

There are no Extinctions in Relations without Bodies

On the Violence of Flat Relational Ontologies

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Abstract

This essay considers violence and extinction to articulate the limits of relational, and to a degree also non-relational, flat ontologies. It suggests that relational ontologies cannot register violence because they privilege relations over bodies. Given their contention of ecological progressiveness after nature, this essay focuses on Donna Haraway's and Rosi Braidotti's relational posthuman ontologies, while also responding to Timothy Morton's non-relational, object-oriented ecology. It cautions that rather than being politically progressive—as postnature ecologies claim to be—not respecting boundaries violates bodies. The essay contends that promulgating blurred boundaries as ecological and feminist, as Haraway and Braidotti do, is especially detrimental given the extinction of species and the gender-based disenfranchisement of bodily autonomy. In this *PARSE Journal* issue on “Violence: Environment”, I argue that if there is only environment, there cannot be any acknowledgement of violence, and that the denial of violence itself constitutes violence. I contend that in flat relational ecologies biodiversity is erased.

As Haraway blurs relations and materials between life and art, I contrast her approach to figures and representation with those in contemporaneous writings by Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze. I engage with Haraway's shapeshifting between metaphors and matter from the “Cyborg Manifesto” in postmodernism to some more recent outputs, observing an intentional entanglement in contradictions and an emphasis on construction that is politically problematic as well as anthropocentric.

Because Benedict de Spinoza is often embraced by flat relational ontologies for his emphasis on immanence, he is woven in throughout the essay as an interlocutor. His immanence with bodies and affects is contrasted to Braidotti's monism of immanence without bodies and without affects. I suggest that, counter-intuitively, flat relational ontologies cannot account for affects and affections and observe that Morton's ecology with objects, too, is without affects. I propose that whereas Spinoza's ontology of immanence of Nature/God is half flat because it is populated by bodies with natures, Haraway's ontology is flat and not flat, symmetrical and asymmetrical, in line with her pursuit of contradictions.

Introduction

Posthumanist, vitalist and new materialist flat, relational ontologies have been criticised by critical animal studies scholars. Most notably, Zipporah Weisberg has called out that “problematic elements of posthumanist thought include its fetishization of boundary dissolution, hybridity, and technoscience; its derogation of species-integrity; its conflation of creaturely essence with essentialism; and its frequent lapses into self-indulgent theorizing at the expense of genuine ethical analysis.”^[1] Other objections of evasiveness have been summarized by the feminist media scholar Sue Thornham as follows: “theorists like Braidotti and Haraway are trying to have it both ways: to be both situated and multiple.... They can also be accused of replacing a narrative of liberation directed at change in the real world with a utopian fantasy whose notions of ‘embodiment’ and ‘situatedness’ are slippery in the extreme.”^[2] These warnings have so far been without much resonance in the context of art, where emphasis on the agency of matter fits seamlessly into the agenda that artworks and their materials have an agency of their own. Another reason why Haraway especially has mostly avoided scrutiny may be because she evades being situated by generating entanglements in conscious contradictions, contradictorily so even in claiming situatedness. In this metaphorical “shapeshifting” of assuming several contradictory positions at once of being simultaneously situated and not situated there is no position for which she could be held accountable. While thoughts and their environments of course change over time that is, the generation of thought is relational there is a consistency in Haraway’s professed rhetorical strategy of contradiction. Contradictions can function like a bunker and shield the contradictor. The gap between a demand for situatedness and a concomitant avoidance of being situated has only become wider with Haraway’s increased emphasis on entanglements in her shift from posthumanist, which she perceived as too restrictive,^[3] to “compost-ist.”^[4]

The contexts of flat ontologies differ and are partly motivated by contrasting philosophies. Flat ontologies of entanglements, symbioses and matter are relational and materialist, whereas flat, object-oriented ontologies are anti-relational and anti-materialist. They also diverge in their approach towards realism.^[5] A flat ontology treats all things as equal: “no entity, whether artificial or natural, symbolic or physical, possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects”, the philosopher Levi Bryant notes with respect to non-relational, non-materialist object-oriented ontology.^[6] Relational flat ontologies are non-hierarchical too, although they elevate relations above what they are relations between. Since relations are foundational, any entity that coalesces is secondary.

But while flat ontologies have shifted the emphasis away from anthropocentrism, they are also not for any thing or any body. Flat ontologies do not hierarchically differentiate between an endangered animal or plant, a human-made plastic bag, a quantum, a code, a dog, a hedge; between an image and what is in an image, a character and an actor, art and life, other-than-humans and humans. Posthuman ecologies are also *post-nonhuman*. They do not distinguish between the different kinds of affects and effects of violence by figures in images and on the planet. But while a medium can only be destroyed, a body can be violated.

The seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza is frequently invoked by flat relational ontologies, but for Spinoza the flatness of immanence is populated by bodies with a nature whose power of acting can be increased or diminished by an encounter. According to Spinoza, a body can only be destroyed from the outside. Violence involves a body being negatively affected or destroyed. The violator cannot be part of the same body as the violated. With their emphasis on relations as constitutive there are, however, no bodies with natures in flat relational ontologies. In this essay I suggest that the violence of a flat relational ontology lies in its denial that there is a body that could be violated. While denying a relation can also constitute violence, the essay focuses more on the violence that is denied when everything is regarded as a relation. There is no accounting for violence and the extinction of bodies and species in this flatness.

(Con)Fusion: Haraway

The science and technology scholar Haraway pursues a relational ontology in that she opposes that “boundaries and natures are set in advance of the entanglements of becoming together.”^[7] Boundaries should be blurred: those between bodies, between bodies and their environments, between humans and nonhumans, between species. Already in her “Cyborg Manifesto” from the mid-1980s Haraway pushed the “confusion of boundaries” beyond the postmodernist play of signifiers into those between rhetoric and materiality, fact and fiction, humans and nonhumans, biology and technology, consciously conflating human arts and nonhuman life, culture and nature.^[8] In Haraway’s entanglements without bodies, there are no entities with a nature, no distinctions between the diverse natures of entities like microbes, matter or metaphors. In contrast to the contention that relations are substantive, for Spinoza, there are bodies, and these have a nature.

The cultural studies philosopher Susan Bordo pointed out that when Haraway had relayed the “fragmented postmodern body through the image of the Cyborg”, this was nevertheless deployed as a metaphor.^[9] Haraway, who had written her doctoral thesis in the early 1970s on how “metaphors of organicism”^[10] engender experiments in experimental biology, described the cyborg as a conflation of fact and fiction.^[11] A hybrid connotes a body made up of two separate bodies that though separate are one as well. But unlike for Spinoza, for whom a body is on the one hand autonomous in its affects and affections and on the other is part of the substance of God/Nature, Haraway not only obscures how who is what, but also slides between the worlds in which they are so: they are one and two materially as well as in the imagination, adding associations and blurring boundaries between every thing while also contending that these entities without boundaries can meet “couplings between organism and machine”^[12] to be simultaneously one thing as well as two and each other’s “companion”.^[13] These fusions flirt with being a con: they are (con)fusing to contrive a hybrid in language.

Haraway defined the cyborg as an image that is a hybrid of half imagination and half materiality.^[14] But is bringing an image from the human imagination into materiality not a case of ultimate human control?^[15] This fusion of image and materiality, of imagination and fact, does not allow for any relations of bodies in images, of bodies of images, or between bodies in life such as how the images relate to the material that they have filmed and are a part of. But it matters if violence takes place in art or life, or if there is a relation between both. While images are immanent to life, they are also bodies of their own. There is a conflation of bodies that can become extinct and those who cannot. Neither images nor cyborgs can become extinct. An eagle is different to a drone and the violence each can cause differs immensely in propriety and scale.

The cyborg is a meld of myth and materiality. Figures such as the cyborg, Haraway argued, precipitated the erasure of the notion of nature: “The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed.”^[16] She credited the myth of the cyborg for irreversibly undermining the notion of nature as an “organic whole”.^[17] Instead of “organic reproduction”,^[18] Haraway argued, the cyborg “skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature” and has no origin.^[19] She contended that the cyborg neither had nature as its origin, nor did it have a nature, which a Spinozean body would have. It can be objected, however, that the cyborg *does* have an origin in human imagination and technology.

Despite her opposition to origination, Haraway claimed ownership of the cyborg myth, setting the time of the apparently original blurring of the boundary between humans and nonhumans in postmodernism: “postmodernist strategies, like my cyborg myth, subvert myriad organic wholes (for example, the poem, the primitive culture, the biological organism). In short, the certainty of what counts as nature... is undermined, probably fatally.”^[20] But this boundary had already become permeable in early modernism, when, as philosopher Hasana Sharp suggests, the increasing “permeability of humanity”^[21] had prompted Spinoza to dig in his heels and double down on the boundary between human and nonhuman animals in order to avoid “affective contagion.”^[22]

Haraway has frequently reiterated her rejection of “organic wholeness” and her endorsement of entanglements.^[23] But is it not organic to be entangled? Like many postmodern posthumanists, Haraway spurned an apparently organic whole as transcending a “final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity.”^[24] To the reproach of organic wholeness one could object that something needs to be finite in order to be whole, and if nature is infinite it therefore cannot be whole: something cannot be whole and transcending at the same time. What was deemed organic, often served as a *bogey(nonhu)man* for being hierarchic and unprogressive, with the human family implausibly put forward as an example for organic nature.^[25] Here what was vilified as organic has been judged on human terms.

Wholeness had first been attributed to nature, only to then be dismantled in one fell swoop. But nature is not just one thing: for something to be organic or a part of nature does not mean that it is all one entity as Haraway’s dichotomy between the supposedly organic wholeness of nature and binary hybrids such as “naturecultures” suggest. In that sense, the cyborg “couplings between organism and machine” can also be seen as an inadvertent reduction.^[26] Haraway explains that through the conflation of nature and culture in hybrids “the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other”, presumably meaning that it is nature that is exploited by culture.^[27] But in the Anthropocene, it has become apparent that the effect of culture on nature has not been prevented by their conflation.

After the notion of wholeness had already been taken apart, over decades of poststructuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Haraway wrote her cyborg essay against other progressives who she described as technophobes nostalgic for an “imagined organic body”.^[28] In her rejection of environmentalism, former biologist Haraway was aligned with the sociologist Bruno Latour, who had developed his political ecology against environmental movements that regarded nature as a unit separate from human politics, and later had to distance himself from being invoked by climate deniers.^[29] Both Haraway and Latour contended that science is political and that scientists construct facts. As proponents of “naturalcultural ecologies”, they pitted ecology against environmentalism, and theory as practice (which political ecology was for Latour) against activism as practice.^[30]

After Immanuel Kant’s distancing from nature, and in distancing themselves from Kant to justifiably challenge any superiority of humans over other-than-humans, anti-anthropocentric flat ontologists have again separated themselves from nature by stating it does not exist. And what does not exist cannot be defended. “After decades and centuries of distancing ourselves from nature,” urges Greta Thunberg, “we should be fighting for nature.”^[31] When Fridays for Future call for listening to scientists they do not mean Haraway. The argument for ecology and against nature, from Latour to Haraway to Braidotti and Morton, throws the baby of natures out with the bathwater of nature. In this boundlessness, there is no way to register extinction. It is not about upholding a boundary between humans and nature, but about being able to acknowledge how biodiverse natures affect and are affected. Natures are biodiverse.

