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Turning into the Night: Embodied, Expansive Practices for
Inhabiting Earth's SpinTilt

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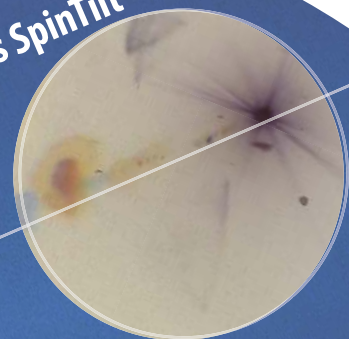
In the tradition of ancient Chinese poets, philosophers, and observers,

we are experimenting with daily life practices that enable us to project our imaginations into the cosmic scale of the material realities of life on Earth. Arguably, this is the only scale of materiality that human activity cannot alter. We have been inhabiting specific aspects of our everyday lives from within our understandings of 2500+ year old Daoist mindsets. Our intention is to explore their contemporary relevance and test out possibilities of trans-lating and exapting them for living the Anthropocene. We've taken up this project of how early Daoist and Chan (Zen Buddhist) practitioners used ideas, aesthetics, methods of observation, and lifeways to cultivate "skilled" and "responsive immediacy" to the material parameters of life on Earth (Hershock 2004, 2).

We generated the following image/text series from a current project, which we've called: *Turning into the Night*. Since May 21, 002018, we have performatively inhabited the time between sunset and sunrise without use of artificial light of any kind. During daylight hours, we reduce our time on digital screens. As evening approaches, we attempt to live (observe) our local landscape transition into night and darkness. We intended to end the project on summer solstice, June 22, 002018. Instead, while in the midst of the process, we decided to continue it indefinitely (we are at 120+ Earth spins at the time of this writing).

We have arrived at the conviction that this act of making ourselves aware of the transition-hinges of day becoming night, night becoming day, and intentionally dwelling within the monumental changes of light into dark, dark into light, is a form of environmental practice. It is a practice that, as Clark Strand puts it, adjusts our eyes to the "strange light of this world," and allows us to experience what "our minds have never known but what our bodies still remember," namely, ancestral timescapes and the ways of land inhabitation that they made possible (Strand 2015, 53). Strand calls this attempt to "reach around the Anthropocene" and back in time and human cultures an effort to "catch glimpses of what might have existed before the Anthropocene." He sees "dark night" practices as ways to recognize self (human being) as part of the landscape of the world, rather than as a thing onto itself or as a figure against the ground of nature to which nature is invisible.

TURNING INTO THE NIGHT:
Embodied, Exaptive Practices for Inhabiting Earth's SpinTilt
smudge studio 002018



**The Copernican
Revolution of the 1500s
placed the sun, rather than the
earth, at the center of our solar system.**

In 1610, Galileo gave Western-encultured minds a second chance to reimagine and rescale their senses of self in relation to the cosmos. This time, it wasn't only mathematics that proved we Earthlings were not the center of the Universe. It was an empirical observation that anyone with sight and a telescope could make for themselves. But Ecclesiastes 1:5 stated: *"And the sun rises and sets and returns to its place."* Galileo was found guilty of heresy and put under house arrest for the remainder of his life. Nevertheless, after his arrest, he uttered these poetic words about the earth, *"And yet it moves."*

We wonder just how much Western-encultured public imaginations and experiences of daily life have reoriented themselves in relation to the cosmos since the 1500s. It seems a relevant question to ask, given how the vast majority of contemporary humans inhabit the planet as if our species were the center of the universe. In early May, before starting the project, we might have asked: why sit and pay attention to the movement of the planet when we already know, "it moves"? Now we ask, what actual awareness do we humans alive today have about the life-affording fact that the ground of our lives is not fixed, it spins?

For millennia, numerous ancient cultures closely observed stars and movements of celestial bodies and arrived at powerful ways of knowing through embodied practices. They materialized their empirical findings and pragmatic cognitions of the cosmos in architecture and sculpture, and in their life ways. At the heart of *Turning into the Night* is the question: what does it take for two contemporary artists|humans to sense and attune to the cosmic scale of the material realities of our habitat on a daily basis? We are addressing that question by attempting to hold the thought of, pay close attention to, and track cosmic-magnitude change at the local, daily-life scale of the spin of our planet.

