

Isabelle Stengers
**Reclaiming
Animism**

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Some people love to divide and classify, while others are bridge-makers – weaving relations that turn a divide into a living contrast, one whose power is to affect, to produce thinking and feeling.

But bridge-making is a situated practice. As a philosopher, I am situated: a daughter to a practice responsible for many divisions, but which may also be understood as a rather particular means of bridge-making. The mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead wrote that all Western philosophy can be understood as footnotes to Plato's texts. Perhaps I became a philosopher because writing such footnotes implies feeling the text as an animating power – inviting participation, beckoning to me and suggesting the writing of another footnote that will make a bridge to the past, that will give ideas from the past the power to affect the present.

In spite of this, I will not take advantage of the possibility that philosophy is a form of textual animism, using this to delocalize myself, to feel authorized to speak about animism. Indeed, where what we call animism is concerned, the past to be considered is primordially the one in which philosophical concepts served to justify colonization and the divide across which some felt free to study and categorize others – a divide that still exists today.

Thus, in contrast to David Abram, whose experience enables him to turn the animist modes of experience, awareness, and knowledge into an intensely powerful bridge-making tool, as a generative constraint I must accept to not feel free to speak and speculate in a way that would situate others. Rather, I must acknowledge the fact that my own practice and tradition situate me on one side of the divide, the side that characterized "others" as animists. "We," on our side, presume to be the ones who have accepted the hard truth that we are alone in a mute, blind, yet knowable world – one that is our task to appropriate.

In particular, I shall not forget that my side of the divide is still marked today not only by this epic story, but also, and perhaps more crucially, by its moral correlate: "thou shalt not regress." Such a moral imperative confers another meaning on my decision to stand on the side I belong to. Indeed, there *is* some work to be done on this side. We can by addressing the moral imperative that mobilizes us, as it produces an obscure fear of being accused of regression as soon as we give any sign of betraying hard truth by indulging soft, illusory beliefs.

As for this hard truth itself, philosophers are anyhow no longer on the frontlines where it is expounded. When scientists' contradictory

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arguments resound, we are only bystanders. Neuroscientists may freely characterize what we were proud of – freedom and rationality – as mere beliefs. Anthropologists like Philippe Descola may freely affirm that our “naturalism” is just one of four human schemes organizing the human and nonhuman world (with animism being another of these schemes). As philosophers, we may certainly wonder whether the neuronal explanation is a case of “naturalism,” or whether our organizing schemes can themselves be explained in terms of some neuronal attractors. But what we know is that those who are not authorized scientists cannot intervene in these questions, any more than a mere mortal could intervene in the Olympian gods’ quarrels. Neither philosophers nor theologians have a voice in such matters, although the former are descendants of Greek reason and the latter are the inheritors of the monotheistic creed. Let us not even speak of the old lady with a cat who claims that her cat understands her.

Scientists may disagree on how we are wrong, but they agree that we are wrong. The epic is no longer about the “ascent of Man,” but rather about the ascent of the Scientist. How, then, to keep the question of animism, if it is taken seriously at all, from being framed in terms that verify Science’s right to define it as an object of knowledge?

The work that I feel needs to be done on my side of the divide may be characterized in terms of what the ethnologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has called a “decolonization of thought” – the attempt to resist a colonizing power that begins already with the old lady with the cat, defining her in terms of a belief that may be tolerated but never taken seriously. However, I would not identify this colonizing power with the living work of scientists. The feeling that it is possible and necessary to resist also stems from my interest in what I would call scientific achievements, and my correlative disgust at the way such achievements have been translated into the great epic story about “Science disenchanting the world.”

Science, when taken in the singular and with a big S, may indeed be described as a general conquest bent on translating everything that exists into objective, rational knowledge. In the name of Science, a judgment has been passed on the heads of other peoples, and this judgment has also devastated our relations to ourselves – whether we are philosophers, theologians, or old ladies with cats.

Scientific achievements, on the other hand, require thinking in terms of an “adventure of sciences” (in the plural and with a small s). The distinction between such an adventure and Science as a general conquest is certainly hard

to make if you consider what is done in the name of science today. However, it is important to do so because it allows for a new perspective: what is called Science, or the idea of a hegemonic scientific rationality, can be understood as itself the product of a colonization process.

