

FROM ANIMALITY TO TRANSHUMANISM

EDITED BY CHARLIE BLAKE, CLAIRE MOLLOY AND STEVEN SHAKESPEARE



Beyond Human

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Preface

It is easy enough to believe that from the earliest times, people devoted energy and time to becoming-animal. Easy too to acknowledge that wherever environments have been generous, climates clement, food and shelter abundant, in short, wherever the human tendency to adopt the good life has been allowed to take its own route, without recourse to large scale social and technological systems, tribes still access animals in myth and ritual.

Whether we believe it was monotheism and rationality or empire and economy that severed the old tie, the avenues of dialogue and performance that once existed between animals and humans have, it seems, withered on the vine. One of the last remnants of those old rituals still hung on to its traditions, albeit uncanny and ashamed, into my childhood: the travelling circus. I mean here the circus of sawdust and the strong, ripe smell of urine, the circus of roaring and neighing, the apparatus of bareback riders in sparkling corsets and their plumed beasts, the circus of the clowns and their chimpanzees and donkeys. With all its cruelty, risk and danger, indeed because of them, circus gestured towards a more sacred dialogue: leaping the bulls in Cretan murals, shamanic donning of the pelts of deer

Tribal life, ancient or modern, neither was nor is now by any means innocent. No more so was the old circus of animals. It is, however, only in our times that the idea of the good has been replaced with the term 'innocent'. In Hollywood action films, flawed heroes fight evil only to defend the innocent – not because they themselves are good, or because they serve the good. News stories mourn the plight of innocent victims: they do not seek out the good. When laws are made, they are always framed to protect the innocent, not to promote the good. Innocence substitutes for the good today because we live in a polity determined to achieve consensus, but we know we will never agree on what is truly good. We prefer innocence because it is passive: good acts, but innocence is acted upon. To be the figures of innocence: that is the function of animals in the contemporary

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cosmology. This is the last perversion of that mythic thought that once, and still in some societies, shapes the relations between species.

The industrial revolution and urbanization gradually foreclosed the ancient proximity, animals. For the authors in this collection, the resulting division between humans and animals is a construction. The continuities (laws of physics, evolutionary continua of organs and genera, persistence of reflexes and instincts) are as persuasive as the ambiguously defining distinctions (communication, ability to learn, tool use, sociality). But the whole point of social constructionism as an explanatory framework is that what has been constructed as belief and behaviour becomes real. That we *only believe* that animals are different does not alter the fact that they have become so, any more than gender or race dissolve as social facts once we understand that they have been constructed through social and historical processes.

This is why we must have not only a theology or philosophy but a theory of the human–animal relation: because the relation is a social fact, even if it is not an ethical or ontological one. This is also why the discourse of animal rights comes in for complex discussion in these pages. In our haste to end the dominion over animals, which entered a new phase with industrialized food production, and the de-population of farms, a first and powerful reaction was to assert rights. This is akin to the decolonization process in the post-War period, especially in that the ex-colonies were understandably but nonetheless uncomfortably and in some cases fatally given, without alternative, the status of nations. Decolonization imposed the nation–state as the only available political organization; the discourse of rights poses a legal structure as the only avenue formalizing human–animal relations.

We should recall here that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlines the duties of states to their citizens, not rights accruing to any and every member of the species. True, human rights extend to refugees, but this only encourages states to create non-refugee categories (illegal migrants, asylum seekers) to ensure that they do not have 'human' rights proper, exclusive to citizens. Rights do not express the responsibilities and obligations animals owe to one another or to us. Instead, they recreate the myth of innocence. No more innocent than they are dumb or unfeeling, nevertheless animals

serve the ideological function of innocent victimhood, the position of all who are excluded from politics, like refugees and children.

We should not therefore consider animals from the standpoint of ethics alone, since that will always bring us to an inevitably political analysis anyway, given our wholly social condition today. Triumphant utilitarianism, calculating the greatest benefit to the largest number, is now the voice of neo-liberalism, save only that what constitutes the good – wealth – is an argument considered already won. This is so clearly a political doctrine that its rivals from Aristotle and Kant to Sen and Badiou must be counted political thinkers rather than ethicists. The species relation is of its nature political, even when we live it individually as ethical dilemma.

