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DAMMED PEOPLE

We are dammed people
repressed, restrained, restricted from flowing through the land we belong to
Oh so many measures inaugurated this post apocalyptic fishtank life;
structures preventing us from swimming against the current, counterclockwise;
invasive roads and dams that choke arteries of our common good were just the beginning
Feet were forced into shoes that did not fit and
Our revolutions to restore common practices of reciprocity and decency
were held at gunpoint by colonial ways of scorching earth and our humanity

We are dammed people - but we are not dead.
We weave our broken fingers back together into a fist and
while They are working to define us out of existence
we are busy 'not-losing-our-place' in this world
by listening to the swamp and the beyond
for guidance in wholesome unity in diversity against the odds

We refuse toxic states and weaponized education
that operate like lawn mowers and leaf blowers
enforcing eliminatory policies - policing toward monopolies
for concrete boroughs that borrow with no intention of ever giving back
normalizing settler refusal to respect

We, the dammed... people?
We have been cut off from the ocean of collective memory
making the temporary occupation seem like eternity
Our archives are underground
Unattainable - yet they remain and all

that was buried will sprout again
If only we can blow up these dams
damn fake borders
bloody orders
this so called civilized nation
built on supremacy and separation

Speechless we struggle to break the spell of being killable and deemed ripe for extraction.
Sick of sanctioned loneliness eroding our immune system, grooming us for retraction

When assimilating hustle becomes a means of subsistence
dissociation is the only way to endure in this system
yet we can not translate our thoughts to the language of hierarchies and binaries
and linear lines, settler appropriation of life
that function to uphold doctrines of manifest destiny
always in denial of our intersubjectivity...

Imprisoned from the inside I feel small and incompetent
Yet there is a glimmer of memory... reminding me on whose shoulders I stand
Ancestor, Ancestor - all I do is to hear you speak my friend
help me re-mem-ber, re-re-search, wake from susto and dream again
I am so damn trapped in the schisms, the architecture of objectifying my kin into oblivious
nothingness ...

But one day some thing - rather than nothing - will crack open these dams
and make them fall
Maybe through collective sabotage maybe controlled demolition
Maybe an act of mystery or perhaps by the unceded basins own volition
A reminder to revere
we are still here.

Dams will come down and water will gush and wipe out structures of this warfare of attrition
And while tv news reporters speak of the flood as a 'Disaster-invader-enemy'
we know this flashflood brings medicine to those wishing to live in ecological reality
Bringing balance, caring for country, regenerating bush, nourishing natives
and we as liberated people learning to reconnect... will rise without reservations
into processes and precious futurity that nurture... all our relations

“There was a story about a sacred tree where all the stories of the swamp were stored like doctrines of Law left by the spiritual ancestors, of a place so sacred, it was unthinkable that it should be violated. Old people said that tree was like all of the holiest places in the world rolled into one for us, no wonder she went straight to it. Funny thing that. The tree watching everything, calling out to her when it saw some people had broken the Law. Something will happen to them. This ancestor was our oldest living relative for looking after the memories, so it had to take her. When the girl was found though, the tree was destroyed by the Army on the premise that this nexus of dangerous beliefs had to be broken, to close the gap between Aboriginal people and white people. Those stories scattered into the winds were still about, but where, that was the problem now. It made us strong and gave us hope that tree. The kinspeople of the tree had believed this since time immemorial. Really all that was left behind of the story were elders and their families whose ancestors had once cared for the old dried and withered, bush-fire burn-out trunk of a giant eucalyptus tree through the eons of their existence. They were too speechless to talk about a loss that was so great, it made them feel unhinged from their own bodies, unmoored, vulnerable, separated from eternity. They had been cut off. They called themselves damned people who felt like strangers walking around on their country.” (The Swan Book 79)

Written as a contribution to the Winternachten international literature festival The Hague by Chihiro Geuzebroek.