The Work, or the Agency, of the Nonhuman in Premodern Art

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> The "human," we now know, is not now, and never was, itself.
>
> —Cary Wolfe

LACRIMAE RERUM: PREMODERN SOURCES FOR A THEORY OF NONHUMAN SENSIBILITY

In a famous ballad on the theme of *ubi sunt* (in a sense, "where has everything gone?"—the classic lament for the passing of time and the inevitable fading of life), fifteenth-century poet François Villon chose for his refrain the image of the snows of yesteryear. Snow's transformative and impermanent miracle could be a Northern European version of cherry blossoms: "But where are yesteryear's snows?" ["Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"]. Lending snow, beautiful and ephemeral, the same intensity as that which inhabits the names of vanished queens and beauties, Villon alchemically turns melted snow into *lacrimae rerum,* or "thingly tears," making explicit the agency of things and the important role things play in the human realization, performance, and

reliving of existential, sweet, and inescapable sorrow, to the point that sorrow and things become one with each other.

When Aeneas weeps at the depictions of the Trojan War in Carthage, he enjoins his companion Achates to rally and let his fears dissolve, since even this faraway nation will empathize with their plight: these, he says, "are thingly tears, and the mortal things touch the mind" (Virgil, *Aeneid,* 1.462: "sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt").[1] Since Virgil, the expression *lacrimae rerum* ["thingly tears"] has marked that sweet and sad entanglement of the mind and emotions with things—not necessarily warlike things, although the line is often quoted on military monuments. Virgil's passage is famously multivalent, and its gnomic half-line is usually cited out of context. Symptomatically, one classicist explicating *lacrimae rerum* called upon Ezra Pound's observation that truly great literature is "language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree," concluding that "the passage, of course, cannot be translated."[2] All agree that this famous line's enigmatic nature lends it a "sense of wondrous beauty and pathetic dignity," and "many would be disposed to quote [it] as the *best* verse in Latin poetry."[3] Here are some readings that have been given to the Latin verse over the years:

> Tears for things, tears of things, tears that the things shed, things worthy of tears. Tears are powerful and their effects are material, so that tears can as well be called material things and considered real. The universe of material things sheds tears for us in the face of our acute misery. These images would wring tears out of stone. Sorrow and tears are implicit in men's affairs or things. Nothing (or no thing) is free of tears. Depicted on the wall are events (things) that bring on tears; these are tear-inducing things. We all cry at the same things; great tragedies move us whether or not they happen to us and ours or to distant others.

The line's fruitful multiplicity of meanings is exactly what inspires the later echoes.

Lacrimae rerum—the classical, premodern, and modern precursor of our speculative materialisms, post/humanisms, and *past*humanisms—are not a narrowly premodern European concept. Take *mono no aware* ["the affective

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1. David Wharton, "*Sunt lacrimae rerum*: An Exploration in Meaning," *Classical Journal* 103 (2008): 259–79.

2. John Wright, "*Lacrimae rerum* and the Thankless Task," *Classical Journal* 62.8 (1967): 365–66 [365–67].

3. Robert Yelverton Tyrrell, *Latin Poetry: Lectures Delivered in 1893 on the Percy Turnbull Memorial Foundation in John Hopkins University* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895)*,* 147; partially cited by Arthur L. Keith, "A Virgilian Line," *Classical Journal* 17.7 (1922): 398 [398–402].

and aesthetic force of things in the world"], a theoretical concept and practical precept that permeates Japanese culture of the Heian period (794–1185). The sensitivity, empathy, or enchantment to, of, and by things [*mono*] is used as a critical term describing the heightened awareness of the ephemeral nature [*mojo*] of things, combined with a sense of wistfulness and an almost glad sorrow inspired by the consideration of transience evoked by objects, where understanding and feelings merge.[4] *Aware* is the ability to be moved. Sorrow, pathos, or sadness are associated with *aware* (where *aware* = "alas!"), but primarily the term refers to an intense impression (where *aware* = "sigh," "Oh!", and "Ah!").[5] The viewings of the moon and picnics of the cherry blossom season [*hanami*], a tradition noted as early as the third century, are permeated with *mono no aware,* as the cherry blooms [*sakura*] move like a fantastical, impermanent, earthbound cloud across the archipelago in a stately and inexorable wave. Since the rise of modern scholarship on Japanese literature, especially the contributions of Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), examples of *mono no aware* are often drawn from the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji,* whose author, Lady Murasaki, often used the expression nominally, as when we say, "He has a certain *je ne sais quoi.*" It was also Norinaga who emphasized the Heian period commonplace that, when the awareness of things is particularly intense, only sharing poetry or narratives that result from this feeling, and moving others as powerfully as one is moved, may bring relief.[6] For us, the themes of *mono no aware* and *lacrimae rerum* participate in a premodern genealogy of the nonhuman as a work of art and the work or agency of the nonhuman in art, the topic of the essays assembled in this volume.

POST/HUMANISM AND THE CRISIS OF THE HUMAN/ITIES

The idea of enchantment with the world, and with its vibrant materialities, and with thingly tears guided us as we approached this collection, conceived

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4. Tomiko Yoda, "Fractured Dialogues: *Mono no aware* and Poetic Communication in the *Tale of Genji,*" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59.2 (1999): 524 [523–57]. Yoda adds: "*Mono no aware* refers to a profound feeling with which one spontaneously responds to a myriad of things and occurrences in the world. To 'know *mono no aware*' refers to one's ability to have such a feeling for certain objects on an appropriate occasion" (526). See also Kazumitsu Kato, "Some Notes on *Mono no Aware,*" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82.4 (1962): 558–59, and Mark Meli, "'Aware' as a Critical Term in Japanese Poetics," *Japan Review* 13 (2001): 67–91.

5. Motoori Norinaga, *The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga: A Hermeneutical Journey,* trans. Michael F. Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 174.

6. Yoda, "Fractured Dialogues," 527.

as one possible answer to Judith Butler's question, "What qualifies as a human, as a human subject, as human speech, as human desire?"[7] and also to Edward Said's provocation, in the context of the humanities, that

> as scholars and teachers we believe we are right to call what we do "human-istic" and what we teach "the humanities." [Yet,] are these still serviceable phrases, and if so, in what way? How then may we view humanism as an activity in light of its past and probable future?[8]

For a long while now, there has been a significant turn both *to* and *beyond* the human (or, the liberal humanist subject) in aesthetic, historical, philosophical, sociological, and more scientific studies—a turn, moreover, which is also often accompanied by a nod to post-*histoire,* or the "end of history." Thus, we might revise Butler's question to something like, "What qualifies as a post/human and what is at stake in this qualification?" This poses a great challenge to those concerned with the future of humanistic letters and education, especially when, as John Caputo writes, "one has lost one's faith in *grand récits,*" and "being, presence, *ouisa,* the transcendental signified, History, Man—the list goes on— have all become dreams." As Caputo writes, "We are in a fix, except that even to say 'we' is to get into a still deeper fix. We are in the fix that cannot say 'we,'" and yet, "the obligation of me to you and both of us to others . . . is all around us, on every side, tugging at our sleeves, calling on us for a response."[9] Caputo expressed these sentiments (which are also worries) in 1993, but they accord well with the anxieties of the editors of the 2007 issue of *The Hedgehog Review* on "Human Dignity and Justice," who were concerned that "transcendent accounts of why the lives of all persons should be valued" no longer "make sense," and therefore, "one might ask whether a rhetoric of human dignity can be sustained and whether calls [in numerous human rights discourses] to honor the dignity of every individual can gain traction." Is it possible any longer "to sustain justice without the idea of human dignity, or a similar concept?"[10]

In relation to these concerns and anxious questions, multiple post/human (and nonhuman, inhuman, ahuman, and even *post*-posthuman) disciplines

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7. Quoted in "Changing the Subject: Judith Butler's Politics of Radical Resignification" (interview with G. A. Olson and L. Worsham), in *The Judith Butler Reader,* ed. Sarah Salih (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 356 [325–56].

8. Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 7.