So what is politics? According to Rancière, politics occurs when an excluded sector of society which is nonetheless the object of government – artisans in Athens, slaves in the USA, colonized peoples in the British Empire, women everywhere – demands to become a subject as well as an object of rule. Rancière observes that when these often revolutionary inclusions occur, they alter the forms of political life radically. From the ancient city square where everyone knew each other to the vast anonymity of twenty-first century mediamanaged elections, from the power of life and death to the statistical management of populations and behaviours, politics has certainly changed.

We know that it can change again, because it is changing now. Rather ahead of the challenge of migrants to the constitution of the nation–state, we have already accepted that nations will cede sovereignty to that extraordinary amalgam of technological networks and human biochips, the market. What would happen if we began to accept the idea that animals were to become political, in the sense of creatures participating in their own rule?

The image we should have before us is not that of a parliamentary session or a senate filibuster. It is so long since animals participated in rule that we have forgotten how they speak. The circus was the last remnant of a far more ancient participation, interweavings of animal and human in intricate assemblages. The importance of artistic expression to the politics of species in this book and elsewhere derives from the repressed memory of another mode of social order.

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Neither human nor animal are necessarily naturally kind to one another. Savaging a human victim in the arena, or being tortured to death by other humans, animal–human dialogue will never be consensual.

The ancient performances combined humans and animals in complicated and temporary machines, often for purposes of violence, but also for acts of amazing and gratuitous beauty. They involved drugs and other sacred disciplines, and from the ancient myths we can perhaps discern the frenzy and mortality of hunters torn apart by their own dogs, or the auguries of death borne by terrible hybrid creatures with their riddles and labyrinths. Human–animal politics is, strictly speaking, unthinkable. Being unthinkable is a hallmark of political life: it was unthinkable to give slaves the vote, as today in the USA it is unthinkable to give the vote to prisoners. The unthinkable inclusion demands an entire remaking of our polity. Nothing less. Hence the critical importance of animal studies to the human sciences.

The concept of species, since long before Darwin, was tied to reproduction: only members of the same species could reproduce sexually. Today, as the industrial revolution that began in the late eighteenth century has passed into its informational and now emergent bio-technical phases, we are long past sex as our sole means of generation. No longer tied to the proto-environmentalism of the mercantilists, from whom all wealth came from land, we generate wealth from trade, from the circulation of money, from information and imaginative invention, in short from all the varied forms of communication, not just the mediation of sex. We know we have other relations with animals: relations of affection and trust. of domination and fear; of nurture and exploitation. But in all these relations we have been in control. If there is a new polity, there will be a new economy, an unforeseeable mode of human-animal trade. This too is likely to be exploitative, dangerous, bloody, but these are forms, indicators, of communication, equal, open and dissenting confrontation, from which alone anything like dialogue is likely to spring.

Sadly, we know that the emotionless rationality of diplomatic dialogue is all about power, its maintenance, and the repression of discussion. We can guess too that political violence springs eternally from the impossibility of dissent. As long as we derive our model of interspecies communication from babies cuddling their care-bears,

we will enforce innocence, a stupid acquiescence in all our demands. The becoming-human of animals is likely to be as fearful and in some ways as disturbing a process as the old circuses. But without it we will have no possibility of passing beyond human ourselves.

Sean Cubitt

Introduction

Charlie Blake, Claire Molloy and Steven Shakespeare

Descartes famously argued that nonhuman animals were nothing more than clockwork machines. Lacking language, or the capacity to interpret signs, these creatures of instinct resembled nothing so much as the technological artefacts of emerging mechanical science. Of course, Descartes' own problematic account of the gap between human mind and inert matter left him vulnerable to those who would collapse the distinction entirely. The way was opened to a strange speculation: the 'bestial' devices against which we measured our humanity turned out to be the reflection of our own paradoxical inhumanity.

La Mettrie's infamous 1748 text *L'Homme Machine* signalled to this new reality, though its idiosyncratic style and brevity perhaps undermined its claim to a seminal place in the history of ideas. It is striking, however, that La Mettrie turns Descartes' reading of animality on its head. Whereas the latter found the alien mechanisms of material creatures to be a sign of their essential difference from human beings, for La Mettrie our machinery is what connects the human and the nonhuman. There is no absolute dividing line between the human and the animal, he argued. We are all shaped by what we physically ingest and by the mechanical structures of brain and body. The characteristics supposed to distinguish us – language, reason, knowledge of good and evil – are present in actual or potential form in animals as well.

