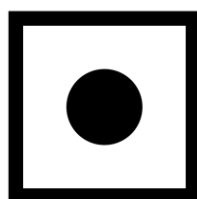


# EDITORIAL

## Tenth Anniversary Volume



In the introduction of *Pulse*'s inaugural issue, ten years ago, the editors describe a “Foucauldian wind of change” blowing through gender studies. This wind of change referred to a renewed imagination in how knowledges are produced, challenging epistemic taxonomies and the matrices of power that intersect them. Over the course of its publication ever since, up to and including this special tenth-anniversary issue, *Pulse* has sought to think beyond the supposed separation of science and culture: instead, how might our hybridised *sciencecultures* and *culturesciences* be better understood?

In the last decade, we have seen an extraordinary shift in *how we think and do humanities*. This, in part, has emerged from an institutional crisis, in which the devaluation and neoliberalisation of academic research requires an urgent renegotiation of its terms.<sup>1</sup> Humanities researchers have therefore been seeking alternative approaches to the confines and codifications of neoliberal knowledge production, in favour of cross-pollinations and ramified webs. Such an endeavour has gone hand-in-hand with a re-evaluation of the post-Enlightenment subject more generally—the human of humanism—and its historically privileged role in the creation of meaning. We live, as Rosi Braidotti writes, in *posthuman* times, which produce “new fields of transdisciplinary knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> In these posthuman times, the division that cleaves the humanities apart from the sciences has become far more indeterminate, and we find ourselves at a moment of vibrant interdisciplinarity. Emergent fields such as the critical posthumanities, environmental humanities,

---

<sup>1</sup> Rosi Braidotti, “A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities,” *Theory, Culture, Society* 36, no. 6 (2018): 31-61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327641877148>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

feminist materialisms, new materialisms, critical animal studies, and others aim to decentre the human by exploring the profound and inescapable entanglements between humans and nonhumans, nature and culture (as inseparable naturecultures).

Emergent fields require alternative methodologies, and the articles within this issue each engage different methods for de-anthropocentric meaning-making, including multispecies ethnographies (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010)<sup>3</sup> and autoethnographies, situated epistemologies, and more-than-human practices. In the pages that follow, we find geological formations, technonatures, human-animal kinships, and more-than-human discursive utterances, each understood as entangled and embedded. In each case, nonhuman species or environments are not approached simply as an object of study; rather, they explore the relationality of different entities to see what emerges through them. In this, they share a common ambition to decentre the human as the sole arbiter of knowledge and research, instead working on the basis that knowledges and meanings emerge from entanglements of both human and nonhuman actors. Such approaches are not only meaningful for those working in the humanities, but may also offer guidance for life sciences, too, in allowing researchers to think about how they approach the nonhumans they study, how they interpret data and use their findings, and how these practices reflect their own situatedness within research apparatuses.

Researchers and the researched are captured in the loop of unresolved systemic problems, an in-betweenness which brings to the fore the intersectionality of the -isms being criticised throughout this journal. Anthropocentrism, speciesism, supremacism, capitalism, and scientism affecting the lives of other-than-human species and their habitats appear as overlapping factors fostering complex accounts of oppression in animal worlds. The adoption of intersectionality as an analytical framework marks new ways of *doing humanities* beyond the human, while remaining in solidarity with human struggles. Ever-extending the map of ethical shortcomings of capitalism, (neo)colonialism and patriarchy, a more-than-human and intersectional approach criticises the imperative of constant growth and extraction, while exposing the depth of geopolitical, technological and environmental pressures this brings with it. In this regard, the slow, unprofitable and elusive accounts of more-than-human existence, material and electric, conceptualised in the following articles acquire political meaning. The current issue of *Pulse* demonstrates that considering nonhuman oppression as a ‘less urgent’ problem is unsustainable. We require a synergy of voices resisting separation, simplification and exclusion if the sciences and the humanities are to become sources for life’s flourishing.

The article by Iana Fishova explores the potential of science fiction to expose universal mechanisms of oppression underlying the exploitation of more-than-human minorities. Building upon feminist interpretations of Michel Faber’s *Under the Skin* (2000), Fishova examines this novel from the perspective of critical animal studies as an example of reversed speciesism. By putting humans in the place of the

<sup>3</sup> S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 4 (2010): 545-76.

marginalised and objectified species Faber promotes anti-speciesist attitudes towards other-than-human beings. Questioning the anthropocentric (traditional) metaphysics of subjectivity and moving beyond discussions of the animal intelligence spectrum, Fishova affirms the multiplicity of the subject and its intrinsic value regardless of the type of cognition, language or morphology.

Zsófia Novák's article navigates the complexities of sentimentalised anthropomorphic representations of nonhuman animals. Comparing traditional natural documentaries, such as 'Our Planet' (2019), and experimental ecocinema, such as 'Gunda' (2020), Novák distinguishes between anthropocentric projections aimed at enhancing the entertaining quality of animal images and anthropomorphic portrayals as a means of encouraging empathy to resist animal oppression. To do so, Novák differentiates between cognitive and affective registers of empathic reactions dominating Attenborough's and Kossakovsky's storytelling respectively.

