



cold spell

gillian parrish

cold spell
gillian parrish

cold spell

copyright 2019 by gillian parrish
<https://spacecraftproject.com/mothership/>

images by chris lujan
<http://www.instagram.com/chrislujanstudio>



“The North makes you look at things on a global scale.”

—James Lotz, geographer, in *The Idea of North*

“There’s something ahead of us. What do you see?”

—Aua, angakkuq, to his daughter in *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*

the girl-of-pains

waits by the river

says, 'not everyone is a human being,'

the feather dress the dress of fur

38°

to hunt in circles
in ink in pixel light

walk the parking lot
edged in ice

to ask of winter

a cold spell

possession (i)

to begin in whispers in ice to auger

to find in lines

(wind-borne & water-born)

for 'the north

is a process' sung thru the running

of fox ox owl wolf whale seal bear

the human hidden skin and skin to run in

to make a space to let the spirits in

to make a ~~hidey~~ holedome (for them) to dream in

This whiteness is not blankness, is not even white.
Each hair on the bear a clear hollow lanced with light.
This bear is more window than mirror, but for the
clean-swept floor, the babies just out of reach. Mama. Ambler.
Drowning-water-dancer. Big body thinning like a feather
into bone. The bear might be the door. Bear the color of a tooth.
Dark tongue, to swallow us, unbind the bones, take us down
to the underground, underfur, underskin to blue rooms
and the predictable hidden rivers. To sing in purple tongues,
to sing the sicknesses to sleep, to dream to stop what's slipping.
For we've crossed the blood-brain barrier, black carbon
crackling between our seams. Wanderer, wild-hunterer,
where will you wait when the world is water, the water dust?
Famine-grazer, the kali yuga in your gut is us. If cannibal,
then mirror. Brother the color of spilt milk.

68°

night blue

(only the moon)

and forests of fir

38°

called it
“polar vortex”

inch of ice inside the kitchen window

17 miles of snow

to the Autozone pawnshop gunshow row

cold spell (i)

cease bleeding ice cease
seeping such clear tears
you blue of blue you green
of green you aquamarine dream
remain like mountains
ice you have your place
in the polar home cold
that holds the world

possession (ii)

'to cross the sea on a bone'

to begin to glimpse
a river

shock of black
in the icefields

six miles high
we cannot hear them
(the window round as a drum)

the great mass of the icecap
the long wild scribble of a river

oil-dark ink-dark ideas
of bounty we are bound to
strapped in uncanny plastic

tho we try to leave our bodies to see
'the reindeer stand like fire' on the plain

how to sing
when it is hard for us to hear the world
is melting around us
this dumb rush of 'engine summer'
here where we shape-shift-and-save
on 'dead ground'

fox said fox said fox said fox

68°

so many empty-bellied dead
'breast bones showing'

in warm water years
these breeding grounds
an empty fridge

no forage → no children

for the small winged

diving birds

38°

woke to garbage trucks

fridge full of plastic

in a white world

'there's no reason for a snowman'

tho isn't it time for softer teachings

in the backyard mess of her chest

a child-wolf is howling

in the empty bowl of a day

gunshot sirens and snow

cold spell (ii)

come muskox come
with your curved horns
goat-hooved
nimble come singing
the old cold songs
pack back the ice
press it back in place
cool the world

possession (iii)

to climb the sky to find the way
half hidden hard to see

to scry the cryosphere by satellite—remote
sensing ‘from a great height’ (~~in RGB~~)

to see through clouds
deep in the body dreaming animals
tracks in the sky deep in the snow

‘depicted as a trackless waste’
‘a vacant place’

in a white world
it’s hard to hide
blood and oil
(the long throats of the ice cores
singing the silt of industry)

girl-of-pains ‘~~submit~~
revisions:’ sing of skin of sky
of pinprick stars

‘set a threshold price’

at the crossroads
cross over

ford the black river

learn to listen
at the crossing places

where the deer run

Yellow eye for summer, blue for winter. To see at the end
of the spectrum, sight sliding into scent. You scry in ultraviolet
light: wolf piss and wolf fur, the filigreed lichen named for you,
filling the forest floor, ghost corals, branching antlers, luminescent
lungs. So many names for you, tuktu, caribou. Horn-gifted,
heedless one. Teach us to see in the dark. Knee-clicker, river-
runner. You make the track, you are the map, become the drum.
Teach us to be eaten. How the body is an offering. Snow-shoveler.
Forager. How will you feed through the ice? For we've made
the rain start falling at the wrong time. A bad rain falling like glass.
Far-ranger. Fog-bringer. Our old seers climbed the sky inside
your skin. Become the drum to stop our dreaming. Trail-maker.
Watcher. At the limits of our vision.

