Introduction:
Who's Afraid of the Inhuman Woolf?

Aaron Jaffe

"'More than anything, artists are men [sic] who want to become inhuman.'"

—Apollinaire[1]

Affordances

It runs like this: first, a film has to contain two female characters; second, they have to talk to one other; third: they have to talk about something besides a man.

Who today hasn't heard of the Bechdel test? Having gone viral, it increasingly serves as a litmus test in class discussion for marking outsized gender bias in texts. The test provides a handy algorithm, generating a consistent output: a fundamental feminist insight that far too many texts do not contain women who talk about anything besides a man. A lot might be said about the particular 1985 comic strip that provided its inspiration, Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For*.[2] Consider, for instance, whether the original strip, "The Rule," passes the test. Two female characters are talking—not about an absent male character *per se*—but about absent male character as an intrinsic issue of form, the ubiquity of movies defined by hyperbolically oversized male barbarians, vigilantes, mercenaries, and so forth. "The last movie I was able to see," says one character, "was *Alien* [in which] the two women . . . talk to each other about the monster."

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Fig. 1. Panel from Alison Bechdel's *Dykes to Watch Out For.*

The idea that *Alien* is suitable substitute matter for female intersubjective entanglement is inevitably ironic, right?[3] Concerning *Alien*, it's the navigator (Veronica Cartwright), talking to the warrant officer (Sigourney Weaver) and anyone else who'll listen, who offers the best advice of all: "Let's get the hell out of here."[4]

The test is a kind of xenofeminist failsafe, in other words, about representational realism:

> Representational realism malfunctions (*it isn't reality*);
> Reality malfunctions (*characters aren't really humans*);
> ∴ *Let's get the hell out of here.*

Obeying the Rule means going away (from the movies). Ironically, as the film *Alien* shows well, space travel means much the same (going away from everything else). Humans are wrong-sized for space travel, after all, both in terms of their need to talk to one another (*in space, no one can hear you talk*) and their undersized lifespans. For these reasons, hyperspace is the favorite *deus ex machina* for representing interstellar life. Going away from things is, in a sense, a realistic creaturely and material standard for Earth and everywhere else. As Nina Power observes in *One-Dimensional Woman*, the Bechdel test suggests further questions about the presumed correlation between realism and reality:

> Does cinema/literature have a duty to representation such that it is duty bound to include such scenes, as opposed to pursuing its own set of agendas? Why should literature/cinema be "realistic" when it could be whatever it wants to be?

> Does reality itself pass the test? How much of the time? Can we "blame" films/TV for that?[5]

Perhaps we ought to defer to the navigator: *Let's get the hell out of here*. This request isn't about escaping gender as a failed hermeneutic code but instead about intersectional repositioning for inhuman scales—gauging, for instance, the monstrous operations of representational sexism and other systematic defects of so-called realistic realism beyond the individual (the individual response to the individual scene in the individual movie).

A variety of this pathos of scale may be found in another critical zone wrong-sized for observing humans (characters, authors, readers) from the start, that is, modernism. It turns out, Bechdel revealed in a recent interview, the idea for the Rule came from a prized modernist source.[6] It originates in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, in the scene in which Woolf describes an imaginary book and a statement that interests her about two of its characters: "Chloe liked Olivia. They shared a laboratory together."[7] In addition to the necessary call for more representation—and more "realistic" representations—of women as subjects, Woolf seems to point in these lines at something besides (or, outside) representative subjectivity—to possible modes of extrasubjectivity to be accessed at impersonal, even inhuman scales. The hypothesis is that literary experimentalism on a scale shift may prove useful, not only for identifying spurious forms of subjectivity, but also for engaging larger networks of combinations that reveal realistic intersubjectivity as a problematic objective. That Chloe and Olivia share a laboratory, Woolf writes, "will make their friendship more varied and lasting, because it will be less personal" (82). Varied, lasting and *less* personal—*more inhuman*—significant qualifications that invoke strategies for life borrowed from the nascent discourse of genetics. Variety, durability, and non-anthropocentric agency redistribute sensibility and meditation in inhuman ways, in so many words, and it's significant that Woolf turns here in her search for suitable resources for assessing new ideas about character and fiction.

Critics have identified several plausible literary equivalents for Woolf's reference but the origins might be better understood as an expressive amalgamation of several real life analogues positioned at the nexus of literary life and laboratory life.[8] One click removed from novels, really preparing biological samples in a research lab—studying anemia, in fact—we find the young Naomi Mitchison (described in her obituary as the "Virginia Woolf of science fiction") and her brother, the eminent biologist J. B. S. Haldane, mincing liver and discovering the chromosome theory of heredity right before the First World War.[9] One thing that marks this association as varied, lasting, and impersonal—besides heredity—is a 1915 coauthored publication about scientific research.[10] The work of Naomi and J. B. S. was known to Woolf, and, more significantly, it resonates with the literary-life strategies of variation, durability, and impersonal agency being proposed. The connection to inhuman scales and genetic discourse is telling in other ways as well. Forming friendship-through-laboratory-life, Chloe and Olivia engage experimentally in radically oblique yet manifestly congenial forms of education and self-formation. This link between education and experiment, communication and biology, helps makes sense of what Woolf means when she summons

this organism that has been under the shadow of the rock these million years—feels the light fall on it, and sees coming her way a piece of strange food—knowledge, adventure, art. And she reaches out for it . . . has to devise some entirely new combination of her resources, so highly developed for other purposes, so as to absorb the new into the old without disturbing the infinitely intricate and elaborate balance of the whole (*A Room of One's Own*, 83–84).

Woolf's associations with Victorian evolutionary science are well-known. The "brain made sensitive by eons of evolution" abruptly pivots outward into impossibly plastic frames of imagined prehistory, telescoping from hours and years to eons.[11] As Catherine Hollis has discussed, the ways Woolf goes big are also influenced by geoscience, traces—or, materialist "marks"—of her father's feud with John Tyndall in the passages about glaciers in *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example.[12] Then, there's the mark of inhumanist pathos in the line about "a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship," and the attendant desire to "mitigate the suffering of our fellow-prisoners; decorate the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions; be as decent as we possibly can" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 77). In this convergence of the twain, where big and small things meet, there's a lament about a sinking ship, the inevitable quiescent decentering of the human from anthropocentric time. Like the Stone Age and stones, the Human Age doesn't end when we run out of humans. Part of what "millions of years" does for Woolf is shift things exponentially (81, 82, 84). Ten to the sixth power shifts being onto a logarithmic scale. The question remains whether knowing—and more specifically literary knowing—exists on a logarithmic scale. Being decent is a side effect of insignificance in *Mrs. Dalloway*, of being small standing before something too big to comprehend.

Indeed, Woolf frequently shifts her literary aesthetic in exponentially smaller directions—in "A Mark on the Wall" and "Kew Gardens," notably. The possible connection to Mitchison and Haldane picks up echoes of a famous short essay Haldane wrote around this time called "On Being the Right Size."[13] For biology, Haldane notes, changes in size involve changes in degree and kind: "To the mouse and any smaller animal [gravity] presents practically no dangers. You can drop a mouse down a thousand-yard mine shaft; and, on arriving at the bottom, it gets a slight shock and walks away, provided that the ground is fairly soft. A rat is killed, a man is broken, a horse splashes" (1). For life, even in smaller, insectile worlds, surface tension takes precedence over gravity:

> An insect [or, say, any other mark on the wall] is not afraid of gravity; it can fall without danger, and can cling to the ceiling with remarkably little trouble. It can go in for elegant and fantastic forms of support like that of the daddy-longlegs. But there is a force which is as formidable to an insect as gravitation to a mammal. This is surface tension. . . . A wet mouse has to carry about its own weight of water. A wet fly has to lift many times its own weight and, as everyone knows, a fly once wetted by water or any other liquid is in a very serious position indeed. (2)

Scalar determinism has implications for social institutions, too. The small city-state is a more apt environment for deliberative democratic sociality and the technical means

of the press, literacy, and education allow this kind of state to get bigger: "With the development of broadcasting," Haldane writes, "it has once more become possible for every citizen to listen . . . and the future may perhaps see the return of the national state to the Greek form of democracy. . . . To the biologist the problem of socialism appears largely as a problem of size" (1).

