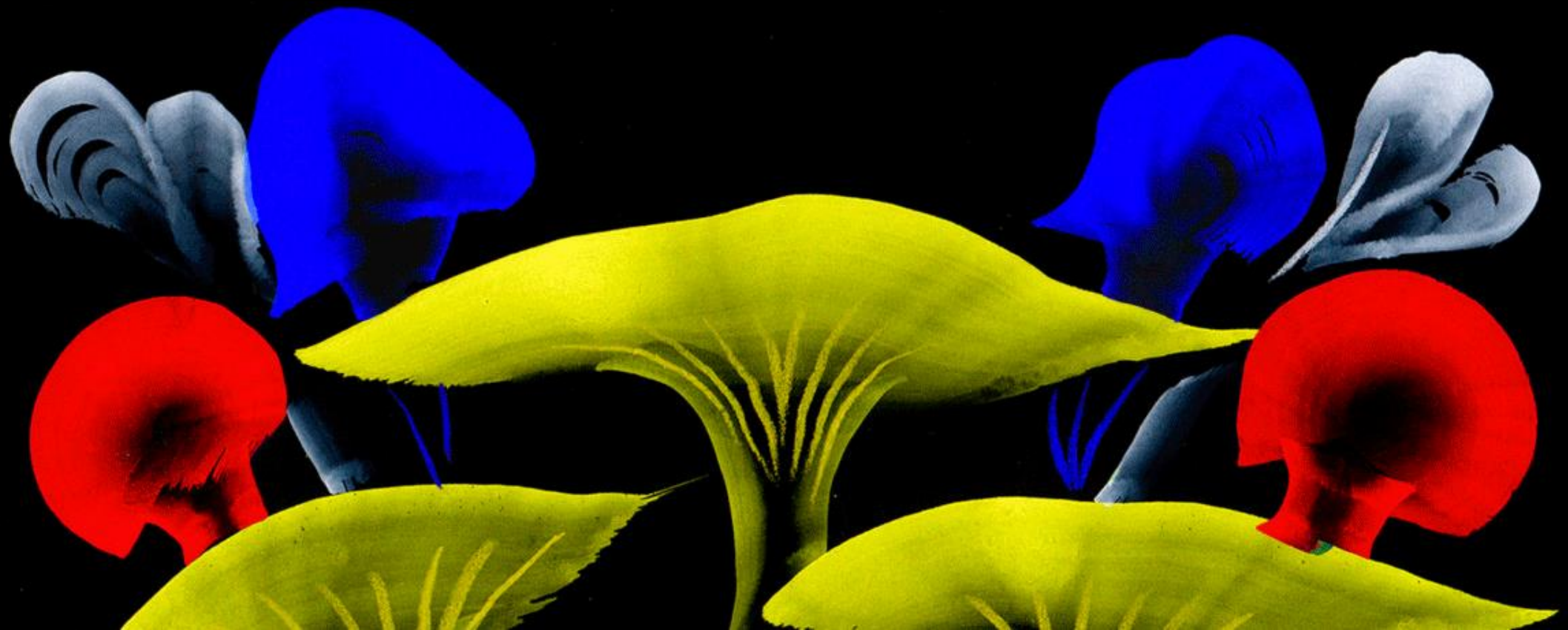
Entangled Life

Merlin Sheldrake

Merlin Sheldrake, 2020

What are your opinions / experience with fungi?

Why this book?



“My hope is that readers will experience some of this ‘mushroom fever’ with me in the chapters to come.”

- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins,* pp. viii.

My Mushroom Fever

- My grandfather started my interest and lockdown confirmed it
- Foraging / collecting
- Growing different species of mushroom (Oysters + Shiitake)

A screenshot from Merlin's video ‘Merlin Sheldrake eats mushrooms sprouting from his book, Entangled Life’ here

