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An Introduction to OOF

A Prelude: Bunnies

Spring 2010. I am excited but a little wary as I travel to Atlanta, where the Georgia Institute of Technology is hosting a one-day symposium, “Object-Oriented Ontology.” An offshoot of speculative realist philosophy, object-oriented ontology (OOO) theorizes that the world consists exclusively of objects and treats humans as objects like any other, rather than privileged subjects. This thing-centered nonanthropocentrism has captured my imagination, and I am attending the conference because I am certain of the potential for feminist thought and contemporary art practice. After all, both feminism and art have long engagements with the notion of human objects. The symposium is energetic and provocative, with an intangible buzz circulating among people feeling out new contours. Nonetheless, I become aware that my concern about gender imbalance in OOO,¹ while significant, pales beside a far graver feminist problem: there is not a single bunny at this conference. How could this be?

The OOO author Ian Bogost, the symposium organizer, narrates the circumstances surrounding OOO’s omission of bunnies in his book *Alien Phenomenology, or What It’s Like to Be a Thing*.² He describes how he designed a feature for the symposium website that would show a single random Flickr image of an object. His software, which he refers to as the “image toy,” queries Flickr’s database for images tagged by users as “object” or “thing” or “stuff” and displays a random

result, with a new random selection overwriting the prior image upon reload. Its surprising mismatches express a wondrously unpredictable and nonanthropocentric “universe of things.”

The image toy is significant for object-oriented ontology because it illustrates the central notion of “carpentry,” a praxis-based, materialist form of philosophical inquiry.³ In Bogost’s words, “carpentry entails making things that explain how things make their world.” The image toy generates what he calls a “tiny ontology,” a microcosmic image of the diversity of being. But it is the sad fate of this tiny ontology to appear on a website advertising the OOO symposium. There, what the toy object makes is a world of trouble. Bogost explains:

The trouble started when Bryant, one of the symposium speakers, related to me that a (female) colleague had shown the site to her (female) dean—at a women’s college no less. The image that apparently popped up was a woman in a bunny suit. . . . [The] dean drew the conclusion that object-oriented ontology was all about objectification.

This sounds like “trouble,” indeed! And the OOO response is radical—to reprogram the ontology itself:

[As] anyone who has used the Internet knows all too well, the web is chock-full of just the sort of objectifying images exemplified by the woman in the bunny suit. Something would have to be done lest the spirit of tiny ontology risk misinterpretation. I relented, changing the search query . . .

With that, the appearance of sexually objectified women within the toy’s tiny ontology provokes a decision to eliminate the offensive objects altogether by altering the Boolean code. Edited, the toy now displays only images that *are* tagged as “object” or “thing” or “stuff,” *and are not* tagged as “sexy” or “woman” or “girl.”

In what can only be characterized as ontological slut shaming, bunnies—which is to say, sexualized female bodies—are barred from ontology. And if, reading this, we think OOO must be joking by committing to this founding gesture (in print, at that), it is assuredly not. Now this ontology looks not only tiny but impoverished.

In many ways this episode stands as a parable for the complex tensions between feminism and object orientation. In their responses

to bunnies, both object-oriented ontologists and feminists (if we are to assume the women's college dean is one) end up enacting crippling misrecognitions of the stakes around objects, objectification, and material practices. I return to this scenario, and unpack its rich ironies, in a case study later in this chapter. But first, fast-forward to the fall of 2014. Many of the authors in this volume are in Dallas for the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts conference. SLSA's interdisciplinary meetings have provided a quirky and remarkably unpretentious home for staging six panels over four years that have laid out the foundations for feminist object-oriented thought: OOF. Now, in Dallas, we are convening a roundtable where Irina Aristarkhova poses a sly question:

Is OOF a joke?

As one might suspect, the answer can only be *maybe*. OOF—a grunt of an acronym meant to stand for “object-oriented feminism”—is, after all, called “OOF.” And faced with situations like these, what other response can we muster?

OOF

OOF originated as a feminist intervention into philosophical discourses—like speculative realism, particularly its subset OOO, and new materialism—that take objects, things, stuff, and matter as primary. It seeks to capitalize perhaps somewhat parasitically on the contributions of that thought while twisting it toward more agential, political, embodied terrain. Object-oriented feminism turns the position of philosophy inside out to study objects while being an object oneself. Such self-implication allows OOF to develop three important aspects of feminist thinking in the philosophy of things: politics, in which OOF engages with histories of treating certain humans (women, people of color, and the poor) as objects; erotics, in which OOF employs humor to foment unseemly entanglements between things; and ethics, in which OOF refuses to make grand philosophical truth claims, instead staking a modest ethical position that arrives at being “in the right” even if it means being “wrong.”

