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Borderland Forest Spells

Agnieszka Bułacik, Liene Jurgelāne, Hanna Grześkiewicz

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LINDEN

Liene Jurgelāne

Borderland Forest Spells

Agnieszka Bułacik, Hanna Grzeškiewicz, Liene Jurgelāne

Broumov Monastery

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First the linden trees call us in through maps.

We have been walking the border in the hills back and forth, looking at how lines divide the land on the map. And then we notice that the maps do not only name villages and roads, but also trees, and most of them - linden trees. We feel called in and so we begin to visit them and to follow their stories.

We learn that in the village of Telecí in Eastern Czech there is a linden known as the Singing Linden. The story says a farmer once hid inside her hollow and sang forbidden psalms, so that it seemed that the Linden is singing.

The hollow becomes an important passage for us too. We sit inside the hollow of a 300 year old Linden tree and sing songs to her and sense her loving presence bringing up stories of our own grandmothers, childhoods, and summers.

For Agnieszka, the lindens beside a stream in Krzeszow were the first caretakers.

For Hania, they appear through their absence and in moments of not looking for them.

I grew up on Linden Street, and with a large linden in our garden that we would collect tea from every July.

Across both Baltic and Slavic lands, the linden — lipa — has been a center of village life for a long time. People gathered beneath her for meetings and songs and ceremonies. In 1848 Linden became a symbol of shared Slavic identity and freedom. In Baltic tradition the linden is linked with the goddess that weaves fates and stands at life's thresholds. It is believed that women especially draw strength from the linden, and some say the souls of dead women dwell within her.

Here in Hoprich, old lindens surround the cemetery. An shares, that walking among it feels clear that death does not exist in the way we think it does. And that realities are multilayered. Germans and Czechs are buried side by side. Linden and oak grow together above them. Death is present, and life is present at the same time.

In the hollow, we feel the layeredness of time. We share Linden's grandmotherly love with butterflies and bees.

She has lived on both sides of the hills for a long time.

We hear her songs in our bodies.

letter to grandma

Agnieszka Bułacik

Dear Grandma,

You have always been my linden-and-mushroom grandma. Sometimes I see you as a 9-year-old girl coming to Krzeszów with your parents and siblings from the east. It is 1945, maybe 1946. I see you walking past the linden trees — the linden alley that, years later, became a beloved playground for my sisters and me. I see you watching German families pack their belongings and leave. I see you walking around the village, wondering which house will become your place to put down roots.

I know that those linden trees accompanied you and so many other families on whom the war had left such a deep mark. They were silent witnesses to these movements, caused by fascism and forced resettlement — an upheaval that made people, stories, and songs wander, find places to take root, learn how to love them, and care for them fully. To sing them songs of hope, love, and mourning. Babcia Staruszka, our elderly grandmother, brought her Ukrainian songs with her.

The linden trees became our base. They were our caring grandmas too. They gave us shade, shelter, space to play, and a feeling of safety. I remember that when we ran out of the house to play, and you asked where we were going, the answer was usually shouted on the run: “We’re going under the linden trees!” Is this where your spirit lives now?

I was always amazed when you would take me to the forest on Sundays. Stepping into it — with its columns of trees, the light, the smells, the sense of mysticism — felt like entering a sacred space. It was your “church.” I loved when you would take me on morning walks to harvest mushrooms, teaching me about each one, how to greet the forest, how to move through it with an attentive, curious gaze. You loved this land so dearly.

A few days after your death, I played under the linden trees with my nieces, your great-granddaughters. The big linden tree that had stood there was gone — cut down. But its young ones are still growing, strong and beautiful. They now accompany the next generation of girls. I want them to grow up strong and beautiful, too. I won’t let anyone cut them down.

Legend of the

night hunter

Hanna Grzeńkiewicz

On the edge of the forest in the middle of a flat-topped mountain range, there is a wooden house. It is a house built on four stilts, surrounded by tall trees: pines, firs, lindens and birches, and overgrown bushes of raspberry and mugwort. Only through a gap in the trees, if you put your face so close to the bark that you can smell the leaking resin, can you catch a glimpse of its wooden structure.

In the house lives a woman. An old woman, living apart from the village. Many are scared of her, but others come to her for help. She makes potions from herbs she finds in the forest, helping relieve ailments, connects the pure-hearted with forest spirits, and curses those who treat the forest as their property.

