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"Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness"

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Scholars in the humanities and social sciences are experimenting with novel ways of engaging with worlds around us. Passionate immersion in the lives of fungi, microorganisms, animals, and plants is opening up new understandings, relationships, and accountabilities. This introduction to the special issue offers an overview of the emerging field of multispecies studies. Unsettling given notions of species, it explores a broad terrain of possible modes of classifying, categorizing, and paying attention to the diverse ways of life that constitute worlds. From detailed attention to particular entities, a multiplicity of possible connection and understanding opens up: species are always multiple, multiplying their forms and associations. It is this coming together of questions of kinds and their multiplicities that characterizes multispecies studies. A range of approaches to knowing and understanding others—modes of immersion—ground and guide this research: engagements and collaborations with scientists, farmers, hunters, indigenous peoples, activists, and artists are catalyzing new forms of ethnographic and ethological inquiry. This article also explores the broader theoretical context of multispecies studies, asking what is at stake—epistemologically, politically, ethically—in learning to be attentive to diverse ways of life. Are all lively entities biological, or might a tornado, a stone, or a volcano be amenable to similar forms of immersion? What does it mean to live with others in entangled worlds of contingency and uncertainty? More fundamentally, how can we do the work of inhabiting and coconstituting worlds *well*? In taking up these questions, this article explores the cultivation of "arts of attentiveness": modes of both paying attention to others and crafting meaningful response. (Text from authors' abstract)

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