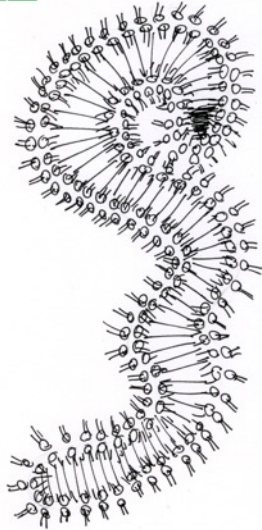


ENCOUNTERS WITH NATURE

ANT
BEARDED FIRE WORM
BEE
BIG BEETLE
BLUE TIT
BREAM
BUZZARD
COCKATIEL
CROW
DEER
DOGFISH
DOLPHIN
DRAGONFLY
EASTERN BROWN SNAKE
FIREFLY
FLY
FROG
FRUIT BAT
HARE
HERMANN'S TORTOISE
HORSESHOE CRAB
JAY
LIZARD
MEDITERRANEAN SHAG
MOUSE
MOSQUITO
OTTER
SEAL
SPIDER
WREN



CHARLOTTE COOPER

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Charlotte Cooper

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Alienation

I've lived in the city, the suburbs and the country. I know about fields, stubble, barns and straw. I've been lost in the woods. I've been a member of the Young Ornithologist's Club. I've collected wool from a barbed wire fence, I've dyed it with onion skin and spun it into yarn. I know how to make a pea shooter from cow parsley stalks and hawthorn berries. I've seen a weasel bound across a lane. I can spot a buzzard perched on a post from a passenger seat at 70

miles per hour down a motorway. I know about damp and mud. I found Dad's own photographs of birds and animals in his bedside drawer after he died. I don't feel as though I belong out there, despite all of this. I've been lost in the woods and I remain there.

One time I am in Norway driving with my friend of many years. We see a fjord and a picnic area. It's a hot day and we've been driving for some time. B suggests we stop and have a paddle, the water is so inviting. We have our swimsuits in the back. We stop the car by the side of the road and get in. It is so easy to be there. Could it be the same when I am in the UK? Later she shows me rocks with iron deposits in them, rusty rocks. I take two of them, they sit on my bedroom shelf for about 20 years. This summer I throw them into my garden. It is a surprise to realise that I can be out there, even in my own garden. I have become alienated, nature is something elsewhere, I need special equipment, knowledge, a different body and gender, a guide, confidence, it is dangerous, exhausting, it's not for me.

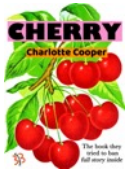
When the car pulls up and it's time to get out I feel afraid. What will I encounter? Will I survive? Is my body strong enough? Will there be pain or exhaustion? What if I fall? What if I become injured? What if I get covered in shit? Don't leave the mothership. Anything could happen. I feel scared every single time. I would prefer to stay in the car but I force myself to get out. It's good for me. And it is.

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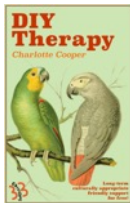
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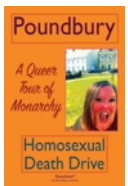
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