural returns, particularly when the desire to break free from conformity takes the form of ornamental excess, a loosening of binaries of sexuality and gender, cross-cultural exchange and experimentation with altered states of consciousness. Elizabeth Galt points out that lush and colourful decorative styles have historically been rejected by a patriarchal colonial bias that sees ornamentation as 'feminine', 'oriental', 'primitive' and 'perverse'.⁸ Such is the case with Art Nouveau, even while it is a product of a particular conjuncture of colonial violence. Galt interprets visually rich films, ranging from the experimental works of Derek Jarman to Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (2003), as emblematic of an artistic tendency in which the excessive ornamentation embodies a queer aesthetic that presents non-conformist sexual and political identities in a style that revels in perverse pleasures. In her discussion of toxicity in relation to queer, racialised and disabled subjects, Mel Y. Chen recalls the now obsolete secondary definitions of the term 'queer' as both 'unwell' and 'drunk', meanings that shadow queerness with associations of intoxication and poisoning. In *Moulin Rouge*, Kylie Minogue plays The Green Fairy. She is depicted on the label of a bottle of Absinthe, but as soon as the drinker takes the first sip she springs off the label—animated as a fluorescent Tinkerbell on acid, flickering like a faulty light-bulb, she multiplies into a line of showgirls, at once seductive, manic and disorienting. Her movements captivate the group of inebriated revellers, who ascend the façade of the Moulin Rouge, swaying dangerously until the entire image fragments into swirling vertiginous fall.

As the historical range of the films discussed by Galt suggests, the ripples of Art Nouveau spread widely through the twentieth century, resurfacing as an undercurrent even when prevailing cultural conditions might seem hostile to its louche artifice. In my early teens in the 1980s I had an innocent affection for the posters of Alphonse Mucha, which depict young women characteristic of Art Nouveau whose long hair mingles with plant tendrils, cigarette smoke and ornate abstract patterns. In the years before rave, those uncomfortable with the monochrome severity of the goths and the flashy conformity of the casuals formed a lesser-known tribe of 'freaks'

8 Rosalind Galt (2011), *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image*, New York: Columbia University Press.

who wore lacey, ruffled Victoriana and listened to Jimi Hendrix and Fleetwood Mac. Around this time, I had a short-lived cottage industry sewing velvet hats with floppy brims held up with a second-hand pin or brooch. I sourced off-cuts from a friend who had a Saturday job at a genteel dress shop in Oxford called Annabelinda, which specialised in ballgowns for wealthy students. It was owned by a certain Howard Marks, who was shortly afterwards arrested because he was using this outfit as a cover for a worldwide cannabis-smuggling empire. He presented himself as ‘Mr Nice’, a hippy adventurer whose dealings cut across international borders and involved secret service agencies, terrorist organisations and drug kings like Pablo Escobar.⁹

In a paper published in *Nature* in 1975, a time when absinthe was still outlawed, scientists J. Del Castillo and M. Anderson argued there were ‘striking similarities between the psychological actions of thujone in absinthe and the tetrahydrocannabinol of the marijuana plant’. They claimed these two plant substances had similar molecular geometry and interact with the same pharmacological receptors in the central nervous system – an effect called the receptor affinity. As was later proven, Del Castillo and Anderson were wrong. Thujone does not act like a cannabinoid. But concluding the brief article, the authors dryly note that as well as suggesting new avenues for the study of pharmacology and toxicology, the affinities between these psychoactive materials are ‘also interesting from a historical and sociological point of view’.¹⁰ The scientific testing of psychotropic plants that has taken place in the laboratory has often overlapped with amateur experiments in diverse sites of sociability, such as dinner tables or clubs.

Carl Gent’s performative samplings of absinthe, a series titled *L’Heure verte* convened as part of his residency at KELDER, evoke these traditions of amateur experimentation with the effects of plants. *L’Heure verte: 1st Tasting* was a performance and absinthe tasting that ‘marked the opening of the debut bottle of Gent’s home-distilled absinthe and the continuation of work at the gallery Green Ray that began with the redesigning of their logo’ with a design that paid homage to the flourishes and curves of Art Nouveau. *L’Heure verte: 2nd Tasting* took place at Goldsmiths Allotment on the occasion of a Halloween gathering.¹¹ Gent had been growing wormwood and other herbs on their allotment plot to make into absinthe and over a number of years the wormwood fronds have sprawled upwards like a mop of uncombed hair. The

tasting involved a demonstration of the distillation process delivered to an audience of witches, spiders and wizards who listened attentively, while nursery children brought in to judge the pumpkin carving competition ran amok among the allotment plots.

Gent’s subsequent durational project at KELDER involved the two-month manufacture of absinthe and the production of four absinthe sculptures, all of which received the body of liquid at different periods in the production process and were activated by a performance. The work was located in a basement, the walls decorated with a thin wash in chartreuse,¹² with hints of plant tendrils in darker green that extended around a counter where the distillation took place. The first part of *Traddutore, Traditore (a new translation)* involved the initial maceration of absinthe in a glass demijohn, accompanied by a performance by Gent. An MP3 player was attached to the bung of the demijohn so that music entered the spirit, in this case Skeeter Davis’ ‘The End of the World’, a charming Cold War ballad that elevates doomed romance to the scale of nuclear Armageddon. Two weeks later Gent convened a skills-sharing workshop to decant the liquid from the demijohn and sieve it into the copper still to start distilling the alcohol. Gent named this performance *Testing the Receptor Affinity*, in tribute to the history of experimentation with psychotropic plants and the (sometimes mistaken) perceptions of affinities between different substances in magical practices as well as modern science. Participants assisted in mixing rye paste, tasting the alcohol and grinding up herbs in a pestle and mortar while Gent shared a range of instructions and digital files to everyone in attendance.

