



## **Processes of Circularity:**

### Permapoesis and the Shed of Interrelation

(working paper, short version)

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*And thinking it beyond doubt that nature and the  
human soul are derived from the same model  
You promptly set about looking for analogies in the vegetable  
garden. (André Breton, Ode to Charles Fourier.)*

By the time crude oil was discovered early on in the twentieth century the major socio-political forces – capitalism, communism and the third option fascism – were busily competing for attention and power. Sadly, not one of these three systems offered human societies an ecological model and we have paid dearly for this grand omission ever since.

The construction of ecologically disembodied culture, where desire and hope are among the abstractions that predominate, has been greatly assisted by the introduction of clock time or what Guy Debord called ‘pseudo-cyclical time’. In this work I will argue that industrial culture’s subversion of the cyclical limits the possibilities for social and ecological regeneration. In previous writing I have articulated industrial culture as a succession of ‘broken-cycle toxicologies’ where exploiting finite non-renewable resources for short-term economic gain, over-extending the capacity of the landbase to regenerate, compressing time and space to enable monological schooling, wage-slavery and other forms of social bondage, generating toxicological waste aggregately and applying and entrenching an anthropocentric worldview are all corollaries. Traditional communities live according to ecological principals – processes of circularity – where by observing cyclical time and space enables life to be more easily lived within what Gertrude Stein termed ‘the continuous present’. This work will first assess how industrial culture continues to negate the capacity for ecological and social communities to regenerate, and second offer context for counter-participation away from dominant industrial-centrist modalities, and towards distributed social-ecologies – towards a free-poor, time-expanded relocalisation of community.

Today our fantastical relationship to food and to non-human nature is paralleled with our increasingly mediated and anthropocentric states. Food

disorders and related mood disorders proliferate; the rate of chronic illness and self-harm in young people rises. Capitalism's attempted goals – wealth, health and leisure – have in real terms meant that people have less time and no longer know how to feed or power themselves within their communities, and therefore communities have lost an essential understanding of what the earth can provide within a reciprocal cyclical relationship.

The basic skills of organic food growing, low-energy living, sequestering carbon in the ground, repairing local ecologies and implementing the mechanics of steady-state economics are the skills we and our children now require if our species is going to make it into the twenty-second century and beyond. Industrial agriculture (transported supermarket food) is responsible for 30% of greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore the home garden and community food garden could alone stop runaway climate change in a matter of years. Steady-state economics, developed by Herman Daly and other ecological-economists, is a system of biomimicry similar to permaculture principals. Daly argues that our current economic system is not just anti-ecological, but uneconomical with every process a wasting of precious resources purely to serve abstract figures that are required to keep ascending regardless of the physical limitations of the landbase. Food and energy are now beginning to escalate in price courtesy of peaking oil supplies and most of us are not prepared for the social upheaval that will unfold as oil diminishes. No other fossil fuel or green-tech energy will replace the extreme clout of cheap oil, and even if it did it wouldn't help the dilemma of a severely broken carbon cycle.

In enabling change our roles do not have to be grand and generate templates for everyone, rather based upon restoring the balance of cyclical life in all manners of ways possible from our homes out, or as David

Holmgren, a community neighbour and a co-originator of the permaculture movement, suggests – a bottom-up rebuild. Our linear mindset has broken the cycles that enable regeneration and equilibrium, where birth, growth and consumption are favoured, while death and decomposition are negated and feared. So, from here on in this work will attempt to participate in what it represents and both decompress and diversify the standard uniform lines of printed text with a continuously present cyclical device.

You can now see that each birth, growth and consumption are superscripted, while each death, decomposition and regeneration are subscripted, to show the work, at least spatially, continuously generating in open, airy, and layered cycles across the page. The point to all this is to engage with the unknown. This is the role of experimentation; a relationship with the unknown that I believe is crucial to the generation of steady-state communities. Once this work leaves the context and critical phase and introduces the more poetic description of the soon to be completed *She of Interrelation* – a simple building I with my family have built for artists-as-WWOOFers – the language itself and not just the spatial elements (letters pitched and given air), will attempt to mimic the processes of circulation embedded in natural world systems. And for this

process I will be guided by the text of a children's book written by Gertrude

Stein in 1939 called *The World is Round*. The book begins:

*Once upon a time the world was round and you could go on it around  
and around.*

In *The World is Round*, Stein's only text for children, the heroine Rose is a young girl standing atop a lovely patch of rural France on the verge of what is to become a horrible bloody battle. Rose has a cousin called Willie and together they free-range and sing with the world of mountains and lions, giraffes, dogs and owls. Here are two examples of the circularity that Stein employs, the first of which is from a 1913 poem called *Said Emily* that she returns to in *The World is Round*. I've used a concrete graphic to quote it to represent what Stein intended by saying it:



And again Stein returns to the law of identity and writes under the surface of the letters that things are simply what they are:

And the hoot owl hooted

*Hullo Hullo*

*Willie is your name*

*And Willie is your nature*

*You are a little boy*

*And that is your stature*

*Hullo Hullo.*

Here Stein constructs a complete circle written as a sentence. However, though the world is round it is not made up of perfect circles and regeneration requires mutation, change, random acts, constant flux, and relations of common substance. The story cannot move forward without constant change and regeneration and in this way the cyclical is constantly spiraling out into another environment, another social engagement, but not progressing in a straight line typical of a linear narrative. The great irony of industrial

culture's growth economics is that it is a system based on an immutable idea – an economics founded on the liberal and hopeful ideal of ever-expanding capital – a straight line – when the physical world, in real terms, cannot actually support it. Today all our industries are founded on the same synthetic reasoning. By the end of Stein's book the two young human circles hook up, transgress and regenerate like this:

*Willie and Rose turned out not to be cousins, just how nobody knows,  
and so they married and had children and sang with them and  
sometimes singing made Rose cry and sometimes it made Willie get  
more and more excited and they lived happily ever after and the world  
just went on being round.*

An Australian poet and Stein scholar, Astid Lorence, recently asked that by “re-imagining [an] Australian experimentalism in terms of a Steinian poetic, could we somehow mobilise ideas about our own local circumstances that we’re not tied up with discourses of historical and cultural heritage?” This seems to be a question about time and presence as much as poetry and



country. Stein's idea for life to be lived within a 'continuous present', both challenges normative history-making heroism and invites us to look at traditional cultures as part of any future model. An anthropologist, Daniel Everett, who has lived with a remote Amazonian culture for the past thirty years, calls the Piraha 'ultimate empiricists' and says that their culture of living in the present has shaped their language. He laments the intrusion on their lives by government and missionaries. He writes that religion and capitalism manufacture desires.

*One of the saddest things I've seen in Amazonian cultures is people who were self-sufficient and happy that now think of themselves as poor and become dissatisfied with their lives.*

Stein's gift to the world is in showing us that cyclical narrative in a written, spoken or printed form is still possible. And if cyclical narrative is possible in modern societies then it may be achievable for anthropogenic communities and our philosophy, science, economics and art to adopt, or biomimic, more

changes in the way we communicate, and thus re-embody ourselves in the cycles of the world – the cycles of the wild.

As previously posited, emergence, simply put, is the point at which a thing or being is born or recreated again. In order to arrive at this point a number of events have already taken place. All of these events or phases are equally significant within an ecological system. Not one thing privileging another, not one thing being more outstanding or important than anything else. For example, an animal's excrement and the animal itself share common relations integral to each other's survival and well-being. In an ecological system excrement is a valuable future source of food for plant growth and benefits many participants within an open-cycle, whereas in modern human settlements excrement is shameful, something to flush and forget about. We make our shit pollution; we dump it in fresh drinking water. No other land mammal does this.

We could radically curb climate change and ready ourselves for emergency descent if we begin right now to work collectively in our communities to grow our own food. A farm moving from ecological to organic or biodynamic

parties must be able to weather these or so years of transition without much income. These years are experimental intelligence years. In my own household we are two and a half years into a seven-year transition from oil-dependency to permanent culture, and I'd like to move this work now to a focus on the home; the heart of a social ecology. At this point in the work I will also introduce a second language transition and will attempt to write and speak in cyclical motions.