The forest animals often come to visit her. A wildcat makes daily rounds around the house. Wild boar families seek refuge beside the bushes on hotter days. Sometimes wolves appear to introduce their cubs to the old woman. On cloudless nights, the seven sister owls sing in a sorrowful choir, perched atop the sprawling linden tree directly opposite the porch.

Rumours say that some years ago, the old woman adopted a child, who has been seen to roam around her garden and the surrounding hills. The child always leaves the property cloaked, and nobody has seen its face. The child has learned from the old woman to protect the forest, by finding its own playful way. It plays tricks on visitors, bursting into laughter each time and quickly running away from the scene alongside their

wild friends, leaving behind only the patter of hooves or paws, and the lingering smell of animal fur. Many are also scared of the child, calling it the Night Hunter, imagining a figure so menacing, nobody dares to disturb the forest and its inhabitants.

One day, a man from the nearby village was sitting with his friends in the local brewery. After some pints of beer and many debates about the fear of the old woman, he declared that no forest being will stop him from making that forest his own. After all, he knows how to conquer it and must know how to manage it better than the old woman could. Full of liquid courage, he walked into the forest at night. Seeing this, the cloaked child followed him into its depths, slaloming between trees that smelled of dewy moss and sprouting fungi. Reaching a clearing where the moon shone brightly, illuminating the surrounding valleys, the man stopped, disappointed not to come across the forest beings. Just as he turned, the cloaked child jumped out from behind a group of pine trees surrounded by a pack of wolves, foxes, deer, martens, and wild boar. The tree branches above were heavy from the child’s airborne companions. The man, so terrified of this sight, screamed with a piercing silence and ran back to the village. The child, as the man was no longer to be seen, removed the cloak to thank the forest companions, revealing her long, beautiful hair.

From then on, whenever the man was asked about that night in the forest, his voice disappeared. All he was able to do is point towards the mountains, with a reverent look in his eyes.

Writings



notes from the process

Agnieszka's journal

4. 2. 2026

Hania mówi, że cisza śniegu jest jakby głębsza. Dźwięki zanurzają się w śnieżnych pokrywach. Wibracje są wchłaniane, a pola i lasy milczą. Wiem, że to ich cicha rozmowa, w której trwają od stuleci. Idą z nami nasze przodkinie. Słuchamy ich historii, wypowiedzianych przez nas. O sile, odporności, elegancji, samotności, niespełnionych marzeniach, rozczarowaniach.

Pola, łąki i lasy rozlegają się na wzgórzach i dolinach. Od czasu do czasu spotykamy sarny, które uciekają od nas, machając nam białymi ogonkami. Las jest znajomy. To siostrzany las, tego, który dbał o mnie w dzieciństwie. Karmił malinami i grzybami, jagodami i miętą. Czuję się w nim jak na spacerze ze starą znajomą. Słucham ziemi. W tym mrozie i w tej ciszy zimowego zatrzymania staram się słuchać historii. Wraca echem opowieść księdza o przemycaniu Biblii przez granicę “za komuny”, historia przesiedleń z drugiej strony granicy, ale też rany międzypokoleniowe, które las i góry mogą zaleczyć. Poruszają się powoli, ale są w ciągłym ruchu. Kiedyś było tu morze, zlodowacenie, które czuję na twarzy w mroźnym wietrze. Bałtowie wierzyli, że lipa jest siedzibą dusz zmarłych kobiet.

5. 2. 2026

Granica między tym, co polskie, i tym, co czeskie, to pasmo gór. Wygląda tak od 1742 roku, prawie 300 lat. Wtedy jednak nie była to ani Polska, ani Czechy. Książd Ruda mówi po polsku tak biegle, że myślę, że jest Polakiem. (Co to znaczy być Polakiem?!) Pytam go, a on odpowiada: “nie, ale przecież tu mieszkamy blisko, odwiedzamy się”. Tu nie ma muru, są wzgórza, są pasma wzgórz, które przekraczano.

Pamiętam, gdy jako kilkuletnia dziewczynka, na spacerze z rodzicami, ze śmiechem przekraczałam zieloną granicę. „Tu kończy się Polska, a tu już są Czechy” — powiedziała moja mama, a ja z uśmiechem skakałam i tańczyłam po łące. “Nie widać tej granicy, jest tylko jakiś biały, kamienny słupek!” Czy to radość z nielegalnego przekraczania granicy, czy tańczenie między światami, państw i granic politycznych, i lasów, i łąk, które w mojej kilkuletniej głowie się nie mieściły i dziś wciąż się nie mieszczą?