On this side of the divide, it would then be possible to remain true to a very particular adventure, while also betraying the hard demands of an epic. In order to think sciences as an adventure, it is crucial to emphasize the radical difference between a scientific conquering “view of the world” and the very special and demanding character of what I would call scientific “achievements.” In experimental sciences, such achievements are the very condition of what is then, after they have been verified, celebrated as an objective definition. An experimental achievement may be characterized as the creation of a situation enabling what the scientists question to put their questions at risk, to make the difference between relevant questions and unilaterally imposed ones.

What experimental scientists call objectivity thus depends on a very particular creative art, and a very selective one, because it means that what is addressed must be successfully enrolled as a “partner” in a very unusual and entangled relation. Indeed, the role of this partner is not only to answer questions but also, and primordially so, to answer them in a way that tests the relevance of the question itself. Correlatively, the answers that follow from such achievements should never separate us from anything, because they always coincide with the creation of new questions, not with new authoritative answers to questions that already mattered for us.

We can only imagine the adventure of sciences that would have accepted such claims as obvious, which would have accepted the very specific challenge of addressing whatever they address only if the situation ensures that the addressee is enabled to “take a position” about the way it is addressed. What we should not imagine, however, is that science would then have verified animism.

We may well think instead that the term itself would not exist. Only a “belief” can receive such a global name. If the adventurous specificity of scientific practices has been acknowledged, no one would dream of addressing others in terms of the “beliefs” they would entertain about a “reality” to which scientists enjoy privileged access. Instead of the hierarchical figure of a tree, with Science as its trunk, what we call progress would perhaps have had the allure of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari called a rhizome, connecting heterogeneous practices, concerns, and ways of

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giving meaning to the inhabitants of this earth, with none being privileged and any being liable to connect with any other.

One might object by calling this a figure of anarchy. Yes – but an ecological anarchy, because while connections *may* be produced between any parts of a rhizome, they also *must* be produced. They are events, linkages – like symbiosis. They are what is and will remain heterogeneous.

In order to resist the powerful image of a treelike progress, with Science as its trunk, I will now address another idea of Gilles Deleuze, that of our need to “think by the milieu,” meaning both without reference to a ground or ideal aim, and never separating something from the milieu that it requires in order to exist. To think then in terms of scientific milieus and what they demand, it is clear that not everything will agree to some of these demands. In particular, not everything may accept the role associated with scientific creation, the role of putting to the test the way it is represented.

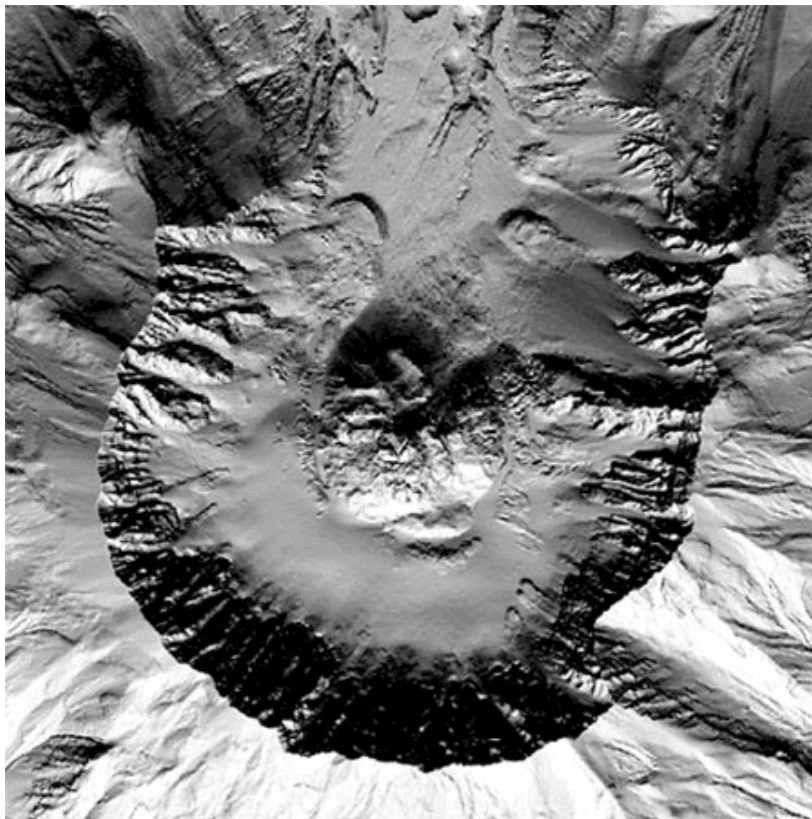
I once offered the example of the Virgin Mary – not the theological figure but the intercessor whom pilgrims address. It’s wrong to think that the Virgin Mary could make her existence known independently of the faith and