Challenging the normative understanding that metaphors and discursive utterances can be separated from the world's materiality, Rhea Jiang's exploration of contemporary AI metaphors shows how they reinforce human exceptionalism. In search of alternative ways to represent AI, Jiang speculates on how might a metaphor of islands and archipelagos, learning from Indigenous and islander onto-epistemologies, inform a less extractivist and less anthropocentric understanding and application of AI.

Fabio Miranda's article looks at the entanglement of multiple perspectives in guano bird observation in Peru, asking how the *casetta*—a concealed bird observation unit—functions as a refractive apparatus for varied concerns. Miranda grounds the research in fieldwork, which allows knowledge and meaning to emerge from the contingencies of the field's more-than-human relationalities. In this way, it perhaps offers an example of what Brett Buchanan, Michelle Bastian & Matthew Chrulew call field philosophy: that is, an immersive, collaborative and experiential mode of multispecies knowledge-production in real-world settings.<sup>4</sup> Encountering penguins, whose population is managed by conservation workers, corporations producing fertilisers, and guano producers in the Peruvian reserve Punta San Juan, Miranda engages in field philosophical work with the environment and with those who work with it, unfurling its surprising epistemologies.

Alinta Krauth's practice-based research demonstrates that the field is a means of ethical reshaping, as judgements and assumptions break apart according to the contingencies of relational enactments. Krauth's article describes her process of developing artworks for bats living in the rehabilitation centre she volunteers at. She develops a concept of enrichment beyond normative notions of sensory stimulation—the language common to animal rehabilitation and care—towards the enhancement of bat pleasure. In Krauth's practice, nonhuman animals become the main reference point. Bats challenge her assumptions and shift her expectations, either engaging with or ignoring the objects she creates to enrich their experiences in the enclosure.

<sup>4</sup> Brett Buchanan, Michelle Bastian and Matthew Chrulew, "Introduction: Field Philosophy and Other Experiments," *Parallax* 24, no. 4 (2018): 384.

This way, moving back-and-forth, Krauth develops her own situated ethics and tackles the notion of more-than-human aesthetics, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Killian O'Dwyer likewise grounds his research in his experience of being a volunteer, in this case for a medical crisis hotline. His article draws connections between telephonics, audio-visual communication technologies and animal suffering. As he asks how life and non-life “become mobilised by the affective or material registers of telecommunication,” O'Dwyer seeks out a more affective telehaptics. To un-do the many ways in which animals are ‘made electric’ and abstract by industrialisation, his research implores us to move beyond the visible and univocal. How, in his words, might we “feel with our ears” and “remain open to others”?

For this tenth-anniversary issue, what began as the most open-ended of open calls has found, over time, its form. Each article shares a common concern for more-than-human entanglement, albeit in highly diverse ways, and the authors each contribute to a broader and ever-growing constellation of more-than-human research. In their ambition to *think with* others, as well as with their own situatedness, these articles challenge the anthropocentrism of normative knowledge-production. Instead, they push at the borders of our inherited epistemic limits and thresholds into a more speculative and generative domain. In their gestures towards recognition and thinking-with, these essays invite social transformation, with an activist inflection, as they aim towards more-than-human flourishing. Embracing the experiences of oppressed nonhuman species and individuals, they may be considered acts of becoming minoritarian which, in Brian Massumi's words, “potentially erase[s] the paranoia of the other ... [and] enable[s] a becoming-active of everybody, against the separative becomings-reactive” of crises that can no longer be ignored.<sup>5</sup> To ‘become-active’ in more-than-human ways is certainly no simple task, but the examples of knowledge produced by the critical research and field practices within this issue may help us to better engage with situated micropolitical demands to decentre the human and recognise the agency of more-than-human entities.

The articles are complemented by book reviews covering recent multidisciplinary engagements with practices of thinking, living and creating *with* other-than-human agents. Leanne Darnbrough writes about *Estado Vegetal: Performance and Plant-Thinking* (ed. Giovanni Aloï, University of Minnesota Press, 2023) which addresses the issues of radical alterity, versatility and polivocality of the other, taking inspiration in interacting with various forms of vegetal life. Alexandra A. Bichara looks at *Myth and Environmentalism: Arts of Resilience for a Damaged Planet* (ed. Esther Sánchez-Pardo and Maria Porrás Sánchez, Routledge, 2024) and highlights new developments in environmental perspectives drawing from Indigenous narratives. Hussein Boon focuses on *Artificial Intelligence and Music Ecosystem* (ed. Martin Clancy, Routledge, 2022), tackling a wide spectrum of problems tied to the use of AI in music production, including the future of democratised

<sup>5</sup> Brian Massumi, *The Principle of Unrest: Activist Philosophy in the Expanded Field* (London: Open Humanities Press), 64.

creativity and the fear of degrading professional competence.

We hope you will enjoy reading about the diversity of more-than-human perspectives and agencies in the tenth anniversary volume of *Pulse: the Journal of Science and Culture*. ▣

–Katya Krylova & Siobhan Leddy