Welcoming wrongness affords OOF a polyamorous knack for adopting multiple, sometimes contradictory perspectives. Readers will find that among the chapters in this volume, there is neither an interest in resolving difference nor an investment in arriving at an ontologically

“correct” master theory. As a result, OOF holds itself in tension with the many discourses it touches and is always as ready to apply a thought as trouble it. This variance prioritizes feminist intersectionality, which ontological framings, hinging on totality and exclusivity, would seem to overwrite. Accordingly, this volume and OOF as a whole aim to bring intersectionality to the fore, and to unsettle, queer, interject, and foment more critical work around the resurgence of objects and all things material in contemporary thought.

Reflecting feminist ideals of inclusivity, OOF forges alliances by participating in endeavors in theory and practice that share not only OOF’s commitment to feminism but also its key interests in nonanthropocentrism and the nonhuman, materialism and thingness, and objectification and instrumentalization. For example, work in feminist new materialisms that highlights our common condition as matter to overcome anthropocentric human–nonhuman distinctions is compatible with OOF’s concern with object relations (and is explored in greater detail in the section on erotics below); and this same concern connects OOF with artistic and curatorial practices that establish representational and nonrepresentational relationships between objects. Studies of the Anthropocene, exposing the ecological fallout of utilitarian objectification of the planet, or studies in digital labor, examining the productivist networking of human and nonhuman data objects, likewise align with OOF’s object-oriented analysis of exploitation (and are discussed in the section on objects and objections and the section on politics, respectively). Simultaneously, OOF’s methodological stakes in praxis introduce object theory to forms of feminist and social justice activism that also interrogate and seek to transform the very power relations objectification describes (and are considered in the section on being otherwise oriented as well as in a case study, using the bunny example, in the section on ethics).

Accordingly, while OOO and speculative realism represent important points of reference (and provide significant points of departure), they are by no means the only or primary context for OOF. Indeed, as I show, OOF’s approach to these and all subject areas involves appropriating certain elements and rejecting others, always in the interest of cultivating feminist praxis. Though OOF’s sights are set on broader horizons than the narrow philosophical position staking that sometimes echoes in these debates, its accordances with

and deviations from OOO and speculative realism nevertheless warrant special elaboration in the remainder of this section on OOF's genealogy.

OOF gladly seizes on speculative realism's nonanthropocentric conception of the world as a pluralist population of objects, in which humans are objects no more privileged than any other. This provides a welcome respite from theories of subjecthood that many feminist philosophers point out are fundamentally dependent on the logic of phallogentrism. It also avails itself of the important insight that in objects we can locate ontic "realism." This too promises a positive return to the "real world" after a generation of feminist thought that has been accused of ascribing gender as a construct in language.⁴ However, these merits notwithstanding, as its awestruck acronym might imply, OOO's tone often appears somewhat too elated by discovering a universe composed of objects. What is more, OOO seems to relish, in the idea that humans too are objects, a sense of liberation from the shackles of subjectivity, especially from the "unreal" delusions of correlationism.⁵ Finding neither of these positions tenable, OOF therefore positions itself as a friendly if pointed rejoinder, reminding this flourishing philosophical discussion first, that object-oriented approaches to the world are practiced in disciplines outside philosophy, and second, that all too many humans are well aware of being objects, without finding cause to celebrate in that reality.

Thus, by swapping OOO's gasp for a gutsier grunt, OOF aims to inject feminism into this discourse, but without dismissing these notions that, in fact, are essential for contemporary activism. To this point, a third contention of OOO, developed in the work of Graham Harman, is that objects are fundamentally withdrawn and sealed off from one another.⁶ For feminists, this idea is particularly provocative: those concerned with activist struggles in late capitalism would do well to imagine its implications. On the one hand, the separateness of objects recalls Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of seriality, an idea Iris Marion Young applied to the feminist movement to account for political affiliation of individuals mobilizing around an issue without being reduced to group identity.⁷ But on the other, withdrawn objects suggest an end to affiliation as such, and with it the neoliberal imperative to network individuals into populations. This ambiguity should give us pause. Despite OOO's disavowal of "object-oriented programming," it can

be no coincidence that object-oriented thinking is emerging at a historical juncture characterized by networks, or the capacity for ordering through code. Programmability is paramount. It remains to be seen whether this may prepare objects for a feminist conception of networks such as Donna Haraway's "integrated circuit," or whether "withdrawal" makes objects more or less susceptible to regimes of control.⁸ Steven Shaviro and others favor versions of speculative realism that privilege Whiteheadian relation over Harman's isolated objects, and in this respect would appear compatible with Haraway's notion of a connectivity that reflects and resists the ubiquity of code toward feminist ends.⁹ As Haraway explains, "Networking' is both a feminist practice and a multinational corporate strategy—weaving is for oppositional cyborgs."

