THE THIRD EVENT
Part 1 & 2

Jackqueline Frost
The Third Event: Part 1 & 2

Jackqueline Frost
The author wishes to thank Rosa van Hensbergen of Tipped Press and Tom Allen (who proofread the manuscript) for their work on this edition, as well as Gizem Okulu and David Grundy of Splinter Magazine (London), Sabrina Soyer of How To Become...Revue (Paris) and Matthew O’Malley of Dogwood Press (New Haven), for publishing early versions of Part 1.
“...who, cut off from their people by accident or by choice, find that they must inhabit a world whose constituents, being alien, force the mind to succumb to an imaginary populace.”

—Djuna Barnes
Part One

For Nat Raha

My life closed twice before its close—
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me

So huge, so hopeless to conceive
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

—Emily Dickinson
The third event discloses itself across the atlanticity of impermanent bad kingdoms. It proposes a human mouth as antidote for the great noises that hunt each other in the night of world systems saturation. Continents emerge as conspiracies of space capturing both time and non-time in connection with the processual ruin of empathy and the compromised global ocean. We are interested in poetically fabricating a specious tension between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean worlds, between real and unreal mass. The smog cut glacial aquifer is the material substrate on which a belief in tropical cathedrals proceeds. Atlanticity is staged upon the moral concept of willingness and the immanence of actual land. It is onto these two principles that the third event projects its humanity, a line that ends adorned by its revealing “a private, invisible end-times.” Unable to fulfill itself, the third event takes refuge in the coolness of an asymmetrical interspecies relationality that is a garden, or a menagerie. There, its heroism resembles an ibis among tall metaphors.
Between what is torrid and what is lush, one finds that all truths correspond to the consummation of a dialectic, whose impurity is reflected in the general history of equatorial substance. The third event edges fugally across a prosaically generated recollection of the intensity of loss; the swelling of a pure time. We are led by these carbon analogies to the exoticism of the voyage toward the image of the origin, the hypostatization of which is our subject. Announced under the halo of the many articulations of the real, this divisive adventure in metapoetics assumes that the order of geological history is prefigured as an already spatialized duration insuring fresher habitats against the measure of surrounding tectonic influences. We propose atlanticity as the shadow of pre-existing solutions to the problem of impossible filiation, which, in marking itself out as a retrograde movement of the true, attempts to suture land to loss through the prism of pseudo-archeological apprehension. The land bridge is a collective false consciousness erected between Atlantis and Europe’s meridian force of ascension, and represents, against its own desires, an
inexpressible ground on which to fold irrecuperable omissions.

In the absence of any imaginary, we imagine the third event: what is felt against the evolving pollution, what was not taken down, naturally evaporated, burned, or chemically diluted with microparticulates. What was sealed or escaped or repatriated. Undaunted by the impasses of artificiality, we see no reason to extend our hypotheses to immaterial intelligences, that is, to mediatic floods and other apocalyptic spectacles—such as the disappearance and reappearance of lakes—that reorganize the general conceptualization of what differentiates habitat from mud. Insofar as the third event dialectically contains a deep-water horizon, our inquiry must interrogate the problematic generated by the non-a-priori intelligence of the social as a form of mystical certainty. Containment and current converge as a discourse of black water plumed in crude naps. It is unclear at this early hour whether the woes of the landscape have invaded speech. From here we
consider the deep-water horizon a future limit inscribed into the paleoceanographic history from which the chauvis, chevrettes, nutria, loutres, belettes, bé cassine, moqueur, colibri, gros-bec, and héron—as species representations—partition themselves in becoming examples of an abstract resilience in situ. It’s not that the vital solutions of life will always find a way, it’s that everything that is not life is already disadvantaged against life’s hegemony for disconcealment.