9. John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 6.

10. "Introduction: Human Dignity and Justice," *Hedegehog Review* 9.3 (2007): 5 [5–6].

have (for a while now) been in full swing in the fields of the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences.[11] In 2006, the National Humanities Center (NHC) announced a three-year project, "Autonomy, Singularity, Creativity: The Human and the Humanities," which sought to "crystallize a conversation already begun" by "a small but growing number of philosophers, literary scholars, and other humanistic thinkers" whose thought and studies have "turned to the work of computational scientists, primatologists, cognitive scientists, biologists, neuroscientists, and others" in an attempt to "gain a contemporary understanding of human attributes that have traditionally been described in abstract, philosophical, or spiritual terms."[12] The NHC wanted to consider the possible ramifications of the *approaching* "posthuman era" by bringing into conversation with these humanists the scientists who have been turning their attention to questions typically reserved for the humanists—questions, moreover, that have to do with "the nature of human identity; the legitimate scope of agency in determining the circumstances or conditions of one's life;

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11. See, for example, most recently, Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013); Claire Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction, Vol. 1* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press/MPublishing, 2014); Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, eds., *Queering the Non/human* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008); Richard Grusin, ed., *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Patricia MacCormack, ed., *The Animal Catalyst: Toward a Human Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); and Joanna Zylinska, *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press/MPublishing, 2014). The recent turns to "new materialisms," "speculative realism," and "object-oriented" studies have given fresh impetus as well to the longer-standing post/human turn. See, for example, Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Levi Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2011); Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011); William E. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009) and *The Quadruple Object* (Hants, UK: Zero Books, 2011); Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency,* trans. Ray Brassier (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Timothy Morton, *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press/MPublishing, 2013) and *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); and Tom Sparrow, *The End of Phenomenology: Metaphysics and the New Realism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

12. National Humanities Center, "Autonomy, Singularity, Creativity: A Project of the National Humanities Center," *National Humanities Center,* May 2007, http://onthehuman.org /archive/more/.

the relation of cognition to embodiment; the role of chance, luck, or fate; the definition of and value attached to 'nature'; and the nature and limits of moral responsibility."[13] From 2006 through 2009, the NHC offered residential fellow-ships and convened symposia and seminars that brought together humanists and scientists to engage in a more comprehensive dialogue on the following three "distinct but related areas":

(1) *Human autonomy,* which entails the capacity for self-determination, self-awareness, and self-regulation that is central to our conceptions of free will and moral accountability;

(2) *Human singularity,* on which our privileged place in the order of being, distinct from animals on the one hand and from machines on the other, is premised;

(3) *Human creativity,* through which mankind demonstrates its capacity for representation and expression, and which many take to be the dis-tinctive feature of the human species.[14]

These objectives make clear that the NHC focused its energies on three areas that are distinctly related to what might be called an ongoing "crisis" of the (supposed) stability and centrality of the liberal, sovereign human subject within the realm of so-called human affairs (having to do with morality, gov-ernance, sovereignty, freedom, the arts, etc.), which are also traditionally held to underpin the mission and projects of the human/ities, and the university more largely.

According to Katherine Hayles, who helped to usher in the post/human turn[15] and who served as a Senior Fellow in NHC's Project, "The humanities have always been concerned with shifting definitions of the human," so "the human has always been a kind of contested term." But for Hayles, "what the idea of the posthuman evokes that is not unique to the twentieth century, but became much more highly energized in the twentieth century, is the idea that technology has progressed to the point where it has the capability of funda-mentally transforming the conditions of human life."[16] As Hayles elaborated:

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13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. See N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), among other works.

16. Quoted in Don Solomon, "Interview with N. Katherine Hayles: Preparing the Humani-ties for the Post Human," *National Humanities Center,* May 2007, http://onthe human.org /archive/more/interview-with-n-katherine-hayles/.

Even though "one of the deep ideas of the humanities is that the past is an enduring reservoir of value, and that it pays us rich dividends to know the past," there are some things "that have never happened before in human history. . . . We've never had the possibility for manipulating our own genome in a generation as opposed to 150 generations. We never had the possibility for individually manipulating atoms as in nanotechnology, and so forth."[17]

The post/human condition, then, in some respects (and according to some), is thoroughly modern because of its dependence, partly, on technological and medical innovations that could not have even been imagined in the past. It has to be stated that in many post/humanist discourses that have been circulating within the university, whether in the humanities or the sciences, the scholarship of those who work in premodern periods (such as classical antiquity, late antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance) is often not considered relevant to the discussion—even when that scholarship is concerned, as some of it definitively has been, with issues of the human and the animal, self and subjectivity, cognition and theory of mind, singularity and networks, corporality and embodiment, bare life and sociality, flesh versus machine, and so on. In more recent years, this has been changing, however, with monographs, essay collections, and journal issues in premodern studies that play a prominent and influential role in the post/human turn.[18] Nevertheless, the question of historical difference remains something of a problematic.

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17. Ibid.

18. See, for example, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects* (Brooklyn, NY: punctum books, 2012); idem, *Inhuman Nature* (Brooklyn: punctum books, 2014); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert, eds., "Ecomaterialism," special issue, *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 4.1 (2013); Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi, eds., *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callas, *Posthumanist Shakespeares* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Eileen A. Joy and Christine Neufeld, eds., "Premodern to Modern Humanisms: The BABEL Project," special issue, *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37.2 (2007); Eileen A. Joy and Craig Dionne, eds., "*When* Did We Become Post/human?" special issue, *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 1.1/2 (2010); J. Allan Mitchell, *Becoming Human: The Matter of the Medieval Child* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); The Petropunk Collective [Eileen A. Joy, Anna Kłosowska, Nicola Masciandaro, and Michael O'Rourke], eds., *Speculative Medievalisms: Discography* (Brooklyn, NY: punctum books, 2013); Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011); Karl Steel and Peggy McCracken, eds., "The Animal Turn," special issue, *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 2.1 (2011); Henry S. Turner, *Shakespeare's Double Helix* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008); and Julian Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

So, for example, in an early prospectus (circa 2007) for the Posthumanities book series at the University of Minnesota, series director Cary Wolfe argued that post/humanism cannot be glossed with reference to terms like "post-industrialist" or "post-structuralist" or "post-modern," for "the question of 'posthumanism' is more complicated than any of these [other 'post-isms'], because it references not just chronological progression (what comes *after* the industrial, the modern, and so on) but also takes on fundamental ontological and epistemological questions that are not reducible to purely historical explanation." Indeed, it was Wolfe's hope when inaugurating the series that the books would draw "renewed attention to the difference between *historicity* and 'historicism' that seems to have been largely elided or avoided in much recent work in the humanities."[19] The series, then, is "not 'against' history, of course, but against historicism in its more unreflective and problematic forms." The imprint has since published 33 books, none of which are exclusively focused on premodern subjects, although some of the books do tangentially touch upon those,[20] and thus, regardless of its claims to reject the overly simplistic construct of "what comes after" and to aim for a more complex historiography, the series nevertheless remains somewhat stuck in the chrono-landscape of contemporary thought and life, and its "historicism" is not very deep. Its prospectus also overlooks the fact that for quite a while now, in premodern studies, but also in cultural and historiographical studies, *much* work has actually been done to attend to the differences between historicity and historicism.[21]

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19. The prospectus for University of Minnesota's Posthumanities book series, authored by Cary Wolfe, is no longer available online, but was first accessed and transcribed by us in October 2007.

20. Such as Tom Tyler, *Ciferae: A Bestiary in Five Fingers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

21. See footnote 28 for the relevant works in premodern studies, and in the field of cultural studies and history, see (as just a small sampling) F. R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of a Cliff: History, Language, Practices,* trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1996); Andreas Huyssens, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995); Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). It should be noted as well that practically the entire oeuvre of the historians initially attached to the *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales* journal (founded in 1929—such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel, among others—also attended to the divide between historicity and historicism, although this is not always acknowledged in current work on chronicity and historiography.

