



Figure 1. Laura Aguilar, *Grounded #114*, 2006, digital.  
Courtesy of Laura Aguilar and the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

# HAS THE QUEER EVER BEEN HUMAN?

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What can be said about the photograph at left? At first glance, viewers will likely recognize the larger background object as a boulder: rough textured, sand colored, partly in shadow, surrounded by desert brush and blue sky. The smaller figure in the foreground presents more of a challenge. It both resembles and differs from the boulder; both share similar asymmetrically oval outlines, but the texture of the foregrounded figure is smoother, more like human skin. Upon noting the hair at the top and the cleft of the buttocks below, the viewer might begin to see this as a human body, seated on the ground, facing away from the camera. One cannot easily categorize the figure: sex, gender, race, age are obscured by its position. And many of the conjectures that one might make about this body as “simply” a body—for instance, that it is curled frontally inward and that it possesses arms and legs hidden by this pose—depend on assumptions about what a “proper body” looks like and what it can do.<sup>1</sup>

The photograph, *Grounded #114* (2006), is the work of Laura Aguilar, a Chicana lesbian photographer from San Gabriel, California, whose lens tends to focus on nonnormative bodies and on members of marginalized groups.<sup>2</sup> Her specialization in portraiture, especially self-portraiture, locates her work, as Laura Pérez observes, on a “terrain of contestation for women of color,” as they must “peel away racialized and gendered associations . . . that their bodily appearance triggers in Eurocentric ways of seeing.”<sup>3</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, Aguilar’s work has given complex interpretation to Pérez’s “terrain of contestation” by incorporating land as part of that challenge.

In this work, Aguilar poses nude in “natural” settings, sometimes accompanied by other women, though more often alone, aligning her body with features of the landscape. Her outdoor photographs are often read by critics as gestures of defiance, flaunting, in a natural setting, the kind of body—fat, brown, queer—that is treated, in dominant culture, as at once a secret and a spectacle. In *Grounded #114*, from the artist’s first color series, Aguilar seems to mold her body into an echo of the boulder behind her—the pose concealing sex and gender, obscuring race, and making even her status as human difficult, at first, to discern. As in other feminist self-portraits, the female body refuses either to open itself to appropriation by the viewer or to position itself as the object of the male gaze.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, though, Aguilar performs this refusal not by intensifying her apparent status as subject (through, say, a defiant facial expression or virtuosic posturing) but by turning away from the demand for recognition within the circle of humanity.<sup>5</sup> By mimicking a boulder, Aguilar enters the very nonhuman fold where some would place her, effectively displacing the centrality of the human itself.

We take up Aguilar’s boulderish turn away from the demand for full humanity as a way to explore the overlap between queer studies and the rising critical interest, across the humanities and social sciences, in nonhuman objects. This turn toward the nonhuman insists, at minimum, that we view the boulder in the photograph not as “mere” backdrop or landscape but as equally important, equally in need of inquiry. In light of the social “invisibility” of Aguilar’s (human) subjects, this insistence might seem an outrage: why look away from the already overlooked or advantage the inanimate over the dehumanized? Yet *Grounded #114*’s self-portrait beckons us to follow this turn, to take seriously the possibilities of subjecting oneself to stone. There is something compelling about the symmetry of the two figures in this portrait, something that asks us to consider the suggestively queer connections between flesh and stone, between human and nonhuman. One might frame Aguilar’s boulder mimicry as protective camouflage, or a form of reverence, or even an in/organic identification; the same minerals occur in both bodies, after all. Yet when discussing this image, neither of us, from the perspectives of our own scholarship, could ignore the possibility that it stages a kind of mating dance.<sup>6</sup> The connections and contrast between the two bodies—one flesh, one rock—come off as undeniably sexy; the pinkish-brown of Aguilar’s skin against the brownish-beige of the rock, the roughness of its surface against the smoothness of hers, caress the eye, catalyzing a tactile erotics. The folds of her flesh counterpoint the dents in the stone, both marking textured, touchable bodies. Her skin brings out a softness in the stone; the boulder lends her body an air of durability.

Victoria Martin characterizes an earlier series of Aguilar's landscape nudes as possessing "much sensuality" but "no overt sexuality."<sup>7</sup> This seems true of *Grounded #114* as well, but only, perhaps, because we tend to think of sexuality in terms of human or animal genital relations. If we think, more broadly, of the constitutive pleasure and potentiality of forms of corporeal communing, then we might well consider this image a sexual one, following, not without irony, on the queer theoretical insistence that we *denaturalize* the kind of "sex" that lies at the center of deployments of sexuality.<sup>8</sup> To say, as Amelia Jones contends of Aguilar's landscape photography, that the "boundaries between human and nonhuman melt away," that there is no clear division between the natural world and the human body, is also to say that there is no natural law to oppose to human deviance, since nature cannot be posited as other than and prior to humans.<sup>9</sup> And lifting that prohibition, in turn, multiplies not only the possibilities for intrahuman connection but also our ability to imagine other kinds of trans/material attachments. Thus humans, as Jeffrey J. Cohen proposes, might indeed be understood as desiring stone, because of its semblance to us and because of its radical difference. Stone, queerly, ignites longing for "a world more capacious than the small one we too often think we inhabit."<sup>10</sup>

And yet stone's time, as Cohen also points out, is not our own. This is invoked in the contrast between the two figures in *Grounded #114*. As we suggested earlier, to view Aguilar as *posing* like the boulder is to understand her body's position as both willed and temporary—and that of the boulder as unwilled and permanent. But the boulder's shape, whether or not we call it willed, is likewise temporary—though the duration of that "posture" may be millions of years. In the gap between the presumed mutability of a fleshly body and the stillness of stone, we may also glimpse the vulnerability, the ephemerality of that body compared with the stability and durability of the boulder. In the American Southwest, the photograph's location, its invocation of temporal contrast, has political as well as geological and ontological valence; this desert terrain belongs to a region overlaid with histories of occupation, of settlement, displacement, colonization, and genocide, as well as of attachment, identification, aspiration, and political and cultural reimagination.<sup>11</sup> These histories are not invoked directly in *Grounded #114*, though they hover just beyond the frame. Aguilar's inhuman intimacy with an occupied landscape might be read as recalling the presence of these pasts, the objectification of indigenous populations. Conversely, her determined alignment with this space could signal a mode of decolonization, a pictorial manifestation of Cherríe Moraga's Queer Aztlán.<sup>12</sup>

The connection between the terrain of the nonhuman and these human his-

tories and possibilities shows that giving attention to the boulder's potential agency within the image need not negate or marginalize concerns relating to Aguilar's identity. Critical attention to the active force of the nonhuman has emerged within scholarship usually understood as concerned with "identity" or "social location." Like Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa envisions a mode of resistance, *mestiza* consciousness, that links marginalized subjects to the land, not just symbolically but materially. This intimate and physical connection to the nonhuman, in the form of the exteriorized land and the interiorized "Shadow-Beast," results in what Carlos Gallego terms the "onto-epistemology" of Anzaldúa's *New Mestiza*.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, *mestiza* consciousness is born *both* of an awareness of dehumanization—"the queer," Anzaldúa observes, "are the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe's fear: being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human"—and of a deliberate transgression of the boundaries of the human.<sup>14</sup> To follow Aguilar's turn toward the boulder, then, is not to turn away from questions of objectification or dehumanization; it is, rather, to consider how these questions already anticipate the contemporary "nonhuman turn"—to examine, contra Jones, not how the "boundaries between human and nonhuman melt away" but how those categories rub on, and against, each other, generating friction and leakage. And it is also to ask about other forms, other worlds, other ways of being that might emerge from the transmaterial affections suggested in the photograph. When the "sub-human, in-human, non-human" queer actively connects with the other-than-human, what might that connection spawn?

