Introduction

Queering the Non/Human

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Non/Human

Allow us to direct your attention to the front cover of this book – its face if you like. What do you see? A buoyant smile and a pair of large eyes staring eagerly back at you? What affects does the appearance of such an image engender in you? Does your own mouth fashion a smile in return, for example? Is the image before you human? What critical registers are you using to determine such a response? What does the term 'human' and its so-called inverse, 'nonhuman', mean to you? How have you come upon such knowledge? What cultural resonances, in other words, inform your views? At this stage you might be wondering what queer theory has to do with all of this. It is in this moment of wondering – of wondering about wondering – that queering the non/human begins because 'queering', as Jeffrey J. Cohen reminds us, 'is at its heart a process of wonder' (2003, xxiv). The above questions are central to this book's engagement with a range of issues regarding identification, categorisation, normativity, relationality, ethics, and practices of theorising. Two questions underpin authors' work, namely: what might it mean to queer the non/human? By extension, what effects might such an act have on our conception of the figure of the Human; on queer theory's relationship with such a category and its exclusions, limits and excesses; and on understandings of the 'queer' and 'theory' in queer theory?

Axolotl by Karl Grimes is an image of a dead salamander, preserved in alcohol. The image forms part of Grimes's collection, *Future Nature*, a photographic and filmic compendium of animal embryos and foetuses in glass jars, originally used in scientific and medical experiments and later discovered by the artist in research collections in the Tornblad Institute in Lund, the Hubrecht Laboratory in Utrecht and the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin.[1] Although reproduced in

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1 *Future Nature* was first exhibited at 5th @ Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, Ireland in 2002. For further information about the work of Karl Grimes, see <http://www.karlgrimes.net>. See also Grimes (2007).

black and white here, Grimes employs a sumptuous array of colours to lavishly illuminate his subjects, a 'highly colourful carnival of animals' in his words (2006). Taking tiny specimens, Grimes transforms them into 'larger than life' prints set starkly against the clinical white walls of the art gallery. *Future Nature* marks the continuation of the artist's engagement with discursive categories, such as nature, culture, science, art, temporality and the Human. Describing the exhibition as 'both requiem and genesis', Grimes brings together life and death in this image through his attendance to animals that are 'constantly on the verge of becoming … yet frozen in time and death' (2006). Relationality is tantamount for Grimes. He revitalises what have been forgotten as mere scientific remains, turning former objects into present subjects, in his 'photographic portraiture', inviting viewers to meditate on matters pertaining to ethics and representation (2006).

One cannot help but notice, what Grimes terms, 'the anthropomorphic allure' of *Axolotl* achieved 'through details of gesture and expression' (2006). It is almost as if the salamander is moving towards us, about to speak. Face to face as it were. 'How can an animal look you in the face?' Jacques Derrida asks (2002, 377). While naked he is prompted, by his cat gazing at him, to think about the place of the animal in the Western philosophical tradition, the violence of naming and what it might mean to respond as opposed to react to an animal. What then are we to make of this almost-address by a dead salamander? 'The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it', writes Derrida, 'Thinking perhaps begins there' (397). And so it begins here. Through its anthropomorphic potential, *Axolotl* moves viewers to reflect on boundaries in its challenging of binaries pertaining to nature/culture, living/dead, beautiful/grotesque, desire/disgust, subject/object, presence/absence and human/nonhuman. Is this simply putting the animal to use for the purposes of poring over the ins and outs of the Human, thus reinscribing by default the Human at the centre of this very meditation? Perhaps. Yet in its irreducible difference, *Axolotl* insists that we respond to it on its own terms – partly ascribed by Grimes certainly – but also set down by the animal voluptuously appearing before us, resplendent in its cacophony of contradictions; a signifier of the différantial relation between the Human and the nonhuman (Derrida 1973).

