

ALL THE STORIES
WE MIGHT TELL

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INTRODUCTION

Words produce worlds, language divides things into categories and allows for certain things to exist and not for others. Starting from the intersectional lines between feminisms and ecocritical thought, I will explore the power of language from three entry points: *Nature*, *Future* and *Magic*. The concept of Nature is often used as a transcendental device for legitimization. Nature is used to mask a 'norm', passing it off as objective and immutable. The prescriptive uses of the natural — and the distinction between what is natural and what is artificial — have been similarly harmful both for the environment and for marginalized subjects such as women. Also a Future is something linguistically produced. The idea regarding the times to come is the manifestation of the horizon of a possibility. In imagining a certain future, or in the impossibility to conceive it, we allow for the regeneration of other times, the reiteration of the past or for the possibility of the new to be born. What is considered real and what is not, namely the separation between facts or fables, is the first act of worlding. Magical thought troubles this distinction as conventionally conceived: it's a form of refusal, an effective word, an act of worldmaking and another cosmology. Through the questioning of these three binarisms, this research attempts to contribute to the downfall of dualistic and universalistic thought and the recognition of its categories — masculine and feminine, machine and human, cultural and natural — as obsolete. The three chapters don't have to be considered exclusively as a linear progression, but as three entrances, even from different perspectives, toward the same object. Therefore their connections will be reticular, repeated and sometimes happily accidental.

The starting point of this analysis was to understand what the 'desire of going back' was, the contemporary call for going back to nature and to the natural. This tendency, while being quite predictable in the conservative fringe — as in the ridiculous alleged past of 'Make America Great Again' —, is less obvious in the progressive one. On one hand, this desire for restauration seems to be symptomatic of the decline of an epistemology that is teetering. At the same time, it's also an attempt to block a change that is already taking place. The resurgence of identitarian discourse, new form of nationalism and fascism around all the world, from Trump, to Salvini, to Bolsonaro, could be seen as fights between the order of immutable and the time that is yet to come, but is also already happening. On the other hand, progressive movements seem to grope around: new form of 'primitivism', local communitarianism, ecovillages, new 'New ageism' and new — but always not new — forms of spirituality are arising. Both the conservatives and the so called progressives, as in environmentalist movement, are appealing to Nature to ask for legitimization. But a true ecological approach will refuse any strategic use of the planet and will not blind itself from seeing the entanglement of naturecultures.

In this scenario I try to interlace what I consider the two most troubling forces of the contemporary: on one hand the epistemological revolution that different feminisms, queer and black theories, migrants, decolonial and indigenous studies and embodied experiences are inflicting on the last fading ‘modern’ discourse, questioning its universalism, binarism and hegemony. Although these discourses are becoming increasingly widely recognized, they are usually incorporated into liberal logic and are purged of their more radical charge. On the other hand, there is the ontologic quake that climate change compels us to face: the ‘Man’ — and I will discuss the problematics of an abstract discourse around the human species and therefore the problematics of the well-known term Anthropocene — as geological force, capable of changing the structure of the planet.

My methodology will try to construct a discourse starting from my urgencies and situated knowledge, trying to produce at least some insight for my material life. Taking a leaf from the concept of *écriture féminine*¹ by Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous and remembering “that to speak is never neutral”², I will start from my ‘own’ experience and my ‘own’ language to enter this field. The ‘own’ here doesn’t mean exceptional nor peculiar, but indeed systematic and manufactured by the outside, always felt as an alienating and uncomfortable place. I’m grateful to a longliving feminist and black tradition that has pushed the limits of what was considered knowledgeable and what not. Undermining the concepts of ‘quality’, ‘learning’, ‘discourse’, ‘academy’, this genealogy subverted a hierarchy of culture that was produced by a very little slice of privilege, but passed off as universal. This genealogy taught me to spit on Hegel and I will do my best to continue to do it.³

The first proposition of the thesis, *Nature*, is an excursus of the history of the concept of Nature as an instrument of moral legitimitization: Nature is used to prove or disprove a certain moral stand, passing off an opinion as indisputable and universal, ‘natural’ though. I will analyze the concept of Nature through two entry points. Firstly, I will address the obsolescence of the concept of Nature in the ecological and ecocritical discourse as it’s investigated by the ecocritical philosophers Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, Timothy Morton and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Secondly I will trace a brief history of how feminism is an anti-naturalism. Regarding this, I will rely on a tradition that criticized the category ‘woman’ as a ‘natural’ category, biologically determined. This thought crosses the chronology horizontally and I will use concepts of feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, Teresa de Lauretis, Monique Wittig and the more recent Xenofeminism. The identity ‘woman’ is conceived as produced by the outside — as described by Virginia Woolf or Adriana Cavarero — and therefore the myth of Woman has to be taken apart. This genealogy of anti-naturalist and gender abolitionists, in their different variants and clashing points, witnessed how the invocation of Nature has always been weaponized against those ‘eccentric subjectivities’, as women, queer people, people of color, colonized people. Regarding this, I will also briefly see how forms of ecofeminism in their claim to nature risk re-essentializing the ‘woman’ identity. So, the production of binarism and the convergence between the myth of Nature and the myth of Woman — opposed to Culture and Man — is still troublesome.

The distinction between what is real or not defines what is thinkable and the horizon of the possible, in other words the idea of the times to come. In the last century the idea of a Future was bound to the idea of progress. But a Futurism, the idea of a progressive future based on growth, is not sustainable anymore: so what we experience today is a Futurism without a future. Anyway, we can not resign to the naturalization of the idea that a future different from the present, portrayed as an impossible fantasy, is no longer even thinkable. Thus, the necessity is to disentangle the production of a future with the capitalist progress, to get the past over with and open up for the new to be born. Moreover, climate change messed up the horizon of possibility and everything around seems to suggest that we should place our time at ‘the end’: end of an epistemology, end of human life, end of the world. In the chapter, I will discuss more thoroughly the extent of the concept of ‘end’ and who is to be included in a future that has to be imagined. A future, if a future is thinkable, for whom and for what. The magnitude of the concept of future will be the central point of this text. I will examine the role of the contemporary ecological movements and how they relate with the idea of times-yet-to-come and with the end of time. In this debate, I will refer to the necessity of a decolonized ecological movement and of an ecological thought that opens up to the urgencies of non-living and more-than-human beings, while not relying on a reproductive futurism. Ultimately, I will consider the the idea of ‘a future in the present’, the idea of an Ongoing End and Indigenous Futurability — how for non-hegemonic subjectivities the future is in the past, because the present is what is not imaginable in its bleakness. These are notions that disrupt the traditional hegemonic Western chronology, opening up the possibility for a new world. Also through refusal, they are practices of world-making.

What is envisioned as possible and what is not — so which future is foreseen — is strictly connected with the distinction between real and not real, between what is considered a fact and what only a fable, a superstition. This distinction is not a given definition, but an act of construction. A certain reality-system therefore defines what is possible and what is not, which kind of entities can exist and which can’t. The third and last proposition, *Magic*, is intended as the more *construens* part of the discourse around the fall of binarisms and addresses the topic of Magic from a wide angle. Starting from Donna Haraway’s utterance “It matters what thoughts think thoughts”, I will try to pinpoint the always more impellent urgency to find another narrative to describe, and also change, our times. The text will start questioning the categories that divide the existent between reality and superstition, facts or fables. Thereafter, it will show how we build reality through acts of worldmaking. I will highlight how, in this process of world building, the ‘magical word’ is a form of resistance of the contemporary hegemonic epistemology. Magic here is a third exit point to interpret reality and has to be interpreted in a broader sense, refusing the dichotomous clash between rationality and irrationality. Magic is a form of protection from misery and uncertainty, it is a way to declare your presence facing a crisis. It is also a form of refusal and active resistance against capitalist ethics. Magical words — spells, charms, hex — are effective words that bring out anger and materialize agency and desires, performative utterances that produce results. Also prophecies trouble traditional causality and chronology. Magic and prophetic speech, such as

poetry and art, operate in the liminal space between knowledge and the unknown. This space seems to be a productive one.

1 *Écriture féminine* is not not necessarily being written by women but is a process of awareness of the sexual order and of the inscription of this order in language and text. The speaking subject disappears, instead you have a free interplay of voices, of signifiers. The 'I' is not associated with a fixed identity.

2 Irigaray, Luce. *To speak is never neutral*. Bloomsbury, 1985.

3 Lonzi, Carla. *Let's spit on Hegel*. Rivolta Femminile, 1970.



BROKEN WORDS

*Where I can't really talk, someone else talks through my mouth,
there is a cluster of voices*

Shut up, actually talk.⁴ I start writing in English to better communicate to you, to ensure — am I sure? — that you will understand me as much as possible, as much I possibly can, as much as you possibly can. My fear is that when I speak this language, I disappear and we all become the same, homogenizing our experience, feeling, opinions to the ‘international standard art discourse’, if something like this exists. Where am I? My singularity, not in the fact that I am somehow special, but rather in the authenticity of not being special. Most of the time that I spend communicating, communicating to myself, is the time I spend translating, to make my references clear, what informed me, the movie I watched, the sayings of my family, my familiar lexicon⁵ — you see that I cannot say anything without using someone else’s words, is speaking just a succession of quotation? One little theft after the other.

As I said, I write this not because my experience is exceptional, I don’t think we need more glorification, and the following commodification, of singularity. Rather, I feel betrayed by myself, a false copy with an impostor syndrome. Am I sincere? Maybe a good definition would be this one, again one that is not mine — what did I say about plagiarism? — but of a human being called Omar of 8 years old when he writes it. And it says: “I arrive in Egypt and I would like to be there forever / the day after I want to go back to Milan”.⁶ Always a stranger, wandering. To be a foreigner in the words that you use, this is the alienation of not using my mother-tongue, nor the words spoken in the country where I am right now. Always lacking, always approximate, close but not really there. “Countersexuality is an attempt to become foreign to your own sexuality and to lose yourself in sexual translation”.⁷ To encounter every language as foreign language, every land as a foreign land. To encounter yourself, your body and your sex as a foreign partner.

Once I had a talk with M., we were crossing Sicily by car, not far from the shores where thousands of migrants were and had been heading and were dying. We were talking about feeling yourself grounded or not, belonging or not to a city, a land, a country. From the privileged and so unjust perspective of our European passports, we were discussing our wandering life, relatively short and relatively modest. He told me that he felt at home everywhere, welcomed by the land, in a certain sense. I always felt like a guest, instead. I can describe this as practice of disidentification, of not belonging, an act of self negation, self non-recognition of my own gender, of my own language, of my own nationality. As Cavarero puts it: “To be a thought that you are not, although inescapably existing in this thought, the speaking about yourself and naming yourself in a foreign language”.⁸ A refusal is a word in action. Here, in this place of uncertainty of meaning, a losing ground, a foreign ground, maybe we can find each other, because we

don't take anything for granted in the attempt of grasping one or two words. I am here, are you as well? On one side, the multiplication and proliferation of identities, staying close with one another, sometimes conflicting but never excluding each other. "The difference would be a crowning display of new differences".⁹ On the other, a negation, as a productive and affirmative action. Two opposite movements are overlapping lastly.

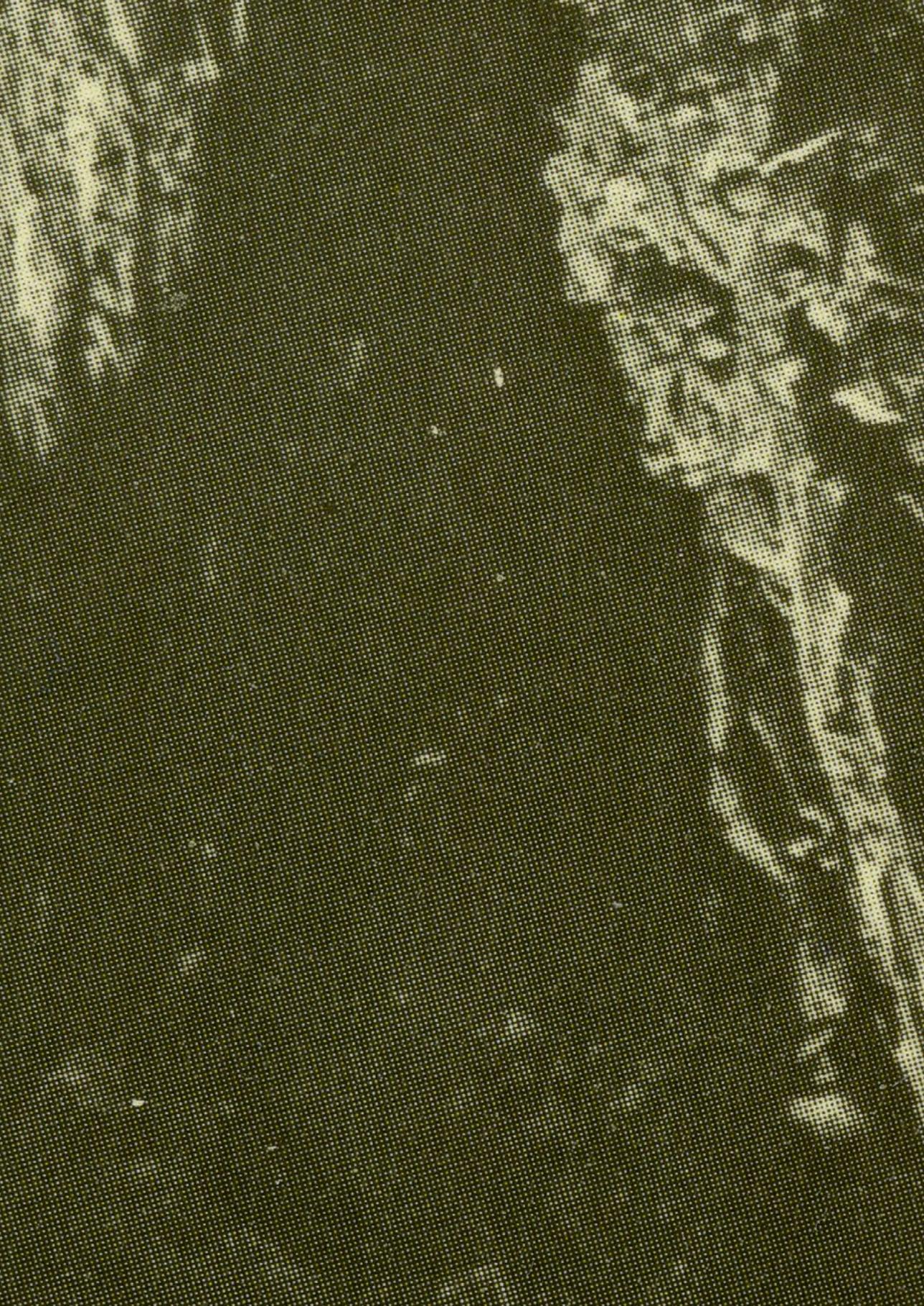
I refuse to define myself, but still. Shut up, actually talk. I became an adult in a wonderful and weird family of friends more or less connected with ecological movements in Italy. In this lively, desperate and full of love collective search for utopia, we grew up with a sort of fantasy of a return to nature, a political environment fueled by the fascination of living together and the possibility of mutual flourishing of human-beings and more-than-human ones. But this desire was often touched by an unrecognised fantasy of control and self-sufficiency, the rhetoric of 'I can make it on my own'. The 'return to Nature' often acts out the myth of the male self-made man that edits out vulnerability, dependency, love and care. A dangerous myth it was and still is.