In fact, we might say the same of branding. On this front, OOF takes this cue from OOO: it is a brand. As a brand, object-oriented ontology has leveraged a calculated posture of coolness to make waves among various communities. OOO struck some as radical partly because it was largely developed in the blogosphere and could afford a somewhat punkish attitude toward institutionalized forms of academic publishing, appearing to buck a blindsided and sluggish philosophical establishment. However (notwithstanding Timothy Morton's suggestion that OOO's politics may be anarchic), the self-proclaimed radicality of OOO's discursive intervention was not matched by a radical politics. For this reason, and no doubt coupled with the fact that the primary OOO authors were four white men (from whom the choice to *not* engage politics might appear as an act of privilege), OOO left some readers with a bad aftertaste and feelings of frustration.

This is where OOF steps in, offering an alternative brand that is, following Haraway's vision, both a feminist practice and a multinational corporate strategy. OOF is a brand for oppositional cyborgs. So is it a joke? Consider: Object. Oriented. Feminism. Perhaps this sounds funny? Surely, taken together, these terms are either paradoxical or redundant. After all, doesn't feminism already deal with objectification? Or on the contrary, isn't feminism oriented toward subjects, not objects? Doesn't object-oriented thought, at least as espoused in recent speculative realist ontologies, steer clear of the political, which is the avowed terrain of feminism? As one must expect, OOF's surface silliness carries seeds of something serious.

Objects and Objections

What is the object of a feminist orientation? Historically, feminism's object or at least its *objective* has been political. Specifically, it has involved inward ways of orienting politics through subjectivity, whether translating private domestic practices into the public sphere of politics or advancing inner personal affect as a source of knowledge.

But what if the *impersonal* is political?¹⁰ A better question to ask might be *who* is the object of feminism? Feminist politics might also arise from outward orientation, from looking to the abounding realm of inanimate, inert, nonhuman objects. In this case, the call for solidarity should be to rally around objects, not subjects. Primarily a white, male, hetero, abled, rational heir to Enlightenment humanism, the subject is a red herring. Immersed among other objects, a "personal" experience of subjecthood, as in culturally or legally viable personhood, might proceed for some human objects, but only secondarily, and given this baggage it is something to be questioned, not prized.

Orientating feminism toward objects means attuning it to the object world. While at first such a move may seem to risk abandoning the concerns of real human subjects (i.e., women), the object world is precisely a world of exploitation, of things ready-at-hand, to adopt Harman's Heideggerian terminology.¹¹ This world of tools, there for the using, is the world to which women, people of color, and the poor have been assigned under patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism throughout history. If, in Audre Lorde's famous words, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," how are we, as feminists, to account for "tool being" as Harman would have it, much less his notion of "carpentry" developed by Bogost?¹²

Perceiving continuity with other objects in the world, not as subjects but as subject to subjects' dominion, allows us to rework assumptions about feminist political priorities and the what and who of feminist ethics. Object-oriented feminism does not abandon feminist attention to interiority. Rather, as Bogost commented in his response to OOF's 2010 panels, the speculative realist philosopher Quentin Meillassoux's entreaty to "re-join 'the great outdoors'" is a metaphor he ordinarily cites "as a lever to show how big and great the world is outside our tiny, forlorn minds." However, Bogost notes that object-oriented feminism shows

the value of looking for the outdoors inside. Indeed, one of the goals and victories of feminism involves making insides and outsides accessible and welcoming, whether they involve rights, ideals, identities, or everyday practices. And when we go outside, we track that world's dirt back in, and vice versa.¹³

Object-oriented feminism's intervention is to approach all objects from the inside-out position of being an object, too.