The use of the word 'non/human' in this book's title is both deliberate and precise; deliberate in our employment of 'non/human' rather than 'human/nonhuman' and precise in our strategic placing of the slash between, as well as, making it part of 'non' and 'human'.[2] Recognising the trace of the nonhuman in

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2 Another variation, 'non/hu/man', accentuates the patriarchal mechanics of the Human. See Griselda Pollack's discussion of the Human within the context of Bracha L. Ettinger's matrixial borderspace (2006, 27–8).

every figuration of the Human also means being cognisant of the exclusive and excluding economy of discourses relating to what it means to be, live, act or occupy the category of the Human (Butler 2004a, 356). This has real material effects. For every 'livable life' and 'grievable death' (Butler 2004b, xv), there are a litany of unmentionable, unassimilable Others melting into the space of the nonhuman. Other configurative prefixes – 'in-' and 'sub-' – also work here, however, 'non-' illustrates all too well how norms operate through, while necessitating, a relation fabricated on negation, denial, resistance and rejection. If the Human is a mobile category, its mutations are not always in the service of inclusivity (Fuss 1996). As 'The Posthuman Manifesto' puts it, 'All humans are not born equal, but it is too dangerous not to pretend that they are' (Pepperell 2003, 177). The slash, positioned as it is between and in-between simultaneously, raises the issue of 'limits, margins, borders, and boundaries' (Fuss 1991), but also that of instability, fluidity, reliance and vulnerability. 'Binary logic', according to Vicki Kirby, 'undoes its truths even as it affirms them, so that an effective way to displace and intervene into what appears to be a repressive mono-logic is to consider its essential perversity' (1999, 28). So while the slash opens out onto – facilitates even – explorations of literal, figural, metaphorical and material relationships, transmigrations and hybridisations between the Human and the nonhuman (Haraway 2003; Hurley 2005/2006; Mills 2003), its positioning marks out the impossibility of applying a hermetic seal to the distinction between – however temporary and shifting – what gets to count as Human and nonhuman (Haraway 2006).

There is much in this collection that can be characterised as 'posthumanism' in the contributors' critiques of the exclusions prefiguring any exposition of the Human as an ontological category (Badmington 2000; Halberstam and Livingston 1995; Butler 2004c); explorations of taxonomies pertaining to species and affiliations between 'human' and 'nonhuman' animals (Haraway 2007; Kuzniar 2006; Wolfe 2003); as well as considerations of our encounters with, reliance on and thoughts about technological advancements and their impact on conceptions of the Human (Parisi 2004; Graham 2002; Kac 2007). Yet we use 'non/human' rather than 'post/human' in the title of this book. While many of our authors share an affinity with posthumanist efforts to critique normative anthropocentrism – or what Alice Kuzniar terms 'anthronormativity' – that prescribes and proscribes, we are wary of privileging one epistemological term over another in case we displace one 'proper object' (the Human, Humanism) and in the process enact a new normative paradigm (the Posthuman, Posthumanism) (Butler 1997). This is not to claim that either humanism or posthumanism are inherently normative – much critically pertinent work is done within each (Badmington 2003; Smith, Gallardo-C. and Klock, 2004; Joy and Neufeld 2007; Janicaud 2005 [2002]) – but rather to mention that too strong an investment in

one *or* the other can have the potentially damaging effect of instantiating a new binary. *Queering the Non/Human* stages an encounter at the interface between the two, facilitated by the term 'queer' which appears in the contributors' work variously as a noun, adjective, verb and adverb.

Queer/ing

Does this make queer the proper object of this collection? Perhaps. Yet it is only a proper object in so far as the contributors' relation to it is an improper one, perversely challenging the very epistemological ground – shaky though it might be – on which it uncomfortably rests (Ahmed 2006). There is an urgency to queer, a forcefulness and an insistence on its own significance. This is partly because provisionality characterises uses of the word 'queer' and ambivalence marks attachments to it as an identity category, political positionality, methodological framework, or system of knowledge production. This centres on the issue of utility and the recognition that, while no term can be capacious enough to represent all those to whom it purports, it is necessary to work with what is available to us in the present moment in the pursuit of change (Butler 1993, 223–42). A spirit of critique underpins much queer theorising in addition to a respect for difference, dedication to self-reflexivity and drive towards revision (Johnson and Henderson 2005; McRuer 2006). This is facilitated by an openness to other epistemological tools, the incorporation of new insights and a commitment to forgoing ownership of the word 'queer' (Butler 1993, 228), or indeed becoming owned by it in the process (Giffney 2007, 206–207). This engenders an uncertain and uneasy relationship with the term 'queer', which comes to signify the continual unhinging of certainties and the systematic disturbing of the familiar. The 'touch of the queer' has uncanny – 'disillusioning, demystifying' – effects with queer itself becoming altered in the process of denaturalising its objects (Dinshaw 1995, 77). The unremitting emphasis in queer theoretical work on fluidity, über-inclusivity, indeterminacy, indefinability, unknowability, the preposterous, impossibility, unthinkability, unintelligibility, meaninglessness and that which is unrepresentable is an attempt to undo normative entanglements and fashion alternative imaginaries.[3] Far from being a narcissistic exercise in abstraction, this represents a concerted effort to make sense of, and make space in, a world that has given up on us. As Donna J.

