

Do you believe in what exists?

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Abstract

Avoiding epistemological extractivism, this essay tries to imagine a context that does not exoticize magical thinking or contemplate it exclusively within an ethnographic niche, seeking a Western animistic tradition. We propose so-called "dark ecology" as one of the keys to re-animate Western thought and transcend the modern separation between culture and nature, decolonizing thought and allowing us to value the knowledge of other culture-natures. Dialoguing with the work of various contemporary artists who are either interested in these issues or practitioners of forms of mediumship, one can glimpse an intricate mesh in which ecology, magic and decolonial thought come together.

Keywords

Witchcraft; art; dark ecology; decolonization.

Ecology is about relating not to Nature but to aliens and ghosts.

Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*

Each of us can now see and recognize the damages - the eradication of ways of life, ways of feeling and thinking, and the disarray or hate it produces. But how are such damaging consequences to be avoided if we think of ourselves as more advanced than others, the first down a path that by rights is that of all humans.

Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre, *Capitalist Sorcery*

Introduction

In her essay *Wondering about Materialism*¹, Isabelle Stengers attacks a type of scientific materialism that is conferring excessive authority to Science with a capital "C" and falling into a radical idealism for the sake of the future of the planet. The problem that Stengers sees in this type of trend is that it helps to perpetuate the extermination of knowledges (and bodies) that are deemed irrelevant from the scientific point of view, for instance magic. We already live on top of a graveyard of practices and knowledges, Stengers says. That's why we must strive to "stay with the trouble"² (as Donna Haraway puts it) and resist the temptation to gentrify knowledge by selectively eliminating those problem areas that we can easily disregard as unscientific. Talking about alienation in the context of capitalism is relevant, says Stengers, but is it not too comfortable? What if we were to talk, instead, about capitalist sorcery? Could this idea help us recognize that perhaps there is something to be learned from those supposedly obsolete practices? Wouldn't we deal better with the enchantment of Capital if we had some notions of sorcery to protect ourselves from it?

Written by Isabelle Stengers and Phillipe Pignarre, *Capitalist Sorcery*³ hypothesizes that it is not within our modernized world that we will find the right term for the mode of domination to which we are subject, since the very modality of modernity "has imprisoned us in categories that are much too poor, oriented as they are around knowledge, error and illusion"⁴. Let us try, then, to work with the ideas that have been discarded. What system shapes wills until its subjects do, freely, what is expected of them? Outside the modern context, the answer is pretty straightforward: sorcery (or witchcraft, depending on the country and the definition). The mere mention of this taboo term meant, until a few years ago, abandoning any moderately respectable academic field; the possibility of self-defense became remote, except if the term was brought up within the ethnographic or metaphorical realm. Is it possible, our respectable colleagues would wonder, that a madman, a freak, someone capable of believing in something like witchcraft, has snuck in our midst? But, as Stengers and Pignarre remind us, sorcery can only be deemed a "supernatural" answer to the matter of capitalism if we insist on maintaining our notion of "the natural," which implies, in turn, having a set definition of what "nature" is. And it is precisely this notion that is now being questioned by contemporary thinkers and ecologists.

It is not, therefore, a matter of believing or not, but of refraining from applying, once again, the modern parameters that we are so used to. The

times when "we" could calmly decide "between what is natural and those beliefs in the supernatural from which we are happily free"⁵ are gone. But even those of us who know this for a fact continue to operate with and within structures that at every turn threaten to overtake our processes of subjectivation. That is why I propose to begin by invoking the skeptic *epoché*: to suspend judgment, to hold matters in abeyance in order to speak of grim things like *the soul*. Are you already recoiling before its mere mention? Is it necessary to trip myself up like this? I immediately feel the imperative need to justify bringing up such a term and plead, in my defense, that Stengers and Pignarre are the ones who dare assume the risks of talking about the soul, associating it with the idea of capitalist sorcery: "To sell your soul, to be soulless, to have your soul eaten or sucked out, or captured"⁶. Moreover, according to them "our catch-all interpretations (symbolic effectiveness, suggestion, belief, metaphor and so on)" are weaker than the idea of the soul and are "incapable of approaching the power and craft of thought and action at work in sorcery which we believe we have destroyed whereas above all we have lost the appropriate means of responding to it"⁷. In this sense, capitalism is the perfect sorcery system because when magic is considered a mere superstition there is no possibility of articulating adequate means of protection from it.

Uttering the forbidden words can be a first step towards freeing oneself from an enchantment. As the well-known though remarkably discredited artist-channel Eulalia Valldosera says, purging oneself of the language of the victors is a painful processes: deprogramming a fear of speaking which is linked to an epigenetic, historical, social and cultural memory of torture and repression is a tough job. Which is why, as the neo-pagan witch Starhawk reminds us, "to utter the word *magic* is already an act of magic: the word puts to the test, compromises, exposes to sniggering. It forces us to feel what it is in us that balks and which is, perhaps, precisely what renders us vulnerable to capture"⁸. In this sense, "staying with the trouble" implies a certain openness to heresy and heterodoxy: you must feel the gaze of the inquisitors on the nape of your neck. To be clear, Stengers advocates the strictly non-metaphorical use of the term "magic". The challenge is to speculate about magic as a material reality (material, but neither scientific nor literal). To do this, one must invoke entities and ideas whose market value has reached rock bottom and revive *a certain state of ontological risk*. Besides, it turns out that, as Timothy Morton observes in *The Ecological Thought*, "risk" is the current state of affairs whether we want it or not, because "the end of the world has already happened"⁹: we have already sprayed our crops with DDT, we have already detonated nuclear bombs, we have already changed the climate. And yet, "today is not the end of history". Life goes on, but in a state of perpetual risk.

