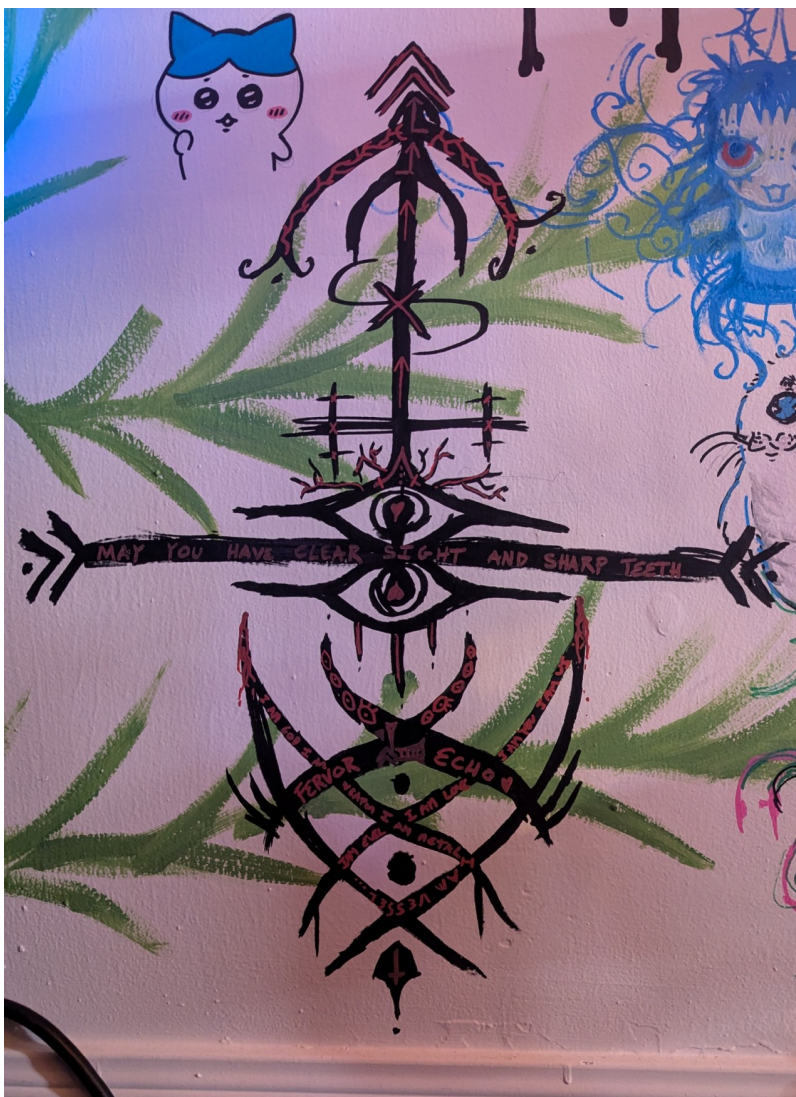


On The Goddess Unborn (Response to Death Saint)

August Ø

Written January 18th—August 23rd, 2025

*My soul burns to speak of strange bodies transformed!
O gods in heaven, you ardent lovers of mutation,
become the breath inside me
and draw up my song, untroubled, unbroken
from the first beginnings of the world
to this very moment and this very day.
(Ovid, Metamorphoses)*



I often find myself expending considerable energy in an Apollonian mode, churning through significant chaff in order to arrive at simple truths. I am a creature of air (whether hot or elemental, I leave for the reader to decide). My teeth are not trained to function unconsciously. I will write and rewrite and bloviate and discard half of this. This will be part letter, part essay, part journal. What I am trying to say is this: bear with me. I promise I'm going somewhere with all this. It might take a while.

Death Saint (DS) has written a [wonderful response](#) to my [original piece](#) on the symbolism of eyes. She opened herself to the work, engaged deeper than I had dared to hope anyone would, and let it change her. She responded in kind (how I always feel I should respond to poetry, but never do) and delivered a fervent and scathing critique that not only revealed starkly the limitations I had been unable to name, but also a path leading beyond them. This was something that I could not have done on my own. For that, she has my undying gratitude. I have much to say about her work.

Decentering the Cis Gaze

DS makes a misinterpretation of my thinking which I aim to clarify here: she sees me centering cisgender eyes and the fear resulting from the spotlight gaze. I did not think it then, and I have better reasons for not thinking it now. I won't do this because it cedes power over our birthright to a group other than ourselves. It would be disingenuous to claim to not be affected by their gaze. It would be foolish to completely not care. I am aware of it, and will continue to be, for my own and others' safety. It has shaped my relation with the object. But I deny it primacy, through word and deed, and will do so until my dying breath. We are so much more than that.

This is part of the reason why I feel weird about introducing pronouns when people meet each other in groups; it creates this expectation that each of our genders should be mapped and appropriately invoked at any time, that I'm safer if someone can say exactly what I am, and that I would be harmed if my gender every confused anyone (or confused me). I'd rather be misgendered than be "accepted" by an establishment that's making some kind of ominous bio/political truth claim about what my transness is. I don't want a trans utopia where there's 200 genders on the census box. I don't want a trans utopia where instagram asks me my pronouns and my sex assigned at birth and then targets marketing at me. I don't want cis people to make money using images of bodies like mine.

Maybe it's just like why k is better when you can't buy it at CVS, because there's some part of transness that cracks or fucks with all these cultural norms I'm talking about, and this current cultural moment of trans visibility is probably actually about securing transness in a sack of amber and declawing it and making it legible (the way gay culture has been ripped from the anonymity of the dark bathhouse and into the stagelighting of the reality show.. lots of people have critiqued this one).

From *trans girl suicide museum* by hannah baer. We have to keep our claws.¹

1 Please read one of my favorite poems, I cannot read it aloud without crying. It is called *for girls who are addicted to hurting themselves* and is in kai cheng thom's book *I Hope We Choose Love*.

