



We can not stop the spring

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N 121
05 20





N,

I remember yesterday being like today, apart from the meal and the weather.

This apartment as a marginal space, a space for possibility, humor, and reflection.

It is a disquieting environment this one, where the courtyard and the stairs seize to be secluded refuges for reverie with street following its natural cycle and becomes a battleground, a field of still destruction. People sing songs about how free they feel in open spaces.

We need to find new modes of nourishing ourselves and ask what kind of life is worth living.

*“...Come nuvole dense di molesti
minutissimi insetti, a sciami a sciami,
gli amorosi pensieri
s'affollavano tutti alla sua mente;
tra i sospiri ardenti,
quasi un vulcano in eruzione, il suo petto
fumo e fiamme esalava:
e mentre tutto intorno
le valli e le foreste
silenziose, attente e meste
si stanno spettatrici alla gran scena,
così cantando sfoga la sua pena...”*

(From “XXI D. Chisciotte 12-23, La lirica I, Giovanni Meli)

G

Dear G,

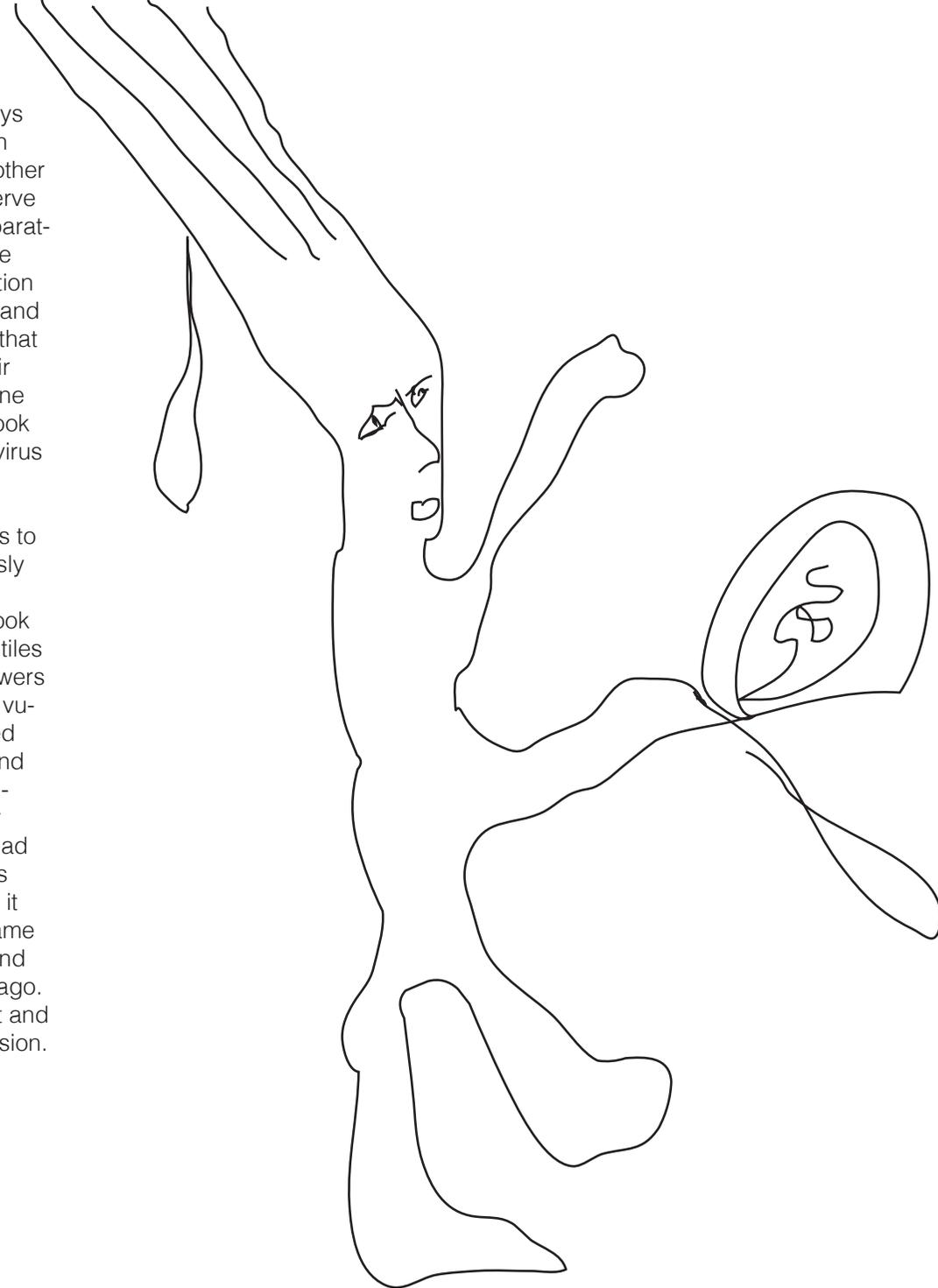
I dreamed such a strange dream. It came back to me on my walk after being three days without leaving the inside-these 65sq m I call home. Feeling the soft ecstasy of the sun ripen my skin I walked past the river which seemed to carry on in a stronger and smoother current than usual- but most likely that is just the impression I had by stopping to observe it rather than walking past it. Not taking it as an “immutable” part of the landscape separating me from the café across from it. There were many ducks floating along and it made me think about how indifferent the non-human race is to these strict measures of isolation this virus, our governments, have imposed on us. The sun still rises and sets as it must and the flowers continue to blossom because we cannot stop the spring. And the animals that inhabit the waters and forests surrounding us breathe, eat and move according to their own unique needs. Maybe this insular moment forces us to find some healing, to re-tune our internal clocks, so that we can re-learn how to care for our species. For once we look as ourselves as one species, a dangerous one. We are in perpetual mutation, as this virus that is stopping us.