After another two weeks the third iteration, titled *Shrew Tree* staged the second maceration of the absinthe to a soundtrack of recordings from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. The connection to nuclear contamination was established through coincidences in translation. In the Ukrainian language the word for Russian wormwood, or mugwort, is ‘Chernobyl’, a collision of meanings and disasters that only add to absinthe’s over-ripe association with toxicity. Guests ingested dishes that included as ingredients the same herbs that went into the absinthe. On this occasion, sobriety at the dinner table was required so that guests could test out the bodily effects of these botanicals in a state unclouded by alcohol. At the same time, they discussed cross-contamination and poisoning and added the final range of herbs to a second demijohn (the third sculpture), called *Shrew Tree*, the vessel so named following a magical practice in which a shrew is placed inside a tree and sealed in to curse the tree, supposedly to

9 Howard Marks (1996), *Mr Nice*, London: Secker and Warburg.

10 J Del Castillo and M. Anderson, ‘Marijuana, absinthe and the central nervous system’, *Nature*, 1975.

11 Goldsmiths Allotment is a space for students and staff at Goldsmiths, University of London, to grow plants and support wildlife. As well as occasional workshops it has hosted exhibitions, performances and seasonal celebrations that mark the turning of the year and its rituals.

12 Chartreuse hovers between yellow and green and is both the colour and name of an alcoholic drink made by monks living in the Chartreuse Mountains in France. See the chapter ‘Chartreuse’ in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (2014), *Prismatic Ecologies: Ecotheory beyond Green*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

draw disease from livestock. Finally, three weeks after the second maceration when the absinthe was complete, *Contagion Heuristic* involved the siphoning of the liquid from the *Shrew Tree* and its serving with water, accompanied by a collective rendition of drinking songs.

The figure of Gent in this murky basement macerating herbs and decanting liquids amid glass and copper distillation vessels calls to mind a medieval alchemist. Indeed, the magical affinities, millennial fervour and radical dissidence of the medieval has long been a point of reference in their work. The wormwood plant plays numerous walk-on parts in the centuries that precede the Enlightenment, even going back to the *Book of Revelation*. In the original Koine Greek version, wormwood is the name given to a star that falls to the Earth and poisons a third of the waterways and a third of the people. Over time, the word 'wormwood' has sometimes been translated, in biblical texts at least, as 'bitter', but even with these shifts in translation, the toxic associations of the absinthe plant cannot be so easily washed away. The medieval alchemist's quest to create gold out of base matter was pursued against a backdrop of widespread panic about End Times and outbreaks of ergotism, a mould afflicting wheat that caused vivid hallucinations as well as a host of other horrible symptoms, which may account for some of the nightmarish imagery of Hieronymus Bosch.¹³ One needs to read at the interstices of historical translation, and here Gent shares a sensibility with Carolyn Dinshaw, to recognise how the medieval period's heretical experiments with heterogeneity dissolve into the present.¹⁴ Ripples in a glass of green.

How did we get here?

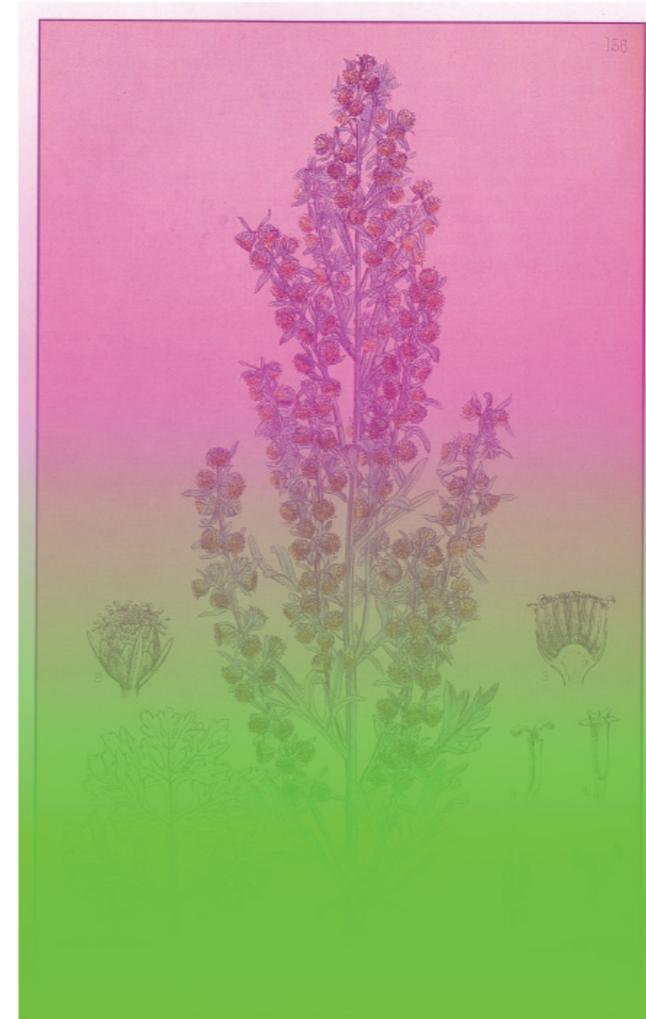
We have lingered too long.

Will you forgive me?

Of this there is no doubt.

We have strangled the parrot.

Good night.



¹³ Laurinda Dixon (2003), *Bosch*, London: Phaidon.

¹⁴ Carolyn Dinshaw (1991), *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*, Duke University Press.