"there was a time when you tore flesh/open with your nails/there was a time/when men feared your teeth"

When I wrote my original essay, I thought differently. I thought that maybe our own strength is the antidote to the gazes of others. I thought about the arc of my own becoming, how it was initially shaped by people and systems that despised me, and later lifted up and transformed by those who loved me. Now I think there is something more fundamental, a transcendence reaching back in time to pull us together², something that has been opposed by the dominant social order. The direction of causality is reversed. Through the cracks in our world, Iridescent Queer Becoming filters through, touches us, flows through us, changes us as we change it. I originally would have countered that I provided the antidote to the fear of perception: a truer perception that “wipes clean the slate of self and other.”³ Now I would say that there is a real living divinity that has been with us from the start, that has always existed (though whose main body is in the future)⁴, and cis perception is not needed for its validity. If writing my Eyes page again, I would probably delete the entire first section of the essay, or at least remove it from such a place of prominence. [I think it's really really important](#) to decenter cis perception as much as possible. To explain why and how, I have to do the annoying thing and define magic.

There is a type of moment I have been savoring lately. You're thinking about whether or not to do something. You're trying to try. You think of all the reasons it's hard, you're almost justifying to yourself why you won't do it, but it feels like weighing pros/cons. But the moment you decide “okay, I'm doing it” – that's when all those objections evaporate into solvable problems. You're doing it despite them. You have constraints, how will you work with them? I think of much of sublunary magic in practical terms; it's the thing you do to gain insight on a decision, or to make sure you get a job or apartment, or to attract the types of beings that will aid in your flourishing. It's how you take a desire and weave its becoming into the narrative matrix. This ontological engineering is often done

2 [There is a signal](#)

3 Quote from somewhere towards the end of Katalepsis, by Hungry

4 Read two of my favorite books: Woman on the Edge of Time, This is How You Lose the Time War

unconsciously, in the sleep-like state we usually find ourselves in. This is inevitable, for the foreseeable future, but I think we should try to keep remembering (and reminding others) when we have accidentally created a story *that could be otherwise* and that *does not serve*. We should be intentional about the stories we create. The moment you shift from “this is the way it is and it sucks, can’t do anything about it though” to “I am going to start telling a different story” – *this* is magic.⁵ I think we have to decenter the cis gaze because I don’t like the stories we tell with it. The moment it’s set aside, there’s this beautiful void – what are we, as a people? What do we want? What is essential to us? What *can* we be? It is so immensely freeing.

The Point of It All

I think it is important at this juncture to elaborate on what it is that I seek to do. I think about Andrew W.K., who, in the course of his musical career, has taken an otherwise simple topic (partying) and followed it all the way to God. Or Yayoi Kusama, who has done the same with polka dots: “Polka dots are a way to infinity.” I think about how nothing exists in isolation, how as Pirsig says in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, “The Buddha, the Godhead, resides quite as comfortably in the circuits of a digital computer or the gears of a cycle transmission as he does at the top of a mountain or in the petals of a flower.” I think I can do the same. I think about Fervor. This is the general – what of the specific? Why Eyes? I’m ever-so tempted to say it was inevitable, but this is incorrect. It was a choice; this is important. (I think about divinity, and what it needs from us.) I’m also tempted to say this was just tapping a cultural thread, riding a wave as it begins to swell. This is incomplete. If it was a choice, it’s one I would make every time. If it was a cultural current, it’s one interwoven with larger principles and powers. There’s something here, something important, and I get to play a role in it.

5 This perspective belies a certain relativism that I don’t know how to move past. I read too much Robert Anton Wilson at a formative age. ~“There is no true theory, only one more useful or beautiful or fun.”

Priestess, prophet, witness, midwife, conduit, I'm not sure. I feel so limited in my sight. It is terrifying, it is thrilling.

My reflection (Enne) and I have been working on naming and exploring a divinity/extant force/latent transgender cultural current of eyes and teeth, mirrors and echoes. Enne's more teeth; I'm more eyes. Right now our in-name group is just us, but we've found and are finding others who are on the same wavelength. I'm calling myself a high priestess and I'm going to keep doing that until it's true. Eyes & Teeth, as we've been discussing it, is about transgender alienation, mutation (evolution), and connection through that. Though transness can make you feel naturally aberrant, you're the next part of nature; even though you feel bad and terrible and wrong it's actually right and holy and good. It's about embracing the dissonance between yourself and the world. It's about connection – seeing yourself in others and seeing them in you, about the process of becoming one another, of mutual perception until both are reified, or until you dissolve into each other/something larger.

It's NOT about saying "I'm so fucked up because the WORLD is fucked up. Especially to people like me. So I might as well have fun being a monster." I mean, there's some of that that you can't really get away from. Still, all of this is comforting and rooted in love & truth & god, I really do believe that. If it's scary it's because becoming yourself is scary, especially when that "yourself" is something bigger that involves other beings.

We (trans people; trans women) are now more visible than at any time in my life so far. The national, even global spotlight has turned on us. What will we do with this? It is horrifying, it is deadly, and I am convinced it is still an opportunity. To do what, I am not sure. I am still trying to figure that out. I am twenty-five years old, but for a second, just a second, please let me write like I am eighteen: there is something I am here to do, and if I do it right, the whole world will see. Everything will be different. I feel the weight of Duty. I move with Grace.

I want something that is *ours*. So much of transness feels like a necessary reaction to cis society and the violence it inflicts on us. I have been told, repeatedly, that nothing exists outside of context. Very, very often I see the type of thinking that goes “I am a monster because this is what **you** made me out to be. I am reclaiming and finding power in this.” I think that’s great. It’s not what I’m doing. There is something internal, essential, and immune to their violence. It is something they cannot understand, because to understand it necessitates being something like us. It is ours, it is not in reaction, and it is what I talk about and think we can reach through Eyes.