Shifting focus from feminist subjects to feminist objects extends a classic tenet of feminism, the ethic of care, to promote sympathies and camaraderie with nonhuman neighbors. For instance, consider Evelyn Fox Keller's classic work on gender and science in which scientific "objectivity" is gendered as masculine precisely because it enforces "the reciprocal autonomy of the object," forbidding erotic entanglements that confuse boundaries of self and other,¹⁴ or Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's more recent work on care as ontological as opposed to moral, as it is more typically understood. Drawing on work by Haraway, Sandra Harding, and others, Puig de la Bellacasa defines care, practiced through "*thinking-with*, *dissenting-within*, and *thinking-for*," as a central function in relational ontology.¹⁵ In keeping with ecofeminisms and cyberfeminisms, these transfers from subject to object welcome absurd coalitions and hospitably accommodate asociality.

A feminist perspective imparts political urgency to the ideas that humans and nonhuman objects are of a kind, and that the nonsubjective quality of being an object is grittily, physically realist. Recall, for example, the theory of Gaia as living mother Earth, or Haraway's cyborg, a part-organic, part-cybernetic feminist hybrid. These examples induce what Haraway names interspecies companionship,¹⁶ including companionship with inorganic "species" of objects, and they cultivate new forms of becoming other than strictly human.

Moreover, reorienting from feminist subjects to feminist objects puts critiques of utilitarianism, instrumentalization, and objectification in no uncertain terms. People are not treated "like" objects when they are objects as such from the outset. By extending the concept of objectification and its ethical critique to the world of things, object-oriented thinking stands to evolve feminist and postcolonial practices to reconsider how the very processes of objectification work. In this new terrain, what does it mean for feminists to objectify someone

who is already an object? What is the transformative potential for a feminist politics that assumes no transformation, when all things are and remain objects? Bringing such notions to bear makes for a politics that is real without being speculative, enriching both new theories of things and feminist discourses.

These feminisms undertake an important political function. Redirecting feminism from a paradigm of personal visibility toward what Elizabeth Grosz calls the impersonal politics of imperceptibility,¹⁷ object-oriented feminism shifts its operational agencies from a “politics of recognition,” of *standing out*, to a politics of immersion, of *being with*. Following Grosz, imperceptibility supplants the Hegelian framework of reciprocal identity formation that concerns “the becoming of being” and is inseparable from individuation and subjecthood, with a Nietzschean model in which active, self-modifying forces unfurl, “[seeking] the being of becoming.”¹⁸ Here, object-oriented feminism coincides with perspectives in feminist new materialisms, wherein our common status as matter makes way for continuity between all objects, whether human or nonhuman, organic or inorganic, animate or inanimate.¹⁹

To this end, Patricia Clough describes how recent work on bodies, science, and technology propels feminist theory to “[open] the study of bodies to bodies other than the human body.”²⁰ For Clough, this revision forges compatibility, even co-constitution, between bodies and the technics of measurement that support advances in genetics and digital media. Underscoring this same technicity, Nigel Thrift conceives of a transformation within capitalism toward territorializing a “new land” on the model of tenancy in which “site, organic and inorganic bodies, and information are mixed up in an anorganic mass that is continuously cultivated—but with a much greater turnover time.”²¹ New materialist authors along with numerous others including Morton and Elizabeth A. Povinelli (both in this volume) emphasize how this understanding of continuity between humans and the material world is revealing itself in new ways as we near ecological collapse on a planetary scale in the Anthropocene, a new geological era marked by immense human influence on the Earth.²²

Similarly striving to shed subjecthood—which is to say, the damaging legacy of humanist exceptionalism—object-oriented ontologists and speculative realists also embrace objecthood. They view the latter

as a way to liberate humans from the trap of correlationism, precisely because correlationism is so deeply entangled with Enlightenment humanism's conception of the thinking subject.²³ But here we must tread lightly. For while the intention to slough off the humanist trappings of subjecthood is worthy as a gesture toward feminist camaraderie with nonhumans, in practice it is likely to remain aspirational; and while, for those not already accustomed to it, human objecthood (which is not to say subjecthood) can be illuminating, rarely will it prove liberating. Certainly examples of objectification's benefiting the objectified are few and far between.