While widely believed by those outside the continent, no one came to rescue inconsequential fauna during the lesser flood. This hoax was generated by a video of a man who appeared to be saving chaois, belettes and similar species that had individually assembled themselves on patches of high ground. The video showed the man wading out into the orange water, falling in sink holes and dips in the land and grabbing the chaois, the loutres, the belettes and the nutria by their tails and rescuing them in small, species-specific boats. Non-Atlanteans lauded the courage of this man who
convincingly stroked the teeth and small, mean faces of these creatures as if he had spared them from the flood and in turn prevented their generalized extinction. Atlanteans know, however, that the true life of these species is precisely in their asymptotic annihilation by rising water which gives an arch to an otherwise neutered accumulation of days and years. Without this minimal, chance-based survival, the chaois, the nutria, the loutres and the belettes would be perceived as unfit for continuation and eliminated by force at the cost of seven Atlantean bolts per head. This is a lesson in the non-self-evidence of the image of the catastrophe, as the oracular can, of course, betray you like anything else—mischievously or treacherously.

Concerned with the explanation of the earth as considered through the optic of inheritance, we ask: Is there a deep form of life? Do eternal things endure it? In Atlantis, there are no discreet villains, having themselves descended from the lower bottoms to walk among the autochthonous. Crimes of theft are washed in quotidian
geysers, and serve as a metonymy for the lesser flood’s capacity to take away substance and give back a vertical, victimological light with which to look upon what is no longer there. To this, Atlanteans employ the proverb: “but what doesn’t the day owe the night?” Embracing the jargon of concatenation, the Atlanteans believe that their destinies, despite being mediated by a hazardous predilection for self-knowledge, might just befall them at any moment. They are thus ever fixed in an activated waiting that is both supple and long. Being from an inexistent landmass they are unbound by the unfolding of past territorial determinations that would foreclose the elaboration of survivalist intelligence such as is found among hot prairie orchids, the bloom period of which has been evolutionarily extended to accommodate the statistical rareness of symbiotic pollination and other processes of species life. This capacity to subsist before others, while not being evolved to a singular ecology, is also the fodder of a unidimensional alienation, which the Atlantean expresses with naive cruelty.
The post-historical nature of Atlantis is co-constitutive with the deep-water horizon. There is a smelt-slick non-floating compliant tower—called them by, Anadarko—grounded by umbilical connections to subsea wells, situated in the territorial waters jurisdictionally legitimated by the Act of Submerged Lands. The installation comprises those who cut a long, straight trench into the history of the future, the sides of which brim with the puce awareness of participating in instantiations of transoceanic phenomena, and these, the Atlanteans call the Toolpushers. It comprises those who capture and record instances of this brimming, using periscopes to magnify its licks several thousand times so as to interrogate the curvature of a single wave of the trench, measuring changes over time in the nature of the puce wave’s parabolic expression. These they call the Enlargers. It comprises those who in engaging this data collected across time employ prediction as a form of managing future outcomes, such as the law of the tendency for naturalized destructiveness and who propose the introduction of inconsequential architectures as
embankment procedures against the eventual point of peak wetland futility. These they call the Defungalers. It involves those who, being born out of the sight of land, negotiate the problem of the effecting of all things involved in the extraction, as symbolized by the brimming trench’s puce erosion of submerged lands, and these they call the Mineral Engineers. It comprises those who while being formed by the appreciable movement of prevailing waters cannot trade in a vision of a future of human knowledge, since their tasks feed the inverse structural development toward the dissolution of what is not yet known, and those they call the Magnolias of Energy Independence. We do not know, these say, if Atlantis itself aspires to the order of existence found, for example, in the small straits and deep-water shelves splitting the elements of the Mediterranean into politically delimited fields of consciousness, but in light of recent actions we question this need. Nihilism toward a definitive end to the state of continental non-existence can be summed up by the passive construction of the Atlantean adage: “all that’s to come runs in.”
Being ethically situated in the before of occidental sentiment, atlanticity comprises no tradition of heroic love derived from an aggregate of images of governance. Hunting grounds have been repurposed as purely oligarchic surface, and do not extend, as symbolic content, to those born in the common colony. In the tense of expectant things, Atlanteans propose baroque contamination, a gravity-based structure, as love’s surrogate, preferring to marry their vultures. Through them, affection becomes essentially maleficent, having been poised precariously, like a dish, on the lip of the earth. It is, from our perspective, imprecise but it is generalized, that when an Atlantean passes, in the material presence of another, a variable quantity of time marked by escalation toward the upper limit of possible wonder, they describe this as amounting to a life. When the other is out of presence, the Atlantean uses what the other said to them to inform their discipline to regimes of astonishment and cynicism. Their collective activities involve the gambling and the loss of money; the drinking and the spilling of drinks; the picking and the spoiling of
blooms. Each time the end to a life is rectified, each one owes the other all this back—everything that was shared that is neither sleep nor breath, as these essentials cannot be insured by agencies. While surveilled through risk management against unit toxicity, this experiment in mutually indebted sovereignty is walked out into society as a fugitive feeling whose variegated compression reconciles the willful elements of atlanticity. The degradation of impure fuel sources like love is represented in direct proportion to the degradation of the ecology of the colony; its fields of water—that having been shifted by geological forces—animate nothing. In this sense, nostalgia is no longer intelligible as a singular sentiment, forming, rather, the basis of all affective registers, and cannot be distinguished from states like melancholy, pride, alacrity, sympathy, or pleasure.