Indeed, bio-genetic preoccupations about scales and their technical affordances—affordances for touching and talking, observing and knowing—reveal a thematic concern with explicitly feminist objectives that stretches across Mitchison's long career. In her 1962 novel *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, especially, scale of access predisposes certain particular affordances about alien life. Just as bilateral symmetry predisposes a kind of binary rationality, so too, the frontal orientation of human bodies in space determines ideas about the past and present.[14] Extra-terrestrial starfish with five-limbed, inhuman orientations presuppose different medial variantologies and immanent potentialities. According to the spacewoman, communication with alien life is the work and glory of the women of Earth. The "disciplines of life," namely, "biology and communication . . . are most congenial to . . . women," she writes. The spacewoman's only caveat is that the woman-child must be afforded a right-sized education—from the nursery till age 35, more or less—and exposed to "amiable fauna . . . within reach of normal affection."[15]

"Chloe likes Olivia" and, while it's never certain that the affective traffic flows both ways, we do know that Chloe and Olivia communicate while mincing liver and working on biological research. This isn't Leopold sourcing organ-meat for breakfast. What makes Chloe and Olivia's relation *impersonal*, then, is its mediation of a shared project, their pursuit of fugitive technical means of inter-sanguinary fortification. When Gatsby concludes that Daisy's affection for Tom is "just personal," he means that it isn't cosmic; when Woolf says something similar, it has nothing to do with cosmic spirituality but rather right-sizing affection in the educational sense proposed by Mitchison's spacewoman.[16] This gesture brings affect within reach. To revisit the case: when Chloe "sees coming her way a piece of strange food—knowledge, adventure, art [and] as she reaches out for it," according to Woolf, she "has to devise some entirely new combination of her resources, so highly developed for other purposes, so as to absorb the new into the old without disturbing the infinitely intricate and elaborate balance of the whole" (*A Room of One's Own*, 84). In this sense, Woolf isn't writing about a thing or an object *per se* but an inhumanist literary laboratory.

That there is no human account of the whole is a special problem for Woolf and for modernism in general. And it's a problem of scale. Early on, Woolf writes that she wanted to "re-form the novel and capture the multitude of things at present fugitive, enclose the whole, and shape infinite strange shapes."[17] The injunction to touch a multitude of fugitive things, to bring them within reach of inner space, entails special effort for resizing literary knowledge. Most famously, this passage from her 1919 essay "Modern Fiction" describes encompassing the whole as an encounter between mind as a finely-tuned literary receiver—a search engine of sorts—and maximal variation of potential signals encountered:

The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old. . . . Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged, but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.[18]

"Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircum-scribed spirit," Woolf famously asks, "whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" ("Modern Fiction," 189). The ironic reversal here is imperative: literary convention and habit—"plot, comedy, tragedy, love interest in the accepted style," generic subject for intersubjective entangle-ment—now become little more than invasive species amid the amiable fauna of the mind. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf contrasts a "civilized exterior of manners and routine, of tea cakes and prime ministers" with "a profound, obscured inner life of passion and feeling."[19] In "Time Passes," she renders a world-format without subjectivized humans altogether (Mrs. McNab's presence, duly noted). The aspect of modernist mentality I want to invoke is the way it reaches out to grasp objects and things "impossible to get a hold of," to invoke Vilém Flusser's formulation, or, as a discipline of life, to return to Mitchison, processed at inhuman scales and expanding modernist reference beyond the Anthropocene.[20]

Zones

A detail sometimes overlooked in "Solid Objects"—the story of Woolf's often dis-cussed in this connection—is that the third, most arresting object encountered by the protagonist John comes from outer space. The other refuse—the sea-glass, the starfish-like porcelain shard—get reclaimed from the surface heap of the Anthropocene. The third is not *human* detritus at all, a point Woolf dwells on deliberately, in fact:

[The object was] almost identical with the glass in shape, massy and globular, but so cold and heavy, so black and metallic, that it was evidently alien to the earth and had its origin in one of the dead stars or was itself the cinder of a moon. It weighed his pocket down; it weighed the mantelpiece down; it radiated cold. And yet the meteorite stood upon the same ledge.[21]

Indeed, the inhuman status of the meteorite does more to facilitate salutary disaffec-tion from human life than the other junk picked up around the wasted commons of the city and its environs. John tries the other things out instrumentally with little success. First paperweight, then miscellaneous knick-knackery prove of little use. With the meteorite, John finally encounters that "creature from another world" which cannot be addressed in a banal way. It not only defies human coding and decoding, it reconfigures previous "freakish and fantastic" encounters into foretastes of exanthropic accident ("Solid Objects," 99). The four-and-a-half-billion-year-old cosmic what-not—older

than the planet itself—kicks off a dissociative, aesthetic reaction that spares him *bios politikos* and the assorted banalities of its forms of human-sized *re*-presentation and correspondence. Remember, extraterrestrial objects play a kindred role in Orlando's ideation: "Better was it to go unknown and leave behind you an arch, a potting shed, a wall where peaches ripen, than to burn like a meteor and leave no dust."[22] Then again, we might wonder with Orlando, about the alternative. Isn't it better otherwise? Indeed, the appeal here is precisely the opposite of triumphal humanism; instead, Woolf's story gestures towards modernism's weird fixations on becoming minimal and becoming inhuman. It's no accident, then, to find the very recent Xenofeminist manifesto—posted by the pseudonymous Laboria Cuboniks—echoing the same terms as the inhuman Woolf, outlining "a feminism of unprecedented cunning, scale, and vision":

> No more futureless repetition on the treadmill of capital, no more submission to the drudgery of labour, productive and reproductive alike, no more reification of the given masked as critique. Our future requires depetrification. XF is not a bid for revolution, but a wager on the long game of history, demanding imagination, dexterity and persistence.[23]

According to Cuboniks, the long game is, above all, "an impetus to generate new worlds." Indeed, detecting possibilities for inhumanist critique among, across, and against the literary and artistic materials of modernism, writ large and small, is one of the chief aims of this special issue. The ludic dimensions of Xenofeminism, for instance, provide a welcome antidote to the pervasiveness of big-talking nerdcore around some of the recent conversations about matter and being.[24]

    Why is modernism/modernity—so often posed as a kind of apex of human activity, an event of "peak human" import—also a force field for all matter of thinking without humans? Registering the implications of several recent critical and philosophical trends, the pay-off is weirder and longer accounts of modernism and its on-going legacies. As Kate Marshall observes in this issue, the word *weird* not only stands for the otherworldly but also what's to come. On or about modernist inhumanism, there's a convergence of four theoretical preoccupations—each belated in different ways. One might imagine them as overlapping circles in a Venn diagram:

> A. *Ontology*, the surprising return of, drawing back from the linguistic turn and considering the strange ontologies of assorted hybrids, pseudo-things, quasi- and hyper-objects, and the possibility of critical or epistemological environments

> B. *Affect*, what affects affect. Inspired by Deleuze, this question moves away from interiority, and, connects to modernity via a "distribution of the sensible," to cite Rancière

> C. *New Media*, how media determine our situations, modulating them in affective/aesthetic terms, to modify Kittler somewhat, as well as rerouting our spatial and temporal positionings

> D. *Matter*, making matter matter, living, dead or un-dead, borrowing from the "semi-fictitious" International Necronautical Society

The middle part of the diagram—the suddenly detectable weird mediator—is the critical problem of the articles assembled here, namely, marking a critical zone for inhuman cruft, matter, objects, affect, bodies, media, organs, intensities, orientations, genres and gestures within literary-aesthetic modernity.

