

Offshoring V.1.0
A user manual for literary transformations

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GET STARTED

Part directives, part fiction, part illustration, this is a manifesto devoted to transformation through writing. Drawing from *Writing Space*'s theme, 'Metamorphosis', I attempt to offer a theoretical framework reflecting on the abrupt changes that myself and many other folks around me have experienced within neoliberal European society, before and during COVID-19.

Institutional betrayal and political dysphoria, linguistic hybridisation, digital and spiritual awakenings, physical transmutations. There are the themes underlying this manifesto.

How much of a refuge can a writing practice represent? I am writing this to testify what being thrown around by circumstances outside of my reach means for me and, in doing so, I abandon any claims of being objective. The piece is born out of a need for self-understanding and to retrace my aims, gestures and ways of thinking/feeling/writing. I wish this to be of some inspiration or practical use to others too.

This is the first version (V.1.0) of a manifesto that can be reworked, accounting for the present and future features found in writing within liminal spaces, from disadvantaged perspectives, or simply away from your lover's arms. It is presently divided into just three sections: one related to form, one to the leitmotif concurring to inspire this and other productions, and one related to identification (becoming-writing), which shows subjects and metaphors inhabiting my chants.

RECAP

Section 1:

FORM

(Dwelling in tale and myth)

Section 2:

LEITMOTIF

(How can I touch you while being away from you?)

Section 3:

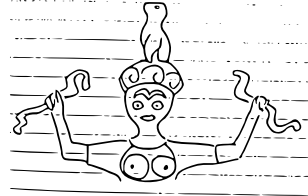
IDENTIFICATION

(Pantheon of Monsters)

Section 1: FORM

(Dwelling in tale and myth)

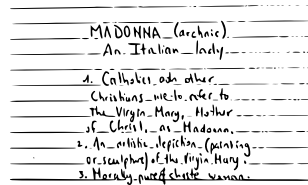
✧ Minoan settlers sophisticated the use of narration throughout the Bronze Age (3000 to 1100 BCE) with oral tales, vascular painting and frescos. They wrote extensively yet we aren't able to decipher their language. The visual sources they left show a matriarchal religion and secular recurring themes that are believed to have contributed to form the hard rock of Greek mythology as we know it. Being inspired by what they saw around them and what they knew to be truthful, this long-lived community informs my first principle: to write a myth, you must know **reality**.



✧ Additionally, you shall follow the Tuscan proverb dear to Gherardo Nerucci: “La novella un’è bella se sopra un ci si rappella.” (The tale is not beautiful if nothing is added to it.) Whether you wish to talk about something that really happened to you, or create a new fantasy altogether, you gotta put makeup on it.



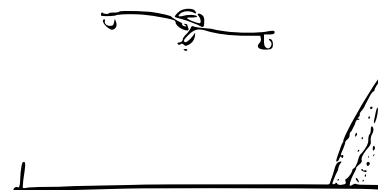
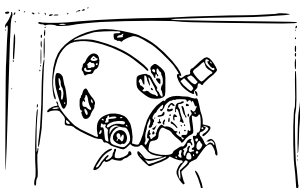
✧ Children begin learning language through imitation. You might have assimilated the way your parents or friends talk —e.g. unarticulated sentences, slang words, conjunctions presenting different tenses. Your teachers probably warned you not to betray ‘through’ for a ‘thru’. However, it is crucial that you feel recognised in the words you’re using. Show off your crooked language.



✧ Stealing what you can with grace and, if the time is right, betray the authors you have loved the most. They won't hate you for doing that —they were once thieves themselves.

ILL. #1

I pad my hips to make them look round and smooth; curves, wombs, side pockets. Pitch-dark makeup on my face, two white spots around my eyes. I can't get the water cannons off my back but, with a little foundation, they merge well. I carry my body around with autonomy, mysteriously —when I feel confident enough and it's safe to do so. Oftentimes, I wish I was invisible but a Junoesque body with polka dots seldom goes unnoticed.



To be able to speak up, one must be fucking privileged.

When in danger, my instincts force me to stay put. No shivers allowed, no breathing in and out. The only motion is in my mind while hearing myself praying: “Tiresias, our benefactor, preserve our flesh so we can live through another day. Protect your offspring from the coward. Don't let us walk through the flaming rains of the desperate land. From one skin to the other; surviving the Winter cold; crossing the glitched pond. Amen.

Section 2: LEITMOTIF

(How can I touch you while being away from you?)

✧ «Although 'to set in motion' is what navigation means in general, this does not differentiate what a navigation is from what any general movement might involve.» [Chen, H.F. (2019) *Body of Embarrassment: On Collective Mourning*, p. 19].

✧ Do not forget about your characters' **obstacles**, no matter the genre. It might be personal flaws hiding deeper traumas as well as totalitarian states oppressing part of their population, as in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Obstacles are said to strengthen a character. It is worth asking, perhaps, if all characters can really *afford* finding obstacles on their path? And in the end, what should we make of all these obstacles? If only they could be piled up to reach the heavens.