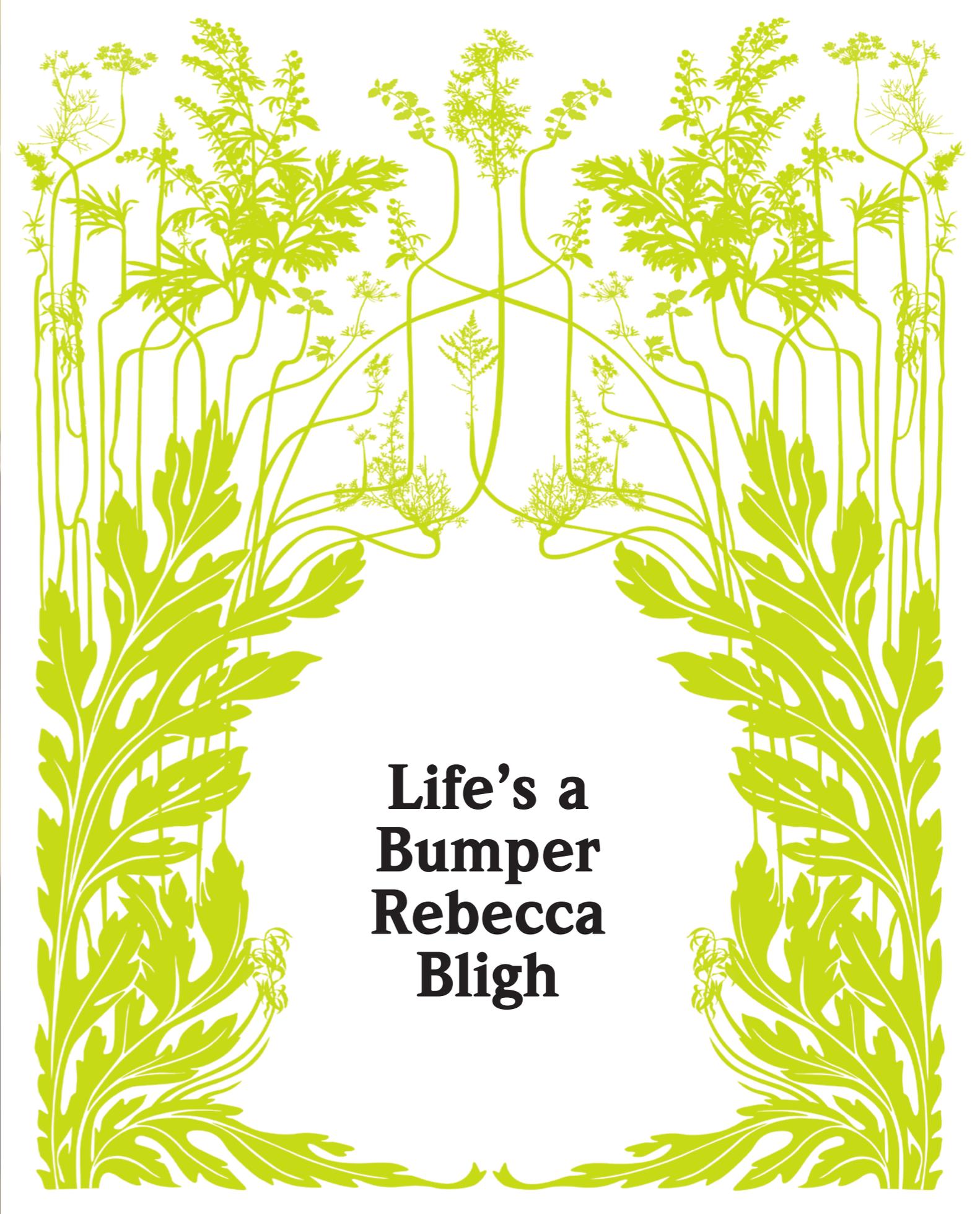
Round Jean Lanfrey's Place, 2016



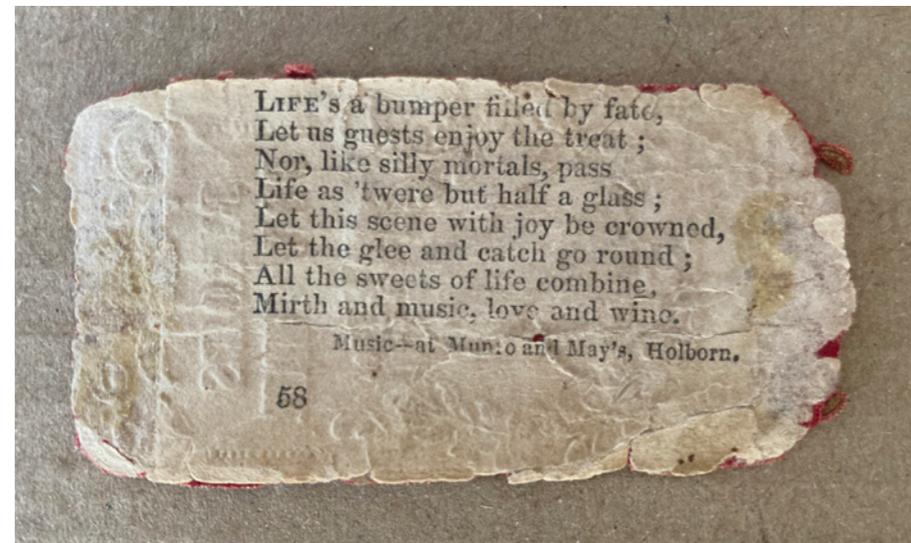
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**Life's a
Bumper
Rebecca
Bligh**



38

“Tain’t in poetry, is it?”¹

I found this bound into the spine of a miniature, pocket-sized Don Juan that belonged to my father.² (I also have an ebonized cane he collected, of diminutive size.) I mean, the spine fell off, and there it was, fitting, this binder’s nicety, this tale from the scriptorium. How satisfying it must have been to find the measure of this ‘rhyming puff’ exactly spanned the gatherings.³ Released: a sigh, a Cheshire cat’s ghost-of-a-smile.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the second-hand markets in London were awash in Victoriana; there were still, then, Victorians alive. I found listings for Munro and May’s in the *New Monthly Belle Assemblée*, dated 1836, which would make it Regency, just; and from the poem, that’s more like it. A ‘bumper’ is a brimming glass that’s full-to-overflowing. So, life’s a boozy cornucopia – be told. Then, be warned – Dickens’ books are full of the draggled remains of the Regency period: raddled degenerates, ruiners of youths, atavistic duellers; the privileged brute who wants to beat a man to death and face no charge.

And still, I hear the ring of glasses
In the head, the morning after
The catch echoes into silence
Though they’re not long dead
We’re all dead a long time.

In Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1848), the leitmotif is realised when the sun strikes cracked face powder, and the purplish tint of too-black whiskers comes to light. Beauties of artifice become memento mori. Death is coming. With luck, middle age is coming. Act with kindness. Try to meet them with humility and style. It’s like as if, as Ram Dass says, all we’re really doing is walking one another home.