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3 See Epps 2001; Smyth 1992; Freccero 2006, 6; Stacey and Street 2007, 1; Morland and Willox 2005, 5; Burger and Kruger 2001; Edelman 2004; Dowson 2000, 165; Haver 1997; Winnubst 2007; Noble 2006, 3 respectively.

Haraway's statement makes clear: 'Theory is not about matters distant from the lived body; quite the opposite. Theory is *anything* but disembodied' (1992, 295).

Queer is utilised in this book as a critical theory 'to challenge and break apart conventional categories' (Doty 1993, xv) pertaining to the 'non/human', including the long-standing divide between 'nature' and 'culture' (Barad 2007). Queer is employed here as a collection of methodologies to unpick binaries and reread gaps, silences and in-between spaces. It is this volume's intention to further broaden and diversify the scope of queer; to insist as Donald E. Hall does that 'there is no "queer theory" in the singular, only many different voices and sometimes overlapping, sometimes divergent perspectives that can loosely be called "queer theories"' (2003, 5). If this book is concerned with queering the non/human, it is also about submitting the 'queer' in queerness/ queering/queer theory/queer studies to examination. Despite its slipperiness, its unremitting resistance to categorisation and practitioners' insistence that queer is a 'doing' rather than a 'being', queer theory has been described recently as 'a tradition that has managed somehow to have acquired a past' (Halley and Parker 2007, 428). While there may be a reluctance to say what queer 'is', there are assuredly assumptions circulating about what queer 'does'. These concern genealogies, aims, priorities, interconnections with activism and other theories and fields, and the thorny issue of who gets to decide on all of this.

This puts us in mind of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's pronouncement that 'there are important senses in which "queer" can signify only *when attached to the first person* … all it takes – to make the description "queer" a true one is the impulse *to* use it in the first person' (Sedgwick 1993, 9, original emphasis). The personal, rooted as it is in subjective experience, undergirding invocations of the term 'queer' has consequences for how queer theory is conceptualised, because queer is nothing if not relational in its formulations. Queer functions variously for the contributors as an interpellating gesture that calls on them to resist, reclaim, invent, oppose, defy, make trouble for, open up, enrich, facilitate, disturb, produce, undermine, expose, make visible, critique, reveal, move beyond, transgress, subvert, unsettle, challenge, celebrate, interrogate, counter, provoke and rebel. These are their words. While a good many of the aforementioned terms could be collapsed into a shorter, more seemly and manageable list, we have chosen not to do this as queer is anything but seemly or manageable. This, for us, is one of the refreshing if sometimes frustrating facets of queer – practitioners' outright refusal to form a consensus around vocabulary or rules of usage.

The term 'postqueer' is appearing with more frequency in the past couple of years (Noble 2006; Freccero 2007, 491), as commentators begin to think about queer theory in terms of moments, waves, phases, or stages. What is the implication of such a move (if there is one) for this volume? 'Post' makes us

