



MELT DIVINE FEMININE

INTO

DIVINE ANIMACY

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The opposite of civilization is not an idealized return to paleolithic hunting and gathering. The opposite of a human is not an animal or a rock or a blade of grass. The opposite of our current predicament – climate collapse, social unrest, extinction, mass migrations, solastalgia, genocide – is, in fact, the disintegration of opposites all together.

Everything is both. And more. And everything is penetratingly, painfully, wildly alive.

Animacy is an overdetermined word; but so is the idea of the Divine Feminine. The reason I have begun to shy away from the Divine Feminine is its unfortunate identification with gender and, more importantly, its over-identification with humans and their myopic classifications generally. Animacy is slightly plushier, springier. More moss-like. It seems a soft spot to rest on while I try to understand and explain how very sentient the world is to me these days.

I am attracted to the constellations of meaning that sparkle like distant stars inside the word *anima*: breath, spirit, soul; and *animate*: to give vigor or life, to ensoul. I enjoy the animal itself, furred, horned, hooved, clawed, scaled, and indeterminate, that bucks and bays and howls inside the word. I enjoy how grammatically philosophers try to clip it like a twitchy nerve and it keeps flinching away. It is a term I think most closely related to the original meaning of the word *spell*: the performative utterance. Magic-summoning. To myth. To story. To make happen. Animacy is the degree to which the referent of a noun is sentient. It is the “soul” that invigorates syntax with something very much beyond language. Ultimately, I am a poet, and my choices often originate from a much darker soil than common sense. Animacy, to my poet-soil-nonsense self, seems the “everything” of muteness and inhuman import that suffuses Neruda’s extraordinary poem “Dead Gallop”: “...the fragrance of plums, rolling to the ground, / which rot in time, infinitely green. / That everything so quick, so lively, immobile, / though, like the pulley, wild inside itself... / Existing like dry stitches in the seams of the tree, silent, encircling, like that, all the limbs mixing up their tails.”

The opposite of Anthropocentrism is not the Divine feminine. The opposite of Anthropocentrism is Everything. And what a tender beautiful thing it is to walk outside on a bright spring morning. Swathes of clementine light wash the pollen from the bricks of your building. You hear the robin’s song like a key turning in a lock. A handful of doves float down from the red-green cloud of a newly foliated

maple tree. What a relief to realize that, unlike Adam and Eve, we haven't been severed from the Garden. The Everything still includes us.

The Everything is us; but it needs something in return. It needs us to melt our ideas of sentience as a purely human property. Or as a purely animal property. Or as a purely individual property. Relationships are sentient. Anima is the inhalation, carrying molecules and spores and pheromones into our bodies from the landscape. And then we exhale, sharing cells that have clung to our deepest cells, slept inside the pith of our blood. With every exhale, we decant ourselves back into the world. How could we be one, or two, or three? We are more gerund than cold, hard noun. More animacy than strictly animal. We ensoul the world and are ensouled in return. Our myths about individuation and linearity no longer hold all the trouble. And all the love. We need to stop sticking out our two hands like it proves everything comes in oppositional dualisms. How many hands does the tree have? The peony? The pileated woodpecker? How many hands is the mycelium using to crochet intimacy from plant to tree to plant through the soil?

Divine Feminine just isn't big enough for all the relationships holding and constituting me these days. She thins my language into a one to one relationship. Even if she includes saints and "mother earth" and all women, it's easy to slip into monic language. One mother. One relationship. One sacred gender expression. One temporality. One thinking animal. One species.

I'm not throwing her out. I'm throwing her IN. Melting her down. Mixing her into the messier, polytemporal animacy of everything I touch, change, and become.

As I continue to massage and reinvigorate myths and folktales and stories about the masculine, I want to gently cushion this attempt in an animacy that is not just human. It is a verb. A mycorrhizal system sewing together a whole forest. A shared breath. A midsummer celebration where everyone is invited.

This is not a command. This is a personal meditation rooted deeply in land stewarded by the Munsee Lenape people. If it does not serve, scatter it to the winds!



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