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trust of pilgrims; for her to do so in a situation committed to the question of how to represent her would be in bad taste. Rather, if we accept that that aim of a pilgrimage is the transformative experience of the pilgrim, we must not require the Virgin Mary to “demonstrate” her existence to prove she is not merely a “fiction.” We must not, in other words, mobilize the categories of superstition, belief, or symbolic efficacy in an attempt to explain away what pilgrims claim to experience. Instead, we must conclude that the Virgin Mary requires a milieu that does not answer to scientific demands.

However, pilgrims and the Virgin are weak examples of rhizomatic phenomena because they have been captured by the dichotomy of “natural” and “supernatural” causations. Within such a dichotomy, one would ask: What is responsible for the healings that occur at Lourdes and other miracle sites – a miraculous intervention or some sort of “enhanced placebo effect”?

This question authorizes the ugly scene, where, before announcing a miracle, the church hierarchy awaits the verdict of physicians empowered to decide whether a healing can be explained away in terms of “natural causes,”



Shaded relief imagery developed by NASA showing volcanic unrest-related changes. Image depicts Mount St. Helens, 2004.

such as a placebo effect. This relies on a disastrous definition the “natural,” namely: that which Science will eventually explain.

“Supernatural” is then – just as disastrously – whatever challenges such explanations. In other words, the milieu here opposes any rhizomatic connections, pigeonholing the case in terms of belief – those who believe that “nature,” as the domain where Science rules, explains effects that kindle superstition, and those who accept this belief but add another one: a belief in a power that transcends nature.

The half-forgotten case of magnetism offers an interesting contrast here. In the nineteenth century, magnetism provoked a passionate interest that blurred the boundary between the natural and the supernatural. Nature was made mysterious, and supernature was populated by messengers bringing news from elsewhere to mediums in a magnetic trance – a very disordered situation that understandably invited the hostility of both scientific and church institutions.

It has even been proposed that psychoanalysis was not the subversive “plague” that Freud boasted of, but rather a restoration of order, since it helped explain away mysterious cures, magnetic “lucidity,” and other demonic manifestations pigeonholed as purely human. In the name of Science it deciphered a new universal cause. The Freudian unconscious was indeed “scientific” in the sense that it authorized the denigrating of those who marveled and fantasized, and it extolled the sad, hard truth behind specious appearances. It verified the great epic Freud himself popularized: he was following Copernicus and Darwin, inflicting a final wound on what he called our narcissistic “beliefs.”

A distinct operation was attempted by the surrealist poet André Breton, who claimed that the magnetism should be taken out of the hands of scientists and physicians, who mutilate them through polemical verifications dominated by the suspicion of quackery, self-delusion, or deliberate cheating. For Breton, the point was not to verify what magnetized clairvoyants see, or to understand enigmatic healings, but to cultivate lucid trances (automatism) in the milieu of art, with the ultimate aim of escaping the shackles of normal, representational perception. The milieu of art would explore the means to “recuperate our psychical force.”

Breton’s proposition is interesting, as the milieu of art could indeed have supported and sustained the unsettling effects associated with magnetism. Such a milieu would perhaps have been able to produce its own practical knowledge of trances – a knowledge concerned only with effects of trances, indifferent to

whether the causes were “natural” or “supernatural.” Yet Breton’s proposition was less a practical one than an appropriative one, marked by a typically modernist triumphalism. To him, art was supreme, not a craft among other crafts but instead the final manifestation of the “surreal,” purified of superstitious beliefs – such as animism.

