

NURTURING THE UNFERTILISED EGG: TOWARDS THE ABSURD HEROINE

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Abstract

This PhD uses a theory-led art practice to position the absurd as a landscape which could provide emancipation from binary gender. In response to inconsistencies between Camus's definition of 'the Absurd Hero' and his naming of cisgendered men as representative of absurd identities, this project proposes a revised figure, 'the Absurd Heroine'. This amendment to absurdist theory contributes a new terminology to challenge notions of transcendence that are used to enforce adherence to a gender binary.

The epistemic object of this research is an unfertilised chicken's egg, which I have cared for since the beginning of the study. The combination of the egg and researcher is described as the 'Egg Carrying Researcher', acknowledging an entangled embodiment of knowledge. My methodology as the Egg Carrying Researcher provides a material and bodily language with which to explore the figure of the Absurd Heroine through a queer appropriation of the Sisyphian task to antagonise a biologically gendered object. This performative practice protests capitalist expectations of heteronormative reproduction, both biologically and institutionally, while theorising that engagement of unproductive and absurd behaviours within the everyday can be utilised as a form of corporeal activism.

The Egg Carrying Researcher provides the primary practice and framework for this research, which is documented through interdisciplinary and action-led artworks, including: sculptural terminological, anecdotal, and fictional text, manifesto, audio play and performed readings, site-based protest, and redacted and reinterpreted archival and media texts. The accompanying thesis positions transfeminist theory and kin-making strategies within a socio-political climate propelled by the Covid-19 pandemic, an environment replicative of the male-centric absurd scenario detailed in Camus's *The Plague*. I conclude by deliberating upon the positionality of cis women as increasing gatekeepers of their identity through measurement of biological reproductivity. I identify the selective mentality of Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) as a form of quality control to a reproductive workforce and distinguish cooperation with this ideology as undemonstrative of the Absurd Heroine.

As the research is embodied by the Egg Carrying Researcher, the findings of the research can be fully encountered and demonstrated within a requested audience with the Egg Carrying Researcher.