Indeed, the acceptance of risk is diametrically opposed to the end of the world. In this regard, Morton warns us against the apocalyptic drive of some environmentalist currents of thought: "A certain ecological language seems to rejoice, even with sadism, in imagining what the world would be like without us"¹⁰. The fantasy of our own extinction seems to provide comfort to some, says Morton, remarking on how unsettling he finds this. "Ecological thought is dark but not suicidal"¹¹, he concludes. Beyond considering the role that Freudian death drive plays in this fantasy, we believe that the Apocalypse is too easy and too Western a solution. The Apocalypse is certainly a way of not "staying with the trouble"¹², a radical cut of the Gordian knot that ignores "the mesh" and turns out to be a rather un-ecological solution precisely because it lacks this awareness. It is also, for that same matter, a rather un-magical solution. For two reasons: because both ecology and magic assume that all things are interconnected and, secondly, because witches are characteristically caretakers of life and "vital" forces¹³.

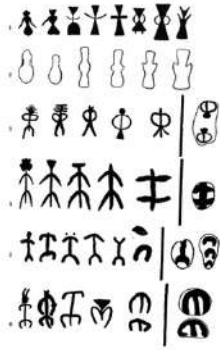
On the other hand, both magic and a certain current of ecological thought have it very clear that interconnection is not, in any way, a way to "clarify" but that, on the contrary, to venture into the mesh implies immersing oneself in mystery, facing and assuming (without understanding) the "strange stranger"¹⁴ incessantly. Even what is closest and most familiar is hidden in shadows. Dark ecology is dark because the information itself is not the key: it cannot be read clearly and independently. Also, the enmeshed information requires a certain (sombre) environment to be interpreted. "Now we know exactly how much mercury we have in our bodies", "we know that plastic filters out dioxins", but "the more we know about the risks, the more these risks proliferate"¹⁵. In the darkness of the mesh information itself does not solve any issues, but rather accompanies us.

Darkness is a meeting point between witchcraft and ecology. As the Wiccan and ecofeminist activist Guadalupe Cuevas says, the Goddess that witches serve, that "cosmic feminine principle from which everything is born and to which everything returns incessantly", is, in short, "the dark Goddess", whether she is called Hecate, Inanna, Kali, Cerridwen or Mari. However, darkness is not, as this priestess reminds us, something negative, but a substantial part of our reality; a part we have lost contact with throughout centuries of impositions. "After hundreds of years of patriarchal mentality we have not won the sky, but instead we have lost the underworld, the generating power of darkness"¹⁶.



A dark (eco) logic

It is interesting to ascertain the extent to which shadows pervade the creative universe of contemporary artists linked to what in this publication has been addressed as "energy cultures". For instance, in Eulalia Valldosera's trajectory, shadow becomes a path. An element that in the origin of her practice could be understood as a mere conceptual resource turned out to be an opening, a cave that the artist entered. Indeed, some of the most emblematic works of her series *Envases (Vessels)* already contained the seed of this transformation. Not coincidentally titled *El culto a la madre (The Mother Cult)*, these are simple assemblages of empty, plastic, cleaning product bottles whose magnified shadows remind us of female figures contained within each other. Valldosera reflects on how the vessels in the shape of women that once contained precious healing ointments now contain toxic products. Their shadows tell us an equally shady story. I can't help but remember the work of Sara Ramo, mainly those works in which shadow becomes sculptural matter, as we can clearly see in *Desvelo y traza (Wake and trace)* or in *Los Ayudantes (The helpers)*, in which darkness is the matrix from which the visible emerges much like the tip of the iceberg. As in Valldosera's work, it is shadow itself that tells us its story and allows for color and light to eventually emerge.

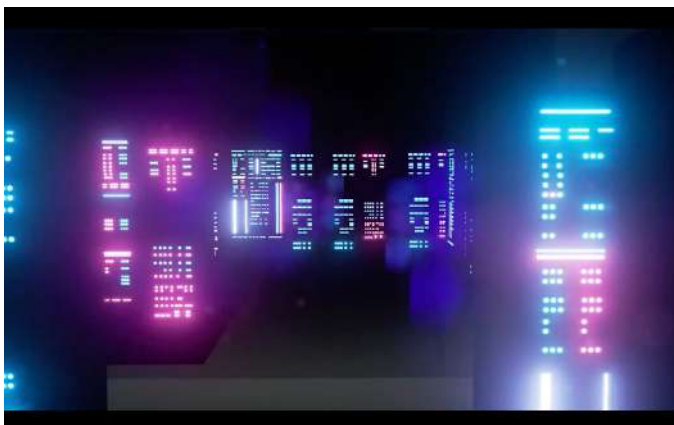


Spain, ca. 10,000-8,000 B.C. Cliff paintings of anthropomorphic human figures, some of them with horns, and clay paintings of anthropomorphic human figures, compared with similar designs from prehistoric paintings of southern France.