We have chosen to experience our planetary ride through the perspectives of Daoist poems that trace the interpenetrations of the cosmic and the earthly, and through Daoist-influenced landscape paintings that offer empirically-based interpretations of earth forces (Hinton 2016). We have generated a number of image-sensations in response to our experiences. They gesture toward felt realities: we are not separate from the Earth's ongoing rotation and 23.5 degree axis of tilt; we live the very specific material realities and aesthetics of its spin intimately; these are deeply embedded in our bodies' circadian and evolutionary rhythms—as they are for all things and beings on planet Earth.

We realize in new ways the extent to which technology and media inhibit our abilities to note or pay attention to even the most intimate and consequential of planetary changes—such as the gradients of time during which day becomes night, night becomes day. Media devices and their illuminated screens block our attunements to and curiosities for attending to the planet-as-process—and to ourselves as enmeshed in its processes. Our media devices proffer infinite quantities of distraction from the highly aesthetic and engaging planetary dynamics that shape us—and that we shape in turn.

"And yet it moves."

Our species has evolved,
and continues to evolve,
in relation to Earth's ceaseless spin.
Through *Turning into the Night*, we explore
what creative, spiritual, and material
consequences result from living an awareness of
inhabiting a spinning planet. We offer our work as a relay
from within this exploration. We sense that our species' ability to
adapt to planetary change in the short and long-term depends on our
willingness to pay attention to planetary change not merely in analytical,
intellectual ways, but through direct embodied experience.

Which has brought us to realize,

This change, it just won't stop. Ever moving. Unfixable. Somehow, without clear demarcation, this sun-filled day began to dim into the most minute of gradations, into shades of blue that are more glow and quality of light and diffusion than color. There's no stopping this change. And yet, it is silent, seamless and graceful in its profound shiftings.

An overall feeling of rest and "winding down" is felt and heard in the air. This is what living beings do. Sensors in our eyes, glands, hearts, brain, are attuned to this unwinding. They "clock it" and their sensings are continuous, everyday. Lowering light triggers their signaling.

Meanwhile, the bombardment of photons is never ending, as far as humans are concerned. Photons of light cruise towards our planet from 93,000,000 miles away.

The pupils of our eyes are doing their evolutionary jobs. They are opening. This un-arrestable glow-shade we call twilight is in fact movement, change, as are all things and time. And when we wake around eight hours from now at the prompting of the highly sun-attuned bird songs outside the back door, we'll be in a blue-ing of another sort once again. The glow will be appearing in the sky from the "east" and, until around noon, our particular location on the planet will roll "downward" on its tilted axis, at which time, it will begin to roll "upward" until around midnight.

Meanwhile, this 8:30 p.m. twilight-ing blue is seamlessly connected with and deeply akin to some other kind of blue that will be tomorrow's 5:00 a.m. dawn-ing.

**What creative, spiritual,
and material consequences
result from living an awareness
of inhabiting
a spinning planet?**

It is typical for most humans to awaken and go to sleep out of a sense that reality is filled to the brim with human-centered concerns, awarenesses, and thoughts. Missing the aesthetic qualities of the transitions into and out of “day” and “night,” and all that this nuanced changing commands, truncates the qualities of daily life.


Like a long exposure in photography, we are exposing our bodies and minds to the transitions of days into nights, and nights into days, spin after spin. This ongoing changing is much vaster and enduring than we are. Our eyes, cells, blood, gut bacteria, are ruled by circadian rhythms that are of the planet’s SpinTilt. Over billions of years, our evolutionary ancestors adapted and exapted in response to the continuously moving, smudged and angled moment during which day and night intermingle. Its rhythms and effects are at play within us, and they play out as “us.”

*Within day there is night ,
within night there is day.*



No longer waking after "morning" (noun) has already arrived.
No longer turning off a light to go to sleep after "night" (noun) has already arrived.
Waking and sleeping within the seamless transition
of Earth's continuous spin, an -ing of light.

THERE IS NO DAY OR NIGHT, ONLY ENDLESS TRANSITION SPIN



Just before sleep, blue is all there is.
Falls material upon all things,
making no distinctions among the things and beings
soaked in its shifting gradients of blue change.
In these moments of spin change—a flash of realization:
this is what this space, this house, are, when "I" am not here,
when a human's physical presence is not laying itself upon the world,
over-illuminating everything into an image of itself.
In the deepening blue, humans adrift within, eyes look, ears listen.
Evolutionary rhythms attuned over billions of years
play their cycles with ease, unfolding of their own accord,
without interruption.

INSIDE BLUE

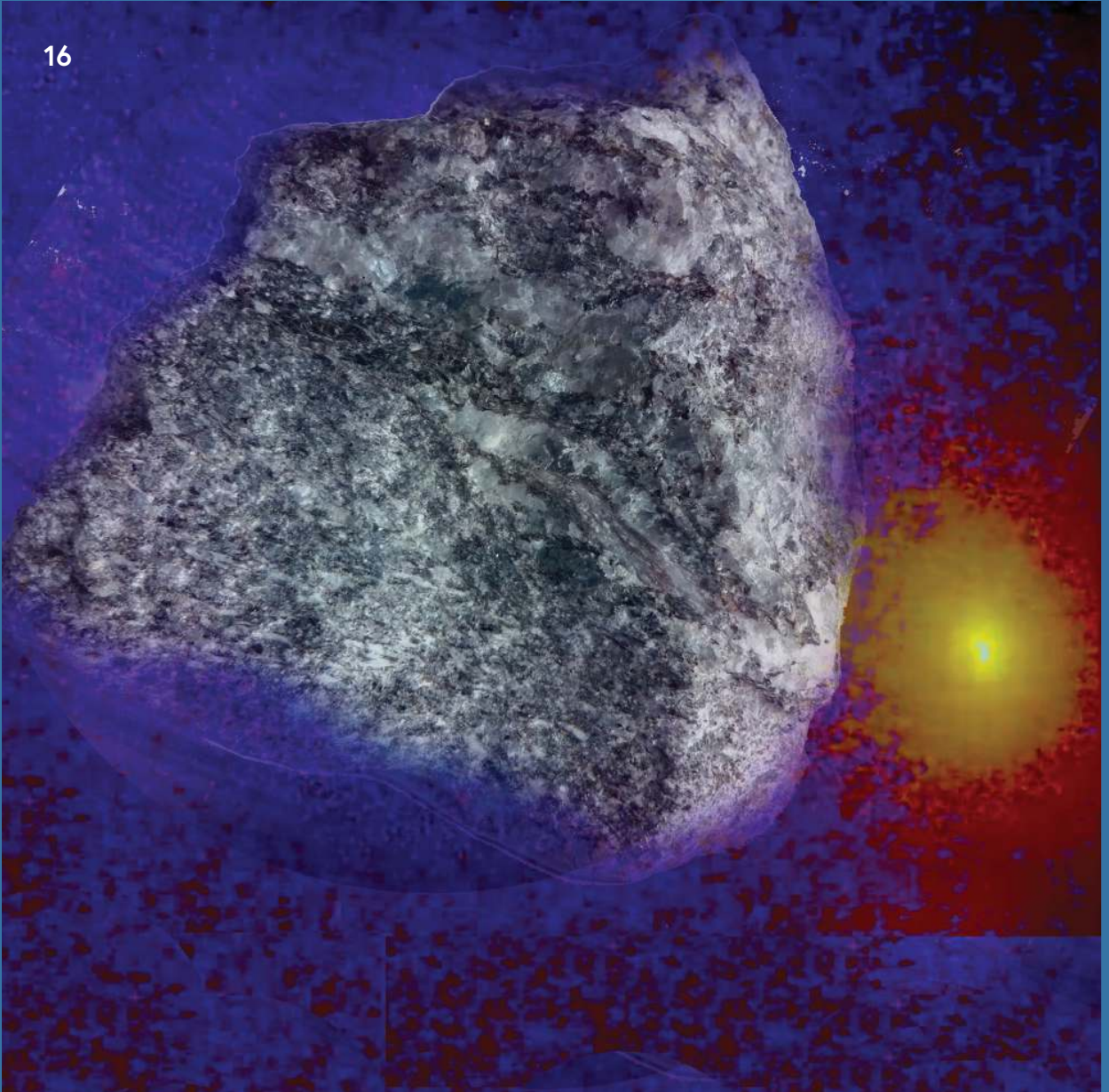
Benificent limit summons the waning of the day.
Sleep comes not from exhaustion,
but from sensations that arise
when blue dims into deep shadow.
Each planetary day reaches a sufficient, evolutionary fullness.

EARTH'S SHADOW FALLS ACROSS THE 10,000 THINGS



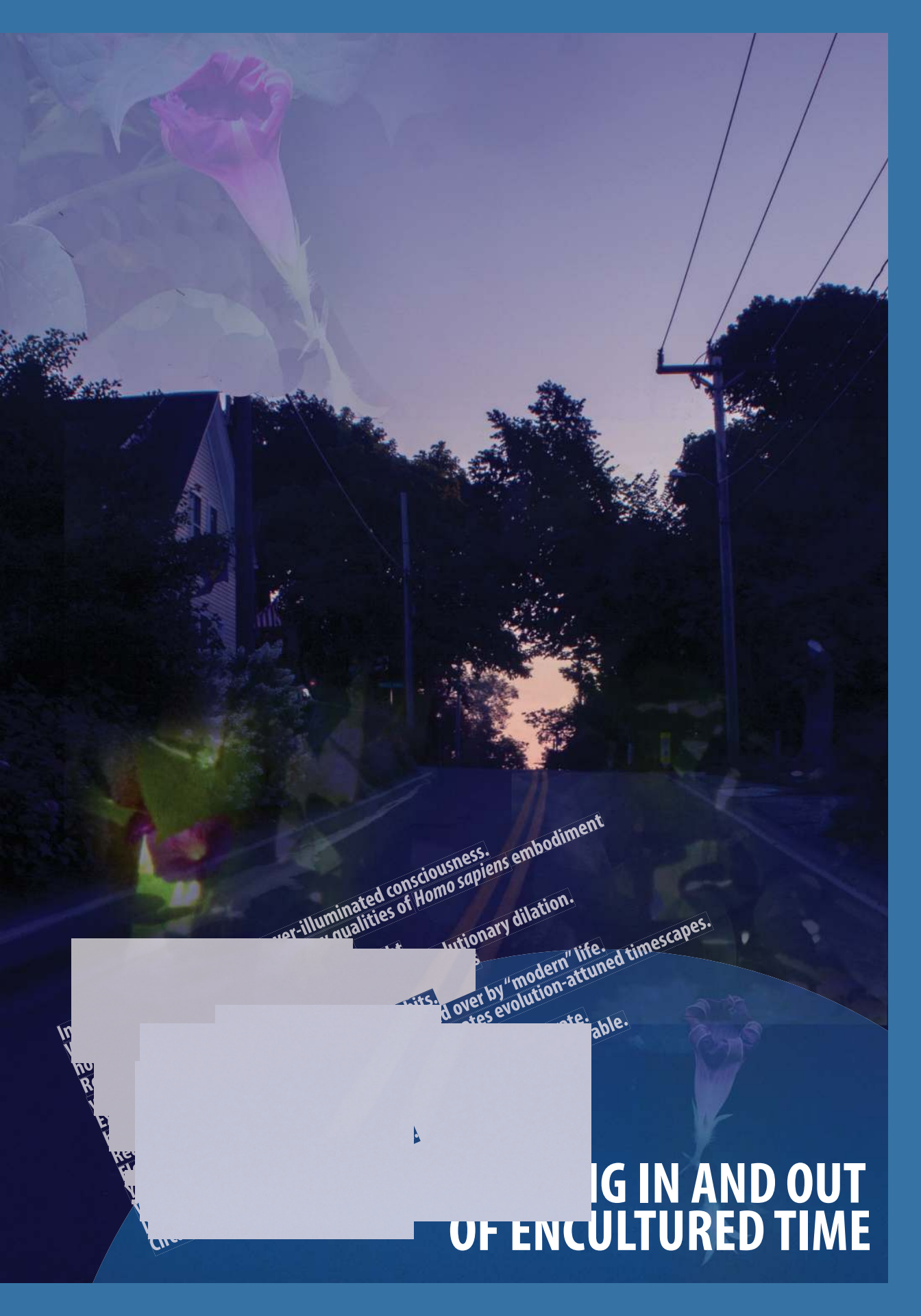
More like a landscape than a clock or the passage of regular intervals.
More like a body within which the 10,000 things are living.
Each day's time undulates, expands, folds in on itself,
takes on unexpected qualities:
spatial, corporeal, mercurial.
Ten thousand things, living inside the Earth's continuous spin,
which is also inside each body-mind-brain's circadian rhythms.

TIME TAKES ON SUBSTANCE



No longer caught in the din of electric lighting,
the 10,000 things are freed riders
upon a hulking, spinning, water-covered rock hurtling through space.
Our exquisite subjection to the existence tissue laid bare.
A cosmic observatory constantly on the move.
Earth's massive heave and strain weaves day into night, night into day
all effortless ease.

RIDING THE TORQUE OF THE EARTH



In and out of overstimulated, over-illuminated consciousness.
We access ancient, enlivening sensory qualities of Homo sapiens embodiment
honed over billions of years of wild time.
Re-learning to see in the night's ambient light
while fading sunlight on retina allows for slow, evolutionary dilation.
Experiencing emergent tips of early morning moments
before they can be harnessed to cultural habits.
Realizing qualities of sensation otherwise paved over by "modern" life.
Electric light is felt as glaring sensation. It obliterates evolution-attuned timescapes.
You do not live them even as you walk in them.
Without no abrupt, electric on/off, light and dark interpenetrate.
Dark nights foil twitcher time. Seasonal changes becomes sense-able.
Circadian rhythm sleep is a radical act.

PHASING IN AND OUT OF ENCULTURED TIME



**SUN AND MOON
MAKE CHANGE**
日月易

Around thirteen hundred years ago,

Master Shitou Xiqian (aka “stone head”) authored a poem of 22 couplets (44 lines). The title, *Cantongqi*, was taken from an ancient Daoist text written 500 years earlier (100-200 CE) and considered to be the first book of alchemy.

In Shitou's time, Chan Buddhism (Zen in Japanese) was growing in popularity and divisions between the two dominant schools had developed.

The Northern school promoted a more gradual process to enlightenment, while the Southern school favored a more sudden and immediate awakening. Shitou's poem, addresses the division between the two schools, “as well as other dichotomies such as one and many, light and dark, sameness and difference” (Suzuki 2001, 15).

Today in 2018, Shitou's poem is widely known by its Japanese name, the *Sandokai*, and in Western countries, by its English title, *Identity of the Relative and Absolute*. The poem is chanted everyday around the world in Zen temples and centers. The daily chanting of these words invites the poem to become a living, embodied form. In the several years since we first encountered the *Sandokai*, we have gained new ears for hearing it. The increased pressure of the Anthropocene has opened new pathways into its teachings and its references to political divisions resonate across the centuries. Our practice of *Turning into the Night* has found a deep home within its verses (“*Within light there is darkness, but do not try to understand that darkness; Within darkness there is light, but do not look for that light*”). Speaking directly of dark and light, the words pull us far back to the deep, enigmatic roots of Daoism, which conceptualized human existence *within evolving* planetary limits.

In our attempt to share our lived experience of *Turning into the Night* we have found the *Sandokai* and its precursor, the *Cantongqi*, to be ready collaborators. The *Cantongqi* is filled with cosmological references that link movements of the sun, moon and other celestial bodies to cycles of time and change. As in, for example, the phrase: “*Sun and Moon Make Change.*” In the original Chinese, the kanji character for change (易) is formed by placing the character for Sun (日) above the character for Moon (月).

Our ability to drawn upon, remix and re-engage these texts as artists has been transformative. We feel as though we are at the beginning of a rich, mysterious exchange with these texts’ authors, made possible by the fact that we, like they, set out to make aesthetic responses to the fact that humans exist as embodiments of living earth materials.

Fire is hot, wind moves,
water is wet, earth hard;
Eyes see, ears hear, nose smells,
tongue tastes the salt and sour.

Three months into our project, we realize how much of existence (material existence)

we have been missing. For decades, we
haven't been inhabiting the Earth as a planet.

As the *Sandokai* reminds, "*you do not see it even as you
walk on it.*" Prior to performing this project, we missed dwelling
within the seasonal and life rhythms that evolve out of this spin, and
the simple and profound aesthetic transitions that occur ceaselessly from
day into night, dark into light.

The *Sandokai* ends with a sobering closure, using words similar to the evening gatha chanted
at many Zen temples. It offers a Zen "whack" that is also a gift of reminding: "*Don't waste your time
by day or night.*" For a threatened species such as ours, there is, indeed, no time to be wasted.

We are just beginning to explore how to take up these alchemic poems as grounds for further
aesthetic work, micro-productions, poetic engagement, and daily life teachers. We conclude by
reproducing the full text of the *Sandokai*. We introduce it through our account of what the
Cantongqi calls, "a timeless instant between end and beginning," an instant that we've realized as a
result of *Turning into the Night*.

Day 82+, somewhere in late August: light and dark, like two arrows meeting in mid-air

The light shifts from casting a light blue to a deeper, indeterminable shade—shading blue. It is no
longer day or night. Liminal suspension. We are riding the *timeless instant between ending and
beginning*. A zero point within space and time that continuously sweeps around the moving planet.
Here, day and night are what they literally are: Sun's light traveling 93,000,000 miles towards Earth,
which casts its own twilight shadow, under which it spins. Day: facing the Sun, the fuel for billions of
years of nuclear fusion. Night: facing the pregnant emptiness of deep space.

This movement, forever just on the verge of reaching a meeting point between light and shadow:
the space *where two arrows meet in mid-air*. Both continuously in motion, always just escaping one
another. The sky's spectrum shifts. Day and night, a hair's breadth apart. In the open space, where
these arrows continuously meet, is it day or is it night? In which hemisphere?

Day and night, always turning into one another, somewhere on Earth. Neither comes first nor
second, they ceaselessly transform into one another. As a pair, *like the foot before and the foot
behind, in walking*, there is no division, and yet they are fully themselves, utterly full of light and
darkness, and beyond knowing, "*Within light there is darkness, but do not try to understand that
darkness. Within darkness there is light, but do not look for that light.*"

We sleep into a light, so blue, and wake into a dark, so blue.
This moving hinge, zero and infinity. And in the
moment just before sleep, without a human's
physical presence overriding all things,
moving blue is all there is. How foolish that
for decades, *we did not experience this,
even as we walked within it.*

**"Do not waste
your time
by day
or night."**

Identity of Relative and Absolute

*The mind
of the Great Sage of India
was intimately conveyed
from West to East.
Among human beings
are wise ones and fools,
but in the Way there is
no northern or southern ancestor.
The subtle source
is clear and bright,
the tributary streams flow
through the darkness.
To be attached to things is illusion,
to encounter the absolute
is not yet enlightenment.
Each and all, the subjective
and objective spheres are related,
and at the same time, independent.
Related, yet working differently,
though each keeps its own place.
Form makes the character
and appearance different;
Sounds distinguish comfort
and discomfort.
The dark makes all words one,
the brightness distinguishes
good and bad phrases.
The four elements return to their
nature as a child to its mother.
Fire is hot, wind moves,
water is wet, earth hard;
Eyes see, ears hear, nose smells,
tongue tastes the salt and sour.
In accordance with each dharma,
the root gives rise to separate leaves.
Root and branch must return
to the great reality.*

(Loori 1998, 29-31)

*The words high and low
are used relatively.
Within light there is darkness,
but do not try to understand
that darkness;
Within darkness there is light,
but do not look for that light.
Light and darkness are a pair,
like the foot before
and the foot behind, in walking.
Each thing has its own intrinsic
Value and is related to
everything
else in function and position.
Ordinary life fits the absolute
as a box and its lid.
The absolute works together
with the relative like two arrows
meeting in mid-air.
Reading words,
you should grasp the great
reality.
Do not judge by any standards.
If you do not see the Way,
you do not see it
even as you walk on it.
When you walk the Way,
it is not near, it is not far.
If you are deluded,
you are mountains and rivers
away from it.
I respectfully say
to those who wish
to be enlightened,
do not waste your time
by night or day.*

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