

A REPETITION NOTEPAD.

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Asterisms are used in astronomy as starting points to find other fainter stars and constellations in the sky. An alignment of stars forms a geometric figure. I want to consider my thoughts as asterisms and by connecting reflections to each other, enable you to navigate among the stars.

*I have always enjoyed counting the stars,
one can easily lose count and start again,
it is a pleasant repetition
one can go on and on,
you can always add one more,
I've never tired of playing this game, not since I was
a child,
it relaxes me,
I enjoy this time,
making beads, I see so many little stars.*

INTRODUCTION

The sidereal day is the period taken by the Earth to perform an entire rotation around its axis.

It determines the transition from day to night, repeating 365 days a year.

Like in the game of counting stars, if you start thinking about repetition you begin a chain of associations that can go on forever.

Our own body, it survives through repetitive actions: the beating of the heart, for example, or the frequency of breathing.

We see natural cycles everywhere, including the life process of a butterfly.

These are pure repetitions creating harmonious rhythms, in a chain-like pattern, whether in our body or among different organisms within a system.

This essay is a union of words in succession as I create a chain by writing.

Interconnecting stories, research and memories, written and visual.

They create a language.

I discovered my own interior rhythm, even in this.

It became a daily practice, similar to keeping a diary, somewhat like weaving.

By reading my notes I feel we share intimacy.

It is deeply intimate.

Never have I experienced such a feeling before.

I'm smiling as I'm sharing it.

Having narrated this chain of thoughts, I have discovered a way to enrich my working process, my practice, to understand what repetition means to me, while uncovering and analyzing its various aspects, I have found that delving into its limitless realm is like looking at the sky.

I am looking at repetition with a gaze I had never used before, associating it with other practices in which I see the same beneficial aspects.

I had never assumed that prayer, mantras, dance, ritual, community, could take me to the same place that the beads took me.

I had never considered that repetition can be union.

It seems my sky is full of stars I can count.



01

LOOKING INTO BEADS

MANTRA

By definition a mantra, in Sanskrit, is considered a tool of the mind, a repetitive formula of sounds and/or words intended to free and protect our mind from thoughts; specifically, an harmonic, repetitive and constant sound capable of channelling thoughts, inducing a deep meditation.

In my practice, gestures take the place of words.

MY HEALING MANTRA

I choose the thread, cut a piece and match the end, I then thread the end through the eye of the needle. The thread is soft and runs through my hands. I take a bead, the first of many, and thread it through the needle, which is thin enough to fit into its little hole and create a knot.

I start counting, counting the number of beads I want to use to create a line. With the tip of the needle I take one from the container and add it to the first of the existing line, just like when you dip your hand into a bag of fresh beans.

I count to see if the number of beads is even or odd and start again. I begin the second line and I continue, the same precise movements. I approach the

jar, pick up a bead with the tip of the needle, bring my hand back to the bead, insert the needle inside and pull upwards until the thread has completely come out. Continuing the same rhythm, I insert the needle inside the next bead until the whole thing takes a shape, and you feel the material in your hands, It feels good. The beads have a certain weight, like embroidery, or crochet, you can go on and on adding material. Like in counting, there is no end, Looking into my practice I find this is the first step to delve into the concept of repetitions. The repetitions of gestures I'm describing, allow me to find my personal rhythm, and create my own cycle, just as it happens within our body. By meticulously repeating these movements, I create a circular space of time, in which I deeply connect with myself. Repetitive doing, becomes a mantra, a meditation, producing a spiritual sense of time which calms me down, and allows me to go slowly, as slowly as the stars seem to move across the night sky. This slow pace becomes a moment of care and dedication where there is space for detail. It becomes a practice which involves emotions. I like the way my practice makes me feel. It feels like I don't want to lose my rhythm any more.

I call my practice a healing mantra.

SHARING A MANTRA

Looking at the practice of other artists, I find a similar form of creation in Caroline Broadhead's creations. Observing one of her works, "Magic Carpet", I understand how Caroline, just like me, invests a lot of time in her working process by always repeating the same gestures.