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- 1 (Charles Dickens writing as Tony Queller, cited in ‘Tony Weller, “Potry” Queller: Why, in *Pickwick Papers*, Did Dickens Have Him Mention “Warren’s blackin” and “Rowland’s oil”?’ by Leslie Katz, a delicious essay which hones and deepens the binder’s joke, as much else in this text (and which, I swear, I didn’t find until after I had written what I thought to be its final draft). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1973951)
- 2 This book is, of course, by Byron, who, deliciously, excruciatingly, rhymes ‘Juan’ with both ‘ruin’ and ‘true one’. On the vanity of ‘the Byronic,’ see Dicken’s story ‘The Boarding House,’ of which Katz’s essay contains gobbets, featuring a medical student called Hicks: ‘a tallish, white-faced young man, with spectacles, and a black ribbon round his neck instead of a neckerchief – a most interesting person; a poetical walker of the hospitals [med. student], and a “very talented young man.” He was fond of “lugging” into conversation all sorts of quotations from Don Juan, without fettering himself by the propriety of their application, in which particular he was remarkably independent.’ (Dickens’ ‘The Boarding House,’ cited in ‘Tony Weller, “Potry” Queller’ by L. Katz, *ibid.*, as in footnote 1.)
- 3 The term ‘rhyming puff’ is Michael Slater’s, used on p.36 of his book *Charles Dickens* (2009).

Marijuana, absinthe and

THERE are striking similarities between the psychological actions of the liqueur absinthe¹ and the experiences frequently reported by users of marijuana². We have therefore compared the properties of thujone and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which are believed to be the active principles of *Artemisia absinthium* and *Cannabis sativa*, respectively. Both substances are terpenoid, derived from the essential oils absinthol and cannabinalol, and are formed by similar biosynthetic mechanisms^{3,4}.

The molecular geometry of these three compounds is so different, however, that it is difficult to believe that, at low doses, they interact specifically with the same pharmacological receptors. At large doses, it is always possible that they exert similar, less specific actions by virtue of common physicochemical properties.

Thujone and THC have similar molecular geometry and similar functional groups available for metabolism. This close geometrical resemblance is illustrated in Fig. 1, in which the bonds common to both molecules are drawn as bold lines.

Finally, although there is

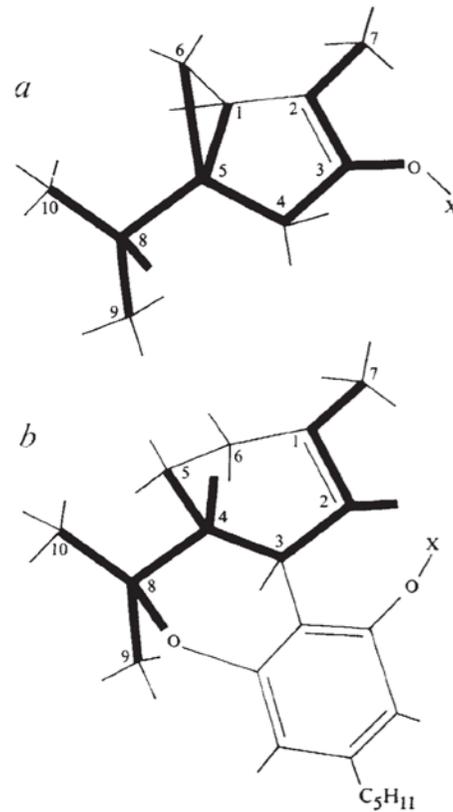


Fig. 1 Structural formulae of thujone-enol (a) and $\Delta^{1,6}$ -THC (b). Bonds common to both molecules are drawn as bold lines. X indicates the site of the receptor with which the oxygen of the thujone molecule or the hydroxyl group of the THC molecule may react. See text for details.

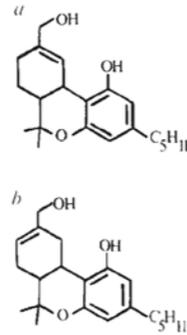
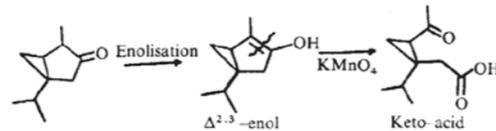


Fig. 2 Products of metabolism of $\Delta^{1,2}$ -THC (a) and $\Delta^{1,6}$ -THC (b).

no direct correspondence between the oxygen of the thujone molecule and the hydroxyl group of THC, it seems possible that both react with a common site of a pharmacological receptor, such as that indicated by [redacted], without changing the orientation or relative position of either molecule.

Indeed, these metabolites have been suggested as the actual psychotomimetic agents in marijuana⁷.



We propose therefore that both thujone and THC exert their psychotomimetic effects by interacting with a common receptor in the central nervous system. Topologically, this receptor should have a binding site for interaction with oxygen, a planar region to accommodate the allyl system, and pockets or cavities in which the alkyl and hydrogen substituents common to both drugs would fit. This hypothesis suggests new experimental approaches to study the pharmacology and toxicology of these and related compounds. A common mechanism of action for THC and thujone is also interesting from a historical and sociological point of view.

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¹ Zolotow, M., *Playboy Magazine*, 18, 169 (1971).

Multiplex: On Cinema & Translation Rudi Christian Ferreira

Cinema offers us multiple interpretations, variations or ‘translations’ of the basement – in fact, my own imagination of the basement is almost completely formed by cinema as I had very limited exposure to the real article growing up yet spent an unhealthy amount of time engaging with film. The basement has been cast as a space where illicit, illegal, deviant, and dangerous activities can take place and would be populated by the mad scientist, the monster, and the serial killer. These subterranean spaces are, by definition, below ground – private places hidden from the public – which makes them ideal for such unwelcome behaviour. Of course, cinema also offers us an alternative reading of this traditionally urban space – one that is less macabre and uses the very fact that it is hidden to present it to us as a place where wonder and magic happens – where those who might exist on the fringes of society can flourish. Cinema presents us with socially awkward teenagers creating model cities, geeks building DIY laboratories, and transexual communities enjoying ballroom culture. Through the lens of cinema, we are able to witness the multiple renderings of the basement and those who populate them.