think of prepositions such as 'after' (in the shadow of queer, working within the context of its presence, being haunted by it) and 'beyond' (transgressing queer, improving on it, submitting oneself to a developmental sequence). 'Post' also bears a critical relation to that which it is attached, a tactility in which queer is interrogated as an ontology in itself, scrutinised for the exclusions through which it comes into being as a discursive field.[4] A queering of queer theory we might say. Looking at this last example, although it is not a descriptor that we or the authors have adopted, it might be pertinent to use the moniker 'postqueer' to describe what is happening in this volume. For us, queer in its interactions with other theoretical frameworks – such as feminism, psychoanalysis, critical race studies, postcolonial theory, posthumanism, deconstruction, disability studies, or crip theory to name but a few – enacts the same critical registers that a postqueer position might claim (for now) to inaugurate. This invokes Karen Barad's notion of a '"diffractive" methodological approach' in which she reads 'insights from … different areas of study through one another'. Like Barad, *Queering the Non/Human* 'provide[s] a transdisciplinary approach that remains rigorously attentive to important details of specialised arguments within a given field, in an effort to foster constructive engagements across (and a reworking of) disciplinary boundaries' (2006, 25). For this reason, we have chosen to retain queer for this volume, well aware that this book emerges at a particular historical juncture and further that its chapters will provoke discussions that may well lead those who read them in exciting directions that we cannot yet bear witness to – nor would we wish to proscribe – in advance.

Queer/in(g) the Non/Human

In *Medieval Identity Machines*, Jeffrey J. Cohen recognises subversive potential in queer theory precisely because 'Queer theory is undoubtedly the most radical challenge yet posed to the immutability of sexual identities.' In spite of this, Cohen is puzzled that 'a critical movement predicated upon the smashing of boundary should limit itself to the small contours of human form, as if the whole of the body could be contained in the porous embrace of the skin' (2003, 40). For him, 'The body is not human (or at least, it is not only human)'; neither, he insists, 'is it inhabited by an identity or sexuality that is unique to or even contained fully within the flesh' (41). *Queering the Non/Human* takes as its starting point Cohen's challenge to the anthropocentrism and humanism that are inherent in much queer theorising. This collection

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4 'Post' as it is envisioned here bears somewhat of an affinity with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's use of 'beside' (2003, 8–9).

of essays is explicitly cross-disciplinary, drawing on contributions from the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. In the first instance, this book aims to bridge the divide between the humanities (as 'academic') and the social and natural sciences (as 'useful') by drawing on analyses from all three fields that deconstruct this distinction. This volume further scrutinises claims that the social sciences are inherently social constructionist and therefore radical, while the natural sciences are marred by absolutism and by extension staid (Kirby 2001). The authors gathered together here employ, what Cohen terms, 'a hybrid methodology' (2003, xxiv) as they engage with disciplines as diverse as philosophy, psychoanalysis, politics, religious studies, medieval studies, art history, critical race studies, literary studies, animal studies, sociology, science studies (including quantum physics, biology and technoscience), classics, film studies, LGBT studies, phenomenology, environmental studies, feminism and gender studies, cultural studies, music and history.

From the divine (Christ) to the diabolical (antichrist), dogs to starfish, werewolves to vampires, murderous dolls to cartoons, corpses to bacteria, nanoengineering to genetics, the brittlestar to biomimesis, the incest taboo to the death drive, the chapters examine what queering the non/human might entail. While this book is designed then, not to reach a consensus, but rather to encourage a polylogue oriented towards proliferating re-workings of queer, a number of themes may be read as organising the narrative. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 can be read as a conversation about the use of theory to articulate queer promises and contradictions. Chapters 4 and 5 use religious (Christian) iconography in different ways to focus on the profound debt that heteronormativity owes to religion as a normative institution, while identifying the potential for queer resistances nestled within the contradictions inherent in those discourses. Chapters 6 through 11 all focus on the nonhuman as animal – whether the mythical (werewolves, vampires), mundane and familiar (dogs, starfish), or microscopic (bacteria). Chapter 12 extends animal queering to meditate on the in/animate in cartoon representations, 'nature' documentaries and dolls in the horror film. Chapters 13, 14 and 15 offer, as it were, the juxtaposition of the 'outer limits' yet 'already here' of queer through discussions of nanoengineering, ethics, and necrosexuality.

