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"Becoming-With"

Wright, Kate

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The becoming-with of a lightning storm creates diffuse becoming-withs, as ionised air draws bodies into an affective circuit of shocks and discharges. Ionised air electrifies bodies to the point that if I touch you with my finger I can cause you a static shock through the same intra-active mechanism that forms a lightning strike. This bodily attunement to molecular difference in the air is a becoming-lightning-storm that operates below consciousness. The smiles on the faces of the McQuilken brothers, bemused by their hair-becomingstorm, betrays a disjuncture between what the body responds to and how the (supposedly) rational mind perceives that response. A key tenet of the Environmental Humanities is a deeply engaged critique of anthropocentrism. Humans' fixation on subjectivity, consciousness, and rationality, which separates anthropos from the rest of the living world, is a narcissism that blinds us to a multiplicity of becoming-withs in which we are immersed, and which can sustain or destroy us. The rational mind is made irrational when it fails to recognise its limitations in a complex system—a system that, in the words of Frank Egler, may not just be more complex than we think, but more complex than we can think.9 The becoming-storm of the hair in this image fractures the illusion that the mind is always the most responsive part of our being, and what enables us to be, in Haraway's terms, "response-able." (Text from author)

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