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The Still Unfathomed Trans+Oceanic

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DAZE JEFFERIES

The Still Unfathomed Trans+Oceanic

Release

Every strayed thing I remember to say now. With hours and borders and blue holes between us, our worlds fall short of encounter for years in the North Atlantic contact zone. As ghosts of other trans femme whorefish haunt the harbour, a flesh tether undetermined, see-through and edgeless—together with the grief of a kin-worn gillnet—is willed further east crossing sea-touched horizon. In this timeline of counter narratives, *you* are communities of trans women + sex workers held apart by cultural loss and ecological change. I lose you as I enter institutional archives and feel you again near the water's threshold. Yer histories of movement are safer here. Deeper, deeper, deeper: there is stillness swelling over the precarity written and reported to appease all gazes of colonial pain-filled possessions. It makes our likeness-in-difference possible.

Autotheoretical at heart, my research-creation imagines how archives of trans and sex worker knowledges from island geographies might be engaged with/in transformative and resistant waves. Honouring the migrations of many who came before—dreaming about safety, sustainability, and social change—a politics of the *trans+oceanic body* emerges from creative and critical worldmaking with ghosts and spirits held by North Atlantic waters. The potentiality of archival relation and intergenerational fluid encounters is formed through personal and political engagements with longing, loss, and oceanleaving. Recognition of being-in-place with gender and sexual self-determination, freedom, and struggle of the rural/coastal comes drifting against the institutional gaze. Medical case studies, media records, distressed inscriptions, bodies of water. I want to find comfort in the missing and ephemeral, not fill gaps in a theatre of pain (see Tuck and Yang 812).

Shaped by the centuries-old extraction of fishy life, colonial histories of sex work and oceanic transness in Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) remain enclosed. Which is to say that surviving an island of capture and trade is a futurity in movement. At every turn here, I want to believe in the impossibility of precarious historical knowing across difference as a call for critical-creative practice (see Hartman 12). Informed by the slippery demands of representing minoritarian cultural histories, with this work of research-creation, I seek to embrace and honour the weighted presence of yer arts: mistress ambience, electronic renders, paint and performance, a showgirl's song. Collectively, we begin to move closer to an intergenerational knowledge exchange that registers the love in trans-corporeal relations (see Alaimo 477). Research-creation with ghosts and water beings thus becomes a counter-archival endeavour—one that rejects the historical record to call for non-dominant expressions of refusal, communities of care, and material-semiotic gestures toward a world more liveable in the wavering deep Atlantic.