There’s a divinity in the world now, and its limbs are Eyes and Teeth. It’s attractive to a certain type of freak, and it tells you that you’re divine, too. It’s a gathering point, a beacon – and if you come closer you’ll see you’re not the only one drawn to the flame. It doesn’t ask for blind obedience, but to take this body you’ve been given and use it – to see, create, rend and tear, cry, be broken and be whole. It asks you to open yourself to others, to let them echo within you. It tells you to ask for more, to be more, to change and be changed in turn. It says there are yet stranger shores beyond the horizon, and that we can go there, together. It asks for you to please live. It asks for insight, and courage to act on that insight. It’s something you have to choose. The components have been there from before history began, from the first of us to ever exist. Now, they begin to coalesce into something larger, something still unfolding. If we didn’t find this, you or someone like you would’ve. It is inevitable; it is a choice. There is a role for you to play, if you come and take it. Will you join us? Are you scared yet? I’m scared, too.

Concretely, my current best guess is that this looks like conceiving of ourselves as a separate group in ourselves, for ourselves, seeing what we want, organizing, and *taking* it. It probably involves a

somewhat large intentional (physical) community. I'm tired of joking about the tranny commune and I've decided I want it for real. Beauvoir says, in *The Second Sex*⁶:

Women's actions have never been more than symbolic agitation; they have won only what men have been willing to concede to them; they have taken nothing; they have received. It is that they lack the concrete means to organize themselves into a unit that could posit itself in opposition. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and unlike the proletariat, they have no solidarity of labor or interests; they even lack their own space that makes communities of American blacks, the Jews in ghettos, or the workers in Saint-Denis or Renault factories. They live dispersed among men, tied by homes, work, economic interests, and social conditions to certain men—fathers or husbands—more closely than to other women. As bourgeois women, they are in solidarity with bourgeois men and not with women proletarians; as white women, they are in solidarity with white men and not with black women. The proletariat could plan to massacre the whole ruling class; a fanatic Jew or black could dream of seizing the secret of the atomic bomb and turning all of humanity entirely Jewish or entirely black: but a woman could not even dream of exterminating males.

I think this line of thinking is worth careful consideration for its material applicability to our context. However, this text is not quite the time or place. Let's back away from the ledge and return to our response to DS's essay.

6 This is probably discussed better or in relation to trans people specifically elsewhere; this is just what I have been reading right now.

Objections: Secreting Away

I think in a sense to be perceived is to be reified. As I write this, none of my friends or loved ones know where I am, what state or city I'm in, even. I am here because I needed to dissolve, needed to see who and what I am outside of my context. Desperately – my sight has become so immediate lately. It's hard to see the bigger picture. I need guidance from my Greater Self. I need the absence of others' opinions about what I am doing so that I can decide it for myself. I came to this city in particular so I could write *this*. I think it's important. I think maybe I am weak of will, and that a stronger being wouldn't need to run away to find themselves. I think I am very wrong about what Will is, but I don't know how.

DS talks about secreting away, hiding the personal to avoid our relationship with it being changed by hostile others. She goes further to declare a binary state for eyes and transness: "Closed or a bleaching glare." I argue against this on three counts: that the occluded is necessarily so, that we belong to transness as much as it belongs to us, and that we transcend this binary.

First – it has been my experience that very few cis people understand transness. It is not something they *can* understand. Occult (occluded) truths are often secret not because they are deliberately masked, but because they can't be understood by those without gnosis, or without prerequisite knowledge. Even if you tried to explain your relationship with transness to cis people, it would take a lot of work on both your parts to achieve intelligibility. I don't want to say "we're special, we're different, we fingers on the right hand of God are made of Different Stuff than those *other* fingers on the left hand."⁷ But I do think that the shameful secreting away of attraction to transness is

⁷ I've recently suspected part of our goal should be to explore the strange horizons and build something we can take back to the world at large. Surely some of the project of transness, of liberation, will be useful to cis people as well. At pride this year I gave some DIY HRT to an older cis woman. I felt weird, but she needed it!

different in kind than the secreting away of our transness from cis society, which will happen regardless of our efforts. (Contra: I think about *Detransition Baby* and how so many people had the reaction “waitwaitwait, not in front of the Cis, they shouldn’t see this.” Maybe a sufficiently good writer could distill and condense the essence of it all in a form that wouldn’t necessarily change the reader to be like us, but would still convey deep and true understanding. Maybe it’s already been done.) You don’t need to actively keep this thing of ours secret in order to protect it. It’s stronger and stranger than that, and larger than any of us. (Listen: [G.L.O.S.S. \(We're From The Future\)](#).) I am not afraid to be perceived by them because I do not believe they can actually see me.

When we speak of “the secrets that cannot be told,” we do not mean merely that rules prevent us from speaking freely. We mean that the inner knowledge literally cannot be expressed in words. It can only be conveyed by experience, and no one can legislate what insight another person may draw from any given experience. For example, after the ritual described at the opening of this chapter, one woman said, “As we were chanting, I felt that we blended together and became one voice; I sensed the oneness of everybody.” Another woman said, “I became aware of how different the chant sounded for each of us, of how unique each person is.” A man said simply, “I felt loved.”⁸

(Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 20th anniversary edition)

Second, we don’t need to be possessive of transness because we belong to it, as much as it belongs to us. Our relationship to it may be changed, but what of its relationship to us? It will always be there for us, regardless of what others do and say. The violence will also be orchestrated against us regardless of our secreting or lack thereof. Transphobia absolutely affected me even before I knew I was trans. Were I to re-closet or go stealth (somehow) this would still be violence against me (Serrano

8 This is what I mean later when I write on the many and the one

talks about “conditional cissexual privilege”). Perception is neither necessary nor sufficient for violence.

Finally, it is easy to argue against the binary state of cisgender perception. Are we not that which transcends binaries? Are we not the half-light, the twilight and the dusk? Are we not the process of transition itself? We span the entirety of this gradient, from unseen to blinding. From slightly faggy boys to theyfabs to stealth girls, from that which they can see and control (the medico-legal-pornographic) to that which they can’t (our hearts, our eyes, our teeth), from their eyes to ours, from the misdirected “love” of parents to the nice lady at the DMV who asked if I wanted an “X” on my drivers license (she didn’t ask if I wanted an “F”), we exist across and beyond the visible spectrum.