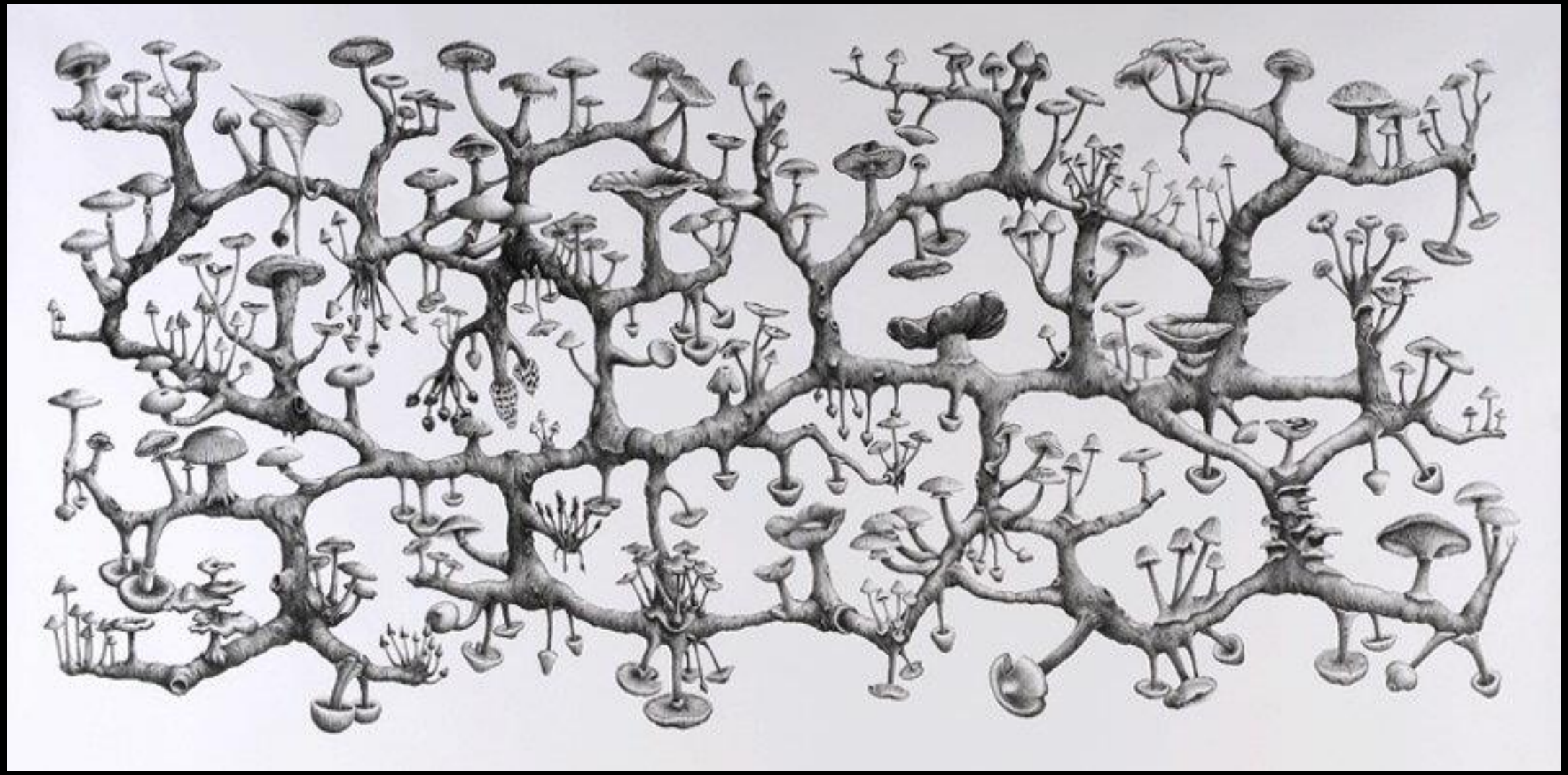
(How I picture the opening scene in ENTANGLED LIFE)

Illustration by
Wendy Xu, 2020.

- Merlin covers many topics in the book, many being purely fungal
  - What I am going to be discussing is the specific relationships people have with mushrooms, or more specifically, the relationships mushrooms have with people

A bolete found by my friends mother

Themes of entanglement



Richard Giblett, 2008, Mycelium Rhizome

Alexis Pantos, 2018, One of the fireplaces where the bread was discovered.