The Human, invoked as it is through a web of discourses and norms, operates not just descriptively but also prescriptively and proscriptively. *Queering the Non/Human* begins this interdisciplinary engagement by asking 'What qualifies as a human, as a human subject, as human speech, as human desire?' (Butler 2004a, 356). This volume explores how the Human acts as an umbrella signifier for a diverse amalgam of acts, identities and bodily manifestations by attending to the 'human' body – its constitutive elements, limits, exclusions, excesses

and borders – within a range of cultural, scientific, theoretical and historical contexts. The contributors do this by tracing 'the exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human' (Butler 2004b, xv) by looking at this category within discourses of the outer limits of the Human. Vicki Kirby's '(Con)founding "the Human": Incestuous Beginnings' is concerned to point out that most social scientific and humanities theory is based on the premise and emphasis of the 'human' as product and process of cultural structures (power, for instance), and that it is these structures that conceive and produce 'bodily contours' – that is, the actual body. In this way, uncertainty, generativity, diversity and potentiality are all located within the Cultural. Kirby interrogates the limits of the nature/culture divide by attending to the question of 'initial conditions' through a discussion of Judith Butler's representation of nature and culture as discrete yet interrelated systems, in a dexterous reading of Butler's formulation of the lesbian phallus. Kirby's query is this: what about evidence from the natural sciences, including medicine? What might they tell us about origins that do not fit neatly into Culture?

Contributors attend to what might constitute nonhuman, posthuman, subhuman, transhuman, superhuman and inhuman perspectives, and discuss moreover how these terms intersect with and diverge from the monstrous, the Other, the abject and the barbarous (Halberstam 1995; Bildhauer and Mills 2003). In 'Queering the Un/Godly: Christ's Humanities and Medieval Sexualities', Robert Mills argues – through an analysis of three-faced/headed sculptures of Christ, afterlife representations of sodomites and monsters, and the blurring of the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman in movable, mechanical icons of the divine – that these assemblages of human and nonhuman, inorganic and flesh can be seen as cyborgian, posthuman reconfigurations of the body. His chapter moreover is cleverly arranged in a tripartite structure, perversely mimicking the trifacial sculptures of Christ discussed. Mills refuses to make his visions cohere neatly in a heteronormative fashion. Instead he insists that readers engage with his chapter on its own terms and forwards not only a pluralised conception of the past but also suggests in its reading practice and presentation the potential beginnings of an écriture queer. Phillip A. Bernhardt-House's 'The Werewolf as Queer, the Queer as Werewolf, and Queer Werewolves' provides an impressively wide-ranging overview of the representation of werewolves and offers an examination of this figure as a site for exploring discourses of sexuality in historical source materials through to contemporary treatments of lycanthropy in popular culture. Bernhardt-House argues that in its hybridity and transgression of species boundaries the werewolf, like the vampire, has become a signifier of queer, defying the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy as much as it contests that of the human/nonhuman. Bernhardt-House also submits

queer theory to 'the yellow-eyed gaze of the werewolf' and insists that such a move 'questions the plausibility of any overarching theory at all'.

The authors consider the status conferred on the Human as a proper object by probing the desire for the Human, the desire for recognition *as* Human and how desire itself becomes prefigured in the pit of heteronormativity as an extension of the Human subject narrowly conceived, that is, the Human subject as analogous to heterosexuality. This is achieved partially through the authors' undertaking of analyses of 'the horror of uselessness', indeed 'the abhorrence of all that is not useful' that appears to pervade heteronormative understandings of the Human subject (Winnubst 2007, 85). Noreen Giffney's 'Queer Apocal(o)ptic/ism: The Death Drive and the Human' is concerned with the Human as a discursive category and its ideological and material effects. She considers what queer theory, read together with posthumanism and figured through the psychoanalytic concept of the death drive, might bring to discussions of the permeability, elasticity and (im)possible redundancy of the category of the Human. While reading Lee Edelman's *No Future* within the context of her neologism 'apocal(o)ptic/ism', Giffney argues that queer theory has always been haunted by the death drive, driven both towards its own 'death' and by the knowledge that it will – must – end. 'Necrosexuality' by Patricia MacCormack considers corpses as the in-between of human and inhuman, 'both and neither human/nonhuman – the *were* that do and don't count.' After tracing discourses of 'necrophilia' as an ontological category through medical and academic writing and in popular culture, she shifts her attention to representations of what she terms 'non-aggressive' necrophilia in Italian horror cinema. Employing Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's Body without Organs, Deleuze's Leibnizian fold and Guattari's massacred body, MacCormack explores how these films' presentation of necrophilia has the potential to challenge how we think about gender, sexuality, embodiment and ethics. MacCormack's analysis rests ultimately on an examination of desire; of the viewer's relation with horror through a discussion of her concept, 'cinesexuality', which is expressed for her 'not in what one watches but how one is altered'. In 'Queering the Beast: The Antichrists' Gay Wedding', Erin Runions critiques the apocalyptic logic that holds together homophobia in the US (in the form of denying gay marriage) with the unconscionable and dehumanising tactics of the war on terror (such as torture). She offers a nuanced analysis of the juxtaposition of desires – on the one hand a Christian apocalyptic desire for a glorious nation and people to come, and on the other hand the apocalyptic desire of terrorists or queers for the destruction, as antichrist, of the American way of life. Runions traces the rhetorical processes through which this latter desire is rendered in/human, thus further dividing the good (human godly) Christian from the bad (inhuman)