In short, La Mettrie argues that human beings are animals because all living beings are machines. On this basis, he advocates an ethic of honouring matter and nature, abandoning fear of death, and acknowledging our kinship with all other animal-machines. To be fully human is to be beyond human.

This Enlightenment tour de force still resonates with the debate in our own day on the nature of humanity, and how it is defined in relation to technology, nonhuman animal life and indeed the non-living matter from which life emerged. Crucial to this debate is the genealogical dimension: the critical awareness that ideas, definitions and values change over time in relation to economic, social and cultural structures. This particularly applies to those ideas which have been claimed to pick out natural kinds or essences. The question inevitably arises: what if the idea of humanity itself were a cultural construction? A construction which underpinned hierarchies of power within and beyond the human species?

When Foucault proclaimed the 'end of man' he was also issuing a challenge to these regimes of power. If the human is defined by certain essential traits (for example, language, rationality, consciousness, free will), it follows that entities which lack these qualities must be considered subhuman, outside the bounds of communication and response, and often not direct bearers of any moral worth. This applies to nonhuman animals, but also to certain categories of *homo sapiens* considered too bodily, irrational, primitive or corrupted to merit the status of full humanity.

This is particularly important to philosophy, because, in its Western form at least, it has been premised on the significance of what it is to be human. Indeed, the legacy of the Socratic imperative of delineating the good life has generally if not exclusively implied securing the distinctiveness of human identity as uniquely rational, self-conscious, free, and uprooted - as bearing the divine image or possessing a meaningful world. In consequence, the human has often been markedly distinguished from the animal, seen as mute, non-rational, instinctive, amoral, as bare life, as poor in world. This distinction, moreover, is not simply one between different biological species, but – it often appears – between different orders of being. As is so often the case, however, that which is excluded comes back to haunt the excluder. As a result of this radical distinction, the shadow of animality becomes constitutive of definitions of the human; its silhouette falling upon and passing over the organic, technological and social realities that supposedly determine who 'we' are, as much as it does upon the underlying questions: who counts as one of 'us', and to whom are we accountable, when we ourselves are in question?

Philosophical challenges to this humanistic prejudice have been a striking feature of recent intellectual history: Heidegger, Derrida. Haraway, Deleuze/Guattari and Agamben are among the key figures. Through their work and the critical responses they have evoked, we are compelled to face the radical incompleteness and violence of anthropocentric modes of thinking and acting. It is not only that the human is not the only centre in the world, that (using Jacob von Uexküll's phrase) other beings experience an 'Umwelt' irreducibly distinct from our own. It is also that our very interaction with these other worlds reveals the porosity and internal strangeness of our own composition. When (as with Derrida) the animal becomes 'wholly other', it places an obligation upon us that ruptures the settled notion of who 'we' are. When (for Agamben) the 'anthropological machine' is suspended, we can imagine a messianic utopia in which the endless manufacture of law-bound identities is also suspended. Negotiating with these thinkers, we find that the divisions between science and messianism, between play and responsibility (divisions as constitutive of our Enlightenment humanity as that between fact and value) are stretched to breaking point.

Such insights are closely related to emancipatory projects, as they mesh across human and nonhuman boundaries. This is an *ethico-political* dimension which involves environmentalism and animals' rights but also a range of challenges to political ideologies which have naturalized anthropocentric, patriarchal and colonial systems of power.

As La Mettrie reminds us, however, ethics cannot be divorced from questions of technology. The power to fashion ever more sophisticated tools raises issues of responsibility, ownership and purpose. However, more telling still is the realization that technology cannot simply be located outside of the human essence. Whether through recognizing the complex mechanisms of our evolved bodies or the strange ways in which technology can now interface with, or be implanted within, our most intimate organs, we are faced with the reality that technology changes our self-definitions. For transhumanists, it raises the possibility of making radical alterations to our longevity, intelligence and susceptibility to disease, perhaps even removing our dependence upon our current physical form. Transhumanism is both an extension of the Enlightenment commitment to human reason and

artifice, and a neo-Gnostic desire to transcend the human altogether into the realms of pure information.