I was in bed and my nose was full and runny, I didn't have a tissue so I used my hands to remove some of what was dripping, but when I touched it, it was not liquid but endlessly long delicate stems, some new form of poison ivy- which looked more like its cartoon version than the reality. I pulled trying to get to it's root, but when I would hold it and look down it would dissolve into a transparent liquid. I got up to go shower. The bathroom tiles were a light blue sky hue with a middle row of butter-colored ones that had tiny sunflowers printed on them. All the colors were washed out and it brought about a feeling of déjà vu- it looked like the bathroom in the apartment of my 91-year-old aunt that hasn't changed since she moved in a few decades ago. Leaving the shower everything was steamy and my reflection in the mirror above the two sinks was unrecognizable apart from a silhouette of a big belly looking round like a planet. And framing this wide rectangular mirror were these bright lime green herbs that looked more like DNA structures, each stem had its own length and each leaf a unique complex pattern, and at the top of each leaf was an off white bud. Its artificial lime green color made it appear like a digital simulation if it weren't for the off white bud that had something inherently raw and alive. It was the same species of whatever had been coming out of my nose! But now it was dry and solid, and immutable. It was like a relic, a souvenir of this memory I had just lived a few minutes ago. What code did it carry? I thought I was imagining it but when I touched it, it was moist and warm. Slowly the mirror unblurred and I could see the fear and curiosity on my expression. I wondered if it was some form of candomblé offering*.

love,



*an afro-Brasilian belief system that offers vegetables, minerals and animals to orishas in exchange for wishes



N, I'm scared by time

Immobility vs Speed
Time and Repetition

My sense of time became so skewed by repetition that it feels as if time had shrunk.
I'm unable to build up a timetable, automatize my day scares me.

I wrote a short tale:

In planet 3 lives a duck whose body parts are assembled in the order of the needs it had. Its mouth takes the larger part cause it's always hungry, and it has the nose inside to save space. What it eat is directly used as energy and it's selected automatically so it doesn't need to defecate. Arms and legs have eyes.
This duck is planet 3.

I thought about planets cause u wrote about your belly, we all are planets and we give birth to others.
Maybe I feel time shrinking cause I feel we as planets are on the wrong axes.

Love,



Dear G,

It is disturbingly beautiful outside! The birds on the tree in front of my window have been chirping all day and this soundtrack create such a tension with the images of the media I feed on like an addict. Today on my walk I saw many people on the arvre, under the bridge of Carouge, you know where there is this little beach of stones? A woman sunbathing topless, a couple that seemed to be on their first date, kids playing with other kids- it felt strange because it was not enough people to make it a normal early spring day but also too many for a quarantine.

How is it in Naples? Do you go out for walks?

immobility vs speed.

These days being physically cut off from the solar system that keeps us moving, and restricted from the streets that are our grounds to do so, we come face to face with our lacks and our dependencies.