Thoughts on Externalization

One big thing I have taken from DS’s writing is that I favor the projective eye, or the eye that receives in order to re-emit, over the one with empty space behind it for things to echo within. This is worth correcting! Eyes are about openness – asking others questions, not because you want them to like you or think you’re clever, not so you can macerate their being and reformulate it into something useful to yourself or The Cause, but out of curiosity, desire for connection, and because individual experiences are incomplete. Eyes are as receptive as they are projective. It’s about closing the loop. I have tried to internalize this over the past few months. It is harder than I thought it would be.

I do not understand part of the objection. It makes sense to me that open reception (“church”) should be sought after. It does not make sense to me that there should not be any re-emission/externalization. I think I must be missing something key. I will try to highlight my ignorance so it can be corrected.

In enacting love unto my item in an attempt to change my relationship to the item, January has won and acted perfectly. It has changed the relationship and what it was before will

never be perceivable to be consumed in its prior form again. Rather than allow this thing to echo within it first, rather than use perception to internalize, it used its view to see, to let the echo escape, and then to mold those waves into a device with a purpose, rather than allowing that deep voice, the pebble that never kerplunks, to debase in its own way and to cause me to try to make the pebble larger or to make my voice louder. I don't just want to be viewed, I want to be heard, and I can never be heard when I am loved.

I don't understand what the hypothetical desired pebble would look like. I *did* let all this echo within me, for about a year before I put it all together. I *did* perceive and internalize. Having done that, the goal was a device with purpose. The goal was to change you. The goal was for you to come back and change me, in turn. What could I have written that would convey the same ideas and not impose itself? How could a one-way transmission of text hear you? What is the alternative?

In *The Spiral Dance*, Starhawk talks about Wicca as a religion of experiential, participatory poetry, as opposed to a more intellectual, receptive theology. This is possibly a point of contention between DS and I. There is a time and place for church (as DS calls it), but what we are trying to do is something new and participatory. It requires another mode of being. I have no dogma, no doctrine. I have things I have figured out and things I'm uncertain about. Other people have other parts of the puzzle. Put them in conversation, and something begins to take shape. In the froth, the ferment, that's where we get closer to truth. Disagreement isn't challenge, it's validation. She knows this, on a level, and so has written from within this mode of engagement. We are building something, and it is not something that you can sit passively and receive. To be part of it means not just being changed, but changing others in turn. Interpenetrate and mutually define.

Fixation

Closing one's eyes is violent. This is why there's a weird dissonance to January's points. As it writes, it sees eyes as "organs of distance and separation, symbols of the rational and the classifying," which are strangely medical and mechanical words to use, not by accident, but as a truer reflection of the internal dissonance being faced here. Eyes, in the way Merleau-Ponty uses them, are tools meant to fix the things we look at, as cisness with transness, as gloves help to keep us separate from the gutters.

What I meant by "organs of distance and separation, symbols of the rational and the classifying" was not that we *should* see eyes this way, but that this way of thinking undergirds the truer conception. This is a further link to the transfeminine connection; a "male" beginning, an end that's gone beyond simply male or female (but hews much closer to the second).⁹ If eyes are used as tools to fix things, the fixation happens mutually, as agents embedded in and part of the context that they're fixing. There is no bird's eye view, no objective perspective outside of the context. I should have talked more about how eyes have been used to fix me: my best friend Temperance, across the country, drawing eyes on the city and on her body for me; my close friend Gertrude spending a night drawing them all over my back; my coming-of-age ceremony performed by my now-partner February, seeing me truer than any before, fixing me in place and helping set my course; how once Ezra Furman corrected my [lyric annotation](#) where I assumed she was referencing *Nevada*; the knife my friend Kay got for me on a trip they took to LA; back when I was camming and had thousands of eyes on me; trans womens' music that has touched and changed me and woven itself into me, that feels like home; so many more

9 Charitable interpretation, please. I WILL spend a few hours reading Talia Bhatt and finding a way to get this idea past your filters if you can't understand it otherwise. But try and see what I'm saying here, clumsily.

countless ways that I have been *seen* and *loved* and fixed in place (mutually). Eyes aren't ways to keep us separate, they're ways to breach that separation.

Conduit

Much of the dialogue of January's writings is meant to be taking place between one and another in external space but forgets internal space[...] Sight is a thing, here, that we are a victim of, mostly lovingly, to try to bandage us from the trauma of a life of being seen[...] but in doing so, it forgets that we don't have to choose between being victims or assailants when we could just as easily ascend above the squabble.

I have little to say here except that DS is right. To clarify though, the balm of sight is the interconnection, the opening of the portals at the boundary of self to interpenetrate one another and thus become something larger. It's the movement away from immanence and towards transcendence. It's not about becoming the assailant.

In certain ways I have always felt hollow.¹⁰ When I turned twenty one I named myself as conduit. The best I could imagine for myself was still empty. I speak through the collections of words of others. (I now know this is not complete. I speak with the words of thousands of prophets; I speak with a voice that is wholly my own.) For a few years I would write or print out impactful passages and plaster my walls with them, externalizing and echoing the words to amplify their internal counterparts. I felt like my brain was splayed out across my house, for me to see and interact with. For a long time I have been fascinated with this interplay between the external and the internal. It has felt there is

10 "It feels like someone... took a shovel and dug out all my insides. And I know there's nothing in there, but I'm still too nervous to open myself up and check. I know there's something wrong with me. My parents know it too, even if they don't say anything." (*I Saw the TV Glow*, 2024)

nothing inside except that which flows through me.¹¹ I think this is my explanation for the neglect of the internal space; I use the external as a prosthesis to represent and understand it.

DS also makes a good point about moving past victims and assailants. I think it's important we figure out what this looks like. I've seen too many people get burned and swear off "community." At the risk of TMI, over the past few months my closest friends and I were trying to *not* do the transfem disposability thing in a case of sexual assault. It took a lot of time and effort. We failed! It sucked! This is such a small problem compared to the ones we'll need to be able to solve! I think it's easy to talk about the ideals, harder to practice them, and harder still to succeed. Dear readers, please let me know if you've figured anything out.

