

An Excerpt from “Seeds”

Kim Trainor
Douglas College, Canada
kimtrainor7@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ecozone.2021.12.2.4215>



Poet’s Statement: “Seeds” is a long poetry sequence that thinks about forms of resistance, survival, and emergence in the context of the sixth mass extinction. Each ‘seed’ functions as blueprint, whether simple human-made tool or complex organism driven by its DNA to adapt to and respond to our current existential threat, each showing a different way of being in the world: lentil, snowdrop, chinook salmon, codex, tardigrade, honeybee, “the beautiful cell,” among others. The *Vespa orientalis*, for example, as noted by Robert Bringhurst in *Learning to Die*, has evolved a band of the obscure pigment Xanthopterin to draw sunlight out of air and generate a small voltage. The endangered chinook salmon travel thousands of miles to their spawning grounds in the Fraser river and feed the rich coastal ecosystem. Tiny houses, mobile wood frame cabins outfitted with solar panels, are being built by the Tiny House Warriors in unceded Secwepemc Territory in the interior of BC to challenge the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. This excerpt consists of Seed 8, *Elysia chlorotica* and Seed 19, Gaia.

Seed 8. *ELYSIA CHLOROTICA* (CHLOROPLAST, ENDOSYMBIONT)

The light reactions, the dark reactions, leaf unfurling, the light—
eastern emerald Elysia, clade Sacoglossa, *Elysia chlorotica*
littoral, in the salt marshes, the tidal marshes, small pools and shallow creeks,
leaf unfurling, the light—the pigment chlorophyll absorbs the blues
the reds, the spectral blues, absorb a photon, lose electron flows
to pheophytin to a quinone, flow electrons flow the light reactions.
In the salt marshes of Texas among the blue crabs and the mud crabs.
In the tidal marshes of Nova Scotia. Vanishing. Cryptic green
algal endosymbiont. Seaweed. Sea green. Chloroplasts
sucked out and stitched to tubules like leaf veins.
Shifting genes. Diverticula. Radula. Algal plastids. The lumen,
the lumen. A leaf unfurling. Pale green χλωρός khloros, seagreen, moss and
pickle. Emerald. Pistachio and pesto. Chlorophyll. Love for this.
The light—absorb the blues, absorb a photon, lose electron flow
to phenophytin flow to quinone flow electrons, gathering. Illumined.
A drop of water split. Regain electron. A molecule, dioxygen.
The light reactions, the dark reactions, leaf unfurling, the dark—

realm of the dead, the fields of bliss, Elysium. The dark reactions. Flow electrons, chain reactions, break down carbon. Break down carbon, sweet conversion in the dark and in the light. Endosymbiont who puts the light together. χλωρός πλάστης. Chloroplast. The one who forms.

Seed 19. GAIA (BIOSPHERE, THE CARNAL FIELD)

This intertwined web of experience is, of course, the 'life-world' to which Husserl alluded in his final writings, yet now the life-world has been disclosed as a profoundly *carnal* field, as this very dimension of smells and tastes and chirping rhythms warmed by the sun and shivering with seeds. It is, indeed, nothing other than the biosphere—the matrix of earthly life in which we ourselves are embedded.

[]

My body is a sort of open circuit that completes itself only in things, in others, in the encompassing earth...

—David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*

A. sends me a screenshot of *Elysia* in response to my poem—
So beautiful an ornament to this world and most likely will move to another soon, an underworld...Robert Macfarlane mentions the Saami belief that the dead live in an underworld that mirrors our own..Could our mirror world be populated by extinct creatures?
Yes, I think, how many have gone through. The *Elysia* unfurls its wings. Emerald chloroplasts stitch sunlight to carbon. In the salt marshes of Texas. The blue crabs. The mud crabs. Stitch calcium. Form chitin. Chilean tarweed and sea kale. Sea angel. Sea salp. The chaotic nanostructure of *espajitos*, little mirrors tangle the light. Sea kelp. Salal. Stitch carbon to hydrogen. The assembly of light-gathering machinery. Paper birch. Nootka rose. Western swordfern. *Capture light in narrow wave-length windows.* Salmonberry. Thimbleberry. Release oxygen. The rare bright elements, the soft, the clear, the blue. Hydrogen joins helium. The fusion ash of stars seeded through the universe. Calcium. Cobalt. Copper. Carbon. Stitch carbon to hydrogen. Release oxygen. Dandelions. Meadowrue. The honeybee. The bumble bee. Sip nectar. Gather pollen. Spiracles of oxygen. Sweet burn and hover. Western pasqueflower. Yellow glacier lily. Heathers. Sunlight. Carbon. The engineers. Make honeypots. Make paper cells. The obscure yellow pigment *xanthopterin* of *Vespa orientalis*. Harvest solar energy. Dig nests. Dig lily bulbs. Fix nitrates in subalpine meadows. Remember the hum

of bees in white rhododendrons at Illal. See this tiny snail, *Angostopila dominika* in the limestone cliffs of Guangxi, China? See how it fits in the eye of a sewing needle. Take notes—*Carbon (C) is a non-metal which easily links to itself and other elements. Life is dependent upon the chemical qualities of carbon. Gaia is an emergent property of interactions among organisms.* Our neuron cells include the basket, the cartwheel, the chandelier, starburst, spindle, pyramidal, stellate, granule, and double bouquet. A “back of the envelope calculation” in 1972 estimated our microbiome outnumbers our own cells by ten to one. This assembly of light-gathering machinery. Luca, our last universal common ancestor, root of the tree of life, rooted in metallic darkness. Noctiluca. Sitka spruce. Dark-eyed junco. Remember the soot-coloured moth at Semaphore, alight on the page. Write, *Cobalt (Co) is a rare, bright, whitish-blue metal, magnetic, needed for root function. Write, blue thinks itself within me, I surrender a part of my body, even my whole body, to this particular moment of vibrating and filling space known as blue...* Blue gentian, penstemon, stickseed, the blue-eyed grass. The light reactions. Remember the night before we climbed Desolation? We stood on the dark shore at Lightning Creek. We stood on the earth, on the Orion arm. We stood in time, looking into the galactic centre, looking into ourselves, these temporary sentient forms, bodies of fusion ash and starlight.

Works Cited

- Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. Vintage, 1997.
- Coder, Kim D. “Essential Elements of Tree Health.” www.urban-forestry.com/assets/documents/Coder_Tree%20Elements%20Pub%20I.pdf. Accessed Jan. 2021.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Northwestern University Press, 1969.