## **Permapoiesis and the Shed of Interrelation**

a few years ago  
my girlfriend and I  
were able to bank loan  
a small plot of land  
near to where we had lived  
a few years before  
at the time  
we had one full-time job  
and this enabled us to make the loan

so we <sup>c</sup>ould move a small house  
onto a <sup>b</sup>are and <sup>b</sup>ulldozed plot  
and start work on a <sup>g</sup>arden of food  
with plants that would feed us  
and repair the land  
at the same time

the day  
that we signed away for the land  
the company my girlfriend worked for  
sacked all of its workers and went away  
neither of us since have had permanent work  
but because we live outside of the city  
our mortgage is about two thirds light  
and we could be together  
work here and there  
in order to pay  
the monthlies  
albeit after  
the day

of course  
this land is not our land  
and this land is not your land  
nor the broker's nor Queen's nor the land of the banks  
and the figures are very ugly and the figures are very funny

and of course the local mob  
should they be here is theirs  
of course

more or less  
we live fully  
buy our clothes second-hand  
and grow our food and keep hooks  
exchange some things with friends and neighbours  
and generate a sum of our energy  
with the daylight sky  
more than less

and by now  
we are reasonably set up  
and think it time to shape our good fortune  
and build a small shed in the garden –  
the *Shed of Interrelation* –  
for artists who can work  
and help grow food  
to shape  
now

and the shed  
and the sum of its parts –  
a bed, a composting toilet, a desk and a bath –

will be a temporary home for artists  
whose work will help define  
a new era of culture  
based upon –

change  
non-hierarchy  
the sharing of resources  
and *permapoesis*:

if a poet's food  
which in part provides  
material or fuel for her meaning  
is produced with her involvement and  
within walking distance to her home  
her involvement and production  
provide the fuel and food  
in part for  
her art

permanent  
meaning-making  
is the activity embedded  
in processes of ecological flux  
and therefore participates in what it represents  
and biomimicry's cyclical and mutable

as a r<sup>c</sup>o<sup>c</sup>ky stea<sup>d</sup>y-state p<sup>r</sup>in<sup>c</sup>ipal

the i<sup>d</sup>ea<sup>s</sup> b<sup>e</sup>hin<sup>d</sup>

a pe<sup>r</sup>manent

c<sup>u</sup>ltu<sup>r</sup>e

the poet

now pa<sup>r</sup>ti<sup>c</sup>ipates

within he<sup>r</sup> envi<sup>r</sup>onment

wher<sup>e</sup> g<sup>e</sup>ne<sup>r</sup>atin<sup>g</sup> toxi<sup>c</sup> waste

and the suppo<sup>r</sup>t fo<sup>r</sup> c<sup>a</sup>pitalise<sup>d</sup> foo<sup>d</sup>

and the e<sup>c</sup>o<sup>c</sup>i<sup>d</sup>e of the lan<sup>d</sup> b<sup>a</sup>se

are no lon<sup>g</sup>e<sup>r</sup> c<sup>e</sup>nt<sup>r</sup>al

to he<sup>r</sup> poem

this alte<sup>r</sup>s

the way she uses

he<sup>r</sup> time and he<sup>r</sup> b<sup>o</sup>dy

the b<sup>l</sup>oo<sup>d</sup> fully oxy<sup>g</sup>enatin<sup>g</sup> he<sup>r</sup> min<sup>d</sup>

throu<sup>g</sup>h the la<sup>b</sup>ou<sup>r</sup>s of he<sup>r</sup> own foo<sup>d</sup> p<sup>r</sup>o<sup>d</sup>u<sup>c</sup>tion

he<sup>r</sup> life stea<sup>d</sup>y-state with the r<sup>o</sup>und wo<sup>r</sup>ld a<sup>r</sup>ound he<sup>r</sup>

he<sup>r</sup> c<sup>o</sup>nc<sup>e</sup>ptual life mate<sup>r</sup>ially ali<sup>g</sup>ne<sup>d</sup> with he<sup>r</sup> physi<sup>c</sup>al b<sup>e</sup>in<sup>g</sup>

whi<sup>c</sup>h is pa<sup>r</sup>t of the o<sup>r</sup>de<sup>r</sup> of he<sup>r</sup> lo<sup>c</sup>al e<sup>c</sup>olo<sup>g</sup>y –

the way she w<sup>r</sup>ites the poem

the way she is the poem

the way the poem

is alte<sup>r</sup>e<sup>d</sup>.