

From Weathering and undreamed Shores
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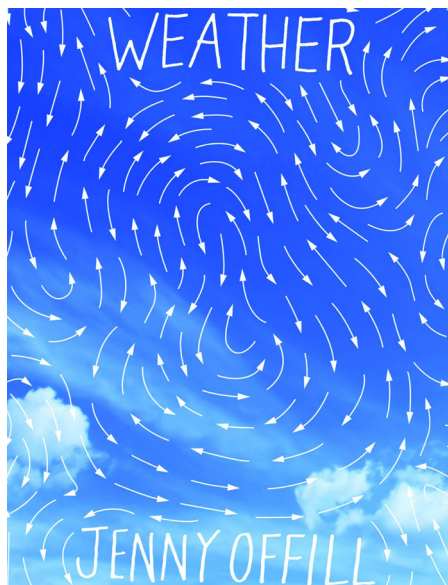
Abstract

When researching the history of the place where today's Swissmill corporation and the Swissmill Tower is located, I found seven stories that explain the past of the site and how and why the placement of this tower came to be. One story seems especially essential to me. That is the role which the Limmat and Sihl took part in the transformation of Zurich, the area of Escher-Wyss and Wipkingen but also the mill itself. The water as a bringer of transformation. First as a necessity that lead to settlement at the river arms close to the lake, then as power for milling, fulling etc. which was eventually taken over by steam engines. Lastly the harnessing of water powered electricity that provided energy for the whole industrial area around the Limmat.

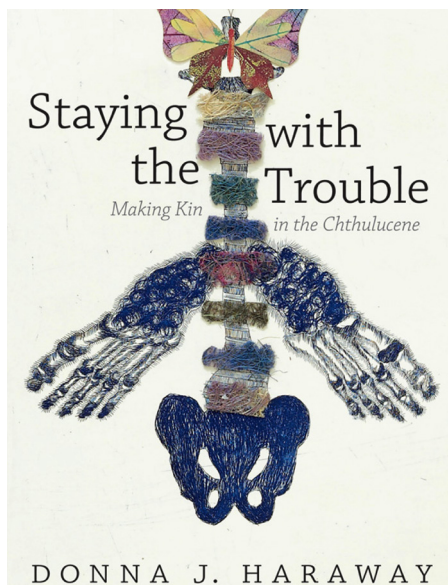
By looking into the history of water in Zurich I stumbled upon the founding myths of this city. In one of them Karl der Grosse meets a serpent and builds the Wasserkirche as a reminder for the significance of their encounter. For me this serpent is not a representation of christian mythology but it is the personification of the river which came to test us at a time when Zurich formed itself into a proper city. The story that unfolds is from the perspective of the river and how our actions over time affected it and us.



potential of VR and storytelling
-
not bound by restraint of reality



potential of leaning into fear
-
Zeitgeist nihilism leaving us paralysed



potential of storytelling
-
rekindling with our surroundings

Topics of interest

As very well illustrated in the book by *Weather* by Jenny Offill, the times we are living in are dominated by uncertainty and fear towards the future, leaving especially people in my generation with a feeling of nihilism towards it. But instead of staying paralysed by it, there is some potential by tapping into the this fear. What happens if catastrophe is happening how can we adapt and change instead of holding onto a version of the past?

A theme that is also prevalent in the book *Staying with the trouble* by Donna Haraway. A way out for her is to rekindle with our surroundings by rediscovering our stories and starting to tell them again. From potential of story telling to the way we tell those stories. We live in a digital age. So working in this realm we are not bound to the restraints that reality forces upon us. But when building and designing we can incorporate different elements like Sci-fi and fantasy.



