

*ALICE MAJOR*

**Path Integral**

I'm angry about anger—this all-too-easy sheet of flame with its ever-ready pilot light ready to sweep the brain. This coil of neurobiology, the braided lash that rounds us up into obedient legions, to be hectored from lecterns: *They're taking things away from you, those hidden elites, those threatening other-coloured others.* This fetter fastened round our necks, a convenient collar where demagogues can attach the leash.

I want to poke around inside the brain, unroll the wrinkled cortex into a flat, creased sponge and map anger's coordinates. Along the x axis: half a billion years of animals trying to survive by fighting back. Along the y axis: the logarithmic scale of primate generations, social structures becoming as convoluted as a coral reef, anger rearing up when others break the rules. And z, the dimension of the individual life, its traumas and tender spots.

On this stretched-out cortex, I want to locate anger's many domains—bile and choler, ire and indignation, aggression and rage—and trace the paths that chain them. Where is the fury that is close to joy, its luxurious purity? Where do we locate the sullen burn of grudge? Where do I find the domain anger shares with religion, our gods of righteous wrath and war with their foreheads of bronze or steel? Where is that narrow territory where unnecessary rage roars up when I'm hurt by something as minor as a stubbed toe?

Surely knowing this territory would help us negotiate these fragile, fractious times.

But the map bewilders me – the infinite calculation of its tangled functions, its derivatives. I can't compute the area covered by anger, the limits to which it might converge, nor the sum-over-histories of its evolving wave that rolls through brains and time and populations. I can't sum up this cortical compulsion that traps us, this power we hand over to noisy purveyors of conflict.

*The dog flings itself barking  
wildly at the fence  
and its mirror dog beyond.*

***About Path Integral:***

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**Video: Path Integral** (December 2021)

Poem by Alice Major

Art by Jean Wolff

Music and video editing by John Vogel

[http://talkingwriting.com/video-path-integral?fbclid=IwAR1gyNzsy3RFUbKjF0hSB8yxc3HsCbcReNTLpaO1G1OuS\\_DS7TZYfk8Ls4I](http://talkingwriting.com/video-path-integral?fbclid=IwAR1gyNzsy3RFUbKjF0hSB8yxc3HsCbcReNTLpaO1G1OuS_DS7TZYfk8Ls4I)