Entangled in Contradictions

For Haraway, to be evasive was a feminist strategy. Her playing with a text metaphorically and disconnected from the material relations that it claims obfuscated intentionally. Haraway’s evasiveness to a feminine fluidity was set against a masculinist stable Cartesian position of universal knowledge. Given that she regarded even interpretation as transcendence, ambiguity appeared as resistance.^[32] Like other feminists at the time, such as Teresa De Lauretis, Haraway embraced contradictions as means to hold off the oppressive straightjacket of an externally imposed unified identity that can be represented in an image. For De Lauretis, a feminist practice was to “live the contradiction”^[33] between what is externally represented and “the space-off, the elsewhere”.^[34] De

Lauretis wrote about contradictions in a non-contradictory manner and was clear about the reason for them: “contradiction or ambiguity on the semantic level brings about the possibility of making new expressive forms, new signifiers.”^[35]

Haraway, however, wrote contradictorily about contradictions. In the “Cyborg Manifesto” she still relayed contradictions in terms of postmodern irony: “Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true.”^[36] In phrases such as “ironic political myth” each term is disabled by the merging of all of them into one entity that is neither ironic, nor political, nor mythical.^[37] In “my ironic faith”, one term precludes the other.^[38] Rather than being ironic, Haraway unironically wrote that “ironies abound”,^[39] avoiding even a situatedness of irony despite putting irony forward as “a rhetorical strategy and a political method, one I would like to see more honoured within socialist-feminism.”^[40] But extolling rhetoric as politics can also be seen as a precursor to what she appears to challenge.

Haraway’s shiftiness was not limited to a text despite (and even because of) its liberal use of metaphors. Susan Bordo had already noted with respect to Haraway that evading locatability was “not merely a theoretical point.”^[41] “Shape-shifters”, Bordo relayed, avoided accountability since they were “continually ‘slip-slidin’ away”; through paradox, inversion, self-subversion, facile and intricate textual dance, they often present them-selves (maddeningly, to one who wants to enter into critical dialogue with them) as having it any way they want. They refuse to assume a shape for which they must take responsibility.”^[42] Bordo particularly pointed to the figure of the trickster that Haraway championed: “the postmodern body is the body of the mythological ‘Trickster,’ the shape-shifter.”^[43] Shapeshifting tricksters, celebrated in postmodernism and art of the twentieth century as progressive, are by now, over thirty years later, as Bordo had warned, quite clearly visible as not just figures contained in a theoretical text or a work of art, but as charlatan politicians who have exchanged politics for rhetoric. Their unworkable policies can only exist as fiction outside of the causal relations of the material planet. These rhetoricians merely pose as representatives of their citizens and are not interested in politics and policies beyond their personal advancement. Their shifty speeches neither have a relation to the reality they refer to, nor are they even consistent as pure rhetoric but nevertheless cause violent affects and effects.

Despite arguing against transcendence as another form of unity, the progressiveness of Haraway’s contradictory invocation of faith, even if unsituatedly ironic, is questionable, particularly when tricksters lead governments, evoke and order violence, and are worshipped in a cultish conflation of politician and messiah, sociopath and saint. Nearly forty years after the “Cyborg Manifesto”, human shapeshifting has become an opportunistic populist strategy pursued by far-right politicians who mirror what voters, donors and party members want to hear in order to advance solely themselves, which is neither socialist nor feminist.^[44] Like the empty signifiers of postmodernism only now embodied, personified, not mythical, and with agency British politicians garner headlines as shapeshifters.^[45] These appropriators of shapes (of former, non-shapeshifting politicians),^[46] and of credits (for the achievements of others), also advance “contradictory things” as Haraway suggests, although in their case these are authoritarianism and libertarianism.^[47]

The slipperiness that Bordo objected to with respect to Haraway is today associated with the greedy fictions of *cakeism*^[48] of “having your cake and eating it”, the impossibility of metaphorically having your cake continue to exist while eating it at the same time in the rhetoric of trickster politicians, intent on causing divisions and generating chaos so that the focus is on them as the narcissistic centre. These tricksters only produce uncertainty in others, but do not doubt their own grand narratives and narratives of grandness. The revolution, the anarchy and the chaos now come from the privileged, the right and the top.^[49] Contradiction and confusion

are spread to uphold power rather than as a strategy of progressive resistance.^[50] And what is the point of boundary confusion when it means that one cannot acknowledge when bodies invade and when they are invaded, when they violate and when they are violated? It matters if the breaching of the boundaries of any body, be that of a being or a discipline, engenders an affirmative opening or a destructive violation. Transgression, which has until recently been celebrated in art, is not a good in itself.^[51]

In contrast to even conservative British politicians distancing themselves from their former Prime Minister, because “what Boris said and what Boris did weren’t really related”,^[52] Haraway normalised the chasm between words and deeds, and associated also scientists with tricksters.^[53] She provocatively cast science as an ideology, a belief and an art, and proposed that only non-scientists believe in it.^[54] In a fusion of science and art into “high scientific arts”,^[55] and sliding between dimensions, Haraway stipulated that three-dimensional objects constitute the building blocks of rhetoric: “artefacts and facts are parts of the powerful art of rhetoric.”^[56] Explaining how science is rhetoric, Haraway opined that “the form in science is the artefactual-social rhetoric of crafting the world into effective objects... like microbes, quarks, and genes.”^[57] While science does construct the parameters of its research, in the conflation of materially and conceptually creating, this making of objects only applies to entities that cannot become extinct. Humans may shape their knowledge of things through the epistemology of science, but they do not make every body, every relation, every affect, every affection. To claim that humans make everything would be anthropocentric in the extreme.

Science is creative in that it forms its outputs according to constructed parameters, but it is neither politics nor art. Science and art differ from politics in that they do not have votes on their outputs.^[58] Science and art are not democratic. But it is expected of scientists to present a coherent argument, when art often raises questions rather than provide answers, even when the work is conceptually clear. In the uncritical import of the science critic Haraway into art, she appears as the arbiter of scientific facts despite her emphasis of their construction.^[59] At the same time, in the context of a discipline that works with tricksterism, shapeshifting remains revered, even when art also tries to counter the shifting of facts and disinformation in life with information and investigation as art.^[60] In the *discipline-shifting* of expansive confluences such as “Science Art Activisms”, the different disciplines with disparate ways of relating are immobilised by having to relate in all the other ways too and are flattened in equivalence.^[61] While the questioning of a universalising science that does not acknowledge its constructions continues to be apposite, the casting of scientific knowledge as premeditated, today evokes association with attacks against experts by contrarian populists who distribute disinformation for personal gain. By now, the violent effects of positing facts as constructed have become apparent and the late former “social constructionist” Latour, who was subsequently referred to as a “post-truth philosopher”, has distanced himself from climate change denialism.^[62]

Toying with a “social constructionist” perspective and the notion that, like politics, science is rhetoric, Haraway had shifted between rhetoric in language and material experiment.^[63] Maintaining that “women’s movements have constructed ‘women’s experience’”, she placed the latter phrase in quotation marks and suggested that “this experience is a fiction and a fact” without determining which is what, and how it is so.^[64] But to claim that experience is constructed by the experiencers obscures to what extent it is controlled by others. By positing even experience as a construction, there is little scope for anything not to be seen as constructed, which is not only anti-materialist and anti-realist, but peculiarly also anti-phenomenological.

Animals too, Haraway alleges, construct their experience in the laboratory in which they are experimented on. She does not want there to be victims, neither women nor animals,^[65] arguing that “those who suffer, including animals, are not necessarily victims”,^[66] because it would be oppressive to think in terms of oppression. It is true

that it is impossible to be only a perpetrator or only a victim always and in every aspect, but this is exactly why understanding in which way the power of a body's acting is increased or diminished is vital, as Spinoza would argue.^[67] When Haraway suggests that humans and other-than-humans are responsible for their own experience of being oppressed, this comes close to the victim-blaming ideology of Western cults which allege that those who are violated have chosen the violence against them.

The human and animal rights scholar Dinesh Wadiwel observes that "Haraway situates animals as 'workers' rather than 'victims'", because "the desire here is to position animals as active agents involved in productive processes."^[68] But in this move of comparing animals to workers Haraway also casts labourers as active per se, and as agents in charge of their conditions and as such unalienated despite her previous dismissal of Marx's postulate of unalienated labour as a "seduction to organic wholeness".^[69] Marx had developed his relational, but not flat materialism in response to Ludwig Feuerbach's previous materialism that he rejected as anthropocentric for its regard of humans and nature as closed objects instead of engaged in constitutive relations.^[70] Unlike the scientist, the product of their labour does not belong to the animals and their activities are directed by others external to them, Marx would say.

According to Haraway though, animals are as equally free or unfree workers as the human scientists. She draws an equivalence between those setting up an experiment and those forced to take part in it: "People and animals in labs are both subjects and objects to each other in ongoing intra-action",^[71] using the term "intra-action" coined by the physicist Karen Barad, who also comes from the laboratories of the natural sciences, to emphasise that everything is constituted through relations as part of the same entity in "the world's iterative intra-activity".^[72] In arguing that "responsibility is a relationship crafted in intra-action through which entities, subjects and objects, come into being", the notion of responsibility is flattened and the lab romanticised as the site of intra-action.^[73] Befitting the constructing of contradictions, Haraway troubles her contention that "animals as workers in labs, animals in all their worlds, are response-able in the same sense as people are"^[74] by also noting that the capacity to be "response-able" is not symmetrical.^[75] Haraway associates "responsibility" with "response", the ethical with the physical, and argues that "touch ramifies and shapes accountability"^[76] and that to enter "into responsibility [is not an] ethical abstraction".^[77] She contends that touch "makes[s] us responsible", but it is exactly in touching that the rapist responds and is culpable.^[78] When she alleges that touch "peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making",^[79] the assumption of benevolence and the blanking out of the possibility for violence is clearly utopian, despite Haraway's distancing from utopianism elsewhere.^[80] Rather than shed a light on the conditions of the production of knowledge, as is Haraway's declared aim, by positing all "partners" as equal these are instead concealed.^[81] In what Haraway describes as a "co-constitutive naturalcultural dancing", violence cannot occur.^[82] As Wadiwel rightly notes: "a top down system of domination does not appear accounted for in *When Species Meet*."^[83]

Whereas an emphasis on experience is usually centred on the individual, the notion of experience that Haraway rejected as an "authoritarian doctrine" is not individualist, but shared, and her dismissal of a unified experience that engenders uniting is individualistic.^[84] Downsizing to smaller units such as "microbes, quarks, and genes", which cannot have experiences that could result in political acts of solidarity prevents even temporary and partial unity.^[85] It encourages division while affirming symbioses: when species might meet, but cannot agree. Dismissing shared experiences frustrates a unity from below that is politically counterproductive, as has been pointed out by activist scholars.^[86] The foundation of Haraway's "partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions of personal and collective selves" in construction and contradiction foils joint action against the damaging effects of political rhetoric unconnected to material reality.^[87] The result is what could be called an individualism without individuals, apart from that of the unapologetically idiosyncratic author. Haraway's

rejection of unity in any form be this as a material body, such as the body of a woman, or an immaterial body, such as the body of women^[88] thwarts any possible agreement and solidarity between those who, though fleeting and morphing, make up a body, and makes it impossible to claim its violation.