He would thus not envisage making rhizomatic connections to other practices that likewise explore a metamorphic (rather than a representational) relation to the world. He would not break with the perspective that still dominates so many “interdisciplinary” encounters, where the “subjectivity” of the artist’s standpoint is contrasted with the “objectivity” of Science. It is as if a contrast could be produced between two banners in a devastated landscape, each bearing one of these subjugating, commanding words – and therefore each empty. The seemingly opposite banners agree on one crucial thing: we should not betray the moral imperative that commands us to trample on what appears as a cradle we are able to leave, and have the imperious duty to leave.

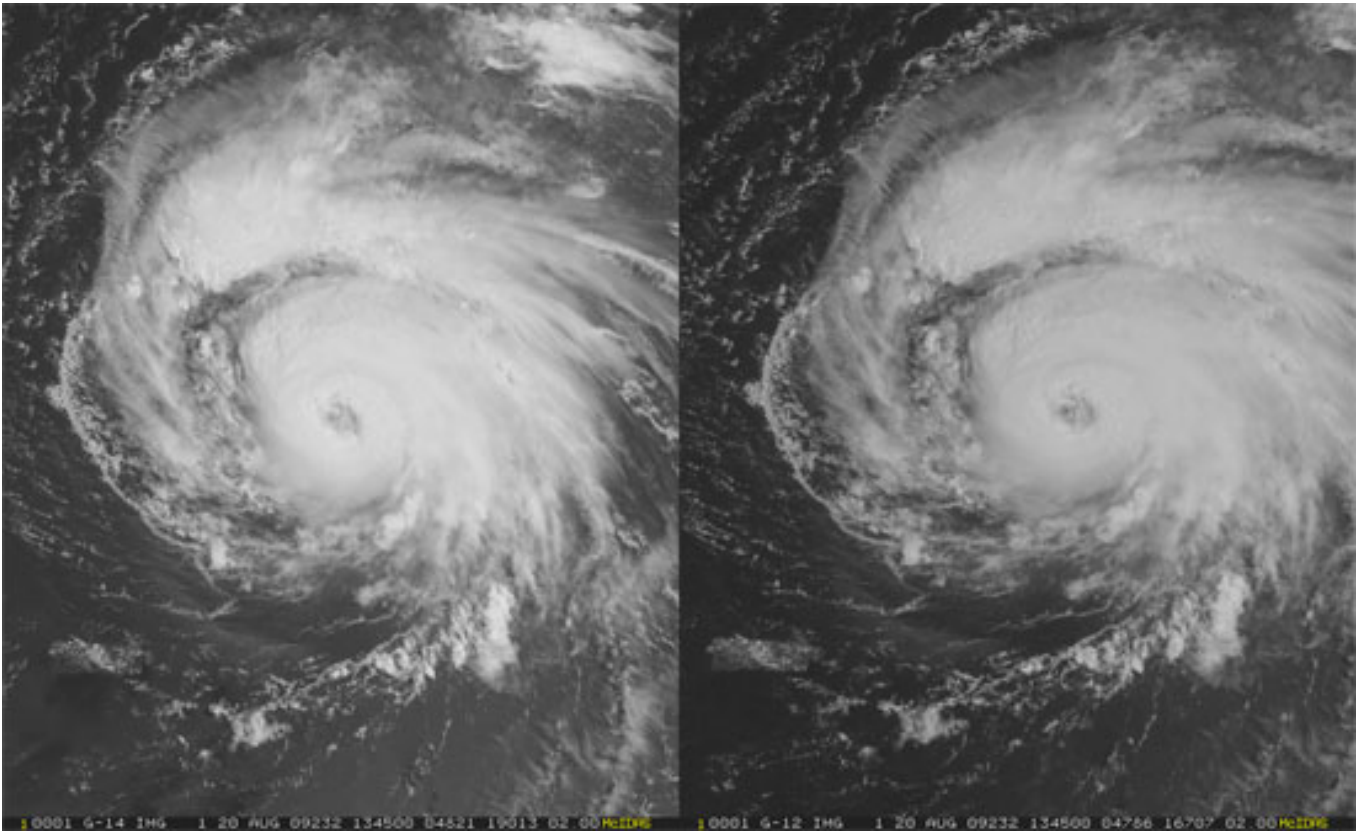
Here it becomes crucial to finally ask, as an active, transformative, and not a reflexive question: Who is this we? It is a question whose efficacy I will associate with yet another operation, that of “reclaiming.” Again it will be a question of thinking by the milieu, but this time a milieu that is dangerous and insalubrious, one that entices us to feel that we bear the high responsibility to determine what is entitled to “really” exist and what is not. It is a milieu that is, as a consequence, ruled by the power of judgmental critique.