The query that launched our work on this special issue, "Queer Inhumanisms," was a simple one: has the queer ever been human? At a moment when scholars are grappling with the question of whether humanity has a future, we were drawn toward the question of its queer pasts. Many of queer theory's foundational texts interrogate, implicitly or explicitly, the nature of the "human" in its relation to the queer, both in their attention to how sexual norms themselves constitute and regulate hierarchies of humanness, and as they work to unsettle those norms and the default forms of humanness they uphold. Anzaldúa viewed dehumanization as an opportunity to reconstruct what it means to be human. The humanity of her *New Mestiza* is not rigid, bounded, and pure but flexible, multiple, and fluid, composed not only of different identities but different entities, different materialities. For Anzaldúa, we are multiple not only symbolically but, as Mikko Tuhkanen observes, biologically, ontologically, spatiotemporally: as Anzaldúa writes, "You're all the different organisms and parasites that live on your body and also the ones who live in a symbiotic relationship to you. . . . So who are you? You're not one single entity.

You're a multiple entity."<sup>15</sup> In the same year that saw the publication of Anzaldúa's landmark *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Leo Bersani, in "Is the Rectum a Grave?" also challenged the ideal of the bounded individual, the integral "self," which he viewed as a potential license for violence. Opposing attempts to redeem sex, he proposed, instead, that we allow sex to become what we most fear, a site for the "breakdown of the human itself."<sup>16</sup> Sex, that is, was valuable precisely as it did violence to the human as violent form, as it shattered the idealized self. Monique Wittig's provocative 1978 assertion that lesbians are not women because of their nonparticipation in the regulatory schemes that uphold heterosexualized gender was extended, in a 1991 essay by Cathy Griggers, to the contention that the lesbian body exemplified the machinic or cyborgian condition of the (post)human body.<sup>17</sup> Sandy Stone's 1991 "posttranssexual" provocation asserted that "the disruptions of the old patterns of desire that the multiple dissonances of the transsexual body imply" worked to produce "a myriad of alterities, whose unanticipated juxtapositions hold what Donna Haraway has called the promises of monsters—physicalities of constantly shifting figure and ground that exceed the frame of any possible representation."<sup>18</sup> And in their introduction to the 1995 collection *Posthuman Bodies*, Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston observed, "Sexuality is a dispersed relation between bodies and things. . . . What is bodily about sex? What is sexual about sex? What is gendered?"<sup>19</sup> In these formulations and others, the figure of the queer/trans body does not merely unsettle the human as norm; it generates other possibilities—multiple, cyborgian, spectral, transcorporeal, transmaterial—for living.<sup>20</sup>

More recent queer scholarship amplifies these efforts to chart the damage done by the human as norm and to alter or replace it as form. In *Aberrations in Black* (2004), for instance, Roderick Ferguson extends the interrogation of the "human" as a technology of racialization (a question taken up by Frantz Fanon, Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, and others) to show how black subjects' citizenship, morality, and even humanity is made dependent on their submission to sexual regulation.<sup>21</sup> Analyses of queer temporality examines the part that various time schemes played in the production of the human and its subhuman and inhuman others. Lee Edelman, in *No Future*, outlines sexuality, the site of the meaningless, mechanistic, and inhuman drive, as implacably opposed to the optimistic futural narratives developed on behalf of the sentimentalized Child.<sup>22</sup> Edelman's call to "insist on enlarging the inhuman" instead of demanding recognition as humans is taken up in a different critical register by Elizabeth Grosz. For Grosz, the inhuman is not posited in opposition to the human but issues from the proliferation of difference: the "inhuman work of difference [is] the ways in which difference stretches,

transforms, and opens up any identity to its provisional vicissitudes, its shimmering self-variations that enable it to become other than what it is.”<sup>23</sup> Departing from the inhuman, Jasbir Puar, in *Terrorist Assemblages*, considers the construction of the *unhuman* as a tactic of control society. Extending the illegal, rather than illegal, status of the detainee, Puar speculates on the withdrawal, rather than regulation, of identity categories and other markers of legibility from these bodies, rendering them unintelligible as humans.<sup>24</sup> The unhuman takes its place as one exemplar of the biopolitical shift from disciplinary to control society, as power works increasingly through the permeation of material bodies, instead of through discrete, identity-marked subjects legible against a standard of humanity.

The increasing urgency of ecological and climatological damage has also pushed many queer critics to move past what Stacy Alaimo describes as a long-standing reluctance to appeal to “nature,” partly because both “nature and ‘the natural’ have long been waged against homosexuals, as well as women, people of color, and indigenous peoples.”<sup>25</sup> As Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson contend in their introduction to the collection *Queer Ecologies*, queer environmental thought might begin precisely from the conjunction of an idealized “nature” as a tool to discipline sexual and gender dissidents, and the debasement and exploitation of material nature.<sup>26</sup> Queer ecocriticism also takes up an understanding of ecology as naming not the idea of the “natural world” as something set apart from humans but a complex system of interdependency. Hence, as Tavia Nyong’o argues, ecology offers an apt framing for “the environment of counter-cultural communal life, musicking, and polymorphous sexuality,” such as that developed in Samuel R. Delany’s 1979 memoir *Heavenly Breakfast*.<sup>27</sup> Delany’s speculative fiction, along with that of Octavia Butler, Larissa Lai, Joanna Russ, and many others, has long served as a rich source of queer posthumanist provocation, a site for imagining other, possibly queerer, worlds. As Nyong’o demonstrates, though, a queerly materialist reframing of ecocriticism can also enable us to discover those worlds within our own.

The question of whether the queer, for queer theory, has ever been human must, then, be answered, not equivocally but deliberately, yes and no. *Yes*, because this sustained interrogation of the unjust dehumanization of queers insistently, if implicitly, posits the human as standard form, and also because many queer theorists have undeniably privileged the human body and human sexuality as the locus of their analysis. But *no* because queer theory has long been suspicious of the politics of rehabilitation and inclusion to which liberal-humanist values lead, and because “full humanity” has never been the only horizon for queer becoming. We might see the “yes/no” humanity of the queer less as an ambivalence about

the human as status than as a queer *transversal* of the category. The queer, we could say, runs across or athwart the human. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reminds us, “The word ‘queer’ itself means across—it comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*.”<sup>28</sup> To say that queer transverses the human is to understand their relation as contingent rather than stable: it needs to be read up from particular situations, not proclaimed from above.