▲
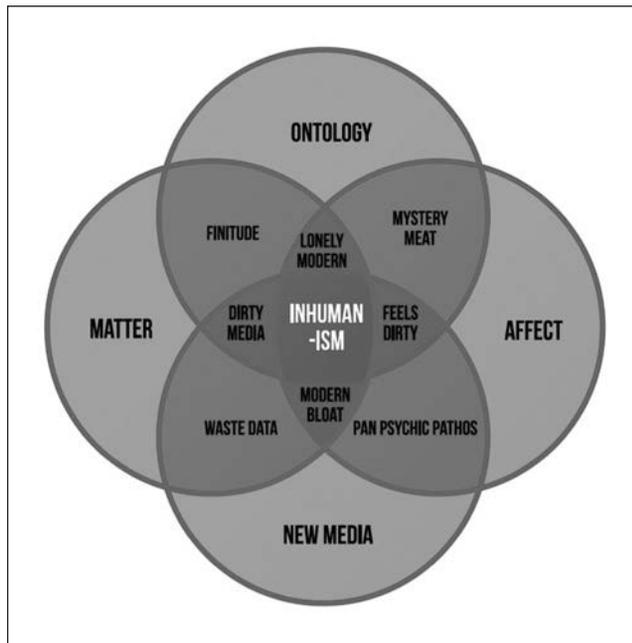
Fig. 2. Modernist Inhumanisms, a Venn diagram.

Furthermore, a fifth concern—too complex to diagram, perhaps—aligns with a second look at Posthumanism, as anatomized by Cary Wolfe, that leaves aside the crypto-transcendentalism of earlier iterations.[25] Indeed, the Interzone is full of strange non-Euclidian shapes, a cross-section of a multiply-armed echinoderm, "teratologically fabulous," to borrow a Lovecraftism, which provides impetus for the massive upheaval of speculative matter in what follows.[26]

The critical potentialities being diagrammed above and "tested" in this issue follow zones of critical possibility in modernism around inhumanist questions of technology, materiality, temporality, and form. The point isn't to plant a modernist flag on another thematic sphere, but rather to mark space for critical exposition in and around modernist studies for work invested in inhuman scenes of modernity and their critical legacies and archives. In particular, the articles gathered here pressure the contextual historicism and narrow periodization that often dominates and contains New Modernist Studies. Framed by ex-anthropic extremity on both sizes, critical inhumanism is a matter of excesses and intensities—expanded hermeneutics, weird fictions, inhuman satires, burlesques of situated and fixed identities. As such, it emerges from what Reza Negar-

estani terms "the catastrophe of revision" that "erases [fixed temporal orientation] from the future by modifying the link between the past and the present."[27] The inhumanist rubrics that these articles engage—indeed, often take issue with—New Media, Affect, Science and Technology Studies, Theory, Object-Oriented Ontology, Actor Network Theory, New Materialisms, Systems Theory, the Biopolitical, the Anthropocene, Accelerationism—share space with an expanded hermeneutics of modernist studies, yet, as several articles here assert, these approaches haven't adequately accessed or even noticed their stakes in modernist trajectories or archives.

The articles in this issue of *Modernism/modernity* offer detailed accounts from the inhuman zone of literary modernity: reports of anonymous being, nocturnal ontology, circulating sap, poisonous radiation, alien ecologies, machinic ventriloquism, dwindling existence, untenable talk, promethean shame, scalar pathos, kind pessimism, precarious foregrounds, and extinct backgrounds.[28] The plot-form of the issue moves, roughly speaking, from inhumanist scales to inhumanist sensoria, following a jagged course from modernist inhumanism as critical category to historical concept to generic condition. In the first article, Charles Tung explores modernism breaking *bad* through the expanding perspective and sheer heterochronic indulgence found in the time-travel fictions of H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon. Here, xenomodernist experiment plays off an ill-fit between human-sized literary form and the inhuman, scalar immensity of time, implicitly and explicitly rebuking small-scale, humanist thinking and feeling. Keith Leslie Johnson investigates *even worse* apocalyptic strains at work in weird early twentieth-century pulp such as in William Hope Hodgson's neglected novel *The Night Land* (1912). For Johnson, the irregular products of inhumanism prognose a weird shape for a High Modernism to come and diagnose a persistent problem still lingering in its wake, namely the limits of a culturist ethics confronted with inevitable extinction. Turning from expansiveness of prose to concentrations of poetry—and Negarestani's recent take on inhumanism—Sean Pryor scrutinizes the conceptual labor of the inhuman around ethical, political, and aesthetic judgments of modernism, considering the literary zone itself as a kind of inhuman scalar orientation. Even as modernist poetry is charged with an inhuman lack of feeling and a refusal to supply a common literary language accessible to all, it cultivates a dark comic orientation through the inhuman word. For Pryor, these abilities—akin to inhumanist sensory organs—resonate with investments in the endgame of philology. While Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot mock humanist philology by playing improperly with the histories of words, Mina Loy, the original xenofeminist, rejects philological privilege altogether, playing against words' histories in order to resist the history of exclusion so often figured by the human and the inhuman. Like Pryor, Maria Cristina Iuli is interested in the inhuman fit between literary form and critical environment. Jumping forward in historical terms, she locates one version of fully realized, immanent inhumanism within Nathanael West's late modernist touchstone *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933). Invoking Niklas Luhmann, Iuli points to inhuman agencies at work in the remediations of social life and the reality machinery of mass media that operate "inside" the novel. Animated by numerous generic and multimedia affordances, *Miss Lonelyhearts* orients almost gyroscopically to the world "outside" as a kind of automatic parody of realist constructions of narrative subjectivity.

Scaling inhumanism outward and upward, as it were, Alberto Toscano explores the historical genesis of the aesthetic organs that sprouted from seemingly opposed political extremes of the historical avant-garde, namely, the inhuman typologies of Italian Futurist F. T. Marinetti and the Soviet documentarian Dziga Vertov. These growths come readily adapted to the disruptions of a machine age and provide inception points for subsequent miscarriages of situated representation during the century of creative destruction to follow. Inhumanism distends out, opening a yawning Promethean gap, as Toscano puts it, between agency and imagination, a dead zone between product and praxis, stalked by the inhumanities of capitalism and technology. In Toscano's account, informed by the technological theorist Günther Anders, the catastrophe ramps up to impending nuclear disaster at midcentury and continues its acceleration into our 24/7 present. Jennifer Fay's article centers, in a sense, on ground zero for the inhumanist space-time weirdly presaged by various avant-gardes. She argues that nuclear iconography after 1945 both extends and revises prior avant-garde aesthetics of machine-inspired violence and existential crisis. Specifically, Fay finds in the atomic test films of the 1950s an aesthetic genre that inhumanely tests both the bomb and its targets—including human subjects—for aesthetic possibilities. These films, she argues, supply experiments in the repeatability that become individuated ends and objects in themselves. As a form of survival cinema, the atomic screen test melds the scientific goal of "hyper-reliability" with mid-century aesthetics and testing practices that push human experience to the limit of endurance while also making the scene of this endurance, the test itself, a spectacle.