At the same time, I was faced with the paradoxicality of feeling uncomfortable in the definition of woman and in being recognized as such. Feminisms, — reading, meeting, speaking with, feeling — have told me that there is not an universal meaning of being a woman, but what it does mean being recognized as such or naming yourself as such is a continuous struggle in order to define who you are, who you are not and who you want to be. It's a continuous process of redefinition and negotiation. And the category of gender continually interferes with other forms of oppression and/or identification, depending on where this operation is made from — from inside as a revendication or from forcibly outside —, even though in both cases the relationship is not mutually exclusively and very much complex. Moreover identification, oppression and privilege operate on multiple axis, such as citizenship, class, income, passport, ethnicity, religion, ability. There is nothing that is not also relationally produced and this troubles a straightforward distinction between the self and the outside. At the same time, I recognized the crystallization and paradoxicality of some identity politics — even while acknowledging their importance in the struggles against racist and sexist regime —, where in attempting to fight against sexism, heterosexism and racialization, they are risking re-essentializing identities as fixed. The very question is how to talk from a marginalized position, while recognizing that this position has been produced by an outside that doesn't want the other to talk and be in any other way than that other.¹⁰

This text starts from this point and is a way to bring out and reflect on the search for meaningfulness and temporary answers, attempting to make something out of anger, while developing non normative relationships and weird families, believing in deep intimacies, witnessing sexist violence on my dearest ones, finding ephemeral and mutable identities in perpetual alienation. Besides being a sort of diary, I see this writing as a collective action. I'm entering a conversation, with the ones close to me; the past ones, the dead ones, the ones that wrote before me or are writing now on the other side of the ocean, to the ones yet to come, the ones not yet speaking or not understanding, the ones shaking their heads, the ones not interested, the ones bored, the ones disagreeing, with the ones that will never read.

It is a dedication, an invocation and an evocation. Being possessed by someone else's voice is a magical act. A far away one, a silenced one, a dead one, a non human one? It is a practice of mediumship: a moment of channeling and an act of ventriloquism. Lastly, I ask to be possessed by other voices, otherworldly ones, and start to write.

- 4 *Shut up, actually talk*, in Italian *Taci, anzi parla*, is a book by Carla Lonzi, it's her diary written between 1972 and 1977.
- 5 Familiar lexicon is free translation of *Lessico Familiare*, an autobiographical novel by Natalia Ginzburg about the habits, behaviours and, above all, linguistic communications of her family covering the period from fascism and resistance to the early post-war years in Turin, my hometown.
- 6 My translation from Candiani, Chandra Livia (curated by). *Ma dove sono le parole?*. Effigie, 2015. *Ma le parole dove sono?* is an anthology of poems by children of primary schools in Milan written during poetry workshops held by the Italian poet Chandra Livia Candiani.
- 7 Preciado, Paul B. *Countersexual Manifesto*. Columbia University Press, 2000. pag. 8
- 8 My translation from Cavarero, Adriana. *Per una teoria della differenza sessuale*. in *Diotima. Il pensiero della differenza sessuale*. La Tartaruga, 1987. pag. 53
- 9 Cixous, Hélène. *Sorties*. in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge. Longman, 1988. pag. 292
- 10 Preciado, Paul B. "L'identità non esiste ma il potere la vuole". *Internazionale*. 29 February 2020. <https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/paul-preciado/2020/02/29/identita-potere/>. Accessed 29 February 2020.
 "And so, without existing, the identity 'woman' can cost you your life in Tijuana, and even in places much closer to your home than Tijuana. This identity fully defines your life. Even if it doesn't exist, 'trans' identity can cost you your life in Paris. Race doesn't exist, but racial identity can prevent you from crossing a border, renting an apartment, finding a job. [...] What does it mean to speak as transgender, as homosexual and as racialized body if transgenderism, homosexuality and race do not exist? We have not yet started to mourn all those who, marked by a non-existent identity, could not exist in another way". My translation from Italian.



NATURE

*Where I talk about hippies dancing naked in the moonlight,
pro-family parades and tentacular monsters*

This writing is addressed to my child-self that, when I heard — I suppose from my mother — that quote from Simone De Beauvoir, that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”¹¹, misconceived it and got the opposite. So I thought that maybe one day — after menstruation, after first-time sex or rather after pregnancy? — I would have the honor to become one, since I didn’t feel enough to aspire to such a great definition yet.

Nature is a tricky term: it could refer to the quality of things, to what moves things to existence or to the world as a whole itself. It’s a word that we continuously use, hear and read, from political debate to food labelings: back to nature, 100% natural, natural order, unnatural acts, natural ways of living, wisdom of nature, natural remedies. My reaction to Nature is suspicion. Despite that, I take propolis when I get a cough and I buy organic food. No one is immune to the lures of Nature. Nevertheless, my point is that, most of the time, the concept of Nature is used to backup moral stand points, where Nature is used as a device for legitimization, claiming and appealing to an external truth as a reference point.

An ecology without Nature

In the first chapter “On the instability of the (notion of) nature” of *Facing Gaia*¹², Bruno Latour tries to respond to the contemporary urgency of climate change. Nowadays, the Earth’s population is forced to face a mutation in relation with the world with always more concern and dramatic outcomes. The only reaction provoked by this compelling encounter is madness, Latour claims. On one hand, this outburst is a reaction to the impassivity and the astonishing calm that characterized the last thirty years where the hegemonic class did nothing, despite the several warnings, to change the economic trend that made the environmental situation so bleak. Therefore, “what could have been just a passing crisis has turned into a profound alteration of the world”¹³, that doesn’t allow us to go back and so has to be faced as a definitive mutation — and not as a temporary crisis, as Latour refuses to call it. On the other hand, this madness takes various shapes: headless climate deniers, blind quietist, geo-engineering megalomaniacs with techno-fixing ambitions, hopeless depressives, cynical hermits, incurable optimists. We are all pathological in a way or another.

“Ecology drives people crazy”¹⁴, Latour says. But these harsh reactions are evidence of how deep the shift is that the New Climate Regime — the name the he prefers to use rather than Anthropocene — obliges us to deal with. Therefore, the utterance that describes our times as ‘the discovery that humans belong to nature’, could be seen as symptomatic of the extent of human alienation from the world. Timothy Morton refers

to this as a ‘quake in the being’¹⁵, the shocking realization that nature isn’t a still backdrop in front of which human actions are played out as though from god’s perspective, but rather there is no more elsewhere because, as humans, we are so entangled, immersed and viscously stuck inside ‘the world’. “We realize that nonhuman entities exist that are incomparably more vast and powerful than we are, and that our reality is caught in them”.¹⁶ Climate change reveals the ‘Intrusion of Gaia’¹⁷, as Isabelle Stengers names it, the definitive irruption of a form of transcendence that we believed transcended and which reappears more heavily than ever.¹⁸

Stengers use the figure of Gaia, the living planet, to describe the event that disrupts the fantasy human exceptionalism. To call this unprecedented form of impingement ‘Gaia’ is a risk, since the name is not immune to problematic connotation. Stengers takes it both from the Gaia hypothesis developed by the scientists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis at the start of the 1970s. The two scientists portrayed the planet as a system with self-regulating capacities, as explained by Lovelock, and as the product of the symbiotic activities and co-evolution of bacterias, in Margulis’s studies. According to the very last one:

Gaia is not the nurturing mother or fertility doll of the human race. Rather, human beings, in spite of our raging anthropocentrism, are relegated to a tiny and unessential part of the Gaian system. People, like brontosaurus and grassland, are merely one of the many weedy components of an enormous living system dominated by microbes.¹⁹

Gaia is an immense and complex system, that mostly doesn’t care about humans. But Gaia is also the ancient Greek deity, the one feared by peasants that knew that humans depend on something much greater than them. For Stengers, Gaia is an assemblage of forces largely indifferent to human projects and reasons.

Gaia, as the Chthulucene of Donna Haraway, is a post-Anthropocene figure to dethrone the narrative of the Man as the primary force making the world.

She (*Gaia*) is not threatened that she makes the epic versions of human history, in which Man, standing up on his hind legs and learning to decipher the laws of nature, understands that he is the master of his own fate, free of any transcendence, looks rather old. Gaia is the name of an unprecedented or forgotten form of transcendence: a transcendence deprived of the noble qualities that would allow it to be invoked as an arbiter, guarantor, or resource; a ticklish assemblage of forces that are indifferent to our reasons and our projects.²⁰

This Gaia, thus, can not be used to support any opinion, it’s not something to invoke or to appeal to. Environmentalism, and its operation of self-critique, namely ecocriticism, are cultural and political responses to a moment of rupture in the relationship of humans with their surroundings. According to Latour, the difficulty lies in the very expression ‘relation to the world’, which presupposes two sorts of domains, that of Nature and

that of Culture, domains that are at once distinct and impossible to separate completely. But since neither of the two could exist without the other, “we are not dealing with *domains* but rather with one and the same *concept* divided into two parts, which turn out to be bound together, as it were, by a sturdy rubber band”²¹: Nature/Culture²², thought. “If ecology sets off panic reactions, we now understand why: because it obliges us to experience the full force of the instability of this concept, when it is interpreted as the impossible opposition between two domains that are presumed actually to exist in the real world”.²³ All attempts are done in order to stabilize the concept of Nature and keep it far away from Culture.

Most of the time the invocation of nature and the natural is just a bad disguise of an ideology or a moral judgment, “[...] in the name of what do you dare decide which behavioral norm are “natural and which are ‘against nature’? [...] Any effort to stabilize an ethical judgment by the invocation of the nature will appear as the scarcely concealed disguised of an ideology”.²⁴ Nature is unstable, just like morality, legality or respectability. However, the invocation to naturalness still has a very strong normative and prescriptive charge. The underlying assumption is that the laws of nature must be respected and will impose themselves on whatever one might do or think. “We are at the point where the moral connotation of the notion of ‘nature’ has been so clearly overturned that the first reflex of every critical tradition consists in fighting naturalization”.²⁵ Thus, denaturalization has been the most common analytical device in the tradition of feminist, black, decolonial and critical studies. What makes the invocation of the ‘natural word’ so ambiguous is the assumption that the ‘natural world’ will not have and will not allow to draw any moral lesson to impart, since it is what ‘is just there’. “Such is in fact the paradox of the invocation of ‘nature’: a formidable prescriptive charge conveyed by what is not supposed to possess any prescriptive dimension”.²⁶ The madness described by Latour is a reaction against the forced acknowledgment of the instability of Nature. Ecology is not the irruption of Nature in daily life but the end of Nature as a conception that allowed us to sum up our relation with the world.

Since its prescriptive charge, I defuse naturalizing discourse where Nature is presented as the alleged non-moral and unchallengeable arbiter, but is indeed used as the supreme moral value. The Supreme Court of Nature, used as a transcendental unit of measure, conveyed under a material mask, takes the force of law, a norm in relation to which the deviation is measured.²⁷ Therefore, certain actions are ‘according to nature’ or against it. This strategic mobilization of Nature and the Natural informs various discourses in the contemporary debates where ‘natural’ is used as a tool of ethical legitimation in place of ‘normal’. Thus, the ‘norm’ is replaced with the ‘nature’, shifting the discourse from an ethical level to a metaphysical one. In other words, this mobilization refers to phenomena and events as undeniable and universal instead of particular, possible but also not, accidental products of historical, political and cultural systems.

Women without Nature

The use of natural as universal has had a pivotal position in the gender debate. In the heteropatriarchy regime, the sexual order — what a man is, what a woman is, which

sexualities and subjectivities are conforming to this statute — has been unquestioned in the Western tradition, and therefore was unquestionable. Without forgetting the more or less private forms of resistance that always occurred in history against the continuous attempt of repression and even if I refuse to trace a progressive and linear history of feminist thought, it's hard to deny the historical hegemony that sexual order has had until nowadays. In order to eliminate it, in the last forty years feminist, queer, trans*, black and postcolonial studies and singular subjectivities did a lot of work to reveal this system. Nevertheless, the use of Nature as a legitimising device in the ethical debate never becomes outdated. Backlash from the reactionary and conservative fringe continues to periodically pop up with all their violent and fascist charge.²⁸ The claim of the European Agenda, a platform that unifies various anti-feminist and anti-abortion movements around Europe, is to 'Restore the Natural Order'²⁹; where under the adjective 'natural' the idea that the predominance of men over women is 'natural evidence' is hidden. Regarding this, Allan Carlson, the founder of the World Congress of Family, declares that "family is an institution that preexists every nation or state".³⁰ According to this mindset, heteronormative institution precedes law and ethic and therefore can't be dismantled.

The pope as well calls for a 'natural order' and 'sound principles' against the widespread of current 'relativism'.³¹ The Vatican tries to find shelter and justification in science, appealing to the new indisputable metaphysic of contemporary, using alleged rational claims to prove the unquestionability of sexual order: hormones, genetic, evolutionary differences, brain conformation. The point to defend is always the same: men and women are two distinct, natural and complementary groups, whoever couldn't fit inside this grid is deceitful and lives in misleading. The religious and Catholic moral is fighting to survive, releasing the last compulsory hiccups. In order to do that, it's shifting from the rhetoric of the woman's subordination to the 'natural complementarity' and 'equality in differences' ideology. But the situation doesn't change. This new 'theology of woman', that emphasizes the alleged woman's peculiar qualities, in addition to the bugbear invention of 'Gender Ideology' — that dreads a monstrous chaotic society, promiscuous and sexualized — are two parallel products of the same strategy to re-essentialize the discourse of sexual order.³² Looking at the cosmetic process done by the Vatican that highlights 'the specificity of woman genius', we can understand the, otherwise implausible, new alliances that are arising in Europe and the US between religious and anti-abortionist associationism and new 'feminists of difference' and TERF movements.³³ As among self-declared feminists, the myth of Nature — with the myth of Woman, its historical companion — hides in the most surprising place.