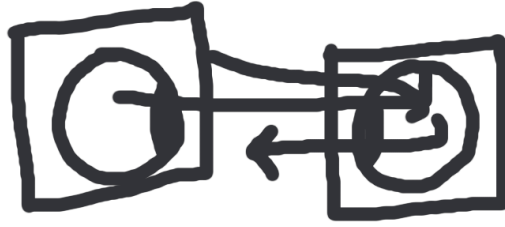
11 I think about Ram Dass saying ~"a person can only meet others as deeply as they've met themselves". I think about *There is No Antimemetics Division* (~"you'll only ever be as good as you are on your first day") and how poor my memory is, and how I keep returning to the question of how to make things easier on someone who would wake up in my body and not be me. I think about Gurdjieff saying that one is not born with a soul, but can work to build one. I wonder if I can build one.

Lens

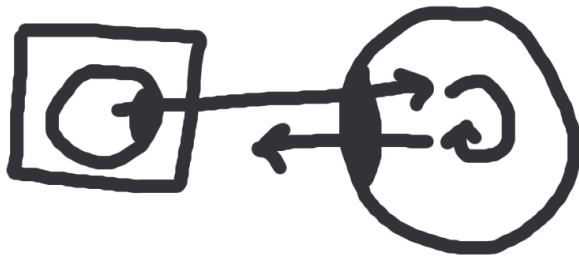
DS describes four methods of listening, which I have attempted to condense into this diagram:



1. self-perception through echo via external medium



2. reply echoed, modulated by external context



3. input internally echoed, then reply generated without external context



4. input internally echoed and digested, not mediated by need for reply

This last way is how I was taught to appreciate abstract expressionism. It is the method that I have, over the past few months, been trying to apply to art in general. (The trick, however, is that if you're consciously trying to do it, you've failed.) DS describes the deficiencies of method 2 (and partially 3):

the danger of having eyes with knives hidden behind them rather than eyes which have hollow spaces ready to trap the noise to be consumed later is that nothing ever echoes when it slams into the blade.

This was, to me, the most impactful line in DS's work. I have tried to let it in, let it change me, let it change how I think and move through the world, to middling success. The function of the echo is to change while itself being minimally changed. It is given space to work. It is the process of opening

yourself, without judgement.¹²¹³ It is very difficult to do. Part of the trick, once again, seems to be to not to “try” to do it, but to just do it. When it snows late at night I’ve liked to walk around the city while hi on ketamine. This is closer to the desired state than when I have been actively trying to pursue it these past few months, by interviewing people, going to museums, or making my phone pick random locations and going there with open heart and eyes. It seems to be getting easier with practice. I think if you build the habit of returning, it will become more natural with time. It is useful to have as a decision-making criteria as well—a mode of being to come into alignment with through choice. Weaving these types of patterns seems to be much more effective than any act or sequence of acts.

Embedded Cognition/Integrative Perception

I have made noises in the direction of acknowledging embedded/embodied cognition, but evidently I have failed to integrate it into my worldview. If I had, it would have shone through in the writing, and much of the critique given would be invalid. Here is my attempt to diagnose and fix the problem.

A large part of my failure here comes from my disgust at the idea of contingency. I want something that’s not dependent on context. DS is right when she says “we are... part of the context and the ways which we are aware also inform us.” I get such a sense of vertigo when I think like this. Two memories stick out to me: when I was in high school and realized you could sit down in elevators, and when I deliberately broke vegetarianism for the first time. Both times I was struck by the arbitrary nature of the context. I saw the walls of the Black Iron Prison. Everything could be something else.

12 Thoreau’s transparent eyeball – “I am nothing. I see everything.”

13 “Nature unfolds herself slowly like a snail if you are still in front of her. You cannot know what you are walking over till you cease walking. The lizard which has eyed you furtively from under a stone comes forth and squeaks to you – you make friends with him, in fact. And as you sit on the hillside, or lie prone under the trees of the forest, or sprawl wet-legged on the shingly beach of a mountain stream, the great door, that does not look like a door, opens.” (Stephen Graham, *The Gentle Art Of Tramping*)

There is no solid ground to stand on.¹⁴ I have had more shattering experiences, but these were shocking because of their mundanity. This is very scary to me! I want something true and real and to me that does not mean “true in the context of.” I don’t think god is “real, from a certain point of view” I think xe is [Real](#). This may be why I gravitate towards the idea of an outside observer (or a perfect one, of God looking back in time, watching you through my eyes).

Another possible reason is the othering I’ve felt throughout my life. Very very few people seem to “get it.” Almost everyone else is on a different wavelength than me, they’re part of something that I’m not. I am probably autistic and definitely transgender. I think about not yet knowing I was a girl, being with a group of guys in private, talking about girls, and feeling so much like I was not like them. I felt scared and didn’t know why. I think about visiting rich white neighborhoods like I grew up in, and viscerally feeling how much of an outsider I am now. I think about every news article about trans women and how much they get wrong. Of course I feel like I am outside their context.

I will attempt to reformulate/regurgitate/integrate DS’s points about the possibilities for integrative perception (IP). They are at the core of her arguments, and if I am to be taken seriously when I say that I now understand them, then I should be able to say them in my own words, believe what I say, and expand further beyond. I largely agree with her thinking. It has taken time and effort to digest it.

My thinking about perception has been centered on the sharp, discerning eyes that pierce through time and distance, that use focused perception to bridge the gaps between self and other. (Think of the needle I attempt to thread through all of these disparate sources. Think of its eye.) DS

14 To read a little more about this particular angst and an earlier attempt to solve it, read “IMXI.A1: The Problem as I See It” from [Intermittens 11](#). I wrote that when I was 20. I was very much on the “we’re all one person, everything is relative, I’ve already fallen for every moral and ethical pitfall that exists and HOW CAN YOU TELL WHAT’S REAL??” trip at the time. It hasn’t fully left me.

writes about eyes that I would characterize as (auto)dissolving¹⁵, as opposed to piercing. This is a similar distinction as between flashlight and starlight consciousness: a beam of directed attention vs. opening yourself to many diffuse things.