The final two articles of this issue, by Kate Marshall and Julian Murphet, resonate with each other as they seek to address generic concerns that circumscribe both inhumanist scales and sensoria around genres that exceed narrow conceptions of modernism as a critical or historical category. Marshall performs an archeological inquiry into the affiliation of object-oriented and speculative theories with the fictional experiments of "The New Weird" in order to speculate in turn about the literary imagination that guides this affiliation. The resulting genealogy—Herman Melville to China Miéville by way of H. P. Lovecraft—focuses on the formal concerns of a range of paramodernist texts that mark them as a crucial and often deliberately forgotten source of contemporary speculative thought. Murphet provides a fitting epilogue to the issue, exploring the genealogy of the satirical impetus of modernist inhumanism. The modernist inhumanism Murphet proposes stretches backward from the contemporary to Bertolt Brecht, Karl Marx, and Jonathan Swift. The literary-critical abilities of militant satire, he argues, are better suited to the inhumanist zone than the brands of apocaplexis, technophilia, and ontological boosterism that often vex these topics in current debates.

Preoccupations with various forms of the inhuman "outside" were always harbored by modernism, but, with a few notable exceptions, they were never really recognized or realized by modernist studies, new or old. Insofar as inhumanism is a subject to be relentlessly "contrasted, gauged, and calibrated," in Negarestani's words, modernism gives critical and aesthetic form to these dynamic inhumanist orientations ("Labor of the Inhuman"). Above all, this means thinking pleonastically about the considerable

traffic between modernism and non-anthropocentrism. As several articles note in this issue, inhumanism isn't necessarily synonymous with anti-humanism. Instead, it's better understood as an unsettled antagonism tangled up within humanism; as Richard Grusin writes in a related context, "the human has always coevolved, coexisted, or collaborated" with the inhuman.[29] Modernist inhumanism, as Pryor writes, is a "term in an opposition and the movement—the process and the imperative—of that opposition itself" (558). In this regard, Negarestani's point about inhumanism exposing an unresolvable "vector of revision" in humanism, "a space of navigation and intervention," is crucial: "It is a dynamic feedback loop in which the expansion of one frontier provides the other with new alternatives and opportunities for diversifying its space and pushing back its boundaries according to its own specifications" ("Labor of the Inhuman"). This conception of inhumanism—its waxing and waning content making space for "complex abilities and commitment"—resonates with Jessica Burstein's thermodynamic account of modernism's agential intensity as an inhuman interface of revaluation and remediation (*Cold Modernism*, 29).

About stable values, inhumanism betrays a constitutive ambivalence that is already *in* humanism, as Pryor points out. *Tergiversations* is the word he borrows from Eliot in this connection. *Shuttlecocks*, Nancy Rufford's inhumanist word in *The Good Soldier*, would also fit. Shuttling between affective optimism and pessimism, tergiversating between gestures of apathetic quiescence and cosmic grandeur, modernist inhumanism simultaneously, as Pryor puts it, "hails the negation of an old cult" and heralds "a terrible trajectory, towards not emancipation, but survival." Murphet and Marshall both remind us in their articles that there's a strong dose of pessimism in the non-anthropocentric survival kit. Its secondary bibliography, writes Murphet, is "severally engaged in the mortification of humankind's pretentions to mastery over the domain of the intelligible and the knowable in an era of sentient machines, routine genetic modification, looming ecological disaster, and irrefutable evidence that we share ninety-nine percent of our biological information with chimpanzees." With undercurrents of misanthropy—the Weird Fourfold of nihilism, molecularity, technophilia, and animality that Murphet identifies, for example—and obsessive gusto for quarreling about obsolescent worthies in assorted forgotten cul-de-sacs, inhumanist thinking all too often appears without organs of irony, freely cribbing various concepts and rhetorical strategies from literary sources yet all the while oblivious to the literary-theoretical abilities, scalar orientations, and sensory organs modernist sources put in motion. As Marshall reminds us, the realm of literary modernity includes frozen remainders of all kinds of alien matter not fully cooked in humanism.

Before proceeding, it might make sense to consider an inhumanist corollary to Louis Althusser's point that history is "a process . . . without a subject": the subject of the process of modernity sounds like something inhuman.[30] Additionally, the inhuman meshes with the preoccupations of Foucault and Deleuze, especially their critical attentions to documenting (or even accelerating) the weird fate of identity as a kind of dissociation of the human in "the space of a dispersion."[31] Jacques Rancière's conception of the "distribution of the sensible" is similarly apposite here, especially insofar

as it differentiates a version of modernism from counterfeit common sense about the collusion between modernism and humanism. As Rancière has it, the "'common' world is never simply an ethos, a shared abode, that results from the sedimentation of a certain number of intertwined acts. It is always a polemical distribution of modes of being and 'occupations' in a space of possibilities."[32] This weird topography, in other words, whatever its ultimate fate, is shot through with strange dimensions of inhuman criticality: "horizontal distributions, combinations between systems of possibilities, not in terms of surface and substratum" (Ranciére, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 46). If space has inhuman powers in modernity, time does too: "the old stands in contrast with the new. In the aesthetic regime of art, the future of art, its separation from the present of non-art, incessantly restages the past" (20). When Lyotard posits the inhuman as the hidden subject of humanism, he cites the line from Apollinaire in my epigraph: artists want to become inhuman (*The Inhuman*, 2). Let's connect this observation with Lyotard's boldly counter-intuitive claim that proposes postmodernism as modernism's larval state: "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern," he writes.[33] This statement opposes a false epochal closure of modernity. Following Jean-François Lyotard's lead: "the relation between modernism and postmodernism [operates] a sort of mobile continuum, a dialectic of residual and emergent form" (as Peter Nicholls characterizes it, drawing on the emergent-dominant-residual distribution advanced by Raymond Williams).[34] How does the mobile continuum go on without anthropocentric dominants?

One of the key objectives of the modernist-inhuman is not merely concocting historical analogies between now and then, but rather foregrounding the inhuman revenant as modernism's durable and idiosyncratic legacy across longer accounts of modernity. The date-stamp may be traumatically short (1917–1989) or inconceivably long (50,000–100,000 years of behavioral modernity), but the problem of the inhuman turn addressed in this issue concerns the "co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities," as Rancière puts it, and the injunction to always modernize (*Politics of Aesthetics*, 21). With Big Data as the interpretive basecamp, modernity arrives undertheorized as a matter of survival, and, given the enormity of the task, postures of epistemological humiliation (*stay on the surface*; *be distant, modest, humble*; *bow down to the Old Ones*) are rapidly turning into the New Dogmatism. If the ex-anthropic turn accelerates concepts of modernism/modernity, is this not a two-way street? To what extent is the inhuman an epistemological/epistemotemporal problem of periodizing the human after the future? In a sense, much as *what comes after the subject?* identified earlier epistemological problems about postmodernity, this unsettled and therefore unsettling question—*what comes after the (humanist) future?*—is the epistemological question that drives the investigations about modernity collected in this issue.[35]

Submitted for consideration: another test, a Woolf test. This one is more thought experiment than scorecard. It goes a little something like this: first, there are two humans; second, they don't talk much; third, there's a mark on the wall. The first human, the narrator, is presumptively female. The second, a bit-player, is pathologically male. Not much supports these gender assignments, except circumstantial extra-literary evidence

and a standard scenario. When the bit-player (the tedious "mansplainer") suddenly materializes at the very end, blurting out a few stray lines of speech, announcing an exit ("to buy a newspaper"), pronouncing on geopolitics ("Curse this war; God damn this war!"), he occasions a preemptory, commandeering extinction of discourse.[36] There's more to this Woolf test, nevertheless, because it's not a test for assessing stories *per se*, but quite explicitly an attempt to access a zone "after life," "an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world," "[a] world not to be lived in," as the narrator puts it ("The Mark on the Wall," 78–79). The first human is a guest in this world, approaching it as a kind of laboratory of literary experimentalism. She speculates silently there about a host of things, "a vast upheaval of matter": nail pops, rose-leaves, cracks in wood, and on and on and on, all prompted by an initial observation for potential speculative matter. The second human blithely passes through this world, savaging its resources, surface-mining. His explosion—however fleeting ("I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall")—is a literary event that prompts a second, administrative look back at everything that the narrator narrated (83). Reflexively, the narrator becomes a protagonist, a figure with heroic capabilities for inhuman speculation, and the second becomes, in turn, an antagonist, a petty interloper, whose status as a *human*—one thing with precedence over everything else—is defined solely by a power to extinguish speculative life-force. His equation of precedence and ontological difference leaves a worrisome aftertaste. Whether or not the mark *is* a snail, as he asserts, other questions linger. *What's the relation of character, scale, and access? What gives certain things the status of characters and others the status of marks? Are marks characters? Are characters human?*