Czechy to były dla mnie wtedy lentilki, knedliki i czekolada studencka. Uwielbiałam rozpuszczać lentilki powoli w ustach i czuć, jak rozplývają się na języku, a skorupka dzieli się na pół, przez szczeliny wypływa czekolada.

7. 2. 2026

Piwowar produkuje piwo Opat. Mnisi są tu wszędzie — ich duchy, bo oni sami już dawno się stąd zmyli. Może ich ciała, zwłoki, szczątki jeszcze gdzieś tu leżą, na pewno część ich leży w Krzeszowie, na cmentarzu, pewnie tam, przy bazylice.

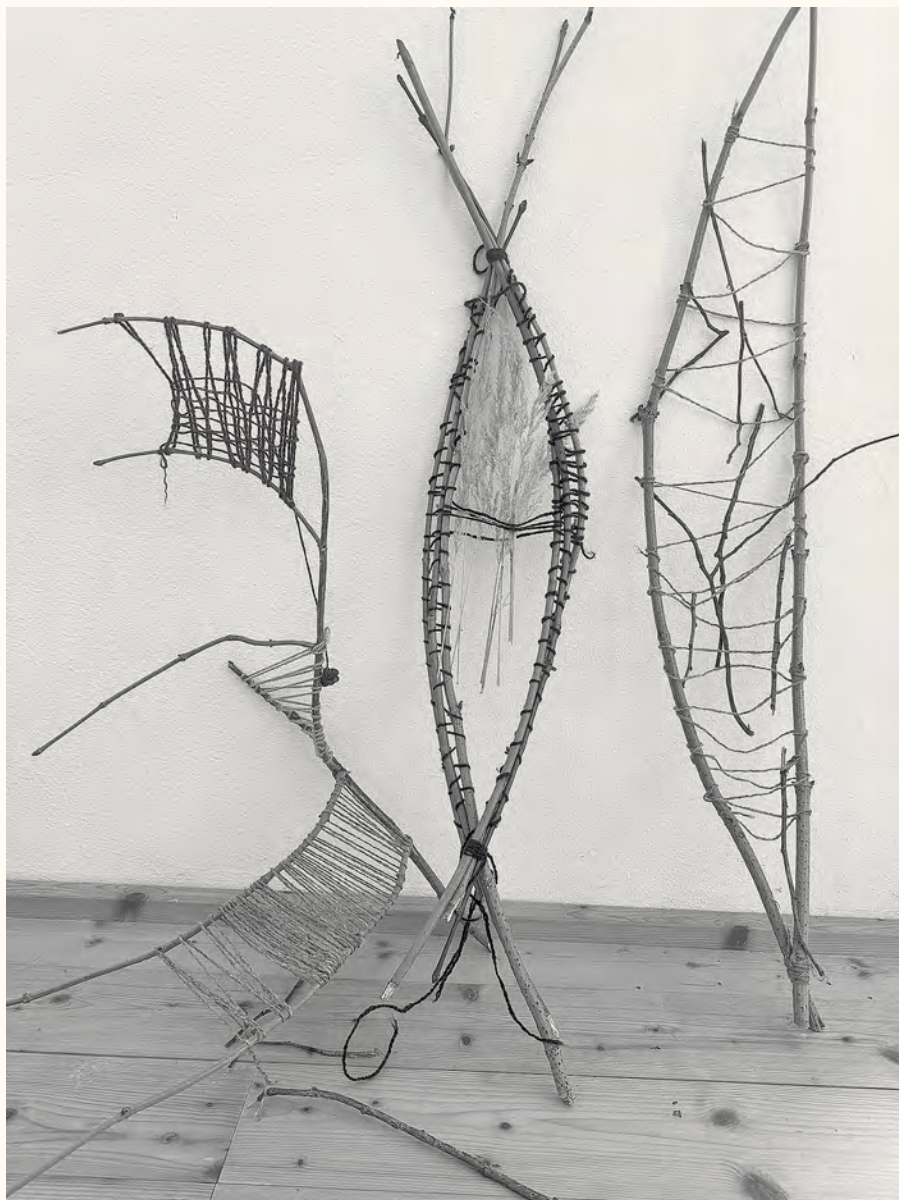
Idziemy przez roztopy, ziemia ma jeszcze lekko zamrożoną warstwę, zamrożoną warstwę, na której niebezpiecznie się ślizgam od czasu do czasu. Fascynuje mnie zielnik trans, święta i zanurzanie się w głęboki czas tego miejsca.