Scientists are infected, of course, as are all those who accept their authority to decide what objectively exists. But also infected might be those who would claim to be animists, if they affirm that rocks “really” have souls or intentions, like humans. It is the “really” that matters here, an emphasis that marks the polemical power associated with truth. Coming back for a moment to the anthropologist Philippe Descola’s classification, I would guess that those who are categorized as animists have no word for “really,” for insisting that they are right and others are victims of illusions.

Reclaiming begins with recognizing the infective power of this milieu, a power that is not defeated in the slightest when the sad relativity of all truth is affirmed. Quite the contrary, in fact, since the sad – because monotonous – refrain of the relativist is that our truths do not “really” have the authority they claim.

Reclaiming means recovering what we have been separated from, but not in the sense that we can just get it back. Recovering means

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Animated .gif image generated by the Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies. Stereoscopy is used to monitor hurricane activity.

recovering from the very separation itself, regenerating what this separation has poisoned. The need to struggle and the need to heal, in order to avoid resembling those we have to struggle against, are thus irreducibly allied. A poisoned milieu must be reclaimed, and so must many of our words, those that – like “animism” and “magic” – carry with them the power to take us hostage: do you “really” believe in...?

I received this word “reclaiming” as a gift from neo-pagan contemporary witches and other US activists. I also received the shocking cry of neo-pagan Starhawk: “The smoke of the burned witches still hangs in our nostrils.” Certainly the witch hunters are no longer among us, and we no longer take seriously the accusation of devil worshipping that was once levelled at witches. Rather, our milieu is defined by the modern pride in being able to interpret both witchery and witch hunting in terms of social, linguistic, cultural, or political constructs and beliefs. What this pride ignores, however, is that we are the heirs of an operation of cultural and social eradication – the forerunner of what was committed elsewhere in the name of civilization and reason. Anything that classifies the memory of such operations as unimportant or irrelevant only furthers the success of those operations.

In this sense, our pride in our critical power to “know better” than both the witches and the witch hunters makes us the heirs of witch hunting. The point is obviously not to feel guilty. It is rather to open up what William James, in his “The Will to Believe,” called a genuine, effective option, complicating the “us” question, demanding that we situate ourselves. And here the true efficacy of Starhawk’s cry enters. Reclaiming the past is not a matter of resurrecting it as it was, of dreaming to make some “true,” “authentic” tradition come alive. It is rather a matter of reactivating it, and first of all, of smelling the smoke in our nostrils – the smoke that I smelled, for instance, when I hurriedly emphasized that, no, I did not “believe” that one could resurrect the past.

Learning to smell the smoke is to acknowledge that we have learned the codes of our respective milieus: derisive remarks, knowing smiles, offhand judgments, often about somebody else, but gifted with the power to pervade and infect – to shape us as those who sneer and not among those who are sneered at.