Both the Afrikaans and Dutch translation of basement is ‘kelder’ – a reference to the shared heritage of the founding directors of KELDER.¹ On the surface, the name appears to be no more than a reference to its subterranean space, but KELDER considers some of the tropes of the basement, as presented to us in cinema, and obfuscates them. The familiar trope of the basement-as-laboratory becomes a recurring theme with the act of experimentation continually encouraged.² It is this spirit of experimentation that informs not only our programme but also the artists we collaborate with, and this is what defined Carl Gent’s *Multiplex*. The researcher and writer, Carolina Rito has written extensively on the subject of the ‘institution as praxis’ and has co-edited a book by the same name. In her article, ‘What is the curatorial doing?’ she states that through their programming, institutions can create ‘spaces for the development of new enquiries, the articulation of new answers, and the advancement of new knowledge.’ This belief that institutions can also be producers of new knowledge resonates with Gent’s *Multiplex*. In their creation of a lurid green distillery/bar/restaurant/music hall, they managed to turn the exhibition space into a space

of communal learning, where ideas are shared, circulated and, in the process, new knowledge is created.³ The project consisted of four events, each with its own specific knowledge-sharing activity. Gent was eager to share their research into the distilling of absinthe, its cultural history, theological references, and biological effects on people, but also eager to learn more through the process and listen to others’ experiences of this most beguiling of libations. This exchange of knowledge was perhaps best illustrated during a ‘sober dinner’, where invited guests, each with their own absinthe-affiliated specialism that helped form the project – a bar person who advised on the processes of alcohol distillation; a social historian with a detailed knowledge of the cultural history of absinthe production; a horticulturalist savvy on the medicinal qualities of herbs, among other friends and acquaintances – enjoyed a dinner prepared by Gent containing the multitude of ingredients present in absinthe.

This informal coming together in the mode of non-hierarchical exchange, whilst emblematic of Gent’s wider practice is also true of subterranean or basement activity where a spirit of openness, generosity and sharing presides. Gent’s communal gesture reflected both the illicit intimacy of underground gatherings and the generative practices of transaction, exchange and collaboration that characterise KELDER’s institutional imperatives.

If we apply the same literal translation of ‘multiplex’ as we did to KELDER, then multiple meanings come to the fore. One meaning refers to the building where films are screened – a complex housing multiple cinema screens – a space very familiar to Gent. In a text written for the project at KELDER it becomes apparent that they are very aware of the ability of cinema to translate subjects onto the silver screen. In the text, Gent laments not being able to see the ‘whirlwind of romance, music, absinthe, colour and passion’⁴ that was *Moulin Rouge* – this was due to their tardiness that resulted in them not gaining access to the nights’ screening of the film and instead being forced to see *The Fast and The Furious* (which was yet to begin) on a neighbouring screen. Despite having already seen the Baz Luhrmann classic, they wanted to see it again, and, in particular, the scene with ‘The Green Fairy’ (played by Kylie Minogue). The scene depicts the protagonist, Christian (played by Ewan McGregor) drinking obscene amounts of lurid green absinthe with sultry French artists, which ultimately results in the appearance of The Green Fairy, a metaphor for absinthe’s hallucinogenic qualities.

1 The founding directors of KELDER, Rudi Christian Ferreira’s first language is Afrikaans and Adriene Groen’s is Dutch. Afrikaans is a language unique to South Africa and is a hybridized form of Dutch. Their shared heritage, as manifested in the naming of KELDER, became a metaphor for their collaborative working practice.

2 I am aware of the distinction between experimental and speculative – where experimental is closely related to science and implies having existing knowledge about a subject whilst speculative implies a more emotional, gut feeling and is not reliant on already existing knowledge. Speculative might be a more accurate description of our activities, however, experimental is a term more familiar with the general public – and gives a clearer idea of our activities as something that does not have a predetermined outcome and makes allowances for ‘failure’.

3 The practice of the art institution being an education space where the institution/artist take on the role of educator has a long history with a number of important texts written on the subject of “The Educational Turn”. The early projects often used academic modes of presenting information – i.e., a lecture or workshop where which tends to be hierarchical. More recently attention was given to shared knowledge production which is nonhierarchical and provides a communal sense of learning.

4 www.kelderprojects.com/Multiplex

This of course is a mistranslation – as in fact absinthe has not hallucinogenic qualities. Yet, cinema chooses to overlook this fact and instead presents us with a far more exciting rendition of absinthe and the culture surrounding its consumption.

It is therefore very apt that Carl Gent chose *Multiplex* as the title of their project. On the surface it would appear that the project is directed by the distilling of absinthe and the associated stages of this production – in fact, Gent delves much deeper to expose the complex interdisciplinary relations between mythology, religion, science, addiction, rock music and the like. They present a multiplicity of research strands, allowing the viewer to decide where they might continue the enquiry. Rito continues in her essay:

Surface *is* the plane of the curatorial – a plane that: enables movement across disciplines; allows seemingly unrelated subjects to meet along their lines of flight; is driven by intellectual and conceptual disquiet; recognises intuition and contingent encounters; and finds new ways of engaging with urgent and current issues and their fugitive affects.⁵

Another meaning of multiplex refers to ‘a system of transmitting several messages or signals simultaneously on the same circuit or channel.’⁶ We can translate the metaphor of transmitting several messages on the same circuit into the project space – much like cinema’s greenscreen, which only acts as a backdrop – a stage for other activities to be performed – so too does Gent’s absinthe-green room become a stage for divergent activities.

Multiplex oscillates between surface and the subterranean – that which is at once apparent and that which requires further unearthing or mining from below. The one constant being that in each of these states the project is dependent on others to activate it by engaging with it, sharing their knowledge and ideas in an act of productive reciprocity – as each state moves on to the next, so it is being altered, and a new translation is added. Just as different filmmakers showed me multiple translations of what a basement could be through the medium of cinema, so too is Carl Gent showing publics the multiple socio-cultural narratives of absinthe – the difference being that the public is invited to respond and inform the process to generate a never-ending series of translations. With each new iteration something is revealed whilst something else is rendered opaque. *Felon Herb* is only the latest translation of a project that started all those years ago when Gent couldn’t see Baz Luhrmann’s rendition of *Moulin Rouge* at the multiplex.