"There's a game I played as a child: I would pick a word, any word, and say it over and over until the sound became absurd, meaningless, foreign. For me, this is exactly what the pandemic has done to the word 'home'. The more I hear it, the stranger it sounds-and the less I seem to understand what it's supposed to mean" Lynn Berger

I'm watching an old lady walk from one side to the other of her six-meter balcony, we have become hostages within our little planets. Our dependency on this speed is kept up virtually, while our bodies stay in pajamas all day. And the days seem long, while the weeks seem short and last week seems like a month ago.

But mostly our dependency on our sociability. On contact, touch and affection. It is hard to fully express love through a screen or to see a familiar face and keep 2 meters away, the impulse is to come closer. I hear on the news a story of an elder man who managed, after a lot of convincing, to find a spot outside the window of his wife's assisted living facility room and goes see her every day, it made me cry like a baby.

Youri told me he feels that the big difference between now and before for him is that all the urgency has been put aside. Its nice to have him more at home. He spends a large part of his days on zoom working on projects for restaurants and schools that wait in an undetermined waiting room to be physically executed. Have you thought about all these spaces that are now empty spaces, offices, schools, the 4-floor H&M shop full of clothes- clothes that will probably be out of season and trashed once things reopen. The absurdity of it all rises like fat to the surface!

But maybe this interruption of the atomised society we find ourselves floating in creates the possibility of establishing new rituals with new symbolic structures. I hear many people saying that in these conditions it is hard to divide the day, to define when work starts and stops, but for many of us artists this division was already blurry. The image of a a clock with no hands constantly comes back to me, Patti Smith writes in M Train, *"Tasks were completed, sump pumps manned, sandbags piled, trees planted, shirts ironed, hems stitched, and yet we reserved the right to ignore the hands that kept on turning"*

I have been doing a lot of reading-in the waiting room:

This passage is from an article called “how the corona virus has infected our vocabulary” and it talks about starling birds collectively organize themselves through moments of transition, and compares it with how quickly we managed to rearrange our lives to these new conditions:

“A few months ago, in this same park, I’d look skyward at this hour to clock the moment when a great scattering of starlings begins to wheel as one. Called murmurations, these flocks gather in the purple Texas dusk. Spiky iridescent birds that stitch themselves into a single animate cloud. (Starlings are an invasive species; in 1890, a Shakespeare enthusiast released sixty starlings into Central Park, as part of a whimsical mission to introduce to North America every bird ever mentioned in Shakespeare’s works; today we have two hundred million.) These enormous flocks can execute sharp turns and vortical spins with a magical-feeling coordination. A thousand starlings bunch into a living fist over the trees, relax westward, shear away behind the eastern skyscrapers. With a kind of muscular clairvoyance, each bird seems to anticipate the movements of the others. What is deciding them? What permits a thousand autonomous actors to move as one body, at these unbelievable speeds?”

A recent study described how these birds are able to “manage uncertainty in consensus”: “Flocks of starlings exhibit a remarkable ability to maintain cohesion as a group in highly uncertain environments and with limited, noisy information.” Karen Russel

Have you been able to paint? I’m having a hard time thinking clearly, and writing my thesis. So I cook things I never usually had the patience to try to keep my hands busy.

This is from an article called “how pandemics change history” with Frank M. Snowden, a professor of history and the history of medicine at Yale:

“I think one of the things I’ve learned about epidemics is that each disease, as I see it, is like a person. Each one is an individual and different from any other. They aren’t just interchangeable causes of death. It depends on the nature of each individual, and how societies and artists react to them. It depends on how many people they kill, if they kill people in excruciating ways, if they kill children and the young, or if they leave orphans behind, or if they are familiar diseases or if they have come from outside.

In the case of plague, it stirs the problems of mortality and sudden death. Artists responded to this, particularly on the Continent. In Catholic countries, the main thrust was to see this as a reminder that this life is temporary and provisional. One sees a great attention to themes of suddenness of death, that is, the danse macabre, where everyone is swept away. Of course, the use of the hourglass, of bones, of vanitatem. You know, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the Preacher.” There’s this enormous sense of that, and a sense also of a worship for plague saints, who were widely depicted. One can see this going across Europe—the cult of religiosity, the themes of sudden death, repentance, and getting your affairs and your soul in order before the plague might suddenly cut you off. It had a transformative effect on the iconography of European art.