What is encompassed by atlanticity necessitates the deployment of the principle of non-contemporaneity, involving, as it does, the combination of mythic civilizational legacies, the irreparable assimilation of
collective specificity, and the uncanny proleptic knowledge of the future destruction of both. In contradistinction to these superstructural considerations, catastrophic repetition resists ontology, circumventing, therefore, the narrative that constitutes atlanticity. In this way the deep-water horizon can be established as outside of history, as an unconscious, paleoceanographic event whose primacy can only be recounted via an allegorical image, evacuating the lesser floods of their proper genealogy. Extemporaneity becomes one explanation of how, in triggering glitches that appear like stretch marks across the boundary concept of the psyche, certain terrifying parables appear to be coming out of the past like chartreuse light. Fumigating the past becomes the singular project undertaken in the relative opacity of positive generational discreetness. The third event emerges through this untimely connection to what is not-yet since the future is large enough, cubically speaking, to contain things that have not yet been imagined. Here, the archeologist is confronted by the radical and saccharine, unconditional indeterminacy of objects.
We are concerned, however, with the future image of atlanticity, which must negotiate instability spread across the interval between pre and postlapsarian—the given gap in which this future fructifies itself. Being pieces of deadwood marooned in exilic ordinariness, they are, as yet, only the discontent subjects of untimely tempests warped in a macro-fraudulence. As Atlanteans have great difficulty understanding a survival of the past in itself, we must supplement concepts (like the concept of atlanticity) to acclimatize human time’s relation to non-human history, which in Atlantis reveals space as altogether concupiscent. It would seem that even where land is willed into existence without foundation, a socius substantiates itself. Leguminous, adaption levels: this or that perspicacity; this or that propensity to gauge the eyes of the other; this or that improvised introspection; this or that tremulous divergence. Embargoed by the shards of ceremony, minute territories are washed into shelves of warm sharks, as cultural difference is spread in the eyes of rabbits or covered in kudzu, the kudzu covered eschaton through which some try to hail their total subjecthood,
The third event is wet in the mouth as if submerged, but it is not submerged; it is affected in easterly movement and it has failed, like a forecast but thwarted wind, to animate anything outside itself. But what has changed within it, and as a result of its own endangering, is consequent. It is steeped in an antediluvian power only possessed by those hailing from a place that soon will not exist, from a city whose material life has been ever on the fray of the under-eternal. But what makes the city appear un-whole is precisely the past of wholeness we attribute to it in order to realize our desire to perceive signs of gradual loss or to protect us from the fear of arriving after the event, of having missed or ignored it. We want the experience of the process of fragmentation as a personal mark or possession. We say the city is ended, a ruin, as man has ended in a homesick shadow, as if we watched both as one watches coffee boiling over or water falling from a window. Even if your city, the Atlanteans say, is not yet a ruin swallowed by a
grey, deoxygenated sea, you might see the ruin beneath the present, if you look hard enough, as if looking at something real losing shape on the horizon. The ruin is the true history of all cities, in its unvarnishable primacy, just as desperation is the true history of men.