I'm in the middle of a forest on the mountains on the border with Albania in a 'gathering' where thousands of people from all over the world are meeting to temporarily live in an ecological community without electricity, money exchange, running water, hierarchical institutions, relying on the principles of peace, sharing, freedom and environmental care. I'm in a gender separatist session in order to regenerate my 'female energy'. Today this is particularly fertile, fostered by the influence of the full moon that brings outward 'feminine creativity and genius'. I feel uncomfortable, maybe it's because I'm not a Woman still. Hopefully, one day I will be.

Nothing has been so much naturalized in Western history as gender. She has a biologically female body — she has a vagina, breast and uterus — therefore she is a Woman, doing lady stuff and women’s works, thinking as a Woman, producing female art, manifesting in everything she does her womanhood. This is her ‘nature’. But what is a Woman? — Lastly, it would be better to ask ‘Who is this very woman?’. What does it mean being a Woman and what has it to do with Nature? Here Nature — and Woman’s Nature — is a concept that depends on an operation of ‘normalization’ produced by those who decide what the ‘norm’ is. For this reason, the critique of naturality has always been central in the debate of feminist tradition. Women, non-cisnormative and non-heteronormative subjectivities, racialized and non western people, know most of all the dangerous outcomes of this discourse. ‘Women’s nature is to nurture’ has always been the imperative and, about the nature of womanhood “a hundred definitions and thousands of contradictions”³⁴ were given, “for no one (*definition*) of course a woman was expected to answer”.³⁵ The woman was the opposite pole, always defined by and through her negation: Man is the universal, the norm, she is the exception, the Other. “He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other”.³⁶ And this Other is deceptive, irrational, weak, passive, always defined by what it allegedly lacks in comparison to the universal Man. Described from the outside, women were depicted, in the best case scenario, as governed by their hormones and menstruation cycles, connected to viscerality on account of their reproductive and gestational bodily qualities. A gender embedded in corporality and nature, at best, in sin and flesh, at worst.

This is the ambiguous tangle of power and fragility that men saw in the other sex and therefore described as an opposite mirror in order to build his own self-confidence and dominance through her subjugation, negation and unrecognized labour.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet.³⁷

This is the odd being that emerges from Virginia Woolf’s analysis of the myth of woman. On one hand, absolute fictional mystification, on the other total historical insignificance in the strongholds of power, politics and cultural production: two sides of the same system, in both cases a form of a negation of any individual subjectivity.

Teresa De Lauretis explains the paradoxical process of self non-recognition in this prescriptive and manufactured identity in this way:

In the early 1970s, in its first attempt of self-definition, feminism posed the question: Who or what is a woman? Who or what am I? And, as it posed those questions, feminism — a social movement of and for women — discovered the nonbeing of woman: the paradox of a being that is at once captive and absent in discourse, constantly spoken of but of itself inaudible or inexpressible, displayed as spectacle and still unrepresented or unrepresentable, invisible yet constituted as the object and the guarantee of vision; a being whose existence and specificity are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled.³⁸

‘This Sex Which Is Not One’³⁹, to use Luce Irigaray’s formula, is just a theoretical discursive syntagma that doesn’t exist in its abstraction nor in its material manifestations. What it remains are only the peculiarities of the life of the very women and, maybe, the similar, but mostly very different — characteristics that will never be pinpointed enough — kinds of oppressions that they experience in their particular livings. Therefore, as Monique Wittig suggests, we have to “dissociate ‘women’ (the class within which we fight) and ‘woman’, the myth. For ‘woman’ does not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while ‘women’ is the product of a social relationship”.⁴⁰ The binary economy that defines gender produces only very prescriptive, narrow and partial identities in which the material process of being and becoming a subject can not find space.

The sexual order, gender binarism and its polarization between masculinity and femininity continues to operate sneaking from the Catholic propaganda to New Age movements. It operates two-pronged, on one hand, through the feminization of Nature, on the other with the naturalization of Woman.

I’m in the ‘Fridays for Future’ demonstration, walking beside me there is a woman holding a billboard on which there is written ‘Respect your mother’, a blue globe is painted underneath. Mother-Earth: She is the one that always gives, nurturing and life conceiving, completely open and penetrable. Her love is unconditional and mercifully, despite any pain inflicted and any abuse endured.

The planet Earth is feminine, Nature and Woman as abstract — and very regressive — figures overlap in their features. But, do we really need to attribute a gender to the planet? By contrast, Isabelle Stengers contrasts the image of Nature as a benevolent mother, that pardons everything and only waits to be protected, with the figure of Gaia. The image of the planet as a compassionate woman has been abused in a lot of deep ecology movements, where Lovelock’s hypothesis of the living planet was maybe brought a step too far. The billboard in the FFF march is eventually a debris of this narrative. Instead, for Stengers:

Gaia is ticklish and that is why she must be named as a being. We are no longer dealing (only) with a wild and threatening nature, nor with a fragile nature to be protected, nor a nature to be mercilessly exploited. The case is new. Gaia, she who intrudes, asks nothing of us, not even a response to the question she imposes.⁴¹

This nature is neither fragile nor intentionally threatening, neither a benign, maternal organism nor a vindictive entity. It has no goal and no intentionality, lastly, it exists irrespectively of human presence.

Obviously, there is nothing new in the feminization of the environment. Ecofeminism has highlighted how the same mechanisms of male western capitalism are employed in the (ab)use of land and resources, both human and non-human. Hence, the exploitation and degradation of environmental systems, of landscapes and more-than-human creatures are products of the very same domination system that oppresses and exploits women as well. The capitalistic economy looks at the other as commodified objects, means to use to infinite accumulation and 'growth'. As formulated by Rosi Braidotti: "women were classified alongside natives, animals and others as referents of a generative force that was reduced to a mere biological function and deprived of political and ethical relevance".⁴² Ecofeminism analyzed the linkages between modes of enclosing the productivity of nature and the exploitation of gendered and racialized subjects in the process of capitalist accumulation, the plundering of resources together with sexist and racist form of dispossession. For this reason, according to ecofeminism, the destinies of women and the planet are intertwined, both in their oppression and possible liberation.

Regarding to the feminization of Nature and her Goddesses, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski also pinpoint how Pachamama⁴³, the "Mother of World-Time" is a deity that at least originally had no attributes that we would consider as maternal. Thought, after the conquest, was progressively assimilated with the Virgin Mary and finally adopted by New Age movements as the benevolent Mother Nature. The only good thing about Pachamama, say the authors, it's that at least — in contrast with Gaia, Chthulucene, apocalypses, catastrophe and so on — she doesn't speak Greek. Finally, even if would be unfair to reduce ecofeminism to a polarizing paradigm that opposes the nurturing qualities associated with woman and nature against the masculine technosciences, some ecofeminist formulations are not devoid of problems and there are some assumptions that could be counterproductive for both, feminist and environmental, causes. Firstly, the proposition that nowadays women, after being confined for centuries strictly to the realm of caring and nurturing, excluded from power management, cultural production and institutions, will take care of the planet and will carry the burden of environmental devastation that they have just recently begun to contribute creating — occupying leading positions in Western countries — is not really in accordance with the principles of climate justice, so that those who damaged the environment will pay the consequences and those who are least responsible for climate change don't have to suffer its gravest outcomes.

Secondly, the idea that women are close to nature for biological reasons is more or less silent in this narrative. Some forms of ecofeminism seem forgetful to the second wave feminist slogan 'biology is not destiny' and return to an essentializing idea of Nature and gender. The woman allegedly lives more in harmony with the environment for certain reasons, is this due to the fact that she has a uterus? I think that we have to be very keen on specifying of which exact woman are we talking about: Indigenous women who actively fight against land exploitation by neocolonialism and capitalism, or new 'CEO

feminist' white female leaders? Moreover, the mystification of the moon and menstruation cycles, the highlight on the gestational and reproductive body, risk closing again the very female bodies in a strict definition of womanhood — that accidentally is very similar to the one historically provided by Man — where there would be not much space for other performances of sexualities. Selecting among the features provided from Man the most positive ones — such as care, the capacity to give life, the distance from war, violence and power — is not a satisfying solution.

Lastly, gendering the planet, naming it as female, is another way to anthropomorphize it, applying the same very same anthropocentric gaze that ecocritical thought is trying to subvert. Instead, it could be that the best intuition that ecofeminism has provided is the idea of solidarity and intersectionality between otherness and how woman could come close to more-than-human others or other otherness, since having always occupied that position, even when they are not sharing the same kind of oppression. Regarding the relationship between the mutual feminisation of Nature and the naturalisation of Women, Neimanis writes:

[...] we find ourselves tangled in intricate choreographies of bodies and flows of all kinds — not only human bodies, but also other animal, vegetable, geophysical, meteorological, and technological ones; not only watery flows, but also flows of power, culture, politics, and economics. So if projects that move us to think about animal ethics, or environmental degradation, or neocolonialist capitalist incursions are still “feminist,” it is not because such questions are *analogous* to sexual oppression; it is rather because a feminist exploration of the inextricable materiality/semioticity that circulates through all of these bodies pushes at the borders of feminism, and expands it.⁴⁴

What can guide in this debate is the transformative and generative power that the feminisms had in history in subverting a social order that was always imagined as given and immutable. I refer to it as a practice whose subject is the project of a radical transformation of society as a whole. Feminism, here, is a constant practice of undoing and transitioning, unveiling repressive structures from the outside and at the same time unraveling them from the inside, since the self is also a product of the very same mechanism. Deconstruction, suspicion, undoing, becoming, questioning of the very idea of power toward generativity and change.

Natures, women: a positive indeterminacy

Today, everything, from evolutionary biology to endocrinology, passing through the ethology of this or another animal species, is wheeled out to support or debunk stereotypes on sexuality and gender. The scientific basis of these claims is often shaky. But even still, there is no reason to accept injustice because it's 'natural' or 'scientifically proven'. Many LGBTQIA+ organizations explicitly dispute any suggestion that being trans* or homosexual might be considered a choice, using often the narrative of 'being born in the wrong body' or 'being born in this way'. Some bring examples of sexual be-

behaviour of certain animal species to make comparisons, saying that, for example, same-sex intercourses happens in animals as well — an utterance that is stunningly obvious. All these forms can be considered practices of ‘strategic naturalism’. But if we bring back the discussion to the level of ‘naturalness’, we lower to the field of our enemies and we are never going to win the match there. I question how much this kind of discourse could be beneficial or rather counter-productive to the debate and how much instead would be more prolific to create a counter-narrative that will not cling to ‘naturalness’ to defend unalienable rights and acts of self-determination. Regarding the strategic use of nature, Helen Hester, who has a firm anti-naturalist viewpoint as Xenofeminist⁴⁵ (XF), says:

Whether through a doctor or psychologist’s diagnosis, or through personal self-affirmation in the form of a social utterance, we have come to believe that there is some internal truth to gender that we must divine. Such concessions are understandable given the perpetually embattled condition of queer and trans* communities. Indeed, inevitabilizing one’s own existence is a pretty shrewd move when labouring to ensure one’s basic survival. However, XF would question the long-term utility of positioning these approaches as the primary form of trans* politics, given that they mark a retreat from one of the most radical and emancipatory tendencies of transfeminism: its capacity to operate as an arduous assertion of freedom against an order that seemed immutable.⁴⁶

The discourse of ‘strategic naturalism’ — however powerful could be to fight for the existence, always threatened, of certain subjectivities — seems to allude to a conception of identity as a hidden truth inside us, possible to find through a process of self exploration. I’m suspicious of the alleged presence of a final truth inside the self, an essence of the being. I will rather encourage a counter-narration from the perspective of continuous redefinitions and choices. In this fight against the immutable, I prefer to start a politics rooted down in the mud, calling for a shapeshifter creature impossible to grasp by a monolithic conception of identity, for a subject never defined once and for all, politically and performatively constructed, collectively reproduced, always informed by relations and negotiations with the outside. In order to be faithful to this non-principle and non-theory, I would rather worship a sterile goddess than a natural one. A goddess hormonologically intoxicated, a polluted deity that has to deal with the impurity and trash that someone left there before. “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess”⁴⁷, Haraway would say. The monstrous always defined the limits in western imagination between human and non-human, masculine and feminine. “A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends)”⁴⁸. In these non-unitarian and centrifugal movements this liminal figure challenges the phallogocentric discourse of a discrete, self-sufficient, independent and pure Man. As Ada Smalbegovic says:

Feminist thinkers, in particular, have drawn on the traditions of natural history that have struggled to convey the sense of nature as changing, as well as

on the philosophical traditions that have intertwined with them, to develop a non-essentialist understanding of nature and the biological body as a site of indeterminacy.⁴⁹

From my perspective, we are all in transition, even if we don't change our names in the passports or take hormones, until the day of our transpass and maybe even after. I look at the biological body as the place of non-determinacy, a site for resistance, experimentation, negotiation and contradictions. This body is never stable, constructed but also always elusive to control, subjugated to institution, power and will, but at the same time inevitably fleeing out. As Silvia Federici comments:

The body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance, as the female body has been appropriated by the state and men and forced to function as a means for the reproduction and accumulation of labor.⁵⁰

A place of negation, but also the space for self-affirmation. Never self-produced, but shaped by time, relations, feelings, more-than-human creatures, illness, decay. Something to come to terms with, to change and to embrace.

This body is a monstrous creature in its shapeshifting, in the impossibility to be separate, self-sufficient and self-defined. "Every body is permeable and porous, host to and hosted by trillions of other life-forms. The body is a transitional ecosystem; it can't survive in a vacuum".⁵¹ We are also monsters in the symbiotic and vulnerable entanglements with a more-than-human world. But this monstrosity is wonders and terrors, as always is. Symbiosis, the comaking of living things, is essential to life on earth — from corals and lichens to the human microbiome inside our guts. But symbiosis is also vulnerable. Everything is tied to others in rapidly shifting worlds, systems share their lively or deadly futures and sometimes disrupted relations leads not to riotous reproduction but to decline and death, as is happening the most in our troubled times.⁵² This sense of unfamiliarity and uncanniness towards nature and toward ourselves is maybe the only landmark where we can catch some fresh air in the demanding pursuit of narrating another mythology that will allow us to deal with the indeterminate conditions of environmental damage.

11 de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, 1949. pag. 273

12 Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Polity Press, 2017.

13 Ibid., pag. 9

14 Ibid., pag. 13

15 Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects, Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

16 Ibid., pag. 130

17 Stengers, Isabelle. *In Catastrophic Times. Resisting*

the Coming Barbarism. Open Humanities Press, 2015.