Nevertheless, it is precisely to Wolfe's hope of a theoretical post/humanism that would pay better attention to the *difference* between historicity and an unreflective historicism, and to Hayles's assertion that certain aspects of the post/human can only ever be modern (or, driven by certain post-nineteenth-century technologies), that our volume of essays, *Fragments For a History of a Vanishing Humanism,* addresses itself. After all, Wolfe himself has argued that "the human is not now, and never was, itself,"[22] and scholars in medieval studies *have* explored the question of the relation between the post/human (or never-human) and the past—a question that has been explored, for example, by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his book *Medieval Identity Machines,* where he writes that even in the Middle Ages human identity was, "despite the best efforts of those who possess[ed] it otherwise—unstable, contingent, hybrid, discontinuous."[23] In all times and places, as Cohen has argued elsewhere, being human really means "endlessly 'becoming human.' It means holding an uncertain identity, an identity that is always slipping away from us,"[24] and this resonates with Hayles's idea that human subjectivity emerges from and is integrated "into a chaotic world rather than occupying a position of mastery and control removed from it."[25] More specifically, we want to continue filling in (and further complicating) what we believe has been a definitive lacuna or gap in post/humanist studies more generally: the absence of a theoretically rigorous *longer* (premodern) historical perspective. Many of the contemporary discourses on post/humanism have mainly focused on the ways in which new findings and developments in fields such as biotechnology, neuroscience, and computing have complicated how we believe we are enacting our human "selves," ushering in the language of crisis over the supposed destabilization of the category "human" in its biological, social, and political aspects (the futurist-dystopic view).[26] Or, they have concentrated on a theoretical reform of

22. Cary Wolfe, "Introduction," in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal,* ed. Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xiii [ix–xxiii].

23. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xxiii.

24. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Afterword: An Unfinished Conversation about Glowing Green Bunnies," in *Queering the Non/human,* eds. Giffney and Hird, 373–74 [363–75].

25. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman,* 291.

26. For one of the best examples of the "crisis," or dystopic, perspective, see Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farar, Straus and Giroux, 2002). See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2000); Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015); Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* (Hants, UK, 2014); Eugene Thacker and Alexander Galloway, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb,*

a humanistic tradition of thought (from the Renaissance through modernity) believed to have produced, in Iain Chambers' words, an oppressive "history of possessive subjectivism" (the critical philosophical view).[27] Or, finally, in some circles (primarily scientific but also cultural studies), the same post/human turn has led to a language of hope and (even occasionally giddy) elation over all of the ways in which we—whatever "we" might be—might finally be able to escape or somehow make less vulnerable or more extensively enjoyable the death-haunted "trap" of our all-too-human bodies (the futurist-utopic view).[28]

But what is missing from most of these discourses, even when they claim to address the question of history, historicism, or historicity, are the incorporated dialogue of scholars who have a deep expertise in premodern studies (antiquity through the Middle Ages). While the past is often invoked and (often crudely) drawn in contemporary theory, it is rarely visited via the route of, or *unsettled* by, actual scholarship in premodern studies—scholarship that in recent years has been deeply concerned with issues of the status of the human and, in a theoretically sophisticated manner, also calls into question the "straight" teleologies and causal explanations of a traditional, or in Wolfe's

trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2000); and Langdon Winner, *The Reactor and the Whale: The Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

27. Iain Chambers, *Culture after Humanism: History, Culture, Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2001), 4. For an excellent overview of "critical humanisms," see Martin Halliwell and Andy Mousley, *Critical Humanisms: Humanist/Anti-Humanist Dialogues* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003). See also Tzvetan Todorov, *The Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

28. On the futurist-utopic (or more affirmative) view, in both scientific and cultural studies, see especially Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication,* trans. Bernard and Caroline Schultze (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988); Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and "Why I Want to Be a Posthuman When I Grow Up," in *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity,* eds. Bert Gordijn and Ruth Chadwick (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 107–37; Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, "Introduction: Posthuman Bodies," in *Posthuman Bodies,* ed. Halberstam and Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1–19; Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* ed. Haraway (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–82, and *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Eduardo Kac, *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (New York: Viking, 1999) and *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York: Viking, 2005); Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988); Lee Silver, *Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World* (New York: Avon, 1997); and Gregory Stock, *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

terms an unreflective, historicism.[29] Neither is this is a scholarship that Hayles worries might adopt the "attitude that there's nothing that has happened or could happen that has not already happened in the past," but rather, that these studies pose the Middle Ages, in the words of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, as an "interminable, difficult middle" that stresses "not difference (the past as past) or sameness (the past as present)," but "temporal interlacement, the impossibility of choosing alterity or continuity."[30] Although seemingly wholly "Other," the past in these studies is "lodged deep within social and individual identity, a foundational difference at the heart of the selfsame" and could even be described as a kind of "unbounded" space-time that is generative of human identity through a "constant movement of irresolvable relations that constitute its traumatic effect, an ever-expanding line that arcs back through what has been even as it races toward what it shall be."[31] But these are lines of critical thought that, for a while now, have been mainly confined to conversations among premodernists (who might be discussing with each other, for example,

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29. Regarding a medieval studies that subverts traditional historicist teleologies, see Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger, introduction in *Queering the Middle Ages,* eds. Burger and Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xi–xxiii; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Introduction: Midcolonial," in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages,* ed. Cohen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 1–17, and "Time's Machines," in *Medieval Identity Machines,* 1–34; Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith, eds., *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, eds., *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of the "Middle Ages" Outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999) and *How Soon Is Now? Amateur Readers, Medieval Texts, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Bruce Holsinger and Ethan Knapp, "The Marxist Premodern," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.3 (2004): 463–71; Eileen A. Joy, "Like Two Autistic Moonbeams Entering the Window of My Asylum: Chaucer's Griselda and Lars von Trier's Bess McNeill," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 2.3 (2011): 316–28; Eileen A. Joy, Myra J. Seaman, Kimberly Bell, and Mary Ramsey, eds., *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Federico, eds., *The Post-Historical Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); D. Vance Smith, "Irregular Histories: Forgetting Ourselves," *New Literary History* 28.2 (1997): 161–84; and Paul Strohm, "Postmodernism and History," in *Theory and the Premodern Text,* ed. Strohm (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 149–62.

30. Cohen, "Introduction: Midcolonial," 5.

31. Ibid.

"old" versus "new" historicist approaches to their subjects of study), and they do not always productively connect with the work of humanists (or scientists) working in disciplines concerned with more contemporary or post/human subjects, and who might view the too distant past as either beside or *opposite* the point. This is not to say that scholars working in premodern studies are not ever seeking a more cross-disciplinary or contemporary-minded audience. Some of them are, and in pointed fashion, especially in the past several years.[32]

It was partly with the idea of both a post/human Middle Ages and an *approaching* post/human era—neither of which can be free of concepts, identities, and social forms that are always both dead and alive at once—that this volume was initially conceptualized. We also formulated the following as initiatory and guiding questions for our contributors:

- How does the concept (or reality) of the post/human impact the ways we develop our notions of humanism, both past and present?
- How do the various historical traditions of humanism (classical, medieval, and early modern) productively and antagonistically intersect with more modern antihumanisms?
- In what ways might premodern and more modern studies, with respect to the vigorous debates over the value (or lack thereof) of the liberal humanities, form productive alliances across the Enlightenment divide?
- What is the role of the individual, singular person in relation to concepts of humanism, past and present?
- What is the role of language and literature in relation to being, body, and mind, past and present?
- Is it true, as some have argued, that the individual (and a concomitant emphasis on phenomenological inwardness) is a product of modernity (or, at least, of the post-Enlightenment), or has the human self, constructed in philosophy and other arts, always been "deep"? Or, conversely, has the "depth" of human persons always been an illusion?