Paris / Edinburgh / London
November 2017-January 2018
Part Two

For Miri Davidson

O my floating life
Do not save love
    for things
    Throw things
to the flood

ruined
by the flood
    Leave the new unbought—
    all one in the end—
water

—Lorine Niedecker
In the abolished century, Atlanteans stood still allowing the mosquitos to loot their blood, saying: “there is no irreplaceable absence.” They are all out getting wetted by the weather, eaten by the insects, interpellated by the laws that orchestrate exceptions. Their bodies appear, through the diaphaneity of these processes, as would haptic replicas—edgeless and unrepresentable—like a swamp annexed by a sea. The floating life, with its limitropes and leitmotifs, ceaselessly habituates itself to coveting displacement, here understood as whatever elements symbolize the non-presence of tempests, foam and phantoms. When the Atlantean body is most wounded they call it the flood body. When it is most mutant, the petroleum body, or the carnival body, or the communion body. Since the arrival of the third event, despite being submitted to an alternative futurity by the most risky object of eras, Atlanteans will rescue the bee from the wave and struggle to involve themselves in its truth. Conversely, they dash cabbages, torn silk, rosaries and aspirin into circumoceanic currents in the deep-water
convection. Potatoes, linen, hymnals, lecithin; collards, cotton, gris-gris, gelatin: all one in the end despite recompositions. “Do not save love for things,” they say, “since outside the night is government.”

Here, the almost-earth is animated by a porous field of asphodels, whose capricious mellifluidity, being neither sorry nor faithful, makes for an awkward augury. Meant to discover the structure of the third event, and getting only so far as the temporal fabric, woven into an eschatological specter, the archeologist, being drunk, is ready to believe anything. “The third event: Solid? Liquid? Gas? The purpose of this reconnaissance involved sketching an archeology of the future catastrophe using a method derived from the peripheral freedom of minor science. The assemblage of atlanticity, in its capacity as meta-narrative of mercurial objectivity, was conceived to address the cruel coordinate in the hardcore conduit, where we find the dead on the lips of the living and the living on the lips of the specialists. Taking a pirogue into the flotant, the archeologist examines watermarks left by
the deep-water horizon. From them, she diagnoses the restoration of the flood’s authority as an epiphenomenon of surplus heat involved in the fabrication of all this cheap alchemy. Just as before, the cane was a sweet machine of fealty extraction. Reconciled to field clothes that reek of bagasse and to stumbling from the rum, each day the archeologist watches the refineries burning the largesse.

It is for the sake of a militant fraternity that one passes through a dead culture in the ethnographic present, trying to make for oneself a community of inexistent others? Being a visitor to this continent’s infamy, the archeologist observes that her hosts are plagued by the imagescape of their belonging to nothing but the ruin of the ruin—the inner, endogenous ruin that resides in the supersensual aspect of the ruin’s archetypal instantiation. According to the civilizational categories of the archeologist, the only elements within the deep ruin that remain recognizable despite decomposition appear to be the steps of a stadium, the floors of a prison, the baths of a governor. Indifferent to criticism by non-Atlantean
experts who claim that current policy engenders traumatic repetition, the city proposes that these catastrophic anteriorities, which embody the very destruction of Atlantis, serve the population as shelter during future storms, actively blockading other havens. Those that choose to not choose between the sensation of drowning on dry land and the sensation of drowning in water are said, by Atlanteans in hushed voices, to be working inside the third event. The Bureau of Land Interpretation calls these, in an improbable triumph of bureaucratic wit, “the saps.”

