

# VENTI journal

Air — Experience — Aesthetics

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## AIR BUBBLES

Tunnels

Petra Kuppers | poetry | 108

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# TUNNELS

Petra Kuppers

'Each movement of respiration encodes terror.' - Stacy Doris

*Muscle tunnel locomotive round, inmates held  
at psychiatric institutions*

*Martín Ramírez sings rip-like architectures of invasion    invagination  
holey fantasy scene in the mountain's side    Jesus' wound  
lay your finger here Thomas does as he is bidden  
Thomasina runs for the hills*

Underwater    cave.  
Mask sound.    Breath  
beat. Cave    snake  
beneath earth,    stone  
slick with    underwater  
aquifer teaser    testers  
held at bay but    glide  
right into    the next nest,  
one hollow    beneath  
swallows of    giant  
gullet, vocal    chords  
tight against    neoprene  
black

Dinosaur bone sticks out of desert cave wall high up  
in the dry. Silicate old clay body sedimented fern.  
Skin bird balances on hot wind. Giant stalagmites  
bite into swampy dry sun parch heat death dinosaur  
rattle roar tongue sail breath dust fall decay I salt  
you here I bless you here I compress you here till

you reach

up in wide arc

jubilation

\\

*The train comes round the mountain spews a cigar is not a cigar  
themselves on bio-bones that stamp me a woman  
jumps up jumps up jumps strength  
cunt into elephant's maw*

*my muscles anchor  
osteoporosis work*

*penile tusks  
the lioness' bloody fur clumps matted dirty to the ochre ground*

\

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Breathing apparatus  
bangs noisily yank  
clank funk till it stops.  
Caught lengthwise,  
anchored. Muscles  
seize with ceiling at  
nose. Beneath the axle  
sharp arrowtips fillet  
skin fat cushion. Sight  
blurs red and silt and  
silt caught in fin swirl.  
Stuck.

\\

Shark senses blood ampullae cruises into cave bung hole  
fin delicacy convulses impale scar tumor tail and upper  
fin stick out of sand till time falls away skeleton time  
drip a mantle moan of liquid alabaster soapy skin.

Cave breath

vibrates animate

holes in the universe

///

*Fire scars pink into her flank*

*she screams  
pops teeth strain out plant matter and old silt  
Explodes downward, hummingbird diaphragm  
lily-stems in the blood pool  
blossom heavy ovary*

*tunnel fills with water till it*

///

Shallow breath louder  
in the inner ear,  
orchestra corpuscles  
beat it beat it. Flippers  
still. Neoprene shifts  
slightly with  
movement side to  
side. Rock clasps  
harder as lung refuses  
to let go.

///

She falls apart, memory of her, silk skin water hole  
wedding dance, heavy pink feathers. Lake water  
open, cool, each sucking wave. Deck dance against  
desert dry alkaline water hole. Flames up, petrol

blue                      a hot suck

gone.

///

*Ball drops*                      *tunnel takes glottal*  
*to bottom*                      *impact*  
*ball bearing high arc*  
*moon-wise Luna moth*  
*bounces echo cone*

*stop all the way*

*wave silver*

*night call*

////////

The next breath.  
Bubbles in the  
aqueous humor of  
your eye, death's  
sequins, mermaid  
companion animals  
sprint across retina,  
reflex shutter, Morse  
code SOS.

///

She rattles hollow spirit anchor  
arms wide. Low quake tsunami  
fire press granite grind bones  
contort till they flare rips into  
cathedral ship. In the dry, dust  
falls moth peacock scales.

Flame out giant turtle.

Farewell cave bear.

\\\\\\

\\

\\To source.

\\

\\

\\Stilled.

\\

\\

\\Perfume molecules perform

memory leaps.\\

\\

\\

The nuggets of Tunnel's three interwoven strands emerged in an Amoeba Dance session I led in Turtle Disco. We use sounds to tunnel through our bodies, listen to the echoes and waves that travel through us, and eventually distill these signals into writing.

PETRA KUPPERS is a disability culture activist, a community performance artist, a Professor at the University of Michigan and an advisor on Goddard College's MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts. She leads The Olimpias, an international disability performance research collective. Her academic books engage disability performance; medicine and contemporary arts; somatics and writing; and community performance. She is also the author of a dark fantasy collection, *Ice Bar* (2018). Her most recent poetry collection is the ecosomatic *Gut Botany* (2020). She lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where she co-creates Turtle Disco, a somatic writing space, with her wife and collaborator, Stephanie Heit. Petra is a Black Earth Institute fellow.





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