In pondering “whom I touch when I touch a dog”, Haraway breaks the body of the dog down into smaller entities that make up that body, rather than regarding the dog as part of a larger body.^[89] Bodies are there to be dismantled and not to be joined together. If a body is only seen in terms of its material parts, there is no one who could die. But if it does not matter whether a body dies because it will become other bodies, then it should also not be of concern if a body is killed. Haraway has understandably objected that some beings are regarded as more “killable” than others, that is, most nonhuman animals are allowed to be killed, but most human animals are not.^[90] Humans, however, she advised, should not “pretend to live outside killing.”^[91] But if a body can be killed, it means that it is more than the sum of its material parts (in an inversion of Morton’s maxim that wholes are less than the sum of their parts) and contradicts the emphasis on the material make-up of a body whereby any body can be broken down into smaller parts without loss. Perhaps there is not such a difference between other-than-humans being intentionally killed by humans or not quite “naturally” dying because of climate breakdown and destruction of habitat caused by humans.

Flat relational ontologies often invoke symbiosis. Haraway “mourn[s] irreversible losses”, yet also insists on all-encompassing symbiosis in which extinctions are impossible to register.^[92] Haraway extols that “I love that when ‘I’ die, all these benign as well as dangerous symbionts will take over and use whatever is left of ‘my’ body.”^[93] Whether bodies are positively or negatively affected is glossed over in this equivalence of benign effects with dangerous ones. Microbes may not commit murder, but they can increase or diminish the power of acting of a body, as Spinoza would say. There are symbionts and there are parasites in relation to a body. But a symbiosis usually implies that every participant benefits from the relation, and so the overall tendency of Haraway’s entanglements is that relationality is benevolent whatever the relation. In these affirmative relations through which entities are made, there cannot be any acknowledgement of violence, because there are only intra-actions.

The idea that there is no nature has been widely taken up by humans agreeing that there is no difference between themselves and those they have colonised, diminished, appropriated and made extinct, while also contending that there are no humans either. Haraway is glad that, on the basis of her DNA, she is mostly not human: “I am vastly outnumbered by my tiny companions.”^[94] Her companions are internal and external, as she casts parts of her body as its own companions,^[95] and determines that the “companion species is a permanently undecidable category.”^[96] There is apparently no entity that is not a companion, and no relation that is not a companionship.

In repetitive manoeuvres between metaphor and materiality Haraway asserts that the dog who lives with her “continues to colonize all my cells”,^[97] while also purporting to write “from the belly of powerful figures such as... dogs”,^[98] replacing other-than-human entities with herself, but also claiming the companionship of the entity that these are a part of. Suggesting that the inter-action of training together with her dog is an intra-action, Haraway romances as well as replaces nonhuman beings and non-beings. If a companion only exists in the relation in which they are a companion, to speak of “companion species” becomes an egocentric as well as anthropocentric model of relation. With companionship presented as an intra-action, every entity is a companion to themselves as their own part in a gigantic narcissistic symbiosis that masquerades as ecological. Species cannot meet if they are already the same.

As the notion of companionship with entities that are a part of oneself is elusive, never mind that of a “companion species”, so is violence obscured. “It seems telling”, Wadiwel points out, “that the word ‘violence’ does not figure prominently in Haraway’s analysis, because, we might assume, violence already speaks of an irretrievably onesided non-symmetrical relationship.”^[99] While Haraway also determines that entities are constituted in inter- as well as intra-actions, the implication that there is an agency of a body that is able to interact, leaves open the question what that inter-acting entity is if there is no body that pre-exists a relation.^[100] There is no discerning between symbiotic intra-active relations that are mutually beneficial and inter-actions in which one “partner” is made extinct. In assemblages that are cast as symbiotic indiscriminately across the boundaries of life, art, worlds, dimensions and disciplines in ever larger hyphenated “biological-cultural-political-technological”^[101] entities, Haraway has expanded the conflation of bodies from postmodernism as “symbiogenetic and sympoietic.”^[102]

Slipping in between companionship of beings and material symbiosis, Haraway insists that “the partners do not precede the meeting”,^[103] that “the partners do not precede their relating”,^[104] and that “the partners do not preexist their constitutive intra-action”.^[105] But the invaded do not exist because of the “intra-action” of being invaded, the raped do not exist because of the “intra-action” of being raped, and the extinct do not cease to exist because of the “intra-action” of being made extinct. The violated do not exist because they have been violated. There is no “becoming with” your invader, your rapist or your killer.^[106]

Haraway sought out the potential violence of blurring boundaries as politically progressive.^[107] But conjuring up a flat relational ontology of a supposedly mutual “subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters”^[108] between “entangled, coshaping species” is astonishingly and dangerously unempathic, given that one species is the cause of the extinction of many others.^[109] A body is not just constituted by an encounter; it can also be destroyed by it. There is no mutually shaping of the violator and the violated. The blurring of boundaries is often to the advantage of aggressors who regard other bodies as theirs and do not respect their boundaries, be these of other humans, nonhumans, governments or countries.^[110] The complexities in which a body can affect and be affected are not captured in the broad brushstrokes of elusive categories like “companion” and “kin” that Haraway claims accrue to humans.^[111] The singularities of being affected and affecting of whether and how a relation is affirmative or destructive cannot be reduced to the generality of entangledness.

The answer to Haraway’s rhetorical question “why should our bodies end at our skin” depends obviously on what one considers to be a body, and who or what the first-person plurals are.^[112] There is no “we” of those who are extinct because of the expanded bodies of humans, and of those who made them so. According to Spinoza, bodies are made up of other bodies with a nature, who have internal and external relations that in turn also constitute them, but these are not interchangeable. A body can only be destroyed from the outside in an interaction and not through an intra-action: “No thing can be destroyed except through an external cause.”^[113] Things of a contrary nature “cannot be in the same subject, insofar as one can destroy the other.”^[114] A body may be affectually and materially permeable, but still remain that body with its nature. The same body can be a part of different bodies: the body of an actor, for example, is in the body of a film, but for this to be the case they have to be different bodies. The actor and the film do not have the same body. They are neither companions nor in a symbiosis. The body of a film may be made up of human and nonhuman protagonists, but its nature is not changed by them. A body can be many things and in many relations at once and be part of many human and nonhuman bodies. But there cannot be affects without bodies, and for there to be biodiversity of relations, there has to be biodiversity in bodies. It is vital to understand in which way a body is part of other bodies, and in which way it is not, in order to be able to acknowledge affective and material inter-actions between bodies as well as planetary intra-actions.

Invasive (Post)Humans

If a body is merely a metaphor, it cannot be violated or become extinct. De Lauretis agreed with Gayatri Spivak that metaphors are used to oppress: “The discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman.”^[115] Given the continuing attack on women’s rights over their bodies, to emphasise entanglement risks becoming anti-feminist if it obscures causes and effects who is violent and who is violated. De Lauretis gave as an example for both “the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric” the false symmetry that flattens gender difference in reporting violence^[116]; when violence is described as a marital conflict instead of the asymmetrical violence of one human against another.^[117] This false equivalence continues to exist in coverage of gender-based violence. When everything is entangled, there is no bodily autonomy. Imagining a “world without gender”, as Haraway envisaged but then again, also rejected does not help in a world of gender-based violence and patriarchal auto- and theocracies, and neither does the fiction of a world of species equality on a planet shaped by the violence of invasive humans against other-than-humans, each other and themselves.^[118] The violence of flat ontologies too is rooted in false equivalence.

In a frequently cited objection, Bordo identified the dissolution of the body into a metaphor:

To deny the unity and stability of identity is one thing. The epistemological fantasy of becoming multiplicity the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self is another. What sort of body is it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel everywhere? If the body is a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all.^[119]

Bordo had cautioned that the modernist Cartesian version of transcendence, the distanced “view from nowhere” had “simply been replaced with a new postmodern configuration of detachment, a new imagination of disembodiment: a dream of being *everywhere*.”^[120] The body is merely a metaphor “in these (seemingly contrasting) epistemologies of ‘nowhere’ and ‘everywhere.’”^[121]

But not everyone associated with postmodernism embraced the one thing standing in for another of metaphors,^[122] and instead of “nowhere” and “everywhere” Jean-François Lyotard, the author of *The Postmodern Condition*, emphasised the here and now.^[123] In contrast to representations of the romantic sublime Lyotard posited the postmodern sublime, arguing that the experience of an encounter cannot be figuratively represented, but only be experienced in the presence: “Not elsewhere, not up there or over there, not earlier or later, not once upon a time. But as here, now, it happens... and it is this painting. Here and now, there is this painting, rather than nothing, and that’s what is sublime.”^[124] The experience of the postmodern sublime was about being situated with respect to the impossibility to comprehend. It was also about being able to situate violence, and about bearing witness to the extinction of what was excluded by the certainties of grand narratives.^[125] By contrast, Haraway’s tone, often under the heading of a manifesto, is that of certainty even in installing contradictions.^[126] And although, like Lyotard, she suggested a “multiplicity of local knowledges”^[127] and “situated knowledges”,^[128] instead of a universal knowledge of science, claiming situatedness while circumventing it is one of the many contradictions Haraway uses to throw a spanner into the works of understanding in order to stay “with the trouble”.^[129] Compared to the situated presence of Lyotard’s postmodern sublime, Haraway does not situate herself in one site, but simultaneously takes up multiple positions of others. She is not just nowhere and everywhere, but also no one and everyone.