If transhumanism can sound like science fiction, this should not dull us to the ways in which the latter has been remarkably prescient in its exploration of virtuality, artificial intelligence and cybernetics. Indeed, contemporary science is continually throwing up scenarios as unsettling as any sci-fi, from the spontaneous self-creation of the RNA needed for life, to the possibility of multiverses and the end of time. Even if there is only one universe, it has not been about us humans for the vast majority of its existence, and it is ever harder to detect anything preordained in the way matter and life have evolved.

The reference to science is important here, because there is an urgent ongoing need to relate these philosophical perspectives to the discoveries and speculations of evolutionary biologists, specialists in artificial intelligence and artificial life, ethologists and so on. As Donna Haraway has insisted, when the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman are mutating, it makes no sense for scholars to lock themselves away in the arbitrary confines of their disciplinary worlds. When we examine the molecular machinery which enables the neurons in our brains to send messages, the gates that open and close to let sodium and potassium ions pass through to generate different electrical charges; when we learn of the rich symbolic and cultural life of nonhuman animals; when we imagine ever more sophisticated learning machines which interact with their environments and gain the possibility of a kind of self-awareness and freedom; when all these things happen, our image of human beings as the unique spiritual apex of the world is challenged.

The power of the best sci-fi is that it straddles the divide between the speculations of science, philosophy and art. In so doing, it signals to another key motif of the debate about humanity: the representational dimension. How do we depict (taking that word in the widest possible sense) our humanity, nonhuman animals, monsters, hybrids, aliens, cyborgs? When we re-present, are we trying to show forth a pre-formed essence, making present again the fullness of an idea? Contemporary theory has focused rather on representation as intervention, transformation and projection, the various ways in which we 'pose' the world and ourselves within it. The value of this lies in

raising our awareness of the loaded terms of any claim to represent the world in its truth.

However, as recent, more speculative philosophies have insisted, it can also leave us trapped within a representational matrix which centres on us all over again, because everything revolves around human ways of constructing the things we see and engage with. If representation is not innocent, perhaps we need new ways of thinking the world in its absoluteness, its weirdness and its inhuman resistance to anthropocentric colonization. As Giovanni Aloi insists in his essay in this volume, what seemed to be a wholly liberating preoccupation with the animal (read: the mammal) returning our gaze can betray our own continuing desire to look into the eyes of those who have some kinship with us. But what happens when we look into the multifaceted eye of the insect? What if we attend to the otherness of the microscopic organism? Is it still an 'otherness' we can even recognize as such, according to the canons of our philosophical tradition?

Asking theory to engage with what is 'beyond human' cannot therefore be a simplistic elevation above the limits of humanity, without engaging with the nature of those limits: how they have been made, reinforced, thought, resisted, imagined and translated. The risk is to dismiss the 'human' as a bounded whole, but then find ourselves embroiled in a new age fantasy of some other essential identity, some other flight from finitude, some other exoticism to feed our craving for distraction.

The present collection therefore investigates what it means to call ourselves human beings in relation to both our distant past and to our possible futures as a species. It considers what questions this investigation raises for our relationship with the myriad species with which we currently share this planet. The contributors look from our origins through early cave art in the upper Palaeolithic to our prospects at the forefront of contemporary biotechnology, and laterally at the connections we have formed with other kinds of life. In the process, these essays intend to position the human in readiness for what many contemporary thinkers have characterized as the transhuman and posthuman future, even as they contextualize humans as animals. For if our status as rational animals or 'animals that think,' and in many cases, as a species beyond animality itself, has

traditionally marked us out as somehow inherently superior to other life forms, this distinction has become increasingly problematic. It has come to be seen as being based on skills and technologies that do not necessarily distinguish us so much as position us as *transitional animals*. It is the direction and consequences of this transition that is the central concern of this volume.

Beyond Human brings an interdisciplinary approach to this complex of issues, precisely to acknowledge its complexity. We are artists, cultural theorists, scientists, philosophers, theologians, whose work links together the questions of animality, technology and transhumanism. This kind of approach does not depend on the constraints of a precisely agreed theoretical foundation, but rather a shared critical sensibility. Taking human beings off the throne of creation is not just a negative move. It frees us for a new understanding of the world and our connectedness with it. It can help us to change the way we relate to our environment and the nonhuman life with which we share it. It can also help us to think more clearly about the promises and threats of technology. When we already have machines inside us, technology is as natural as anything else (which is not to say that it cannot be as dangerous, strange and ambivalent as nature).

