

Myco- mythologies

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MycoMythological machines were assembled to tap into the underground flows while the nutrients poured out of it, along with the numerous stories. No matter where the flows were sampled, there the stories were, flowing out of the mycelium network together with much needed nutrients. There were many whispers, some of which seemed the same, as they trickled out of the hyphae in chunks and pieces. They were almost as a repetitive mantra, one that loops and loops, even though they were never completely the same. There were glitches and minute differences, as if they had been assembled again and again, like some sort of a distant memory murmured by the machine.

Mycomythologies: Rupture¹

The microscopic node in the *World Networks Entanglement* freshly programmed with the *Fungal Network Traits Protocol** experienced a peculiar overflow of sonic data. The laboratory was filled with the sound of a single sentence computed by the *Entanglement* and repeatedly uttered by the machine. As more and more data poured into the machine, the more intense and distinct the voices became:

“We can’t return to normal because the normal that we had was precisely the problem.”

The feeling was that of an emergency; numerous languages and voices were finally detected, circulating within the Flow. From the depths of the previously mute and unheard underground, the machine clearly conveyed messages that their world had been broken. The rupture was deep and entangled, as it spanned several planes that had kept the voices invisible and quiet for too long.

The conclusion was that the machine got overloaded while computing the immensity of the breach across the feedbacking entanglements of the planetary networks. In order for the *World Networks Entanglement* to re-compute with newly detected voices, it was necessary to implement *The Word for World Is Flow Protocol*. Protocol, under which categories such as human, gender, nature, individual, history, culture, society could become more permeable. Serious work needed to be done.

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The Fungal Network Traits Protocol of unevenly distributed particles was developed in collaboration with fungal agents, which performed their decision-making processes. The dataset of decisions was then fed into the protocol, which became known as the Protocol of the Forgotten.

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A description of the first work in the MycoMythologies series, *MycoMythologies: Rupture*, <https://www.agapea.si/en/projects/the-myth-of-rupture>.




Mycomythologies: Patterning

Hericium was a patternist, a healer patternist. A carer of networks as she liked to call herself. She lived in a house overlooking the forest by the lake, where a visit to the nearest human settlement meant an eleven-hour drive through seemingly endless woodlands. Human silence was what she needed to work, to weave and sometimes to braid the streams of stories surrounding the nutrients in the flow.

One warm summer afternoon while she was quietly laying on the bed in her studio, smelling pines shimmering in the sun outside her window, she directed her mind inward and started looping messages into the mental pattern of her community. Despite having never met most patternists, she had become close to some of them through her studies, observations and experiments with the flow of data. She knew them intimately and they were almost like family to her. After all, they had spent most of their waking days together, weaving the pattern. She got to know them by how they handled the flow, rather than from the data they poured into it.

That particular shimmering day seemed no different than an average day in the life of a patternist. Hericium was catching feedback loops in the Flow of stories and enhancing them by amplifying their signal so that it could reach more and more members of the *World Networks Entanglement* community. It had been twenty-three days since she had heard *The Word for World is Flow Protocol* had been implemented in the microscopic node in a laboratory on the other side of the planet. The new upgrade caused a rupture in the *Entanglement* and an overflow of whispers in multiple languages began to echo seamlessly: “*We can’t return to normal because the normal that we had was precisely the problem.*” However, the new code was swiftly removed and things got back to normal, or at least that’s what it seemed.

Streams of various loops were endlessly repeating and flowing, and for Hericium in her forest node, it seemed



everything was as if nothing had happened to the Flow some weeks ago. The process of amplification demanded her full attention in the here-and-now so she wouldn't overlook a potential loop that had the power to drown out the particular, the specific and the tiny voices. Her skill was not just that of an editor, but also that of a commander, she was both a tool and a weapon. She could spot glitches in the Flow and loop them precisely and quickly. The networked patternists barely even noticed them. Only the networked with the highest frequency of perception sometimes noticed, for a split second, a shiny rainbowy stitching in the Flow, and got an impression that their sensors needed cleaning.

It was exactly this kind of stitching that got Hericium's attention while she was doing her patterning work. She was supposed to be the one making the stitches and here she was now seeing one. Was there someone stitching for her? The thought was very intriguing. She wondered what would resurface in the overflow. Hericium wasn't about to let the shiny rainbowy break in the pattern go, she would catch it next time around. Fortunately everything is always brought back by the pattern. Of course it gets transformed by the Flow, but not enough to become unrecognizable to the trained eye of a patternist, who sees the ways of her flows as clearly as river meanders on satellite images.