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32. For example, the mission and projects of the BABEL Working Group (http://babel workinggroup.org) have been pitched in this direction. See, for example, the journal *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies,* edited by Eileen A. Joy, Myra Seaman, and Lara Farina, which dedicated its inaugural issue in 2010 to the post/human turn and is in continual dialogue with scholars across a wide variety of fields and temporal periods (see footnote 17). See, also, in recent medieval cultural studies, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory beyond Green* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*; L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Staying Alive: A Survival Manual for the Liberal Arts* (Brooklyn, NY: punctum books, 2013); The Petropunk Collective, *Speculative Medievalisms*; Cole and Smith, eds., *Legitimacy of the Middle Ages*; and E. R. Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

- How does the interplay between singular corporealities and social "bodies" affect our understanding of what it means to be human, both in the past and in the present?
- What is the role of the Other (or, more generally, alterity) in our conceptions of humanism and "being human," past and present?
- Is humanism a philosophy, or set of ideas, or a historically situated socio-critical practice that has lost its *raison d'etre,* such that it is time for a new humanism or no humanism at all? Or is it time to reclaim a new "critical humanism" in new modes of address and analysis?

This last question has special prominence in our collective project. There is no doubt that humanism—especially of the variety in which, in Iain Chambers's words, "the human subject is considered sovereign, language [is] the transparent medium of its agency, and truth [is] the representation of its rationalism"—has a terrible reputation and has been responsible for some of the worst atrocities perpetrated in history.[33] Furthermore, we are aware that any attempt to recuperate humanism *now* may always come too late if, as Foucault supposes in the conclusion to *The Order of Things,* "man" has already been "erased," like "a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."[34] Yet even the most compelling antihumanist texts—such as Cary Wolfe's *What Is Posthumanism?* or Karl Steel's *How to Make a Human*—continue, in Kate Soper's terms, to "secrete" humanist rhetoric.[35] There is a certain dependence of anti- or post/humanist discourses upon the space (and languages) of the university humanities, where, as Derrida has written, the principle of unconditionality "has an originary and privileged place of presentation, of manifestation, of safekeeping" as well as its "space of discussion and reelaboration." And all of this

> passes as much by way of literature and languages (that is, the sciences called the sciences of man and culture) as by way of the nondiscursive arts, by way of law and philosophy, by way of critique, by way of questioning—where it is a matter of nothing less than rethinking the concept of man, the figure of humanity in general, and singularly the one presupposed by what we have called, in the university, for the last few centuries, the Humanities.[36]

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33. Chambers, *Culture after Humanism,* 2–3.

34. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1966), 387.

35. Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 182.

36. Jacques Derrida, "The University without Condition," in Derrida, *Without Alibi,* ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 207 [202–37].

In this sense, we might practice what Martin Halliwell and Andy Mousley have termed a critical or "baggy" humanism that "takes the human to be an open-ended and mutable process."[37] And like Halliwell and Mousley, we might develop a *new* or *post*/humanism that is "both a pluralistic and a self-critical tradition that folds in and over itself, provoking a series of questions and problems rather than necessarily providing consolation or edification for individuals when faced with intractable economic, political, and social pressures."[38] This is a humanism that acknowledges, with Chambers, that "being in the world does not add up, it never arrives at the complete picture, the conclusive verdict. There is always something more that exceeds the frame we desire to impose."[39]

A heretofore *under*developed consideration of the deep past in the post/ humanist project is where we locate our point of entry into the ongoing conversation, but the (post/human) present always provides for us the pressing questions. We are therefore intensely invested, as Fernand Braudel was in the 1950s, in the idea that

> nothing is more important, nothing comes closer to the crux of social reality, than [the] living, intimate, infinitely repeated opposition between the instant of time and that time which flows only slowly. Whether it is a question of the past or of the present, a clear awareness of this plurality of social time is indispensable to the communal methodology of the human sciences.[40]

As regards our more narrow purview in this volume—literature, history, philosophy, narrative and critical theory, and the arts—we are especially concerned with developing, from a long or "slow" historical perspective, a critical post/humanism that would explore: (1) the significance (historical, sociocultural, psychic, etc.) of human expression, and affectivity, especially as that expression is enmeshed in various ecologies; (2) the impact of technology and new sciences on what it means to be a human self; (3) the importance of art and literature to defining and enacting human selves; (4) the importance of history in defining and re-membering the human; (5) the artistic plasticity of the human; (6) the question of a human collectivity or human "join": what is the value *and* peril of "being human" or "being post/human" together? and

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37. Halliwell and Mousley, *Critical Humanisms,* 2.

38. Ibid., 16.

39. Chambers, *Culture after Humanism,* 2.

40. Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociale: La longue durée," trans. Sarah Matthews, in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past,* ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt (New York: The New Press, 1995), 117 [115–45].

finally, (7) the constructive *and* destructive relations (aesthetic, historical, and philosophical) of the human to the nonhuman.

Following the example of the important three-volume collection edited by Michel Feher in 1989, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body,*[41] our volume is styled as a gathering of fragments *toward* a history of a humanism that could never be rendered in any sort of monolithic totality, especially if one is convinced (as we are) by the value of a discontinuist historicism in which history is always unfinishable and each temporal period is noncoincident with itself. This is to say, no era can be perfectly captured in our hermeneutic nets as there is never any "pure" or "whole" period to be captured that isn't already riven by its own contradictions and lack of self-knowledge, especially with regard to the active suppression of the fact that the past always inhabits the present (often in uncanny ways), and that the "contemporary" is never really the radical "break" with the past that it often believes itself to be. As Dominick LaCapra has cautioned, each period is always "beset with its own disruptions, lacunae, conflicts, irreparable losses, belated recognitions, and challenges to identity,"[42] and part of the aim of our volume is to make this state of affairs more visible, especially with regard to the supposedly postmodern genesis of the post/human. Similar to Feher and company's aim to provide the broadest and most temporally and geographically varied coverage of the human body's discontinuist history, while also insisting that that same human body is always constructed, always a social formation, and always representational, we too insist on the always provisional and contingent formations of the human, and of various humanisms, over time, while also aiming to demonstrate the different ways in which these formations emerge (and also disappear) in different times and places. There can thus be no "total history" of this state of affairs as it plays itself out in differing historical contexts, but nevertheless, we can see at the same time that defining what "the human" is has always been an agon—always an ongoing, never finished social-cultural-political project. We say also a "vanishing" humanism, mainly to denote the ways in which, as noted above, the foundations of the liberal humanist subject have been roundly critiqued and dismantled in many university discourses, and thus, appears as a "vanishing" figure in the contemporary scene. Indeed, following Foucault's assertion in *The Order of Things* that "man" is an invention of a more recent date than most believe, our volume aims also to demonstrate that the contours of the human figure and the humanisms attached to that figure have always

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41. Michel Feher, ed. (with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body,* 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 1989).

42. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 24.

been—on both sides of the so-called Enlightenment divide—indeterminate, contestable, slippery, and ephemeral. Post/humanism, as philosophy and also methodology, would best be framed, we believe, by an attention to longer and discontinuist, historical perspectives.

The volume is divided into two sections: the first part (Singularity, Species, Inter/faces) focuses on critical issues that circulate around questions of human "singularity" and human "species," with faces, visages, facades, and/or inter-faces serving as the most explicit thought props through which each author approaches the question of human being and human becoming, as well as the undoing of the human. The second part of the volume (Human, Inhuman, Spectacle) concentrates on the relations of the human to the inhuman and the difficulties attendant upon maintaining any sort of line between the two, especially vis-à-vis the analysis of certain aesthetic (and often surreal) spectacles designed to provoke wonder and horror, and to also destabilize the human as a figure of so-called "rational" and/or "humane" impulses. Although all of the essays in the book can be read productively in relation to each other (because each essay, in one form or another, takes up the question of the status— epistemological, ontological, psychic, historical, cultural, aesthetic, and so on—of the human being), the division of the book's contents has been structured to highlight, in the first section, the historical and critical problematics surrounding the attempts (both in the past and the present) to delineate "the human" as a singularity (whether as an individual or as a unique species), and in the second section, to foreground the ethical and cultural dilemmas that arise when the human is marked off from, but also merges with, what is supposedly nonhuman or inhuman. Each section begins with what might be called the most historically mute period—the so-called "prehistoric" (the chapters by Jeffrey Skoblow and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, respectively)—and then includes chapters that consider instants and events of modern critical thought and/or culture (such as, for example, Claude Romano's "evential" hermeneutics, the surrealist biology of Roger Caillois, the iPod, Freud, Derrida's turn to the animal, biopolitical theory, George Lucas's *THX 1138,* and Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*) in relation to the slower currents of premodern thought and culture that still inhere in the present (such as, for example, the heroic quest, the devotional manual, the Oedipus myth, the chivalric romance, historical saga, and the idealized Lady of troubadour poetry). Finally, the essay by Craig Dionne on Shakespeare, the post/human, and aesthetics constitutes the cautionary cultural-materialist coda to the volume, alerting us, after immersion in the contents of this volume, that while we "must not turn our backs to the subaltern stories outside the manor" (the post/human), we "must [also] be mindful not to aestheticize . . . bare life." In other words, to speak of the

post/human (if even in literary texts) is to call attention to forms of life more broadly, and also to *liveliness* and processes of *living,* and thus we must be careful to consider the material ("on the ground") conditions that undergird our theorizing, for *living* itself (human and otherwise) is at stake.