Otherwise Oriented

Object-oriented feminism participates in long histories of feminist, postcolonial, and queer practices and promotes continuity with and accountability to diverse pasts stemming from multiple regions and disciplines.²⁴ To wit, the chapters in this book reflect multiple orientations spanning science and technology studies, technoscience, bio-art, philosophy, new media, sociology, anthropology, performance art, and more.²⁵ In philosophy, the main foci for object-oriented inquiry include relations between objects, objects' phenomenological encounters, objects in "flat" or nonhierarchical arrangements, relations and interactions between objects, and assemblages of objects. But of course these important questions are not solely philosophical pursuits, and during the past century practitioners of avant-gardism, feminism, and postcolonialism have frequently found traction in similar ideas. Indeed, the "object" in object-oriented feminism connects with past and present engagements and experiments including nonanthropocentric art practices,²⁶ queer/postcolonial/feminist critiques of objectification and marginalization, and psychoanalytic critiques of relation.²⁷

For example, Frantz Fanon famously described the experience of being "sealed into . . . crushing objecthood" upon realizing that he "was an object in the midst of other objects."²⁸ Or, in quite a different spirit of investigation, the artist Lawrence Weiner wrote of his work, "ART IS NOT A METAPHOR UPON THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN BEINGS TO OBJECTS & OBJECTS TO OBJECTS IN RELATION TO HUMAN BEINGS BUT A REPRESENTATION OF AN EMPIRICAL EXISTING FACT."²⁹ By

invoking representation, Weiner contradicts what Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin herald as new materialism's antirepresentationalism, pushing instead for a form of facticity in objects, like Fanon's "fact of blackness."³⁰ In this sense, we can understand what Weiner calls "the reality concerning that relationship" between human beings and objects and objects and objects as their orientation.

Along these lines, Fanon's comment harks back to Edward Said's orientalism, the dynamic by which the objectified Other orients and thus confirms the subject's central position.³¹ Here, our pursuit of a feminist object-orientation brings us unexpectedly to Sara Ahmed's "queer phenomenology," a specifically subject-oriented endeavor. Usefully for OOF, Ahmed's excavation of queer orientations leads her to parse multiple meanings of "orient" and to distinguish between being "orientated toward" and being "orientated around."³² In orientalism, and under conditions of white supremacy, we are orientated "toward" the Orient, the East as visible object (disorientingly overembodied in the racialized/sexualized/classed other), but orientated "around" the Occident, the West as transparent whiteness (embodied in habit, which goes always overlooked). The blind spots inherent to this dynamic require our close attention, precisely because in its object orientation, OOF suffers from a similar scheme. We must recognize that even this volume, OOF's first effort, contains too little material on the specific concerns of people of color. So criticisms of OOO, speculative realism, and new materialism's whiteness, and of mainstream feminism's whiteness, pertain, disappointingly, to this endeavor

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IT DOES NOT TELL THE POTENTIAL & CAPABILITIES OF AN OBJECT (MATERIAL) BUT PRESENTS A REALITY CONCERNING THAT RELATIONSHIP**

Figure I.1. Lawrence Weiner, *Notes from Art (4 pages)*, 1982. Detail of an artist project originally published in "Words and Wordworks," the summer 1982 issue of *Art Journal*. Copyright 2015 Lawrence Weiner / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

as well—but can feminist object-orientation help us to understand why, or what we might do otherwise?

For Ahmed, being orientated toward something is “to take up” that thing as thing, but being orientated around something is “to be taken up” by a thing, so that that thing becomes the very “center of one’s being or action.”³³ In OOF, even when we construe ourselves as objects among objects, we take ourselves up as things, “orientating toward” our selfsame objecthood. Yet perhaps we are “orientating around” a larger and still unanswered question of what to do with our objecthood as such. For example, while the (white) feminist struggle has made room for postfeminism as one possible answer to this question, the antiracist struggle does—and should—not accept postraciality.³⁴ Indeed, these two possibilities for “post” objecthood answer the question of what we can do otherwise with our objecthood quite differently: either claim objectification, giving it heightened visibility, or deny if not objectification then its salience, further obscuring it. In the latter, objectification threatens to disappear from awareness, like another Occidental habit. This sharp divergence signals a serious pressure point requiring close reflection and demands that future OOF inquiry “take up” conditions of white supremacy—conditions that may be so fundamental to our understanding of objectification, utilitarianism, and exploitation that we have become inadvertently “taken up by” them, even when considering our own objecthood.