Jak stawać się rdzenną, czy jak stawać się queerową do tego miejsca — nie w rozumieniu orientacji, ale miłości, budowania relacji, bycia w świecie. Jak nawet przetłumaczyć „to become queer to the land”? Czy rdzennosc ma być jedyną wartościową, ważną relacją z ziemią? Czy budowanie, zaplatanie, zszywanie kawałków historii, miłości, troski, uważności mogą być tą istotnością, czułością?

Kiedy tworzy się zobowiązanie, przywiązanie, poczucie odpowiedzialności? Czy miłość do ziemi może wreszcie zostać odarta z patriotyzmu, z miłości do narodu? Jak uwolnić ziemię od kraju, od granic istniejących przecież jako umowa, kolektywna fantazja ludzi?

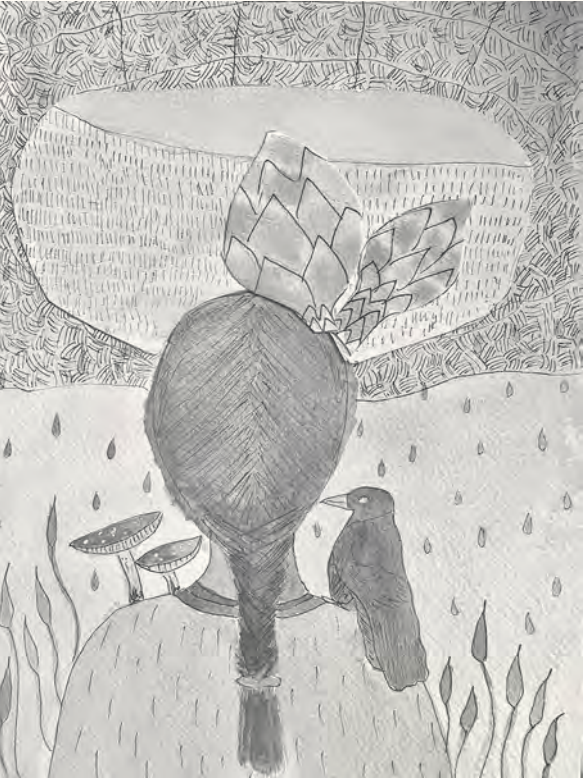
11. 2. 2026

We dream about writing new myths. Creation story that the world was born out of an onion. Cebulaki come back and it makes us laugh. Laugh. The stories from the past come and transform. In Aderspach, Masopust is an adapted and transformed German tradition. Queered, one can say. We walk and listen and laugh and drink. At the beginning, it's just men approaching us, and I feel the power of heteropatriarchy in this space. How to become queer to the land and to each other? Will recalibrating our relationship with the land recalibrate our relationships with one another? “On the other side of the hills”, as Zaneta calls it, are other stories of heteropatriarchal violences. And I know them too well. We walk along the border, filling into this imaginary crack. Political. Polish trees, Czech trees. Polish berries, Czech berries. White poles mark the border. We cross it over and over again, guided by a snowy path through the fog in the middle of the forest. I feel into the layers of softness and harshness of the borders here, a liminal space, a space in between. I feel into my boundaries, how armoured I become at times, how porous, how I blend with these borders, with otherworldly beings who do not respect, nor consider their existence. Can I become so porous that...