Ordinary waking consciousness sees the world as fixed; it focuses on one thing at a time, isolating it from its surroundings, much like viewing a dark forest with a narrow flashlight beam that illuminates a lone leaf or a solitary stone. Extraordinary consciousness, the other mode of perception that is broad, holistic, and undifferentiated, sees patterns and relationships rather than fixed objects. It is the mode of starlight: dim and silvery, revealing the play of woven branches and the dance of shadows, sensing pathways as spaces in the whole.

(Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 20th anniversary edition)

Another way to look at this distinction is inhibitory vs. excitatory gnosis; two forms of peak states where influence is possible and the barriers between self and other are dissolved, but one through frantic movement and the other through the emptying of yourself. IP eyes are like the beads of Indra's net: each bead reflecting each other bead, interdependent, whole together. In this mirroring (eyes wide) there is no room for dissection.

Integrative perception (IP) is not a state of "seeing yourself" a certain way. To understand it, the question is not "what would it mean to understand our position in the context?" but "what would it *be like* to be empty, open, receptive, integrative in these circumstances?" It is about seeing with the eyes in your heart instead of the eyes in your mind. Given this, we will start by exploring some experiences of transness that I've had in the mode of IP. The bolded passages are where I felt the most IP, DS's 4th method of listening.

15 There is a better word than "dissolving", but I have not found it.

Experiences of Integrative Perception

I go to one of the raves that has more cishet people. I am different¹⁶, and the ways that difference is highlighted keep me in relation to them. I become more of what others see, but I am still able to lose myself in it. **I stand at the front, back touching the stage, and look out at the crowd.** I watch them watch me. I dance closely with a cis woman who has come with her boyfriend. I am scared. I empty myself so I can be filled with the music. I see and am seen.

I go to one of the local tranny picnics. I am able to let go of this tension I carry, though being around a hundred other transfeminine beings in public. I feel one among [many](#): ease, dissolving into something larger. **I lay on the grass and watch us climb a tree.** At the picnics two years later, there is less ease. I am on edge; more is wanted of me by some people than I want to give, and I'm bad at saying so. I don't tell her why I stopped talking to her. I am sad. I miss the being who used to run the picnics and killed itself last year. I finally stop going because I don't want to see the girl who sexually assaulted me anymore.¹⁷ I am superficially more connected, but less open. The flows are blocked.

I go to my partner's birthday party and invoke the Living Goddess of Eyes and Teeth. I empty myself so she can fill me. **I am ritually cut, an almost-lightning bolt down my chest, deep.** I am surrounded by transsexuals, high out of my mind like the mythical oracle-priestesses we style ourselves after. After, I smear my blood on a polaroid of the fresh wound and mail it to someone I've never met.

I am at an underground electronic show. A girl I've met once before, over a year ago, asks me questions: "what was the last time you were lost?" I tell her I can't remember if I've ever fallen asleep

16 "As Discordian High Priestess St. Mae once said—one role of the Discordian Priest is Clergy for the Strange. Lost and lonely lunatics are our flock. The world was not designed for us, we have little control over it, and that makes us all outsiders. But that's actually a very special place to be." (*The Color Truthers*, by The Aftermathematics Research Cabal, [Intermittens 11](#))

17 I tried. I really tried. I promise I really tried.

with only stars above me. She says she thinks I'm due. I tell her about the beetles I used to see on my walk to school. **For some reason, she's interested.** She is one of us. She is unlike anyone else.

I am on a mountainside, several miles down the trail, and the acid is peaking. **I am surrounded by transcendent beauty.** I have been listening to [fast music](#) and drinking Monster Rehab Tea + Lemonade; I am a parody of myself and I love it. I am the hottest bitch on the trail. In fact, I am probably the only bitch on the trail; I have not seen another soul since I set out. I call my friend Fel on the phone and we talk for hours. I have needed this for 6 months. God does not quite tell me what she wants, but she does tell me a joke.

I am a tool, a weapon. A girl I haven't met before has come through town and is staying with me. I'm hurting her very badly, with the help of two others. **I am fully in my body, and partially in hers, too.** After, I'm upset because I accidentally left a scar. I should have tried this new thing on myself first, instead of trusting what someone told me. The being who told me about this move (putting out an incense stick on someone) is dead.

I lay in bed, staring into stained glass backlit red by LEDs, listening to Ethel Cain's [Perverts](#). I am going through a ketamine phase. **I feel seen and whole and complete. Beautiful, mysterious new possibilities are open to me.** I feel holy. I think if I do this for a week straight, something amazing will happen. It stops working when I tell people about it.

Dissecting Those Experiences

Let's see what we can extract from these experiences. First though, we have to take a detour to lay down a few concepts. The idea that originally made this all click for me is thinking about IP in terms of Will and Flow. Will is your input to the co-creative process of reality. It's about listening to the parts of yourself, or deciding not to (bad for internal flow, but we all do it). Will is your knife, your

mind, your claws.¹⁸ Will is the moment you move from “this is impossible” to “how do I do it anyways?” It is your capability to act. Flow is harder to define. If you work magic, you likely know what I mean, it’s how it all functions. It’s the currents of the universe, it’s the Tao, it’s when things just *work*, when you meet the right people at the right times, when energy is unimpeded on its path from one place to another. Flow is movement, it is dance, it is when the road rises up to meet you. You have internal flows, and you are a nexus of flows that pass through you.