antichrist. Ultimately, she seeks a queer antichrist as a way of interrogating the normative sanctions and censures inherent in contemporary Christian discourses of temporality, family, nation and humanity.

Queering the Non/Human showcases important potentialities for rethinking identity, desire, subjectivity and embodiment 'in radically different, off-center, and revealing ways' (Burger and Kruger 2001, xiii) through a widening of the interrogative lens to question, for example, the narrowness with which sexed embodiment is determined if considered only from anthropocentric vantage points (Hird 2004; Colebrook 2000). In 'Animal Trans', Myra J. Hird undertakes an analysis of trans to argue that human normative sanctions rely upon an erroneous misconception of nonhuman sex dimorphism and sexuality. She insists that much queer theorising about sexuality, irrespective of its use of nonhuman behaviour evidence, effectively reinscribes the socio-cultural onto the nonhuman. She asks us to consider, instead, how we might understand trans in humans from a bacterial perspective. The word 'queer' becomes a facilitative metaphor for talking about affective relations between human and nonhuman animals and for thinking about the animal as a symbol for representing non-normative love and the resistance to normative hegemonies. Alice Kuzniar's '"I Married My Dog": On Queer Canine Literature' considers the intense intimacy between humans and their pets, which has the potential to profoundly disturb the limit of both animal and human existence; that is, what it means to exist through relations with an Other. Through an analysis of writings by Rosalyn Drexler, Margaret Ross Kemp, Michael Field, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Jean Dutourd, J.R. Ackerley and Rebecca Brown and by focusing on the multiform ways in which the love of dogs has been employed as a code for same-sex desire, Kuzniar explores a range of issues pertaining to same-sex desire and how human/dog relations can function as a strategy to challenge, critique and subvert norms relating to sex, gender, species, desire, intimacy and love. The facilitative functions of queer are also evident in Robert Azzarello's 'Unnatural Predators: Queer Theory Meets Environmental Studies in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', which argues for queer theory as a productive site to bring together the politics of human sexuality and the politics of the 'other-than-human world' of environmental studies. Through a vivid and provocative analysis of Renfield's obsession with food chains coupled with Dracula's queer predation, he argues that this queer eroticism may be harnessed to build a queer environmental studies.

The contributors meditate on the ethical implications of discussing animals without simply anthropomorphising them in the service of a narcissistic propping-up of the Human. Through an interrogation of Emmanuel Levinas's encounter with Bobby, a dog he comes across during his time in a concentration camp, Karalyn Kendall's 'The Face of a Dog: Levinasian Ethics and Human/Dog Co-

evolution' pushes the human/animal encounter further to consider the possibilities for a queer co-evolution of the human–nonhuman. Kendall meditates not only on the complex, messy and largely unrecognised co-evolution of living organisms, but presses us to think about what kinds of ethics this co-evolution precipitates. Eva Hayward's 'Lessons from a Starfish' discusses starfish morphology and ontogeny (the so-called 'natural') alongside Antony and the Johnsons' song, 'The Cripple and the Starfish' (the supposedly 'cultural'), to offer a 'critical poetics' of embodiment, trans/formation and re-generation. By emphasising relationality, tactility and enfolding, she asks us to resist anthropomorphising the starfish to think about what it might mean to be 'not like a starfish … [but] of a starfish … not trapped in [a] body … [but] of [a] body.' In 'Animating Revolt/Revolting Animation: Penguin Love, Doll Sex and the Spectacle of the Queer Non-Human', Judith Halberstam disturbs the human/nonhuman distinction through an evocative analysis of penguin love, doll sex and transbiology. She creatively conjoins three filmic genres ('nature' documentary, cartoon, horror film) to argue that the kind of 'transbiology' theorised by Donna J. Haraway and Sarah Franklin as new conceptions of the body within the 'new technologies' of cloning and cell regeneration, is already pre-figured in horror film and cartoon animation. While the transbiological is often absorbed into normative figurations of the Human, the heteronormative and the familial, Halberstam argues that popular culture imagines rich alternative politics of embodiment, reproduction and desire and, as such, presents a valuable avenue for queer resistance.