5 Carolina Rito, ‘What is the Curatorial Doing’, in *Institution as Praxis: New Curatorial Directions for Collaborative Research* (Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2020)

6 According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary











How to make your own absinthe and how to drink it best

(or, internal salve for subjective dissolution and temporal dispersal [multiple herald])

So, to make your own absinthe is a three-part process:

- 1st maceration
- distillation
- 2nd maceration

After this, the absinthe is bottled, drunk, traded, whatever.

First maceration

Acquire a glass demijohn with a rubber bung – large plastic bottles also work fine – and fill with discount supermarket vodka.

Traditionally, a more Western European and flavourless neutral grain spirit would be used, but vodka works almost as well and is cheaper in small quantities.

After this add fresh stalks and leaves of grand wormwood.

Dried wormwood is more normal but as we're interested in absinthe as a visual as well as an alcoholic toxin-object and foregrounding the presence of wormwood, we keep it fresh.

Then grind up and add the following (all dried):

- Green anise
- Sweet fennel
- Coriander seed
- Lemon verbena
- Star anise
- Hyssop
- Fennel seed
- Sage (all dried)

While all absinthes are understood to contain the 'Holy Trinity' of wormwood, anise and fennel, producers will normally keep the specificities of their recipes secret to avoid competitors reproducing their product at lower cost. I provide my absinthe recipe freely but leave the quantities and measurements up to your experimentation and preference.

When all the ingredients are added seal the demijohn with the rubber bung and let it macerate, which is another word for infuse, for two weeks.

This is the first opportunity to encode your absinthe with whatever aural or textural elements you favour. Simply expose your resting demijohn to a sonic environment that you wish to flavour the absinthe. I play my absinthe excerpts from various endtime mythologies, using the cavity in the rubber bung that normally allows fermenting gases to leave the vessel where I inserted a headphonespeaker, pointing inwards towards the macerating liquid.

Sieve out the herbs and spices from the macerated spirit, which will now be green.

Distillation

Purchase a small copper still or alembic online.

These are used to distil spirits or essential oils. It is illegal in a lot of countries to distil alcohol. Don't get caught.

You will also need a hot-plate or similar heating apparatus.

There are a lot of cold mix 'absinthe kits' commercially available that do not require a still or heating. While it is inaccurate to say that these kits do not make absinthe [absinthe was prohibited in the period where most spirits were granted a legal definition and, as such, has no legal definition] it is entirely accurate to say they do not make anything like absinthe as it was originally produced. Rather, they add wormwood flavouring or oils, along with other herbal flavourings, to a base spirit. It simply won't taste the way absinthe should or do the things that makes absinthe special and vital in a time when alcohol too often assumes the role of an anaesthetic for a brutalised existence.

Assemble the still or alembic following the provided assembly instructions, sealing all joints with a 1:1 mixture of rye flour and water and then begin the following distillation process:

Place the macerated spirit into the copper pot and heat it from below using the hot plate.

When distilling my absinthe I ran all the electrics through a timer switch that would activate itself. I wanted my absinthe to make itself, to not require a button that depended on my pressing, despite my choreography.

Keep the condensing recipient – the kit will explain which part of the alembic this is – filled with cold

water. It is a good idea to keep refreshing the flow of cold water via a constantly running tap as the water heats up fast and warm water will disrupt the distillation.

Once the spirit begins heating it will boil off the aquatic elements of the spirit and distilled vapours will begin to condense inside the recipient.

As it drips out it loses its previously greenish brown colour, and is stronger in both alcoholic volume and flavour.

Tip: once it gets going the dripping will be continuous. As soon as it begins to slow down, stop collecting. If the still runs too long it starts producing a lower-ABV spirit. This will ruin your distillate.

After this, pour the distillate back into the demijohn or bottle and prepare it for the second maceration.

Second maceration

Add fresh stalks and leaves of petite wormwood (*artemisia pontica*) to the distillate.

Petite wormwood can prove hard to find and it is very difficult to grow from seed – a rhizome of a parent plant is best. It's therefore a good idea to not harvest an entire plant but keep it growing. Mine is currently settled in an allotment in London. It seems to die every winter time but this death is an illusion, more a total-clearing for the new year's life. Petite wormwood is also used to warmer climates than London can provide so my plant is therefore a little stunted and slow growing but still absolutely fine for using in absinthe.

Then grind up and add the following:

- Mugwort aka Russian Wormwood (*artemisia vulgaris*)
- White Wormwood (*artemisia herba-alba*)
- Hyssop and Lemon Balm

The addition of *artemisia vulgaris* and *herba-alba* is specific to my absinthe recipe. Known as White Wormwood in English, *shTeh* (الششبيح) in Arabic and *la'anah* (לענה) in Old Testament Hebrew, *artemisia herba-alba* is the specific plant referenced across the Qu'ran, Bible and Torah, the wormwood of Patmos

and Armageddon. White wormwood is often available online but grows commonly around the Mediterranean and Middle East. I asked a friend to pick some up for me on their last trip to Bahrain.

Leave the mixture to macerate alone for three weeks in a dark space, after which you can strain out the remaining herbs and your absinthe is ready to drink.

A note on the drinking

Drink it any way you see fit but this will be best:

Alone or in a group of more than three people, preferably sat on the floor.

Get a vessel, preferably glass or clear Perspex and add a double measure (50 ml-ish) of your absinthe. Place a single cube of brown sugar on an absinthe spoon or something similar like a tea-strainer resting over the vessel.

An absinthe spoon is a decorative spoon made of steel or, in my case, stainless silver, with often very decorative slots that will hold a sugar cube but allow water and dissolved sugar to pass through. Pour ice-cold water – but not ice – over the sugar cube allowing it to dissolve.

The ratio between absinthe and water should be 1 part absinthe to 4 parts water but this can be adjusted to taste.