You can see this even into the twentieth century with that wonderful film by Ingmar Bergman, “The Seventh Seal,” where the plague is a metaphor for what Bergman was worried about in 1957, which is nuclear war. One can see that it has all the things that I’ve been talking about with regard to the plague, including the danse macabre with which the film ends. You’d see paintings of the Grim Reaper coming, and it really is an example of the persistence of this artistic response to death.

Other diseases provoke different responses. One could talk about tuberculosis, and how different it was in the Romantic period, in the nineteenth century. That's really an odd one, because, to me, tuberculosis is one of the most gruesome and painful ways to die, where, in the end, you asphyxiate, and yet, on the other hand, you'll have it glorified with operatic heroines on the stage who are perceived as beautiful. Or "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which is not only about slavery. It's also about tuberculosis.

Why was tuberculosis glorified?

I want to say something I hope will make you smile, but I would like to be able to give you a definitive answer to that. Human beings are funny creatures, aren't they? Not all of the things that are done are easy to understand, but, with regard to plague, it was a disease that affected everyone. I think that's critical. It was the end of the world, the final reckoning, the final apocalypse. With tuberculosis, on the other hand, people thought something that wasn't true. They thought—and the medical doctrines of the early nineteenth century taught them this—that it was a disease of the elite, of the artist, of the beautiful, of the refined, and that it made people much more beautiful, so that fashion tried to turn women into tubercular creatures. You see Toulouse-Lautrec painting an anorexic-looking woman who's putting rice powder on her face so that she'll look pale like the tuberculosis people. The Pre-Raphaelites married their models, who were tuberculosis patients. Victor Hugo was told by his friends that he had one great fault as a writer, which was that he wasn't tuberculous, and therefore he wouldn't be as great a writer as he would have been otherwise.

There was an American thinker and writer about culture, Arthur C. Jacobson, who had the idea that America, at the end of the nineteenth century, as tuberculosis was beginning to recede, was going to face a crisis for the arts, the sciences, and culture because there wouldn't be geniuses anymore the way there had been in the time of tuberculosis."

Can we draw a line to the memes (I'm not saying memes are art) that are circulating about the desperation/normalization of all this protective gear (menstrual pad masks?!).

I remember being a child when my uncle came to a Sunday family lunch wearing a mask—which he would not remove for his entire stay, and this distance felt so strange.

tight hug,



Dear N,

Naples looks so sad with no people in the streets. But at the same time I feel it's finally breathing and rest.

I try to walk at least twice a week from my parents house where I'm right now, to my studio, but I'm afraid of getting a fine, so I always look down and walk fast, so weird.

Clothes: you should get in and take them all for your "eBay trafficking".

I'm painting of course with a different mood. I'm usually so influenced by my walks and thing happening, and now it seems like it's just happening one thing and that's all people are talking about, so I think my mind is travelling more.

I feel in a loop, N.

At the same time, each one has a task in this moment. We, as citizen and artists, we can only follow the rules to make it stop as soon as possible as citizens and make art as artists.

Le maintenant, ce-maintenant-ci, perd son ambiguïté et son exclusivité. Il devient le moment unique, orienté vers son avenir, le passé dépasse, le présent présent à quelque chose qui n'est pas lui.

L'histoire commence par une réflexion sur la vie.

Love,



Dear G,

Novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky believed that the cleverest people are those who regularly call themselves fools. In other words, they feel humble amusement as they acknowledge their failings and ignorance—thereby paving the way for creative growth. They steadily renew their commitment to avoid being know-it-alls, celebrating the curiosity that such blessed innocence enables them to nurture. They give themselves permission to ask dumb questions! Now is a favorable time for you to employ these strategies. This is what Rob Breznsny suggests his fellow Sagittarius souls.

For virgos: I predict that you will have more flying dreams than usual in the coming weeks—as well as more dreams in which you're traveling around the world in the company of rebel angels and dreams in which you're leading revolutionary uprisings of oppressed people against tyrannical overlords and dreams of enjoying eight-course gourmet feasts with sexy geniuses in the year 2022. You may also, even while not asleep, well up with outlandish fantasies and exotic desires. I don't regard any of these likelihoods as problematic. In fact, I applaud them and encourage them. They're healthy for you! Bonus: All the wild action transpiring in your psyche may prompt you to generate good ideas about fun adventures you could embark on once the coronavirus crisis has ebbed.

I feel my mind, like my body, to be mutating. All my blood is rushing to the belly, to the baby, and my center of gravity is shifting. I feel my love growing. But I can also feel fear, making new life, fearing for the older generations that you see get weaker, you come face to face with mortality.