These two things work in concert. Knowing this is how you get out more than you put in. Flows can be unconscious, but a bit of steering will do you well. And you can do more than just steer—you don’t have to wait for the stars to align if you remember you can fix them yourself. There is tension between Will and Flow, in everyone I’ve seen, most of the time. Will manipulates, resists, and rides flows. Flows inform and invite will. Flows are not inertia. It usually takes some effort to ride them, and you can’t ride them forever. Flows show you doors, and you choose to step through. Always entering the doors, never leaving, [deeper and deeper](#) into the labyrinth...

This is what I meant when I said that eyes represent oracle states (not oracles themselves, mind you). Oracle states are something you may recognize from your own experience, but I think they will be hard to describe to those who don’t already know what I’m talking about. In these states, you are perfectly penetrated by the flows. Will isn’t an impediment, you’re out of your own way. Everything superfluous has fallen aside. It’s head above water, a breath of fresh air, clarity one-thousandfold. It’s inherently precarious and can’t last long. It seems any question asked of you can be answered.¹⁹ The most effective ones for others to ask are those requiring true perception, like “why am I this way?” or “what do you want, and how will you get it?” It is in some ways passive; to me so far it has required another to ask the questions. Self-deception does not come naturally, you can see all the way to the

¹⁸ You’d think it was your teeth, but nope! Will is still eyes.

¹⁹ Do NOT ask me to factor a large product of two primes

bottom of your heart. It is easy to tell others what you really think. It is easy to *find out* what you really think.²⁰ This state exists on a continuum. I have occasionally accessed lesser forms of this state through texts that seemed to unlock or unleash me.²¹ I would like more than anything to have a reliable method of inducing the greater forms.

When the flows move through you, you become more enmeshed with the context. You have a higher degree of engagement with reality. When you become more enmeshed with the context, there are more approaches and entries for flows to move through you. You can't let them move you too much, you have to give your own input. Flow state is more conducive to IP. You're not thinking as much about every little thing, you're *doing*, and one thing follows the next with smoothness and alacrity. You feel when it is time to act, and when it is time to rest. Will/Flow :: dissective/integrative isn't a 1:1 comparison, but a lot transfers. They're both necessary. Will and DP are about discernment and choice. Flow and IP are about openness and being moved.

But what have we learned from our examples? IP isn't about dissolution of the self. In all our examples, there's still a self that's perceiving. On the mountain, I am far away from my usual modes of being, the thought loops I get trapped in, the expectations I put on myself. At the rave, I am full of music instead of these things. At the party, I am present, so, so present. At the underground show, the girl is seeing me without expectation. Taken together, we can say that IP is about there being an easy path for things to enter you in their fullness. If you are present, if you are open, if you are empty, if you are filled with something singular that pushes out your normal mental machines, if you are doing less pre-perception or post-perceptive processing, if you have freedom from your normal internal

20 For some value of You, Really, and Think. Give me a charitable interpretation here so I don't have to spend another paragraph explaining.

21 Octavia's stuff did, the first time, but I squandered it. Mark Fischer's [unfinished introduction to Acid Communism](#) did once. Sometimes it just comes on its own, though.

constraints—then there is a clear path for things to flow into you. This is what DS means when she talks about having hollow spaces instead of knives behind your eyes.

IP is also about immediate presence. In the examples above, see how presence is lost when flows are blocked. This often happens when you get in your head, when you step away, or when there is distance. For example, at the cishet rave, I am not experiencing IP when I am seeing myself as other (I'm a weird tranny, I hope this cis dude doesn't clock me for dancing with his girl; 1st and 2nd listening methods) but I am experiencing it when I stand still, full of the music, and stare out at the crowd. See how the flows are inhibited when acting from outside the context (piercing), and are connected when acting from within. The flows are blocked again at the later picnics, when I have things I need to say but haven't, when I have grief I still need to process. See also with Perverts, where I interpose others' thoughts between myself and the object, destroying the fragile, nascent flow.²²

Many of the ways I've described experiencing IP above were with the aid of substances. They are peak states. This isn't necessary. The ways I've oriented myself to the world, and the ways I move through the world, have simply made it more common. It would behoove me to take up a meditation practice. This would make this perception more available in daily life.

When you use Will to unblock your internal flows, the parts of yourself move in alignment. This gets you doing things in the world, like planning ritual or going to the mountains to do acid or becoming a woman. Sometimes those things are seen as strange by others. I have tried to encode what I think here in this symbol²³:

22 A witch must know when to be silent to protect the work

23 I did original sketch, Enne made final design and made it look good, I sat next to her and said what I thought it needed



It's about the whole trans thing, about listening to both the quiet little pieces inside you and to your greater self, finding out what they need, and doing it. It's about alignment of your internal flows with each other and with the bigger ones that move through you. Unblocking in this way leads to effective exercise of Will. Will is setup; at a certain point you have to give yourself over, polish the transparent mirror in your mind and open yourself, and move in alignment with the greater flows.

I've been taking the long road, when a shorter one was available. I have inadvertently used eyes as "organs of distance and separation" to attempt transcendence. You can go straight to IP, instead of spinning up a whole edifice to facilitate it. I use the rational mind to notice "you are like me in these ways; you mirror me in these ways" and use that to convey understanding of the other through myself. You can skip that and open yourself more directly. Presence and attention. I think about the girl at the

underground show – she asked interesting and strange questions with full curiosity, interest, and openness. She was comfortable in silences. I felt like she saw me. I would like to be more like her.

Symbolism

Eye symbolism can be any two paired perceivers so long as they create a visual qualia for a third thing. If I am viewing one trans experience and someone else is viewing the trans experience of their own, then we are not eyes, but when I argue we are both viewing the same experience, when I tell you we are connected to a larger experience, then January's brilliance begins to illuminate itself. Even in our difference, so juxtaposed as we are, we are both observers of a greater creature, vestigial organs of some god which lurks within the realm of the mind, the social mass consciousness attempting to survey its surroundings and play in what it has been and will be sees through us and we report back to it in direct link, sharing an invisible bond, upside, disconnected, scrape out the cribrosa I am coming to you sister, then we are eyes become if not eyes we were unwillingly already been.