Should any of the sugar remain, stir the rest in.

If the absinthe has been made well the drink will 'louche' and the clear green absinthe will turn a milky white-green as the essential oils in the spirit emulsify.

Drink.

Three Drunken Maidens

There were three drunken maidens
Came from the Isle of Wight
They drunk from Monday morning
Nor stopped till Saturday night
When Saturday night did come me boys
They wouldn't then go out
These three drunken maidens
They pushed the jug about

Then in comes bouncing Sally
Her cheeks as red as blooms
Move up me jolly sisters
And give young Sally some room
For I will be your equal
Before the night is out
These four drunken maidens
They pushed the jug about

There's woodcock and pheasant
There's partridge and hare
There's all sorts of dainties
No scarcity was there
There's forty quarts of beer, me boys
They fairly drunk them out
These four drunken maidens
They pushed the jug about

But up comes the landlord
He's asking for his pay
It's a forty pound bill, me boys
These gals have got to pay
That's ten pounds apiece, me boys
But still they wouldn't go out
These four drunken maidens
They pushed the jug about

Oh where are your feathered hats
Your mantles rich and fine
They've all been swallowed up
In tankards of good wine
And where are your maidenheads
You maidens frisk and gay
We left them in the alehouse
We drank them clean away

A Jug of This

You mar'ners all, as you pass by,
Call in and drink if you are dry.
Come spend, my lads, your money brisk,
And pop your nose in a jug of this.

Oh mar'ners all, if you've half a crown,
You're welcome all for to sit down.
Come spend, my lads, your money brisk,
And pop your nose in a jug of this.

Oh tipplers all, as you pass by,
Come in and drink if you are dry.
Call in and drink, think not amiss,
And pop your nose in a jug of this.

Oh now I'm old and can scarcely crawl,
I've an old grey beard and a head that's bald.
Crown my desire and fulfil my bliss,
A pretty young girl and a jug of this.

Oh when I'm in my grave and dead,
And all my sorrows are past and fled,
Transform me then into a fish,
And let me swim in a jug of this.

Mugwort soup

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion or 3 small spring onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 10 medium white mushrooms, sliced
- 1 large Yukon Gold or russet, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1.5 litres chicken or vegetable broth
- 250 ml heavy cream
- 120 mg tender mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) leaves
- Tabasco
- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

Melt butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until softened, about 4 minutes. Add garlic and mushrooms; cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Add potato and broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer until potato is tender, about 20 minutes.

Add cream and mugwort, and simmer 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly. Puree soup in batches in a blender until smooth. Return soup to pot. Add Tabasco to taste; season with salt and pepper.

Glazed Carrots with Hyssop

- 6 large carrots thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp water
- 3 tbsp butter
- 3 tsp honey or brown sugar
- 3 tsp finely chopped hyssop
- salt and pepper to taste

In a saucepan, combine the carrots, water, honey, butter and salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer over medium heat.

Cover and cook over low heat until the carrots are tender and the liquid is a syrupy glaze, about 10–20 minutes or so. Be careful that it does not burn.

Toss the carrots with hyssop and serve immediately.

Lemon balm drizzle cake

For the syrup:

- LOTS of lemon balm (one big handful of leaves)
- 140g caster sugar

For the cake:

- 225g caster sugar
- 225g unsalted butter, softened
- 4 large eggs
- 275g self-raising flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 4 tbsp whole milk
- 1 big handful of lemon balm leaves

Start by making the syrup. Mix the caster sugar with 70g water, add a big handful of lemon balm leaves and set over a low heat. Once the sugar has dissolved, bring the syrup to the boil then take it off the heat and leave to steep until the cake is ready for glazing.

For the cake, beat together the butter and caster sugar until light. This is best done in a free-standing mixer.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating well between each addition.

Fold in the flour and baking powder.

Add enough milk to create a dropping consistency. In other words, until the mixture falls off a tapped spoon with only the slightest hint of resistance.

Finely chop one large handful of lemon balm leaves and stir into the cake mix.

Pour/spoon the mixture into a lined 900g loaf tin and bake at 160 degrees C for 45 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean having been inserted into the middle of the cake.

Leave the cake to cool for 10 minutes then poke a few holes in the top of the cake with a cocktail stick. Pour the syrup over the top and leave to cool in the tin.

Star Anise Ice Cream

- 6 star anise
- 1 vanilla pod, split
- Zest and juice of 1 large orange
- 200ml water
- 150g dark brown soft sugar
- 4 egg yolks
- 400ml double cream

Prise open the individual points of each star anise, remove the shiny brown seeds, crush and put them in a saucepan with their casings, the vanilla pod, orange juice and water. Bring to the boil, then simmer until the liquid has reduced by two-thirds.

Remove from the heat and allow to sit for at least an hour, or refrigerate overnight.

Strain the liquid, scraping in the vanilla seeds, and pour into a saucepan over a medium heat, adding half the sugar and stirring to a syrup.

Beat the egg yolks until pale in a separate bowl, add the remaining sugar and beat again. Pour in half the syrup, beat again, then stir the rest through. Pour in the cream and beat well until light, fluffy peaks form.

Add most of the orange zest, leaving some to decorate the top.

Line a loaf tin or freezerproof container with clingfilm, leaving an excess of a few inches around each side to fold over the top, and scatter the remaining orange zest in the bottom.

Pour over the cream mixture, smooth with the back of a spoon, cover loosely with clingfilm, and freeze for at least four hours.