Against the sublime Haraway sets the ordinary. The words “ordinary” and “mundane” appear frequently throughout *When Species Meet*, applied to species as well as for reality. There are “ordinary knotted species”,^[130] “ordinary multispecies”,^[131] “ordinary knots of daily multispecies living”,^[132] but also “ordinary people”,^[133] “ordinary Aussie people”,^[134] “ordinary African farmers”,^[135] “ordinary living”,^[136] and “ordinary reality”.^[137] There is “the mundane space that I call my body”^[138] as well as “mundane, prosaic, living wolves”.^[139] It is as though every thing that lives is ordinary, always there and always the same. Species are not special, but normal. In what sounds like academic populism, the ordinary is cast as living, real and grounded, and set against elitist, lofty aesthetics. The opposition “ordinary vs. the sublime” even has its own entry in the index.^[140] Employing oppositions while opposing them, Haraway positions good ordinariness against bad divides. She suggests that “The Great Divides of animal/human, nature/culture, organic/technical, and wild/domestic flatten into mundane differences... rather than rising to sublime and final ends.”^[141] Ordinariness is explicitly cast as flat. In the suggested flatness no thing ends, every thing is flattened into the same ordinariness, no thing sticks out. The ordinary has become prescriptive. Haraway castigates Deleuze and Guattari for what she claims is a “scorn for all that is mundane and ordinary”,^[142] a “scorn for the homely and the ordinary”^[143] and a “disdain for the daily; the affectional”,^[144] and juxtaposes their ostensible “philosophy of the sublime”^[145] with her apparent grounding in the earthly and the mud. In a remarkable misrepresentation, Haraway declares that Deleuze, the philosopher of affect and immanence, is a proponent of the sublime and transcendence, and even blurs immanence and transcendence.^[146] Haraway’s critique is that Deleuze and Guattari do not write about actual animals^[147] and only about “sublime wolf packs”,^[148] but in the fusion of her figure and those of other-than-humans as well as their worlds “the animal worlds I inhabit” we mostly learn about these in correlation to her.^[149] Haraway meets other species as an individual and as individuals. She posits all species as ordinary, but in her defence of the ordinary as normal, she erases who and what is special. But is biodiversity not extraordinary? What is not ordinary need not be sublime.

By now, the species and their environments that have once been ordinary have become extraordinary or extinct. Humans and other-than-humans are living, and dying, in the figurative situations that once evoked feelings of the sublime, but in life here and now, and not separate and experienceable as art. The painting has become the planet and we are in the picture drowning in floods, effected and affected by vast and incomprehensible environmental changes without experiencing this as sublime. In the age of extinction, the “nowhere” of some postmodernisms is not the playground of metaphors anymore, but material: as more species are becoming extinct, the emphasis on the “everywhere” of matter distracts from their “nowhere”.

For Lyotard, the aim of art was moving towards matter, but this matter was still in art.^[150] When Deleuze suggested “existing not as a subject but as a work of art” after Nietzsche and Foucault, this was about opening life and thought to being like art, but also in contrast to art as that when and where life has ceased to exist.^[151] In the age of extinction, humans “inventing new forms of existing” as Deleuze had recommended is more than ever necessary, but at the same time not enough, since even humans living creatively cannot replace those other-than-humans extinguished by human inventions.^[152]

Writing about “violence and figuration” in painting,^[153] Deleuze cautioned against confusing the violence of the sensation of art with the violence in the relations between represented figures in art^[154]: “The violence of sensation is opposed to the violence of the represented.”^[155] In Francis Bacon’s paintings, affect as figure had replaced the affect of a figure.^[156] This pure affect was violence as figure. The violence of a sensation is the “violence of reaction and expression”, of the beholder in a material, nervous reaction to the painting, be that by the artist in the process of making or by the viewer in beholding.^[157] The painter is also a viewer. There are different relations in these two worlds of violence, looked at in the gallery and represented in the art.^[158] The

experience of the postmodern sublime in front of Barnett Newman's *Not There, Here* (1962) should not be confused with the violence of the represented in J.M.W. Turner's *Dutch Boats in a Gale* (1801) evoking the romantic sublime.

"Not only is the painting an isolated reality" writes Deleuze, "the Figure itself is isolated in the painting."^[159] For Bacon "the violence of paint [has got] nothing to do with the violence of war."^[160] This might be true with respect to painting, but not for lens-based realist images. There is a difference between the ontology of photographic images and that of painting, as André Bazin had articulated.^[161] With respect to filmed figures who are violated in realist lens-based documentary images, the spectacle of violence against the represented can be the violence of sensation.^[162] Like the feeling of the sublime, the sensation of violence cannot be experienced by those who are violated, but only by those who are in safe distance from what is represented in the spectacle of violence. Deleuze's writing about violence differs depending on the medium: when he discusses violence in his cinema books, it is curiously not the violence of sensation and only the disagreeable spectacle of violence between the characters represented in a fiction film. Given that Deleuze had cast the inorganic time-image as a liberation from organic time, he perhaps did not want to delve into areas where the separation between the affect of the image and the affect *in* the image is not so clear, in film compared to painting.

According to Haraway, "figures are not representations", but if a figure is not a representation, it should affect and be affected in relations with who and what is in the same world.^[163] While for Deleuze affect was a figure that comprises a response, it is unclear on which level one can respond to Haraway's figures, and in which way they are a response. The *cakeism* of having it both ways here is that of claiming to be a figure in reality and in art without any causal relations in either world. In this slippage, the difference between the affectual relations of bodies in life and of those in art are erased and no causes and effects in either world are acknowledged. Haraway's figures are without causalities and casualties. Her notion of apparently actual "becoming-with" (which she set against Deleuze's conceptual "becoming") eludes the causalities of a dialogue, an exchange, a forward and backward between the engaged entities, while presuming a relation. Instead, the human who apparently becomes-with, overtakes the space of the nonhuman who they purportedly do so with. It is a one-sided projection that imagines only a benign relation and does not countenance the thought of *unbecoming-with* through a violent usurpation. There is no accounting for violence either of sensation, in representation or of representation.

Representation in lens-based images (in contrast to politics) has been regarded as violent because it forces multiple material and actual living bodies, relations and environments into one flat medium in which they cease to be vital, and therefore who or what is represented can be seen to be violated in this reduction. On the other hand, recent realism has found new value in representation.^[164] Representation usually involves figuration, although figures do not always mean representation such as when affect is a figure. Haraway bypasses the problem of the violence of representation by casting herself, like everyone and everything, as a constructed figure.

When marvelling that her orthodontures are not based on an ideal actual human head, but on sculptures of the heads of Greek Gods, she reiterates the point that, just as nature is invented, humans are constructed.^[165] But she does not unwrap the layers of sculpted resemblances further into the possibility that the sculptures of the Gods' heads may be based on human heads, as though only life is constructed, but not art. And while orthodontures may be fashioned after artists' sculptures of the heads of imagined Gods, humans have not created all of the head and body (nor have Gods).

Haraway is not interested in existing as a work of art, like Deleuze was, but maintains that she already exists as a figure of art: “For me, figures have always been where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all of the force of lived reality. My body itself is just such a figure, literally.”^[166] Arguing that her body is literally a figure and not just a literary figure, Haraway blurs the materials and relations of life and art.^[167] So, Haraway claims that her “body” is “literally”, if by this she means “materially”, a figure of fiction in literature and art, and posits an equivalence between the figures and materials of art and life.

When he noted that “Bacon’s bodies, heads, Figures are made of flesh”, the flesh consisted of the material of paint for Deleuze.^[168] In contrast to the conflation of matter and material by Haraway that is also often conveyed in the context of the making of art, Deleuze distinguished the relationship between form and matter from that between materials and forces. Forces become “visible through their effects on the flesh” of paint.^[169] Haraway’s figures by contrast cross “dimensions” but are without forces that have effects.

Haraway finds that “figures help me grapple inside the flesh of mortal world-making entanglements that I call contact zones.”^[170] But if the entanglements make the worlds and the contact zones the “I”s, what is the “me” that grapples and the “I” who can write “what I call”? Every thing points back to the human writer: “my companion species, who are my maker” even as she writes that other-than-humans make her.^[171] Rather than the making artist being the centre of attention, the posthumanist human assumes the centre by being made.

Haraway’s statement that “The text is always fleshy and regularly not human” could also be read as a blaming of nonhumans for human texts.^[172] Haraway evades the accountability of a human maker, while also maintaining that humans have made nonhuman nature as “*The Reinvention of Nature*”^[173]: “the primate body is a discursive construct and therefore a literal reality, not the other way around.”^[174] In this line of thought, nonhumans with agency have been invented by humans without agency who in turn have been made by the former.

In a flat ontology, art and artists should not really have a different ontological status than anything else. Given that, according to flat relational ontologies, humans are without agency and only shaped through relations, the agency of nonhuman entities is appropriated as the agency of art by artists apparently without agency.^[175] Art appropriates life while also claiming a separate status from it. And if humans have no agency and only materialise through relations, what kind of relations are relations without agency? (The answer is: only material relations).

There is an asymmetry inherent in the flat composition of supposedly ontologically equal matter, things and objects, when only other-than-human entities are regarded as autonomous and with agency and humans are not. Following this line of thought, nonhumans make art as well as humans while at the same time the former are somehow inadvertently destroyed by the latter despite being seemingly without agency. In an apparently accidental act of victim-blaming devoid of human agency, then, other-than-humans are attributed agency over their own extinction.

When Haraway enthuses that in the figure of a hedge shaped like a dog “the rich naturalcultural contact zones multiply with each tactile look”, she conflates being physically affected by touching a hedge with looking remotely at the aesthetics of resemblance to a dog without qualifying that this “tactile look” is a human gaze.^[176] Haraway suggests that touching means “entering into responsibility”.^[177] In the “naturalcultural contact zones” between the nature of the hedge and the cultured shape of the dog,^[178] Haraway suggests, “so many species, so many kinds meet”, but there is no living dog to meet anyone, and the hedge does not really “meet” the human-made imitation of a dog that is only apparent to humans.^[179] These entities “meet” only as human-made metaphors. The violence of the blurring of boundaries between a representation and the living body that it is a

representation of consists in that the actual dog does not matter, which was precisely the reproach Haraway had levelled at Deleuze and Guattari who, however, had been clear that the notion of “becoming animal” is about conceptual becoming.

Despite noting that power is asymmetrically distributed between human and nonhuman animals in an “always asymmetrical living and dying, nurturing and killing”,^[180] that there is “non symmetrical suffering and death”,^[181] and that “the capacity to respond, and so to be responsible, should not be expected to take on symmetrical shapes and textures for all the parties”,^[182] Haraway writes about “dogs and their humans” as though the control of this relation is equal and reversible.^[183] But unlike Latour’s contrived symmetrical relations of equally powerful parts in hybrids in which no body controls the other, Haraway contradictorily assumes both symmetrical and asymmetrical relations.^[184] Unlike Spinoza’s half flat ontology with bodies in immanence, in line with her construction of contradictions, Haraway’s ontology is simultaneously flat and not flat, symmetrical and asymmetrical.