Our hope, in this special issue, is to set the two terms of our title—“Queer Inhumanisms”—both alongside and athwart one another. “Queer Inhumanisms,” that is, does not declare an identity so much as it stages an encounter, one that seeks to discover what each of its terms might do to the other. The encounter with the inhuman expands the term *queer* past its conventional resonance as a container for human sexual nonnormativities, forcing us to ask, once again, what “sex” and “gender” might look like apart from the anthropocentric forms with which we have become perhaps too familiar. At the same time, the deliberate twist given the reclaimed epithet “queer” in late twentieth-century queer activism and analysis—the way it gestures, at once, toward a history of abuse and marginalization and an aspirational expansiveness—prompts us to recall two inflections of “inhuman,” the dynamic sense that Grosz employs and the one that invokes indifference and brutality. The scholarship presented in this issue travels between these two inflections, keeping in mind both the promise and the costs of the call to move “beyond” the human.

This special issue emerges at a moment that is witnessing a broad-based shift across the humanities and social sciences affecting both objects and methods—a shift that is coming to be known as “the nonhuman turn.”<sup>29</sup> The phrase points to an increasing tendency to question our automatic recourse to the human as both the center of our analysis and the ground of any epistemology. Areas of thought usually associated with the nonhuman turn include affect studies, assemblage theory, speculative realism and object-oriented ontology, actor-network theory, techno-posthumanism, animal studies, environmental studies and ecocriticism, and the new materialisms.<sup>30</sup> These widely disparate domains all share a conviction that the “human” (at least as traditionally conceived) has unjustly dominated and unduly limited the horizon of critical thought, even in the work of structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers who sought to de-emphasize the centrality of human agency and intentionality. For despite their identification as antihumanist, both structuralism and post-structuralism (often designated as the “linguistic” and “cultural” turns, respectively) remained, in the view of many thinkers associated with the nonhuman turn, irredeemably anthropocentric insofar as they privi-



leged (human) epistemology over ontology, language over matter, “representation” over “realism.”

“The human,” in this body of work, is usually associated with the Enlightenment subject, C. B. MacPherson’s possessive individual, and/or “Man” as glossed in Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things*: he is rational, bounded, integral, sovereign, and self-aware. This is the figure to whom rights and citizenship are granted; this is the default figure that grounds and personifies norms of behavior, ability, and health; this is the figure around which we ordinarily construct notions of political and social agency.<sup>31</sup> Posthumanism and other anthro-decentric modes of thought extend the critique of this figure outlined by twentieth-century anti-humanisms.<sup>32</sup> Alongside this normative and masculinized sense of the “human,” through, we want to point to two other inflections of the term. The first is an affective one: the often-feminized subject of sympathy, defined by the capacity for emotional attachment to others. To be “human,” in this sense, is to feel for others, to love and to grieve and to respond to the suffering of others. This mode of humanness, aligned with the ideal of humaneness, grounds most liberal and sentimental appeals to justice as a way to remediate damage.<sup>33</sup> This figure of the human is less bounded than the first; indeed, its function has often been to make tolerable the damage inflicted by possessive individualism. Yet while a certain openness is demanded of “humanity” in this guise, it must still be effectively self-regulated, limited in scope and function—and hence, although it is frequently rendered as feminine, it remains as normatively white as the figure of Man.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to this implicitly hetero-gendered pair, the cognitive-rational and the sympathetic-emotional figures of the human, we note a third sense, one increasingly invoked in the context of climate change: that of the human as species. Undergirded by evolutionary thought, the human as species is both aligned with and hierarchically differentiated from other forms of life. Insofar as it appeals to biology and to processes of growth, habituation, and reproduction, the sense of the human as species seems to manifest a more material connection between humans than those established through emotional interdependence or cognitive similarity. For this reason, it offers both the idea of an immutable, natural reality outside human control, cited, for example, in claims about competitiveness and violence as founded in “human nature” or the prohibition of homosexuality as “unnatural,” and an evocation of unfolding, of progressing, which has been taken up in numerous ways, from Karl Marx’s appeal to the “life of the species” as precisely what is thwarted by capitalism to the visions of superiority (often based on white racial purity) devised by eugenicists. The human as species, then, is both materially “here” (and hence vulnerable to “degeneration” or extinction) and speculative,

not yet “here.” This temporal duality obtains for the other forms of the human as well: they refer at once to a putative “fact” of (human) nature, the way things *are*, and an ideal, a standard to aspire to, the way things *should be*. It is this latter aspect of the “human” that has enabled it to become a resource for critique. As Zakiyyah Iman Jackson points out, for instance, the work of decolonial critics such as Fanon, Wynter, and Aimé Césaire attends rigorously to the gap between the figure of Western Man and the humanist ideal—a gap in which outrages like colonialism and slavery loom large.<sup>35</sup>

Each of these inflections of “human” has been taken up, in recent anthropocentric scholarship, in ways that elaborate not simply a critique of old forms but an awareness of new frames. Analyses of neoliberalism show how fantasies of possessive individualism and sovereign agency have worn thin in a new labor economy; theories of affect call attention to the impersonal nature of affect, as opposed to the putatively personal implications of “emotion”; and critical discussions of the commercialization of “life itself” illuminate the breaking down of beliefs in species individuality.<sup>36</sup> In this light, the nonhuman turn marks, for many critics, not a venture “beyond” the human but a new mode of critical realism, a recognition that the nature of “reality” itself is changing as power moves away from the individual. The emergence of what late-Foucauldian and Deleuzian critics frame as “control society,” they argue, requires a critical lens capable of determining how, as Puar explains, “societies of control tweak and modulate bodies as matter,” rather than as humans or subjects.<sup>37</sup> Yet recognizing this, as Puar adds, does not mean wholly abandoning the ethical investments and methodological frameworks that drove ostensibly “human-centered” fields of inquiry based in identity and social location. Though the emergence of control society historically follows that of “disciplinary” society, the latter has not been transcended; it remains not only copresent but deeply imbricated with the former. Hence the form of the “human” remains with us partly as a means of disciplinary dehumanization and regulation, exclusion, and/or marginalization, tactics that, as Puar points out, remain primary vectors of control for “some bodies—we can call them statistical outliers, or those consigned to premature death, or those once formerly considered useless bodies or bodies of excess.”<sup>38</sup> The mattering of the body is not, then, inherently a posthuman condition, insofar as humanness and its constitutive parts remain a material as well as ideological force.

