

1)

Excerpts from *Notes on Thought and Vision*

H.D

The Scilly Islands, July 1919 (published 1982)

If I could visualise or describe that overmind in my own case, I should say this: it seems to me that a cap is over my head, my forehead, affecting a little my eyes. Sometimes when I am in this state of consciousness, things about me appear slightly blurred as if seen under water.

Ordinary things never become quite unreal nor disproportionate. It is only a slight effort to readjust, to focus, seemingly a slight physical effort.

That over-mind seems a cap, like water, transparent, fluid yet with definite body, contained in a definite space. It is like a closed sea-plant, jelly-fish or anemone.

In that over-mind, thoughts pass and are visible like fish swimming under clear water.

The swing from normal consciousness to abnormal consciousness is accompanied by grinding discomfort of mental agony.

I should say – to continue this jelly-fish metaphor – that long feelers reached down and through my body, that these stood in the same relation to the nervous system as the over-mind to the brain or intellect.

There is then, a set of super-feelings. These feelings extend out and about us; as the long floating tentacles of the jelly-fish reach out and about him. They are not of different material, extraneous to the gray matter of the directing brain. The super-feelers are part of the super mind, as the jelly-fish feelers are the jelly-fish itself, elongated in fine threads.

I first realised this state of consciousness in my head. I visualise it just as well, now, centred in the love-region of the body or placed like a foetus in the body.

The centre of consciousness is either the brain or the love-region of the body.

Is it easier for a woman to attain this state of consciousness than for a man?

2)

Excerpts from *Governing Jellyfish: Eco security & Planetary 'Life' in the Anthropocene*

Elizabeth R Johnson

In Animals, Biopolitics, Law: Lively Legalities

Edited by Irus Braverman, Routledge, 2016

Eva Hayward (2012) has explored how looking at the alien like bodies of jellyfish might open up new ways of relating to other organisms, creating the potential to alter our sense of what does – and what might – come to matter. They are organisms that are encountered “viscerally rather than intellectually, sensuously rather than conceptually”. We cannot touch them without inviting distress, but through looking at a distance we nevertheless might as Karen Barad writes, become “more intimate with the infinite alterity” that “lives in, around and through us, waking us up to the inhuman that therefore we are.”

Similarly, Stacy Alaimo has drawn on Jacques Rancière to speculate on how scientific representations of jellyfish may ignite a “redistribution of the sensible”. Such redistribution, for Rancière, would ostensibly transform our aesthetic, ethical, and political commitments. For Alaimo, jellyfish pulse beyond the “visible, the sayable, the thinkable to disrupt and confuse categories with their ...mode of being”.

Unlike charismatic organisms —polar bears or sea turtles—that are easily enrolled in regimes of species protection or an extended conception of rights, the seemingly fluid continuity between jellyfish and the marine substrate that gives them life makes them difficult to individualize and practically impossible to judge. They do not conform to accepted frameworks of animal ethics. Do they suffer? Do they respond? The way their bodies process information — through a neural network rather than a centralized nervous system —make it difficult to know. Often, even their animality is called into question.

3)

Excerpts from *The Starfish that burns: Gendering the jellyfish*

Lila M. Harper

In Forces of Nature Natural(-izing) Gender and Gender(-ing)

Nature in the Discourses of Western Culture

Edited by Bernadette H. Hyner and Precious McKenzie Stearns, 2009

Metaphorically (jellyfish) can be both disruptive of gender expectations, while also functioning as a material force; its shell-less form can suggest an evolutionary continuity of life and yet also be read in terms of opposing gendered and threatening dichotomies. In many ways, the jellyfish functions still as an ideal that masks some basic mystery of a life form so very different from our own.

4)

Excerpts from *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene*

Donna J. Haraway, 2016

I remember that *tentacle* comes from the Latin *tentaculum*, meaning “feeler”, and *tentare*, meaning “to feel” and “to try”...

The tentacular ones tangle me in SF...The tentacular ones make attachments and detachments; they make cuts and knots; they make a difference; they weave paths and consequences but not determinisms; they are both open and knotted in some ways and not others.

The tentacular are not disembodied figures; they are cnidarians, spiders, finery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jellyfish, neural extravaganzas, fibrous entities, flagellated beings, myofibril braids, matted and felted microbial and fungal tangles, probing creepers, swelling roots, reaching and climbing tendrilled ones. The tentacular are also nets and networks, IT critters, in and out of clouds. Tentacularity is about life lived along lines —and such a wealth of lines—not at points, not in spheres.

5)

**Excerpts from *On Touching — The Inhuman That Therefore I am*
Karan Barad
In Power of Material, Politics of Materiality
Edited by Susanne Witzgall and Kersten Stakemeier**

When two hands touch, there is a sensuality of the flesh, an exchange of warmth, a feeling of pressure, of presence, a proximity of otherness that brings the other nearly as close as oneself. Perhaps closer. And if the two hands belong to one person, might this not enliven an uncanny sense of the otherness of the self, a literal holding oneself at a distance in the sensation of contact, the greeting of the stranger within? So much happens in a touch: an infinity of others – other beings, other spaces, other times – are aroused.

...

I want to conclude this essay by making an attempt at putting “us” more intimately in touch with this infinite alterity that lives in, around, and through us, by waking us up to the inhuman that therefore we are, to a recognition that *it may well be the inhuman, the insensible, the irrational, the unfathomable, and the incalculable that will help us face the depths of what responsibility entails*. A cacophony of whispered screams, gasps, and cries, an infinite multitude of indeterminate beings diffracted through different spacetimes, the nothingness, is always already within us, or rather, it lives through us. We cannot shut it out, we cannot control it. We cannot block out the irrationality, the perversity, the madness we fear, in the hopes of a more orderly world. But this does not mitigate our responsibility. On the contrary, it is what makes it possible. Indeterminacy is not a lack, a loss, but an affirmation, a celebration of the plenitude of nothingness.