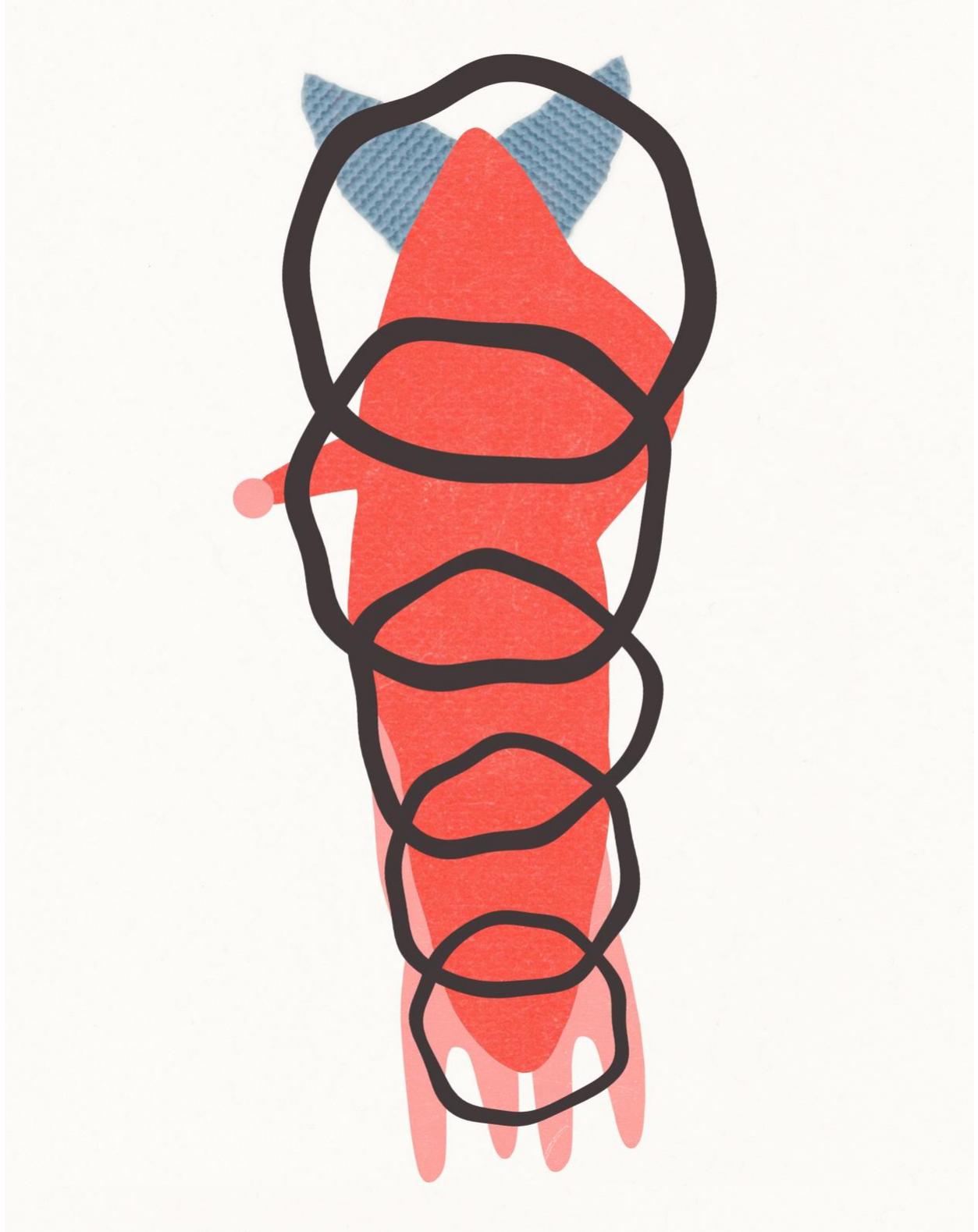


Fig 1. *Enclosing I*. Mixed media illustration.

Return

I could never expect you to carry the future. Away from researchers, media, Johns.

If or when you return to the sea, please leave a memento, look after a land-child.

Fetishized, assaulted, and forced to disappear, mermaids are strange figures in the colonial history of Newfoundland. As disposable-desirable beings who trouble temporalities of settler sexuation, their socio-political worlds queerly mirror those of trans women + sex workers at the Atlantic edge. This is our trans-species “ethics of encounter” (Hayward 256). Ocean keepers. Ocean leavers.

Measure our proximity with fifty-year-old fishing rope.

The still unfathomed.

You are salt-hearted.



Fig 2. *Kin-Worn I*. Found fabrics, fishing rope, cotton.



Fig 2. *Kin-Worn II*. Found fabrics, cotton, polyester.

Resurface

AM Kanngieser and Zoe Todd: “when we mobilize place, land, water, atmospheres, and other nonhuman beings in our histories, we must be mindful of all the relations and reciprocal responsibilities that we are invoking” (389).

Sonja Boon and Kate Lahey: “How do we account for ghosts? What do we make when linear time is flooded by histories and futures and, at the same time, all-too-much-now-ness” (41)?

Alexis Pauline Gumbs: “We were all people who had been mistaken for an ocean” (335).

Fetish keeps the island floating. In yer body, in yer guts.

You want me to remember, but you ask to be withheld.

I leave. I leave it. I leave it up to you.