For other scholars, the ethical dimension of the nonhuman turn is paramount. Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*, for instance, posits an expanded political ecology as the effect of closer attention to the vitality and agency of all matter.<sup>39</sup> For Bennett, refusing to acknowledge the vitality of the nonhuman is not only

shortsighted but ethically “wrong,” and making things right—“highlighting the common materiality of all that is”—will both deflate the overblown human ego and open new possibilities for thought and action.<sup>40</sup> In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad argues that an understanding of agency as enacted or “intra-active” rather than the property of any singular subject or object does not obscure but rather heightens human accountability, developing a sense of responsibility that goes far beyond one’s individual “acts” to a recognition of one’s agential entanglement in “the larger material arrangements of which ‘we’ are a ‘part.’”<sup>41</sup> The ethical dimension of the nonhuman turn also emphasizes the possibilities for anthro-decentric generativity. Barad insists on the importance of “elaborating feminist and queer understandings of world-making where humans and nonhumans and the divide between them are not hard-wired into political analyses.”<sup>42</sup> José Esteban Muñoz’s conception of the “brown commons” likewise opens a transmaterial space devoted to “a process of thinking, imagining otherwiseness.” Deliberately minoritarian, defiantly queer, this “commons of brown people, places, feelings, sounds, animals, minerals, flora and other objects” refutes the form of the individual in favor of “a movement, a flow, an impulse, to move beyond the singular and individualized subjectivities.”<sup>43</sup>

The critics we have drawn from above, in order to explicate the stakes of anthro-decentric thought as both a lens for critical realism and a mode of queer world-making, all share critical orientations drawn from feminism, critical race studies, disability studies, and elsewhere. They are all set in motion, that is, by particular forms of dissatisfaction with the way things are, often founded on histories of neglect, oppression, or injury. This particularity calls attention to a tension between universalizing and locating impulses in both anthro-decentric and queer thought, a tension that parallels the divergent senses of the reclaimed term *queer* itself—as primarily a tool of incessant unsettling, restless refusal of all forms of identity, or as an extensible collection or assemblage of overlapping and mutually imbricated forms of gendered, sexual, and other corporealized dissidence. Muñoz’s brown commons specifically foregrounds the latter; the “sense of brownness” that bonds the commons is both a history of damage and devaluation and a response thereto, a “smolder[ing] with . . . life and persistence.”<sup>44</sup> This emphasis on histories of damage is in keeping with one consistent provocation across the diffuse and multiple body of work that we seek to name, imperfectly, by “queer theory”: its emergence as a response to precarity. Queer theories grounded in woman and lesbian of color feminism, for instance, draw on thinkers who observed with Andre Lorde, that their subjects were “never meant to survive.”<sup>45</sup> The trajectory of queer theory that locates its origins in critical response to the AIDS pandemic also nec-

essarily understands queer survival as far from a given. (Indeed, as Neel Ahuja observes in this volume, early queer-theoretical responses to AIDS, such as Bersani's 1987 essay, prefigure contemporary critical concerns with extinction.) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's oft-cited essay "Queer and Now" opens with the assertion "I think that everyone who does gay and lesbian studies is haunted by the suicides of adolescents."<sup>46</sup> Queer theory, then, emerges from an understanding of queer life as precarious life.<sup>47</sup>

We are not attempting, in pointing to this history, to reserve queer theory for LGBTQI-identified people or topics. Nor are we insisting that queer theory must always remain "faithful" to its moment of emergence; this, in our view, would hypostasize a living and lively body of thought. Rather, we are marking a specific kind of situation—a desire to persist in the face of precarity—as the primary catalyst for queer thought in general. That situation, moreover, is particularly generative for queer inhumanist thought, since the intensification of precarity in particular contexts tends to push putatively "human" subjects to the critical edge of that category. (It is therefore no accident, we think, that many of the most generative queer critiques of the human have emerged from queer of color critique and transgender studies.) Queer ecology and many other queer engagements with the nonhuman also emerge, in the contemporary context, as a response to precarity, as the effects of climate crisis extend that condition to encompass all of humanity, and numerous other species as well. *All* life, we might say, is now precarious life. For some, the global nature of the crisis points to a need to return to universalizing frames of thought, producing demands for a species-based response even among thinkers historically suspicious of universality.<sup>48</sup> Similar claims resonate across many areas of thought associated with the nonhuman turn regardless of their conscious alignment with climate questions, as though the post-post-structuralist identity of the turn necessitated an impatience with or outright refusal of particularizing claims. Locatedness and historical specificity, privileged grounds for post-structuralism, are complicated by the adjustments in scale said to be necessary to think beyond the confines of the human.

The inclination to vastness in much of this work—in particular, in speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, and some new materialisms—leads some of its critics to designate it with terms like "the new cultural geology" or "the new infinity."<sup>49</sup> This extrahuman vastness is complemented, Jordana Rosenberg argues, by a hyperbolized attention to smallness, which they name the molecular. For Rosenberg, the ontological fascination with "particulate matter" conflates an effect of power (the aforementioned penetrative operation of power in control society) with a mode of resistance.<sup>50</sup> Drawing on Andrea Smith's scholarship, they

suggest that its recent uptake in queer theory reproduces and extends the problems associated with “subjectless critique,” which, as Muñoz, David Eng, and J. Jack Halberstam explain, demands a “continuous deconstruction of the tenets of positivism at the heart of identity politics.”<sup>51</sup> Subjectless queer critique, in this sense, aligns itself with the aforementioned inflection of “queer” as a tool of incessant unsettling. Yet as Smith points out, this insistence on unsettling may well mask the queer subject’s status as a settler subject, as well as enable the covert retention of a normative whiteness.<sup>52</sup> Recent critical attention to matter and materiality, Rosenberg argues, extends Smith’s concerns as it installs the molecular as “the pre-eminent ‘subjectless subject’ of ontologically-oriented theory.”<sup>53</sup> Or, we might say, the nonhuman turn revives subjectlessness as *humanlessness*.

In this light, the palpable resistance by many critical race, feminist, and queer thinkers to posthumanism and/or the nonhuman turn is not the effect of some recalcitrant or retrograde attachment to the human. Rather, it illuminates a concern over the critically and politically limiting effects of much recent critical insistence on the “positive,” of calls to turn away from “critique” as such. If posthumanism, as Jackson suggests, fails to examine the locations of its own appeals to universalism, it risks precisely the failures that Césaire identified over half a century ago in a humanism covertly centered on the figure of Western Man.<sup>54</sup> Charges that speculative thought, in particular, has neglected generations’ worth of scholarship on gender, race, and sexuality have been partly answered in the recent embrace of feminist and queer theory by object-oriented ontologists.<sup>55</sup> Still, an uneven attention to race and related axes of dehumanization persists in many of these fields of study, as several contributors to this special issue remark. In light of this unevenness, recent appeals by some object-oriented and speculative thinkers to a limited range of queer theorists in order to affirm the fundamental queerness of the nonhuman or the ecological may, ironically, diminish the potential of speculative thought, insofar as the isolation of queerness from other contexts risks a form of queer exceptionalism that is, as Puar shows, uncritically aligned with Western discourses of modernity and progress.<sup>56</sup> Along with evading a certain critical responsibility, the distancing of social justice concerns based around race or gender from thinking about the non- or posthuman (on the basis that these categories reinstall an “anthropocentric” point of view) may well foreclose in advance some of the new formations that the nonhuman turn hopes to uncover. We cannot determine in advance what qualities normally cited as “human” will turn out to have expanded purchase.