"Bead embroidery, for example, requires concentration, but it is also a work that with its repetitive actions has meditative qualities in that satisfying nature of stitching stitch after stitch or threading bead after bead is all about organized rhythm and giving yourself time." ¹

The "Magic Carpet" " is a carpet made of glass beads: it is a representation of the flying carpet, made during Covid time, a creative attempt to escape with imagination, representing at the same time the fragility and vulnerability of an object placed on the floor, symbolizing the consequence of stepping on a fragile surface, as a metaphor of our actions." I'm intrigued by Caroline thoughts, the way she uses her works considering the human scale, the environment and the space surrounding us. I feel that for Caroline, as with myself, repetitive practice is equally as important.

We share a process of creating that requires time and dedication, allowing us to feel the same concept of slow time that I mentioned, and the same satisfaction in the process of creating.

The material itself assumes another fundamental aspect, linking us to a traditional technique, and an intimate knowledge of the material, and I think we are both interested in relating this to a human scale, where the body is considered as a complete whole.

Perhaps Caroline and I both share the same "healing mantra"

A PRAYER, A BEAD

I read that Mantras resemble prayers, and Catholic Rosaries can be considered as mantras. Now I realize that there are different types of repetition that constitute a meditative practice.

I like to feel that connection.

When I was little, it was usual for me to spend time with my grandparents, there was a time of day that I remember precisely when my grandmother, sitting in her armchair, would grab one of her rosaries and start praying. What was amazing to me, beyond the attraction I felt for that object, was that my grandmother, would close herself off in a space of time where she no longer existed for anyone else, that was her moment, no questions, no phone calls, no distractions. I remember her hands running through the beads, and the whispers of her voice. It was a moment of tenderness and care. Now I am quite sure of the reasons why my grandmother, did not and still does not permit an instance to renounce this time.

*Behind a moment of faith, and prayer, there is something else,
And I can say with certainty,
that it is the only time in the day when my grandmother allows time for herself.*

I think that for my grandmother saying of the rosary is a practice akin to a healing mantra as well as a belief. Now, I find it curious how my practice approaches this moment.
It seems that we are taking equal pleasure in owning this space of time.

Doesn't it feel like we're both meditating?

SHARE BEADS

I discovered with immense astonishment that the meaning of bead comes from prayer.

“From the Middle English *bede*, « a prayer » « a bead for counting prayers »
From Old English, *bedu*, *bed* « a request », *entreaty* « prayers »
Modern English, *Bead* (plurals *beads*)”²

Likewise, the Rosary, taken from Latin *rosarium*, “rose bush” is a devotional and contemplative prayer typical of the rite of the Catholic Church and is composed of a set of beads strung on a string.

At the same time it is tangible means that serves to mark and accompany the rhythm of prayer, based on the interspersed repetition of the “AVE MARIA” and the “PADRE NOSTRO”.

I feel intrigued that my grandmother and I share beads as a material to conduct our meditative practices.

I see the beads running through her hands.

INTIMATE TIME

I like to consider my practice, like prayer, as moment of peace and serenity that distracts from the worries of daily life. It is an intimate way of perceiving time.

rhythm and time return to me

GIVING YOURSELF TIME

Prayers, mantras, and my practice adapt that “giving yourself time” that Caroline talks about. It’s about how time and dedication turn into the satisfaction of seeing something grow, and to see this growth, and to maintain the meditation, you have to go slowly.

You cannot expect time to flow quickly, nor do you want it too.

FEELING TIME LIKE PRIESTS

This feeling of time reminds me of a romantic story I heard on a podcast, in which Marco Pesatori, an Italian astrologer, tries to explain the development of astrology by “imagining” the conditions necessary for the first examples of stargazing practices. According to the narrator, the main aspect of these conditions was the abundance of “unproductive” or “free” time, which allowed the priests of an ancient society sufficient time to note the slow cycles of the stars.⁸ I like to imagine myself sitting next to the priests, moving my gaze between high and low, between the stars and the beads, until finally I too can mature slowly and allow slowness to guide me to my own rhythm, just as it allowed the priests to understand the cycles of the stars.

It must have taken a long time to understand how the sky moves.

This slowness reassures me.

BRINGING THE STARS CLOSER

The need to go slowly, and to appropriate a technique that allows me to do so, I think arises as a counterpoint to the frenetic pace of contemporary time.