On the other hand, Regina de Miguel's work is a paradigmatic example of this dark logic that delves into the mesh and considers all its intricate aspects (even the inanimate ones) as life. In *Una historia nunca contada desde abajo* (*A Story Never Told from Below*), de Miguel works with a multi-ubiquitous female character who inhabits the strata of the earth and who guides us through multiple dimensions: the women behind the Cybersyn project, extremophile life forms, disappeared political prisoners in Chile, and the cosmos as a dark informational entity. De Miguel identifies the voice-over that guides us on this filmic journey with the figure of the undead, the revenant, the Lacanian lamella and with literary characters such as the female protagonist of Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*¹⁷.

Perhaps these associations would be better understood if we explained that Cybersyn was a project of the pre-internet era that sought to generate an informational network that would facilitate the management of Chile during the Allende administration. But, lacking adequate technical means, the modern visualization room was in fact a totally analogical device, to the point that behind the screens there were female statisticians and graphic designers who drew the complex graphs that magically appeared on the screens of these extremely modern gentlemen. The status of women as machine cogs, as processors and transmitters of information, gives De Miguel the perfect opportunity to delve, on the one hand, into the idea of information as a strange immaterial matter common to living and artificial beings and, on the other, into the idea of the female body as a cosmic entity halfway between the living and the dead, as a "link", as the means, the media and the medium. But as a medium that has been forcibly "disappeared" like Valldosera's "erased" mother-vessels¹⁸: bodies submerged in shadows. A status which, for modernity, is comparable to invisibility.



Although he doesn't mention it, the "mesh" Morton talks about is gendered or, at the very least, it has a clear inclination. In her work, Valldosera becomes the spokesperson, mediator, medium or "correspondent" for this intricate web. The mystical activism of this artist intends to give voice to

different entities (a flower, a seed, water..., but also a Picasso or a Mondrian) using her body "as antenna and anchorage of a new language to mediate between the different layers of our reality"¹⁹, a process the artist refers to as "psychic archaeology". In Regina de Miguel's work, the voiceover that emerges from the darkness (from the underworld), is linked to the scientific search for forms of life which have generally remained buried and which present a great resistance to environmental conditions considered unfavorable to life²⁰. In both cases gender becomes a key to establish a connection between different strata, to carry out this archaeological dig. In De Miguel's work, colonial processes, extractivism, violence against territory and violence against women are inscribed in the same cross section²¹. There is no way to cut the knot. In the same way, in Valldosera's *Plastic Mantra*, toxicity within the natural environment is interpreted as a reflection of our psychic toxicity. In the image assemblages which can be found on her website, her plastic virgins are aligned with pictures of floating plastic detritus which are in turn aligned with images of fleeing refugees drowning in the Mediterranean.



Animating to decolonize thought

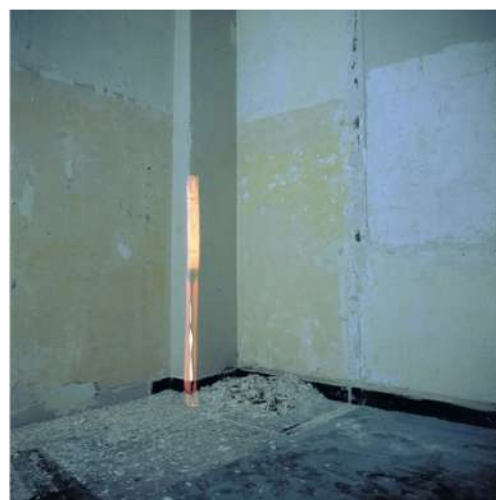
Because it thrives in forms of continuous or fluid thought that interconnect different layers of knowledge, the eco-logic we are speaking of here has a very clear animistic dimension to it. Bare in mind that what we have traditionally called animism and attributed to "Indians" and pagans has much more to do with a form of existence, of being immersed in the flow of reality. Before the witch-hunt which took place during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and was exported to the colonies, this form of existence was also part of what we now call "the West". Animism has much more to do with the embodiment of a notion of "the mesh" than with confusing the properties of objects and subjects.

Decolonizing the idea of animism is something that Anselm Franke did magnificently in his exhibition *Animism*, which highlighted the flaws in the modern division between culture and nature. Tim Ingold²² and Nurit Bird-David²³ have also made very valuable contributions to the decolonization of the idea of Animism, and it should be noted that all these reflections begin by dismantling the belief that we Westerners are not animists. On the contrary, animism was our idea: the aforementioned "soul" projected unto the ethnographic-others, says Bird-David; that somewhat abstract "life" that scientists search for in Mars, says Ingold; or Freudian narcissism combined with Tylor's idea of animism and turned against itself, says Franke. This last double somersault deserves an explanation of its own: first, anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor coined the term "animism" defining it as the inability of some peoples to distinguish what had a soul from what did not, projecting souls where there could be none. Freud then argued that this behavior was the consequence of a narcissistic projection of one's own consciousness. If you give this some thought, you will realize it's a full-blown parapraxis: we are so narcissistic that we managed to define entire and completely alien cultures with an idea of our own making, projecting our own animistic tendencies and therefore our own "souls". A "Freudian slip" indeed...

