I have not yet buried my parents. But I am grieving their loss.

I have not yet buried my parents. Yet I have buried them in my heart.

I have not yet buried my grandmother. Even as she lays in her grave. The grandma who raised me, the one who loves me.

My grandmother lives with me now. In how I comfort my child, my mind, my life.

I am an adult child of narcissistic parents. Parents who cannot see beyond their needs. My grief is for the lost parents. The parents that never were. My grief is for their love. The love that never was. Squatters of my mind. Squatters that won’t leave.

The Re.Past dinner is coming. To honor the dead. Who is the living. Who is the dead. Who is being mourned. Who is mourning.

I watch myself as I prepare for the Re.Past — as I gather DEET wipes, rain boots and hats.

The preparation for the Re.Past dinner involves reckoning with fears—ticks, mosquitos and poison ivy at its worst.

Yoon Soo Lee is a Professor of Art and Design at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her practice moves around three core areas of study: the art of pedagogy, how to work in dialogue cross-discipline, and how to create art and design that is based on self-knowledge. She has presented at the AIGA Educators Conference, UCDA Design Educators Conference, and the Cognitive Science Society. Her research is supported with grants from the National Institute of Health. Her work is published in Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal and Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies. Yoon Soo studied at Seoul National University where she received her BFA and MFA, as well as at Western Michigan University where she received her second MFA in graphic design.

It turns out death, or is it living, was the fear—I long for death like nothing else, for then I can go back to being a rock. Or sand. Or part of an earthworm.

The pain of existing will be wooed into calm. I become part of the earth again. Back in her bosom. Never to be alone again.

I prepare our wardrobe: for husband, child and myself. I make white clothes so we can see ticks. That crawl up our legs. That crawl up our sleeves. White clothes are worn — at funerals in Korea. My husband is Tanzanian. And my child is a new. Tall boots, white clothes, hats and a satchel. We are ready to greet Malaga.

The RePast dinner.

We are on the island. The wind is blowing. The sun shines bright. Did I hear water? Or am I remembering the songs.

The students are focused. Serving the guests. With poetry, cider and soup — so rich. So studious.

Time is suspended — where am I? Who am I? A friend asks me — if you could be anywhere, anytime in history, where and when would you be?

I would be a rock at the beginning of time. Submerged in water. Watching the first single cell organisms. Blossom and procreate.


Honoring the dead.
Honoring the removed.
Honoring the banished.
Honoring the confined.
Honoring the condemnation.
Honoring the horror.

William was the baby. Removed from his home. To be sent to an asylum. To live and die there.

I walk, talk and eat. Alive yet detached and unmoved. As if I connect to the true content of what happened here on this island, I might fall through the cracks of earth. Never to gain light again.
The cruelty of humanity. The inexhaustible need for consumption — as Malaga Island was cleared out for development, for rich white folks — no end to desire, riches and wealth. Greed and privilege. No end in sight. Squatters they were. In this North America. Squatters we all are. Never to leave.

I walk like a ghost. Moving but not living. Suspended between the living and dead.

Who is being mourned. Who is mourning. In between the living, in between the dead. Walking like a ghost. Mourning the living. Mourning the dead.