

Almanac: Chimeric Assemblages

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Almanacs are hybrid instruments, assemblages that are hard to define and whose varied uses are ultimately difficult to isolate and circumscribe. They enable the movement of things from one place to another, recombining the world, and have taken on various functions through history, mixing different fields and uses. In this sense, we can consider almanacs as assemblages or “patchworks”.

“Assemblage theory” was introduced in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980) and has been explored further by contemporary philosophers such as Rosi Braidotti (Braidotti, 1994, 2013) and Manuel DeLanda (DeLanda, 2016). This philosophical framework is inspired by the artistic technique of assemblage, which consists of blending different objects and elements that are not commonly associated, to create new emergent patterns. The main claim of assemblage theory is to provide a relational account to ontology, highlighting the fluidity and connectivity of the Real, while showing equally its processual dimension, which is always in the making and becoming.

Almanacs as assemblages are double and plural entities, characterized by a systemic and interdisciplinary openness, liable to continuous reconfigurations and risemantisations, articulations and disarticulations that are heterogeneous in their variability and lead to a plurality of displacement as well as of replacements. Simultaneously, almanacs strip away any form of residual essentialism and reification through their continual evolution. And although in one sense they have been used as tools of systematization, for record and prediction, almanacs can also be rethought as instruments that allow one to see the world in its kaleidoscopic polivocity, welding together different elements.

Consequently, almanacs have the potential to mix up science and popular narratives, proposing a topological image of relationships, influences and occult forces, (astrological, nautical, geographic, meteorological and...and...and...). Historically, they have mapped the dynamics of planets and constellations, predicted atmospheric phenomena and lunar phases, and provided useful coordinates for sailors and farmers. After the Middle Ages, they held additional functions including news and information related to the medical field, world events, as well as recording the deaths and births of kings and sovereigns.

This structural power of assembling different elements, creating a patchwork-movement is also reflected in the etymology of the word almanac that suggests a dimension of opacity in which intertwined and composite stratifications coexist: the origin of the word is suspended between Greek (the vocabulary in question is *almenichiaká*, which at the time defined astrological charts) and Latin, with possible Arab-Spanish mediations (the word used was *al-manākh* and it possibly stood for astronomical tables). An early paradigmatic example of the word almanac is found in the work of the philosopher Roger Bacon, in 1267, in reference to an astronomical calendar, but once again its function seems foggy and nebulous, constitutionally hybrid (Weekley, 1921).

It is perhaps also interesting to consider almanacs as a form of minor literature (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986) which force language and play amongst its interstices and gaps, assembling a "chimeric" product that has many uses and functions, which are not eminently logocentric, but composed of images, indications and suggestions on how to navigate between relations. Almanacs are tools that can help us to orient ourselves within the folds of the affective and polyvocal forces of the Real rather than a vehicle for a major language that blocks the road of becoming and inter-disciplinary hybridation.

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