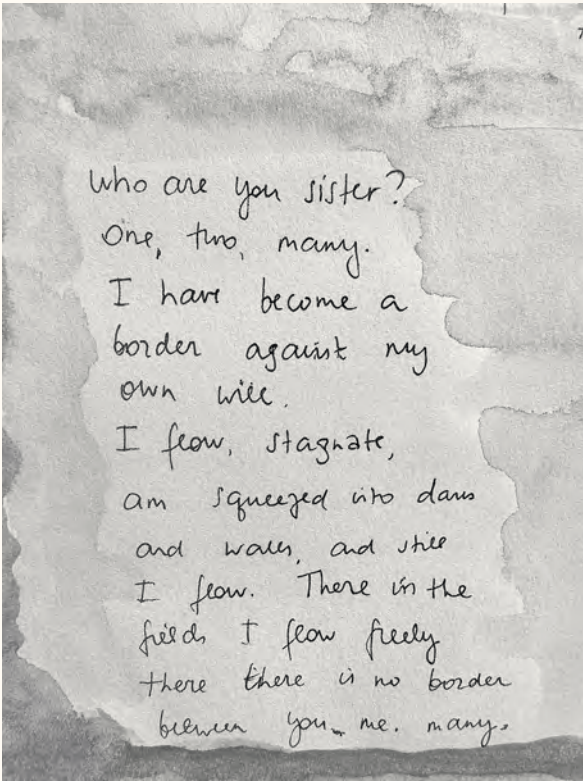


notes from the process
Liene's journal:

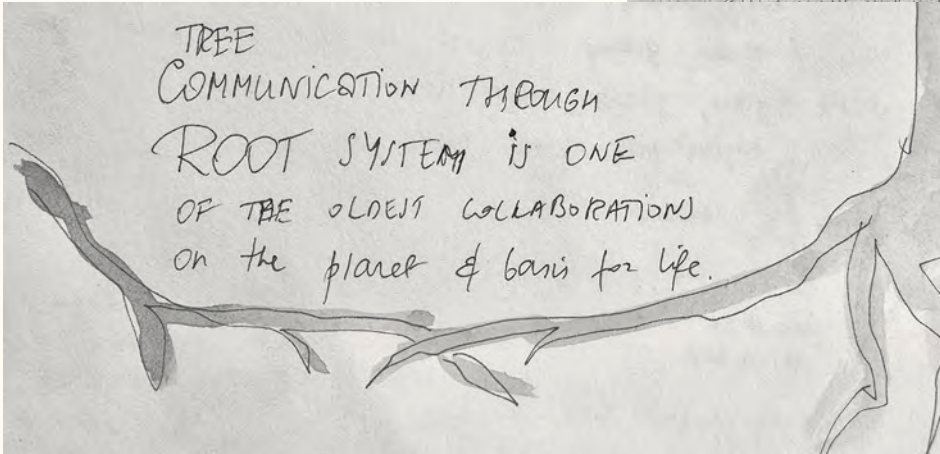
10. 2. 2026
It's all about remembering. Through the body. I need to become much, much slower. I want to vegetalize my sensorium. Yarrow is calling me again. To the edges. What songs can we learn from the trees? What is the song of the ravens here?



11. 2. 2026
Is it possible to know a river if you cannot swim in it?



12. 2. 2026
I am dying. I am a young fir dying because my habitat has been destroyed. The road you see is a road of destruction and greet. But my dying is also a future building. Home building for others. The future will bring endless cycle of life and death as it has before. Sing my song. We transfer of songs we are roots. We hear each other through countless invisible threads that are our eyes.



16. 2. 2026
Tonight I dream a horse carries me to the cedar forest that is Linden forest that is us that is a dream in a dream. "The world needs its witches" I am told in the dream.

Workshops

AS A YOUNG ADULT
I WAS AFRAID TO
DRAW THE TREE
BECAUSE OF THE
PSYCHOLOGIST INTERPRETATIONS
... It's NOT A FAULT OF THE
TREE, I suppose.

I will wrap you
around
with warm blanket
of care
embroided with
boundless love.

In this nest
you can rest
and dream safely
dreams of...
fill in
the blank
😊

klusina, v tobě
je černá díra světa
je doupě pro mláděta
klusina ve mně
je černá díra pro mláděta
je doupě světa

HUGGING
COLOURS
SAFE SPACE

1 doupě strom
1 houpě strom

UNITY
PRESENCE
SILENCE
NO LIMITS
LIFE
ANIMALS

I've never realized
that trees have
such different sounds
and tones in my head.
a lime tree is a soft and
sweet humming of bees in
spring, spruces sound with
a deep base sound, with a
hint of my thrm. olives are
full of melodies &
tones.