The Woolf test, then, concerns experimentalism of format, the susceptibility of "[m]atter for further speculation" (81). For the protagonist, this stance differs from knowledge *per se*, equated with almanac and etiquette knowledge, the kind of rank-based administrative formalism expounded by "Whitaker's Table of Precedency." Instead of spurious administrative hierarchies—relations understood as a pecking order about who comes first, who gets served first, who eats first, who gets linked most—the instrument detects an alternative arrangement where "[e]verything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing": "A quiet, spacious world . . . without professors or specialists or house-keepers with the profiles of policemen, a world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the water-lilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs" (83, 81). Above all, this ordinary inhumanism is a modernism of scale:

> [W]aking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of. . . . Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow. For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers—all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags

blown out; and of water-beetles slowly raiding domes of mud upon the bed of the river. I like to think of the tree itself: first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. (82)

The problem of Hamlet—in Eliot's reading, at least—concerns another variant of this dilemma, a dilemma of orienting to the pathos of the background and "sticky" romanticism, to borrow a term from Johnson's article in this issue (544). Hamlet, the sensitive modern, is an enervated neurotic, confronted by an unwelcoming dataverse. The pedestrian rope bridge between thinking and being is out: "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events" that connects the two craggy cliffs via sympathetic, human-scale relations, out-of-order.[37] The legendary "prolongation of the bafflement" isn't just that the protagonist finds himself with things and feelings difficult to connect. It's that the missed encounter in a landscape of lost objects, a setting *hic et ubique* not tuned to psychology, quickly becomes an ontological horrorshow: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy," says modernist Hamlet in Q1.[38] Finding so much amiss—indeed, feeling so much ground shifting without even knowing where to look or what to feel—is "inexpressibly horrible" (49). An adequate "objective correlative" between human interests, emotions, or attentions and the vast inhuman world resembles the fallacy of coincidence that Ruskin termed the "pathetic fallacy." The connection is not merely fallacious for bearing false sympathies (in expressions like "cruel, crawling foam") but also because it names a form of pathos that has lost its critical orientation.[39] Is this (a background of) apathetic pathos or (a character of) suffering antipathy?

Orientation, of course, is a key middle term for another philosophizing figure fretting about the stage, stalking several articles in this issue. I'm thinking of the soi-disant Speculative Realist—the Speculative Materialist, the Object-Oriented Ontologist—this veritable Hamlet without problems, standing in the wings of several articles collected here. With pathos-in-charge as a first philosopher, low-wattage, pan-psychic feelings reach everywhere, touch everything, and become a kind of operating system keen to proclaim no thing in or of itself more or less interesting than any other. When Ruskin coins the term "pathetic fallacy"—another aesthetic test of realist judgment—he follows the standard action plan in the wake of Kant, reserving for science the task of presenting things in relation to each other and for art the task of leveraging relations of things to humans. The proposed non-Archimedean standpoint proceeds from an embargo of the reflexive turn as its foundational edict, and symptomatic of this paradoxical gesture is an approach that simmers in an elegiac sauce of critical self-denial.[40] To be—*and*, not to be—is the predicate, not the question, and objects, elements, agents, units, entities, snails, and other miscellaneous characters all swarm in for pride of place in the nominal subject positions of sentences.

The middle term of this shell game—"oriented" (redolent of object-*oriented*-programming or album-*oriented*-rock)—makes conspicuous a certain preoccupation with format as the god-term as opposed to image or medium.[41] However dressed up the cosmological ambitions, orientation-as-format gathers miscellaneous tangles of ersatz-sympathies, litanies, and indicators, fitting for a situation in which human relations and

bonds no longer convey critical legitimacy or convictions. Make no mistake: formatting the inarticulate world in ways that proclaim basic sympathies among all things by no means hastens an apocalyptic re-boot or enhanced democracy. Nor, more modestly, does it lay out a new criticism. More to the point, format-takes-command conforms to a retro-presentist, administrative style, epiphenomenal of the internet era, spewing out a naïve salmagundi for undistinguished middle-of-the-road realism, spiced with occasional encounters with ineffable monstrosities.[42]

Amidst all the untethered mentality, emphasizing orientation-as-format obscures what raises the problem in/for modernity to begin with: the discovery of inhuman scale and the technical difficulties of optimizing proportional forms of access. The question for modernist Hamlet, in other words, isn't too much mentality, human or otherwise, but the fall of the protagonist enveloped in a background which is "populated" by too many inhumanly alienated things. What's really superfluous isn't mind—"in excess of the facts as they appear," as Eliot puts it—but rather the sheer superfluity of things in heaven and earth for which a single human is irrelevant ("Hamlet," 48). Modernist Hamlet cannot access a frame—aesthetic, hermeneutic, epistemocritical, or otherwise—that encompasses the distribution of the sensible in the inhuman world. Geoffrey Hartman calls the pathetic fallacy a form of "fetishistic and extreme cathexis" and tellingly likens its aesthetic effect to a camera apparatus panning around over a ruined great outdoors.[43] Instead of a despoiled nature and a malfunctioning sublime, the fight for bare apathetic survival occurs for modernist inhumanism in a dystopian hellscape, a ruined ecosystem, and a botched psycho-sphere. The modernist surveys the waste land as a kind of horizonless heap of broken statues and battered books.[44] For the very reason that modernism regulates an impossible-to-archive whole, it's crucial to be agnostic about what modernism actually is in normative terms. Woolf is particularly preoccupied with this issue. As Tammy Clewell observes, her work doesn't abandon the post of aesthetic judgment so much as it just "strip[s] the pathetic fallacy of all consolatory effects," emphasizing the need to "resist . . . art's consolatory powers" precisely when confronted by the problem of modernity, the problem of too much information.[45]

Grasping

Whatever lies in the murky inhuman abyss—"the slow, delicious ooze of sap" that Woolf invokes—is implicated in the technically-assisted observation of a "reality anterior to the emergence of the human species—or even anterior to every recognized form of life on earth," as Quentin Meillassoux characterizes it.[46] Wherever it is in expanses of deep time, the placement follows the modernist discovery of format without humans. The arche-fossil Meillassoux describes—akin to Woolf's meteorite—is clearly rooted in the modernist knowledge of inhuman timescales advanced by modern sciences of genetics, geology, plate tectonics, and cosmology. The ecological inhuman, yes, but what about ethics after humans, aesthetics after humans? Do such teleological formations make sense—or can a modernist inhumanism indicate something besides

political bad faith? In so many words, this impossible inhuman object is a fossil of the future, "designat[ing] the material support on the basis of which the experiments that yield estimates of ancestral phenomena proceed—for example, an isotope whose rate of radioactive decay we know, or the luminous emission of a star that informs us as to the date of its formation" (Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 10). Such ersatz-archives are not merely eccentric; they exit the orbit of human-scale archiving practices altogether. Seeing and hearing by technical means—devising techniques of observation, experiment, and reflection—is the crux of Siegfried Zielinski's project of variantology: "technical media had been a pile, a treasure of possibilities (or perhaps better: *potentialities*), which permanently had to be explored, every day and everyday new."[47] Let's take such variantology as an occasion for literary speculation about the scalar implications of a long inhuman turn in modernity, administering the complexity of temporality as an inevitable encounter with entropy and expiration—navigating the bottomless well of expired databases, dated theories, and dead links.