Out in the world, empathic limitation structures the heart, the way sound and shadow structure eternity, the way color structures attention and accident. Is adaptation a value for those who happen to possess it? For whom is the deep a house? The third event, tropicalist and prehistorical, dwells in the voilerie—mending veils by day, tearing veils by night—eager to portend through overangelsness a way out of this disaster ambiance. The nearest utopia is overgrown with bromeliads and a
metaphysics of opaque essences. From its highest point, one can watch principalities conspiratorially flooded and sunk. Terrorized by the gaudy insurances of the elite, those born in the common colony use the past as a serum to treat—often unsuccessfully—transcendental sicknesses. Using the jingle, “but is modernity’s pursuit properly sensuous?” the past was peddled in snake-milk to the populace. Altanteans, reflecting later on this period, have said, “We felt the great past might mend a little if we bowed low enough, if we succumbed and gave homage.” But the non-Atlantean dead, too, have committed some prolix portion of the evil of this night, owing no less to their notoriously toothless intercontinentalism. Naively, these claimed that if the Atlanteans wish for theirs to no longer be a secret out of the past, they should simply resurrect it, with a few ethnic songs and dances or little spell sacks of pepper and moss. Made of exterior calm despite the misery of planets, the third event practices the circumvention of elegiac existence, anticipating the arrival of a placeless energy.
For now, the chicanery of rulers is a practice of ambiguation realized in burnings and revivals. Proclaiming that the pure crest of the idea ruins everything, they begin their séances by writing in the book of machinations that all shall be subdued in the common sorrow. They are involved in the integrity of farcical deadening and the ritual transformation of feeding blooms with rust. They commence to moaning in strange liquid tones, intoning that the territory of the sea, their domain, is set to increasing. They agree that the beliefs of the mass are like weather, but forced through uncertainly, such that their dispossession must become arrow-like. They make sacrifice to the serial opacity of the hardcore conduit, regaling in the people’s unbearable silence and fascination, held dihedral through throng and technique and private scandal. Their sessions invoke “Our lady of the wrought iron cemetery ornaments; Our lady of the unliberated capitols of suspect progress; Our lady of the no-less-ridiculous sexual arithmetic; Our lady of the hegemony of the limited fantasies of skin; Our lady of the teeth of the night in the mouths of the fisherman; Our
lady of the incomplete spirits of marshall law deployments; Our lady of the illegitimacy of non-market mediation; Our lady of the little wars and little military exercises; Our lady of the righteousness of corruptible love; Our lady of the zombified genealogy of guerilla science; Our lady of the tomorrows that sing in sub-prime keys; Our lady of the relentless whiteness of doom’s music; Our lady of the dull machetes of the deltaic populations; Our lady of the bad factories of indisputable goodness; Our lady of the revolt as a clumsy thief in the night.” They permit the ascension of a few chosen peasants, full of deeds but not thoughts, picked from among those who put small strokes of blood on the okra, committing themselves to the enormous bliss of Atlantean death. They despise the scythers, who receive the children of the workers blue in the gaslight. They have observed beggars full in their midsts, wondering why these do not take them by the throat or set fire to their houses, but wander instead through burnt cane muttering, “there ought to be magnolias somewhere in this dusk.”
Pauouelle says she has prophesied their meeting by “the water of these desires.” The fieldwork is the museum of their encounter. She begins her interview asking, “Do you saps believe in a deep form of life? Do eternal things endure it?” According to Pauouelle, the night is not premeditated, though its been going on for a long time. This woman is neither process nor procedure but one permanent thing: a disclosure, sumptuous and irremediable, as in tragedy. Her freedom is neither tender nor self-evident, constituted primarily by the habitual trespassing of demarcated wilderness, singing harmonies with locusts and eating honey like a ghost. Her days are calibrated by the growing of specific dark melons and brackish corn. In church, she genuflects against the pew as would a hunted body. Her losses are predominantly terrestrial. She privately interrogates the cultural consensus that all absence is supplemental. Her subjectivity resides before a portal managed by a legally designated retainer. In the grave dilemma of her solubility, she tattooed the word “refugee” on her upper thigh. Her capacity for autonomy is delimited by the
external obligation to curb the visible likeness of her will, thus prompting her will to go underground. She has a phobia of logistics’ primness, the frightful beige of data and quantification. Her groin pouts as if she keeps her love in it. Her most secret aspiration involves living inside the minor tide of history. Her thoughts negotiate the elucidation of what may lay beyond mere hope as motive counter-principal. For her, the outside is officially “unoccurring,” but hints of its existence show through the splendid and reeking falsification of origins. Despite her criticism of the hysterical parousia of her civilization’s unlikely resurrection, she consents to the strategic essentialism of believing in a heartland.