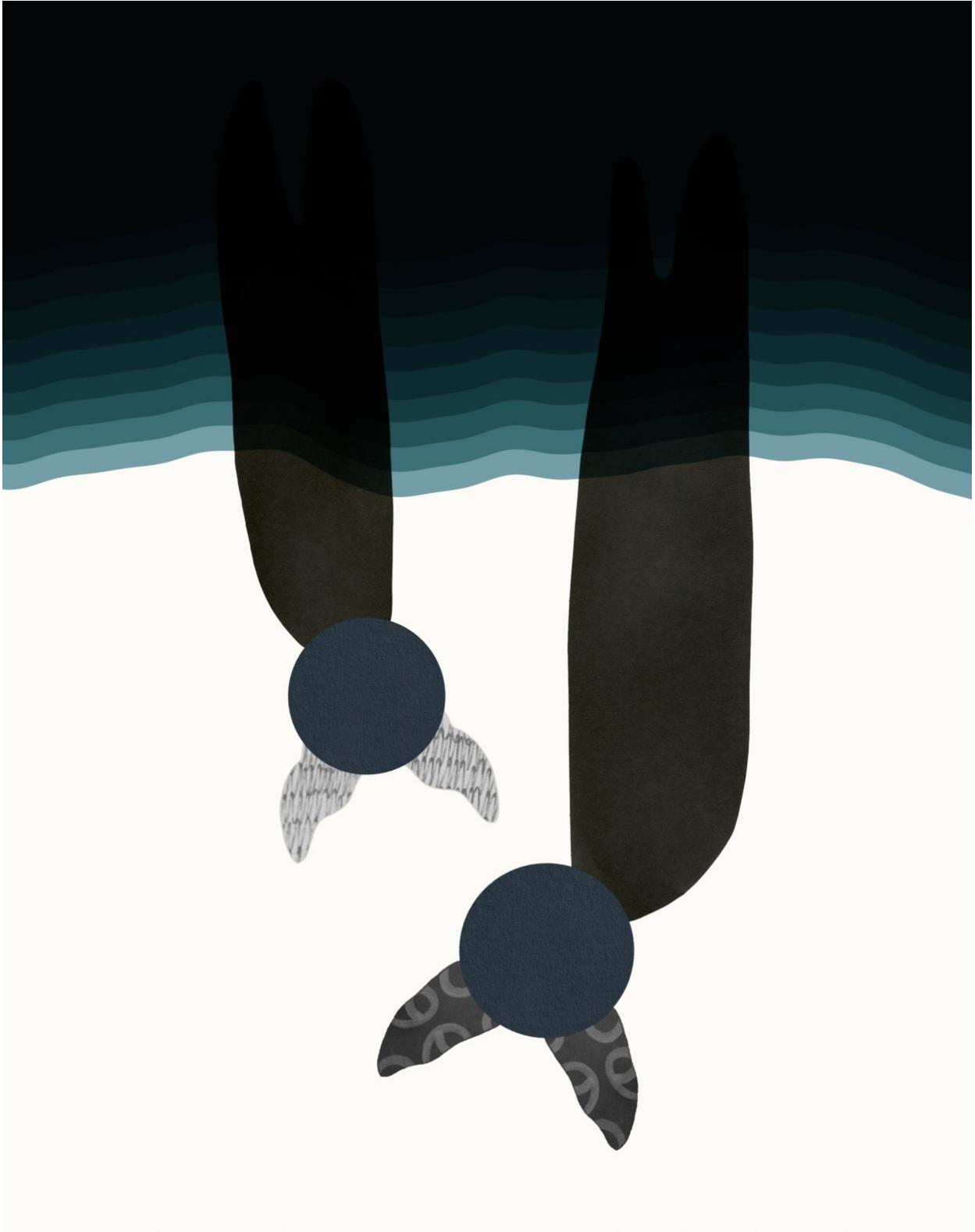


Fig 3. *Oceanleavers I*. Mixed media illustration.

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DAZE JEFFERIES (she/her) is an artist, writer, and educator born and raised in the Bay of Exploits on the northeast coast of rural Ktaqmkuk/Newfoundland. Working with archives, found beach materials, queer ephemera, oral histories, sound, poetry, sculpture, theory, performance, and illustration, her research-based creative practice engages with the ocean as a body of loss to form washy, wayward, and withheld counter-narratives of trans and sex worker histories at the water's edge. Her research-creation and multidisciplinary projects have been exhibited and performed at Eastern Edge, The Rooms, Unscripted Twillingate, St. Michael's Printshop, Struts Gallery, Inverness County Centre for the Arts, and Cape Breton University Art Gallery. Co-author of *Autoethnography and Feminist Theory at the Water's Edge: Unsettled Islands*, she has recent publications in *Land of Many Shores: Perspectives from a Diverse Newfoundland and Labrador*, *Hustling Verse: An Anthology of Sex Workers' Poetry*, *Riddle Fence*, *HELD*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Arc*, and *Feral Feminisms*.