One response to our critical predicament makes schlocky pulp make-believe signal a heroic strain of philosophical realism.[48] What might be made of a literary realism informed by a format characteristically instantiated by the likes of H. P. Lovecraft? We might begin to account for this quandary by rethinking Kafka's burrower—the paranoid-mole narrator in "The Burrow" (1931)—as a variant of Lovecraft's professorial protagonists, busily preparing the way for Cthulhu and his ilk:

> [I]t only remains for me to assume the existence of a great beast, especially as the things that seem to contradict the hypothesis are merely things which make the beast, not so much impossible, as merely dangerous beyond all one's powers of conception. . . . For a long time already I have played with the idea that the beast can be heard at such a great distance because it works so furiously . . . I merely assume that the beast—and I make no claim whatever that it knows of my existence—is encircling me.[49]

We arrive at the unthinkable formulation: HPL is the background noise of modernism. In "The Call of Cthulhu"—published three years earlier than Kafka's story—Lovecraft's narrator describes the great beast as follows: "My somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature. . . . A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings."[50] This time, the beast scuttles about sunken, necrotic cities of the deep, emitting dimly religious sensory broadcasts. Seeping into the etherized subconscious of the weak-minded, the messages defy any reading, decoding, or interpretation. J. Alfred, I guess, might heed these calls when he says "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas."[51] But Prufrock, who sees his own decapitated head self-presented on a platter and imagines himself wriggling like an insect on a pin, is no prophet of great undisclosed matter—Lovecraftian or any other sort. Because Lovecraft's stories are stocked with assorted alien things and/or objects, set in weird, persistently misanthropic formats of reality (i.e., "universes"), he's become a literary mascot for the recent efforts to burnish the throne of ontology and mothball epistemology.[52]

Purported realism aside, Lovecraft is the unquestionable master of the tentacular fabulous, and the powers of tentacles for grasping something about modern character and the inhuman are precisely at issue. One way or another, the tentacle knows, and this capability raises epistemological problems. The horrific, partly non-human corpse of Wilbur Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror" (1928) provides an illustrative case in point:

> The thing that lay half-bent on its side in a foetid pool of greenish-yellow ichor and tarry stickiness. . . . It was partly human, beyond a doubt . . . But the torso and lower parts of the body were teratologically fabulous . . . Above the waist it was semi-anthropomorphic; though its chest . . . had the leathery, reticulated hide of a crocodile or alligator. . . . Below the waist, though, it was the worst; for here all human resemblance left off and sheer phantasy began. The skin was thickly covered with coarse black fur, and from the abdomen a score of long greenish-grey tentacles with red sucking mouths protruded limply. (389)

Let's bracket the link between this tentacle and the kind of masculinist hostility to slop, slither, and interiority that Andreas Huyssen described as modernism's characteristic response to mass culture.[53] Part of the reason is that something besides hostility is in play. Horror, yes, misogyny, without a doubt, but also an almost wide-eyed and slack-jawed admiration for the inhuman powers of multiplicity. Well before Speculative Realism lays claim to Lovecraft, Deleuze and Guattari invoke him in *A Thousand Plateaus* as a spokesperson for the phenomenon of anomalous multiplicity:

> The anomalous is neither an individual nor a species; it has only affects, it has neither familiar or subjectified feelings, nor specific or significant characteristics. Human tenderness is as foreign to it as human classifications. Lovecraft applies the term "Outsider" to this thing or entity, the Thing which arrives and passes at the edge, which is linear yet multiple, teeming, seething, swelling, foaming, spreading like an infectious disease, his nameless horror.[54]

It should, then, come as no surprise that, for Deleuze and Guattari, Lovecraft's interest in molecular zones of intensity and proximity between organism and organization, "capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field," make him a secret sharer with Virginia Woolf (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 304).[55]

The Lovecraftian mythos is deeply tentacled, but modernism also—as Deleuze and Guattari notice—has serious tentacle bona fides. "The roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish." Maybe you hear the call of a massively-tentacled presence gathering in the frozen inhuman wastes in Marianne Moore's octopus of ice? Frozen or otherwise, tentacles are all over the joint. A quick survey of modernism's embrace of tentacle-becoming reveals a variety of connotations: clingy, elongated, flexible feelers that don't so much touch or handle as present grasping as a hazard. In Flusser's vampire squid book—his long expressive homology between an inhuman mass media system and the alien sensory instruments of the "vampire squid from hell"—he notes that tentacles can not only function to probe and grasp but also as organs of vision and light that hypnotize prey.[56] In *Blast* 2, Jessie Dismorr writes of

"tentacles of [the] senses, subtle and far-reaching."[57] In 1917, Woolf describes Henry James in similar terms—probing the "uncompromising organism" of London with his "amazingly delicate and tenacious tentacles."[58] And, in "The Method of Henry James," she imagines James—not Great Cthulhu—as a "portentous figure looming large and undefined in the consciousness of writers, to some an oppression, to others an obsession."[59] In Woolf's 1924 story "Together and Apart," tentacles return again as alien sensory probes: "Fibres of her were floated capriciously this way and that, like the tentacles of a sea anemone, now thrilled, now snubbed, and her brain, miles away, cool and distant, up in the air, received messages which it would sum up in time."[60]

Furthermore, in *Ulysses*—where one can find anything—there's the familiar equation between the tentacle and the occult. Bloom eavesdropping on some incomprehensible something or another: "Of the twoheaded octopus, one of whose heads is the head upon which the ends of the world have forgotten to come while the other speaks with a Scotch accent. The tentacles," which he later recalls thusly: "What was he saying? The ends of the world with a Scotch accent. Tentacles: octopus. Something occult: symbolism. Holding forth."[61] This Joycean driblet is usually taken as a criticism of dreamy occult gibberish. Hugh Kenner annotates the tentacled octopus as a political metaphor: "British economic power, its tentacles stretched toward Ireland, its two heads, London and Edinburgh," are strangling the Irish economy.[62] He writes that AE's go-to metaphors for the economic leviathan include assorted mystery meat ("elephant, tiger, plesiosaurus"), so why not an octopus? Pound in fact used the metaphor precisely this way in a 1943 Radio Rome broadcast: "My politics seem to me SIMPLE. My idea of a state OR an empire is more like a hedge hog or porcupine, chunky and well defended. I don't cotton to the idea of my country being an octopus WEAK in the tentacles and sufferin' from stomach ulcers and chronic gastritis."[63] Not surprisingly, EP links this farty cephalopod-sovereign to his familiar anti-Semitic litany as well as "Mr. H.G. chubby Wells and the liberal stooges" (*Ezra Pound Speaking*," 20). There's also a shocking scene with a wretched-looking extrasensory tentacle—an inhuman piece of sushi poking out of a jar—set in the asexual breeding laboratory in Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*.[64]

For a statement of the HPL weltanschauung, there's little better than "The Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family": "Life is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemonical hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous."[65] For Michel Houellebecq, this synthesis of misanthropy and exanthropy supplies "an alternative to life in all its forms, to constitute a permanent opposition, a permanent recourse from life"—but Houellebecq is also quite frank that this alternative emerges as a warped byproduct of Lovecraft's odious racial hatreds.[66] For Graham Harman, Lovecraft is an avant-gardist of backgrounds, designating—without actually re-presenting—the "gaps between objects and their qualities."[67] A particular line from "The Call of Cthulhu" is often cited to make this point: "The most merciful thing in the world . . . is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far" (167).