Poems

Hollow spell <i>Liene Jurgelāne</i>	white fields <i>Agnieszka Bułacik</i>
thread over thread root over root story over story we are weaving	White fields, covered in snow, sing a silent song, and we listen.
there they are - our inherited maps ghosts in the corners aches of straight lines borders that separate. songs gone underground.	They tell stories they heard from the wind, who brought them from distant times.
in the hollow we remember	The stories this earth hums with
let our bodies be a chorus let the land sing through us we ask	
in the hollow we remember becoming the river kissing the stone, becoming the stone kissing the river.	
in the hollow we remember we are polyphonic — the ancestors and the unborn, the dusk and the dawn. the moss and the stone the crossing, crossing, crossing	
In the hollow we remember thread over thread root over root story over story We are weaving	Porous <i>Agnieszka Bułacik</i>
beginning, ending, beginning past, present, present, future, past	
thread over thread root over root story over story In hollow we remember	we let each other breathe we let each other breathe
weaving the fates, mending the scars, threading the cuts. until we are river kissing the stone. until we are stone kissing the river.	your exhale my inhale your exhale my inhale
thread over thread, root over root story over story we are weaving we remember	its embracing death and dying its the bodies changing shape its about letting down the armour
	we are porous we are porous that’s how we breathe we are porous we are porous that’s how we live
	plants animals insects seed people animals insects birds seeds have been crossing these hills for centuries

Songs

Lipka Zielona
Inspired by the traditional folk song “Lipka” and the recording by Rokiczanka. Lyrics adapted by Agnieszka.

po tej stronie strumienia
stoi lipka zielona
a na tej lipce na tej zielonienkiej
trzy ptaszyny śpiewają
a na tej lipce na tej zielonienkiej
trzy ptaszyny śpiewają

Nie były to ptaszyny
Tylko trzy dziewczyny
Co zaplatały czasy rozmaite
By głęboko słuchać ich
Co zaplatały czasy rozmaite
By głęboko słuchać ich

Jedna słyszy: „badź tutaj”
Druga słyszy: „za mna gnaj”
A trzecia słyszy: “Nasza najmilejsza
miej odwagę słuchac nas”
A trzecia słyszy: “Nasza najmilejsza
miej odwagę słuchac nas”

Bede słuchać uważnie
światło twoje nie zgaśnie
a te historie które nas ulecza
nimi ja sie podziele
a te historie które nas ulecza
nimi ja sie podziele

po tej stronie strumienia
stoi lipka zielona
stoi-i patrzy, patrzy uporczywie
przez głęboki gesty czas
stoi-i patrzy, patrzy uporczywie
przez głęboki gesty czas

Wież mnie koniku, wież
Polish folksong

Wież mnie koniku, wież
wież mnie przez całe wieś.
Przez góry doliny, przez góry doliny
do mojej dziewczyny (2x)

A jak przyjechali
przez góry, doliny
zarzał konik głośno, zarzał konik głośno
do mojej dziewczyny (2x)

Dobrú noc, má milá
Slovak lullaby

Dobrú noc, má milá, dobrú noc,
nech je ti sám Pán Boh na pomoc!
Dobrú noc, dobre spi,
nech sa ti snívajú sladké sny.
Dobrú noc, dobre spi,
nech sa ti snívajú sladké sny.

Snívaj sa ti sníčok, ach snívaj,
ked’ vstaneš, sníčoku vieru daj,
že ťa ja milujem,
srdečko svoje ti darujem.
že ťa ja milujem,
srdečko svoje ti darujem.
journaling elements

Fara Hoprich Event



Agnieszka Bulacik, Liene Jurgelāne



Hanna Grzeškiewicz





Borderland Forest Spells — Final Listening Session

After one month of listening with the forests, mountains, trees, rivers, and humans of the Czech–Polish borderlands, the artists-in-residence concluded their residency with a final public listening session.

“During the residency we walked, recorded, sang, and listened with the land. We traced stories of displacement and re-rooting, followed the echoes of migration in this landscape and in our own bodies, asking what myths might be seedling in the mountains and valleys that welcomed us.

This session was a shared listening space in which we invited you to explore collectively what it could mean to form new kinds of kinship. Kinship beyond borders and beyond binaries. To become more queer in our relation to land, by forming relations out of care and choice, instead of ancestral roots. To sense plants, animals, trees, ghosts and spirits as part of a wider circle of belonging.

Through voice, silence, songs, spells, and ritual we invited the participants into a space of deep listening. A space where we could practice gentler ways of being together in an unsettled world.”

Ora et lege
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