PART I: SINGULARITIES, SPECIES, INTER/FACES

Jeffrey Skoblow opens his discussion of palaeolithic images at Chauvet and Rouffignac in France with a timeline. The paintings and engravings, some 13,000 years old, resemble others extant from the period throughout Europe that are 35,000–40,000 years old. By comparison, the earliest tools, such as a symmetrical hand ax, are 100,000 years old, and Skoblow judiciously suggests we should include them in the catalogue of human representations. Also, 80,000-year-old burials that associate ochre with human remains imply the existence, at that time, of the belief that there is another, or a parallel, life in addition to the present one.

All these manifestations exist in a near-vacuum: we know little about the contexts that surround them. Thus, these human representations are not unlike things or animals: as Georges Bataille phrased it, "Whatever has no meaning for itself is a thing."[43] However closely we attend to them, the results of our efforts are meager. And yet, some paradigms emerge. For instance, the vast majority of portraits bear "no apparent figuratively human dimension: the delicate and expressive muzzles of horses, aurochs and lions, bison and mammoth eyes, horses' manes and bison beards and so on" predominate (48). With more schematic images, such as dots or V-shapes, interpretation is guesswork. A pointy shape can be thingly, animal, or female: "an arrow, a bird track, or a vulva" (49, quoted from Bahn, 159–60). What does that teach us about the human? Skoblow warns that even the modest categories—male/female, animal/human, whole/fragment—used to group these images may be anachronistic. But, as he consoles us, at her most vulnerable, the prehistoric human is also the most recognizable: we can easily embrace undecidability.

Skoblow describes what it was like to be in the caves themselves:

> Mammoths, horses, bison, rhinos, and ibex required us to walk around in circles and backwards with our heads back, looking up and spinning to keep the images straight, to see them in their orientations as they crisscrossed and

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43. Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo,* trans. Mary Dalwood (New York: Walker and Company, 1962), 157.

> overlapped and spread across in their rough arc. All are filled with calm,
> even the ibex running with legs at full stretch, many with eyes that look back
> at you. Our guide answered questions and by way of wrapping up on the way
> back, he said, as I understood him, that "of the people who made these things
> we know nothing but one thing: they are us"—or he may have said "we are
> them" which, if not exactly the same, amounts to the same thing: what could
> only be called human. (47–48)

We might say that the cave visitors, then and now, as in Japanese literary contexts, "look like they know *mono no aware*"—that is, they look like poets. We can imagine that cave space filled with sighs: *aware cho* ["to sigh after being stirred by something"].

Eileen A. Joy's "Eros, Event, and Non-Faciality in Malory's 'Tale of Balyn and Balan'" never departs from that sigh-poem space of shared awareness. In *De civitate dei,* Augustine wrote that, unlike all other living creatures and animals, God chose to create the entire race of man from only one individual to bind humans "not only by similarity of nature, but . . . affection."[44] Against Augustine's optimism, Joy argues, most contemporary social theorists—for example, Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck, Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash—regard the late modern individual, as opposed to the premodern person, as cut loose from social bonds. She does not even retain, as a remainder, her own intact selfhood—whatever "intact" might mean. Lash calls her "a combinard" who "puts together networks, constructs alliances, makes deals," and lives in a world of risk and precariousness.[45]

Joy argues that the human has always been in the process of coming unstuck from the consolations of local times and places, and tightly woven family groups, partly because the idea of the heroic individual mastering the world—whether the knight in Camelot or the financier on Wall Street—has been essential to the valorization of the human subject, while at the same time, that same heroic individual can only ever really succeed or fail on the terms set by the group from which she is always coming undone. In Malory's *Morte darthur,* Joy's test case, Balyn, "the knight with two swords," is a medieval combinard just as multi-local and non-linear as Bauman's "liquid modernity." Joy asserts that this contradicts the accounts of the supposedly monolithic and

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44. Robert Flint, *The Philosophy of History in Europe*, vol. 1. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874.

45. Scott Lash, "Foreword: Individualization in a Non-Linear Mode," in *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences,* eds. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim and trans. Patrick Camiller. London: Sage Publications, 2002, ix [vii–xiii].

unified premodernity that acts as a backdrop against which, to paraphrase
Carolyn Dinshaw, the modern and postmodern "groovily emerge."[46]

Joy argues that "almost all of our notions of time and temporality are insuf-
ficient to [its] weirdness and ungraspability . . . what might be called time's
continual and dissonant 'forking'" (55). She reaches out to philosopher Claude
Romano's "evential hermeneutics" to argue for a conception of the human
person as a type of queer location (a "highly localized site of awareness" in
the terminology of medieval historian David Gary Shaw[47]) that is always in
the process of "becoming" through the "impersonal events of the world" that
never cease "happening" to it (60). In this scenario, Balyn becomes "a nas-
cently (or proto-)modern human individual" who is "thrust, through *aventure,*
into the 'compulsive and obligatory self-determination' of a certain alienating
*past*modernity" (56). Balyn is not so much a preexisting (and stably human)
identity, as he is "a break within the flow" of the "absolute consciousness"
(60) of the assemblage of Camelot, especially when caught in the flux of the
events of his narrative, which he can never know in advance. Here, there is no
becoming-human, only a "*taking place*" in a becoming-world (64).

Tim Spence's "The Book of Hours and iPods, Passionate Lyrics and
Prayers" weaves parallels between two media platforms—the medieval prayer
book and the personal music device playlist. For Spence, the overarching issue
that brings the prayer book and iPods together is "the personal verification
and comfort that stems from the habitual use of devotional technologies" (80).
Prayers and contemporary songs are also alike in that both rely on a limited
vocabulary of personal suffering, particularly in love and love-longing," both
forms are intentionally composed in a highly lyrical manner, filled with pathos,
and both can be used at will by individual agents to manipulate moods.

Spence divides history into three periods—medieval, modern, and
digital—as he compares prayer manuals and mp3 players, devotional songs
and rock-n-roll lyrics, all as technologies that individualize us and "allow us

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46. Dinshaw writes: "Radical hybridity of postmodern identities is bought at the cost of
the medieval. Merely displacing rather than eliminating totality (as Paul Strohm has remarked
in relation to other postmodern theorists), [Homi] Bhabha produces via a convenient and sim-
plified Benedict Anderson a binary modernist narrative of history—produces a dense, obvious
(and white) Middle Ages against which the arbitrary modern groovily emerges—though he
routinely critiques such binary narratives in decrying 'teleology and holism.' And this totalizing
force applies pressure elsewhere in Bhabha's work; it is no coincidence (at least to this queer
medievalist) that his treatment of an undifferentiated, homogeneous distant past intersects with
his treatment of sexuality": Carolyn Dinshaw, "Queer Relations," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 16
(1999): 93 [79–94].

47. David Gary Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England* (New
York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 12.

immediate access to our private passions" (91). The twelfth-century Victorines (Hugh, Adam, and others) were instrumental in composing and propagating prayers on Christ's Passion and other practices, later anthologized in the Books of Hours, allowing practitioners to interact "with their prayer books to discover appropriate material for their prayers and meditations, either scripted or original" (69). These practices involved "complex technologies—some cognitive, some concrete," including books, decorations, architectural spaces, calendars, and clocks (69).