For this reason, we are wary of divorcing “queer” thought entirely from

located histories of precarity, of reducing “queerness” to simply a movement of thought, or of affirmation or negation. If we accept the framing of the nonhuman turn as a move “beyond” the merely human concerns of identity and alterity, we overlook how the very possibility of making a distinction between human and nonhuman has, historically, been constructed by the kind of actions and processes that we have named dehumanization. Amid the contested valorizations of “new” and “old” materialisms, we must also question whether consensus should or can be found in the very meanings and cosmological stations for that multivariate concept going by the name of “human.” In an age of scientific modernity which both hollows out and levels the “human,” an anticolonial understanding rejects unthought projections of the temporalized and geopolitical hierarchies that sustain settler and other imperialisms today. A number of critiques have prepared us to be wary of a presumptively universal “human” isolate from which a “beyond” or a “post” is possible, in part because of what is ontologically transcribed into that universal human.<sup>57</sup> Many indigenous thinkers, in particular, show that various indigenous ontologies not only consider many “inanimate” entities to be alive, sentient, and agential, but also to have relational capacity “akin to *personhood*.” The combination of colonial governance, spiritual imperialisms, and dominant ontologies leads to a realm of contestations; an indigenous critique of the biopolitical collapse of individuated humanness on the one hand and personhood on the other could have significantly broader ontological ramifications than the secularized and componential logics of, say, “animal rights.” In this view, despite their titular resemblance, we might differentiate the mainstream scientifically based logic of interspecies understanding of Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson’s *Animals Make Us Human* from the colonial inculcation and peaked awareness of spiritual transformation in Muscogee poet Joy Harjo’s *How We Became Human*, or the solidification of sexual systems in relation to the adjudication of personhood in Mark Rifkin’s *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*.<sup>58</sup> The task remains, then, how to forge connections between these divergent histories, how to think on more than one scale, how to remain responsive to the continuing historical urgency of particular or located crises at the same time as we face new universal or diffuse ones.

We have thus far privileged the term *nonhuman* despite its distance from our own title, “Queer Inhumanisms.” We have not done so out of any affinity for “nonhuman” per se; it presents itself here by virtue of its familiarity, as a common descriptor of the focus of new critical developments. The term is not without its problems, though; it seemingly invites us to choose sides and perhaps to turn, even if polemically or temporarily, away from the human as such. Noreen Giffney and

Myra Hird's considered reconfiguration of the term, in contrast, in their groundbreaking 2008 collection *Queering the Non/Human*, transforms the false binary (human/nonhuman) into an occasion for critical thought. As they point out, "Recognizing the nonhuman in every trace of the Human also means being cognizant of the exclusive and excluding economy of discourses relating to what it means to be, live, act or occupy the category of the Human."<sup>59</sup> The slash through non/human, then, attempts to recollect and foreground the very histories of dehumanization too often overlooked in celebratory posthumanisms. "Inhumanisms," in our view, performs a similar kind of work through its homonymic echo. Resonating against "inhumane," inhuman points to the violence that the category of the human contains within itself. Yet it also carries a sense of generativity—inhuman not simply as category, as a spatial designator or the name of a "kind" of being, but as a process, an unfolding. This latter sense is especially pronounced within Deleuzo-Guattarian thought. Jeffrey Cohen and Todd Ramlow contend that the Deleuzian inhuman "opens the body to all kinds of positive possibility, to numerous invitations for reinvention and becoming."<sup>60</sup> Our titular embrace of "inhumanisms" follows the aspiration of becoming-minoritarian, though as the *s* at its end indicates, it does not necessarily align this aspiration with an embrace or advocacy of Deleuzian method or thought; indeed, the call to *become* resounds against numerous invocations of queerness as an unfolding, from Anzaldúa to Sedgwick to Muñoz. It might, in fact, have more precisely matched our inclinations had we chosen *a-human* (as in agnostic to the human as such). In the end, though, we chose *inhuman* for its dual temporal and historical resonances, since we do not as yet foresee a form of the inhuman that liberates itself entirely from histories and processes of dehumanization, nor one that does not risk falling back into them.

For any field or concentration as yet provisional, there are risks—of omission, of premature foreclosure—in putting forward a selection of essays that demonstrate a common character. We note, for instance, that certain partially overlapping areas are less represented in our dossier and essays: indigenous studies, non-US-originated authorship, or a diversity of theories of the transnational. Any of these returns us to the ongoing question about the narrowness of queer theory's referents. Our motivation in coordinating this selection, however, has never been coverage, but provocation. We thus open with the most kaleidoscopic, gestural formation, a dossier consisting of eleven compact pieces by writers both familiar and potentially new to *GLQ* readers, including J. Jack Halberstam, Jinhana Haritaworn, Myra Hird, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Eileen Joy, Uri McMillan, Jasbir K. Puar, Susan Stryker, Kim TallBear, and Jami Weinstein. Among them, too, is José Esteban

Muñoz, who sent us his first draft not long before his death in early December 2013. Given how deeply generative his work has been for us in conceptualizing this issue, we are grateful to have permission to feature his entry in the form that he sent it. We especially admire his ability to draw new materialist and object-oriented thought away from themselves, to catalyze, despite a predominant lack of attention to race in these fields, a conception of race that is at once materialist and speculative, ecological and active, defiantly minor and joyously collective, and deeply queer.

While we initially requested that our dossier writers relate their current work to the theme of queer inhumanisms, with the idea of giving form to its notional scope, we also asked them to imagine being part of a conversation. Looking around at their scholarly and activist surroundings, some go a step further: they rework, indict, suggest, reflect, or even launch a polemic. Readers will note speculation and celebration, as well as warning and reminder, meticulous critique and sweeping rejoinder. The collective dossier sets the tone for the breadth of ethical and conceptual reaches of a queer inhumanism that challenges that familiar opposition of the “new” and the “old” by jumping into—rather than acceding to—the multiply temporal fray of so many forms of scholarship, activism, and politics.

In the first essay, Tavia Nyong’o puts the lie to posthuman innocence—or the timeless neutrality of the posthuman wild—by inquiring after the mechanics and process of fabulation in the film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (dir. Benh Zeitlin; 2012), in which a young girl named Hushpuppy, a “returning” extinct European species, the aurochs, and the “rewilded” site of the Bathtub play prominent roles.<sup>61</sup> Through these figures, Nyong’o traces not only queer relations within the internal politics and narrative of the film but also the relation to actual places that inspired its director, as well as to a fictional-autobiographical play on which it is based. The gendered, racial, and other discrepancies and shifts found among these sites are not, Nyong’o claims, an arbitrary and thus defensibly opaque part of the creative process, but neither should they be resolved as “real” to “fiction” or “original” to “derived.” Rather, they can be plumbed as meaningfully equivocating “impossibles” whose telling flickerings hint that it is a sovereign’s invested projections, drawing on “the primitive vitality of a native terrain,” that might underlie an otherwise alluring “dream of a rewilded, ecological cinema” that this film represents to so many.