I have the feeling that we are always rushing and I feel my breath is quickening.

I believe that this acceleration of time is a problem of contemporary society.

I'm reading in the book "Alienation and Acceleration" by Hartmut Rosa, professor of sociology and political science, where the author maintains the notion of

"How empirical studies show that people in contemporary society feel a strong pressure and complain about the scarcity of time. This feeling seems to have increased in recent decades, making the thesis plausible that the digital revolution and the process of globalization lead to a further wave of social acceleration."³

Again,

"Individuals feel compelled to keep up with the speed of change they experience in their technological and social worlds in order to avoid losing potentially valuable options and connections and maintain their competitiveness."⁴

My practice takes me away from the need to feel connected, and by doing, I forget the need to run, the feeling I get is pleasant.

STARLINK

The words of Hartmut Rosa make me think of Starlink, Elon Musk's new internet project, which aims to place 12,000 satellites in low orbit around the earth to provide internet everywhere.

Starlink an "appropriation" of nature, to make time more industrious, more productive still, seems to me to be going in the stubbornly opposite direction of where I want to go with my stars.

I am asking myself if all this speed always brings benefits.

*The natural rhythm of my breathing has changed.
I am not sure I like having 'more efficient stars'.
By weaving my beads I follow my rhythm.*



02

MEANS OF SALVATION

03



RHYTHM, BODY, VULNERABILITY

I keep thinking about the slowness of my practice, and the speed of the world “outside” and their consequences, and I want to quote again the words of Hartmut Rosa:

“The fear of modern high-speed stasis has accompanied modern society throughout its history, motivating cultural illnesses such as acedia, melancholy, boredom and neurasthenia, or in our days various forms of depression. The experience of inertia arises or intensifies when changes and dynamics in an individual’s life or in the social world are no longer experienced as elements within a chain of development with meaning and direction, i.e. as elements of progress, but as directionless and frenetic changes.”

I think back to my grandmother’s prayer time, to the priests, to the women embroidering beside them, to the beads coming together, and to Caroline’s words.

“The satisfying nature of embroidering stitch after stitch or stringing bead after bead is all about organised rhythm and giving yourself time.”

It seems to me that these practices, by their very nature, bring with them the progress Hartmut speaks of, by increasing a sense of satisfaction, they become beneficial practices for the individual and for the community.

Reflecting on this I want to connect with Clare Hunter, British textile artist and curator.

In her book "The Threads of Life", Clare reflects on the importance of embroidery and sewing as means of expression. I could almost call them "means of salvation."

In a chapter entitled "Fragility", Clare describes how sewing was used by women in psychiatric hospitals as a way to survive, to communicate with the outside world, to stay in touch with themselves and to give rhythm to their days:

"The embroidery of Elizabeth, Agnes and Lorina is not an episodic liberating outlet. They all devote hours, days, weeks, even months to their anomalous texts; Elizabeth resorts to the sampler which in her hands becomes a tool to confess her moral failures, Agnes deliberately accumulates sloppily embroidered words to express and exorcise her mental illness, Lorina uses bright colors to make her words stand out."⁵

Three fragile women who in sewing have found a way to witness their feelings, soothe their restless spirits,

feel the satisfaction of seeing something grow and stay in touch with themselves.

The time devoted to the practice turns into emotional involvement.

I am fascinated by the fact that the "suffering body" of these women finds relief in the making, as if it rediscovers a sense of direction.

The repetitive gesture becomes a place of comfort and a way to gain deeper intimate knowledge.

Making becomes a direction.