Effects without Affects: Morton

If, as Haraway claims in drawing another equivalence between actual and fictional bodies, that “for many years I have written from the belly of powerful figures such as cyborgs, monkeys and apes, oncomice, and, more recently, dogs”,^[185] and that she has done so “literally”, what is happening in the now apparently materially and metaphorically appropriated bellies of these living and invented bodies that are occupied by this human writer? Haraway appropriates other-than-human beings while dissolving and negating them, claiming they are fiction as well as material. She continues that “in every case, the figures are at the same time creatures of imagined possibility and creatures of fierce and ordinary reality; the dimensions tangle and require response.”^[186] But what sort of response does a “tangled dimension” evoke? The response cannot be advocacy, which Haraway rejects in line with evading representation.^[187] But the response is also not causal.

Similar to Haraway, whose figure transcends art and life, the object-oriented eco-philosopher Timothy Morton also includes aesthetics in his anti-relational flat ontology. But whereas Haraway’s figures cross between the “dimensions” of life and the arts unperturbed by causal relations, Morton argues that causality is aesthetic in an example of realist aesthetics without art cited by the curator João Ribas: “When you make or study art you are not exploring some kind of candy on the surface of a machine. You are making or studying causality. The aesthetic dimension is the causal dimension.”^[188] Aesthetics and dimensions though are usually defined by not being connected through causalities. For Jacques Rancière, for example, the “aesthetic dimension” is “a supplement to the parts that cannot be described as a part itself”, that is, aesthetics is not causally connected to life.^[189] Morton, however, contends “that causality is wholly an aesthetic phenomenon. Aesthetic events are not limited to interactions between humans or between humans and painted canvases or between humans and sentences in dramas. They happen when a saw bites into a fresh piece of plywood.”^[190]

But the saw does not act alone, or to invoke Morton’s own words against his own intention: “there has to be a correlatee as well as a correlator.”^[191] In this specific case, there is a correlator human wielding the correlatee saw. This does not mean that everything that happens can be reduced to a relation to a human, but that there is human responsibility for what we do with the saw, and that the saw does not cut on its own. In this flat ontology of aesthetics, the “aesthetic event” of a machine made by humans held by a human cutting into plywood made by humans is relayed as though there is no human correlation, which, moreover, is not distinguishable from, for example, the aesthetic event of an animal mimicking its environment. Morton chooses a violent, masculinist and strangely modernist example for an “aesthetic event” of a human using a human-made industrial tool to fragment

what is already a human-made composite, with a carefully selected plywood as its victim, and not, for instance, the less ecologically enticing example of a human cutting down a tree with a saw. There is also no difference between a painting of a saw cutting plywood, where the causality lies between the brush and the canvas, and nothing is cut, and the non-sentient object of a saw that cuts into the non-sentient object that is plywood in correlation with a human action. The plywood does not feel pain or violated by the saw. Would a human or nonhuman animal being “bitten” into by a saw be the same kind of “aesthetic event” in this object-oriented ontology? Why is the plywood referred to as “fresh”? What would plywood that is not fresh be? Usually, the words “a fresh piece of” are followed by the word “meat”, which indicates a former part of a recently killed animal that had no agency in being dismembered as the body it was. The saw, meanwhile, is anthropomorphised, or zoomorphised, through its association with biting. In this confusing flattening of the differences between bodies that are sentient and those that are not, the effect that the violence of such an “aesthetic event” has on a body is bypassed. There is a flattening of causalities into effects without affects. Violence has a destructive effect on a body that goes against its nature, according to Spinoza. Violence can extinguish a body. An effected object in object-oriented ontology is not an affected Spinozean body.

If all effects are regarded as equal, such as the effect of a saw on plywood or on a tree, can one even speak of causalities, given that these depend on there being differences in effects? Morton uses the phrase “causal dimension”, but causes and effects are not a dimension.^[192] Perhaps given the hostility of object-oriented theorists towards relations in their world of withdrawn objects without relations, they do not want to admit that causality is a relation, and instead claim that it is a dimension.^[193] But what is causality if not a relation? Calling a relation a dimension diffuses causalities. There is no causal dimension. Violence is relational. It cannot be separated from the relation in which it is enacted. Where Haraway determines relations without causes and effects, Morton conceives causes and effects without relations. Both Haraway’s relations and Morton’s causalities are without affects.

And for all, there is no nature. “Nature” is typically set in inverted commas in flat relational as well as non-relational ontologies and regarded as a romantic human projection with a view on nonhumans as separate from humans. From “Why Political Ecology has to let go of Nature” in *Politics of Nature: How to bring the Sciences back into Democracy* (Latour, 2004),^[194] to *Ecology without Nature* (Morton, 2009),^[195] to *Philosophy After Nature* (Braidotti and Dolphijn, 2017),^[196] to “e-flux presents Ecology After Nature” (2020),^[197] to the book series *Art After Nature*,^[198] a “let go of”, a “without” or an “after” is added to “nature”. In purposeful contrast to Kant’s human-made aesthetics as separate from life, nature and causality, Morton’s aesthetics (and ecology) are everywhere. Nature is the only thing that is not part of ecology. Everything is ecological in terms of being in a causal context, including art: “*All Art is Ecological*”. In this ecology with art, but without nature, there is no distinction between human-made art and other-than-human aesthetics of, for instance, an animal or a plant. Because everything is in the “aesthetic dimension”, there are no autonomous nonhuman aesthetics.^[199] In an overreaching generalisation that also flattens many areas of systemic and singular violence against, Morton contends that all art is not only ecological, but also about everything: “of course, *all art is ecological*, just as all art talks in various ways about race, class, and gender, even when it’s not doing so explicitly.”^[200] But if all art is “about” the same anyway, why bother making different art, and why even call it “art”? Everything would just be ecology, without art or nature. In this abstraction to everything being ecological, to be ecological, then, has nothing to do with any positive environmental effect on nonhuman nature. It is ecology without life, and unlike the political ecology of Latour, not even political. Despite their consensus that there is no nature, Haraway’s contention that “nature is constructed”^[201] makes her understandably a correlationist for non-relational ontologists like Morton: “extreme postmodern thought argues that nothing exists because everything is a construct. This idea [is] now known as *correlationism*.”^[202]

If “there is always a multiplicity of parts that exceeds the whole”, as Morton argues,^[203] there are not, as with Spinoza, bodies with natures that make up bodies with natures, but only parts and fragments that can be reconstituted in any other combination, which sounds quite modernist. There is no difference between plywood and a tree, and there is nothing that could become extinct. There are no bodies with a nature that would be affected, and their power of acting be increased, diminished and potentially extinguished by an encounter, only parts that combine, like in a Lego set. Morton’s Lego-block ecology without relations features indiscriminate lists of human-made and not-human-made, sentient and non-sentient entities, like “blocks of ice, humans, sunlight, the Panthéon, polar bears”, some of which affect many, like ice, sunlight and humans, and some are affected more than they affect, like polar bears.^[204] The examples are often human-made objects, such as trains inconceivably, “little train stations within train stations”^[205] and not much less inconceivably indeterminate pieces in a cheese pitted against the piece of a cheese they are a part of couched in the anthropomorphic language of a human revolution: “an anarchic revolutionary army of little squirming pieces crawling around and within that seemingly rigid and singular piece of a cheese.”^[206] As a reminder: advocating for chaos is an established autocratic and self-serving practice that serves those at the top.

As with other flat ontologies, the trajectory of breaking entities down into its smaller parts privileges physics and chemistry as though nothing is lost by scaling down. Morton’s notion that “*wholes are less than the sum of their parts*” is the opposite of Spinoza’s bodies with natures.^[207] The former’s ecology without nature is not just contrary to anthropocentrism: it also bypasses biocentrism, zoocentrism and phytocentrism and as such is an ecology without biodiversity.

Like Haraway, Morton refers to symbioses, albeit to an implausibly non-relational one that nevertheless transgresses boundaries and promotes ambiguity: “We humans contain nonhuman symbionts as part of the way in which we are human; we couldn’t live without them. We and all other lifeforms exist in an ambiguous space between rigorous categories.”^[208] But that a body consists of other bodies does not mean that the body and its parts can be separated and continue to exist. Other than in Morton’s Russian doll image, in which humans “contain” nonhumans, a symbiosis is a relation. In the terminology of *cakeism*, Morton wants to have his ambiguity about symbioses and eat his objects without relations. He is not merely discounting a “rigid distinction between humans and nonhumans”, implying that any distinction between humans and nonhumans is rigid, thereby conflating an acknowledgement of the limits or the nature of a body, as Spinoza would note, with rigidity.^[209]

The Flattening of Biodiversity: Braidotti

Rosi Braidotti often associates flatness with banality. Images are flat not in terms of dimensionality, but metaphorically.^[210] Braidotti does not think of a relational ontology in terms of flatness, but with respect of monism. Spinoza’s monism is often invoked by flat relational ontologies like vital, new and posthuman materialism through Deleuze’s reading of him.^[211] Deleuze developed Spinoza’s notion of the immanence of the substance of God/Nature into a pure immanence without a God, and Spinoza’s affects of bodies with minds into pure affects detached from bodies. Neo-materialist monism such as that espoused by Braidotti follows in general Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, rather than Spinoza directly. In neo-materialist monism, Spinoza’s substance is often identified with matter.^[212] But for Spinoza, there is not just unlimited substance, there are also limited bodies. His monism is populated by bodies of different natures. Neo-materialist monism by contrast casts immanence as a flat ontology. It is an immanence that privileges matter over bodies. There are no bodies in this matter. In posthuman monism, Spinoza’s substance with bodies has become matter without bodies.

Braidotti associates violence with dialectical oppositions that she wants to overcome through a non-dialectical, pervasive materialism.^[213] It is true that antagonism engenders violence, and that apart from art theory,^[214] twentieth-century continental philosophy by Chantal Mouffe, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek has also propagated antagonism, with Žižek's interventions habitually being that something is not violent enough. But there is not just the option of matter vs. dualism, as set out by Braidotti. There are not only one or two options in ontology. While set against Descartes' dualism, Spinoza's ontology is only half flat. The other half consists of autonomous bodies with natures that affect and are affected by each other. The infinite substance of God/Nature is flat, but the finite modes of bodies and thought are not.

Braidotti posits the immanence of materialist monism against transcendentalism as though Spinoza's immanence was about transcendence: "Contemporary monism rests on the rejection of transcendentalism, which is replaced by the concepts of radical immanence, relational ontology, and affirmative ethics."^[215] She distinguishes posthumanist monism of "raw cosmic energy"^[216] and the "unity of all matter"^[217] from "ecological holism"^[218] and "Spinoza's vision of God and the unity between man and nature."^[219] But for Spinoza the unity is not between man and nature; it is between God and Nature. Spinoza's God does not transcend or create Nature; God is Nature.