I heard about this term today from the sage-femme:

La transparence psychique de la grossesse

*Au cours de la **grossesse**, une **transparence psychique** particulière permet à des fantômes préconscients ou inconscients et à des éléments du passé de se représenter. La femme enceinte est ainsi en contiguïté avec le bébé qu'elle a été autrefois. L'objet interne est actualisé par la **grossesse**.*

Ghosts from past lives have been appearing in my dreams and it seems so real that when I wake up I have a hard time understanding where and when is the reality. Past lovers, long lost friends, familial relationship dynamics from childhood. In dreams, we create new images, do they become new memories?

I had another weird sci-fi dream; I felt some foreign object touching my eyeball when I touched my finger to it what came out felt like a soft transparent material, like a contact lens, but when I looked it, it became a screen and projected these purple and green eel-like creatures that were intertwining in a dance forming a beautiful sort of mandala that looked like a new language.

"The world of men is dreaming, it has gone mad in its sleep, and a snake is strangling it, but it can't wake up."
DH Lawrence

love from across the alps down the north to the southwestern coast touching the mediterranean sea,



As you know, N, I always have dumb questions.

Actually one weird dream I had is me looking at my hand that slowly transform itself in a pizza and I start eating it. Still no rebel angels, I'm more into the eight-course gourmet feasts with sexy geniuses.

It's true what u said about the sky, I had this impression too, but in these moments I wake up the baby me and try to look for images out of the clouds or imagine the sky as layers of ice cream that move, liquify or freeze depending on the temperature and how much of it you eat.

We always create fake memories N. I think your dream is clearly linked to the life you are creating inside you, not only a new body, but a new intelligence. You are creating a brain, and that's cryptic.

CREAM

Cream cut. Any where crumb. Left chambers. (Gertrude Stein - Food)

I send you my love back from the seaside rocks up to the alps.

G

Dear G,

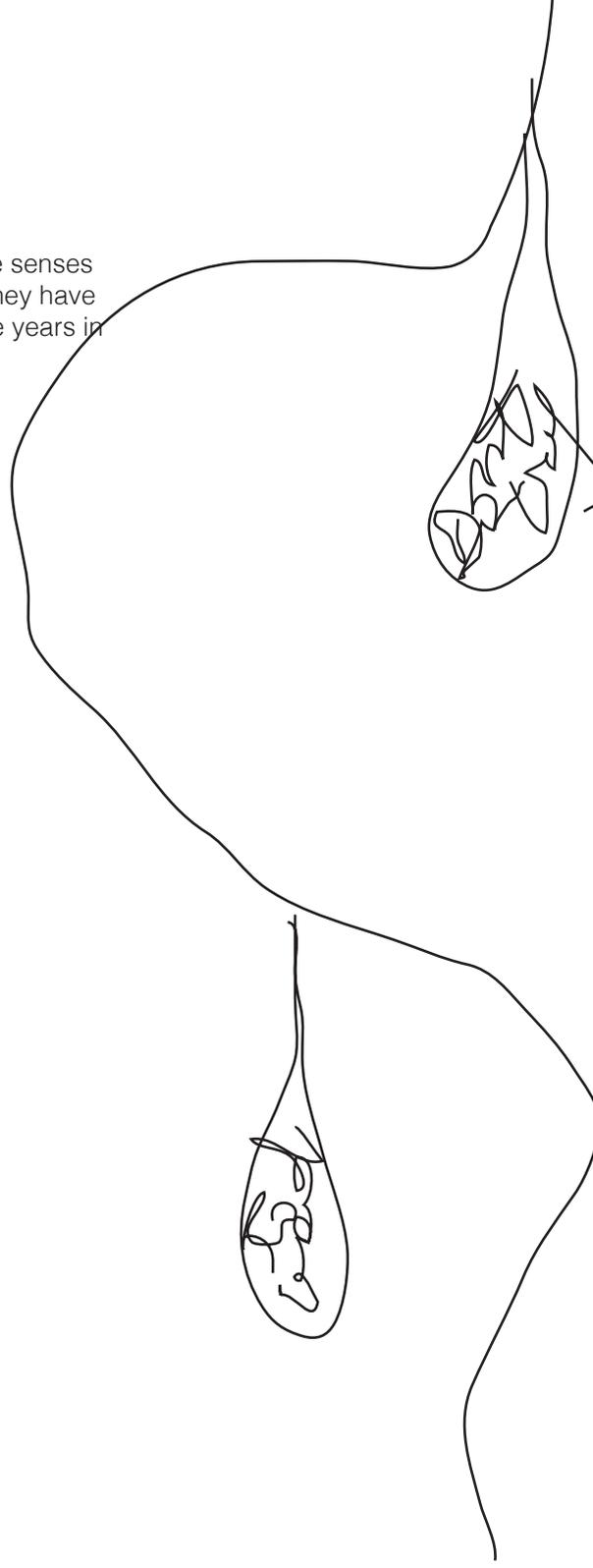
And as we line up outside to return to "normal"...
my strange creams continue.