The volume is arranged in four sections in order to traverse this strange terrain in a structured way. In the first part, 'Animality: Boundaries and Definitions', Ron Broglio alerts us to an animal revolution 'to come'. He confronts us with our failure to incorporate the animal body into the social body, an incorporation which would mean rethinking the human and the non-human community. Broglio argues that what is scandalous about the animal body and the animality of the blunt human body, what is indeed the seed of revolution, is that these bodies abandon reason, sensibility, and civility as the modes of discourse and point to an-other register all together. This animal revolution does not abide by human norms of meaning or temporality. It always takes us unprepared.

This aspect of resistance is taken up by Claire Molloy, who disputes the fictions of human-nonhuman primate relations which, she argues, deny the unworkable relations between humans and chimpanzees that lurk in the extratextual narrative zones. Framed by the work of Vicki Hearne and being particularly concerned with the relationship between training and interspecies communication, Molloy maps

various ways in which chimpanzee agency is suppressed, denied and (re)constructed. As Broglio identifies the revolutionary reality of 'dumb' animals, so Molloy confronts us with the subversive otherness of the 'unknown animal'.

These opening essays suggest that domesticating unruly animality is often at work in precisely those critical and philosophical studies which theorize it. Giovanni Aloi focuses upon one insidious form of this: the obsession with the animal gaze which implicitly imagines the animal as mammalian, or somehow able to share in a reciprocal act of seeing. Aloi accepts that the critique of speciesism is a necessary advance in the cause of respecting nonhuman interests, but the default use of the general term 'animal' creates an imaginary hybrid which threatens to neutralize singular differences. In particular, those entities which are too unlike us to engage in the 'return of the gaze' (insects, for example) are hidden from view. Aloi asks what happens when we allow our view of the world to be disrupted further by these stranger singularities.

Part Two, 'Representing Animality', examines the way in which human-animal relationships and exchanges are negotiated, imagined and portrayed. Mark Wilson and Bryndís Snæbjornsdóttir are practising artists whose work critically departs from the rise of academic animal studies, which in their view continues to privilege human language and conceptualities over different ways of encountering otherness. Through reflecting upon their own practice in dialogue with other artistic and philosophical works, they call attention to the very human investments and interests served by our meetings with animals, meetings in which it is often the singular animal which is occluded.

Clearly, even in the most 'sophisticated' artwork, the animal's alterity can be trained to serve human needs (including the need for a sublime or inscrutable other). Natalie Hansen examines this logic at work in the commodified world of toys, and specifically the My Little Pony range. Showing how the innocent childhood fantasy world is already overdetermined by adult expectations, Hansen charts the interrelationships between the role played by animal toys and the enforcement of sex and gender norms. More transgressive aspects of the love that crosses species are reined in. However, through exploring a number of cultural and theoretical texts, Hansen insists that a queer reading of this love is possible. The restrictions which

adults attempt to place on the little girl who plays with her pony doll are indicative of the challenging possibilities implicated in her breaking with humanist and heterosexist stereotypes: she is *becoming* horse as a way of inaugurating new possibilities of subjectivity, relationship and affection.

Lucile Desblache builds on this potential for reimagining humananimal connections. She explores how some contemporary fiction writers stretch language towards a literature of ideas and emotions that intends to bridge the gap between theory and representation, to give a voice to non-human animals, to be their 'porte-parole', and perhaps most importantly, to evoke potential relations between human and non-human beings. Drawing particularly on Creole writing, she advocates a fiction that breaks with Enlightenment dualism, proposing instead a 'diversality' of meaningful connections between human beings and the rest of the 'pluriverse'.

As the Enlightenment world fragments and humanism is ruptured, the repressed animal regains its spectral, even sacred intensity. The section entitled 'Thinking Beyond the Divide' engages with this return in a postsecular context. Felicity Colman traces the way in which the mediatization of animals – how they are represented and conveyed by human imaginative forms – plays a key role in shaping the nature and affects of human community. Bataille's reflections on the Lascaux cave paintings become a touchstone for considering how the representation of the animal shores up normative and restricted notions of humanity, whilst also offering the possibility for a 'sacred' intensity of experience. Breaking with the conventional construction of our life-world, this excessive meeting with animality generates the promise (or threat) of nonhuman modes of relation and agency.