Braidotti regards matter as self-organizing, but what is the "self" that organizes it (and what is the "self" that is being organized)?^[220] For Braidotti, Spinoza's "matter is one, driven by the desire for self-expression and ontologically free", which suggests that matter can desire and has a self that it can express, and it renders matter transcended by its self.^[221] According to Spinoza, a body strives to persevere in accordance to its nature. In neo-materialist monism by contrast, Spinoza's complex relational architecture between the substance of Nature/God and the desire of bodies to continue to exist, their conatus has been reduced to the desire and agency of matter. If Spinoza's substance would be driven by a desire, it would be transcendent.

Thinking with Spinoza, Deleuze had focused on the singularity of affects as autonomous from the overwhelming unity of an emotion expressed by the human subject. Regarding affects as not directed by, for example, the overriding emotions of the face in what Deleuze called *faceification*, was liberational. Extending this thought, "the desire for self-expression" that Braidotti determines in matter could be called *matterification*.^[222] (In the case of materialist monism, the dominating self-expression is conversely through relations). Spinoza's affects are not purely autonomous, unlike those Brian Massumi developed following Deleuze.^[223] Instead, a body can be supported or destroyed in being affected. Without boundaries, there can be no understanding if a body is sustained or diminished by an encounter. That a body has relations does not exclude it having boundaries. For Spinoza, bodies have boundaries and a nature and are part of the immanence of Nature/God. Even the affects have boundaries, and Spinoza addresses them individually: "As usual, we shall take them one by one, and then indicate which of these are a hindrance and which can be advantageous."^[224] But in a flat relational ontology, there are no affects to affect bodies and no bodies to be affected. There are only relations without affects. Relational monism has reduced Spinoza's affectual ethics to a flat ontology without bodies and affects.

Braidotti suggests that the "relational capacity of the posthuman subject" not be "confined within our species," but include "all non-anthropomorphic elements."^[225] This posthuman entity that is a subject as well as matter, is not a body made up of other bodies that affect and are affected by one other, but just one "expanded, relational self" of which everything else is a part.^[226] In other contexts, this expansionism would be called appropriation, annexation, colonisation, imperialism or transcendence. Of this expanded subject without boundaries, it is impossible to determine who or what violates, dominates and invades, and who or what is violated, suffers and is made extinct. There is only agency without an agent.

By contrast to this monistic intra-action without an outside, for Spinoza bodies of any-size-whatsoever have an outside for them to be able to affect and be affected. According to Spinoza, a body can only be violated from the outside and violence is in contradiction with the nature of a body. The question of violence hangs in the balance between autonomy and relationality. If we are all one substance, there cannot be any violence. If there is only intra-action, there cannot be any violence. Violence is not an intra-action. If humans are only entangled, not autonomous, they cannot they be held responsible for their violence.

In a relational ontology, whatever exists does so only through relations. There is no body that relates in these relations. In an inversion of Spinoza's conatus, entities are shaped from the outside. But if relations create entities, these must all be sustaining ones as otherwise there would not be any thing, which is why relational ontologies often have a utopian character. Because there is no body in the first place, there is no thing that could become extinct. There is no accounting of violence in an immanence without bodies. Violence in relational monism is just another vital, impersonal force without a perpetrator or a victim, and so not really violent in the manner of having a destructive effect.

Because vitality is always posited as benevolent and intelligent, it raises the question of an unintentionally transcending creator.^[227] Given that, for Braidotti, the "non-human, vital force of Life" that connects all living matter is cast as a subject without a body, even if this is a posthuman one, this force then needs more distancing from it not being transcendent than if there would be bodies in this immanence.^[228] But because there are no bodies in this monism of matter, it is much more vulnerable to being transcended and perhaps therefore any notion of "nature" is more vehemently rejected as though it is "nature" that enables transcendence, and not human projections of it. The result is an inability to acknowledge the biodiversity of bodies with different natures. Posthuman monism without bodies consequently reaffirms the identification of nature with the sense of wholeness that it rejects. Not only has "nature" been erased in this posthuman appropriation of Spinoza, the nature of bodies has too: since there are no bounded bodies, there also are no bodies that have a nature. In the quest to redefine matter as alive after it had long been regarded as dead,^[229] there is now ecology without nature and "life itself" without bodies, which would also be life without extinction.^[230]

Braidotti objects to the oppression of difference and a false symmetry with respect to gender.^[231] Criticising Deleuze for an "equivalence in the speaking positions of the sexes"^[232] and that "the patterns of becoming that he presents" are "sexually undifferentiated",^[233] she argues for "re-inscrib[ing] the politics of location and of sexual difference in the sense of a dissymmetry between the sexes, so as to allow for a critique of the power differentials that are grafted on those differences."^[234] While Braidotti reproaches Deleuze for ignoring gender differences, she advocates ignoring species differences, affirming a "dissymmetry between the sexes" with respect to human natures, but not a dissymmetry between human and other-than-human natures.^[235] Nevertheless, is not the demand for an acknowledgement of asymmetry exclusively with respect to (human) gender anthropocentric a case of human exceptionalism that Braidotti understandably spurns? Braidotti claims that "species equality in a post-anthropocentric world does urge us to question the violence and the hierarchical thinking that result from human arrogance and the assumption of transcendental human exceptionalism."^[236] But in this claim there is a reduction of differences and diversities to hierarchies, a reduction of hierarchies to anthropocentrism, and a reduction of "species" to speciesism, all of which prevents acknowledging biodiversity.

Braidotti relays a belief in the promise of progress through human-made technology: "Being rather technophilic myself, I am quite upbeat. I will always side firmly with the liberatory and even transgressive potential of these technologies."^[237] In this generalising stance, technology is supposed to have an agency that is benevolent for everything else but is also part of "the self-organizing or 'smart' structure of living matter", of technological as

well as sentient entities.^[238] Every thing is on a continuum of an “expanded, relational self” mediated by (human) technology that includes nature in (human) culture.^[239] In what Braidotti refers to as a “post-anthropocentric universe”, human-made technology is anti-thetically cast as not anthropogenic.^[240] This might be because humans are already considered as having been made by the technology they have made: “posthuman subjects are technologically mediated to an unprecedented degree”, that is, posthuman subjects are humanly mediated by human-made technology.^[241] With respect to technology being transgressive, the question arises as to how something can be transgressive if there are no boundaries to transgress and everything is on a continuum.

Casting aside differences between human-made media and nonhuman and human life, in another reincarnation of Haraway’s cyborg and “naturecultures”, and of what could have been called Latour’s “politicsnatures”, Braidotti too argues for a benevolent fusion of media and nature in “medianatures” and for “a technologically mediated emphasis on life as a zoe-centered system of species egalitarianism.”^[242] But unlike “medianatures”, species can become extinct. The human species has to a large extent disproportionately affected and violated other species. It is sadly not equal to those who it makes extinct. Species egalitarianism obscures the causes of extinctions in a false equivalence between species, like false balance in journalism^[243] or *bothsideism* with respect to political violence.^[244] Species egalitarianism flattens biodiversity. A flat relational ontology erases ontological difference and assumes a sameness that does not exist. Whether species are extinguished or not does matter, because there is “life beyond the species”.^[245] The latter is indeed the case on the plane of immanence. But if a species is otherwise not acknowledged as a category, then it cannot be respected and protected, never mind its extinction be acknowledged, and this puts flat relational ontologies at odds with biodiversity. Matter cannot become extinct. Matter may have agency and live, but it is not sentient and cannot die. Matter is not a body. Matter cannot be killed or be made extinct. Matter cannot be violent or experience violence.

In Braidotti’s cosmic monism, there should not really be any species in the first place, because there are no bodies. Relational monism is not just posthuman; it is post-body and therefore also post-nonhuman, post-animal, post-plant, post-species, post-anybody. In contrast, in Spinoza’s specieist anthropocentric monism of human bodies with minds in immanence with Nature/God, there would not be any “naturecultures” or “medianatures”. In line with a general monism, Braidotti demands that “we need now urgently... a much wider scope in our approach to the entanglements of nature and culture what Haraway termed ‘naturecultures’ and their all-over emerging ecologies.”^[246] Instead, with respect to violence in relation to its environments, I would argue that we need a much narrower scope in which who does what violence to whom and how can be ascertained. Violence is not flat.

We Are Not All Biodiverse

The violent material effects of rhetorical strategies by individuals, corporations and states have become apparent as gaslighting, greenwashing and propaganda. With the emergence of the recognition of human-made material catastrophes of the climate and the destruction of biodiversity, postmodernism’s games of shapeshifting have come to be seen as inappropriate, but the blurring of boundaries continues to be deemed progressive rather than destructive in art and moving images, and the terminology of entanglement pervades artistic theory and practice.

A few decades after the “Cyborg Manifesto”, Haraway has replaced the posthuman hybrid with matter in *composthumanism*: “I am a compost-ist, not a post-humanist: we are all compost, not posthuman.”^[247] But if we are all compost, there is neither compost nor “we”. Not even all compost is the same: we may become compost

after we are dead, but we are not living as compost. We do not have the same affects nor the same nature as compost. We can be violent, but compost cannot. We may become compost, but we are not compost. “We” are neither all cyborgs, nor all compost. A single entity cannot replace the biodiversity of many. We are not all biodiverse.

When humans violate the boundaries of others, kill them and make them extinct, to acknowledge the boundaries of bodies and their biodiverse natures in the worlds, environments and causal relations in which they affect and are affected, in life and art, has become vital. As the sociologist Joanna Latimer notes: “relations have no intrinsic value in themselves.”^[248] Latimer also cautions that rather than dissolving boundaries between human and other-than-human beings, relational ontologies reinforce them by only focusing on the “shared substance between different kinds”,^[249] and the critical animal pedagogue Helena Pedersen warns that “rather than disturbing species boundaries, [posthumanism] does a colonial work of reinscribing them.”^[250] My contention here, however, is more that bodies are violated by not acknowledging their boundaries, and that in flat relational ontologies the extinction of bodies cannot be acknowledged because there are no bodies. Biodiversity is flattened by relational ontologies.