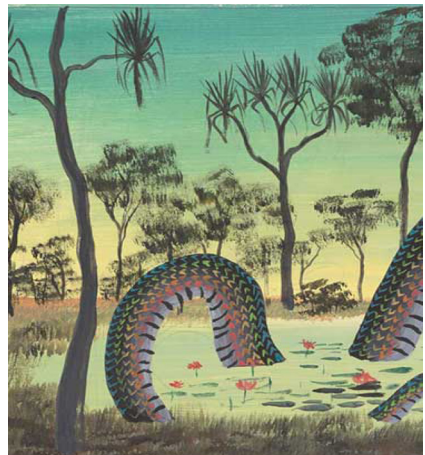
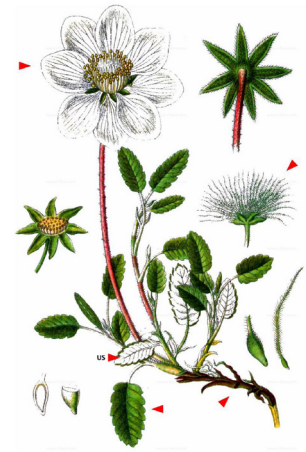
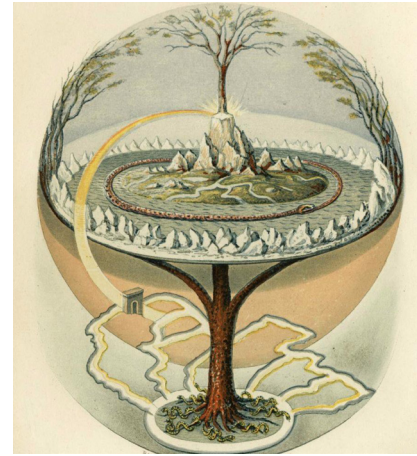
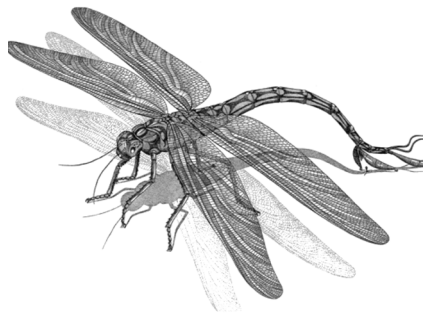
Founding myth of the Wasserkirche

When Emperor Charles lived in Zurich in the house called “zum Loch”. At the place of execution of the two saints Regula and Felix, he had a column erected with a bell at the top and a rope attached to it, so that anyone could pull it who demanded that the law be administered whenever the emperor sat at the midday meal.

One day the bell rang, but the servants who went there found no one at the rope. The bell rang again in one direction. The emperor ordered them to go back and look for the cause. Then they saw that a large serpent was approaching the rope and pulling the bell. Dismayed, they reported this to the emperor, who immediately stood up and wanted to do justice to the animal, no less than to the people.

After the worm bowed reverently before the prince, he led him to the bank of a water, where on its nest and on its eggs sat an oversized toad. Charles examined and decided the dispute of the two animals in such a way that he condemned the toad to the fire and justified the serpent. This sentence was pronounced and executed.

A few days later, the serpent came back to the court, bent down, moved to the table and lifted the lid of a cup standing on it. In the cup it put a precious stone from its mouth, bowed again and went away. In the place where the nest of the serpent had stood, Charles had a church built, which was called Wasserkirche.