In different ways, the next two essays open up the theological dimension of this new paradigm. Donald Turner reads Levinas and Bataille together to challenge and deepen standard defences of the moral worth of animals. For Turner, such approaches often underestimate the asymmetrical relationship between humans and other species. Freed from its own anthropocentric bias, Levinas' work points towards an acknowledgement of the trace of the divine Other in the face of the animal, not only in the human. However, Turner argues that Levinas is still caught in an ethical logic of scarcity, which needs to be supplemented by a Bataillean insistence that the ethical life

follows an economy of surplus: gifts of respect to non-human animal life manifest a kind of divine self-expenditure that defies utilitarian calculation, and humans approach divinity in acts of interspecies altruism. The argument that 'animal studies' cannot be confined within a humanistic discourse – that it must and does reopen questions of radical alterity *per se* – invites creative theological response.

Many of the chapters in this collection attempt to grapple with the philosophical, ethical and conceptual boundaries that have marked out differences between human, animal, divine and machine, but which, in the light of recent cross-disciplinary theorization, have been dismantled or at the least, undermined to reveal new possibilities and problems. This is further demonstrated by Celia Deane-Drummond (whose own background combines theology with scientific expertise in plant physiology). The boundary she considers is that of free agency. Deane-Drummond acknowledges that the Christian claim that human beings are made in the image of God has often underwritten accounts of human uniqueness in the divine purpose for creation. However, drawing on ethological and primatology research which supports a case for intention, innovation and theory of mind in primates other than humans, Deane-Drummond argues for a more nuanced understanding of freedom and of the image of God which can be enlarged to take account of different communities of creatures. In her essay, the project of dismantling boundaries continues with the proposal that to establish freedom as a border which separates humans from other animals is to ignore the complex cognitive capacities of other social species and the claims made for their selfdirected agency. The theological project of Hans Ur von Balthasar is critiqued from this perspective, but also seen as a rich resource for envisaging a constructive theology that breaks with anthropocentric biases.

This posthumanistic and postsecular contesting of boundaries is oriented most explicitly towards questions of technology in the final section, 'Animal-Human-Machine-God'. Taking the notions of excess and transgression from Bataille, and geometry and abstraction from Leroi-Gourhan, and then filtering them through the writings of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and futurists such as Raymond Kurzweil, Charlie Blake argues that the 'inhuman' is not merely that which defines the human animal in contrast with

the beast and the spirit or divinity, but the mark of its inner telos as what has come to be known as the transhuman. Steven Shakespeare examines boundaries between animality, the divine and the machinic and maps, particularly through the works of Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari, various ways in which these break down and rub against one another other as productive irritants. He notes that amongst the messiness of the dismantled borders the human has become ever more difficult to define, yet it is precisely these conditions that allow for a re-thinking of God through the inhuman. At the core of his argument is the notion of 'articulation' which Shakespeare explores in a variety of modes – the linguistic, the organic and the mechanical—and in relation to the dualisms that have demarcated the human from its other.

Where Shakespeare, Deane-Drummond and others consider the animal as a boundary intervention, it is the human–machine interface and its material realization, conceptualized as the cyborg, which forms the focus of Jones and Whitaker's chapter. Challenging certain strains of cyborgian hyperbole, Jones and Whitaker argue that the transformation of the human body by technological means should not signal alarm around the repercussions for self-identity or the erasure of humanness. Indeed, technological transformations may in fact be better understood as a return to functional normalcy. Mapping some of the myriad ways in which bodies are transformed by technology, the essay follows a trajectory through prostheses and implants to plastinates and examples of post-mortal bodies.

Taken together, these essays constitute a remarkable exercise in renegotiating boundaries. They move us through the trajectories between the animal and the transhuman, not in a linear and teleological fashion, but as an unpredictable revolutionary movement of excess, unknowing, idiocy, resistance and inhumanity. They engage with the subversive, sacred, affective potentials of moving beyond the human, narrowly and violently conceived. We offer them to the world of scholarship and commentary, but also to the indifferent intensity of the animal who sees in paper only food for new becomings.

PART ONE

Animality: Boundaries and Definitions