There are other paradigmatic cases of re-signification of "animism" in the West: Deleuze and Guattari were able to build a fluid ontological vision from the ruins of Western ontology; among them lay pre-Socratic, Jewish and Arab thinkers²⁴. But although the rescue operation they initiated was promising, there were also medieval magicians, gypsies, witches and a long etcetera of thinkers whom perhaps, following the proposal made by Barbara Glowczewski in the wake of Felix Guattari, we should call "vitalists" (instead of animists) insofar as they belong to a genealogy that "postulates the intimate links between the things on which life depends"²⁵. A genealogy that, in the light of the Anthropocene, it may be crucial to recover. Animism is a milestone in this rescue operation, because as Franke says, it is one of

the great taboos of modernism and always raises the horrifying question: "Do you believe?" Franke's exhibition avoided answering that provocation entirely and treated animism not as a matter of belief, but as a boundary-making practice. And this is precisely the point: it is impossible to venture into the mesh if we perpetuate these divisions.

As Morton says, "all life forms are the mesh, and so are all the dead ones, as are their habitats, which are also made up of living and nonliving beings"²⁶. Not even the separation between life and death is clear. That is why the figure of the Lacanian lamella appeals especially to De Miguel's imagination: not for representing some form of sublime spiritual immortality, but for embodying "the obscene immortality of the living dead, who, after being annihilated, recompose themselves and return to their activities as best they can"²⁷. Here is the Dark Goddess yet again, the resilient one. Because, as Stengers says, Gaia is a tough cookie. She's not the loving mother, but a force which intrudes upon us, a "powerful and fussy"²⁸ being. Gaia is more a "revenant" than she is an unprotected Eden.



The idea of nature has been criticized in recent times. What if, as is the case with animism, the very idea we have of nature was distorted by our binary narcissistic projections? To what extent is the idea we have of nature part of the problem rather than the solution? In *We Were Never Modern*, Bruno Latour proposes that the division between nature and culture is one of the pillars of the modern constitution and that, moreover, modernity derives its power from a constant transgression of the very taboo that constitutes it. In other words, while other cultures recognize hybrid forms of nature and culture, of human and non-human beings and, recognizing their power, formulate knowledges and practices to regulate them, we moderns have built an impenetrable conceptual boundary between science and culture, turning its inviolability into a dogma. But it is precisely this denial that allows hybrid forms of knowledge to proliferate without control and take over the world in an endless and delirious pantheon of fetishes and gods (or "Factish Gods", as Latour calls them it) which are never recognized as such.

That's why we must be careful when we talk about "nature" as a given. Eulalia Valldosera covers her back and clarifies: rather than speaking about nature she prefers to talk about *psychic ecology*. Could this "psychic ecology" be related to magic? Could magic, asks Stengers, help us feel that nothing in nature is natural?²⁹ In the attempt of reconsidering ecology in the light of the non-binary thinking of "culture-natures", we propose an ecology of ideas that involves a certain revisionism of ancestral Western thought.



This last aspect requires an explanation. Theorists such as T.J. Demos have already recognized that certain post-anthropocentric currents of thought connect (intentionally or unintentionally) with indigenous world-views of nature as a pluriverse of agents³⁰. It should be pointed out that we are not trying to steal the limelight from those peoples that currently stand as poles of resistance in the search for a more sustainable system, but rather to avoid certain "epistemological extractivism"³¹ and to add, at the same time, a nuance that perhaps we should define as pre-western rather than western. The hypothesis is that we will only be capable of establishing a genuine dialogue with other culture-natures when we have assumed as our own the continuity between both terms. We believe that decolonizing thought requires recovering a certain energy culture-nature that, in "the West", was linked to the idea of magic and gender and that, moreover, is

inevitably ecological insofar as it involves an exploration of the mesh and, therefore, assumes the inextricable nature of the world. Again, there is no way to cut the knot. The witch is a representative of this eco-logical tradition, since she symbolizes the great pact (diabolical for modernity) between culture and nature, terms which she renders interchangeable. In this sense, the reactivation or reanimation of animism that Stengers and Ingold speak of has to do with both the reinsertion of objects in a vitalist flow (as OOO maintains) and with the theoretical reconsideration of certain ideas that have survived against all odds thanks to *bodies*; bodies which have served as "living laboratories"³².

It is in this sense that decolonial theorists such as Nicholas Mirzoeff, T.J. Demos or Rita Natalio are critical of theoretical currents related with Object-Oriented Ontology. According to Mirzoeff and Natalio, emphasis on the object as a conceptual unit of measurement is potentially problematic in a global panorama in which slavery persists precisely because certain subjects are still objectified and capitalized as such³³. Another one of Mirzoeff's arguments is that the "anthropos" in "Anthropocene" points yet again towards the centrality of the white male³⁴, who is once again condemning everyone else to the end he has chosen for himself. On the other hand, Demos draws attention to the fact that the most representative theorists linked to Object-Oriented Ontology, even when concerned about the climate crisis, do not seem interested in the complex socio-political structure of environmental degradation nor in the indigenous world views that resonate with their philosophy.