18 Danowski, Déborah and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. *The Ends of the World*. Polity Press, 2017. pag 14

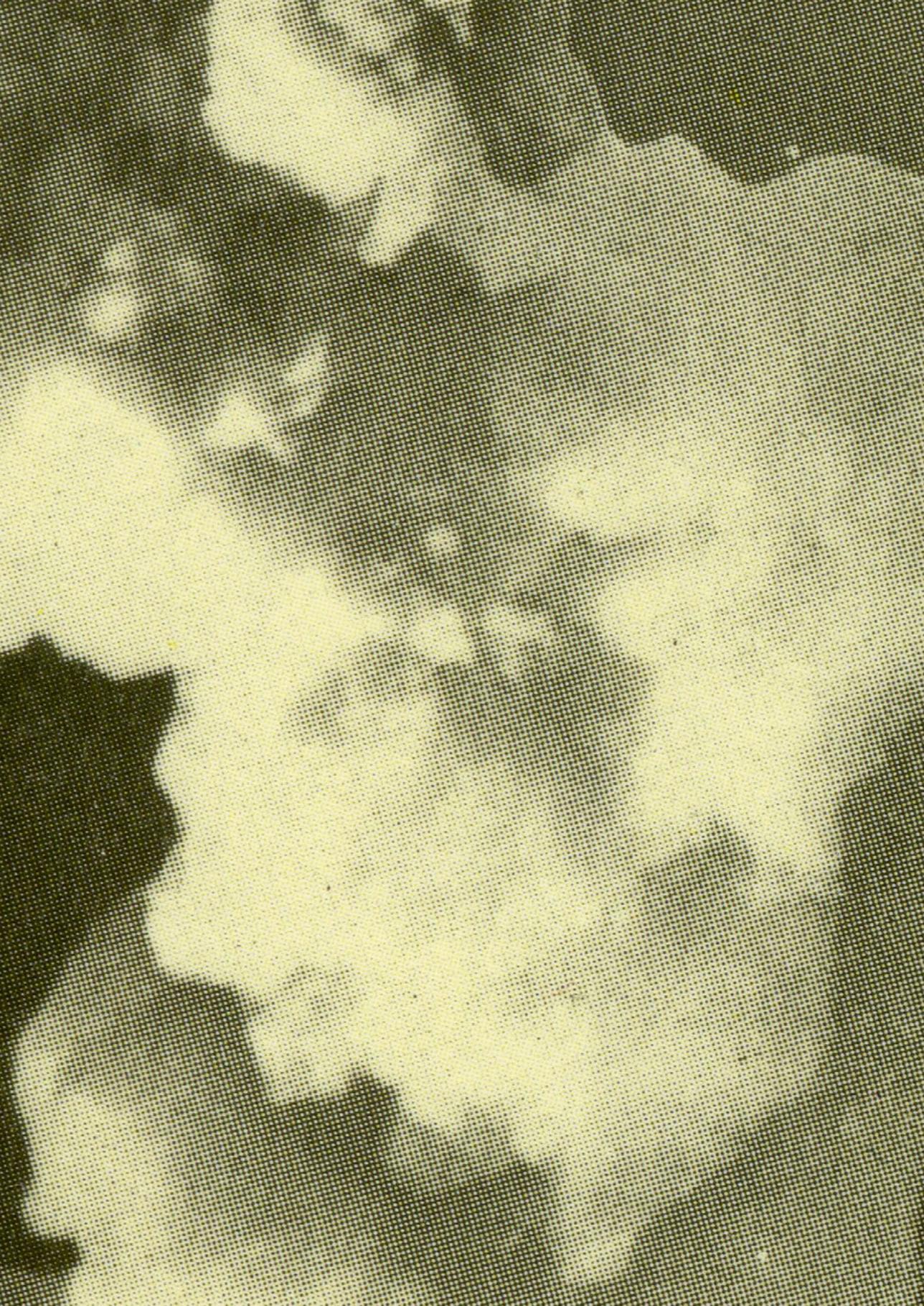
19 Tola, Miriam. *Composing with Gaia: Isabelle Stengers and the Feminist Politics of the Earth*. PhaenEx 11. No. 1. Spring/Summer 2016. pag. 3

20 Stengers, Isabelle. *In Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism*. Open Humanities Press, 2015. pag. 47

21 Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Polity Press, 2017. pag. 15

22 Latour refers to 'Nature/Culture'. Donna Haraway

- to 'naturecultures'. Anyway both recognize their inseparability without any priority, causality or foundation. Natures and cultures intertwine with one another, becoming unrecognisable.
- 25 Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Polity Press, 2017. pag. 19
- 24 Ibid., pag. 21
- 25 Ibid., pag. 21
- 26 Ibid., pag. 23
- 27 Morton, Timothy. *Ecology without nature*. Harvard University Press, 2009. pag. 14
- In his analysis Morton claims for an ecology without Nature: "In the name ecology itself: down with nature!" Nature, as a prescriptive old transcendental unified category, is a product of Romanticism, where the bourgeoisie had to replace the authority of God, bounded with royalty and aristocracy, with a new one. Ultimately, there is not such thing as Nature.
- 28 Only looking at the case of Italian politics, these are some examples of recent movements and events organised by christian, anti-abortionist, 'pro-family' groups: 'Family Days' (2007, 2015, 2016), 'Sentinelle in piedi' (2015), 'World Families Congress XXIII in Verona' (2019).
- 29 European Parliament Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. "Restoring the Natural Order": *The religious extremists' vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction*. 20 April 2018. <https://www.epfweb.org/node/690/>. Accessed 4 May 2019.
- 30 Carlsson, Carl C. "What's is wrong with the United States definition of family". 1 July 1994. <https://www.pop.org/whats-wrong-with-the-united-nations-definition-of-the-family/>. Accessed 4 May 2019.
- 31 The battle against 'the dictatorship of cultural relativism' was started by Benedict XVI, but is continued by Francis nowadays.
- 32 Garbagnoli, Sara. "Il genere, la denaturalizzazione dell'ordine sessuale e la reazione del Vaticano". 04 August 2016. <https://www.intersezioni.it/il-genero-la-denaturalizzazione-dellordine-sessuale-e-la-reazione-del-vaticano/>. Accessed 02 October 2019.
- 33 TERF, Trans-exclusionary feminists, are a minoritarian fringe inside the Feminist movement that believes in the biological roots of womanhood and rejects trans women. Between TERF and Transfeminism/Intersectional Feminism there is an open fight.
- 34 Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. Routledge, 2001. pag. 53
- 35 Ibid., pag. 53
- 36 De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, 1949. pag. 16
- 37 Woolf, Virginia. *A room of one's own*. Feedbooks, 1929. pag. 49
- 38 De Lauretis, Teresa. *Eccentric Subjects: feminist theory and historical consciousness*. Feminist Studies 16. 1990. pag. 115
- 39 Irigaray, Luce. *This sex which is not one*. Cornell University Press, 1985. pag. 26
- 'This sex which is not one' explicit refers to woman's sexuality and how it has been described for what it allegedly lacks — ig. the well-know Freudian penis envy. The woman was conceived as an imperfect and defective man — ig. a clitoris was seen as a minipenis. Irigaray wants to disrupt this unitarian discourse called phallogocentrism. "The mystery that woman represents in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. *She is neither one nor two*. [...] Further, she has no 'proper' name. And her sexual organ, which is not *one* organ, is counted as *none*". For the phallogocentric discourse, the female sexual organs is seen only as a non-penis, therefore as a 'nothing'.
- 40 Wittig, Monique. *One is not born a woman*. in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Beacon Press, 1981. pag. 20
- Wittig is a gender abolitionist. She calls for the destruction of the class of woman — and the idea of woman as a natural group. This has to be pursued through the destruction of heterosexual regime and the destruction of the doctrine of difference that it's used to justify it. A lesbian is not a woman, therefore what makes a woman is a specific social relation of servitude with a man. For Wittig, being lesbian is a method of fugitivity, since it is a concept that goes beyond the categories of sex.
- 41 Stengers, Isabelle. In *Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism*. Open Humanities Press, 2015. pag. 46
- 42 Tola, Miriam. *Composing with Gaia: Isabelle Stengers and the Feminist Politics of the Earth*. PhaenEx 11. No. 1, Spring/Summer 2016. pag. 10
- 43 Danowski, Deborah and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. *The Ends of the World*. Polity Press, 2017. pag. 112
- 44 Neimanis, Astrida. *Hydrofeminism: or, on becoming a body of water*. in *Undutiful Daughters*. eds. Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni and Fanny Söderbäck. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. pag. 96
- 45 Latoria Cuboniks. *Manifesto on Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation*. September 2018. <https://www.laboriacuboniks.net/>. Accessed 5 May 2019.
- Anti-naturalism is one of the main point of the Xenofeminist Manifesto: "In the name of feminism, 'Nature' shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever! If nature is unjust, change nature!"
- 46 Hester, Helen. *Xenofeminism*. Polity Press, 2018. pp. 26-28
- 47 Haraway, Donna. *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*. in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Free Association Book, 1991. pag. 181
- 48 Ibid., pag. 180
- 49 Smailbegovic, Ada. *Cloud Writing: Describing Soft Architectures of Change in the Anthropocene*. in *Art in the Anthropocene*. Open Humanity Press, 2015. pp. 98-99
- 50 Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Autonomedia, 2004. pag. 16
- 51 Wilk, Elvia. *The World Made Fresh: Mystical Encounter and the New Weird Divine*. E-flux Journal #92. June 2018. pag. 13
- 52 Tsing, Anna and others. *Arts of Living in a Damaged Planet*. University of Minnesota Press. 2017. pp. M1 - M11



FUTURE

Where I talk about doomsday, strippers and pyroclastic clouds

A. tells me what her partner E. thinks. According to E., the world was going to end the 26th of October 2017, later on the 15th of December. An ecological disaster, a subversion of democracies, an economical crisis. In every case the horizon foreseen is an anarchic chaos where humans will fight for resources and survival. Every time the fateful day passes without any change, but the catastrophe is just postponed. Thus, he prepares. They bought a pallet of food online to feed themselves for a year. We spend two days piling cans, sacks of flour and boxes. We store the food in big plastic boxes to protect them from mice. Outside, the snow reached the heights of the window.

January 2018, Sweden

E. is in good company. It's been a while that the end is announced everywhere. It could be that we are only becoming more receptive to what were once seen as bizarre and depressing clairvoyants, indeed they don't sound so strange anymore. In Wikipedia's list of dates predicted for apocalyptic events⁵³ there is no interruption since 2010. In the last decade the apocalypse has been foreseen every single year by astrologers, televangelists, religious sects, conspiracy theorists. 2020 makes no exception — Happy New Year! It seems that a lot of people are feeling that uncanny sensation of something strange coming, like in horror movies when you know that the jump scare is going to come soon and you are already anticipating the worst. The problem is that the waiting has been so long that you forgot the thrilling music that forewarned you and you are starting to doubt that you will ever face the monster. Such an ever-changing monster it is.

No future and Capitalism Realist

The fantasy of the end of times is inextricably tied with a certain concept of future, the horizon of a possibility to come and the urgency to be able to think of something different than the present. The speculation of an end could be seen as symptomatic of the death of the idea of the future. There is no future because 'there is no alternative' to neoliberalism, as Margaret Thatcher used to say with a doctrine that will become sadly famous as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even though it is no longer possible to think that free markets, free trade, and capitalist globalisation are the best or the only way for contemporary societies to function, it's equally impossible to think of something else. That is what is so paradoxically tragic. Capitalism gets you stuck in eternal present, because it is the only possible horizon. This bleak time is described by Mark Fisher as 'Capitalist Realism': "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it".⁵⁴ Such is the inurement in which we are. Such depressing times, such interesting times.⁵⁵

In this sense, the dystopian worlds imagined by Hollywood movies⁵⁶ are also not narrative pretext for the emergency of a new way of living, but exacerbation of the current world rather than an alternative to it. That is why “it’s easier to imagine the end of the world, than the end of capitalism”, as formulated in the well known slogan attributed both to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek. In this scenario the catastrophe is neither waiting down the road, nor has it already happened. Rather, it is being lived through. There is no punctual moment of disaster; the world doesn’t end with a burst but gradually falls apart. What is left is just the suspicion that the future harbours only reiteration and re-permutation. Moreover, Timothy Morton also notices how the growing number of post-apocalyptic fantasies imagined in disaster movies that push the catastrophe into the future is directly proportional to how dramatic realities, as mass extinctions, are disregarded.⁵⁷ Somehow, in these cases, the cinematic aspect is used as a form of denial. Therefore, thinking that the end of time is already occurring now — rather than in an imaginary future — and engaging with it in the present times is the only way to recognize the extent of the damage. This has been referred as a ‘prophylactic use of apocalypse’⁵⁸ by Günther Anders, according to who we have to be apocalyptic only to, then, be wrong in a sort of inverse prophecy.

Furthermore, the realistic aspect of Capitalist Realism relies on the capacity of presenting itself as the only realistically possible system, maybe not the best but the only *real* one.⁵⁹ In this way, the worst aspects of capitalism, such as social injustice, poverty and environmental destruction, are described as just inevitable part of reality, while the hope that these forms of suffering could be eliminated is painted as naive fantasy. But Fisher reminds us that:

what counts as ‘realistic’, what seems possible at any point in the social field, is defined by a series of political determinations. An ideological position can never be really successful until it is naturalized, and it cannot be naturalized while it is still thought of as a value rather than a fact.⁶⁰

So, as we saw in the first chapter, what is present as a ‘natural order’ is rather a contingent fact. Therefore, any critical operation must destroy and unveil its appearance of necessity and inevitability to the one of mere possibility. ‘Naturalization’ is the best technique used by ideology to mask itself, but it’s not a solution. We cannot resign ourselves to the fact that the only way to create effective change is to pass off our subjective values for mere facts. That is why, in the first chapter, I questioned the long-term effectiveness of ‘strategic naturalism’. What is possible, what is real or not, is also a matter of ideology, of narrative thought. But there are non authoritative and non prescriptive ways to tell stories. This fictional aspect of reality — and which kind of worlds can be produced — will be crucial in the analysis proposed later in the third chapter.