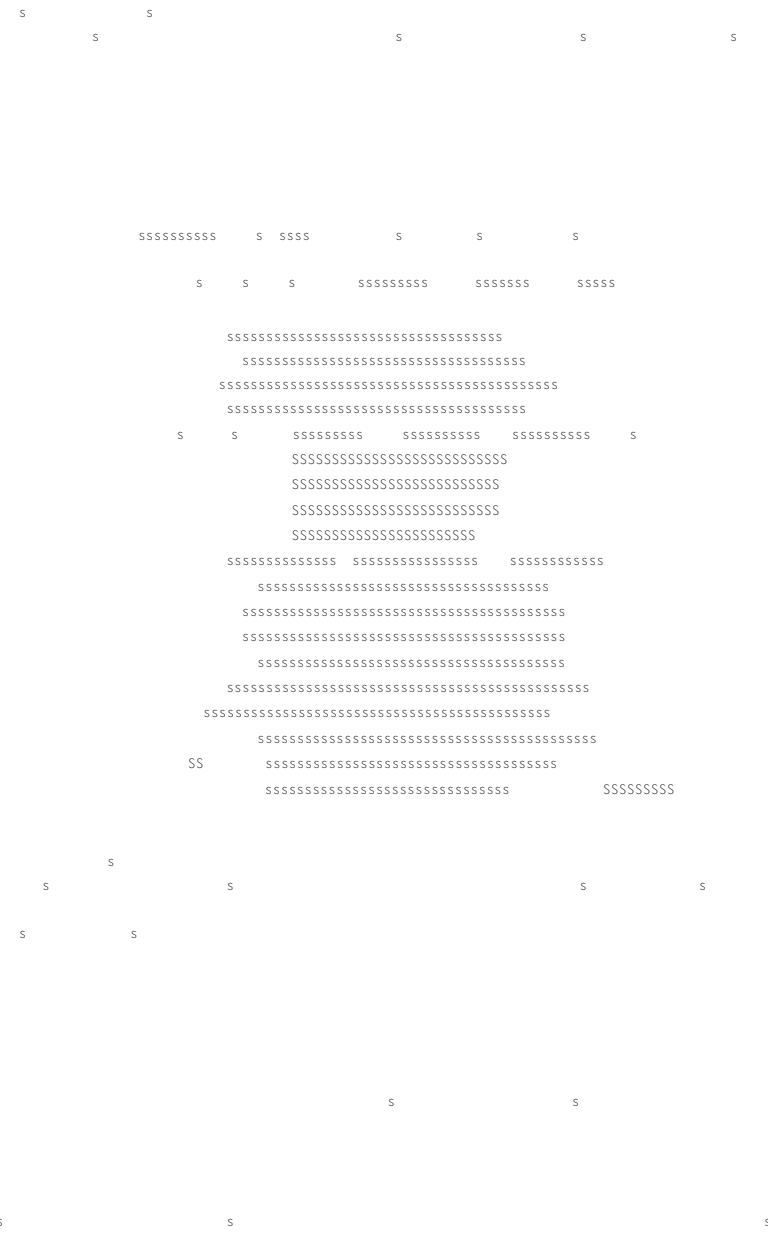
REPAIR THE DAMAGE

Reflecting on Vulnerability, I want to quote Louise Bourgeois, French sculptor and artist, who in one of her books, "Blue Days and Pink Days" writes:

"When I was growing up, all the women in my house were using needles. I've always had a fascination with the needle, the magic power of the needle. The needle is used to repair the damage. It's a claim to forgiveness. It is never aggressive, it's not a pin." ⁶

Again using the needle is a form of "repairing the damage", it works even for me. Like when gluing parts of a broken vessel back together, the needle is the glue that keeps me intact, a way to take a distance from "outside rumors" and being more connected to my feelings.

*Perhaps the needle can be a cure for modern acceleration?
A moment of relief? a deeper breath?*





04

AN EMPTY SPACE

A VULNERABLE HOLE

I am looking at the stars, standing next to the priests and in this quiet atmosphere, I'm thinking about the power of the needle, its ability to repair, to unite and I wonder what makes a bead a bead?

I realize that what makes a bead a bead is a hole.

And what makes a bead fascinating, at least to me, is that through the hole it can be joined.

Then needle returns to my thoughts

I'm thinking about what it might suggest if we consider the hole as a metaphor for the fragility of people, it is the same fragility mentioned in Clare's chapter, and the modern illness mentioned by Hartmut, a wound that reveals our vulnerability, a sign of our limitation. We might think that being joined through the hole, just as I join beads, might be a way of sharing our vulnerability, a new way of being in the world with others. A way of holding people together, "the elements within a chain of development with meaning and direction."

What would it be like if we were united by a thread?

THE SAME VULNERABLE HOLE CAN JOIN PEOPLE

If this thread passing through the hole joined one person to another just as I join one bead after another, it would create a network, a weaving, a whole, just like the union of priests, or a group of women who meet on the doorstep to sew and eventually we would begin to observe a community of people, those elements of a chain we were talking about.