All in all, we could say that this ontological and animistic turn of Western thought has a certain tendency to ignore those who have for centuries carried the stigma of being "animists" and being "objects". However, Demos recognizes the relevance of such currents of thought³⁵ because of the paradigmatic post-humanistic turn they imply. In *Decolonizing Nature*, Demos draws from Speculative Realism and New Materialisms as much as from indigenous thought and ecological activism linked to the "global south". Demos' aim is, in part, the same as ours: to generate a theoretical field that allows us to transcend the academic inertia which consistently excludes forms of thought buried under centuries of colonial violence. A violence that, let us remember, was also exerted against very diverse peoples of the continent now called Europe.

This is why we have proposed to embark upon a search that will allow us to sketch a cartography based on the testimonies and works of certain bodies (the "living laboratories") imagining a context that does not exoticize magical thought or contemplate it within an ethnographic niche. The concern that triggers this process is that, far from establishing an exchange that leads to a genuine embodiment of the valuable worldviews of other

culture-natures, our decolonial gestures might be nothing more than well-intentioned extensions of rather colonial epistemological gestures. We have to ask ourselves: is an interest in the Yanomami or Quechua worldview compatible with overt contempt for the knowledge of the galician meigas? How can we be interested in, for instance, Wixrarika shamanic practices if we can simultaneously ostracize a mediumistic artist like Eulalia Valldosera? To what extent are we the heirs of those inquisitors we openly rebuff today?

The concern that these decolonial approaches might be, to say the least, epistemologically selective, has been accentuated by the recent health crisis. It is remarkable how, in light of the situation caused by COVID-19, our approaches to any other form of medicine seem to have stopped in their tracks. As Charles Eisenstein points out in his essay *The Coronation*³⁶, contemporary Western health culture suffers from a certain schizophrenia. On the one hand, there is a movement that promotes the use of alternative or holistic medicines, giving special importance to nutrition and validating the spiritual dimension of health. And yet, all this seems to have disappeared overnight. The idea of health has suffered an extreme "reset" linked to the idea of what is and what isn't "essential". Acupuncture, for instance, may be considered non-essential from the point of view of conventional virology, but, as Eisenstein observes, it may be absolutely essential for someone trying to overcome an addiction to opiates caused by chronic back pain. This resurgence of allopathic medical orthodoxy in a way proves that the use of these "other" medicines which integrate, precisely, culture and nature, was a minority phenomenon or simply capricious. Imagine then, in this radically western landscape, researching into what the traditional medicines of the world could bring to the table.

In his essay, Eisenstein mentions the infamous "terrain theory" which, by the way, is perfectly compatible with the medicinal systems of other culture-natures. According to this theory of Antoine Béchamp, erroneously identified as Germ theory denialism, (as we see, a completely unbiased name), it is the diseased "terrain" which will attract germs. Germs, far from being denied, are considered a symptom of a weakened ecosystem that somehow precedes the disease. The metaphor the author uses (replicated from a famous meme) places us in a dirty fish tank and poses the following dilemma: "Your fish is sick. Germ theory: isolate the fish. Terrain theory: clean the fish tank". It is symptomatic that this theory is indeed known as "denialist". Is it not far more denialist to focus on germs without assuming the overall role that the ecosystem plays in the development of disease? How can we be ecological if we are not even capable of understanding our own bodies as interconnected systems? In the wake of Stengers and Pignarre, "we are not going to say that aspirin or antibiotics are 'capitalist'. That would be a little stupid and is likely to make infernal alternatives continue to proliferate. But we will say that the manner in which *think* about

and *offer* such medicines is *indissociable* from the very question that set us thinking and daring to take the word 'sorcery' literally"³⁷.

Thinking big (working in the shadows)

I think it is necessary to borrow Timothy Morton's premise and "think big". Only from the impossible perspective of the unmanageable whole or from a "cosmic" point of view can we recognize the existence of the mesh. This idea can be put in relation with the planetary scale Felix Guattari mentioned in his *Three Ecologies* or with Isabelle Stengers' *Cosmopolitics*, and it has to do with the constant dislocation of our imagination. It is a multi-ubiquitous "perspective" that renounces the illusion of organized space: the cosmos is here, right in your face, as it is in Regina de Miguel's work. We are embedded in what Morton calls "the mesh", where, as Eulalia Valldosera says when describing her first experiences with interdimensionality, "you cannot distinguish between shadow and light, because you see everything at the same time: the information comes in synaesthetic packages"³⁸.