In their chapters, the authors also reflect on the rapidly expanding reach of technological advancements and how they impact on practices of knowing, desiring and relating. In 'The Nanoengineering of Desire', Luciana Parisi continues her innovative thinking on desire, sexual difference and the limits of the Human. Her discussion begins with identifying a paradox of nanoengineering: the more it purports to control the reproduction of life, the more it challenges what we understand life to be as well as our relationship with nature. Parisi argues that nanoengineering renders the organism dependent upon the inorganic in ways that eschew the Western understanding of technology defined within the Human domain; that is, created and controlled by Humans. She develops this argument through a timely analysis of the virtual-actual developed by both Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. Karen Barad's 'Queer Causation and the Ethics of Mattering' explores biomimicry as a springboard from which to consider the limits to which the human/nonhuman divide might be pushed. Barad skilfully interrogates the growing corporate mantra to 'innovate through nature', that is, to mimic nature's own bountiful creations and innovations for human progress. With Elizabeth Wilson, Donna J. Haraway and Myra J. Hird, Barad asks us to consider embodiment and discursivity from a brittlestar perspective. Through

her well-known concept of 'agential realism', Barad invites us to consider bodies as neither within nor outside of the world but rather as part of the world. As such, Barad calls for an epistemology that is neither realist nor relativist, but based on the recognition of 'the inseparability of knowing, being, and doing'. From this vantage point, Barad argues that biomimicry creates assemblages that mimic and adjust the entanglements of objects in nature that we study.

The chapters included here raise questions about received notions and uses of 'queer' and 'theory' and the relationship between the two. And so we come to the chapter that opens this collection: Claire Colebrook's 'How Queer Can You Go? Theory, Normality, and Normativity', in which she distinguishes between queer critiques, queer studies and queer theory. She argues that analyses are typically unable to move beyond the act of distancing that theorising necessitates. Through a detailed exploration of Gilles Deleuze's work on difference, Colebrook argues for a queer theory that returns to a 'higher Platonism'; a theory 'that identifies its orientation as essentially queer', one which rests not simply on a 'destabilisation or solicitation of norms, but [serves to create] differences that are no longer grounded in either the subject or generating life'. Following Colebrook, we might keep the following questions in mind while reading *Queering the Non/Human*. Is queer theory a theory for, about, or by queers? If queer theory is characterised by a 'doing', is it one of theorising on behalf of or in the service of those marked out as queer? Is queer thus a methodological extension of personal or political identifications? In this case, are we talking about queer theory or queer studies? Is a distinction helpful or are we in danger of instantiating a new binary and hierarchical relationship between the two? If we conceive of queer as an adjective or adverb that describes and propels the workings of theory, what might it mean to theorise queerly? In this instance, does queer theory entail the queering of theory? This ultimately leads our contributors to question what it means to theorise. Discussions of how we *do* queer theory invoke considerations of *what* we do with queer theory. How, in other words, does queer act on theory and how in turn is it acted upon? The association between the two is not so much an active/passive relation as an intra-active one; their enfolding an act of 'becoming-otherwise.' *Queering the Non/Human* then is not about applying queer theory to a passive non/human object awaiting change to be enacted upon it by an extraterrestrial force. This book begins rather with the conscious recognition that change is always an enfolding; an enfolding from which we as 'agents' are inextricable.[5]

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5 Readers will notice that in the last couple of lines we bring together Karen Barad's 'agential realism' and Claire Colebrook's Deleuzian proclivities to produce a contradictory statement about 'agents' and 'becoming-otherwise'. This is a nod to the contradictions that characterise *Queering the Non/Human*. Such contradictions are, in our opinion, one of this book's major strengths.

Acknowledgements

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