68°

'fur road and amber road'
old plunder

tracks and traplines lost to pipelines

38°

cold toe weather tho tar streets trap the heat

coal train on cold tracks

in the sidewalk grass broken glass

(lynx-eye bright)

'north is not always north'
turns to move toward a center
tracing back to the long time
'when nothing was wasted'
led by animals we lived beheld
beholden in other skins

now snow falls black
now musk-ox stumble
and the dying of the murre
and the dying of the bear
(nothing less than a world)
how we forgot the magic words

notes

With thanks to DUSIE Kollektiv for making space for this singing-thinking. For Aila Juvonen, wizard-walker of Lapland and other wild places, and for other wizardly folk: Madeleine and Quinn—may the cold zones remain long into your lifetimes and may you abide clear-eyed in the magical web. And for Gene, who listens at the crossing places.

“cold spell,” was begun in January 2015 shelved until January 2019, as other projects kept the roof overhead, as all the while life for our kin in the arctic keeps declining. The work was taken up again in answer to a call from DUSIE for chapbooks by *Counter-Desecration* anthology contributors written in honor of editor Marthe Reed and her call for work that acknowledges that “there is *no safe distance*,” work that lives “somewhere *inbetween* self and other, near and distant, paradoxical poles resolving moment-to-moment... *Meeting place*.”

Various sources informed the work, with some of their words woven in to bring more voices to the singing. (Would that we could speak fox.)

Abercromby, John. *The Pre-and Proto-historic Finns, Both Eastern and Western: With the Magic Songs of the West Finns*. No. 9-10. D. Nutt, 1898. [From whence come the spell poem forms.]

Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. Vintage, 2012.

Aarhus University. “Environmental Toxins Enter the Brain Tissue of Polar Bears.” *ScienceDaily*. ScienceDaily, 23 July 2013. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/07/130723081350.htm>.

Cohn, Norman & Kunuk, Zacharias, directors. *Journals of Knud Rasmussen*. Igloolik Isuma, 2006

Davidson, Peter. *The Idea of North*. Reaktion books, 2005.

Greiner, Christopher. ““The North Chose Us”: Selected Poems by Nils-AslakValkeapää as Expressions of Sami Cultural Ecology and Indigenous Rights Concerns.” *IK: Other Ways of Knowing 1.1* (2015): 21-32.

Ingold, Tim. *Lines: A Brief History*. Routledge, 2016.

Laugrand, Frédéric, and Jarich Oosten. *Hunters, Predators and Prey: Inuit Perceptions of Animals*. Berghahn Books, 2014.

Martin, Keavy. *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature*. Vol. 3. Univ. of Manitoba Press, 2012.

Mock, Jillian. "In Alaska, Starving Seabirds and Empty Colonies Signal a Broken Ecosystem." <https://www.audubon.org/news/in-alaska-starving-seabirds-and-empty-colonies-signal-broken-ecosystem>

Osborne, E., J. Richter-Menge, and M. Jeffries, Eds., 2018: *Arctic Report Card* 2018, <https://www.arctic.noaa.gov/Report-Card>

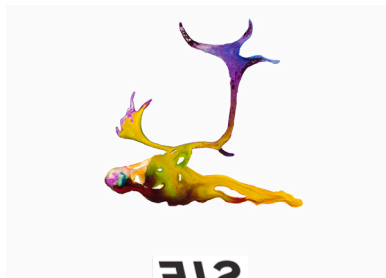
Pentikäinen, Juha. Ed. *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*. Mouton e Gruyter. (1996)

Pentikäinen, Juha. "The Shamanic Drum as Cognitive Map." *Cahiers de Littérature Orale* 67-68 (2010).

Stokkan, Karl-Arne, et al. "Shifting Mirrors: Adaptive Changes in Retinal Reflections to Winter Darkness in Arctic Reindeer." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 280.1773 (2013): 20132451.

University of Cambridge. "First Atlas of Inuit Arctic Trails Launched." *ScienceDaily*. ScienceDaily, 10 June 2014. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/06/140610101328.htm.

Gillian Parrish is the author of the book *of rain and nettles wove* (Singing Horse Press). She works as an assistant professor at Lindenwood University in St. Louis and serves in her spare time as the mothership of *spacecraftproject*, hosting new work by writers and conversations with artists from around the world: spacecraftproject.com.



**DU
SIE**