One of Felix Guattari's *Three Ecologies* is the ecology of imagination. Thus, ecology concerns not only the devastation of the Earth, but also "collective capacities to invent, imagine, create"³⁹. In a way this is what Timothy Morton encourages when he asks us to think big, imagining on a cosmic scale, developing and cultivating the imaginative treatment of hyperobjects (which are beyond us both in scale and complexity). That is why Morton dares to say that ecology is not about our relationship with Nature, but with aliens and ghosts, and he contradicts the notion that to be ecological one must be local, warning us against the danger of filling "the hole in the world with holism and Heidegger"⁴⁰. As Donna Haraway warned in her *Cyborg Manifesto*, there is no origin to return to. Instead of heading back towards that impossible "Eden", Haraway chooses "trouble" as a way of life, while Morton chooses to nest in the darkness that is, as we know, propitious to dialogue with ghosts. It might be, he proposes, that this darkness enables us to catch a glimpse of the universe, even if it is the one we carry inside because, as Lynn Margulis has demonstrated, the entrails of terrestrial organisms are full of extraterrestrials.

Since information is not going to give us the key to change, imagining becomes essential. As Guattari says, "this revolution must not be exclusively concerned with visible relations of force on a grand scale, but will also take into account molecular domains of sensibility, intelligence and desire"⁴¹. We must dialogue with ghosts and make contacts of the third kind with other culture-natures and with our own. We must decolonize *ourselves* in order to stop projecting *ourselves*, to overcome that primary narcissistic phase that has defined dominant Western thought for so long. According to

Freudian theory, only by overcoming this psychic stage will we be able to recognize the existence of the other. It is necessary, therefore, to unearth the fragments of that shadow history where (surprise!) we are the animists. De Miguel tells us about her "gallery of saints": Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo or Maria Zambrano among others: a genealogy that is permanently being obliterated, as if there were long lapses of time in which the emblematic figures that could embody such a tradition simply did not flourish. To "establish a possible filiation" with this tradition, Valldosera goes to the rescue of "ancestral practices that awaken and nourish the feminine aspect of being: artists, mediums, sibyls, wizards or witches, men and women who have been historically denied or manipulated"⁴².



Recovering this genealogy is, as Sére Skuld says, a work in the shadows. Skuld, a Spanish practitioner of chaos magic and a multidisciplinary artist, began her journey when, "in Spain, all you could find were some grandmothers who spoke of forms of everyday sympathetic magic". Inscripting oneself in such a tradition implies, as Skuld says, treading uncharted territory and constantly shaping the findings "from the other side" to "make your way as best you can"⁴³. But however hidden it may be, witches agree the existence of such a heritage is undeniable. Paloma "Luna" Crespo, one of the three high priestesses of the Celtiberian tradition (recognized as a religion by the Spanish Ministry of Justice since 2011), feels offended when they are labeled as neo-pagans, "because we haven't created anything new. We stem from the ancestral tree of witchcraft, which has its roots in times immemorial, before Christianity, and which was uprooted by Constantine first and by the Inquisition later"⁴⁴. Eco-feminist activism connects with the sensitivities of many of these contemporary magical practices. "Our school of thought is radically ecofeminist. But we also practice magical activism, spells in which we invoke the Goddess of Iberia to help us bring about much needed social change. Because to be a witch is to make the world change. And it isn't enough to switch political

party. We must change the current paradigm, based on domination and power, for another in which pleasure and cooperation are its principles"⁴⁵, says another witch named Jana, a priestess of the Iberian Mystery School and a high school teacher born under the name of Cristina Perales.

Conclusion

This is, therefore, as much a political task as it is a spiritual one. As Robin Morgan, one of the founders of W.I.T.C.H (a collective that emerged in the late 1960s in New York), said: you can't have a revolution without a cosmogony. But this cosmogony is buried, like Regina de Miguel's extremophile life forms, hidden (though in plain sight) in the shadows. An archeological endeavor is necessary; one has to carefully brush and comb darkness to see what emerges. An archaeology of shadows. I think of Valldosera sweeping her floor drawings with a broom. *The navel of the world*: that was the name of those swollen bellies drawn on the ground with cigarette butts and ashes. Somehow, Valldosera already sensed that she had to sweep up "all the programmings that were limiting her"⁴⁶ in order to draw alternative cartographies and locate herself within a tradition that would allow her to carry out the psychic activism she sought to do.



Where should we start this archaeological task? Like Stengers, we believe that this search should be driven by "matters of concern" (rather than "matters of fact"). We're not denying the existence of objective events; of course there are "facts", but the question of their relevance is far more important than the facts themselves. Stengers illustrates this with the story of Galileo: it is not so much that until Galileo no one had perceived the

objective fact constituted by the frictionless descent of objects, but rather that no one had framed this fact within a theoretical-philosophical framework that justified its relevance. Galileo "disguised" the selective character of his discovery, says Stengers. A pity, because if relevance had been considered a decisive factor in this type of experimental achievement, we might have embarked on the adventure of knowledge instead of striving to conquer it.