a river
a serpent

electric chimes
greens

prism of colours
dragonflies

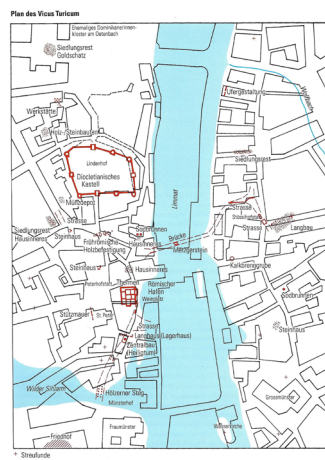
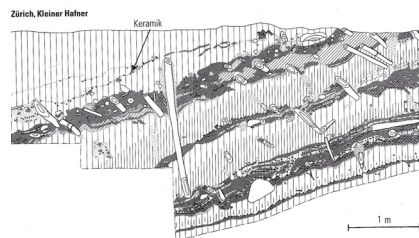
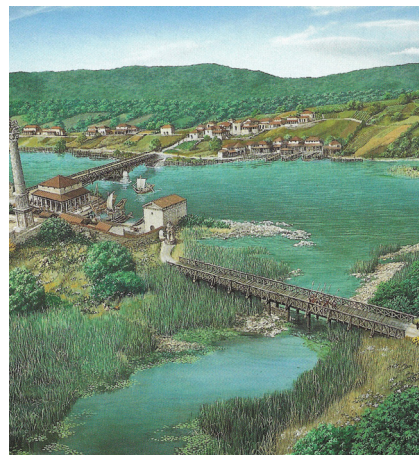
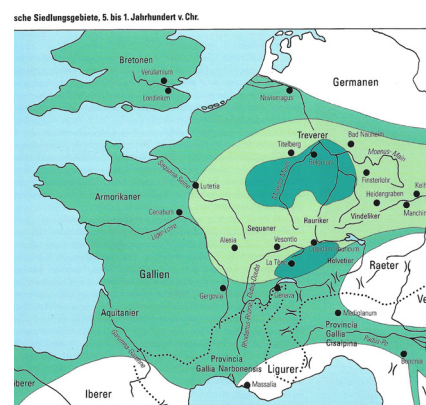
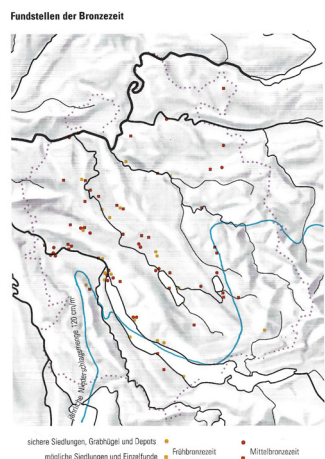
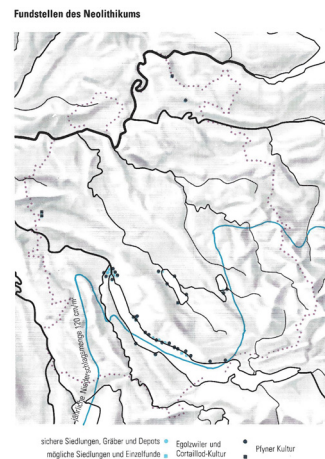
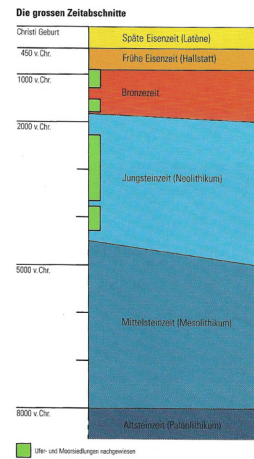
From Weathering and undreamed Shores - Tales of a Serpent in Zurich -

A river
A serpent

I have been here
since aeons
whirling between times
effervescent between shores

I remember the ancient dragonfly
on my current
it observed me
and perceived me as the prisms of colour that I am

I remember when nature formed itself
between frozen times
the only noise
electric chimes between the greens



I remember your kind
 which settled here before
 countless times
 Times you don't even remember
 Times you simply accept
 them as vanished
 There is curiosity
 Interest in our own past
 Stone
 Copper
 Bronze
 Iron
 Times when the temperature rose and fell
 when ice and water moved and shaped the continent
 shifting Shores and Places
 first Tribes and then eventually Empires

stone
copper

bronze
iron

shifting shores
tribes and empires



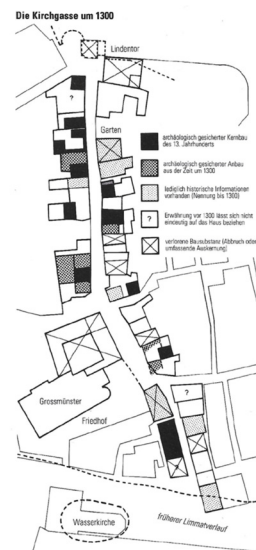
Back then I enjoyed you
Found you bemusing
and when you took on a shape that seemed to last
I came to test you
The column
and the bell
It seemed an invitation
I could not resist