Longest standing relationships are with yeasts

- They are essential in making breads and alcohol and fermented foods

- The relationship could go back more than 100,000 years

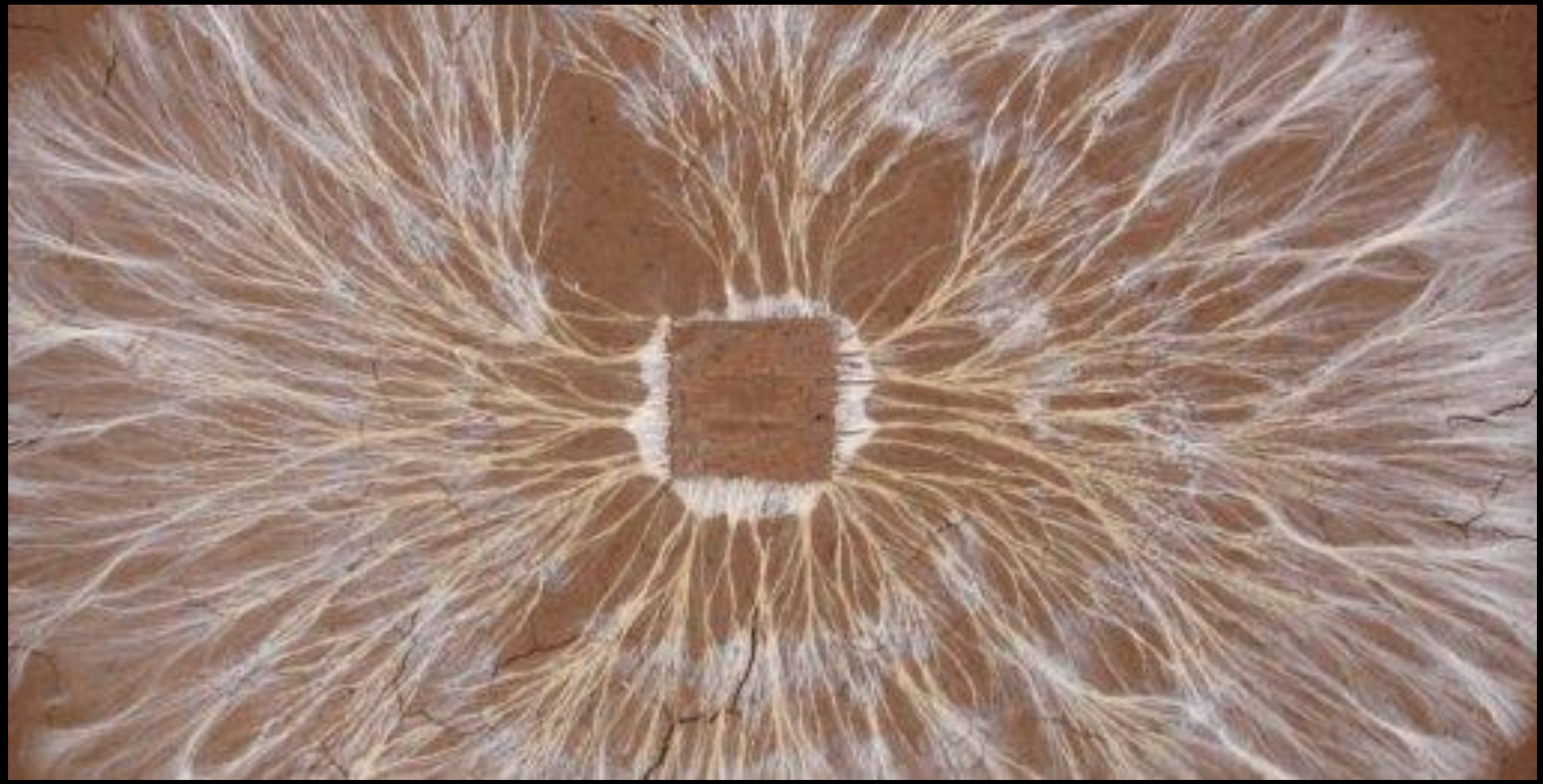
Fungi are everywhere!

BBC News, 2018, How trees secretly talk to each other - BBC News

Pxhere. (2020) *UK needs to scale-up agriculture innovation to reach net-zero target.*

Industrial agriculture is severing the connections that plants have with fungi

Wood Wide Webs



Ama, Mycelium growing

Mushrooms on the brain

- *Ophiocordyceptis unilateralis*
- Ergot alkaloids and psilocybin
- seeing the world through the eyes of a mushroom

"An infected ant is a 'fungus in ant's clothing'"
- Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life,* pp. 117

Gilbert Lab, 2006, Carpenter ant (genus Camponatus) infected with a parasitic Cordyceps fungus.

Fungi and gender (or lack there of)

- Fungi can have over 20,000 mating types
- The world is not binary
- “there are many ways to be a fungi”

Pink oyster -
Pleurotus djamor

Modern problems have mycelial solutions

- Mushroom leather
- Living coffins
- Replace polystyrene

Stella McCartney, 2020, *Mylo Collection*

Whether you build your home from fungi, or you start growing mushrooms in your home, fungi will catch *you* in the act. If you're alive, they already have.

- Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Lives,* pp. 252

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