Why not focus, then, on what matters to us, on what is vital for each form of knowledge, in order to detect with our own vibrant bodies the undercurrents that animate and bring to life our conversations. To build a system based on these vitalist premises, we must resort to consultation. Guattari's three ecologies consult each other; Stengers' cosmopolitics is mainly a system of consultation, a form of gathering she links to the action of "reclaiming"⁴⁷; Bruno Latour speaks of mediation. But how can we describe such a "system"? It can only be put into action "when there is a gathering around a divisive topic", an agreement that is reached "when those who are divided agree that no one has the answer"⁴⁸, thinking and imagining together and allowing mutual learning to transform each one of them. In order for this to be possible, one must first understand that there are things that do not and should not respond to scientific demands. Things that cannot and need not be deconstructed. We cannot continue thinking about ecology and decolonialism and, at the same time, continue selecting what exists and what does not.



Image captions

Regina de Miguel, film still from *A Story Never Told from Below*, HD video and 3D animation. 01:09:38. Original soundtrack by Lucrecia Dalt, 2016. Prologue available on <https://vimeo.com/153526028>

Eulalia Valldosera, *Mujer-semilla #1*, 3 projectors, 3 plastic bottles on piles of books, MNCARS, 2009.

Sara Ramo, *Black hole*, iron structure, metal mesh, kraft paper, silk paper, glue and pure pigment, 2018. Photo by Eduardo Ortega, courtesy of Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel.

Eulalia Valldosera, image of several "matriarchal vessels" taken from her website: <https://eulaliavalldosera.com/aqua-luz-y-sombras-proyectos-realizados-desde-1990/instalaciones/envases-culto-madre-1996/>

Sara Ramo, *Desvelo y traza*, site-specific installations at Matadero Madrid and Centre d'Art La Panera, 2014-2015. Photo by Daniel Ramo.

Sara Ramo, making-of of *The helpers*. Photo by Flávia Mafra.

Regina de Miguel, film still from *A Story Never Told from Below*, HD video and 3D animation. 01:09:38. Original soundtrack by Lucrecia Dalt, 2016.

Regina de Miguel, *Foundation*, photographic series and verses by Regina de Miguel and audio by Lucrecia Dalt, 2018. More on <http://www.reginademiquel.net/Fundacion>

Regina de Miguel, extremophilic species engraved on obsidian stone from the installation *Ansible*, 2015. More on <http://www.reginademiquel.net/Ansible>

Eulalia Valldosera, images related to her water healing work, 2018. More on <https://eulaliavalldosera.com/soy-aqua-som-aigua/>

Regina de Miguel, *Fundación*, photographic series and verses by Regina de Miguel and audio by Lucrecia Dalt, 2018. More on <http://www.reginademiquel.net/Fundacion>

Regina de Miguel, engraved obsidian sphere from the installation *Visita interiora*, 2018.

Eulalia Valldosera, *Column III (from the series Burns #12)*, 1991, 125 x 125 cm.

Eulalia Valldosera, *Plastic veils*, 2016. See image assemblages and other veils on <https://eulaliavalldosera.com/aqua-luz-y-sombras-proyectos-realizados-desde-1990/cuerpos-fotos-y-acciones/velos-plasticos-2016/>

Evohé & Sére Skuld, performance *The Book of Toth*, based on A. Crowley and Frieda Harris' Tarot, CCCB, 2018. Photo by Miquel Taverna.

Eulalia Valldosera, *Swept Away / The Navel of the World #1 #2 #3*, 1991-2001. More on <https://eulaliavalldosera.com/aqua-luz-y-sombras-proyectos-realizados-desde-1990/instalaciones/ombliigo-mundo-1991/>

Eulalia Valldosera, *Food for Thought*, Ø140 cm paella, ladle, 5 water motors, tubes and plastic scraps collected from beaches, marine life themed glassware from the Mataró Glass Cooperative (Cooperativa del Vidre de Mataró), exterior and underwater lighting, Museu de Mataró, 2016.
"Originally paella was eaten directly from the pan, without serving it in individual dishes and respecting individual needs. Full of the products the sea gives us, the festive paella was communally shared on the beach, and for me, now, it is a reflection of the those who formed a cooperative in which everyone was both owner and servant and which was strangled by the laws of capitalism".

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- I. Stengers, *Otra ciencia es posible: manifiesto por una desaceleración de las ciencias*, Barcelona, Ned Ediciones and Futuro Anterior Ediciones, 2019.
- I. Stengers, *Reativar o animismo*, Belo Horizonte, Edições Chão de Feira, 2017, p. 11.
- I. Stengers, "Wondering about materialism", in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (Eds.) *The Speculative Turn*, Melbourne, Re. press, 2011.
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- N. Mirzoeff, "Não é o Antropoceno, é a cena da supremacia branca ou a linha divisória geológica da cor", *Buala*, 23 abr. 2017.
- Ñukanchik Llata Kashpa-Nuestra Identidad, Saraguro, Kipa Radio, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVVq52zqXlw>
- R. de Miguel in conversation.

R. Natalio, "Acabar com o mundo, torcer o mundo", *Buala*, 21 mar. 2017.

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T. Morton, *El pensamiento ecológico*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2018.

T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2016.

Notes

¹ I. Stengers, "Wondering about materialism", in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (Eds.) *The Speculative Turn*, Melbourne, Re. press, 2011.

² D. Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016.

³ I. Stengers and P. Pignarre, *La brujería capitalista*, Buenos Aires, Hekht Libros, 2017.

⁴ Idem, p. 76.