Error and prayerwork. Substance abuse

1. Error and prayerwork. Substance abuse.
2. Or, more accurately, Prayer.
3. I drank it in my twenties and then, in my thirties, I started making it.
4. Cheapest possible vodka that was probably not strong enough. Seeds and plants ordered online and raised in a three-footed sculpture I had made called Fidelity. Harvested, crushed, snipped and placed in a demijohn.
5. And after this, so many wet-works. Liquid sculpture slides off, evaporates, leaks or is drunk up: ingested. Whatever framing and encoding has been done through the violence of language and the proper noun designation of Art potentially remains (I guess) but does not remain in one zone. It heads into soils, skies and bodies. Good.
6. Absinthe is a looser territory than most names for different boozes. Its long-lasting illegality meant that absinthe was never duly defined by law. Throughout and beyond its prohibition what delineates a bottle of booze as absinthe is something that is arrived at by diffuse public consensus. Cider with blue food colouring or lime milkshake could be legally called absinthe, but the people would disagree, the closer associations to cider and milkshake would supersede alternative assertions and they would not be drunk as absinthe.
7. The bad truths inside the materiality of absinthe ≈ the bad truths inside the idea of absinthe.
8. Gothic in this way, overripe with different associations, none of which really work when properly checked out.
9. the Bible and Chernobyl. That's okay, I guess.
10. Th' thujone! Ain't enough to actually matter, but the reality of chucking it in yourself, via a UV-shining plastic shot glass or all that paraphernalia and silverware it matters not: dissolution does arrive. The energising botanicals of hyssop, anise, fennel, verbena, coriander seed, lemon balm fill the self just

- as the deep tranquilizing alcoholic maw opens up beneath you.
11. Tulips on your shins or some similar plantlike communion.
12. So while, it probably isn't the poisonous waters of the Star Wormwood that will take a third of humanity into the next waiting room, nor the cataclysmic reactors of Chernobyl turning a third of the world poisonous, nor the final tipple that results in murdered families, nor an undressed green-skinned woman, nor something structurally-twinning with THC at the molecular level, it is maybe a non-identical twin to all these things, an almost-rhyme. Reared so close to these signifiers, sealed off-screen and with a populace needing to find a home for these ideas in their chaste secular world, hungry for fairies and demons and sin, that if absinthe isn't these things, I'm not sure what it is.
13. An upper and a downer all in one.
14. I have no imagination you see. Only a body and the things that a body must do. Does this liquid I've made and the bad things I've tried to put inside it help the body do the things it must do?
15. Does it help it listen to itself and the world?
16. Write about the sky, I dare you. Or the city. Or the times.
17. It's a world of despites isn't it. Worlds of despites. Of songs that slide through different times and bodies and bars. Of knowledges shared or stolen or divined by looking at things askew. And when you can't do it yourself you ask something to help. And, invariably, the thing helps. It gets in you and you follow its rules for a bit. And then it's been years and you wonder if you've been spending more time on the side-quest than the main venture. And does that stop it being a side-quest? And does that flatten things? Render all those sensorial visions and departure lounges mute? And is that muteness a problem? A little less noise isn't always bad.
18. And then you're drunk.
19. They use the female body to police the female
- body don't they? I know I should be explicit with my theys, know thy enemy. Image of a green woman, tits out, killed by Temperance. They use it to tear clothes off of women.
20. In this gaslit time, the booze helps thusly:
21. The decency and dignity that sits beneath the barbarity hoisted upon us by the variously redacted.
22. Secondly and via proximity to the vision we desire to make whole, it allows us to traverse between this: the ghastly planet of extinction and extraction. To that: the Universe where living occurs. It shows one way to get there, to strip away the horror and to give us respite and clarity. And as anyone who has grown stuff knows, one glass of home-distilled absinthe is worth twenty bottles of shop-bought.
23. The hope is that we return from the underworld retaining a part of this vision and then (katabasic bitches that we are) we'll try to purchase the psychic tools necessary to provide a polar reversal, to undo the curse. It gives us the energy and the faith to put in the good work that we trust will, one day, vanquish our conquerors.
24. Prayerwork.
25. Asking the divine to intervene or illuminate or protect. Asking for some measure of making, fixing-up or knocking down that is not guaranteed. Often seems guaranteed against. The dimensions referred to can be interior or exterior. Can refer to physical realities themselves such as infection or attraction or the abstracts that shepherd such realities, such as money.
26. So,
27. Dear Lady, I think I am beginning to understand what S said when he insisted on time's cyclical nature. Now I am in my body again, brought here by You, the past is laid out in front of me, and can be intervened in. It's not just capitalism etc. that stopped me being here before, but some lack of poison.
28. Keep me drunk
29. Keep me sober
30. Make me both, often enough, with wise weeds harvested from rich-enough soils in order to strike against all that is rapacious and runaway. Keep me present and distracted enough to avoid their potholes and provide the best care I can.
31. These petty spells and prayers. These incantations. I think they work.
32. The word 'absinthe' works, we maintain it and, despite its contradictions, the substance remains, is imbibed, becomes people and people make it again. And, supposedly, while it is partially us and possesses us, other things outside of the Absinthe Cycle get done. We become co-authors.
33. It doesn't need to be booze. Now, more than previously (for us at least), the worlds-to-be are more visible, require less intervention from our companion weeds in order to emerge from the mist.
34. The search for legality, for recognition is a dangerous pursuit. Visible weeds are plucked out. I would argue that the visual is just one element of visibility, and that's the point isn't it.
35. The 7eventh Seal: the 7even trumpets
36. And when he opened the seventh seal, there was a silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them, And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer, and many incenses were given to him so that he might present the prayers of all the saints at the golden altar which is before the throne.
37. This context starts out with present verbs, then we find future verbs, and future again at the end, but the Byzantine text has present tenses in between. This is not unusual for the switch back and forward of tenses. But it is also possible for the tenses to have been assimilated by the surrounding futures? At any rate, verbs with a present tense form can have a future meaning.
38. In modern Greek "ἀπὸ" has absorbed ἐκ. Generally, Codex A represents the oldest reading for Revelation. Family 052 is split exactly in half: two mss for each of the major readings. More likely that an original future form was corrected to a subjunctive form than vice versa. But the subjunctive and future in NT Greek have overlapping domains anyway, and all three of these readings may be rendered as English subjunctives.
39. And the smoke of the incenses went up before God from the hand of the angel mingled with the prayers of the saints. And the angel took the censer and filled it with the burning incense and he hurled it to the earth; and there came rumblings and voices and peals of thunder and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets readied themselves to play. And the first one sounded his trumpet; and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was rained on the earth.
40. And one third of the earth was burned up, and one third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

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