He made it seem as if
he could see like the dragonflies
and hear the electric chimes
He made it seem as if
you cared
for more then your kind
but for everything!
Many people came and went
but it appeared as if he could
speak for many

And you passed
the test
when passing judgment beyond the perception of your species
So I giftet a part of myself
a stone
moulded in the depth beneath my bed
pressure and heat
shaped when tossed and whirled in my current
an irresistible force
a gem
for you to fuel your future
It seemed he understood the present I gave you
leaving me to think
that you would tune in
and collude with me

the serpent
and a test

Karl der Grosse



You went on
 to built this church
 for us
 for our story
 But now it rests as a myth
 this place
 built on a river
 lost its meaning
 This place of worship changed
 it became part of the daily
 your daily existence
 Eventually
 the story became a fairytale
 The gem vanished
 between the veering of wheels
 which became more valuable to you

founding myth
 Wasserkirche Zurich



from
agricultural society

to
industrial society

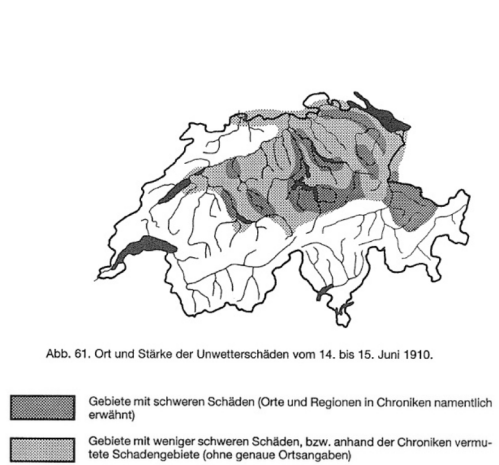
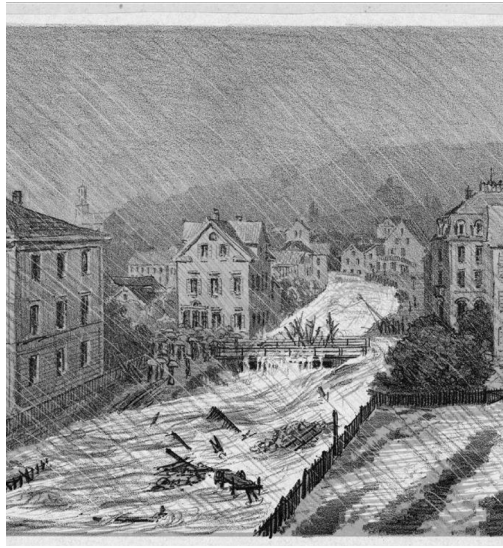
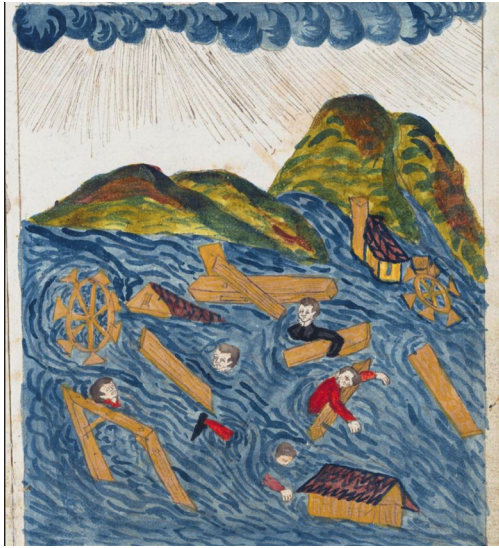
Back when you took on
a solid form
a structure that meant to stay

You needed grain
So I gave you water

You needed mills
So I gave you water

You wanted progress
So I gave you water
- I gave you myself

And you?
channeled
bend me in shapes
poured and polluted
faeces and poison
rammed pillars into my sides
into my middle
Why are you so self involved?