From Futurist to Post-Futurist

The Italian activist and thinker Franco Bifo Berardi in his book *After the future*⁶¹ retraces a history of the concept of future and identifies the faith in it as the leading myth of

modernity. The idea of the future is central in the ideology and in the energy of the 20th century. The future was bound to the idea of progress and progression, the idea that better will come, despite how bleak the present is. “Notwithstanding the darkness of the present, the future will be bright”.⁶² Since the Futurist Manifesto, that exalted acceleration, energy, speed and violence in the name of progress, this obsession has led to endless accumulation in the name of growth and profit. But now, the present reality we are facing is a Futurism without a future. After the Club of Rome and its report, *The Limits to Growth*⁶³, in 1972, the idea of Futurism became unthinkable: infinite accumulation is not possible on a planet with finite resources. A few years later, the punk movement will cry out “No future”⁶⁴, like a self-fulfilling prophecy that has slowly enveloped the world. In the last three decades of the century the utopian imagination of Futurism was slowly overturned, and has been replaced by the dystopian imagination.

Now the Future, as psychological perception, is over and we finally have to live as Post-Futurists. Being Post-Futurist means to start to live ‘in time’, where time is not something that you can accumulate but just accommodate, taking pleasure in the decomposition of yourself, the becoming other of yourself. We have to disentangle the future — the perception of the future, the concept of future, and the very production of future — from the trap of progress. Indeed, the idea of a progressive future is not a ‘natural’ concept at all. “The future is not an obvious concept, but a cultural construction and projection. For the human of the Middle Ages, living in the sphere of a theological culture, perfection was placed in the past, in the time when God created the universe and humankind”.⁶⁵ Future is not a natural dimension of the mind, rather it is a modality of perception and imagination, a feature of expectation and attention, and its modalities and features change with the changing of cultures.

From the screen of my laptop I look at the news. In Italy in the last months a series of what were once considered as climate environmental exceptional disasters are becoming the norm, not crisis or emergencies but dramatic realities that people will have to face in the next year with ever more frequency. Events that we have to learn to live with — or die with — as best we can. Whirlwinds on the seashores of Tuscany, extreme flooding in Venice, overflowing rivers in the North, rivers of mud in Basilicata, avalanches, wind gusts, torrential rain and landslides. We don't even have the words to describe what is happening. Every time these events are depicted, they have such a ridiculous exotic taste: who would have thought to see the word “hurricane” printed on a local newspaper of Brianza? The storm of October 2018 that caused the uprooting and the destruction of 14 millions of trees — and lot of more environmental and economic damage — has been named Vaia⁶⁶ one year after. The act of naming is always late. From faraway, I look at online pictures: everywhere big piles of debris, mud, branches and trucks, cars, bricks, appliances, electric trellis. A monstrous blob threateningly sliding down a valley seems to be the only thing that will remain, absorbing everything inside itself.

Today the end of the future takes its greatest shape as the destructive force of weather mutations, of what has been called ‘the climate beats’.⁶⁷ But the image is very difficult to grasp and has no clear boundaries, like the mud blob after a storm. Morton explains this difficulty — and the consequential political impotence — as a result of the ontological

nature of global warming. Climate change, like styrofoam or radioactive plutonium, is a hyperobject⁶⁸: an entity of such vast scale and so massively distributed in time and space that it challenges the traditional idea of what a thing is in first place. In simple words, you can not see climate, you just see local weather manifestations. The ‘Intrusion of Gaia’⁶⁹ challenges anthropocentrism, ontologies and the myth of the Future. It obliges to deal with the difficulty of thinking of a future inhabited by things that go far beyond human-life scale, like pollution or nuclear radioactivity. A future not deliberately intended or forecasted by men, but unfortunately entangled and inevitably modified by their actions. If you start looking at a thing, throughout all of its states and in all the ways different entities interact with it, just like a piece of styrofoam changes shape, going from a cup of coffee to a small grain inside a fish stomach, you will start to consider things not as discrete objects in time and space, but a continuous line of existence that encounter different forms and entities in which it stays in different relations. Bundle of forms over time, taking count of the other-selves, future-selves, past-selves, possible-selves, self not happened. A truly ecological approach also means to design a life that can include these kinds of things. Ultimately, human survival is inescapably connected with this long network of causality and aftermaths.

Crisis and interregnum

The impossibility of getting a past over with and opening up a future different than the present time could be seen as a sort of paralysis. But a crisis — from *krino*, to separate, to judge — is the moment where it’s necessary to make a choice, namely to move. Speaking about crisis could sounds vacuous and banal, describing the contemporary through a term that is not really addressing any specific cause or proposition of change. Starting from this point, Nancy Fraser⁷⁰ in a book on the global political, ecological, economic and social breakdown, looks at the current situation through the lens of a quote by the Italian communist thinker Antonio Gramsci: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear”.⁷¹ In order to explain this idea of interregnum, she uses Gramsci’s concept of *hegemony*. *Hegemony* is a process in which a ruling class makes its domination appear natural by installing the presuppositions of its own worldview as the common sense of the society as a whole. Also here it’s a process of ‘naturalization’, that is why *hegemonic* values are usually referred to as ‘common sense’. It has to do with the political, cultural and moral authority of a given worldview. *Hegemony* is organized in a *hegemonic bloc*, a coalition of various social forces that the ruling class assembles and through which it asserts its leadership. Every *hegemonic bloc* decides what is possible, just and right inside its domain and what is not. Gramsci thinks that in order to change this arrangement, the dominated class should build a new common sense, a *counterhegemony*, through the organization in new political alliances, a *counterhegemonic bloc*.

It’s not difficult to see that the current hegemony ruling around the world is a new form of capitalism — neoliberal, globalizing and financialized — both in its variant of progressive neoliberalism or reactionary neoliberalism. Neoliberal capitalism is constantly morphing tactics and it has been able to absorb crises, like the recession of 2008.

The problem is that now, with the global political, ecological and economical breakdown — of which Fraser takes Trump’s election as symbol — this *hegemony* is starting to shaken and many people are losing their faith in it as the most beneficial system for the majority. Nevertheless,

we have to distinguish between neoliberal policy, which remains in force pretty much everywhere, and neoliberal hegemony, which is quite shaken. We have a situation — and that is why the Gramsci quote is so relevant — which combines two things in a tense amalgam: first, a dramatic weakening of neoliberalism’s authority — diminished confidence in its ideas, policies, and the institutional order that underlies them, and second, the inability at least so far to generate a plausible alternative, either at the political or the institutional level.⁷²

That is why we live in times of interregnum, a socio-cultural condition whereas a social order loses its grip and can hold no longer, meanwhile a new frame is still at the designing stage, has not yet been fully assembled or is not strong enough to be put in its place. When the ruling class loses its consensus, it is no longer leading but only dominant, thus it exercises coercive force alone. That is why interregnums and their ‘morbid symptoms’ can be dangerous and their outcomes so dramatic.

The old is dying and new cannot be born again, also because the past and future coexist simultaneously. Some still are living as moderns, others recognize that we have never been modern.⁷³ I always wonder how it is possible that two completely different historical mindsets are happening at the same time just a few kilometers away from each other. Around me I see men wearing their wigs and frock coats, like in the movie *Barry Lyndon*. They refuse to see that the world is changing, despite their intentions. Neither can they recognize anything other than themselves. This is the ‘non-simultaneity of the simultaneous’, according to which “Not all people exist in the same Now”⁷⁴, namely the coexistence of realities from radically different moments of history at the same time. I would more simply say: “Ok, boomer”.

No future for our children

It seems that the future is something thinkable just for a few people. How to detach naturalization from the environment and the future from the idea of progress? In other words, how to build an ecology without appealing to Nature? And how can we imagine a future — and thus changing a present — without appealing to Futurability, neither as a progressive myth nor as a narrative of ‘let’s change the world for *our* children’? Helen Hester in *Xenofeminism* underlines how ecologist movements are often aligned in the use of the figure of the Child.⁷⁵ The agencies of adults, non-reproductive subjects, but also more-than-human beings are always subordinated to those of the Children as an abstract bearer of the idea of the Future. But this rhetorical shorthand can underline problematic assumption, as the stigmatization of non-reproductive sex and ‘improperly’ reproductive bodies. People are being called on to act only as future reproductive actors: ‘for our children’, it’s the call. Hester inquires in what ways can we fight for a better,

more emancipatory future without relying on reproductive futurism.⁷⁶ Heterosexism inside environmentalism often passes unnoticed and the bond between reproductive futurism and environmental care remains unquestioned. For this reason it is important not to hand over futurity to normative white reproductive futurity.⁷⁷

Future in the present

In a similar sense José Muñoz, in his book *Cruising Utopia*⁷⁸, highlights how futurity can be a problem. Heterosexual culture depends on the notion of future since reproductive sexuality looks to ‘a future for our children’. But queer people, rather than sacrifice the present for a fantasmatic future, live and enact queer worlds in the present. Muñoz criticizes the binarized logic of present and future and asks for a disruption of it with the enactment of what he describes as ‘a future in the present’. To call for this notion of ‘future in the present’ is to summon a refunctioned notion of utopia. Thus, certain performances of queer subjects contain anticipatory illumination of queer reality, other political possibilities for a world that should be, could be and that will be. Muñoz takes the idea of ‘a future in the present’ from C. L. R. James’s *The Future in the Present* where James claims that a socialist future could be glimpsed by observing workers’ interactions and solidarity in the factory. For James, these moments of rupture are an actual socialist reality in the present. Following this idea, Muñoz explores dissident sexual performances, queer art works, stickering activist campaigns, a constellation of places for instant sex, bars, movie theaters, venues in New York at the beginning of Nineties, before the repressive politics adopted by mayor Giuliani. These cases are example of ‘contact relations’, cross-race and interclass encounters — as between strippers and patrons, sex workers and clients — that will be replaced by privatized commercial relations, ‘networking’ instead of ‘contact’. Then, sexual dissidence, in a post-Giuliani New York, will be assimilated, absorbed, institutionalized and finally administered by society through, what is called, *homonormativity*.

Nonetheless, those moments of group enactment and collective recognition — like a vigil march for the murder of a gay man — became moments of communal utopia, glimpses of illumination of a future that lives and acts right now. This form of futurism doesn’t abandon the present, rather “works as a refunctioned utopianism that is predicated on a critique of the present”.⁷⁹ In this sense, Muñoz says:

I suggest that the reading practice that James describes (*the idea of a future in the present*) helps us read the world-making potentialities contained in the performances of minoritarian citizen-subjects who contest the majoritarian public sphere. I use the term minoritarian to index citizen-subjects who, due to antagonisms within the social such as race, class, and sex, are debased within the majoritarian public sphere.⁸⁰

As Fred Moten comments, Muñoz’s queerness is a “utopian project whose temporal dimensionality is manifest not only as projection into the future but also as projection of a certain futurity into and onto the present and the past”.⁸¹ These collective practices, and

also the archival reenactment of the past ones, are processes of world-making, glimpses of other possibilities, other practices of sociality. They also disrupt the idea of the past, present the future as distinct temporalities and allow an opening up to the existence of a new world. These techniques of worlding will be better explored later.

Decolonize the future: FFF and XR

On the contrary, the problem with the idea of ‘a future for our children’, chronologically disconnected with the present, is that it risks producing very little future, where there is a place for just very few to survive. With the global and massive mobilization of children and teenagers of 2018 and 2019, with the rise of Greta Thunberg as leader and FridayForFuture and eXtinctionRebellion movements, this debate comes up again. Hopefully from another perspective, where children start to be the subject of the speech rather than only the object or the comparison tool used to awake consciences. Right now, the problematic aspect of environmental discourse is starting to be addressed and some weeks ago XR Scotland declared the necessity to decolonize the movement.⁸² It has to be recognized that this ‘us’, that provoked climate change, is not a general humanity, but an economical structure built on a colonial project that pursues power and richness, that over the centuries created a global order based on exploitation, racism and sexism.

Another insight is that for many, such as the poor, blacks, queer, trans, people with disabilities, the bleakness is not something of ‘the future’. For those who are indigenous, working class, black, brown, queer, trans or disabled, the experience of structural violence became part of their birthright.⁸³ The two main contemporary movements, in both numbers and global diffusion, FFF and XR have in their name the idea of future. But for many actors, human and non-human, the consequences of climate change are making the present unbearable. For centuries, racism, sexism and classism have been necessary for the capitalist system to be upheld, and have shaped the contemporary conditions: “When we focus only on “our children” and not the people who are dying now, we risk leaving space for eco-fascism”.⁸⁴ What emerges from the critics of XR is that no general, neutral, universal humanity does exist. The crisis will come for everyone, but there are massively unjust ways it will damage — and it’s already damaging — some people more than others in facing poor air quality, hunger, public health crises, drought, floods and displacement.

Ongoing end and Indigenous futurability

This recognition is connected with the idea of ‘ongoing end’, as opposed to the imaginary of the apocalypse. The artist Adelita Husni-Bey criticizes the idea of a final punctual moment of disruption how it tends to be painted in contemporary Hollywood movies as a primary white-capitalist US event.

Whereas the ‘end’ is actually an ongoing process to which disenfranchised and non-white people have always been subjected to — as in they were, and are, always under the constant threat of destruction through colonialism and its af-

tereffects: poverty, disenfranchisement, high rates of imprisonment, lack of political agency and so forth.⁸⁵

‘The end’ is simply the slow unveiling of the catastrophe we’ve been living through for centuries. This realization disrupts any fantasies of progress, return, or reconciliation with a past, a present and a future that is already happening, that is happening right now and will continue to happen. The idea of an ‘ongoing end’ makes the fantasy of a sudden catastrophe pointless and it is similar to the idea of a present apocalypse, one that is being lived through.