ILL. #2

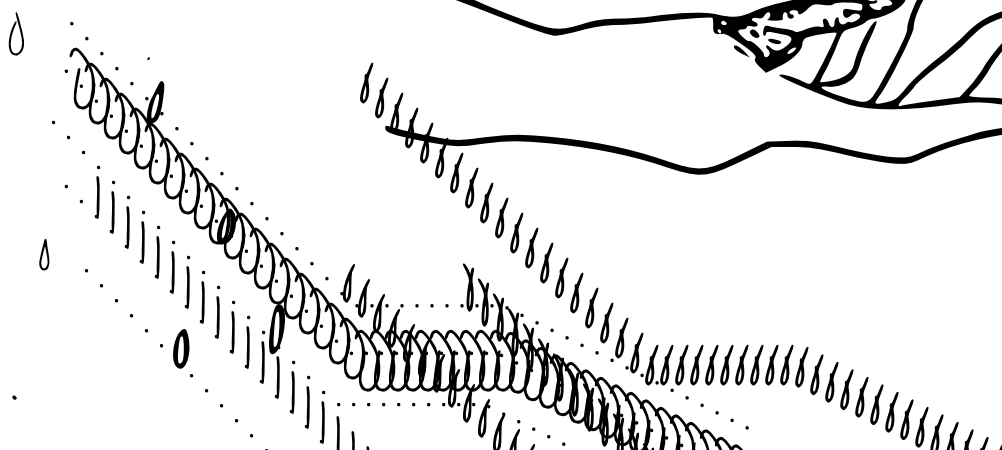
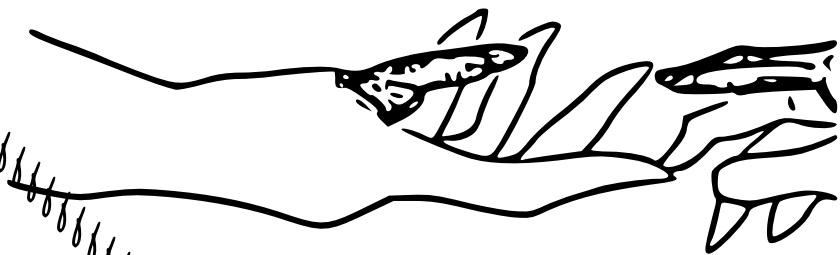
I swapped my British SIM card for an Italian one. Getting a new network provider is a small thing —like getting home and thinking: *I'm home.*

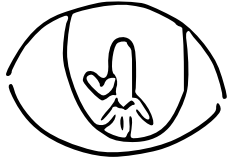
I've been 'home' for five months already but only now has the last of my shields been crushed. The tech infrastructure shouts in a

language that doesn't satisfy me, as scrolling gets impatient. A new video appears on my screen. My eyes glance at the bottom, looking for Italian words in the description. Click and hold > 'Not interested'. 'We'll show you less of this content'. The hashtag game defeats me and I think about my home abroad. I'm burnt out.

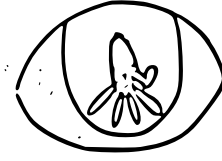
✧ Macro-violence operates through the psyche, diluting aggression in a consistent series of invisible waves of pain (see Byung-Chul Han, *Topology of Violence*, 2011). I turn towards my dreams, exhausted, but they aren't there anymore. Where did they go? Where *did I* go? My SIM card screams "Gentile cliente, benvenuto!" I must always remember the **violence** —both received and given. In relation to obstacles and violence, remember that utopias aren't real. In fact, they are dangerous because they could turn into delusions. As humans living through the Capitalocene, you and I both possess a whole set of inherently grown delusions. So, when possible, you shall draw scenarios that are somehow possible, even if "it's just a fairy tale".

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Section 3: IDENTIFICATION (Pantheon of Monsters)



✧ One of the inherent characteristics of a protagonist lies in their **difference**. This could be related to physical appearance, such as in Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Here, Ekumen Envoy Genly Ai is notably taller and darker-skinned than most people on Gethen. As Gethenians are ambisexual, Genly's physical appearance is a gateway to a masculine mannerism causing him many communication barriers. Differences in spirit or values can be found in Lauren Olamina, protagonist in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. Lauren has 'hyperempathy', a condition causing her to share feelings with others. As a result, she is discernibly different from most people, which will be a key as the novel develops.

ILL. #3

The internalised dynamics within my family champion the annihilation of my individuality.

Sister cuts me down mid-sentence and changes the topic. Her white feminist beliefs still want me to join the pink-washed 'revolution'. Mother asks me when my therapy will end: "You don't need therapy." but the magic doesn't work and I still need it. My nephews carry their bodies around the house, inhabiting a ready-made cisgender identity, being put onto straight lines, narcotised. "Who do you like, auntie?" I look around. "What if I liked girls?". He laughs while I play an episode of She-Ra and the princesses of power.

Brother in law makes fun of a sex worker living nearby his office, then lectures me over finding a job before I turn 30. He wouldn't hire someone who's over-30. He's actually sorry for them. Instagram posts tell me to fight against heteronormativity. But every woke soldier would recognise when it's time to go undercover.

I want to scream and sometimes I do that, when I can't stand my anxieties and start walking in circles around the living room. I act like a clown in front of my parents, hiding feelings. They think that I'm being silly; it's just pandemic-induced boredom. Most people I know who are like me have gone through this. (Our) Life is on hold and it feels like it will never come back.

✧ Monsters 'become' monsters through oppression. Means of oppression could vary. A beautiful maiden is raped by Poseidon in Minerva's Temple and thus turned into Medusa by Minerva herself. Frankenstein's monster is abandoned by his creator, whose family rejects him. While saving a girl from drowning, the creature gets shot. He then seeks revenge against his creator for having left him alone in a world that hates him. What is your monster angry about?

✧ Mainstream cultures associate the monstrous with fetishised imagery. In *The Monstrous Feminine*, Barbara Creed explains how Hollywood enacts pornographic motifs in Horror movies while giving female connotations to 'the monstrous'. Some might feel attracted to monsters for no seemingly recognisable reason but it should be remembered that monsters have wounds and are not just a kinky fantasy.