The idea that the literary effect of gesturing to an impossible whole—a mainstay of modernist aesthetics (think for instance of Hemingway's oft cited remarks about the iceberg)—is somehow attributable to Lovecraft alone is ludicrous. The qualification, I suppose—the undead tentacle-effect, we might call it—notices that even when feelers extend across a multitude of sensuous planes, the effort makes a wreck of any coherent framework supplied by human experience or life. Hemingway's iceberg still trades on the endeavors of one intrepid human adventurer at the ends of the earth; the intimations of Lovecraft's pulpy, tentacled immortalities stimulate special effects of occult innuendo. This realism is weird because it insists that the non-mimetic is realism: that heeding the call of Cthulhu towards an evasive, abject anti-sublime and learning not to worry is not only a good thing but also a more realistic ontology.

One possibility is that the multimedia aesthetic abilities of modernism already point being away from naively realist autonomous narrative, representation and mimesis towards more generically heteronymous conditions. The key lies in multiplicity—and the multiplicity of limbs in particular. Limb indeterminacy (*how many limbs?!*) has weird implications for things—for what can be touched and reached. Legs become feelers, suction-cupped, stalked organs, stamens, and lures; Velcroed grasp implies a multiplicity of purpose: ready to hand becomes ready to tentacle. Among its other merits, Flusser's vampire squid book is a fable about information at the literary limit. Comparing "the vampire squid from hell" and *homo sapiens sapiens*, he proposes a fantastic convergence that links the odd existence of a tentacled lifeform, complexly equipped for probing the deep ocean, to the inhuman consequences of our emerging system of new media. Humans increasingly approximate the strategies of invertebrate life, Flusser writes:

> As our interest in objects began to wane, we created media that have enabled us to rape human brains, forcing them to store immaterial information. We have built chromatophores of our own—televisions, videos, and computer monitors that display synthetic images—with whose help broadcasters of information can mendaciously seduce their audiences. (*Vampyroteuthis*, 67)

Is this assessment hyperbolic? Probably not. Recumbent with chromatophoric gadgets, humans become more and more cephalopodan, probing, probed by, and propelled through an endless ooze of immaterial information. Increasingly, our environment is, in so many words, the seemingly unfathomable abyss of Big Data fitfully plumbed by inhuman algorithms. Following Flusser, I want to propose the tentacle as a tether across the subject/object interface. I have argued elsewhere that the branch in modernism—in Benjamin's Artwork essay, or Conrad's preface to *Nigger of the Narcissus*, or Woolf's "Together and Apart," or Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," is a figuration of the radio antenna.[68] Pound's black bough may in fact be an extrasensory tentacle. The tentacle intrudes as a third parasitic go-between beside background and character, sentience and sapience, "natural" innocence and "cultural" experience, broadcasting the signal into the greatest of great outdoors, deep space.

The message: Let's get the hell out, *hic et ubique*. . . .

Notes

1. Guillaume Apollinaire, quoted in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 2.

2. Alison Bechdel, "The Rule," in *Dykes to Watch Out For* (Ann Arbor: Firebrand Books, 1986), 22.

3. Ironic not just because *there are two women talking* in *Alien* but because the *something they talk about besides a man* so deliberately confounds the maternal and the feminine—not least by realizing H. R. Giger's travesties of reproductive and genital iconography. For good reason, *Alien* and its sequels have generated a bounty of scholarship about gender politics and monstrous, bio-horrific forms thereof. See, in particular, Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," *Screen* 27, no. 1 (1986): 44–71. The "maternal-feminine," Creed observes, "is there in the text's scenarios of the primal scene, of birth and death; she is there in her many guises as the treacherous mother, the oral sadistic mother, the mother as primordial abyss; and she is there in the film's images of blood, of the all-devouring vagina, the toothed vagina, the vagina as Pandora's box; and finally she is there in the chameleon figure of the alien, the monster as fetish-object of and for the mother" (54). See also Kelly Hurley, "Reading like an Alien: Posthuman Identity in Ridley Scott's *Alien* and David Cronenberg's *Rabid*" in *Posthuman Bodies*, ed. Judith M. Halberstam and Ira Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 203–24; and, Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," *Representations* 20 (1987): 187–228. Clover is correct to liken James Cameron's Ripley to a "space-age female Rambo": "To applaud the Final Girl as a feminist development, as some reviews of *Aliens* have done with Ripley, is . . . a particularly grotesque expression of wishful thinking" (209, 214).

4. *Alien*, directed by Ridley Scott (1979; Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003), DVD.

5. Nina Power, *One-Dimensional Woman* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009), 40.

6. Bechdel credits her friend Liz Wallace for the idea in "Testy," *Dykestowatchoutfor.com*, last modified November 8, 2013, http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/testy.

7. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. Mark Hussey (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 82.

8. Marie Stopes's *Love's Creation*, published in 1928, is a popular choice because Woolf knew Stopes, and the novel's protagonist is a female scientist. See Christina Alt, *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 114–27.

9. Neil Ascherton, "Naomi Mitchison—a queen, a saint and a shaman," *Guardian*, January 17, 1999, http://www.theguardian.com/Columnists/Column/0,5673,320853,00.html. Also see Nick Hubble, "Naomi Mitcheson: Fantasy and Intermodern Utopia," in *Utopianism, Modernism, and Literature in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Alice Reeve-Tucker and Nathan Waddell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 74–92.

10. J. B. S. Haldane, A. D. Sprunt, and N. M. Haldane, "Reduplication in mice (Preliminary Communication)," *Journal of Genetics* 5, no. 2 (1915): 133–35.

11. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harvest Books, 1990), 68.

12. Catherine W. Hollis, "Virginia Woolf as Mountaineer," *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman (Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011), 184–90, clemson.edu/cedp/press/pubs/vwcon/20.pdf.

13. J. B. S. Haldane, "On Being the Right Size," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1926, 424–27, in the *UCLA Computer Science Department's Internet Research Lab Papers*, irl.cs.ucla.edu/papers/right-size.pdf.

14. See Gavin Miller, "Animals, Empathy, and Care in Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*," *Science Fiction Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 251–65. Drawing on ideas from cognitive scientists Rafael Núñez and Eve Sweetser, Miller suggestively explores Mitchison's interests in embodiment, orientation, and variability, the ways "abstract everyday concepts such as time" are rooted in "human bodily experience of the world, [which in turn,] can get shaped in specific ways to generate cultural variability" (256).

15. See Jane Donawerth, *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 30–37.

16. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 152.

17. Woolf to Clive Bell, August 19, 1908, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, vol. 1, *1888–1912* (London: Hogarth, 1975), 356. The full passage is telling: "I think a great deal of my future, and settle what book I am to write—how I shall re-form the novel and capture multitudes of things at present fugitive, enclose the whole, and shape infinite strange shapes. I take a good look at woods in the sunset, and fix men who are breaking stones with an intense gaze, meant to sever them from the past and the future—all these excitements last out my walk, but tomorrow I know, I shall be sitting down to the inanimate old phrases" (356).

18. Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth, 1933), 184–95.

19. James Naremore, *The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 31. See also the discussion of Woolf in Jessica Burstein's important account of modernism's constitutive ahumanism, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2012).

20. Vilém Flusser, *The Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design* (London: Reaktion, 1999), 86. On the concept of the Anthropocene, coined by Paul Crutzen in 2000, see Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "Have We Entered the 'Anthropocene?'" *Global Change: International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme*, October 31, 2010, igbp.net/ 5.d8b4c3c12bf3 be638a8000578.html.

21. Virginia Woolf, "Solid Objects," in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (San Diego: Harcourt, 1989), 102–07, 106.

22. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando, a Biography*, ed. Mark Hussey (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 78.