I wanted to talk
but no one could hear me
the dragonflies
the grass
the gem lost in the gravel around me
Then with every bend you forced upon me
I got angry
a squirming, swelling current
Yet you still corrected



So now?

Now I am leisure
You want me to be
a simple delight
for you to relish
in

Now you erect buildings
which embody your hubris
The idea that you'll last forever
This tower
built as a cathedral of your existence
standing tall
guarding grain
a fortress in your image



Now you found the gem
beneath the foundations of the old
when reaching deep into the soil
when excavating my sides
to erect the the new

Now you constructed this shell
which has life inside
life that I gave you to begin with
concealed in the heights of you garden
shielded from eyes
exploiting it only for yourself

You think you made me obsolete
but you know
the weather will turn
you can feel it
already
Yet you still don't listen



a girl
an agent

eva
a depiction

I could first taste it
taste it in the water
a linger of change once I swallowed it

Then I could feel the wind
the gales changing its tune

Then I could hear a chime
conveyed between the green

Then I could see in a peculiar way
rainbow coloured

Then I heard a voice
it seemed stirred, somber?
growing louder
urgent
around the column at the water
Who is it?

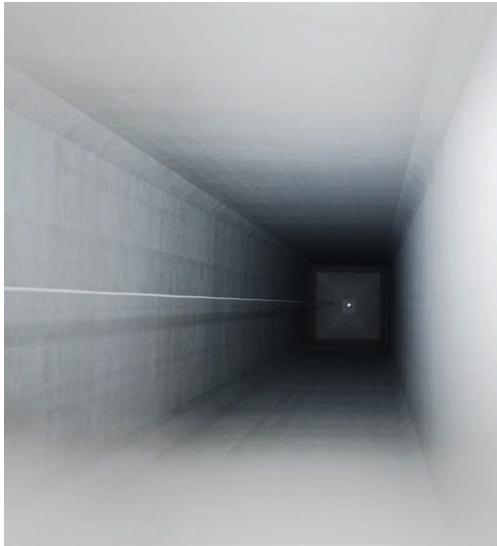
It made me question
are there still spells at the river?
Finally
I found a story
Above the grain
above the machines
milling live
in this persiflage of a garden
What does it mean?



a river
a serpent

Who is she?
Why can she notice
the colours?
Why can she hear
the chime?
Why can she follow
me?
Is it a ruse?
Will it matter?

Have you found
what is hidden behind the concrete walls?
Will you help pass judgement
one more time?

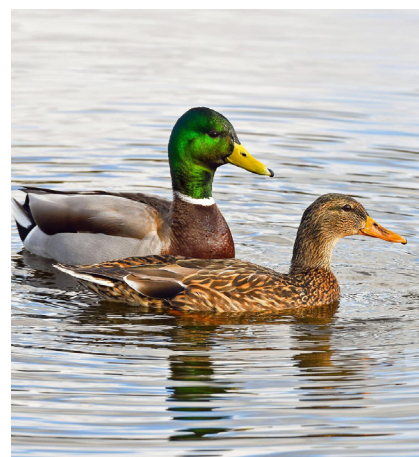
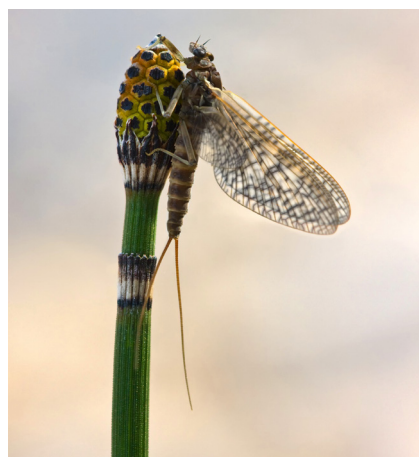
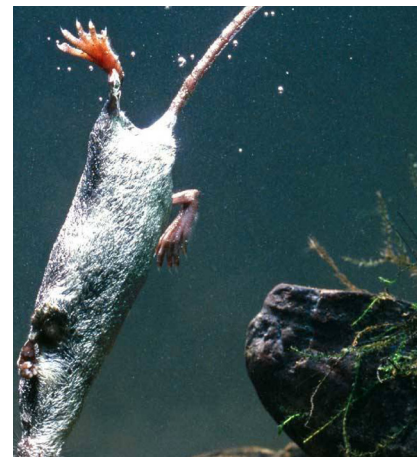