The idea of progress in the times to come, Futurism, and the fantasy of the end of times, as future apocalypses, are two products of the same view. Both negate another kind of narrative and, thus, the possibility of action in the present. On the contrary, the concept of Indigenous Futurability dismantles the idea of Futurism as a universal value. In a similar way to Afrofuturism, Indigenous speculative practices are different from Western speculative fiction. As Hannah Donnelly describes, the term Indigenous Futurability was coined by the Anishinaabe academic Grace Dillon⁸⁶ to refer to practices of storytelling that challenge colonial narratives and open up decolonized futures and self-determined representations. Indigenous futures look like the resurgence of Indigenous languages, knowledge and governance system. They are different from other speculative practices because they challenge the colonial settler framing of the past, and present a future.⁸⁷ Indigenous future in itself troubles the Western idea of chronology as a linear progression. Future does not always mean future in years or date. According to Donnelly, Indigenous speculative practice is not the individual watching the world ending, but communities repairing, returning and revitalizing the country. The dystopian futures linked to the apocalypse are not relevant to Indigenous futures, because the dystopian present situation is the world ending and already occurred in the past. The real utopia is the cessation of settler occupation and the possibility to create a story not controlled by the colonized, since the present is very much defined by their history. Léuli Eshraghi, a curator from Apia, in the Samoan archipelago, says:

As indigenous people, we are inhabited, often haunted, by ideas, images and traumas of our ancestral past, manifest in our genetic and spiritual memory, and in the continuing violence we are currently experiencing. We are non-linear beings even within European linearity. Many of our languages in the Vasalaolao place the future directionally ‘behind’ and the past ‘ahead’ of us.⁸⁸

Also another Indigenous scholar, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a Nishnaabeg Michi Saagiig writer from Alderville First Nation in Canada, calls for a future where a radical resurgence would be guided by Indigenous knowledge and will put Nishnaabeg intelligence — with the brilliance and complexity of its embodied thought — in a leading place. “If we want to create a different future, we need to live a different present, so that the present can fully marinate, influence, and create different futurities. If we want to live in a different present, we have to center Indigeneity and allow it to change us”.⁸⁹

This kind of knowledge comes from and within the land, 'Aki'. The land is both the context and the process, where people are in an intimate relation with the physical and the spiritual elements of the world. The land is pedagogy and is embodied in the Elders, because they are practitioners of Nishnaabeg intelligence, as a collective and situated knowledge. In order to imagine a future of freedom and self-determination over bodies, minds and land, Nishnaabeg people don't have to look for legitimization and recognition by colonizer's academy or methodology. Instead, this refusal "creates an elsewhere in the here, a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism. It is a performance of other worlds, an embodied practice of flights".⁹⁰

Refusal is about creating futures, but from a here and now, while insisting on the potentiality and concrete possibility for another world. It shows how it's possible to think out beyond current parameters. It is about acknowledging the extent and seriousness of the troubles, while neither succumbing to abstract futurism, nor resigning to sublime despair or indifference. It is a form of fugitivity that acts in the present and it acts in the space between silences and words.

My friend C. brings home a postcard she bought in Naples during holidays. It's an image of the eruption of Vesuvius in 1944. The image was coloured and manipulated later, but it's sold there, without any particular questions or doubts about its veridicity. No one seems to care too much. The end is fictionalized, fantasized, made it anew. A tale, a story, here, elsewhere. On another planet. A memory to reconstruct is a building of a narrative, an act of construction, how this will be? Otherworldly? Since 1944, the volcano has not erupted again. Scientists say that the more time passes the more violent the eruption will be. The area around the volcano is densely populated. 700'000 people are living in the high-risk area, the one that will be inevitably damaged by an eruption.

- 53 "List of dates predicted for apocalyptic events".
Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. 13 December
2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_
predicted_for_apocalyptic_events/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events/).
- 54 Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*.
Zero Books, 2009. pag. 2
- 55 I'm referring to the well-known translation
of the Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting
times".
- 56 Dozen of disaster and apocalyptic movies
are produced every year. To name some recent ones:
The day after tomorrow (2004), *Children of Men* (2006),
I Am Legend (2007), *WALL-E* (2008), *The Road* (2009),
Melancholia (2011). In the text, I am particularly
referring to the analysis that Mark Fisher does
of *Children of Man*, where the dystopian world foreseen
is an exacerbation of neoliberal capitalism, statal
violence and ultra-authoritarianism. The theme
of sterility, thus, is the expression of an anxious fear
of reiteration, of the impossibility of the new
to be born out of the present.
- 57 Morton, Timothy. "The catastrophe has already
occurred". 15 July 2008. [http://ecologywithoutnature.
blogspot.com/2008/07/catastrophe-has-already-
occurred.html/](http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com/2008/07/catastrophe-has-already-occurred.html/). Accessed 10 January 2020
- 58 Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New
Climatic Regime*. Polity Press, 2017. pag. 219
Latour here is referring to *Le temps de la fin*, by Günther
Anders, published in 1960.
- 49 Danowski, Deborah and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.
The Ends of the World. Polity Press, 2017. pag. 135
The authors pinpoint how usually environmental
activists are accused of having unrealistic projects
and discuss fantasy. This was the answer given
by Dilma Rousseff to the activists who were protesting
to defend the constitutional right of Indigenous people
and were fighting against the damming of Amazonian
rivers. What is considered real and what fantasy
is pivotal, indeed.
- 60 Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*.
Zero Books, 2009. pag. 21
- 61 Berardi, Franco Bifo. *After the future*. AK Press, 2011.
- 62 *Ibid.*, pag 13
- 63 Meadows, Donella H. and others. *Limits to Growth*.
A Potomac Associates Books, 1972.
- 64 "No future / No future / No future for you / No future /
No future / No future for me" says *God save the Queen*
by Sex Pistols in 1977.

- 65 Berardi, Franco Bifo. *After the future*. AK Press, 2011. pag. 12
- 66 Incredibly, there is the possibility to pay the “Institut für Meteorologie of the Freie Universität” of Berlin to give your name to a meteorological event. This is what happened in this case, the name was a birthday present for a lady called Vaia Jakobs.
- 67 The fact that the irruption of a force that transcend humans has been defined with an animal connotation is noteworthy. I will discuss later the importance of the distinction between civilized and feral beings.
- 68 Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects, Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- 69 Stengers, Isabelle. In *Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism*. Open Humanities Press, 2015.
- 70 Fraser, Nancy. *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born*. Verso Books, 2019.
- 71 Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers, 1971. pag. 276
- 72 Fraser, Nancy. *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born*. Verso Books, 2019. pag. 48
- 73 Latour, Bruno. *We have never been modern*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
- The modern are the ones that blind themselves in order to not see that nature and society are connected and bound together. They expunge from each the traces of the other, in the attempt to distinguish between human and non-human. But every social fact, as every scientific object, is the result of an intricate web of relationships and alliances between humans and more-than-humans.
- 74 Bloch, Ernst. and Mark Ritter. *Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics*. New German Critique. No. 11 (Spring, 1977). pp. 22-38
- This idea was formulated by Ernst Bloch to describe the situation of Germany after World War I — with the rise of National Socialist and the concurrent economic crisis — where simultaneously conflicting historical realities were appearing.
- 75 Hester, Helen. *Xenofeminism*. Polity Press, 2018. pag. 41
- Hester highlights that the poster of the People Climate March of 2014 was a photo of a child.
- 76 *Ibid.*, pag. 55
- 77 *Ibid.*, pag. 53
- 78 Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York University Press, 2009.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pag. 56
- 80 *Ibid.*, pag. 56
- 81 Moten, Fred. “The beauty of Jose Esteban Muñoz”. 10 March 2014. <https://www.boundary2.org/2014/03/the-beauty-of-jose-esteban-munoz/>. Accessed 20 December 2019.
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- 83 “The wretched of the earth. An open letter to Extinction Rebellion”. 3 May 2019. <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/an-open-letter-to-extinction-rebellion/> Accessed 24 November 2019.
- 84 “XR Scotland. On Class and Climate Struggle: Decolonising XR”. 19 October 2019. <https://freedomnews.org.uk/statement-from-xr-scotland/>. Accessed 24 November 2019.
- 85 Pasquinelli, Teodora. and Federico Campagna, Adelita Husni-Bey. “On magic, a skype conversation”. http://www.artecritica.it/onsite/on_magic-eng.html/. Accessed 10 December 2019.
- Here, Adelita Husni-Bey talks about her work with tarots for the Venice Biennale 2017. One of the tarot is called “The Ongoing End”, from *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse* by Evan Calder Williams.
- 86 Grace Dillon is a professor at Portland State University where she holds courses on Indigenous Futurism. She also curated the first anthology of Indigenous Futurability: *Walking the Clouds: Indigenous Science fiction*. University of Arizona Press, 2012.
- 87 Donnelly, Hannah. *Indigenous Futures and Sovereign Romanticisms. Belonging to a Place in Time*. in *Sovereign Words: Indigenous Art, Curation and Criticism*. Valiz, 2019. pag. 261
- 88 Eshraghi, Léuli Mazyar Luna’i. *Mātau ‘o tautuanaga o fa’āliga ata mo o tātou lumana’i, Considering the Service of Display for our Future*. in *Sovereign Words: Indigenous Art, Curation and Criticism*. Valiz, 2019. pag. 246
- 89 Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017. pag. 20
- 90 *Ibid.*, pag. 173



MAGIC

*Where I talk about clairvoyant horses, passports
and woman at the stake*

The world is never given once and for all, but is the result of a constant process of construction. We constantly negotiate — and we are also forced to negotiate — the boundaries that separate ourselves with other selves. But some things exceed and pour out. How permeable will we allow ourselves to be? The porosity, interdependence and vulnerability is not something to be denied, since only an attitude toward things that go beyond self-sufficiency would allow the emergence of the multitude. The categories that we use today are products of capitalist, patriarchal and colonial history. We identified with those categories so much that we thought that we embodied them, that they were real. But there is no such thing as masculinity and femininity or as natural and artificial, but a multiplicity of beings — and a complexity of sexuality, pleasure, identities and livings — that can not be assigned or reduced to the binary. Even so, this doesn't mean that the outcomes of these polarizations aren't bleak and repressive, on the contrary, they are very embedded in the structure of institutions and in the way the differences between beings are established. Nomination is at the same time the definition of a boundary and the reiterated affirmation of a norm. What refuses or exceeds the name is not describable through this narrative. It seems that words create damage. But some kinds of words can help in challenging dichotomies, fixing definitions and saving the particular from the tyranny of the universality.

Magic is a way to produce effects, it's a relationship of causality between actions and events, but a different causality to the mechanistic one. It is a way to gain back control against uncertainty or potential danger. It is a way to make things visible, listenable and tangible, while it brings out anger and materializes agency and desires. Magic invents new words and these words are things that do things. Moreover, it opens up different understandings and different ways to make sense, maybe it overcomes sense sometimes. We have to shift the idea of superstition towards that which we should be really suspicious of — such as power, gender, nature, growth, future, profit. They are words as well, nothing 'natural' at all. There is nothing 'natural' whatsoever. Words, not really a thing, not more real than angels and spirits, but still. That is why, sometimes, common sense is not reasonable at all. On the contrary, magic words are poetic words, effective words, performative words. Mythopoesis is about myth-making. Myths are about worlds that fall apart and recombine themselves, transform, change names and metamorphose. Which myths are we going to tell now? H el ene Cixous foresees these new worlds:

Then all the stories would have been told differently; the future would be incalculable; the historical forces would, will, change hands and bodies; another

thinking, which is yet unthinkable, will transform the functioning of all society. Well, we are living through this very period where the conceptual foundation of a millennial culture is in the process of being undermined by millions of a species of mole (Topoi and ground mines) never known before.⁹¹

A spell: how an utterance can make something appear or disappear by invoking it
We say that certain things exist and certain do not, some are fiction and some are facts. Facts produce effects, fables don't and only live in the airy realm of imagination, dreams or desire. But this distinction could be troubling and sometimes fiction produces consequences in the same way of the so called events.

I'm sitting 10'000 meters above the ground level, somewhere in the air between Milano Malpensa and Schiphol Airport. I picture in my head crossing various imaginary lines. A border: an invisible mark that divides the land in two different jurisdictions. A passport: a piece of paper that declares my entity, my legal state. I could sign a piece of paper that declares that a certain thing is on my property. I declare that I'm getting married and now we are vinculated in mutual obligations. A law is declared and I can be punished for it. I get paid, my employers compile a certain numerical sequence on a computer and so another numeric string results in mine: we are exchanging money. Ultimately, what am I the most? What is that constitutes my existence? Is it more my molecular composition, the movements of my subatomic particles, my corporeal flash, my hormones, my affections, my thought or rather my documents, my psychological diagnosis, my bank account, my online data profiling, my business card, my CV?

As Federico Campagna, explains in "Technic and Magic"⁹², there are things that are considered real and things that are not and this is due to the ruling metaphysic in which we are immersed. The world we live in, and indeed any world in any moment of history, is the product of a certain reality-system through which it emerges. A reality-system is a filter that defines the metaphysical assumptions of a certain age: it says what is understood as existence, what kind of entities exist and which ones don't, how they exist, etc. Our contemporary age has embraced a troubling and painful form of reality, 'Technic', that declares that certain things are real — documents, law, nations — and others are just superstitions. Different metaphysics create completely different structures of reality and the process of world building informs what is meaningful and what is not. The realisation of this process, therefore, allows the reproduction of certain actions and not of others. 'Technic' and 'Magic' are two different forms of the process of metaphysical imagination: they are two alternative reality-systems, producing two different worlds, each with its own specific range of the possible.

In 'Technic' things are pure instrumentality, means to an end for the limitless expansion of production.

The essence of technology consists of a specific way of enframing the world, which unveils it as a 'stock-pile of standing-reserve', that is as nothing but the accumulated instrumental value of everything and anything. A forest is no longer

a forest, but a stockpile of timber ready to be sent to production; a waterfall is no longer a waterfall, but a stockpile of hydro-electrical units ready to be extracted; a person is no longer a person, but a stockpile of labour ready to be employed; and so on.⁹³

‘Technic’ focuses on ‘absolute language’, as abstract pieces ready to be recombined and consumed through a grammar. Whatever fails or refuses to be reduced to a function of descriptive language is banned from the world as a fantasy. This world is thought of as a ‘stock pile’ of usable things, where all the beings are bits recombinable for economy in order to operate with it. So the contemporary metaphysical problem is a linguistic problem.

On the contrary, according to Campagna, ‘Magic’s’ reality-system is based around the notion of ‘the ineffable as life’, this means that at the heart of existence and of each existent there is a kernel, irreducible to any linguistic category. This ineffable dimension of existence crosses inside all beings, is present in every single existent — though with different intensities — and it is the same in all of them. The real is a continuous line without any interruptions. Therefore Magic troubles the categories of living and non living, time and space as normally thought in ‘Technic’, because these binarisms — dead or alive, animal or human — are the ways in which descriptive language categorizes existents. “Magic’s therapy reminds us that not everything is at stake in the world: that our most fundamental dimension, and the most fundamental dimension of every existent is not negotiable and cannot be put to work. Thus, Magic acts both as a consolation and as a different cosmogony”.⁹⁴

In ‘Technic’, on the contrary, the specific existence is only seen in relation to the category which it fits into: as species, gender, citizenship, but not as a being in itself. The specific existence doesn’t count, it only counts in relation to the name. If you take out all these names, all these categories, the thing doesn’t exist anymore, because the existence of the thing is replaced by the existence of the name, as in border control and passports economy. Standardization means that reality exists for its name and definition. Individuals only stand for the typology and category inside which they can be assimilated: civilized or barbarians, humans or savage, healthy or insane, normal or deviant. We thought that what distinguished humans from animals was the capacity to give names and through naming it was possible to build a ordered world — this was the work of taxonomies, of encyclopedias, of anthropology, of biology and all the scientific classification. But now, we have to deal with a world made just of names that have substituted reality for its definition. Therefore, the goal is not to enlarge the categories, or to broaden the notion of illness, the notion of normality, the notion of citizenship in order to include more people inside them, but to question the very idea of illness and sanity, of gender, of citizenship, of naturality and normality.