However, we can try to understand everything about how the past has shape us, but understanding is not reclaiming because it is not recovering. Indeed, this is the anguished question of David Abram, a question that we cannot avoid just by invoking capitalism or human greed: How can a culture as educated as ours be so oblivious, so reckless, in its relations

to the animate earth? Abram writes that an answer to this question hit him when he was in a bookshop where all the sacred traditions and resources of moral wisdom of the present and the past were gathered:

No wonder! No wonder that our sophisticated civilizations, brimming with the accumulated knowledge of so many traditions, continue to flatten and dismember every part of the breathing earth ... *For we have written all of these wisdoms down on the page*, effectively divorcing these many teachings from the living land that once held and embodied these teachings. Once inscribed on the page, all this wisdom seemed to have an exclusively human provenance. Illumination – once offered by the moon’s dance in and out of the clouds, or by the dazzle of the sunlight on the wind-rippled surface of mountain tarn – was now set down in an unchanging form.¹

Yet David Abram still writes, and passionately so. As a first step towards recovery, I propose that the experience of writing (not writing down) is marked by the same kind of crucial indeterminacy as the dancing moon. Writing resists the “either/or” dismembering of experience. It resists the choice between either the moon that “really” offers us illumination, as an intentional subject would do, or the moon of the critique, just triggering what would “really” be of human provenance.

Writing is an experience of metamorphic transformation. It makes one feel that ideas are not the author’s, that they demand some kind of cerebral – that is, bodily – contortion that defeats any preformed intention. (This contortion makes us larvae, as Deleuze wrote). It could even be said that writing is what gave transformative forces a particular mode of existence – that of “ideas.” Alfred North Whitehead suggested that Plato’s ideas are those things that first of all erotically lure the human soul – or, we could say, “animate” humans. For Whitehead, what defines the (Greek) human soul is “the enjoyment of its creative function, arising from its entertaining of ideas.”

However, when the text is *written*, taking an “unchanging form,” it may well impose itself as being of human provenance – even giving the impression that it can be the vehicle for accessing the intentions of the writer, for grasping what he “meant to communicate” and for what is ours to “understand.” Correlatively, the Platonic soul may become a definition divorced from experience, something that we have and that “nature” does not have.

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Whitehead wrote that, after *The Symposium*, where Plato discusses the erotic power of ideas, Plato should have written another dialogue called *The Furies*, which would have dealt with the horror lurking “within imperfect realization.” The possibility of an imperfect realization is certainly present whenever transformative, metamorphic forces make themselves felt, but this is especially true where ideas are concerned, if, as I claim, the realization of ideas implies writing.

Indeed, once “written down,” ideas tempt us to associate them with a definite meaning, generally available to understanding, severing the experience of reading from that of writing. This is all the more so in a world that is now saturated with texts and signs that are addressed to “anyone” – separating us from the “more than human” world to which ideas nevertheless belong. In order to reclaim animism, however, it is not sufficient to entertain an “idea” that would allow us to claim that we know about it – even if for people like myself it is crucial to realize that my experience of writing is an animist experience, attesting to a “more than human” world.

Reclaiming means recovering, and, in this case, recovering the capacity to honor experience, any experience we care for, as “not ours” but rather as “animating” us, making us witness to what is not us. While such a recovery cannot be reduced to the entertaining of an idea, certain ideas can further the process – and can protect it from being “demystified” as some fetishistic illusion. Such an idea is the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of “assemblage” (the often-discussed translation for the French “*agencement*”).

An assemblage, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the coming together of heterogeneous components, and such a coming together is the first and last word of existence. I do not first exist and then enter into assemblages. Rather, my existence is my very participation in assemblages, because I am not the same person when I write and as I am when I wonder about the efficacy of the text after it is written down. I am not gifted with agency or intention. Instead, agency – or what Deleuze and Guattari call “desire” – belongs to the assemblage as such, including those very particular assemblages, called “reflexive assemblages,” which produce an experience of detachment, the enjoyment of critically testing previous experience in order to determine what is “really” responsible for what. Another word for this kind of agency that doesn’t belong to us is animation.

Relating animism to the efficacy of “assemblages” is a dangerous move, however, because it may well reassure us a bit too easily. It

is part of our fabrication as readers, to feel free to ponder without experiencing the existential consequences of our questions. For instance, we may be tempted to understand assemblages as an interesting concept among others, pondering its connections with other concepts – that is, without feeling our intentional stance threatened by its demand. And also without fearing the suspicious gaze of the inquisitors, without feeling the smoke in our nostrils. We are protected by the references we quote.