Turning to material craft and what she calls the pedagogical potential of mathematical art projects such as *Crochet Coral Reef* (a collective fabric art project based on the artists’ rendering of nondominant mathematical formulas) to instill “felt” being, Jeanne Vaccaro examines the promise for transgender of the hand-



made, validating craft's place in gender while refusing to repeat the analogical collapse that is often made of the two. Instead, Vaccaro focuses on the crafted nature of transgender while rejecting either a closed reading of transgender or the reductive and hostile accusation of mechanistic displacement and obvious seams that might have inspired Susan Stryker to reclaim Frankenstein as a site for her transgender rage. For Vaccaro, it is "feeling" that works to suture the human site of gendered knowing and the inhuman site of reef ecologies: "The handmade is a methodology and its intervention a felt method, a look at the ordering . . . of bodily knowledge."

If Vaccaro poses the handmade as the epistemology of the transgender ordinary, Eunjung Kim begins with ontology: "Can objectification . . . offer a new way to challenge the exclusionary configurations of humanity that create otherness?" Assessing the hidden limits of a disability studies perspective in which human dignity must be affirmed for disabled people, Kim critiques the collusion of the "ethical positioning of proximity to humanness" and ability-based criteria for human being and worth. Instead, in her reading of the 2006 Korean film *I'm a Cyborg, but That's OK*, Kim examines the potential of nondegraded, expanded objecthood, wherein the objectness of a female factory worker—Donna Haraway's cyborg exemplar—is literalized and augmented, and she deploys that objecthood for survival and mutual benefit. Kim's objected-subjects thus *unbecome human*, loosening the violent holds between value, humanness, agency, ability, and life. In the process, the dehumanization that might be attributed to life in the factories is defamiliarized, though not denied.

To further plumb the ironies of the inhuman, Jayna Brown's essay examines ramifications of the biologization of human matter in which "not all bodies are scientized in the same way." Cancer patient Henrietta Lacks's unusually resilient, queerly reproductive cancer cells were turned into a billion-dollar cell line. Not forgetting the double irony—the nonirony, that is—of the strange vitality attributed to "black" life and of its use as raw material, Brown nevertheless wishes to separate understandings of the plasticity of life, in which the behavior of cells can surprise and confound us, from its common partner, eugenics. A close look at the thinking of H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley reveals complex racialization, colonialist fantasy, and imperial interest couching narratives of tissue, cell, and, ultimately, the human. And yet "we"—black, queer, and disabled people—"are less ethically bound to honor the boundaries of a bodily sovereignty never granted to us." And this, despite the lack of any appreciable economic return to Lacks's family until recently, motivates Brown's invitation to consider even Lacks's cells as more than either the scientific boon or the site of racial deprivation that they have been understood to be; they are also plasticity's victorious exemplar.

Like Brown, Harlan Weaver notes that nonhuman scenes are not absent of racial history. His essay on pit bull intimacies is careful to mark homonormative whiteness's "engulfment" of race-analogical logics in queer liberal (and nonqueer) advocacy for pit bulls. Thinking microcosmically and with intra-action, Weaver examines the potential of a generous form of intimacy not bound to stable kinship and permitting of cross-species encounters, one that he calls "intimacy without relatedness." As he writes, in the animal shelter, "momentary, fleeting contacts described in touches, tastes, movements, and shared rhythms I describe are promisingly, improperly, and queerly inhuman." Weaver asks whether the potential of this queer inhumanism must necessarily be extinguished by the political closures around race analogy, homonormativity, and class in pit bull politics. He answers tentatively: perhaps not, provided that the theory and practice of the thick complexities of interspecies worlds he describes be equally invested in navigating such troubled histories.

The intimate interspecies scene that animates Neel Ahuja's essay aims less at the microcosmic (even though one of his participants is the mosquito) and more at the mutual entanglement of human and mosquito species in a setting of climate change, whose mobile constitutions render species natures partial and historicizable, rather than timeless. Observing that the climate crisis "presses queer theory for a planetary account of reproduction" in a way that troubles any queer posture against reproduction, Ahuja further argues that such a planetary account cannot ignore the all-too-tempting "xenophobic rendering of the environmental parasite." Taking the human as assemblage, and arguing for a dissolution of Manichaean accounts of the (mosquito) parasite/host pair in view of the human settler's own parasitic nature, Ahuja produces a queer inhumanism of both "interspecies entanglement and reproductive displacement."

Our final essay, by Karen Barad, emphasizes in its very form the conceptual experiment that queer inhumanism represents, given that that concept is both multiply produced within the pages of this issue, and a long way, if ever, from settling. Unsettling, in fact, is characteristic of Barad's revisionary approach to matter, given that it is so often imagined as stable, solid, contiguous. Serving as the bookend, in this issue, to both Nyong'o's retreat from the stabilization of reality versus fiction as a mode of analysis and his engagement with Hushpuppy's irresolvably conflicted "virtualization," Barad's experiment here is to take up, with marked enthusiasm, imagination as a partner to materiality, thereby releasing investments on originary fabrics and predictable developmental temporalities. Narrating the role of electricity in the formation of an embryo, Barad points to "material imaginings, electrical flirtations signaling connections-to-come," unsutured to what

seems to emerge concretely. The virtual, then, for Barad, is an ontologically indeterminate ubiquity, a “dance of indeterminacy.” This makes matter itself—in its own restless self-engagement and in its substantive nothingness—more a question of the transmaterial. Turning toward trans\*’s to meditate on its human locus, Barad wonders: “Can we (re)generate that which was missing in fleshiness but materially present in virtuality?” Inspired by dossier participant Susan Stryker’s “Transgender Rage: My Words to Victor Frankenstein,” Barad insists that a denaturalization of nature—and its own “transempodiment” — leads auspiciously to the undoing of universality, the very universality that couches the human and its effects.

There is something about both the provocative disparities among the pieces in this volume and the queer inhuman itself that suggests unpredictability. Though we might say that there is a growing conviction about likely and actual disasters (reproductive and otherwise) that calls up crisis thinking, this conviction seems couched in a larger, ranging sense of wonderment vis-à-vis rapid changes of scale in climate discourse. These affective frictions, we feel, are also the queer inhuman. They find affinity with Muñoz’s gesture toward an unknowable yet resolutely accessible utopia, aligned more with horizon and imagination than with ideological closure. Returning to Laura Aguilar’s *Grounded #114*, the photograph’s distal enmeshment of body and stone, stone and body, the ensuing tenuousness of categorization in the face of ontological relativity, the drag and cause of a world-weary set of human denigrations, and the erotic pull to a future that we cannot witness, lead us to speculate that one consequence of Muñoz’s utopian gesture might be the possibility, for us humans, of approaching the outer reaches of inhuman identification, from a place—humanity—we know too well and then not at all.

## Notes

We would like to express our deepest thanks to *GLQ*’s editors for their support and guidance, and to Jennifer V. Nguyen for invaluable research assistance.

