

Adaptation Gap

Kate Simpson

[] *but the law is the law.*
Emily Berry

I don't like the way things have turned out [] at least help me with their static nature. Tell me, plain as water, the rivers will be available – will always show up here – that I'll be able to pull out an armful, a well-coated limb, some mutable knowledge, or affective vapour. When we met you said tomorrow would be full of shrinking margins, fewer outlets, or at least that's what I remember. I asked if skin would always mediate content appropriately. *Don't like the way things have turned out* [] feelings of wetness are just best guesses, they may just be cold. Isn't that wild? And today is different entirely. I am here to greet stressors in the imaginary, drink from a glacier and expect ceremony. Is there anything more sustainable than memory? Is there anything less secure?

Like the way things have turned out [] lore is like this, not sentimental, not all the time. Sensitivity is a lagoon that's been separated from a larger body. I arrive at the meeting, a soothsayer of all key points to come. I say things are likely to flow from here on out. Cycles, in our mouths, are more often than not failures, or at the very least incomplete shapes. I did not mention this. To fail is to completely miss the point, *the way things have turned out* [] means we can all complicate hope's diction.

You ask if this will be able to compete, by which you mean communicate, I think. At the most, I say, no. On the ice cap I exhibit post-traumatic growth, live meaningfully for a handful of seconds. I walk atop crushed material – which is to say it all made its way here – but as omission. *Things have turned out* [] like this, heads under, in, and above. Identifying priorities is like proposing preferred states of matter. I say I will leave no trace. This is an estimate. Flinching is a quick synonym and a slow act. This is not something I have learned, only found amidst melt, which is always interpersonal, which means it goes both ways. I am supposed to *have turned out* [] language which can be made plain. I am asked to find alternative outputs for all this, which makes me feel watery, which is a state of which I know just over half. There is limited space for that here. The geography of a line is much different to a globe. To cope under pressure mostly means moving, or being moved, neither of which are linear. *Turned out* [] was more often than not a form of turning back, an attempt to clear emotion as it surged toward you. I won't be here when you feel it, from here on *out* [] A piece of art, thaw, policy perhaps.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgements

Each year, the UN Environment Programme publishes the “Adaptation Gap Report”, which examines how well the world is preparing for climate change. An “adaptation gap”, here, is defined as “the difference between actually implemented adaptation and a goal set by society, determined largely by preferences related to climate change impacts, and reflecting resource limitations and competing priorities.” The most recent report, published 2 November 2023, was titled Underfinanced. Underprepared. Inadequate investment and planning on climate adaptation leaves world exposed.

The poem is in response to a conversation with James Ford, Chair in Climate Adaptation, Priestley Centre for Climate Futures, which took place 15 May 2024. With thanks to Clare Martynski for facilitating this meeting.

The adapted epigraph “I don’t like the way things / have turned out, but the law is the law.” is from Emily Berry’s *Unexhausted Time* and is reproduced with kind permission from Faber & Faber.