eva
a depiction

Again
lured back into the fortress
I found myself wandering
between the tentacles
the inner organs of this tower
the grain cursing through its veins

Everything seems alive
fuelled by more than fossil liquid
the blinking of machines
echoing the brilliance
of its origin
above

So you want it back?
Revoke the gem?
Retake this place?



forgotten industries
and ecosystems

are there still spells
at the Limmat?

Once before
no one thought
back when cloth veiled over the land
that it would come to halt
stop swaying
But the world stopped moving
for a moment
and so did the cloth
Then everything was scrambled for bits
What is left?
Not even a memory of that time
while the world moved on

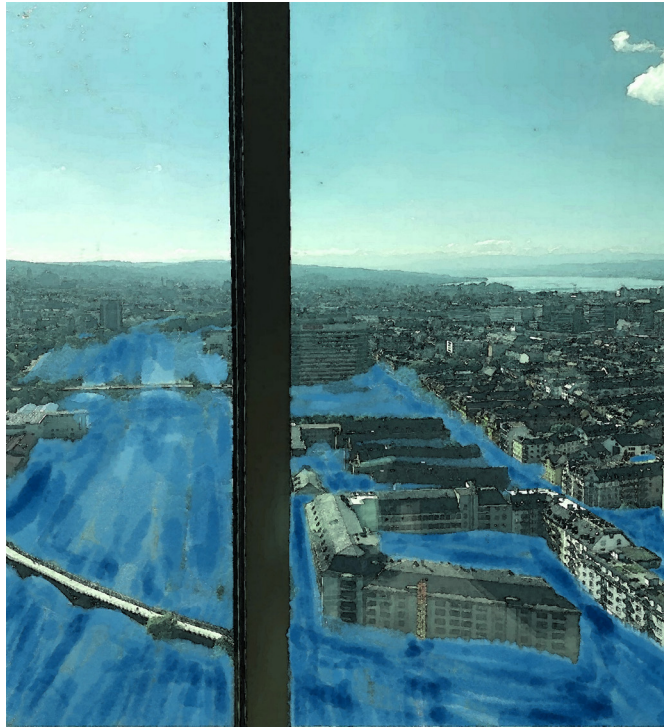
So this time?
when returning what is owed
What will happen?

This time
this tower
will stand
A concrete version of our existence
Will it become a myth
now that the serpent comes back?

If you are built for a single purpose
can you ever change
or do you become a leftover?

You were part of a process
You are a process
You live in a process
but what happens when this process is gone?

To which story will we pray?
Which story will we tell?



Zurich
Sihl
Limmat
It became a lake
It changed everything
Rain fell
endlessly
It wasn't a day
It wasn't a year
but every time the serpent appeared
we tried - instead of listening -
to tame
to controll
and when we did start to follow
it was too late