1. As scholars in disability studies have shown, what body parts are deemed present, missing, essential plays a critical part in the calculus of reading images. For a disability-theoretical meditation on the supposedly “incomplete” statue of Venus de Milo, see Lennard Davis, “Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso,” in *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995). Davis observes the paradox whereby one woman’s disability renders her repugnant in the eyes of others, while a clearly disabled (“armless” and “variously mutilated”) woman’s body in the form of Venus de Milo is considered an

ideal of Western beauty. He writes: “If . . . disability is a cultural phenomenon rooted in the senses, one needs to inquire how a disability occupies a field of vision, of touch, of hearing; and how that disruption or distress in the sensory field translates into psycho-dynamic representations” (128).

2. Chon A. Noriega, “Clothed/Uncloded,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 33, no. 2 (2008): 1. For studies of Aguilar’s photography, in addition to the works cited below, see Yvonne Yarbro-Bejerano, “Laying It Bare,” in *Living Chicana Theory*, ed. Laura Trujillo (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman, 1998), 277–305; Astrid M. Fellner, “Subversive Bodily Acts: The Photography of Laura Aguilar,” in *Body Signs: The Latino/a Body in Cultural Production*, ed. Astrid M. Fellner (Vienna, Austria: Lit Verlag, 2011); Daniel Perez, “Chicana Aesthetics: A View of Unconcealed Alterities and Affirmations of Chicana Identity through Laura Aguilar’s Photographic Images,” *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2, no. 1 (2013), [scholarship.claremont.edu/lux/vol2/iss1/22](http://scholarship.claremont.edu/lux/vol2/iss1/22). Thanks to Gino Conti and J. Jack Halberstam for pointing us to this image and to Aguilar’s work in general.
3. Laura Pérez, *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 281.
4. Amelia Jones, “Performing the Other as Self: Cindy Sherman and Laura Aguilar Pose the Subject,” in *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 93.
5. Alison Kafer makes a similar argument in her reading of Riva Lehrer’s painted portrait of Eli Clare, a disability theorist and poet. Clare is pictured crouching, knee touching ground, in a forest scene, a branch emerging from inside his shirt. Kafer writes: “In fact, ‘person’ and ‘plant’ are not so easily distinguished, as evidenced by the young sapling emerging from Clare’s chest. The painting is breathtaking in its conjuring of an entire ecosystem, one in which human is inextricably part of nature. Its power also lies in its mythology, in its blending together of environmental, disability, and gender politics. Clare isn’t connecting with nature in order to be cured of his allegedly broken body, but is rather locating that body in space and time. He’s not getting rid of the tremor but locating it, grounding it; it’s as much a part of his body as the tree” (*Feminist, Queer, Crip* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013], 146–48).
6. In recent work, we have each addressed the animacy and the allure of nonhuman objects, including stone. See Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Dana Luciano, “Geological Fantasies, Haunting Anachronies: Eros, Time, and History in Harriet Spofford’s ‘The Amber Gods,’” *ESQ: A Journal of American Renaissance* 55, no. 4 (2009): 269–303; and Luciano, “Sacred Theories of Earth: Matters of Spirit in William and Elizabeth Denton’s *The Soul of Things*,” “After the Post-Secular,” special issue, *American Literature* 86, no. 4 (2014): 713–36.

7. Victoria Martin, "Laura Aguilar at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects," *Artweek* 31, no. 5 (2000): 24.
8. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
9. Jones, "Performing the Other as Self," 93.
10. Jeffrey J. Cohen, "Queering the Inorganic," in *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political*, ed. Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Killian, and Beatrice Michaels (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 149–65.
11. A segment of this history can be mapped through Aguilar's own family, whose residence in California's San Gabriel Valley can be traced back several generations, preceding the US claim to the territory. But if recognized life-forms such as "family" can sometimes claim a duration longer than nations, nations also uproot, even obliterate, life-forms (family, tribe, nation); the Mexican claim to this land was likewise that of an occupying power. An earlier self-portrait, *Three Eagles Flying* (1990), makes this claim more explicitly as it depicts Aguilar's nude body hemmed in and bound by US and Mexican flags. One of her best-known works, *Three Eagles Flying* is often read as a statement about cultural identity. But in light of Aguilar's later alignment of her body with the very land to which both nations, in turn, laid claim, we might extend its purview to histories of spatial occupation (as a considered approach to cultural identity in any context touched by powered interests might itself do). On this photograph, see especially Luz Calvo, "Embodied at the Shrine of Cultural Disjunction," in *Beyond the Frame: Women of Color and Visual Representation*, ed. Neferti X. M. Tadiar and Angela Y. Davis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 207–18.
12. Cherríe Moraga, "Queer Aztlán: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribe," in *Queer Cultures*, ed. Deborah Carlin and Jennifer DiGrazia (New York: Pearson, 2004), 224–29.
13. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 40; Carlos Gallego, *Chicana/o Subjectivity and the Politics of Identity: Between Recognition and Revolution* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 74.
14. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 40.
15. Gloria Anzaldúa, quoted in Mikko Tuhkanen, "Queer Hybridity," in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, ed. Chrysanthi Niganni and Merl Storr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 96.
16. Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?," *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 221.
17. Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1992); Cathy Griggers, "Lesbian Bodies in the Age of (Post)Mechanical Reproduction," *Postmodern Culture* 2, no. 3 (1992), muse.jhu.edu.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/journals/postmodern\_culture/v002/2.3griggers.html. See also Griggers (as Camilla Griggers), "Phantom and Reel Projections: Lesbians and the (Serial) Killing Machine," in *Post-human Bodies*, ed. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 162–76.

18. Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 280–304. See also Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ* 1, no. 3 (1993): 237–54, and Karen Barad's discussion of that essay in this issue.
19. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, "Introduction: Posthuman Bodies," in Halberstam and Livingston, *Posthuman Bodies*, 8.
20. "Viral," special issue co-edited by Patricia Clough and Jasbir K. Puar, *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, nos. 1-2 (2012). On transcorporeality, see Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), where she elaborates the concept in relation to chemical sensitivity.
21. Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); see also Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Butler, *Precarious Life* (London: Verso, 2004).
22. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
23. Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 91.
24. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 158.
25. Stacy Alaimo, "Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of 'Queer' Animals," in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, ed. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 51.
26. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., introduction to Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, *Queer Ecologies*, 5.
27. Tavia Nyong'o, "Back to the Garden: Queer Ecology in Samuel Delany's *Heavenly Breakfast*," *American Literary History* 24, no. 4 (2013): 747.
28. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), xii. We note that in other linguistic accounts, its etymology remains inconclusive.
29. The designation "nonhuman turn" emerged relatively recently and gained popularity in the wake of a conference bearing that title, held in 2013 at University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee's Center for 21st Century Studies. Other common designations include the "ontological turn," the "material turn," and the "postlinguistic turn."
30. In addition to works directly discussed in this introductory essay, other recent scholarship at the intersection of queer and various aspects of the non/human includes, in "thing theory," Scott Herring, *The Hoarders: Material Deviance in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); in phenomenology, Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); in affect and assemblage theory, Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Liv-*

