An Excerpt from “Seeds”

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Poet’s Statement: “Seeds” is a long poetry sequence that thinks about forms of resistance, survival, and emergence in the context of the sixth mass extinction. Each ‘seed’ functions as blueprint, whether simple human-made tool or complex organism driven by its DNA to adapt to and respond to our current existential threat, each showing a different way of being in the world: lentil, snowdrop, chinook salmon, codex, tardigrade, honeybee, “the beautiful cell,” among others. The Vespa orientalis, for example, as noted by Robert Bringhurst in Learning to Die, has evolved a band of the obscure pigment Xanthopterin to draw sunlight out of air and generate a small voltage. The endangered chinook salmon travel thousands of miles to their spawning grounds in the Fraser river and feed the rich coastal ecosystem. Tiny houses, mobile wood frame cabins outfitted with solar panels, are being built by the Tiny House Warriors in unceded Secwepemc Territory in the interior of BC to challenge the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. This excerpt consists of Seed 8, Elysia chlorotica and Seed 19, Gaia.

Seed 8. ELYSIA CHLOROTICA (CHLOROPLAST, ENDOYSMBIONT)

The light reactions, the dark reactions, leaf unfurling, the light—
eastern emerald Elysia, clade Sacoglossa, Elysia chlorotica
littoral, in the salt marshes, the tidal marshes, small pools and shallow creeks,
leaf unfurling, the light—the pigment chlorophyll absorbs the blues
the reds, the spectral blues, absorb a photon, lose electron flows
to pheophytin to a quinone, flow electrons flow the light reactions.
In the salt marshes of Texas among the blue crabs and the mud crabs.
In the tidal marshes of Nova Scotia. Vanishing. Cryptic green
algae endosymbiont. Seaweed. Sea green. Chloroplasts
sucked out and stitched to tubules like leaf veins.
Shifting genes. Diverticula. Radula. Algal plastids. The lumen,
the lumen. A leaf unfurling. Pale green χλωρός kloros, seagreen, moss and
The light—absorb the blues, absorb a photon, lose electron flow
to pheophytin flow to quinone flow electrons, gathering. Illumined.
The light reactions, the dark reactions, leaf unfurling, the dark—

**Seed 19.  **GAIA (BIOSPHERE, THE CARNAL FIELD)

This intertwined web of experience is, of course, the ‘life-world’ to which Husserl alluded in his final writings, yet now the life-world has been disclosed as a profoundly carnal field, as this very dimension of smells and tastes and chirping rhythms warmed by the sun and shivering with seeds. It is, indeed, nothing other than the biosphere—the matrix of earthly life in which we ourselves are embedded.

[ ]

My body is a sort of open circuit that completes itself only in things, in others, in the encompassing earth...

—David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*

A. sends me a screenshot of *Elysia* in response to my poem—
of bees in white rhododendrons at Illal. See this tiny snail, Angostopila dominika in the limestone cliffs of Guangxi, China? See how it fits in the eye of a sewing needle. Take notes—Carbon (C) is a non-metal which easily links to itself and other elements. Life is dependent upon the chemical qualities of carbon. Gaia is an emergent property of interactions among organisms. Our neuron cells include the basket, the cartwheel, the chandelier, starburst, spindle, pyramidal, stellate, granule, and double bouquet. A “back of the envelope calculation” in 1972 estimated our microbiome outnumbers our own cells by ten to one. This assembly of light-gathering machinery. Luca, our last universal common ancestor, root of the tree of life, rooted in metallic darkness. Noctiluca. Sitka spruce. Dark-eyed junco. Remember the soot-coloured moth at Semaphore, alight on the page. Write, Cobalt (Co) is a rare, bright, whitish-blue metal, magnetic, needed for root function. Write, blue thinks itself within me, I surrender a part of my body, even my whole body, to this particular moment of vibrating and filling space known as blue...Blue gentian, penstemon, stickseed, the blue-eyed grass. The light reactions. Remember the night before we climbed Desolation? We stood on the dark shore at Lightning Creek. We stood on the earth, on the Orion arm. We stood in time, looking into the galactic centre, looking into ourselves, these temporary sentient forms, bodies of fusion ash and starlight.

Works Cited