Footnotes

1. Weisberg, Zipporah. “The Trouble with Posthumanism: Bacteria are People too”. In *Thinking the Unthinkable: New Readings in Critical Animal Studies*. Edited by John Sorenson. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. 2014. p. 94. See also Weisberg, Zipporah. “The Broken Promises of Monsters: Haraway, Animals and the Humanist Legacy”. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*. Vol. VII. Issue II. 2009. Anat Pick also notes that new materialist ontologies “risk political and ethical vacuity by downplaying the overdetermined relations rooted in violence against animals.” Pick, Anat, “Why not look at Animals.” *Nexus*. Spring 2015.
2. Thornham, Sue. “Feminism and Postmodernism”. In *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. Edited by Stuart Sim. London and New York, NY: Routledge. 2011. p. 46.
3. Haraway avers that “I’ve stopped using it [post-human]... The reason I go to companion species is to get away from posthumanism... Posthuman is way too restrictive.” In Haraway, Donna and Gane, Nicholas. “When we have Never Been Human, what is to be done? Interview with Donna Haraway”. *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 23. Nos. 7–8. 2006. p. 140.
4. Haraway, Donna. “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin”. *Environmental Humanities*. Vol. 6. 2015. p. 161.
5. The physicist Karen Barad argues for an “agential realism” whereby scientific research always take into account the relation to the researching scientist. Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2007. This “correlation” of the world to the human is in contrast to its autonomy from the human in traditional as well as speculative realism. As Graham Harman explains: “In the history of philosophy, ‘realism’ usually refers to the view that a world exists independently of the human mind. This is not the case for the ‘agential realism’ of Karen Barad... Barad’s sense of ‘realism’ is precisely the opposite of the traditional one. It is also the opposite of the sense employed by present-day speculative realism, which is opposed above all to the constant correlation (cf. “correlationism”) of world and thought—the very

- correlation that Barad recommends with her concept of ‘entanglement’”. In Harman, Graham. “Agential and Speculative Realism: Remarks on Barad’s Ontology”. *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*. Issue 30. 2016.
6. Bryant, Levi R. *The Democracy of Objects*. Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press. 2011. p. 246.
 7. Haraway, Donna J. *When Species Meet*. Posthumanities Vol. 3. Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press. 2008. p. 208.
 8. Haraway, Donna J. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, NY, and Abingdon: Routledge. 1991. p. 150.
 9. Bordo, Susan. “Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism”. In *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Edited by Linda J. Nicholson. London: Routledge. 1990. p. 144.
 10. Haraway, Donna J. *The Search for Organizing Relations: An Organismic Paradigm in Twentieth-Century Developmental Biology*. PhD thesis. Ann Arbor University. Microfilms Library Services. 1972–12–29. See also Haraway, Donna J. *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields: Metaphors of Organicism in Twentieth-Century Developmental Biology*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press. 1976.
 11. Haraway writes about “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.” Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, p. 149.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
 13. Haraway, Donna J. “The Companion Species Manifesto. Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness”. In *Manifestly Haraway* by Donna J. Haraway and Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2016.
 14. “The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality.” Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, p. 150.
 15. Zipporah Weisberg has convincingly argued with respect to the genetically engineered “hybrid” of the oncomouse, “the first patented transgenic animal hailed by Haraway as the embodiment of ‘transgressive’ politics,” that “the relationship between humans and oncomouse reproduces the unequal (human) subject/(animal) object relation that has been characteristic of sado-humanism for centuries.” Weisberg, Zipporah. “The Trouble with Posthumanism: Bacteria are People too”. In *Thinking the Unthinkable: New Readings in Critical Animal Studies*. Edited by John Sorenson. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. 2014. p. 100.
 16. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, p. 152.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
 21. Sharp, Hasana. “Animal Affects: Spinoza and the Frontiers of the Human”. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*. Vol. IX. Issues 1–2. 2011. p. 49.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, p. 150.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. “The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family.” *Ibid.*, p. 151.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
 29. Latour notes that there has been “a big transformation from the old attack on science. Now we are to defend science against climate skeptics.” In Mazanderani, Fadhila and Latour, Bruno. “The Whole World is

- Becoming Science Studies: Fadhila Mazanderani Talks with Bruno Latour". *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*. Vol. 4. 2018. p. 221. See also De Vrieze, Jop. "Bruno Latour, a veteran of the 'science wars,' has a new mission". *Science*. 10 October 2017. Available at <https://www.science.org/content/article/bruno-latour-veteran-science-wars-has-new-mission> (accessed 2022-10-15).
30. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 233.
 31. Thunberg, Greta. "The Climate Book. Book of the Week: Episode 2 – Our Changing Planet". BBC Radio 4. 25 October 2022.
 32. Haraway rejects "the transcendent authorization of interpretation". Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", 153.
 33. De Lauretis, Teresa. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press. 1987. p. 26.
 34. De Lauretis describes "a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable." *Ibid.*
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
 36. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 149.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. *Ibid.*
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 149. The cyborg manifesto was first published in the *Socialist Review*. Haraway, Donna J. "Manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s". *Socialist Review*. No. 80. 1985. pp. 65-108.
 41. Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism", p. 144.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. Comparing the candidate for the post of next British Prime Minister, Liz Truss, to the disgraced previous PM, Boris Johnson, the political commentator Andrew Rawnsley writes "'she is a wholesale appropriator of credit she doesn't deserve,' remarks one senior Tory. That's another trademark shared with Mr Johnson." Rawnsley, Andrew. "Liz Truss reminds me of a Tory leader but it's not Margaret Thatcher". *The Guardian*. 24 July 2022. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/24/liz-truss-reminds-me-of-a-tory-leader-but-its-not-margaret-thatcher> (accessed 2022-07-25).
 45. Crace, John. "Shapeshifter? World King? The PM could be seriously unwell". *The Guardian*. 3 February 2020. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/feb/03/shapeshifter-world-king-the-pm-boris-johnson-could-be-seriously-unwell> (accessed 2022-09-15); Crace, John. "Shapeshifter Liz Truss on a roll as version 3.0 hits Tory sweet spot". *The Guardian*. 21 July 2022. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jul/21/shapeshifter-liz-truss-is-on-a-roll-as-version-30-hits-tory-sweet-spot> (accessed 2022-07-22); Syal, Rajeev, Sinmaz, Emine, Quinn, Ben and Walker, Peter. "'Ambition greater than ability': Liz Truss's rise from teen Lib Dem to would-be PM. We look at the shapeshifting Tory leadership candidate who loves to promote Thatcher comparisons." *The Guardian*, 30 July 2022. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jul/30/liz-truss-profile-ambition-charm-thick-skin-thatcher> (accessed 2022-07-30); Booth, William, Adam, Karla and Rauhala, Emily. "Who is Liz Truss, a shapeshifter set to be U.K.'s next prime minister?". *The Washington Post*. 23 September 2022. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/03/liz-truss-uk-prime-minister/> (accessed 2023-09-24).

46. Boris Johnson compares himself to Winston Churchill and Liz Truss cosplays at being Maggie Thatcher.
47. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 149.
48. Behr, Rafael. "The Tories said we could have our cake and eat it—now they are stuffed and voters are hungry". *The Guardian*. 21 December 2021. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/22/tories-cake-stuffed-boris-johnson-covid-restrictions-freedom> (accessed 2021-12-21).
49. Osborne, Peter. "Boris Johnson wants to destroy the Britain I love. I cannot vote Conservative". *The Guardian*. 11 December 2019. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/11/boris-johnson-destroy-britain-conservative-revolutionary-sect> (accessed 2022-07-10).
50. Cohen, Nick. "All revolutions devour their own children. Just look at the Brexiteers". *The Guardian*. 25 December 2021. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/25/all-revolutions-devour-their-own-children-just-look-at-brexiteers> (accessed 2021-12-27).
51. Reeves-Evison, Theo. *Ethics of Contemporary Art: In the Shadow of Transgression*. New York, NY, and London: Bloomsbury Academic. 2020.
52. An anonymous UK government official quoted in Stewart, Heather, Halliday, Josh and Goodley, Simon. "Private school polish and big dreams: how Rishi Sunak became a contender for PM". *The Guardian*. 6 August 2022. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/06/rishi-sunak-tory-leadership-private-school-prime-minister> (accessed 2022-08-06).
53. Haraway claimed that "Just as for the rest of us, what scientists believe or say they do and what they really do have a very loose fit. The only people who end up actually believing and, goddess forbid, acting on the ideological doctrines of disembodied scientific objectivity enshrined in elementary textbooks and technoscience booster literature are nonscientists, including a few very trusting philosophers." Haraway, Donna J. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of a Partial Perspective". In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, NY, and Abingdon: Routledge. 1991. p. 184.
54. Haraway contended that "no practitioner of the high scientific arts would be caught dead acting on the textbook versions. Social constructionists make clear that official ideologies about objectivity and scientific method are particularly bad guides to how scientific knowledge is actually made." *Ibid*.
55. *Ibid*.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
57. *Ibid*.
58. Saskia Draxler of gallery Nagel Draxler states that "Auctions are not elections... Auction results don't reflect the state of democracy or civilization, they reflect the taste of a minority." In Kazakina, Katya. "Who's Afraid of Women of a Certain Age? The Market Still Dramatically Undervalues Female Artists". *Artnet News*. 23 December 2022. Available at <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/whos-afraid-of-women-artists-of-a-certain-age-2229271> (accessed 2022-12-26).
59. In the words of Weisberg, Haraway "is fetishized as the authority on progressive reconfigurations of human-animal relationships." Weisberg, "The Trouble with Posthumanism", p. 98.
60. For instance, by Lamia Joreige, *After the River*, 2016; Susan Schuppli, *Cold Cases*, 2021; Dana Levy, *Erasing the Green*, 2021/22, at the 12th Berlin Biennale, 2022; and everything by Forensic Architecture, such as *77sqm_9:26min*, 2017; *Cloud Studies*, 2021; *Living Archeology in Gaza*, 2022; *Three Doors*, 2022.
61. Haraway, Donna. "Symbiogenesis, Sympoiesis, and Art Science Activisms". In *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*. Edited by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, and Heather Anne Swanson. Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota

- Press. 2017. p. M33.
62. Kofman, Ava. "Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science". *The New York Times Magazine*. 25 October 2018. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html> (accessed 2022-10-15).
 63. Haraway provocatively plays with the "social constructionist" position that "science—the real game in town, the one we must play—is rhetoric." Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", p. 184. But she also admitted that "this is a terrifying view of the relationship of body and language for those of us who would still like to talk about reality... the further I get with the description of the radical social constructionist programme and a particular version of postmodernism, ... the more nervous I get." *Ibid.*, p. 185.
 64. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 149.
 65. Haraway persists that "We had better get it that domination is not the only thing going on here... we had better be the movers and the shakers, or we will be just victims." In "When we have Never Been Human, what is to be done?", p. 139.
 66. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 72.
 67. Spinoza writes that "his power of acting, insofar as it is understood through his nature, is increased or diminished." EIV. Preface. Spinoza, Benedict de. *Ethics*. Edited and translated by Edwin Curley. London: Penguin Books. p. 116.
 68. Wadiwel, Dinesh. *The War against Animals*. Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill and Rodopi. 2015. p. 210.
 69. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
 70. Whereas Marx's historical "old" materialism and Deleuze's materialism are molar since they preserve "molar phenomena as material elements of even larger material processes rather than reducing them to molecular forms", as Serge Hein explains, traditional Anglo-American materialism is molecular and thereby reductive since "all processes or realities (i.e., the molar sphere) are seen as capable of being explained by reducing them to their more fundamental constituents, such as molecules and atoms (i.e., the molecular sphere)." Hein argues that the emphasis on the molecular in "old" Anglo-American materialism is carried on in Barad's "new" materialism. In Hein, Serge F. "The New Materialism in Qualitative Inquiry: How Compatible Are the Philosophies of Barad and Deleuze". *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*. 2016. Vol. 16. Issue 2. pp. 132-34.
 71. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 71.
 72. Barad, Karen. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter". *Signs*. Vol. 28. No. 3. Gender and Science: New Issues. Spring 2003. p. 823.
 73. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 71.
 74. *Ibid.*
 75. Haraway states that "the capacity to respond, and so to be responsible, should not be expected to take on symmetrical shapes." *Ibid.*
 76. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 36.
 77. *Ibid.*
 78. *Ibid.*
 79. *Ibid.*
 80. Haraway contends that "I get really nervous about the ways in which it gets made into a utopian project." In "When we have Never Been Human, what is to be done?", p. 138.
 81. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 72.
 82. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 83. Wadiwel, *The War against Animals*, p. 212.
 84. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 159.
 85. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", p. 185.