I like to call this chain community.

“A community is a group of people united by social, linguistic and moral relationships, organisational ties, common interests and customs.”⁷

It fascinates me to think that my practice can create this connection, what if beads symbolically take the place of people? Or vice versa? If meditative practices come together?

The fragility of the thread I use to weave would be strengthened, like the light of nearby stars.

Even the whisper of a hundred repeated prayers is stronger than one.

Now I start thinking about people together.

What if my practice could change man's relationship with others? Bring them together?

BETWEEN SPACE

RITUALS CREATE COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY CRATE RITUALS

There is an image in my head where the prayers are multiplied.

And where stars, beads and people come together.

Where my idea of community begins to take shape.

The Marian Procession is the torchlight procession that takes place on the 25th of March each year in Lourdes.

It is a spiritual practice that pilgrims from all over the world share together. It is a nocturnal walk, a moment of recollection, in which each torch carried by the pilgrim represents a prayer.

Looking at the images of the torchlight procession, I see the prayers expanding, I see the stars, I see the beads forming and I see the people.

Just as the rosary is made up of beads that follow one another, the Marian procession creates a union of people who share a “creed” and gather together.

I see in this procession, a community of people.

A ritual, which by its very nature repeats itself, creating aggregation.

I like rituals, because rituals create community.

IF THE HOLE DANCES IN A RITUAL

My thoughts are starting to converge.

Speaking of rituals, people, community, vulnerability and rhythm, I think of the Taranta.

Since ancient times, dance has been part of rituals as a moment of aggregation, both in ceremonies and in folk festivals, it has always represented an opportunity for people in a community to come together.

Dance is a rhythmic discipline through which our bodies express themselves.

In my opinion, the Taranta is one of the most fascinating folk dances; it is a way to observe how a community is created and how the repetitive rhythm of our bodies once again becomes a beneficial experience. The Taranta, a typical southern Italian dance, has become a cultural ritual.

The myth evolved concerning women “saved” who were believed to suffer from an inner malaise, which popular belief attributed to the bite of a spider, specifically the Taranta.

The traditional “cure” is choreographic music therapy, during which the subject is brought into a trance-like state during frenzied dance sessions, resulting in a phenomenon that has been called “musical exorcism.”

Through dance and the exhausting repetition of body movements, the woman’s body is brought to liberation. Tarantism, or dance, allowed psychic conflicts of the unconscious to be drained and reintegrated into the socio-cultural order.

These therapeutic rites were considered “hypnotising devices” capable of inducing a state of trance.

As the Italian anthropologist historian of religions and philosopher Ernesto de Martino writes in his book, “The Land of Remorse” “In the context of symbolic imitation, the Tarantines say they feel “broken”, “crashed”, “minced”, “broken”, “plotted” or “injured”, “bored” i.e. affected by a deep tedium of self and things.”⁸

The feeling of the Tarantati, brings me back to the “suffering bodies” of Clare Hunter’s women, and the contemporary illness cited by Hartmut Rosa’s.

Dance, like the needle, is a form of “repairing the damage”, it reconnects the person with the inner self, and by reconnecting with the inner self with the whole self it brings the individual closer to others.

The Taranta, for me, is a link in the chain, it is a repetition that “saves” the body and unites people.

I feel like my practice has turned into a dance

DANCE, DANCE, DANCE

*I once did this dance,
even though I had not been bitten by the Taranta.
It was magic,
I let my body fill with holes,
I reached an invisible connection.
I remember there were so many people around me, we were
cheerful
we smiled together.*

ZOOM IN AND OUT : PEOPLE AS BEADS

Thinking about people moving together in a contemporary practice, I want to talk about the work of Mia Habib, a Norwegian dancer, performer and choreographer. In the performance "All, a physical form of protest", Mia investigates the body in protest, the human mass and its strength through the repetitive action of walking and running in a circle as a meditative practice. An excerpt from Mia's interview with the New York Times,

"The play, which features people of all ages, focuses on the pedestrian actions of walking and running. The group effort is meditative: we can

experience something together, which can quickly lead us to another energy because we don't have to concentrate so much on this action. The multiplicity of nudes has the capacity to become almost abstract, as if they were just lines or shapes in motion. And when enlarged? You see really unique details: our body is the most individual thing we have, right? But when you shrink it down, it all looks the same, and I think that's very interesting: a mass unifies, but it's still made up of these singular personalities."⁹

Mia's way of thinking brings me back to Carolilne's work, after all they both use practices with a meditative purpose, which take time, and involve the body, the union of human bodies like the union of beads reinforces the same practice.