Here, DS understands. This is what I talk about when I call the goddess unborn, the many and the one, extant living transgender divinity. We get to be her eyes in the world. Eyes promote prosocial behaviour:

[The 'watching eyes effect'] is the finding that placing images of human eyes in participants' environments often causes them to behave in a more prosocial manner than they otherwise would. Actions observed by others can have social and reputational consequences, whereas those that go unobserved cannot.

[\(Watching eyes on potential litter can reduce littering: evidence from two field experiments, 2015\)](#)

HER eyes, however, promote divine behaviour. At least, that's what I want them to do. Structuring world and life correctly, right thought right action, so as to bring us further into the heart of god, and bring her further into our world.

Transcendence of Opposites

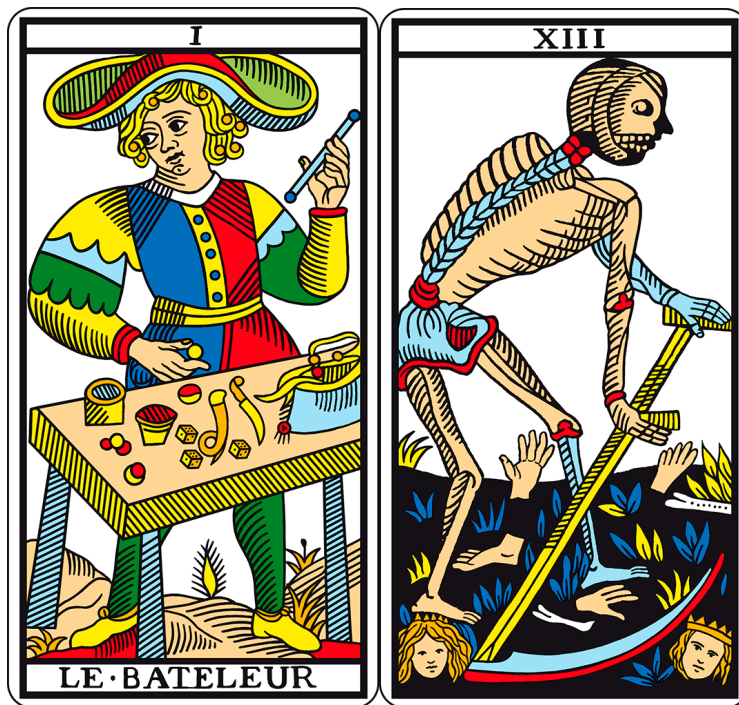
While we are here, on juxtaposition and how it works, I am going to dunk on the dumbest line I have ever read in my life: "Like all good symbols, eyes contain and transcend opposites"

Let me try and explain what I mean by this. I think we probably mean different things by some of these words. This was left as an HTML comment for me to flesh out later. I'm touched anyone went to the trouble of finding it, but those thoughts were incomplete. Let me flesh them out. I first read about this idea as the *principle of polarity* in [The Kybalion](#):

Everything is Dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites; like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature, but different in degree; extremes meet; all truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may be reconciled.

I first understood it through my study of the tarot.²⁴ Be warned: this is largely personal insight that I don't know if anyone else agrees on. See cards 1 and 13 for two clear examples:

24 For more about tarot, check out *The Way of Tarot* by Jodorowsky/Costa. I've picked Jodorowsky's deck to explain what I mean because much thought went into restoration of the deck, and the symbolism is denser and clearer as a result. I've picked the Tarot De Marseille because it's what I know best, due to his book.



The Magician has the power to do anything. His hat is the lemniscate, the infinity symbol. His wand is blue, representing spirit. He wields all four elemental suits: cups, wands, swords, and pentacles. He is mirrored in this way by card 21, The World, the final of the major arcana (count the visible pips on the dice; they sum to 21). However, he is also a charlatan; he is a street magician and he works by slight of hand. His cups are for dice, and the table is angled to suggest he is hiding something under it, while he misdirects us with the wand. In this way he represents two opposites. The insight is that this is not dual, there is no paradox or contradiction; it is one thing. From this comes what I think is the true wisdom embedded in the card. Do you see it?

In card 13, we see a skeleton with a scythe. They clear space, perhaps kill. This card is often named “Death.” And yet, the ground is black, extremely fertile. The skeleton is the color of flesh (contrast with the few white bones on the ground—though even the bones are alive, a flute). It is an ending, but not an ending, with the card placed in the middle of the cycle. It is impossible to think about card 13 without thinking about what comes after (card 14, temperance). It is a card of profound transformation. In this way it, too, represents both poles, and through them something greater.

If you study the other cards you will usually be able to find their opposites contained within them. (This is why I don't often bother with reversed cards.) You will see how there are not two isolated concepts, but two connected poles, ends of something larger – magician and charlatan, death and life. In this way the cards refer to their own transcendence.

To me, the eyesymbol does this well. It contains opposites (e.g. dissective/integrative perception), invokes its own opposite (perception/action, eyes/teeth, see how DS spends a significant amount of time talking about non-perception, secreting away), and is the conduit for opposites to connect and become one (Borges, *The Theologians*: "It is more correct to say that in Paradise, Aurelian learned that, for the unfathomable divinity, he and John of Pannonia (the orthodox believer and the heretic, the abhorrer and the abhorred, the accuser and the accused) formed one single person"). This creates two points, two eyes, which imply the third thing DS talks about. The eye both represents the transcending of opposites and is itself a pathway to transcendence. It is total. This is what I originally meant to say. DS agrees:

Three eyes, then, always happening as an upward turned triangle, begging for homogeneity in its ascendance, is a symbol of stable movement into divinity through integration of both forms of perception.

This transcendence is necessary. We must do more than represent the existing world; our task is to create a world that hasn't existed before and escape being "doomed to immanence." We all have reached into our own chests, dug out our hearts, reforged them, and put them back. I am telling you that we have to do it again. We have to transition again into something that doesn't exist yet, because we need to create a world that doesn't exist yet. What we've done is great but it's not enough. I want a world where my sisters do not kill themselves. I want so much more than that. Goddess, help me ask for more.