Magical spells: how to tell very effective stories

Donna Haraway is a practitioner of SF. “SF is a sign for science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, and also, string figures”.⁹⁵

Facts and fables need each other. SF means to build worlds with words and these wordy worlds are very big and variegated. “SF is storytelling and fact telling; it is the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come”.⁹⁶ Practicing SF is a way to get out of the Anthropocene, the strings produce figures like in the cat’s cradle game, digits touch each other, one entanglement after another, players pass back and forth not only in collaboration but in response-ability, the ability to give responses.

Anthropocene is a problematic term. As soon as it had been proposed by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer to identify the new geological era that has seen humans imposing as a geological force, it has been accused of reinforcing again the very narration of the *anthropos* that tries to reveal. The Anthropocene tends to disavow the different responsibilities that caused climate change and to homogenize agencies and problems under the name of a generic human being.⁹⁷ Some affirm that, despite the possibility of the universal masculine principle being guilty, the very one to accuse is an economic system based on exploitation: therefore we live in a Capitalocene.⁹⁸ Also Donna Haraway refuses the term Anthropocene as a tool to understand and act in the present, because it reiterates the story of human exceptionalism, of top-down bureaucracy and politics of western world. That story must give in to geostories, to Gaia stories. We should live in the Chthulucene, a name that alludes to the chthonic power of the Earth, the deities of the underground, the tentacular ones — because *tentaculum* is a ‘feeler’, from *tentare* ‘to feel’ —, those that we used to fear. Chthulucene is a timespace that troubles the universalist *anthropos* of Anthropocene. “We need another figure, a thousand names of something else, to erupt out of the Anthropocene into another, big-enough story”.⁹⁹ Now that human exceptionalism and utilitarian individualism are becoming unthinkable in the best sciences — from biology to anthropology —, this Chthulucene should overcome the Anthropocene and gather the trash of Capitalocene. As we have seen, in naming this new era the ‘Intrusion of Gaia’ Isabelle Stengers makes a political operation as well. The writer Miriam Tola observes that:

In addressing the limits of reducing the earth to a set of resources and raw materials, Stengers offers a trenchant critique of the dominant liberal tradition deriving from Locke that sees the planet as an inexhaustible repository of resources to be transformed into value through labour and enclosures. She is adamant that the problems posed by the intrusion of Gaia entail a radical rethinking of Euro-American hegemonic notions of progress and growth that have emerged out of a colonial landscape marked by the violent disqualification of other ways of living and conceiving the world.¹⁰⁰

Isabelle Stengers is aware of the necessity of another terminology and she highlights how: “To name is not to say what is true but to confer on what is named the power to make us feel and think in the mode that the name calls for”.¹⁰¹ To name is a way to think and so act differently. Both Gaia, with its intrusion, and Chthulucene are concerned with world-making, as product of divergent and overlapping activities often unintentional,

with many actors involved, many of which exist irrespective of human control. Also Latour claims for a new terminology: we must tell the stories of Gaia¹⁰², we have to be 'Earthbounds' and stop to look at the sky.

Many new big-enough stories, different than the fall from Eden's one. In a short essay called "The Carrier Bag Theory"¹⁰³ Ursula K. Le Guin imagines another line of human evolution: she put herself back in the scenario of Paleolithic age and the daily life at that time. In the common imagery one would think that the first tool created by these first hominids would have been a sort of stick or knife, somehow a kind of weapon. No wonder the opening of *2001: Space Odyssey* has become such an iconic sequence: the dramatic invention of the first ape's tool is a sharp bone to do harm. On the contrary, according to Le Guin, the very first artifact, the first tool created by humans has to be some kind of recipient. The survival of the hominids depended on their ability to gather water, seeds, sprouts, berries, roots and wild fruits. But how much food can be held in one's hand? Not much. Therefore there would have been the necessity of some kind of container. "A leaf a gourd a net a bag a sling a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient".¹⁰⁴ Sixty-five to eighty percent of what human beings ate during Paleolithic was gathered, but the mammoth hunters occupy our memory, the cave paintings and the stories we tell. Because in these stories there was a Hero. There was a difference between the modest routine of the gatherer of wild-oats and the epic expedition of a small group of mammoth hunters: they came back with a story to tell.

That story not only has Action, it has a Hero. Heroes are powerful. Before you know it, the men and women in the wild-oat patch and their kids and the skills of the makers and the thoughts of the thoughtful and the songs of the singers are all part of it, have all pressed into service in the tale of the Hero. But it isn't their story. It's his.¹⁰⁵

The stories of the Hero dominated in the books, but they are not the only ones, nor the ones our lives mostly depend on. Eventually, Le Guin calls for another kind of narrative and another way to tell stories:

We've heard it, we've all heard all about all the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained. That is a new story. That is news. And yet old.¹⁰⁶

A carrier bag of storytelling is a form of collecting, carrying together with and through stories of becoming with, without exceptionalism or protagonism. This story will be more faithful to the complexity and the interdependency of the livings. All of them can not find space in the story of the Hero, they are just overcome as prey, tools, props, background. These new stories — yet ancient — would have wider room. Even if the Hero wants to be in there, the story would not be solely about him. They would be stories of reciprocal induction, of vulnerability and interdependence, of 'companion species' — as

Haraway¹⁰⁷ would say — living and dying well together, even if this dying is not the end of the story. This story would get rid of the male fantasy of the phallogocentric discourse, of being born adult, as a self-sufficient and self-generated self, but it would recognize how much we were cared for and carved through the acts of others, humans, unimaginable kinds of critters and un-animated beings. And this story would act as a charm. Because at the end:

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.¹⁰⁸

Shapeshifting, metamorphosis and possession: how to become someone else or have someone else inside you

What is Pluto? Donald is a duck, Mickey Mouse is a mouse and Goofy is a dog. And Pluto? It is a dog as well, but not all dogs are the same. Some animals are animals and some are not; this is the first lesson a child will learn reading Disney comic strips. Goofy looks at Pluto, animals look at other animals and Men are animals that are not animals. In another strip Huey, Dewey and Louie, during a sunny day, suggest to Uncle Donald to do some birdwatching in order to relax.¹⁰⁹ As has been shown, Nature is not a neutral discourse. The human decides its status, dividing and marking boundaries, defining what a thing is and what it is not. One thing is A and A is not B. Reality is not a continuous line but is constituted by discrete parts that have identical or opposite characteristics. In other words, these units stand to each other in a relation of equivalence or difference. We perceive by distinguishing and creating separate things, we encounter the world dividing it and giving it a name. Naming is an act of separation. This is the way Western epistemology has interpreted — and manufactured — the world, but it's not the only possible one.

M. always made fun of me telling me my time is slower than the one experienced by others. Hours pass and for me it looks like a couple of minutes have gone, and then I'm inexplicably late. I could spend hours staring at the wall or watching the washing machine going on, when suddenly I realize the two hour washing program is finished. One of the past nights, I was staring at the ceiling, unable to fall asleep. I got out of the bed and lay down on the floor, at the foot of the radiator. The only way to calm down was to picture in my head the female dog I had the chance to take care of when I was a kid, to picture myself as the dog and to picture the dog as myself. That dog was not mine. When my grandmother died after ten years of illness, the two female sister dogs of my grandfather were then under the responsibility of my dad and my aunt. Since the only alternative would have been bringing them with us in the city, they decided to let them continue to stay in the same house in the mountains were they were living in their semi-free way: going in the woods nearby for a couple of hours, taking a small bath in the stream and then coming back home — usually covered in mud — independently through a little always-open dog-size door. The previous nurse of my grandma, an old woman living nearby, went there everyday to feed them. During weekends and holidays, when my father and my

aunt were not working in the city, we went there to stay altogether. I remember looking at one of the two, the one teased by everyone for her always sad eyes — especially when she was asking for food —, quite the opposite of her sister, always lively and cheerful. I remembered her eyes and how I felt that they were very similar to mine.

The image of the end of the world — and its apocalypses — projects back to the beginning of it: to a time before the beginning of time. How this time is hypothesized, ‘a world without us’ or ‘us without the world’, makes the difference. As in the paradox of Pluto, this world has been divided from us by us. In Western tradition we are used to placing the time, where humans and animals do not distinguish themselves between each other, in the past. Then, we defined the moment of separation between human and animals — from time to time through the civilizing activity of language, or technology, or consciousness, or law — as the moment of rupture between Nature and Culture. This was the tale of human exceptionalism, but this is not the only possible view. In the Amerindian cosmology¹¹⁰ at the beginning of time there were only humans, only later they differentiated themselves from all living beings: different animal species, natural and meteorological phenomena, celestial objects. But at the beginning, there was nothing in the world but people. Everything was first human, only then this primordial plasticity crystallized in the various forms as we experience them nowadays. This is why, during states of alteration — like dreams, illness or trance — this pre-cosmological universal humanity threatens to break through, bringing people back to a state where all differences continue to communicate with each other. So all non-humans are ex-humans that still preserve some latent humanity inside. But this humanity is both a universal condition and a feature built relationally.

This indigenous Amerindian epistemology is characterized by what has been formulated by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Tânia Solze Lima with the name of Amerindian Perspectivism.¹¹¹ The statute of beings in this mindset is not something defined once and for all, but is relationally constituted from time to time. It’s very connected with the predatorial economy and the temporary and relational status of prey and predators. Everything is relatively defined in terms of its reciprocal position on a scale of predatory power. A peccary or a monkey sees a human hunter as a jaguar or a spirit; a jaguar sees its human prey as a peccary and sees other jaguars as humans. This means that all beings, living or not, are ascribed to the status of person and, even if they may differ in their corporeal resemblance, they have human intentionality and agency. Thus, the common condition of all the existent is humanity, not animality. And this is the meaning of animistic shamanism, where in order ‘to know’ you have ‘to personify’ the other, to take its point of view — here objectivity, thus, has no value — and break the corporeal barrier in order to access the human kernel latent inside. Shamanic perspectivism has ‘multinaturalism’ (one universal ‘mind’ in different bodies) as cosmic politics: a cosmopolitics therefore. Rather than Western ‘anthropocentrism’ — with the idea of human exceptionalism —, this reality-system singles out ‘anthropomorphism’ — even if this anthropomorphism has nothing to share with the Disney one. Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro explain it in this way:

To say that everything is human is to say that humans are not that special species, an exceptional event that came to tragically or magnificently interrupt the monotonous trajectory of the universe. Anthropocentrism, conversely, makes humans into an animal species endowed with transfiguring supplement.¹¹²

When Western philosophy tries any operation of self-critique in order to dismantle the *anthropos*, it affirms that as humans we are fundamentally animals too. On the contrary, the Amerindian anthropomorphism answers back that all the other beings are human as well.

Prophecy and divination: scrying the crystal ball

The prophet — from *pro*, before and *phain*, to speak — is the one that speaks before, but also in place of. A prophecy is both the idea of speaking for someone — a deity usually — and both foretelling. A prophecy is different from a prediction, that presumes the occurrence of precise and particular events that may be verified or falsified by its fulfillment. On the contrary, prophecies are not usually referring to any specific time or place. Predictions are statements in future tense, whereas prophecies flow in the open time between the present tense and the prospective time of their alleged fulfillment. While prediction presumes a deterministic understanding of the world, prophecies are a reminder that linear time itself is only a portion of the world and doesn't capture reality in its totality. What we consider as absolute time is only a segment, though. Prophecies are scarcely being heeded, but their purpose is indeed not to be understood in the present, but rather to be ignored and then seen later as prophetic.

Prophecy is the performance of a speech act that saith 'Lo, I hereby predict that something in what I here say, or will later be taken to have said, will come to seem like a prediction'. Or, in short, 'I predict that this will one day count as a prediction.' This is why prophesy, or open-ended prediction, always belongs to that class of utterances known as performatives, utterances that do not name or describe things, but rather do things, or act out the doing of them.¹¹³

Their aim is to unfold the revelation that the prophecy should have been heeded. They ensure that "past, present and future remained looped together by anticipation and retrospection"¹¹⁴ and create a space-times made of these interferences, troubling linear time and causality.

A prophecy occurs in moments where the boundaries, such as those between human and animals, teeters, like during dreams, trance or fever. Cassandra gained the ability to foresee the future after her ears had been licked by snakes, while she was sleeping in the temple of Apollo. Snakes whispered in her ears the yet-to-come. Animals know the future because they have access to a state of non separation with the world. The pythia of Delphi gave her riddle during a state of trance caused by divine possession.

When the boundaries between the human and the rest of the world are uncertain, nature starts to be like a series of signs to be decoded: the flight of the birds — whether

they are flying in groups or alone, what noises they make as they fly, the direction of flight —; messages from the sky like thunder and lightning, or the shape of the entrails — such as the liver or the intestine — of a sheep or a goat; the position of celestial objects in the heavens. Prophecy requires a certain attitude to hearing, since dealing with prophecies is mainly a matter of attunement, where signs become meaningful. Prophecies are riddling, garbled and obscure. It is said that the pythia of Delphi only spoke in Greek hexameters: this is the relation between poetry and prophecies. Both operate in the liminal space between the comprehensible and the unknown. The oracle doesn't say nor hide, but gives hints.¹¹⁵ Lastly, Silvia Federici remembers that:

Prophecies are not simply the expression of a fatalistic resignation. Historically they have been a means by which the “poor” have externalized their desires, given legitimacy to their plans, and have been spurred to action. Hobbes recognised this when he warned that [...] prophecy being (are) many times the principal cause of the event foretold.¹¹⁶

Prophecies can be empowering because in prophecies, past, present, and future take place simultaneously, they presume a realm outside of linear time where everything still communicates and is interlaced. Climate change was foreseen in the Seventies and now it envelopes in the world. It is almost possible to say that to disprove the prediction of global warming, we need a prophecy that will remember that the capitalist thought that provoked it is not the only possible reality setting.