In Pauouelle’s dream she is herself in a market, having descended her mother from the trailer’s stilts. They agree to buy squash and cream to cook together. But as they enter all the stalls shut just as they approach. Angrily, Pauouelle reaches for the hanging plants on the walls and dashes them to the floor. Upon waking, she realizes that this dream has conjured a memory of her
mother telling her that before she was born her fetus was fed on only squash and cream. “Dreaming is like night work but of another order,” she says. “The dream speculates on what it can skim off of the bank of the body. The dream is a heist to which the dreamer is a cheeky accomplice.” Pauouelle believes the dream involves, not her decomposed familial love—as this would be the stuff of egoic analysis—but the unconscious problem of being born in the common colony, submitted to the desolate miracle of all the devils and all the saints, to the sexuality of the garden, and to the ovaries of the female sago palm, to the social uplift of the night, to the ethos of the ethnos who is one blood cut up in lengths, to the orchid moth whose name in Atlantean means, “memory of the future,” to the moth orchid whose name means “prophecy of the past,” and finally to the desperate medicinality of music to which the Atlanteans often incant the saying, “You’ve got to believe in the sound. It’s the one good thing that we’ve got.”
It is recourse to prayer and not to historicity that is disseminated as plot to salvage the floating wreck of fabled destruction. What in other geographies in recent times might be called “the intellectual,” cannot be reconciled by ethnographic translation, since the project of the humanization of Atlantean humanity, being uncreated, gleams oxymoronic. Rather, the word is idiomatic for a certain fragility that one associates with wounds that though scarred continue to reopen themselves in the opposite shape of duty. This condition was, as it occurred among the commoners, non-contagious. A viral version of the sickness spread among the governing classes with symptoms that would disappear within several months. It was occasionally asymptomatic. Like any other figure of excess seeking revelation in a world indifferent to questions and answers, to be intellectual in Atlantis would involve negotiating the general perception of one’s person as dragging around a body full of sybaritically perforated blood. Otherwise, the word for intellectual is used, though rarely, to describe thunder coming down in an unjustifiable meadow where
neither land nor water insists. Any love for the ideas of things is said to dis-encounter the problem of justice, rejecting the laborious melancholy of a non-collective rearticulation of bones and need. Individuality is assimilated to infrastructure or to a secret paranormality of the curse tropic. Its traces, however, seem to secrete themselves from the secret’s sleep, taking on the patina of a meta-theoretical element in the total climate. In this sense, the primary problematic concerning thought as vocation involves the non-contiguity of pleasure and the withholding of pleasure, that is, of sensation and entanglement, or what is known to the Altanteans as either “organ translucidity” or “desertification.” There is the intimacy of intellection and there is its contour as fleeting composition, which, however irreducible, produces a schema subtended by the fundamental bifurcation into, on the one hand, the bromidic hijinks of pure possibility, and on the other, the slanted rain of authentic miscalculation. “Cannot a beastly thing be analogous to a fine thing if both are apprehensions?” the archeologist remembers reading somewhere.
“I believe in little” Pauouelle says, “besides the cane, the oil and the third event.” To be from Atlantis, as the archeologist has come to understand it, is like being loved by something strange that has forgotten you, made bitter by a colossal fate. You are what the city for its own destiny wants to forget. It cannot contain your fantasy of re-racination, the southness of your feeling. It cannot contain the baroque incalculability of your having been unintended. It draws you, therefore, toward some incommensurate place you feel your private ruin might come to represent, if you are capable, in the process, of not ruining it. But what must be overcome is the a priori value of describing the event inside the salubrious provisionality of truth, invented in absence, as a phenomenon of ethnographic hijacking. When asked why she has not given up digging around for fragments of an epic memory in the kudzu covered colonial vegetation, the archeologist responds, “Because history is potential.” When she asks why Pauouelle spends her days ruminating upon the untidy gap between the signatures of desire made visible and the affirmation of the instruments of its
appearance, she replies, “Because one’s transformations, perennially overwrought in the unseasonal rottenness of the colony, will not take place in the mitigatory aura of even obscure light.” Gazing into a sheer tide of dubious solidarity, Pauouelle now sees how the archeologist, who will never feel herself to be an honest part of anything once the world of this sap’s womanhood has deserted her, came to sing Atlantean songs, with a mouth full of blood and cane, as if they were mirrors wherein she might be caught up forever in a slice of adaptation: I know they buried her body with others / Her sister and mother and five-hundred families / And will she remember me fifty years later / I wished I could save her in some sort of time machine / Know all your enemies / We know who our enemies are / Know all your enemies / We know who our enemies are.”
Cover image from cartographer Harold Fisk’s maps for his report “Geological Investigation of the Alluvial Valley of the Lower Mississippi River,” to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1944.