86. Giraud, Eva H. *What comes after Entanglement? Activism, Anthropocentrism, and an Ethics of Exclusion*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2019. p. 9.
87. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 157.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
89. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 7.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
91. *Ibid.*
92. Haraway, "Symbiogenesis, Symptiosis, and Art Science Activisms", p. M33.
93. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
94. Haraway deliberates that "human genomes can be found in only about ten percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body, the other 90% percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists." Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 3.
95. Haraway emphasises that "species, like the body, are internally oxymoronic, full of their own others, full of messmates, of companions." *Ibid.*, p. 165.
96. *Ibid.*
97. Haraway, Donna J. "The Companion Species Manifesto. Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness". In *Manifestly Haraway* by Donna J. Haraway and Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2016. p. 93.
98. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
99. Wadiwel, *The War against Animals*, pp. 212–13.
100. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
101. Haraway, "Symbiogenesis, Symptiosis, and Art Science Activisms", p. M33. I am referring here to the use of "intra-action" in Haraway's conceptual world rather than to Barad's more consistent development of the term through quantum metaphysics.
102. *Ibid.*
103. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 14
105. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
107. Haraway advocated that "my cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work." Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 154.
108. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
110. Trump, for instance, "always had a problem with distinguishing between himself and the office." Green, Lloyd. "Trump and Republicans' terrible, no good, very bad week is about to get worse". *The Guardian*. 8 October 2022. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/10/trump-republican-party-bad-week-fbi-raid> (accessed 2022-10-8). He "used the government as an extension of himself." Haberman, Maggie in Conrad, Peter. "Confidence Man: The Making of Donald Trump and the Breaking of America by Maggie Haberman review—the vain sadist and his 'shrink'". *The Guardian*. 9 October 2022. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/oct/09/confidence-man-the-making-of-donald-trump-and-the-breaking-of-america-by-maggie-haberman-review-the-vain-sadist-and-his-shrink> (accessed 2022-10-9).
111. As in a "joint kinship with animals and machines." Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 154.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

113. Spinoza, *Ethics.*, EIIIP4, p. 75.
114. *Ibid.*, EIIIP5.
115. De Lauretis cites Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman". In *Displacement: Derrida and After*. Edited by Mark Krupnick. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 1983. p. 169. In De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 47.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
118. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 150. Haraway later rejects the utopian "world without gender" that she had imagined in the "Cyborg Manifesto", stating that "I have trouble with the way people go for a utopian post-gender world." In "When we have Never Been Human, what is to be done?", p. 137.
119. Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism", p. 145.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
121. *Ibid.*
122. Smith, Daniel. "Sense and Literality: Why There Are No Metaphors in Deleuze's Philosophy". In *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of Freedom: Freedom's Refrains*. Edited by Dorothea Olkowski and Eftichis Pirovolakis. New York, NY, and London: Routledge. 2019. pp. 44–67.
123. Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1984.
124. Lyotard, Jean-François. "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde". In *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1988. p. 93.
125. Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1988.
126. Haraway, Donna J. "The Cyborg Manifesto" and "The Companion Species Manifesto". In *Manifestly Haraway* by Donna J. Haraway and Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2016.
127. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", p. 187.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
129. Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2016.
130. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 5.
131. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
132. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 270.
134. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
138. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
140. *Ibid.*, p. 415.
141. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
144. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
145. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
146. Haraway's mischaracterisation of Deleuze and Guattari has been noted as "almost malicious" by Beaulieu,

Alain. "The Status of Animality in Deleuze's Thought". *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*. Vol. IX. Issues 1-2. "Continental Philosophical Perspectives on Non-Human Animals". Edited by Chloë Taylor. 2011. p. 80.

147. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 27. She repeats her attack on Deleuze und Guattari's apparent disinterest in "actual relations between animals and between animals and people" in "When we have Never Been Human, what is to be done?", p. 143.
148. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 29.
149. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
150. Lyotard, Jean-François. "After the Sublime, The State of Aesthetics". In *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1988. p. 140.
151. Deleuze, Gilles. "Life as a Work of Art". In *Negotiations: 1972-1990*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 1995. p. 95. See also Surin, Kenneth. "Existing Not as a Subject but as a Work of Art: The Task of Ethics or Aesthetics?". In *Deleuze and Ethics*. Edited by Nathan Jun and Daniel W. Smith. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2011.
152. Deleuze, "Life as a Work of Art", p. 98.
153. Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. London and New York, NY: Continuum. 2003. p. 34.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
155. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
156. Deleuze writes: "For it is never a matter of this or that character, this or that object possessing rhythm. On the contrary, rhythms and rhythms alone become characters, become objects. Rhythms are the only characters, the only Figures." *Ibid.*, p. xv.
157. *Ibid.*, p. x.
158. For Deleuze looking at Bacon's paintings, there are "two violences, that of the spectacle and that of sensation." *Ibid.*, p. 61.
159. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
160. Deleuze cites Bacon from Sylvester, David. *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962-1979*. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson. 1987. pp. 76-81. In Deleuze, *Bacon*, p. 39.
161. Bazin, André. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image". In *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*. Edited by Hugh Gray. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press. 2005.
162. How the suffering of fish dying in the documentary *Leviathan* works as an affective extraction has been relayed by McMahon, Laura. "Leviathan, Meat and the Annihilation of Worlds". In *Animal Worlds: Film, Philosophy and Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2019.
163. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
164. See Ribas, João. "What Is It That Makes Today's Realism So Different, So Appealing?". In *Realism Materialism Art*. Edited by Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey and Suhail Malik. Berlin and Annandale-on-Hudson: Sternberg Press and CCS Bard, Centre for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. 2015.
165. Haraway in the documentary *Donna Haraway: Storytelling for Earthly Survival*. Directed by Fabrizio Terranova. 2016.
166. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
167. Haraway avers that "Neither the partners nor the meetings in this book are merely literary conceits." *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
168. Deleuze, *Bacon*, p. x.
169. *Ibid.*, p. x.
170. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.

171. *Ibid.*
172. Haraway, "When we have Never Been Human, what is to be done?", p. 137.
173. The subtitle of *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* is *The Reinvention of Nature*.
174. Haraway, Donna. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York, NY, and London: Routledge. 1989. p. 241.
175. Eva Giraud, a critical theorist of activism, has aptly observed that "it has become increasingly commonplace to argue, for instance, that humans are never autonomous beings who act against an essentialized natural world; instead, the human is only realized by and through its relations with other entities." Giraud, *What comes after Entanglement?*, p. 1.
176. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, pp. 6–7.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
178. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
179. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
180. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
181. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
182. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
183. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
184. See Panse, Silke. "Der Krieg in der Black Box des Friedens: *Der Tag des Spatzen* mit einem Ausflug in die politische Ökologie". In *Grenzfälle. Dokumentarische Praxis zwischen Film und Literatur bei Merle Kröger und Philip Scheffner*. Edited by Nicole Wolf. Dokumentarfilminitiative, Positionen und Perspektiven des künstlerischen Dokumentarfilms. Vol. 23. Berlin: Verlag Vorwerk 8. 2021.
185. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 4.
186. *Ibid.*
187. See also Giraud, *What comes after Entanglement?*, p. 26.
188. Morton, Timothy. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*. Ann Arbor, MI: Open University Press. 2013. p. 19. This passage has also been referred to by Ribas, "What Is It That Makes Today's Realism So Different, So Appealing?", p. 349.
189. Rancière, Jacques. "The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge". *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 36. Autumn 2009. p. 3.
190. Morton, *Realist Magic*, p. 19.
191. Morton, Timothy. *All Art is Ecological*. Dublin: Penguin Random House. 2018. p. 18.
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193. Harman, Graham. "Art without Relations". *Art Review*. 4 November 2014. Available at <https://artreview.com/september-2014-graham-harman-relations/> (accessed 2022-9-10).
194. Latour, Bruno. "Why Political Ecology has to let go of Nature". In *Politics of Nature: How to bring the Sciences back into Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2004. pp. 9–52.
195. Morton, Timothy. *Ecology without Nature. Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2009.
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197. E-flux presents *Ecology After Nature: Industries, Communities, and Environmental Memory*, available at <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/341335/ecology-after-nature-industries-communities-and-environmental-memory/> (accessed 2022-9-10).
198. *Art after Nature*. Book series edited by Giovanni Aloï and Caroline Picard. Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press.

199. Morton, *Realist Magic*, p. 19.
200. Morton, *All Art is Ecological*, p. 18.
201. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p. iii.
202. Morton, *All Art is Ecological*, p. 18.
203. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
204. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
205. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
206. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
207. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
208. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
209. *Ibid.*
210. For Braidotti, there are “the most banal, flat images of gender identity”, p. 252; “flat and mostly banal renditions of animal sounds”, p. 157; and “flat repetitions of dominant values or identities”, p. 81. Braidotti, Rosi. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist theory of Becoming*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press. 2002.
211. See also Dophijn, Rick. *The Philosophy of Matter: A Mediation*. London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic. 2021.
212. For Braidotti, “monism refers to Spinoza’s concept that matter, the world, and humans themselves are not dualistic entities structured according to principles of internal or external opposition but rather materially embedded subjects-in-process circulating nomadically within webs of relation with forces, entities, and encounters.” Braidotti, Rosi. “The Critical Posthumanities; or, Is Medianatures to Naturecultures as Zoe Is to Bios?”. *Cultural Politics*. Vol. 12. Issue 3. November 2016. p. 383.
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214. Bishop, Claire. “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”. *October*. No. 110. Fall 2004.
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216. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p. 55.
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228. *Ibid.*
229. For instance, by Sigmund Freud.
230. *Ibid.*
231. Braidotti, *Metamorphosis*, p. 213.
232. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

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234. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
235. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
236. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, p. 86.
237. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
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249. Latimer warns that "contemporary understandings of shared substance between different kinds undermine the asymmetrical division between the human and the animal, and when they actually reproduce it." *Ibid.*
250. Pedersen, Helena. "Release the Moths: Critical Animal Studies and the Posthumanist Impulse". *Culture, Theory and Critique*. Vol. 52. No. 1. 2011. p. 73.