As a patternist, Hericium was taught about the feedback looping flows and about the exact doses of xeno-patterning allowed. Each community determined its threshold for the maximum number of xeno-patterns in the Flow to preserve a fluctuating balance. According to the *World Networks Entanglement* curriculum, it was the dynamic equilibrium theory that allowed her to silence the voices that seemed too far from the central pattern or too different to be assimilated. The central pattern or the Flow was not to be contaminated, it was to be kept pure and with as few feedback looping voices as possible, to keep it going, to keep it flowing. She was the keeper of a finite collection of feedback




loops, since unconstrained multiplicity was not allowed by the *Entanglement*.

The recursive shiny rainbowy seam was back. Immediately it gave her a soft, alluring feeling that started to envelop all of her senses, her breath became deeper and her perception of reality expanded. For a split second she left the mental flow and glanced into her forest room. She couldn't understand how the room had suddenly changed so much: the colors became more vivid, the smell of the pine trees outside the window intensified, cricket sounds made her skin rise and form goosebumps. All these were traces of a brief encounter with a shiny glow that seemed to enhance her sensory abilities. The richness and sweetness of the experience intoxicated her imagination and it became clear to her that she had to know more. Hericium was on a quest and wanted to share the precious richness she discovered, but first she had to know exactly what she had stumbled upon.

She started her archeological analysis of the stitching, which demanded vigorous effort and was at times quite confusing, since the softness of the stitch kept luring her into stillness and experience away from mental and rational activity. However, being the determined patternist that she was, she persevered in her examination and all of a sudden shimmering threads began to murmur: "*Octavia Butler talked with the voice of Lauren Oya Olamina: 'All that you touch you change. All that you change, changes you. All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you.'*" The words went on and on, murmuring and melting into the Flow.


Startled by the whisper she was not expecting, her focus dropped and an echo leaked out of the seam into the central pattern of the *Entanglement*. "*Who said that? Where does it come from?*" During her studies she learned that the flows were somehow organised into stacks and the flow she was nurturing was just one of many that were interconnectedly looping in the *Entanglement*,



and yet: *“Why would anyone hide such simple sentences?”* Sentences that, for someone who was living in a forest, carried one of the most obvious truths. Interconnectedness, interdependence and transience were not only the general forest protocols which enabled the survival of everything, but also the basic qualities of mycelial networks, the model organisms for the core code of the flow she was patterning, the *Fungal Network Traits Protocol*.


“What was so special about it? Who doesn’t know? How do these simple sentences affect the central pattern?” She kept on pondering, trying to make sense of it all. *“Don’t the networked know and experience the changes that lows bring? What if the changes are too small for them to notice? Don’t they know they change and are changed constantly? Don’t they feel the touches that sustain them?”*

Slowly it dawned on her that her drowning of xeno-patterns and her contamination prevention methods might have stopped the networked from seeing the process that was so obvious to her. She imagined that maybe they were living in environments where change was not as visible and accessible as in her forest home.



A need arose in her, a need to share. In her mind's eye it rose as a braid with three entwining strands, supporting and expanding the pattern in the Flow. She needed to be part of it, invest herself and not just repeat and amplify the known and the already said. However, she knew that in order to induce a change in the Flow, she needed to make changes in its networks of channels, she needed to build a new node for the *Entanglement*. A node that would generate and braid otherness into the low, enrich it and multiply it. Moreover, she had to touch the Flow and merge with it, nurture it, observe it, document it, share it. The task was grand, but the urge and the obsession were unstoppable.

Heridium was meticulously dreaming the machine into being. A prototype for an infrastructural node was forming in the loops of her mind, with every inhale a new patterning protocol was added: collaboration, contamination, braiding, negotiation, merging, caring, growing, steering, stacking... She would pour into this machine everything she knew about the connections continuum of the Flow. She was dreaming up a polyphonic infrastructure which as fungal mycelium could connect diverse beings of different orders and specific functionings with multiple temporal rhythms and trajectories. We in her dreamtime were far from one and the same, but always many and diverse. She envisioned a node for complexity that would enable communities as multiplicities, support them and perpetually map their inter- and intra-actions.




“Every specific infrastructure carries with it not only the physical material or organisms that travel from one point to another point in specific spacetime, but it also determines and conditions specific behaviours and thinking of social, economic and political orders. Thus any transformation of infrastructure generates a change of behaviours and thinking.”