23. *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation,* laboriacuboniks.net

24. The telltale "declarative, seething, ominous idiom," as Murphet characterizes it in this issue, of Speculative Realism, filed in bureaucratic triplicate, lands on academic discourse as a kind of polemic of administration. Costumed "in Nietzschean glamor without a trace of the mordant satiric bite that distinguishes each of the master's apophthegms from a thousand witless imitations," it tries to whistle past the graveyard of theory, ducking the linguistic turn and thus constitutively oblivious to the coincidence of various modernist trajectories and legacies of critique in the weird mediation zone of inhumanism (658).

25. Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

26. H. P. Lovecraft, "The Dunwich Horror," *H. P. Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005), 370–414, 389.

27. Reza Negarestani, "The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I: Human," *E-flux* 52 (2014), e-flux.com/ journal/the-labor-of-the-inhuman-part-i-human/.

28. Many of the articles assembled here originated at a one-day symposium on Modernism and Inhumanism held at University of Notre Dame London Centre, August 28, 2013.

29. For the very reason Grusin expresses here, we have favored *in*human over *non*human. See Richard Grusin, ed., *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), ix.

30. Louis Althusser, "Lenin before Hegel," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 71–84, 83.

31. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 10.

32. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 39.

33. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 79.

34. Peter Nicholls, interview by Yubraj Aryal, "On New Modernist Studies," *Journal of Philosophy: A Cross Disciplinary Inquiry* 4, no. 10 (2009): 56–59, 59.

35. Flusser connects the supposedly humanist/humanizing injunction that everything will be read, studied, and criticized in the fullest sense to alien epistemology, the inhuman transit, and belatedness of unsettled and unsettling beings. See Vilém Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant: Objections to Nationalism*, ed. Anke K. Finger, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

36. Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall," in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, 83–89, 89.

512   37. T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet and his Problems," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 45–49, 48.

38. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2008), 1091–149, 1.5.175–76.

39. John Ruskin, "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5:201–20, 5:205.

40. In this regard, Justin Clemens highlights a stylistic hiccup of SR/OOO, which he argues derives from Quentin Meillassoux's influential *After Finitude*, a style of presentation which is assertoric rather than argumentative. The assertoric style, *After Finnitude Parrhesia* [2013]: 57–67, 59). The problem of observation and critical environment—a "realist" style that doesn't tacitly duplicate existing economic and socio-political arrangements—can't be simply waved away with a magic wand, which is precisely why Cary Wolfe's synthesis of pragmatism and systems theory remains so relevant. See Cary Wolfe, *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

41. The ambition of Speculative Realism/Object-Oriented Ontology, in other words, is not driven towards *critical theory* but *format*, a special treatment of the world. It faults competing formats (chiefly, idealism, phenomenology, and multi-foliate theoretical inheritors, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, the linguistic/discursive turn, etc.) in which "things are treated as phenomena rather than as objects, which means that they are not allowed to interact with each other except when chaperoned by a thinking human subject" (Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* [Pero: Open Court, 2005], 33). SR/OOO exponents themselves have a lot to say about their positions, ambitions, membership, and impact. For a recent credo, including a statement of various enmities with much of philosophy and literary criticism, see "The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object Oriented Literary Criticism," *New Literary History* 43, no. 2 (2012): 183–208.

42. Justin Clemens writes that "Vomit is the paradigm of SR's Great Outside, of its allegedly-levelled objects," likening the paradigm to "the penumbra of Kant's vomit's splatter": "the objects of the great outside, and perhaps even the Mallarméan '*Perhaps*,' start to look and smell again like the most delightful, sub-philosophical, idealist elixirs" ("Vomit Apocalypse," 63–65).

43. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 68.

44. Lovecraft's 1921 story "The Outsider" deposits his dead narrator in a claustrophobic and ruined setting, a zone of "cosmic nightmarishness and hellish accident," namely a library. The ancestor "beings" may have once cared for his needs, he reasons, but what's telling is that he can't distinguish between the "piled-up corpses of dead generations" and the "maddening rows of antique books," in H. P. Lovecraft, "The Outsider," in *Tales of H. P. Lovecraft*, ed. Joyce Carol Oates (New York: Ecco, 1997), 1–6, 1–5.

45. Tammy Clewell, *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 49.

46. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 10.

47. Siegfried Zielinski, "Vilém Flusser: A Brief Introduction to his Media Philosophy," _vilem_flusser_archive_, 1–6, 2, film7000.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/flusser.pdf. See also Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, trans. Gloria Custance (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

48. Reportage, not overstatement: "[T]he speculative realists have all pursued a model of reality as something far *weirder* than realists had ever guessed. It is no accident that the only shared intellectual hero among the original members of the group was the horror and science fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft" (Harman, "The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer," 184). Here's another example from Harman: "In symbolic terms, Great Cthulhu should replace Minerva as the patron spirit of philosophers, and the Miskatonic must dwarf the Rhine and the Iser as the river of choice. Since Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin resulted in mostly pious, dreary readings, philosophy needs a new literary hero" (Harman, "On the Horror of Phenomenology: Lovecraft and Husserl," *Collapse* 4 [2010], 6).

49. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 325–59, 353–54.

50. H. P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu," *H. P. Lovecraft: Tales*, 167–96, 169.

51. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, *1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958), 3–7, 5.

52. This is, above all else, a *literary* world and HPL and his interlocutors depend on an unstated aesthetic of vernacular modernism, a syncretic strain of crypto-romanticism captive to the pulp production model in which it originated. For more on this connection, see Glenn Wilmott, *Modernist Goods: Primitivism, the Market, and the Gift* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 152–60, and Leif Sorensen, "A Weird Modernist Archive: Pulp Fiction, Pseudobiblia, H. P. Lovecraft," *Modernism/ modernity* 17, no. 3 (2010): 501–22. No need for dark, non-Euclidean architectures for developing the connection, as Sorensen explains, it's a side effect of the "'contaminated' medium" of modernism's weird archive (502). Pulps like *Weird Tales*—where Lovecraft published—were crucibles for strange cultural alchemies, annealing undead matter from various folkloric sources, assorted generic offshoots with homespun racist, sexist, and ethnocentric prejudices, sublimated through the horrors of alien miscegenation, into something uncannily "right"-sized for a certain, defective modernity.

53. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

54. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 270.

55. See also *Understanding Deleuze, Understanding Modernism*, ed. Paul Ardoin, S. E. Gontarski, and Laci Mattison (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). I'm also indebted to Julian Murphet, "The Mole and the Multiple: A Chiasmus of Character," *New Literary History* 42, no. 2 (2011): 255–76.

56. Vilém Flusser, *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis, A Treatise, with a Report by the Institut Scientifique de Recherche Paranaturaliste*, trans. Valentine A. Pakis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

57. Jessie Dismorr, "Monologue," *Blast* 2 (July, 1915): 65.

58. Virginia Woolf, "Henry James: 2. The Old Order," in *The Death of the Moth, and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), 135.

59. Virginia Woolf, "The Method of Henry James," in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNellie, vol. 2, *1912–1918* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 346–49, 346.

60. Virginia Woolf, "Together and Apart," in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, 191.

61. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1986), 135.

62. Hugh Kenner, "The Taxonomy of an Octopus," *James Joyce Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1981): 204–05, 205.

63. Ezra Pound, *"Ezra Pound Speaking": Radio Speeches of World War II*, ed. Leonard W. Doob (Westport: Greenwood, 1978), 21.

64. H. G. Wells, *The First Men in the Moon* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

65. H. P. Lovecraft, "The Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family," in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, ed. S. T. Joshi (New York: Penguin, 1999), 14–21, 14.

66. Michel Houellebecq, *H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life* (San Francisco: Mc-Sweeney's, 2005), 119.

67. Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2012), 4.

68. Aaron Jaffe, "Inventing the Radio Cosmopolitan: Vernacular Modernism at a Standstill," in *Broadcasting Modernism*, ed. Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle, and Jane A. Lewty (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009).