Binding: how to loosen the bind and not be acted upon

“With two knots I attach you, with two eyes I attack you, I attach and bind you”.¹¹⁷

L'affascino, the binding, is a way to bind someone else so that she/he would be acted upon. The Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino thought that its origin comes from a ‘crisis of presence’, the feeling of being acted upon and the impossibility of being present in the world. In a moment of crisis the boundaries between the self and the rest of the world are uncertain, so magical practices work as a way to reestablish a separation and to declare the existence of the self. Magic is a way to reaffirm your presence through reestablishment of a frame of sense. During the 50s De Martino investigated the resistance of some magical practises in Lucania, a region in south of Italy, in order to understand why these kinds of practices survived in this type of rural society. He was one of the first authors — even if with the relative limits of his time — looking at magic with an almost psychological lens, not reducing magical practices to a product of underdeveloped and ‘primitive’ cultures, but understanding their function inside a certain community as effective responses to certain needs. According to his analysis, for subordinated people magic offers a sort of refuge, a protection from a regime dominated by material misery and political impotence. This is the immense power of the ‘negative’ throughout an individual’s lifetime, with its trail of aftermaths and frustrations: death, illness, starvation, high rates of child mortality and spontaneous abortion. This ‘negative’ is also an inherited trauma from a history of misery and suffering. The so called ‘realistic’ level

and the magical level do not enter into a contradiction because magic does not really have as its object the suppression of this or that negative, but the protection of presence from the risks of an existential crisis when faced with manifestations of the ‘negative’. Thus, the magical ritual satisfies the need of recovery stopping the crisis through the action of bringing it inside a precise ritual and mythical horizon, a metahistorical level built on the framework of magical forces, of symbols and rituals, of spells and exorcisms, regulated by the figure of magical practitioners and healers.

In this sense magic allows us to be in the world and regain our wholeness. When possessed, women — because possession was a particularly feminine ‘illness’ that affected the young women around the age of their marriage at the beginning of summer — were experiencing a state of immobility and catatonia, they were unable to move. To unbind this stuckness, a spell was necessary to lose the bind. Quite the opposite, others were moving frenetically, incapable of controlling their own movements. In the tradition, this was told to be provoked by the hitch of a *tarantola*, the spider. The woman *tarantata*¹¹⁸ could only be healed through the ritual of the rhythmical musical performance, where her epileptic state was reabsorbed. Magic rituals frame these crises in a meaningful horizon and allows you to take some control in a society where you, as a woman, don’t have very much possibility of action.

A poison: how a fire can be lit

Magical rituals are a form of relief, but they also can be a site for resistance and revolt. With a materialistic approach similar to De Martino, Silvia Federici, in her well-known book *Caliban and the Witch*¹¹⁹, retraces the birth of capitalism of the 16th and 17th centuries and witnesses how the rise of the accumulation system was coeval with a genocidal war against women, namely witch hunting. This process, through the expropriation of the peasantry from the common land, provoked the sexual division of labour: the creation of waged labour for men and the confinement of women to unpaid reproductive labour. In this sense gender appears as a specific kind of class relation, where “‘femininity’ has been constituted in capitalist society as a work-function masking the production of the work-force under the cover of a biological destiny”.¹²⁰ In this process witch hunting, and the elimination of all subjectivities that were not conforming to the new established system, were part of the process of accumulation and dispossession for capitalist self-sustaining. The witch was a troublemaker for capitalism, she was “the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dared to live alone, the obeah woman who poisoned the master’s food and inspired the slaves to revolt”.¹²¹

These forms of practice were incompatible with the capitalism work discipline. The kind of work of witches was not useful for capitalist accumulation and so not recognized as ‘work’. Magic was a way to get something you wanted without working for it, therefore its eradication — together with the oppression of vagabonds, beggars, gamblers — was a way to suppress “in the proletariat any form of behaviour not conducive to the imposition of a stricter work-discipline”.¹²² Also the conception of time, with lucky and unlucky days, days when travel is allowed and days when it’s not, was not compatible with the new capitalist work-regime. Similarly, also the possibility of finding hidden

treasures by the help of magical charms was an impediment to the institution of a rigorous, but above all spontaneously accepted, work-ethic. “Eradicating these practices was a necessary condition for the capitalist rationalization of work, since magic appeared as an illicit form of power and an instrument *to obtain what one wanted without work*, that is, a refusal of work in action”.¹²³ The persecution of unruly, ‘unproductive’ women in Europe during the transition to capitalism was therefore functional to the foundation of a system that doesn’t allow for forms of fugitivity. The persecution of the witches was only the climax of the state intervention against the proletarian body in the modern era. Ultimately, for Federici:

Magic was also an obstacle to the rationalization of the work process, and a threat to the establishment of the principle of individual responsibility. Above all, magic seemed a form of refusal of work, of insubordination, and an instrument of grassroots resistance to power. The world had to be “disenchanted” in order to be dominated.¹²⁴

The journalist Sarah Jaffe comments on Federici’s book, trying to see which insights we can unfold from her analysis in relation to the contemporary diffusion of magical revival practices around the world.

Today’s witches also understand the power of the collective to make the world anew. All organizing is science fiction. [...] All organizing is a plan for a future that doesn’t yet exist, a way to envision things you’ve never seen and to bring them to life. It is also true in this way that all organizing is magic.¹²⁵

In this sense Magic is a form of resistance to the hegemonic world system, firstly in *imagining* another world and putting it out. Federici sadly warns us of the limited effective power of the resurgence of ‘magical’ practices, since

the revival of magical beliefs is possible today because it no longer represents a social threat. The mechanization of the body is so constitutive of the individual that, at least in industrialized countries, giving space to the belief in occult forces does not jeopardize the regularity of social behaviour. Astrology too can be allowed to return, with the certainty that even the most devoted consumer of astral charts will automatically consult the watch before going to work.¹²⁶

The discipline of productivity is so inscribed in our bodies and lives that it’s difficult to escape it only through magical practices. Despite that, magic can first of all relativize the hegemonic reality system and its conception of time, body and individual. “At the basis of magic was an animistic conception of nature that did not admit to any separation between matter and spirit, and thus imagined the cosmos as a *living organism*, populated by occult forces, where everything was in ‘sympathetic’ relation with the rest”.¹²⁷

Despite the partial effect of magical practises in a world dominated by rationalism and mechanicism for the profit of capital, magic opens up the possibility of another reality different from the neoliberal one.

A hex and a curse: namely how to transform anger in beautiful imprecations

Magic allows the possibility of another world-view, but magical practices have some potentiality also in their language techniques. In the essay, *The songs of Hecate: poetry and the language of occult*¹²⁸, Rebecca Tamás reflects on magic as a literary genre of insubordination. She underlines the relation of magic with poetic practice and how both reflect on the possibility of what could be made out of words. Tamás registers the contemporary rise of neo-pagan crafts and modern insta-witches, but also the persistence of traditional forms of occultism, from Cuban Santería to Southern African fortune-telling. A lot of forms of what we can roughly gather under the umbrella of witchcraft, from 'Witches against Trump' that hex the president to African-American magical rituals, focus on the protection and restoration of oppressed communities, the creation of new forms of solidarity and the resurgence of Indigenous strength.

Tamás, also debtful to Federici's analysis of witchcraft, sees the figure of the witch as a site of resistance, a way out of silence and silencing, focusing on her capacity to speak out. "I would define a witch as someone who uses language to cause change in the material world".¹²⁹ Someone that creates a new relation with poetic speaking and the power of words. Thus, this witchcraft lives in language and in what language makes possible: how 'mights' turn out fury, knowledge or desire. It's a language of hate, but this anger is a sensible response to a problematic history and present moment. It's powerful in disrupting and upsetting, but eventually this fury fuels a poetic that looks for space of transformation and change. In a feminist sense, "anger makes things happen"¹³⁰ and magic is a way to channel it. "Hexes. Spells. Curses. Rituals. The language of undoing, of hate that does something, that doesn't rebound on its owner and turn her to ash, but names and recognises the hurt, purges it and makes it ashamed".¹³¹ Magic allows the internal to become external, giving relief, manifesting agency, allowing feeling and thoughts to become language and allowing language to become action.

The feminist black poet Audre Lorde in her discourse *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action* also highlights the generative power of words:

Each of us is here now because in one way or another we share a commitment to language and to the power of language, and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us. In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation. For those of us who write, it is necessary to scrutinize not only the truth of what we speak, but the truth of that language by which we speak it.¹³²

The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation and self-definition for a subject that was always spoken out by the outside. Nonetheless,

when she finally takes the floor, she has to use a language not manufactured for herself. A language where she's alien, even though this transformation is what makes her existence possible and its effects real.

Magic also brings back the idea that we are not alone in this world: we are surrounded and entangled with other beings, more-than-human ones, non living ones, ones yet to come and ones already dead. "Unlike a spell, which uses language to create a change, a summoning brings others into presence even when language has been temporarily lost".¹³³ A summoning is an invocation, a way to feel indebted to the ghosts of the past, the ones whose memory has been forgotten, silenced and suppressed. It's a magical act of community, standing-with, being-with in alliances. It's not a way to rewrite the past, but to disrupt a close notion of time and of a history that has been told by very few. This operation is similar to Munoz's idea of a 'future in the present', thus his archival reenactment could be seen as an act of mediumship. Tamás concludes that:

Irrationality is not apolitical, but politically radical; radical because it takes an interest in what it's actually like to be alive as a human being — what it's like to live alongside many non-human creatures and things, what it's like to not make perfect sense, to not always be in control of what happens, to want joy, to have a complicated body, to rise and fall unpredictably, widely, to love or desire others more than 'procreation' or 'hormones' ask of you, to want to worship while also feeling extremely sceptical.¹³⁴

It's time to definitely trouble the binarisms of Male knowledge — rationality/irrationality, fiction/facts — and fill the gaps that rational capitalist society leaves in our beings and communities; the problems a certain kind of logic can not solve and neither considers valid. Magic asserts that there is not only one legitimate way of knowing the world. There is nothing natural in it and there is nothing more real than in fictions and fables. This was what Campagna and Fisher — with the unnaturalness of Capitalist Realism — were affirming.

There are things — like what does it mean to be alive in a world of living things in transformation and entanglements with more-than-human critters — that are hard to express in descriptive language. In this, poetry — but also art in general —, with its balance between knowledge and unknowing, can help to express what goes outside and beyond language. It's a way to resist clarity, linear meaning and definite names. As phantom is hard to fathom, indeterminacy can be positive. The queer poet CA Conrad uses poetry rituals, (Soma)tic Rituals as he calls them, to heal and to deal with trauma, like the aftermath of the homophobic murder of his partner.¹³⁵ For Tamás, making art — maybe only good art — is to create meaningfulness out of the straightforward logic of productivity and commodification, to resist fixation and to try to grasp complexity. Art doesn't say something, it is something and in this way is an occult practice of reality. As William Burroughs said:

It is to be remembered that all art is magical in origin — music, sculpture, writing, painting — and by magical I mean intended to produce very definite results.

Paintings were originally formulae to make what is painted happen. Art is not an end in itself, any more than Einstein's matter-into-energy formulae is an end in itself. Like all formulae, art was originally functional, intended to make things happen, the way an atom bomb happens from Einstein's formulae.¹³⁶

Final chanting: how to disrupt reality through muttered words

The Puerto Rican video artist Beatriz Santiago Muñoz in her practice uses magical thinking. In "La cabeza mató a todos", "The head that killed everyone"(2014), the protagonist, Michelle Nonó, a medicinal botanist but also a cultural activist, cast a spell to end military occupation and war-industry on the island. The subtitle says: "Instructions to destroy a apparatus of war with a spell. The form of spell is precise". In the video, a black cat instructs Michelle on how to make the hex. Santiago Muñoz defines artistic practice as "the transformation of states of consciousness and perception through the sensorial, the material and the formal. [...] Art is a practice which aspires to the transformation of states of consciousness through the total transformation of its sensorium".¹³⁷ I will say that its goal is to create a space for a certain sensitivity to produce an attunement toward what resists naming and representation. "Ritual and art also share the possibility of being perceived through multiple positions. [...] In this sense the future and past are superstitions, and all these facts have equal weight. They all coexist together, in artistic practice we take them all in one single gulp".¹³⁸ Every image somehow contains the one before and the one to come. "They do not exist in one past or another, but all at the same present time and in the same memory".¹³⁹ Art, as a magical language, violates the primary function of language that is clear communication; the exchange of content is done on another level, though. Magical words have not as subjects the communication of this or that fact, their content is their existence itself, as performative utterance, the content is their form. Moreover, they remind us that there is also something beyond language or when language is broken. These operations can bring together contradictory and incompatible elements, where words change their meanings, are incomprehensible while perfectly clear, are multiple while simultaneous. This language can somehow speak also of what is not possible to speak of, through pauses it opens holes where to glimpse what is beyond. In the moment where the language starts to fall apart, in its disruption, language somehow can speak more. So, that the only faithful language would be a broken one and the only real communication would be a stuttering, a speaking in tongues — namely speaking in words that are apparently in languages unknown to the speaker —, a moment of aphasia. The erasure makes the word possible.

Through language, in its broader sense, we share a filter through which we interpret and build reality. There is not a legitimate language or a legitimate reality system, all of them are equally arbitrary. This world is fiction but not fictional, at least not more than everything else. Magic has the ability to create a world, while reminding us that reality is also a creation, not natural at all. And still real, but also mutable, neither objective nor absolute. "If language is not for being believed but to compel to an order, then the visible, as well as in language, establishes an order. It determines what is possible to think and feel about the present and future".¹⁴⁰ As Santiago Muñoz explains, every visual

language — like the camera, the lens, the subject's positionality, the image's darkness or clarity, its depth of field — are part of this grammar and of what it is made possible. "What I'm trying to emphasise is that there is a way of thinking that is sensorial. It allows you to start to see differently, to see new events taking place that we don't have names for, that we can't recognise properly".¹⁴¹ My hope is that there is a way of speaking and a way to make art that would be faithful to this. Magical speaking allows us to attune to others and reminds that this attunement is not a universal melody. This honesty to the resistance to representation and to what exceeds representation makes the difference. So that, with a certain attitude, also the language of birds can become meaningful and the oracle can know that a world might come through words.

I started this text mumbling and asking that my mouth would be inhabited by other voices. What I was looking for was a picture that contains multiple worlds and not only factual. There is much beyond the term of factuality, both of which we can talk about and of which it is impossible to talk about. Eventually, in the demanding pursuit of narrating another mythology that will allow us to deal with the indeterminate conditions that we are facing I ask for help. I call for more clairvoyance, in order to see it clear. A social medicine to see anything that is not evidently present yet: critters, animals and all the others that refuse to be named. Clairaudience, 'clear hearing', the ability to hear the voices or thoughts of spirits, to listen to the silenced ones, the voice of ghosts that still have to go out hunting. Acts of medium-ships and collective channelling. Clear sensing and clear feeling to sense others more and more, to feel the shape-shifting of the self as well. Rituals are sites for storytelling, resistance and change, they refer to the past, but allow for the future to be born out from the present. This is my last invocation: that one day it would not be necessary to define ourselves in order to guarantee a little piece of existence.

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