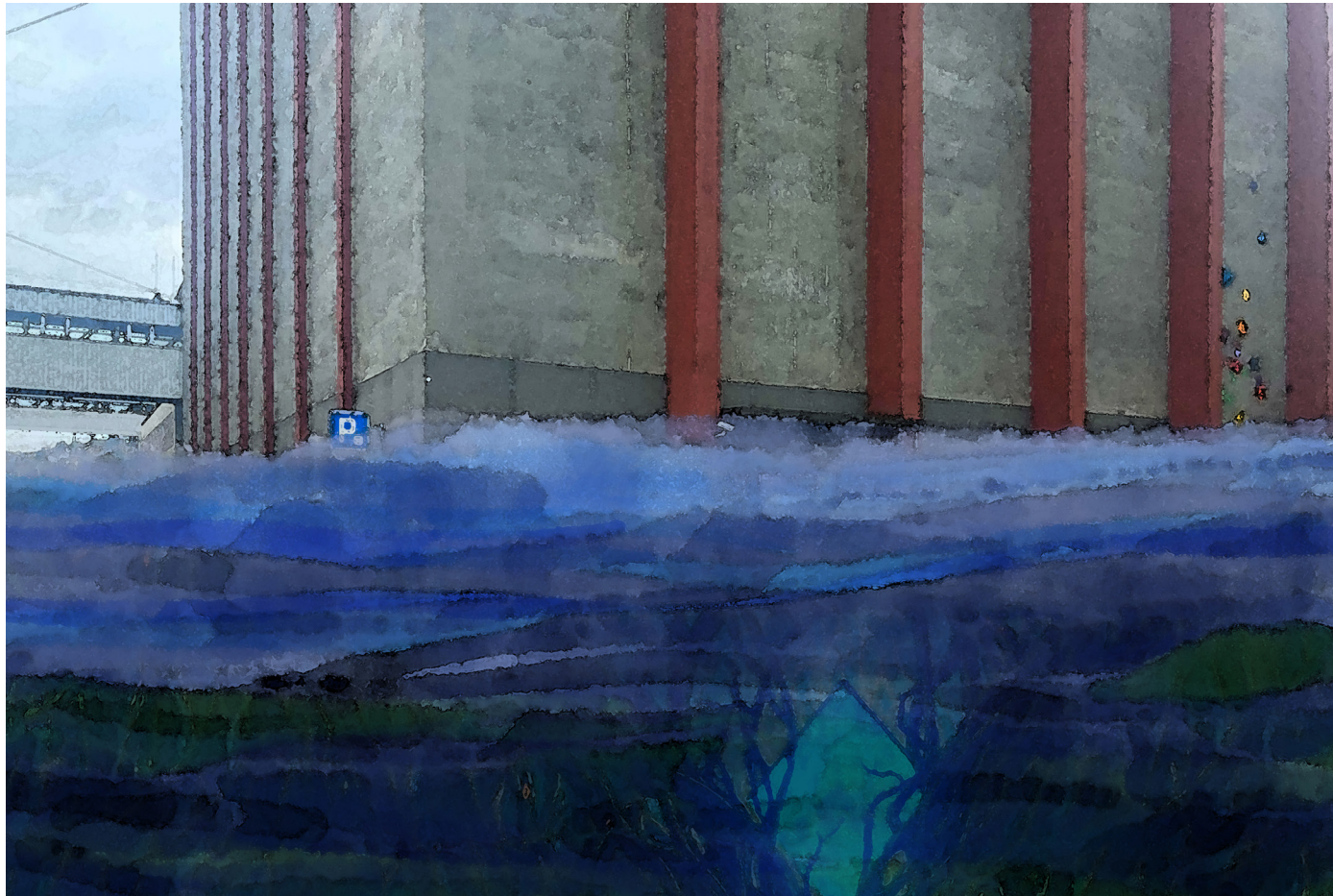


I can see
this tower
A residue
from a time
when it was built as a cathedral
standing tall
guarding food

But still you can't reach to take what's yours
the only thing left to do
is to return
what was in the garden
let the gem be dissolved
fed to the serpent
incorporated back into its body

it wasn't a day
it wasn't a year

which story
will we tell?



I climbed the empty stairs
inside the column
past the bell
past the echoing bones
the pipes
the floury dust

You used to draw grain
now you draw water
the serpent
crawled inside of you
took part of you over
gushing and engulfing

Now I am standing
on top of undreamed shores
on top of this column
the serpent flowing, whirling, sliding around
what happens now?

The wind rose
The water rose
To live we must try