Just beyond the edge of the historical density of these technologies, ca. 1500, Spence locates the birthplace—or perhaps more accurately, the College House—of Mr. Cogito, the character in Zbigniew Herbert's poems who embodies "the ironic contrast between an individual borne aloft in an untimely manner by his inner thoughts and the chaotic circumstances in which he finds himself, a world always just outside of the thinking being's control" (71). As Spence argues, "Mr. Cogito replaced Mr. Oratio—or the medieval deference to devotional prayer—at the moment introspective meditation stopped producing prayers and began producing subjective analysis for the self-reflective individual's independent self" (71).

To console herself in her untimely predicament, today's Mlle Cogito participates in a field of technologies that mirror the medieval Mr. Oratio's: "a network of technologies . . . woven together to form a very intimate and sensual relationship between the individual user and a larger, corporate body of being" (72). If for Mr. Oratio that corporation was ecclesiastic, for Mlle Cogito it is, perhaps less glamorously, capitalist. Spence skillfully and dizzyingly juxtaposes the Beguines and the band the Weather Underground, the rosary and the iPod, Goliards and college students, *Carmina Burana* and the band Public Enemy, the mystic Richard Rolle and the band Modest Mouse, dying in a tavern and overdosing, the Word made Flesh and the Digital Age Word that "has become electric." Spence concludes that the study of medieval prayer rituals renders more accessible certain aspects of the digital age that are obscured because of our immersion in them, especially the corporatization of private emotions and the role of the conveyances in habituating our emotions to function within a larger corporate structure that is both "omnipresent and invisible" (88).

Daniel Remein and Anna Kłosowska, in "What *Does* Language Speak: Feeling the Human with Samuel Beckett and Chrétien de Troyes," read *Perceval* (ca. 1165) and *Molloy* (1951) near to each other. Following Heidegger and structuralism, they ask: if language speaks, what is the status of the human—human desire and subjectivity? Perceval and Molloy both have an interesting time naming themselves: their similarities rift the space-time of literary and

intellectual history, but the essay is still careful to "not wrest what it calls away from the re/moteness."[48]

Remein and Kłosowska argue that it is the very moment when Molloy and Perceval realize and say aloud their names that a strange infatuation or erotic fixation on an object emerges, recalling the Japanese principle of *mono no aware,* or the Virgilian *lacrimae rerum,* mentioned earlier in this introduction. In Molloy's case, this fixation "amounts to a potential incident of public inanimaphiliac intimacy with a bicycle that seems mechanically impossible" (99). Rather more sublimely, Perceval is transfixed by the procession of a candelabra, a bleeding lance, and the grail. Again, in a striking parallel to the principles of *mono no aware,* Perceval is punished for failing to ask questions about the condition of the Fisher King and thus failing to share his story, the sharing of which is portrayed as the only form of relief for what ails not only the king but also an entire kingdom, turned into a wasteland. Passing from Heidegger to Lacan, Deleuze, and Graham Harman's speculative materialism, Kłosowska and Remein borrow from Reza Negarestani the phrase "complicity with anonymous materials"[49] to point out three similarities between *Perceval* and *Molloy.* First, the narrative structure and content, from the description of the objects (radiance and light) to the hero's naming. Second, the objects in the narratives are not part of nature but rather they are semiautonomous, "somewhere in between tool and matter" (106). Third, these same objects short-circuit the grand isolation of humans from the world of nonhumans.

Remein and Kłosowska use Graham Harman's term *allure,* a "touch without touching," to describe the object's fetching agency. No longer inert or inhuman, Harman's object is radiant matter that, as in medieval physics, sends out beams that effect a cure or provoke longing, passion, and madness. Kłosowska and Remein ask what allure/relation is between the radiant matter, and the being, at the moment of naming—in terms of how they relate to what we would *want* to call human, and they conclude that poetry is the "erotic radiance of language caught on and besotted by fragments" (125). Second, they claim that Chrétien writes enough episodes of erotic co-operations or hybridizations with nonhuman matter to be reclaimed as a Beckettian modernist *avant la lettre.* Reading Chrétien, they submit, is the best training to take pleasure in Beckett—to laugh, frolic, and absurdly giggle as we imagine Molloy with his red rubber bicycle bulb, instead of shrinking from this and other Beckettian texts as if they were grey clouds dripping dour pessimism.

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48. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper, 1971), 196.

49. Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008).

PART II: HUMAN, INHUMAN, SPECTACLE

In "Aninormality," Jeffrey Jerome Cohen asks: what is the role of nonhuman agents in art? Take, for example, the three drops of blood on the snow in Chrétien's *Perceval* or the famous winter scene in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:* no amount of research on "Ricardian kingship or contemporary Welsh-English relations" (132) (the human and historical context) can explain their intensity, but neither can research on snowflakes or goose blood (the nonhuman context). Cohen turns to Roger Caillois's 1934 essay on the praying mantis: intrigued by the mantis that plays dead, Caillois notes that her behavior inspires a strange situational lyricism in the driest entomological accounts.[50] Caillois concludes that myths are not only inspired by social phenomena but also by striking natural ones: a slight instance of nonhuman agency, but agency nonetheless. This serves as Cohen's departure point for a consideration of the nonhuman as it is bound up with the human in medieval fabulist art.

Cohen highlights a passage in Caillois's writing on stone,[51] where Caillois talks of the intensities of various agents in three "kingdoms"—geological, vegetal, animal. To each kingdom's particular density corresponds a particular wavelength, speed, or frequency of its art, and since the art is set at different speeds, the mutual reading of each kingdom's art produces the effect of a blurred presence. If we really concentrate our attention, as Caillois and Cohen urge, that presence can be brought out in sharper relief. They both invoke the term *commonality* to represent this network of mutually recognizable (if blurry) yet also imperfectly perceived signals of nonhuman agents that together make up the "aesthetics of the universe."[52] For Caillois, the "mobilizing element" of this commonality across kingdoms is beauty, a general "innate lyricism," a shared "universal syntax."[53] "Natural fantasy" is another name Caillois gives to that nonhuman agency.[54] Caillois does not propose an "evolutionary, cultural or symbolic use value" (140) for nonhuman agency; instead, suggests Cohen, Caillois's idea is that impulse, mobility, or agency are the normal states of the three kingdoms—what Cohen labels their *aninormality,* a suitcase word that brings together the ideas of the animal and the anomalous to break up the definition of normalcy.

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50. Roger Caillois, "The Praying Mantis: From Biology to Psychoanalysis," in *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 66–81.

51. Roger Caillois, *The Writing of the Stones,* ed. Marguerite Yourcenar, trans. Barbara Bray (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985).

52. Ibid., 49.

53. Ibid., 104.

54. Ibid., 84.

Against the anxiety that thinking in terms of the nonhuman is tantamount to thinking unkindly or unethically, with "pessimism, even misanthropy" (139), Cohen argues that posthumanism is not less but more caring in trying to "view the world through a less anthropocentric lens" (139). Cohen locates "medieval aninormality" (140) at work in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (ca. 1136) and also in the work of Marie de France (ca. 1160), who weaves a lyrical world of human-animal and human-object hybrids: man-wolf, man-osprey, talking deer, not to mention adventure plots that turn on bits of cloth, knots, and sticks. Cohen's attention to the final image of the earth, in whose porous cavities the heroine of Marie de France's *Yonec* discovers slumbering lovers ready to spring into action in yet-unnarrated stories that mirror her own, helps us to see what Cohen means by inhuman art: the transformative potentiality of stories that always already inheres in the geological crevasses of their landscapes.