This is why it may be better to revive more compromised words, which have been restricted to metaphoric use only. “Magic” is such a word, as we freely speak of the magic of an event, of a landscape, of a musical moment. Protected by the metaphor, we may then express the experience of an agency that does not belong to us even if it includes us, but an “us” as it is lured into feeling.

I would propose that we need to forfeit this protection in order to relieve ourselves of the sad, monotonous little critical or reflexive voice whispering that we should not accept being mystified, a voice that relays that of the inquisitors. This voice may tell us about the frightening possibilities that would follow if we gave up critique, the only defense we have against fanaticism and the rule of illusions. But it is first of all the voice of the epic story that still inhabits us. “Thou shall not regress!”

We would admit many daring propositions as long as – like Breton’s – they reflect a version of the epic, as long as they warrant that only selected types (artists, philosophers, and so forth) are authorized to explore what mystifies others.

Magic undercuts any such version of the epic. And this is precisely why neo-pagan witches call their own craft “magic”: naming it so, they say, is itself an act of magic, since the discomfort it creates helps us notice the smoke in our nostrils. Worse, they have learned to cast circles and invoke the Goddess – She who, the witches say, “returns,” She to whom thanks will be given for the event that makes them capable of doing what they call “the work of the Goddess.”

In so doing, they put us to the test! How can we accept regression, or conversion to supernatural beliefs? The point, however, is not to wonder whether we have to “accept” the Goddess that contemporary witches invoke in their rituals. If we said to them, “But your Goddess is only a fiction,” they would doubtless smile and ask us whether we are among those who believe that fiction is powerless.

What the witches challenge us to accept is the possibility of giving up criteria that claim to transcend assemblages, and that reinforce,

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again and again, the epic of critical reason. What they cultivate, as part of their craft (it is a part of any craft), is an art of immanent attention, an empirical art about what is good or toxic – an art which our addiction to the truth has too often despised as superstition. They are pragmatic, radically pragmatic, experimenting with effects and consequences of what, as they know, is never innocuous and involves care, protections, and experience.

The witches' ritual chant – “She changes everything She touches, and everything She touches changes” – could surely be commented on in terms of assemblages, since it resists the dismembering attribution of agency. Does change belong to the Goddess as “agent” or to the one who changes when touched?

But the first efficacy of the refrain is in the “She touches.” The indeterminacy proper to assemblages is no longer conceptual. It is part of an experience that affirms the power of changing to be NOT attributed to our own selves nor reduced to something “natural.” It is an experience that honors change as a creation.

Moreover, the point is not to comment. The refrain must be chanted; it is part and parcel of the practice of worship. Can the proposition that magic designates both a craft of assemblages and their particular transformative efficacy help us to reclaim it from both the safety of the metaphoric and the stigma of the supernatural? Can it help us to feel instead that nothing in nature is “natural”? Can it induce us to consider new transversal connections, resisting all reduction, unlike this sad term “natural,” which in fact means “no trespassing: available for scientific explanation only,” and also unlike “the symbolic,” which covers about everything else?

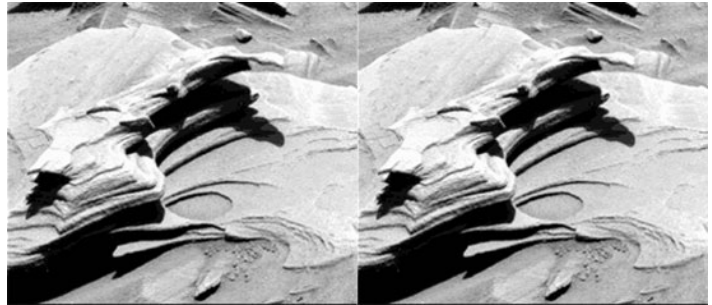
Reclaiming always implies a compromising step. I would claim that we, who are not witches, do not have to mimic them but instead discover how to be compromised by magic.