⁵ Idem, p. 80.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Idem, p. 83.

⁹ T. Morton, *El pensamiento ecológico*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2018, p. 126.

¹⁰ Idem, p. 51.

¹¹ Idem, p. 128.

¹² See note 2.

¹³ To clarify: midwife, abortionist and birth control specialist are three obvious aspects of how the witch embraces, with her care, all aspects of life, including death.

¹⁴ T. Morton, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁵ Idem, p. 44.

¹⁶ F. Sánchez Alonso, "Son psicólogas, son maestras... son brujas (y viven en España)" in *Papel, El Mundo*, 10/01/2016, <https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2016/01/10/568f8c82268e3edf488b45fd.html>

¹⁷ R. de Miguel in conversation.

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- ¹⁸ *Envases borrados (Deleted Vessels)* is part of the series *Envases: el culto a la mare. (Vessels: The Mother Cult)*
- ¹⁹ E. Valldosera, op. cit., <https://eulaliavalldosera.com/me-we/>
- ²⁰ R. de Miguel, op. cit.
- ²¹ Ibidem.
- ²² T. Ingold, "Re-thinking the Animate, Re-animating Thought", in *Ethnos*, Vol. 71:1, marzo, 2006.
- ²³ BIRD-DAVID, Nurit. "Animism' revisited: personhood, environment, and relational epistemology". *Current Anthropology*, vol. 40, n. S1, feb. 1999.
- ²⁴ L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (Eds.), op. cit.
- ²⁵ B. Glowczewski, *Devires totêmicos / Totemic becomings*, São Paulo, n-1 edições, 2015, p. 25.
- ²⁶ T. Morton, op. cit., p. 49
- ²⁷ R. de Miguel, op. cit.
- ²⁸ I. Stengers, *Otra ciencia es posible: manifiesto por una desaceleración de las ciencias*, Barcelona, Ned Ediciones and Futuro Anterior Ediciones, 2019, p. 144.
- ²⁹ I. Stengers, *Reactivar o animismo*, op. cit., p. 13.
- ³⁰ T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2016, p. 23.
- ³¹ Term taken from a live broadcast of *Ñukanchik Llata Kashpa-Nuestra Identidad* in a conversation between Verónica Yuquilema Yupangui, Inti Cartuche Vacacela, Sisa Pacari Vacacela and Sayri Cartuche, Saraguro, Kipa Radio, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVVq52zqXlw>
- ³² As Jean-Jacques Lebel says in the audiovisual essay that Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato produced about Guattari. A. Melitopoulos y M. Lazzarato, *Agenciamentos: Félix Guattari e o animismo maquínico*, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4L_m5vPQoaY
- ³³ As Rita Natalio points out, throughout history indigenous and black people have been systematically enslaved as "objects that can speak". R. Natalio, "Acabar com o mundo, torcer o mundo", *Buala*, 21 mar. 2017.
- ³⁴ N. Mirzoeff, "Não é o Antropoceno, é a cena da supremacia branca ou a linha divisória geológica da cor", *Buala*, 23 abr. 2017.
- ³⁵ "Speculative realism, new materialism, ecosophical activism, object oriented ontology, elementary politics, and post-humanism". T.J. Demos, op. cit., p. 19.
- ³⁶ C. Eisenstein, *The Coronation*, <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-coronation/>
- ³⁷ I. Stengers y P. Pignarre, op. cit., p. 82.
- ³⁸ E. Valldosera in conversation.
- ³⁹ I. Stengers, *Otra ciencia es posible: manifiesto por una desaceleración de las ciencias*, op. cit., p. 148.
- ⁴⁰ T. Morton, op. cit., p. 52.
- ⁴¹ F. Guattari, *Las tres ecologías*, Valencia, Pre-textos, 1996, p. 10.
- ⁴² E. Valldosera, op. cit., <https://eulaliavalldosera.com/me-we/>

⁴³ S. Skuld in conversation.

⁴⁴ F. Sánchez Alonso, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ E. Valldosera in conversation.

⁴⁷ The terms are abysmally different in the Spanish and English editions. In the Spanish version the term used is "consulta". However, in the English text it seems like "reclaiming" is used, though at other times it looks like it might be "gathering". The original term that Stengers uses in French is "consultation," and after examining the original French edition we have found that the Spanish translation is, without doubt, accurate. It might even be that this chapter was completely rewritten for the English edition, and is therefore a different text despite having the same title. The English book even has one more chapter than both the French and the Spanish editions. Also, in the English version there are no subchapters in Chapter 5, whilst in the equivalent Chapter 4 of the French and Spanish editions there are indeed subchapters. All in all, comparison with the English edition has turned out to be a very harrowing experience.

⁴⁸ I. Stengers, *Otra ciencia es posible: manifiesto por una desaceleración de las ciencias*, op. cit., p. 134. This text has been translated directly from the Spanish edition originally quoted, for the reasons exposed in the previous note. Indeed, this specific sentence is not to be found anywhere in the English edition. The original French text is: "On peut appeler consultation le rassemblement autour d'une question qui divise, lorsque ceux qui sont divisés s'accordent sur le fait que nul ne possède la réponse".