In "Humanist Waste," Michael A. Johnson challenges the periodization where Renaissance humanism overcomes the medieval, and postmodern posthumanism overcomes the Enlightenment humanist subject. The Middle Ages, in this periodization, bears persistent material traces of "concepts, identities, and social forms that are always both dead and alive at once" (152). Because "dead and alive at once" has a decidedly excremental ring to it, Johnson's critique of periodization logically focuses on waste. Johnson cites two sides of one particular debate over periodization: representing the medieval troubadour tradition as "proto-humanist," or as antihumanist or inhuman—a tradition, as Johnson points out, "in which a persistent metaphorics of excrement troubles the question of the human" (152). Johnson looks, in medieval and more modern contexts, at technologies of waste disposal, literary and philosophical metaphors of waste, the complex interplay of individual and community "haunted by animal excrement" (152), and waste as a metaphor for a loss of meaning.

Johnson first takes us through the psychoanalytics of excrement. He explains that according to Lacan (via Žižek), the problem of waste disposal is linked to interiority and the distinction between human and animal: humans face shit disposal as a problem, while for animals, lacking an 'interior' of the sort humans experience, shit—this exteriorization of what was once interior—poses no problems. For Freud, the degree of separation from waste—through different means of disposal, repression, and sublimation—is a measure of civilization. Repression may go too far, as in the science fiction dystopian commonplace of the food pill that eliminates eating and waste, perceived negatively as the "imposition of an inhuman exteriority" (154) that is accompanied by other measures that erase interiority and individuality.

A similar example that Johnson turns to is George Lucas's film *THX 1138,* where the protagonist "inserts his wages, in the form of a colored dodecahedron, into a toilet-like device, as though to eliminate the process of consumption and waste altogether" (154), the "toilet" serving as "a vestigial trace of its original function," an absurd scenario that explains why later *THX* cannot mourn his mate: *THX* and others have "no interior, no 'private self,' *because they do not shit*" (155).

Parallel to Karl Steel's discussion of the superlative deliciousness of human flesh (see below), Johnson studies texts that laud the superiority of human excrement. This excellence notwithstanding, waste also stands in metaphorically for a collapse of difference, hierarchy, and value. Johnson guides us through Baudrillard, Freud, and Alenka Zupančič's reading of Lacan, to focus on Lacan's Seminar VII on sublimation, a point (many scholars agree) when Lacan moves from mostly abstract and structuralist language to a more embodied image of subjectivity. Johnson shows that troubadour poetry frequently combines the excremental, the animal, and the feminine, while at the same time these poems "plug up" the Lady's "explosive and filthy materiality through the technological prosthetics of writing" (166). With Lacan, Johnson uses the "scene" of *fin'amors* as a pattern that may help us rethink the human in and against this late-capitalist paradigm we currently inhabit.

Karl Steel's "How Delicious We Must Be / Folcuin's Horse and the Dog's Gowther, Beyond Care" looks at medieval discourses of anthropophagy as a ground of distinction between humans and animals, demonstrating that the binary is never successfully fixed in place. While most treatments of medieval anthropophagy use it as a metaphor—of profanation of the Host; of excessive cruelty or illegitimate government; of the painful formation of subjectivity, allowing psychoanalytic discussions—such metaphorical readings partly efface the visceral horror that Steel aims to restore.

The distinction between flesh and meat is like the distinction between human and animal, the animate—literally, "ensouled," or possessed of a soul or *anima*—and the inanimate. To show how blurry that distinction is, Steel summarizes Christian theories of life, including the commonplace understanding brought to the fore in Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* that animals possess mere biological life, *zoe* rather than *bios*.[55] The distinctive human characteristics that animals lack are usually defined as reason, language, and soul. Paradoxically, since the humans are superior to animals, their flesh must taste

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55. See Agamben's introduction to *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

better than animal flesh. This rather too literal appreciation for human superiority is explicit, as Steel shares, in many medieval texts, including Poggio Bracciolini's tale of a teenage serial killer, a fifteenth-century hunting manual of Edward of York, the story of king Cadwallo in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History,* the Middle English romance *Richard Coer de Lyon, the Chanson d'Antioche,* Marco Polo's account of Japanese customs, and John Mandeville's similar account of the people of Lamore, which all describe human flesh as "the most restorative and most delicious" of meats (176).

Steel asks: what work does the distinction between eating animal and human flesh do? He suggests that the distinction is not intrinsic but rather constructed, a "carnophallogocentrism," as Derrida called it in *The Animal That Therefore I Am.*[56] This makes the horror of anthropophagy seem less noble: not a horror of violating the human, but a horror of violating the human privilege, human "exemption from routine violence." Next, Steel examines medieval alternatives, wherein "medieval people could imagine other relations to the animal, less concerned with violence and saving human privilege" (185). Noting that Cary Wolfe in *Animal Rites* discounts the meaning of such examples for the cultural paradigm because they are exceptions that confirm the rule—"the logic of the pet . . . the individual who is exempted from the slaughter in order to vindicate, with exquisite bad faith, a sacrificial structure"[57]—Steel argues against Wolfe by focusing on two texts where exceptions to the sacrificial economy are never explicitly claimed to serve some purpose, but rather seem to be "interruptions of economy" (idylls or utopias, even stories of companionship): Folcuin of Lobbes's story of a horse that led the funeral procession of its saintly master and afterward refused to carry anyone, and also the Middle English romance *Sir Gowther,* whose hero commits heinous crimes, after which the Pope prescribes as a penance a diet of food snatched from a dog's mouth. A greyhound feeds him "whyte loafe" until Gowther is ready to "forthe gon"—fight and snatch food forcibly from other dogs—in a three-day "hillside idyll" (188). In such stories, says Steel, we learn to "suspend ourselves between two impossibilities: the unjustifiable need to defend ourselves from the appetite of others, and the dizzying fact of temporary mattering, our own and others, within a near universal indifference, where we must make cuts to care, even if what we protect takes no notice of us at all" (192).

56. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am,* ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 93.

57. Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 104.

Daniel Kline's essay, "Excusing Laius: Freud's Oedipus, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* and Lydgate's Edippus," shows how the focus of Lydgate's story, different from Sophocles', can allow us to read the story of Oedipus differently from Freud, more along the lines of Emmanuel Lévinas's critique of Freud. Kline examines the genesis of Freud's theory of the Oedipal complex, citing Lévinas's critique of psychoanalysis as the "end result" of a rationalism—in other words, a humanism—that fails to account for realities more profound than ourselves and that are, ultimately, beyond our intentions. For Kline,

> Freud's Oedipal complex isolates aggression in the child and obfuscates parental responsibility for that violence in much the same way *Oedipus Rex* seems to condemn Oedipus. Thus, the father's violence against the child and the necessity of that violence in constituting the patriarchal family is relocated from age to youth, from external world to internal fantasies, and from the social realm to the intrapsychic. (194)

And yet, in the Oedipus story, "the Sphinx's riddle inheres in the paradox of aging and of retaining identity or sameness within temporal difference" (194). To push against this forgetting of the riddle and against making actual violence in Oedipus only a symbol, and at that, the relatively benign symbol of the social apprenticeship of the healthy individual, Kline underlines that "the Oedipus narrative begins not with the child's violence against the parents, but with attempted infanticide" (195), and he thus shows that Freud's account of Oedipus was a very particular choice, given his knowledge of other versions of the story.

Unlike the Sophocles version that assumes our knowledge of the backstory, medieval versions provide "prologues" to the episodes of patricide and incest, somewhat decentering the latter episodes crucial to Sophocles and Freud. Freud dismissed postclassical versions as religious rewritings that were supposed to inspire piety. Kline walks us through Freud's library in London, stopping at Léopold Constans's 1881 volume on twelfth-century French renditions of Oedipus that Freud heavily marked on almost every page, indicating that medieval versions of the story influenced Freud's thinking on the Oedipal Complex.