We might, for instance, experiment with the (nonmetaphoric) use of the term “magic,” which designates the craft of illusionists who make us perceive and accept what we know to be impossible. Magic, the witches say, is a craft. They would not be shocked by a transversal connection with the craft of performing magicians if this connection was a reclaiming one – that is, if the craft of performing magicians was addressed as what survived when magic became a matter of illusion and manipulative deception in the hands of quacks, or left to the mercenary hands of those who know the many ways we can be lured into desiring, trusting, buying.

And this is precisely what David Abram, himself a slight-of-hand magician, proposes when he relates his craft with what makes it

possible, that is, “the way the senses themselves have, of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given, in order to make tentative contact with the other sides of things that we do not sense directly, with the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible.”² What “illusionists” artfully exploit would then be the very creativity of the senses as they respond to what Abram characterizes as “suggestions offered by the sensible itself.” If there is an exploitation, the magician himself is exploited as the suggestions are offered not only by his explicit words and intentional gestures, but also by subtle bodily shifts that express that he himself participates in, and is lured by, the very magic he is performing.

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Satellite image of rock formation on Mars denominated *The Home Plate*. Stereoscopy is here used to identify volumes.

Our senses, Abram concludes, are not for detached cognition but for participation, for sharing the metamorphic capacity of things that lure us or that recede into inert availability as our manner of participation shifts – but, he insists, never vanishes: we never step outside the “flux of participation.” When magic is reclaimed as an art of participation, or of luring assemblages, assemblages inversely become a matter of empirical and pragmatic concern about effects and consequences, not of general consideration or textual dissertation.

Alluring, suggesting, specious, inducing, capturing, mesmerizing – all our words express the ambivalence of lure. Whatever lures us or animates us may also enslave, and all the more so if taken for granted. Scientific experimental crafts, which dramatically exemplify the metamorphic efficacy of assemblage conferring on things the power of “animating” the scientist into feeling, thinking, imagining, are also a dramatic example of this enslaving power. What I would call with Whitehead an “imperfect realization” of what they achieve has unleashed a furious conquest in the name of which scientists downgrade their achievements, presenting them as mere manifestation of objective rationality.

But the question of how to honor the metamorphic efficacy of assemblages – neither

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taking it for granted nor endowing it with supernatural grandiosity – is a matter of concern for all “magic” crafts, and more especially so in our insalubrious, infectious milieu. And it is because that concern may be common, but can receive no general answer, that reclaiming magic can only be a rhizomatic operation.

A rhizome rejects any generality.

Connections do not manifest some truth about what is common beyond the rhizomatic heterogeneous multiplicity – beyond the multiplicity of distinct pragmatic significations associated with “magic” as related to what we call politics, healing, education, arts, philosophy, sciences, agriculture, or to any craft requiring or depending upon a capacity to lure us into relevant metamorphic attention.

The only generality here is about our milieu and its compulsion to categorize and judge – and spiritualism is here a probable judgment – or to negate whatever would point to the metamorphic dimension of what is to be achieved. Rhizomatic connections may be a non-general answer to this generality. Each “magic” craft needs connections with others in order to resist infection by the milieu, the divisive power of social judgment, to smell the smoke that demands we decide whether we are heirs to the witches or the witch hunters.

But connections may also be needed to heal and to learn. Where the dangerous art of animating in order to be animated is concerned, what connects may be practical learning about the needed immanent (critical) attention. Not about what is good or bad in itself, but about what Whitehead called realization. Again, no mode of realization may be taken as a model, only as calling for pragmatic reinvention. In order to honor the making of connections, to protect it against models and norms, a name may be required. Animism could be the name for this rhizomatic art.

Reclaiming animism does not mean, then, that we have ever been animist. Nobody has ever been animist because one is never animist “in general,” only in terms of assemblages that generate metamorphic transformation in our capacity to affect and be affected – and also to feel, think, and imagine. Animism may, however, be a name for reclaiming these assemblages, since it lures us into feeling that their efficacy is not ours to claim. Against the insistent poisoned passion of dismembering and demystifying, it affirms that which they all require in order not to enslave us: that we are not alone in the world.

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1

David Abram, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology* (New York: Vintage, 2010), 281.

2

David Antrim, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Random House, 1997), 58.

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