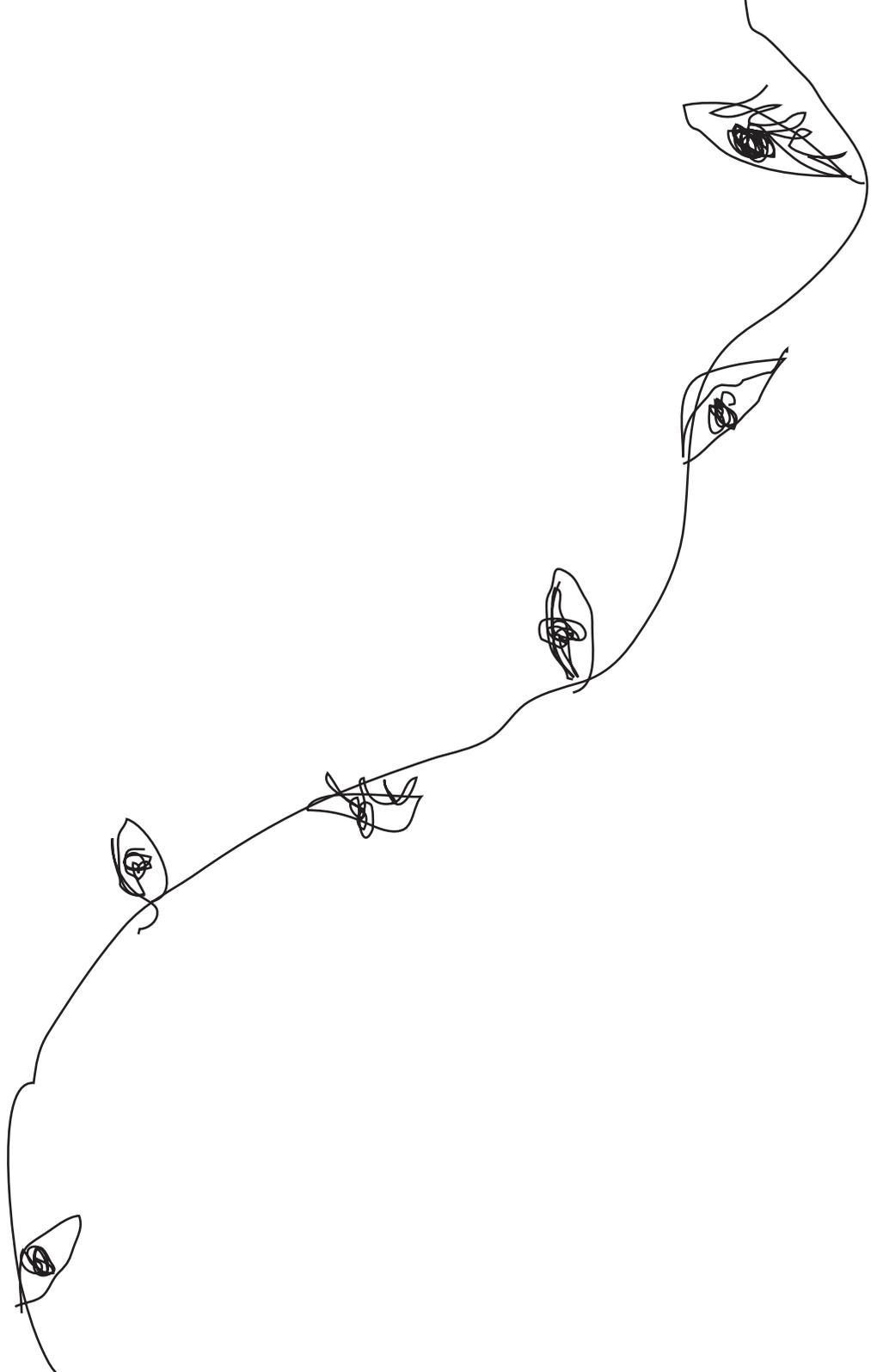
"plants perceive the world in a much more refiend way than we do: they have more senses than we do, and their sensitive world is not simply divided into five great realms. They have memory, and make this memory their own body: a tree is the climatic archive of the years in which it lived."

