

“Magic is the language of things.”

A horned, shirtless man wields a spear as the roaring mob behind him fills the corridors, breaking into chambers and shouting the names of hiding enemies. Another insurgent peeps timidly from behind a plastic riot shield, the ferret snout of his fur hat slipping down into his eyes. The battle is in full rage. The main chamber has fallen. The now-empty podium opens itself to welcome the conquerors...

One could easily mistake a general description of the January 6th insurgency in the US Capitol for a peculiar medieval Live Action Role Play (LARP) as opposed to a violent, reactionary political protest. The furry cloaks, masks and other fantastic ornamentations carefully crafted by QAnon followers and Trump supporters dazzled a real-time internet audience – a materialization of a long-felt breach in the reality-dam, leaving the once (supposedly) distinct categories of fact and fiction to openly “*bleed*” (in LARP terminology) into each other and flow into the relentless stream that (in)forms what feels tangible to the person you look at in the mirror every morning. It's a leak that seems to have intensified, but has in fact been steadily dripping ever since the start of our day-count, a fissure we have patched over with common sense and scientific reason.

Philosopher Isabelle Stengers notes that, while we may feel apprehensive of “betraying hard truth by indulging soft, illusory beliefs,” facts have yet undeniably ceased to be the primary fuel of our present-day social organism. We inhabit a world that lingers on after the countless pronouncements that we are now “post” this, that, everything; a world where the big ideas implode under their own weight and only ephemeral, pliant narratives prevail, germinating like swamp flora concealed from direct sunlight. Now we can in the same moment believe and refute, embrace and object, laugh in irony and attentively listen. Perhaps only now we have finally stopped believing in the passivity of our own reflection, cautiously dipping our hands into the now-liquified surface of the mirror, yet still scared to admit that what we thought we see and know rarely corresponds to what is going on. One therefore needs to always bear in mind what Omsk Social Club pointedly remarks in one interview: *“every world is a fantasy, even the one you live in”*.

So if today it seems easier to believe in a cabal of cannibalistic, Satan-worshipping pedophiles who are throning a so-called “deep state” than in the bestiality of the actual material-economic system, perhaps *belief itself* must be called into question. In our “rational” world, “belief”, alongside “magic” and other polluted terms, has been cast to the position of mere metaphor – something that we let slip as a figure of speech, not wanting to get our hands dirty with its literal meaning. But if we refuse to *reclaim* its power, we must understand that someone else will – and indeed, already has. As Stengers thus explains, our task should rather be to open up to the irrational, to become “infected” with belief and wield the spear of fantasy: *never mind the metaphor, get compromised*.

And since “reality” is always more than a set of given facts, more than what we can “objectively” know, it might as well be treated as a multiplayer pod, a mutual game of borrowing, passing on and accepting together. It's a game already played as a group, whether we choose it or not, and logging in only allows us to consciously enter the space of intermingled (e)motions (trans)forming the milieu within and without. It is in this crucially embodied sense that a fiction, whether clothed as word, image, narrative or a LARP game, is always transformative (to whatever ends); always a form of shared, self-actualizing magic(k), summoning the force of the already at hand bio-synthetic fusion mutating our senses, traveling from body to body, molecule by molecule. And before we even choose to play, we are already subject to

the rules of our “trans-corporeal” existence, as Stacy Alaimo has it – a grouping of material interchanges enmeshed deep within the network. It is on this level that the game must be played, offering us to try out tools and reclaim spells that reach beyond the frame. Because if we shall ever heal, we must first accept our wounds, for – as Joë Bousquet penned – “my wound existed before me, I was born to embody it.” The mission thus becomes clear: *To bleed into each other, before we bleed out.*

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