As Kline explains, Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* is likewise based on these French renditions, and Kline attends to the ways in which Lydgate baroquely expanded the encounter with the Sphinx. This provides Kline grounds for a Lévinasian reading that "dismantles the hierarchy of father over son, of parent over child, by observing that the father's exteriority, most clearly present in

the other who calls the father to responsibility, is found in, but is not reducible to, the child" (221). Lydgate's "generous and humane" (216) account of Oedipus emphasizes the responsibilities inherent in the parent-child relationship. Conversely, in Lydgate, somewhat surprisingly to modern critics, the horror of incest and patricide committed by Oedipus is not emphasized as much. As Kline suggests, that again allows us to think of Lydgate along the lines of Lévinas and not Freud: "If Freud sees Oedipus as the universal human subject, the autonomous individual who acts in history, Lydgate's Edippus is the exemplary individual who is tethered to" history (222). Lydgate's Lévinasian Oedipus is a creature of "change, not stasis; is embedded in culture, not isolated; adapts to the vagaries of age and change; and remains firmly wedded to the warp and woof of history" (222).

In the volume's cautionary coda, "The Trick of Singularity: *Twelfth Night,* Stewards of the Posthuman, and the Problem of Aesthetics," Craig Dionne reflects on the crisis of the humanities and asks, how are literature and culture relevant if they do not "directly speak to the complexity of the modern world?" (224). Dionne closes with an indelible image from Trevor Nunn's film version of *Twelfth Night*: Feste is banished to the dark world outside. The spectator, placed in the same dark space as Feste, observes the wedding feast through the glowing warm windows of the manor. Dionne enjoins those of us invested in the posthuman turn to not "turn our backs to the subaltern stories outside the manor" (243). We must be mindful of our responsibility to shape a more just society in economic and practical senses.

Dionne opens by evoking Robert Scholes's 2004 MLA presidential address, "The Humanities in a Post-Human World," concerned with religious fundamentalism and the so-called "pragmatic" or "real" neoconservative politics, as well as economics not invested in practices of care. Against the association of the term *posthuman* with these neoconservative political and fanatical religious values that go against the humanities, Dionne defines *posthumanism* as a label for a constellation of theorists and social critics working on the same problem but from positions within different critical discourses, including cyborg theory, informatics, systems theory, queer studies, the turn to the body and to animal rights, new materialism and the turn to ontology, theories coalesced around the BABEL Working Group, and scholars such as Cary Wolfe, Katherine Hayles, Cora Diamond, Ian Hacking, Ralph Acampora, Judith Butler, and others.

In *Twelfth Night,* Dionne sees an already postmodern play that hinges on the problem of defining a singular identity in the face of modernity's blurring of identities, as opposed to a humanist reading of the play as a rehearsal

of "Renaissance melancholy or self-consuming love" (228). Among others, Dionne reads Malvolio as "a crude parody of Tudor humanist learning that is meant to bolster traditional venues of social ascension through courtly service" (234) and shows that Malvolio is the exponent of the unorganic, posthuman concept of the subject. Lastly, Dionne sees Malvolio's story as a parable of the academic. Malvolio's contradictory use of materialist language that "speaks us" and individual agency at the same time presages our own plight: "the problem of establishing an aesthetics of difference during a time of great economic, political, and ecological instability—a strangely familiar reminder for humanists that our own professional longing to return to aesthetics might replay something of a return of the repressed" (227).

Dionne closes with an image of reversible consciousness, like the chamois glove that can be turned inside out. If Frederic Jameson's *A Singular Modernity* attributes to film as a medium the rise of the postmodern experience of and preoccupation with contingency—a moviegoer emerging into the bright light experiences the shock of contingency—Dionne notes *Twelfth Night*'s obsession with this problem. We may have brought it to new heights—for example, "in a world of digitalized textual production—out-sourced and team-written texts that appear on the computer screen in a stream from a placeless nowhere"—but the problem was always already there in Orsino's "manic love," "a miming of the itinerant identity that appropriates its oscillating emotional states and shifting standpoints as a form of courtly pastime" (240). It was already there in the figure of Feste and the play's obsession with contingency and bare life, which should force us to examine the conditions of our posthumanist work in our own "manor."

ALL THE WAY TO THE VEGAN DEMON

Jean de la Fontaine (1621–95) once wrote: "If a lute played by itself, I would run away, although I passionately love music."[58] La Fontaine says this à propos of a scene in Apuleius's *Psyche,* which he translated, where the young woman, Psyche, marries a powerful man whom she cannot see, Cupid, and lives in a castle surrounded by a post/human kind of opulence and love: a castle filled with invisible servants and musicians. The tableau of post/human musical performance is so insufferable for La Fontaine that he adds harp-playing nymphs to explain where the music comes from. But anyone who has seen Jean

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58. Jean de la Fontaine, "Preface," *Amours de Psiché et de Cupidon* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1669), n.p. This phrase is picked up in André Gide's *Journal* (13 October 1927).

Cocteau's 1946 film *La Belle et la bête* is aware that charm and grace, desire and pleasure don't need human agents: a partly human beast, rows of moving disembodied hands, and other human fragments all contribute to a breathtaking love story. In La Fontaine's own seventeenth century, extended thought experiments relegated humans to insignificance, as in a reflection on cabbage in Cyrano de Bergerac's famous science fiction novel, *State and Empire of the Moon* (1657). Bergerac's protagonist encounters a vegan Demon so particular that he will only eat those vegetables that died of natural causes. Harvesting a live cabbage, wounding it with a knife, would have been unconscionable and unnatural:

> Is not this cabbage, as you are, a part of Nature? Is she—Nature—not the mother of both of you equally? It even seems to me that she made provisions with a greater urgency for the vegetative rather than for the reasonable kind, since she left the engendering of men to the caprice of their fathers who can, as they please, engender them or not: a stricture with which she did not, however, choose to afflict the cabbage: because instead of leaving the germination of the sons to the fathers' discretion, as if she were more apprehensive that the cabbage race might die out than the human race, she constrained them willy nilly to give being to one another, and not at all as it is with men, who only engender children by caprice, and who can only engender twenty at the most throughout their lifetime; while cabbages can produce four hundred thousand per head. To say that Nature loved man more than cabbage is to tickle yourself to make yourself laugh. . . . add that man cannot be born without sin . . . while we know full well that the first cabbage had never offended its Creator.[59]

And then, in the Demon's imaginary account, the cabbage speaks. That, as Joanna Zylinska insists, is a neat way to think about the ethics of the post/human turn. "What if x responded?" can be a useful touchstone in theorizing the ethics of the nonhuman. As Zylinska says, when we dismantle the hierarchy, we open the possibility of a better ethics. An ethics that is open ended, based on "a prior demand on those of us who call themselves humans to respond to the difference of the world critically and responsibly, without taking recourse all too early to pre-decided half-truths."[60] As we follow Zylinska,

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59. Cyrano de Bergerac, *Histoire comique des etats et empire de la lune,* in *Oeuvres,* vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Jacques Desbordes, 1709), 83–85.

60. Joanna Zylinska, "Bioethics Otherwise, or, How to Live with Machines, Humans, and Other Animals," in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change,* vol. 1, ed. Tom Cohen (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press/MPublishing), 2012. (203–25).

let us take comfort in the familiarity of the thought exercise that allows us to imagine "x" responding, a post/human exercise that by far predates what we call modernity, as this volume well attests.

Thought experiments, texts, narratives, and other ways to think *with,* and not merely *about,* nonhumans are collected in the chapters of this volume. These chapters amount to something like cognitive engineering, because they allow us to think a little farther beyond ourselves. And, we inherit these thought experiments from a premodern world that extends all the way to the bear nests in prehistoric caves. Moving closer to the present, these thought experiments extend to vegan Aristoxenus and succulent vegetarian Pythagoras; moving closer still, to the medieval Marie de France, whose protagonists fall for avian boyfriends; to the three drops of goose blood that make Chretien's Perceval think about Blancheflor; to the greyhound who feeds a knight; and all the way to the scientific revolution of the 1650s when Bergerac's supervegan Demon converses with cabbage. Was there resistance to these thought experiments? Yes, as La Fontaine's alteration of the myth of Cupid and Psyche shows. Did the post/human imagination always exist in explicit, self-aware and mainstream ways? To that question, we offer a resounding "yes"—not least because much of post/human thought seems to correlate with an ethical imperative to not diminish and avariciously contract the world, but rather to expand the scope of human sympathy and ethical being.