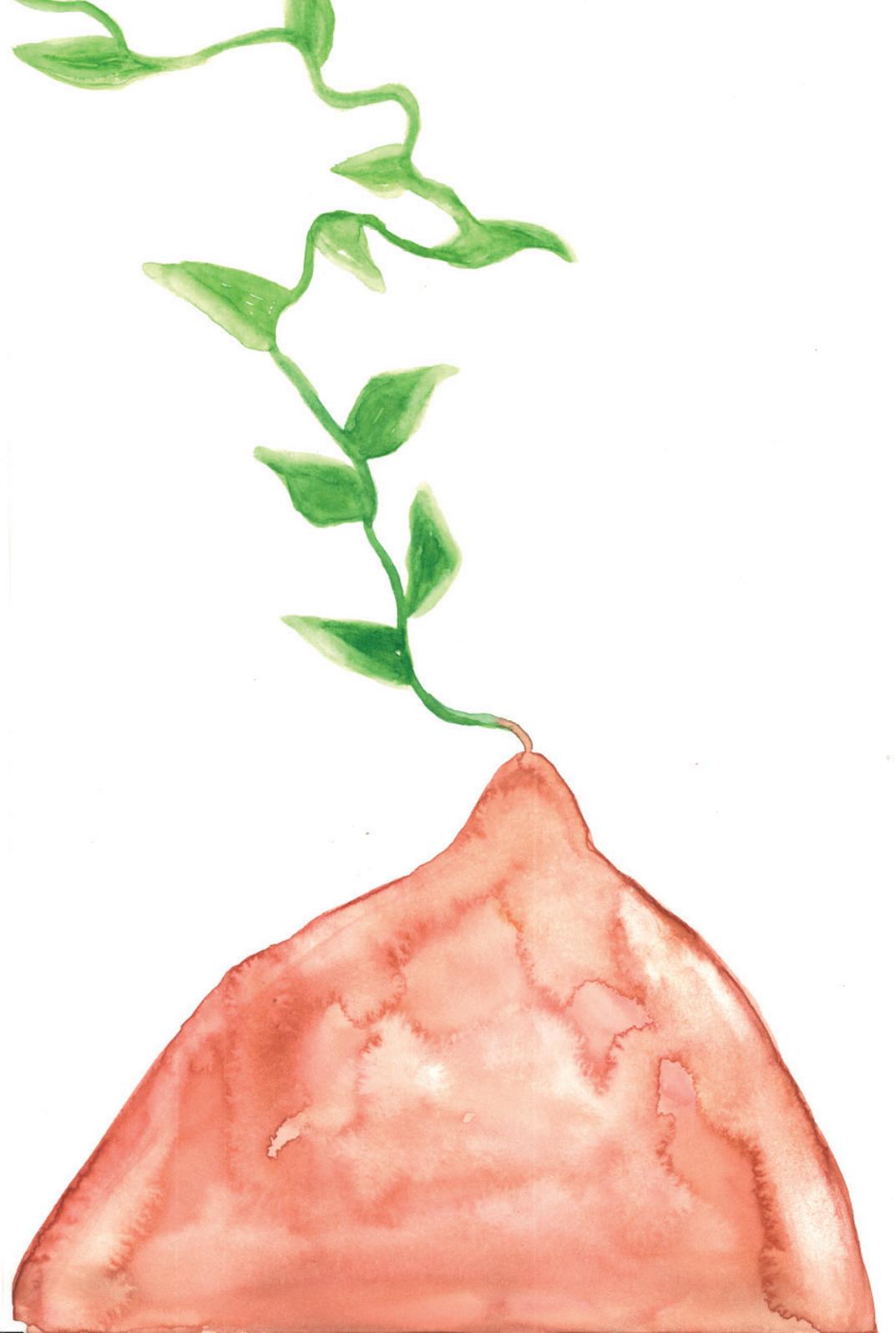
Emanuele Coccia

I really really wish to have a feast with you soon sexy genius!

bisous,







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