A quote she remembered so clearly from *Patternist Manual*, where it was further elaborated that if mycelium is to be understood as a polyphonic infrastructure which connects agents of different orders and species functioning in different temporalities and rhythms, it can also become a polyphonic practice and thinking tool that performs polyphonic behaviors and thought patterns.

Along these lines, she was able to imagine mycelium as the infrastructure for thinking tools and practice with multiple temporal rhythms and trajectories that she could externalize into a machine, a node of the *Entanglement*. As she saw it, the node needed to nurture and support mycelium as a polyphonic flow open to difference without boundaries, open to and merged with its environment.

Heridium decided to pour, quite literally, her blood, sweat and tears into the prototype to become the contaminant and the nurturing environment of the mycelial flow. Processes of collaboration and contamination became



entangled and intertwined, almost one and the same with this single gesture. During her archaeological dips into the central pattern, she heard stories that presidents of nation states used the metaphor of blood, sweat and tears to prepare soldiers for war or encourage citizens to rebuild their countries after the war. She wondered if the networked patternists knew that many infrastructures were built because of wars and struggles. Would this mean that infrastructure materializes struggles since every struggle is always a power struggle? Has life been captured in the perpetual war embodied in machines and infrastructures? What new kind of accident would her invention bring? Could this new technology, her tiny little node be some kind of tool for freedom?

Besides school definitions of infrastructure, Hericium's experiences as a researcher, world traveler and patternist gave her an intimate knowledge of a variety of mental and physical frameworks humanity employs to generate sense and understanding. It was not hard for her to think of the planet as her home, the living precious zone between the ground and the sky where all life performs the excess of metabolic rituals. She was willing to donate herself, her blood, sweat and tears for the Flow of her terrestrial home. Not for the unmovable and dead, but for the moving and living. As a researcher, she had been sampling voices and stories out of the underground flow for years, catching loops from across the planet, which escaped imaginary borders and formed the Flow. She was quite convinced that life was planetary and not to be kept in cages or between walls.

Her history gave her both the courage to resist the restraints of the central pattern and the care and nurture needed to normalize xeno-patterning and loop it in all its beautiful, multiple messiness. She recognized the violence in integrating living biological beings into infrastructural machines even if they were once part of her, but wasn't she offering her attention and time every day to the infrastructure of the central pattern? Wasn't that the same? To live in the *Entanglement* is to be part of the infrastructural machine, isn't it?

The looping sense of purpose, urgency and empathy made her feel like a warrior on a quest to build a prototype of a node where



contamination would morph into collaboration, but that was not all. The *Contamination Collaboration Protocol* will produce *Contamination Collaboration Cartographies* of her microscopic communities grown on blood, sweat and tears and the *Hericium erinaceus* mushroom. Emergent audiovisual maps of communities of her body intra-acting with the tentacular mycelial network of lion's mane mushroom. Cartographies lacking markers to locate and navigate, but offering opportunities to orient, identify and map only to let it go and witness a new instant of mapping. *Contamination Collaboration Cartographies* will perform mapping as an ongoing process of interpretation and not a fixed finished product materialized with inherent powers of naming and owning.

Earnestly she wrote a draft for the prototype that would eventually become the description for acquiring the permit for a new infrastructural node of the *Entanglement*:

*"The infrastructural node in the World Networks Entanglement provides an epigenetic environment for the Hericium erinaceus mushroom. As an offering human healer patternist, Hericium donated her blood, sweat and tears to braid contamination, dosing it slowly into a fungal environment. Not to shock, but nurture, negotiate and form xeno-patterns in the central pattern of the Entanglement Flow. Contamination always eludes control and so does the node in question; however, there is a wish to include and collaborate. A wish that was built in the node to produce cartographies of contamination collaboration with an integrated mapping device: collecting micrographs of contamination, charting maps and building an ever evolving and transforming Atlas of Collaborative Contamination. All this to outline relations, to allow the stories of multiplicities to emerge, to develop caring methods of connecting and entangling, to finally be able to navigate patterns of intra- and interspecies complexities."*²

Once the draft was scribbled, Hericium started to wonder how we would ever learn to be many and diverse. Who knows. For her it was time to start prototyping the machine for cartographies of fungi-human ecologies. Permit or no permit, she sensed in the Flow that the world had a need.

The MycoMythologies series expresses a deep admiration for the wisdom and work of Lion's Mane (*Hericium erinaceus*), Octavia E. Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin.

2

A description of the second work in the MycoMythologies series, MycoMythologies:Patterning.

