The ILC project for this quarter has unexpectedly turned out to be my final quarter in college, and fittingly turned into a capstone project combining all of the subjects I’ve meandered through over my years in college: writing, philosophy, ecology, power dynamics and consciousness studies. By capstone I suppose I should actually say it turned into the rough draft for a body of work that I will be shaping and adding to in my post-college life, which I plan to spend writing and thinking regardless of what kind of paid work I end up doing. While much of my work this quarter was internal, spent alone with books or a pen and paper, I’m not sure I’ve ever worked so hard at anything in my life, and I am incredibly proud of what has been accomplished.

I had three learning objectives for this quarter:

LO #1. *The students will gain a deeper understanding of current theory in relation to animism and the anthropocene.*

For this learning objective I read Dark Ecology, by Timothy Morton; a number of journal articles from The Handbook of Contemporary Ecology, edited by Graham Harvey; Becoming Animal by David Abram; revisited Staying with the Trouble by Donna Haraway; and a variety of writings by Derrida, Marx, Julio Cortazar, Barbara Smuts, Chellis Glendenning and including notably *The primacy of the body, not the primacy of perception* by E. T. Gendlin and *Sitting, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Yearning: Reflections on Scholar-Shaping Techniques* by Don Hanlon Johnson. Dark Ecology was especially impactful. Morton’s theory of the agrilogistic and the arche-lithic gave me a framework to use in my thinking around the problem of animism in the anthropocene.

LO #2: *The students will practice a variety of somatic explorations in order to engage the body, as well as the intellect, in this attempt to understand animistic ways of relating to the world.*

Originally, I intended to follow a schedule of weekly readings, and corresponding weekly “somatic explorations”: walks or other interactions with places outside of books and my own writing. The first week a trip to the Point Defiance Zoo was deeply impactful and informative. I attempted to BE with the animals in the zoo, outside of my rational mind. While looking into the eyes of the animals that first day of the second week, the direction of my attention began to shift inward into the relationship of my body to other bodies, and kept turning further inward for the rest of the quarter in an unexpected and frankly, disconcerting way. After a few weeks I gave up on the idea of roaming far afield to ‘wild’ places and began walking out my own front door each morning with a notebook and pen. During these somatic explorations I attempted to shift my perception from a place in my mind to a place in the core of my body, and to write from there. I spent many, many hours walking in this way.

LO #3: *Students will devise a midterm evaluation assignment for the class, and complete the assignment to be used as examples*

My ILC partner and I were asked by Sarah to come up with an assignment for the mid-term self evaluation We worked hard on it in general, though Allan wrote most of the material for the original assignment. I ended up writing three separate responses so that other students had an example of the possibilities. We presented the assignment and read our responses in class; a challenging thing for someone who historically can’t speak in front of groups.

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Our original ILC contract listed distinct academic and creative responses to the reading and explorations. In reality, the whole project became deeply intertwined with itself and with my personal life, no longer separate from my academic life. I wrote longer pieces synthesizing what I was reading with what I was experiencing. In the end, I much prefer the work I did over the kind of work I imagined I would do.

These somatic explorations, readings and shifts in perception brought me to a feeling that animism isn’t something we can decide to do or something we can even ‘return’ to. It is something that is happening all the time, because our bodies are always in relational interaction with the rest of the wild world. We have never been not wild, but over the time of the reign of agrilogistics we have become very confused, dangerously so.

This project was a beginning to something and I don’t know yet where it is going to go. If we were never not wild, how do we stop the attempt our individual and collective rational minds are making to control the world and even our own bodies in a way that is causing such personal and collective trauma, damage and destruction? Could it be as simple as a shift in perception? I don’t know yet but am so much further along towards something like an answer than I was in Week 1. I am grateful to Evergreen and Sarah for the structure to have this experience, to my ILC partner for going through it with me, and to myself for the willingness to go to darkly interior places I never could have imagined, coming out the other end with something like new eyes.