ing in *Compromised Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming); Rebekah Sheldon, "Somatic Capitalism: Reproduction, Futurity, and Feminist Science Fiction," *ADA: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 3 (2013), [adanewmedia.org/2013/11/issue3-sheldon/](http://adanewmedia.org/2013/11/issue3-sheldon/); Julian Gill-Peterson, "The Technical Capacities of the Body: Assembling Race, Technology, and Transgender," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (2014): 402–18; Aimee Bahng, "Transpacific Futures: Regenerative Productivity and Salt Fish Assemblages in the Era of Genetic Modification," in "Fictions of Speculation," ed. Hamilton Carroll and Annie McClanahan, special issue, *Journal of American Studies* (forthcoming); in animal studies, Eva S. Hayward, "Spider City Sex," *Women and Performance* 20, no. 3 (2011): 225–51; Hayward, "Enfolded Vision: Refracting *The Love Life of the Octopus*," *Octopus: A Journal of Visual Studies* 1 (Fall 2005): 29–44; Alice Kuzniar, *Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on Our Animal Kinship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Carla Freccero, "Figural Historiography: Dogs, Humans, and Cynanthropic Becomings," in *Comparatively Queer*, ed. Jarrod Hayes, Margaret Higonnet, and William J. Spurlin (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 45–67; and Christopher Peterson, *Bestial Traces: Race, Animality, Sexuality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); in ecotory, Claire Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction*, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2014); Colebrook, *Sex after Life: Essays on Extinction*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2014); Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Robert Azzarello, *Queer Environmentalism: Ecology, Evolution, and Sexuality in American Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012); and Elena Glasberg, *Antarctica as Cultural Critique: The Gendered Politics of Scientific Exploration and Climate Change* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Other oft-cited texts of the nonhuman turn include Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003); Patricia Ticento Clough, ed., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Bill Brown, ed., *Things (a Critical Inquiry Book)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect* (London: Zero Books, 2010); Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re-press, 2011); Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002); Levi R. Bryant, *A Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University

- of Michigan Library, 2011); Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2008); Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Scherer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); and Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I and II*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010–11).
31. For further elaboration of located notions of the “human” and “human rights,” see David L. Eng, Teemu Ruskola, and Shuang Shen, eds., *China and the Human: Part I: Cosmologies of the Human* and *China and the Human: Part II*, special issues, *Social Text*, nos. 109 and 110 (2011).
  32. See Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); and Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (New York: Polity, 2013). Wolfe cautions that the term *posthumanism* does not imply a historical overcoming of the human, as some invocations—he cites N. Katherine Hayles’s *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)—seem to suggest; rather, he argues, posthumanism “comes both before and after humanism” as a critical and conceptual intervention as well as a historical moment (*What Is Posthumanism?*, xv).
  33. See Lauren Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, Politics,” in *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics, and the Law*, ed. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 49–84; Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).
  34. On the whiteness of the sentimental subject, see Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Kyla Schuller, “Taxonomies of Feeling: The Epistemology of Sentimentalism in Late-Nineteenth-Century Racial and Sexual Science,” *American Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2012): 277–99.
  35. Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, “Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism,” *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 669–85. See also Alexander Weheliye, *Habeus Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) for an extended consideration of Wynter’s and Spillers’s contributions to critical analyses of the human.
  36. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
  37. Jasbir K. Puar, “‘I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess’: The Becoming-Intersectional of Assemblage Theory,” *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 63.
  38. Puar, “‘I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess,’” 63.



39. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.
40. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 122.
41. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 178.
42. Malou Juelskjær and Nete Schwennesen, "Intra-Active Engagements—an Interview with Karen Barad," in *Kvinder, Køn og forskning/Women, Gender, and Research* 1–2 (2012): 12.
43. José Esteban Muñoz, "The Brown Commons: The Sense of Wildness" (paper presented at the annual convention of the American Studies Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 16, 2012).
44. Muñoz, "Brown Commons."
45. Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2012), 42.
46. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," in *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 1. Jasbir Puar's "Coda: The Cost of Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints" points to the mechanisms of divergence between certain lives of value—those gay youth whose lives will get better—and the deaths of other young queers, such that the elaboration of one produces the elaboration of the other. At the same time, she asks questions that estrange conventional identity from itself; a theory of affect might yield "switchpoints" that reveal surprising alignments, in this case between "perpetrators" and their "victims" (*GLQ* 18, no. 1 [2011]: 149–58).
47. See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).
48. For instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty observes that human survival now demands a return to the universal even as he queries how to "relate to a universal history of life—to universal thought, that is—while retaining what is of obvious value in our postcolonial suspicion of the universal?" ("The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 [2009]: 219–20).
49. Chris Nealon, "The New Infinity," *Mediations: Journal of the Marxist Literary Group* 29, no. 1 (2015); see also Mark McGurl, "The New Cultural Geology," *Twentieth Century Literature* 57, nos. 3–4 (2011): 380–90. As Nealon observes, the positioning of hermeneutic or historical-materialist analysis as insufficient to address larger-than-human concerns reiterates a critique of human hubris that has strong roots in Christian, and specifically Catholic, doctrine, though it presents itself as nondenominational.
50. Jordana Rosenberg, "The Molecularization of Sexuality," *Theory and Event* 17, no. 2 (2014), [muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/theory\\_and\\_event/v017/17.2.rosenberg.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/theory_and_event/v017/17.2.rosenberg.html).
51. Judith Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and David L. Eng, "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?," *Social Text*, nos. 84–85 (2005): 2.

52. Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," *GLQ* 16, nos. 1–2 (2010): 52.
53. Rosenberg, "Molecularization of Sexuality."
54. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); see also Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism," *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 669–85.
55. See Timothy Morton, "Queer Ecology," *PMLA*, 125, no. 2 (2010): 273–82; Levi Bryant, "Of Parts and Politics: Onticology and Queer Theory," *Identities* 16 (2011): 13–28; Katerina Kolozova, Michael O'Rourke, and Ben Woodard, eds., *Speculations of the Other Woman: New Realisms in Feminist Philosophy* (Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, forthcoming). Much new materialist thought has aligned itself with feminism since the mid-1990s. As Sara Ahmed argues, however, this body of work's tendency to define itself against the "anti-materialist" inclinations of post-structuralist feminists may present a reductive picture of the latter, resulting in the erasure or forgetting of "how matter matters in different ways, for different feminists, over time" ("Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism,'" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 [2008]: 36).
56. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 77.
57. See, e.g., Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 336–57.
58. Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, *Animals Make Us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010); Joy Harjo, *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems, 1975–2001* (New York: Norton, 2002); Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
59. Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird, eds., *Queering the Non/Human* (Burlington, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 7–8.
60. Jeffrey J. Cohen and Todd Ramlow, "Pink Vectors of Deleuze," *Rhizomes* 11–12 (Fall 2005–Spring 2006), [www.rhizomes.net/issue11/cohenramlow.html](http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/cohenramlow.html). See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), esp. 26–38.
61. Lucy Alibar and Benh Zeitlin, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, directed by Benh Zeitlin (2012; Beverly Hills, CA, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment).