

Falling into Place

April Griefsong explores pathways to a restorative culture, ones that are as yet unimagined, waiting to be found

In my 20s, I rode a motorbike. Just me and the bike and the road. It was my passion. It was my freedom. Just me and the bike and the road. I was in awe of the skill and attention and full bodied experience of driving at speed. Just me and the bike and the road.

Yesterday, I was the narrow escape.

No time to brake; no time to think. I was trundling along the windy Welsh backroads of Pembrokeshire in my beat-up van, turned a sharp bend and there was a monstrous lime green dream machine leaning into a knee dip, at speed – on my side of the road. A tailback of traffic already behind me, certain I should be going faster, a cold clarity landed in my mind as I took in the situation.

Not my life flashing before my eyes, but a breath of connection to all the unmet purposes and entanglements that would miss my participation, if this were to be my good day to die. Only the day before I had planted seeds – taken them in my mouth, kissed them and sung the songs of their origins, as I knew them – how the seeds and the soil and the pot were brought together – and I wept a commitment to nurture them into sprouts this season.

It was a prayer. It was a promise. And in that moment, it was a weight of connection to All Life; a reason to live.

While my brain was reacting to imminent disincorporation, before my disbelieving eyes, the bike seemed to levitate from the knee dip and magically manoeuvre back into place on the right side of the road. A narrow escape. An adrenaline rush for the biker – I felt his euphoria as the bike passed me by.

That's not what I felt though. Neither did I feel relief nor gratitude for what didn't happen. I pulled into the next layby, letting the cars piled up behind me speed past, still unaware of the carnage averted partly by my reluctance to put metal to the floor. Breathing deeply, trembling a little, I tried to hold onto the gift of such a sudden shock – the remembrance of some of those flares of purpose, like blossoms on the tree of life – those reasons to live. They are sometimes hard to find in these times. The weight, though, the heaviness of all those entanglements with life – I feel that. I am weighed down by such responsibility.

Like many, burned and blistered, I have turned away from active participation in public displays of protest. I have dropped any certainty that governments are willing or able to take the steps needed to meet the consequences of what has already happened. Certainty is what I have been sold, educated and programmed into thinking is the territory of solutions for these urgent climate concerns. Yet I see no signs that those making decisions impacting the global future, are doing so with any connection to the things that matter to me, and probably to you – protecting biodiversity; securing food and fresh water access; the complete overhaul of education, healthcare and finance that will address inherited inequalities; mass migration from uninhabitable lands. Like humans and Nature, it is all inextricably entangled and needs addressed as such.

However, within the movements attempting to give voice to the neededness of such difficult dialogue, I experience the seeding of division and distraction in order to reinforce the belief that this is the only way it can be. You and I do not have the power to implement the vast landscape of changes needed. This is the story most prevalent in modern consensus reality.



My interest in Transformative Adaptation is drawn to wonder about explorations of 'Transformative'. What if? What if people of these lands are willing to do something even more disruptive than sitting in roads; more desperate than smashing windows; more cutting edge of radical – something totally out of our minds? My invitation to transformative exploration involves interrupting the mental lockdown that has been imposed upon us; that we agree to by believing the stories being told. What if...

My mind is colonised. It is a loyal soldier of the system – centuries of carefully cultivated furrows of predictable compliance, especially under pressure. And there is pressure here now – drip fed by the media to keep minds distracted by shiny screens, hooked on hope. The conditioning calls for certainties and solutions, emergency plans of action and baddies to shout grievance at. Part of me thinks there is nothing I can do – I am a tiny cog in some very complex systems and it makes my brain hurt to think of all the changes needed. I go into overwhelm; shut down; my mind takes flight into addictions and distractions – yet again seeking solace in conditioned reaction to stress and pressure.



The global response to this pandemic has shown us that drastic and imperative change is possible to protect life. There is transformative power in such a statement. The challenge now facing each and every one of us here is – how far are we willing to go in service to those who come behind us? Every step towards a restorative culture that recognises and honours the impact of our entanglement with all life, is a step towards transformative possibilities. And possibilities have been serious casualties of the consensus reality being complied with – it is not possible to adopt an economy rooted somewhere other than finance; it is not possible to create effective local governance without centralised power; it is not possible to feed the people of this land without destructive agricultural monocultures and flying food around the world; it is not possible to communicate with other than human beings; it is not possible to reclaim indigeneity or court ancestral reconnection.

In order to generate a curious space of co-creative TrAd experiments – a project is sprouting, looking for folks willing and able to let go of certainty about what they think they know. Humans of all descriptions with capacity to truly, deeply wonder what might become possible if we can break this mental lockdown; fall into the cracks of discomfort and disbelief and be willing to make mistakes together; experiment with absurd ideas of inter-species connection and co-liberation.

If all we think we know is already colonised by the system; minor edits and sideways steps, predictable and quickly absorbed by the system – then what is left but to attempt

with young ones, to create a cartography of place, mapping out home by the water sources and food growing spots; crossroads, ancient trees and graveyards. Most especially, note the places under threat of imminent destruction. Give attention to these places. Sing to them, what is known of their origins – who was here when they were built or planted? Wonder aloud about the changes these beings have lived through and the impact of this culture's stories about them. Chart discoveries, entanglements and insights with the lunar tides. Are there humans willing to awaken animal bodies and grow ears to hear the faint whisper of possibilities currently unimaginable from inside the murky depths of certainty? To wonder aloud if you might be one of those shapechangers, you could visit Stories As Sanctuary (SAS) at the Green Gathering 2021 and share your story around a fire with music and stars, myth and magic to wonder under.

What if ... this is where transformative possibilities reside? Outside of certainty. Outside of what is currently considered real. Outside of psychologising, pathologising, problem solving or vaccinated protection.

Coming out of lockdown may have lost its shiny party hat of celebration. Like my narrow escape, relief and gratitude may not have the holding power we imagined, especially for younger folks. Reasons to live may be becoming more elusive as deadlines for hope are passed and certainties about the future become interlinked with despair and desperation. While it is not bad enough here yet, to be living amongst the wreckage of what this culture has wrought – it will be, soon enough.

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a radical act of discernment towards spell breaking – some kind of alchemy on the wild edges of experience?

'Falling into Place' is a Transformative Adaptation project, exploring place-based practices that humans lean into, local, where feet touch the earth; where an invitation goes out to these human bodies to fall into experiences of entanglement with all life – human, other than human and more than human. What might come of people making daily practice of bare feet on the ground, bare fingers in the soil, bare asses in the river, throwing song into the wind, dancing with mountains and sitting under a tree long enough to hear it breathe? Not to immunise against the troubles of the time, but to fall into feeling them fully. How can humans be mobilised by wonder and awe and deep grief? Make a project

Let there be stories to tell of now, of those who choose to bear faithful witness to how it is, who have the courage to go against the prevailing lust for bigger, better, brighter. Let there be stories of those falling into Nature's library of wonder and awe, to be transformed by poverty and prayer and promises. Let possibilities arise in deep collaboration with all life that in the crazy weather, stormy days ahead, may become reasons to live.

To learn more about Transformative Adaptation and wonder about how to get involved, please visit:

www.transformative-adaptation.com

To express interest in joining the project, Falling into Place, contact me at: aprilgriefsong@hotmail.com

April Griefsong is a devotional artist, storyhost and sound crafter, outdoors dancer with trees, wild swimmer in resecration and the art of brokenheartedness. A student of Orphan Wisdom, April is a practitioner of radical curiosity, spellbreaking and the craft of courting the other than human and unseen world. Join April at the fireside for tea and wild tales of how it is, at the Green Gathering 2021, where she co-hosts the SAS.