"A mass unites, but it is still composed of these singular personalities."

Beads and people exchange, they can be counted endlessly like the stars in the sky.

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GROW IN THE SAME DIRECTION

PARTICIPATORY RHYTHM

*Have you ever watched canon boat rowers for a while?
Since I have lived here, I have done so several times.
What fascinates me is the synchronism of the movement,
which seems so light and effortless.
I must say that just by observing them I get a pleasant
feeling of calm.
Recently, a friend of mine started practicing this sport.
He told me that when you get into the water,
and you start moving,
repeating the same movement over and over again,
your thoughts become null.
That's how you keep the rhythm.
He also told me that the most incredible thing,
is to see how all the members of the rowing team
suddenly move spontaneously,
following the same rhythm.*

*It seemed to me that he was describing what I have been
making notes about.*

THE MISSING LINK IN THE CHAIN

In rowing, as in rituals, as in the performance of Taranta and Mia, and as Hartmut argues, people intertwine with each other, they become elements of a chain that move a mechanism. When this mechanism does not take place, we lose control and instead a sense of dissatisfaction is generated, which Hartmut, in his essay, goes on to describe:

“Dynamic change is perceived when episodes of change add up to a kind of growth, progress or history, while the perception of stasis is the consequence of experiencing episodes of alteration, transformation and variation without purpose, unconnected and random. according to this reading, things change but do not develop, “going nowhere”, so what leads to the pathology of depression on an individual level can also generate the feeling of the “end of History” in the collective cultural perception of time.”¹⁰

This thought relates me to the sense of alienation generated by the contemporary capitalist system and Marx's thesis that

“Since workers under capitalist conditions do not own what they produce, they are alienated from

the products of their labour. Moreover, since they cannot determine the ends, means and forms of production, they are also alienated from the process of labour, that is, from the very process that forms and constitutes their whole being. Finally, they are alienated from nature, which they treat only as raw material to be economised, as an object to be modeled and designed. This means that the relationship with labour has become simply an external means of existence, just a way to make money, and workers considered only part of a production line.”¹¹

Again, Max argues,

“capitalist modernity would produce social conditions in which subjects would be severely limited in their relations with “the world” and would be alienated from the subjective, objective and social world.”¹²

Thus, human action becomes an end in itself, disconnected from its products, nature and other human beings. There is no longer a sharing of time and space. One no longer rows in the same direction. One loses that satisfaction of doing of which Caroline speaks, one loses the community action of rituals, the sense of sharing of prayer.

In observing Caroline's work, I feel connected to man and his existence, his traditions and his history. This is the reason why I like to think of my practice as a way of re-learning to be in proximity with ourselves and others. As Hartmut says,

“the way we relate to ourselves and the way we relate to the world are mutually dependent, if we do not feel ourselves, we cannot transform the world adaptively.”¹³

I feel even closer to beads, I feel even closer to the stars.



09

FEELING AS A ROWER

Right now, I am holding the oar, the rowers are moving.
I want to join them in the movement, to see where we
can go.

If I understand correctly, from what my friend told me,
I will spontaneously follow their flow.

All I have to do is jump into their rhythm,
and repeat it for as long as possible.

KEEPING THE ACCOUNT

I am curious to see if my practice can bring people
closer together, if it can turn into a ritual, a dance,
if it can sew people together, reverse the beads, grant
a prayer, create a chain between heaven and earth.

I can say now, that I believe even more, that once you
have created a harmonious rhythm in your body, you can
expand it into the different organisms of a system, and
repeat it while maintaining the rhythm.

I've never tired of counting the stars

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IMAGES

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<https://sciencephotogallery.com/featured/constellation-of-ursa-major-the-great-bear-pekka-parvainen.html>
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