In this, OOF connects with object-oriented work in feminist indigenous studies, such as Kim TallBear’s revealing studies of Native American DNA and pipestone, or Povinelli’s work on aboriginal arrangements and “geontology,” in which race, object-orientation, and indigenous nonanthropocentrism converge around questions of sovereignty.³⁵ Indigenous approaches to nonanthropocentrism and object-orientation forge a distinct line between an artifactual mode, also employed in object-oriented theory, and a vitalist perspective that also appears in new materialism. This stance is compatible with OOF, especially insofar as it is forthright about having real political objectives. Here, again, OOF departs from ontological speculation. For if, to borrow Weiner’s phrase, this is “the reality concerning that relationship,” then “reality” will require intervention and change. So object-oriented feminism professes no innocence, but offers a prescriptive activist practice, rejecting the noninterventionist, descriptive stance of

ontologists—which remains too redolent of the aloof distancing of orientalism.

Erotics: Methods by Artificial Means

Orientalism's object-Other anchors and guarantees the occidental subject's so-called "view from nowhere," making a further leap from objectification to objectivity. Yet, as Lorraine Daston notes in her history of "aperspectival objectivity," contemporary understandings of objectivity are founded in the nineteenth century's distancing of scientific activity from the individualistic artistic or philosophical subject position cultivated in intellectual solitude.³⁶ Instead, aperspectival objectivity, which becomes synonymous first with scientific objectivity and later with objectivity in general, was understood to arise out of scientific correspondence in burgeoning communication networks: an anonymous, convivial, (and often deskilled) collective mind. While we often consider rational, disinterested objectivity to be a hallmark of humanist subjects, it in fact emerges at the moment when creative individual subjects disseminate into networks of things.

Hence, in practice, and a shared commitment to nonanthropocentrism, OOF also resonates with new materialist thought, in particular with feminist new materialism.³⁷ OOO and OOF share a constructivist orientation; in new materialism, methods often manifest around scientific experimentation with all manner of objects. This includes even minute and slippery objects residing well below the usual threshold for human access such as those at the undeniably non-anthropocentric level of quantum physics. For example, a physicist as well as a philosopher, Karen Barad demonstrates how new materialism provides opportunities for testing out certain theories about time, identity, and so forth, in an empirical laboratory setting.³⁸

Object-oriented feminism shares this penchant for experimentation over speculation. Where an ontologist might speculate, describing the world, "This is the way things are," object-oriented feminists and feminist new materialists engage in the world using experimental praxis, "This is a way of being with things." Or more simply, "This is a way of being things." With experimentation, feminist new materialism embraces the agency of things, apart from any human influence. Like the Whiteheadian "panpsychism" Shaviro identifies in speculative

realism, new materialism defers to the abounding animism in the world of things,³⁹ as well as to political formations that need not include humans.⁴⁰ So, with careful attentiveness to objects, and the precise orientation of self into a human–nonhuman assemblage, the work of Jane Bennett yields a material world rife with impersonal affective power and loaded with thoughtful implications for human–nonhuman politics. In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett describes the independent “thing-power” of “man-made objects” to “become vibrant things with a certain effectivity of their own, a perhaps small but irreducible degree of independence.”⁴¹ Encounters with the outside world of things, including inorganic matter, expose their “vibrant” quality, seducing and estranging us.

Whereas Barad’s experiments occur against the more rarified backdrop of a physics lab, Bennett’s are conducted in daily experience, at such banal sites as an unswept sidewalk. This broad and nonhierarchical experimentalist disposition is shared by object-oriented feminism and echoes over the wide range of objects engaged in the different chapters of this volume. In any milieu, experimentation is always participatory, always both observational and interventionist. This allows for tinkering with received truths, priming us for alliances with hacked realities, investigative arrangements in living, and radical aesthetic practices in art.

Anne Pollock has observed that objects in object-oriented feminism, as in OOO, are usually blatantly artificial things, typical of engineering and art.⁴² Here, object-oriented feminism and new materialisms may begin to diverge. New materialism’s object of study is frequently a thing of science, some essential dollop or granular manifestation of matter that originates in the natural world. Like the human-made objects that emit Bennett’s thing-power, or Haraway’s naturecultures, artificial objects can lay no claim to any purity or the naturalness that might be associated with proper scientific inquiry.⁴³ Perhaps for this reason, new materialism’s approach often bears a note of sincerity, of reverence for something that is, in some way, yet pure.

Contrast this with Aristarkhova’s assertion that humor is a feat of thought that is becoming increasingly difficult for theorists, philosophers, and even scientists, but can be achieved by artists, immersed as they are in artifice. Rooted in Friedrich Nietzsche’s nihilistic will to

laugh at truth, OOF's humor is in keeping with traditions of radical feminist laughter.⁴⁴ Moreover, and key for object-oriented feminist methodologies, humor is a creative, constructivist practice. Humor, too, is a form of making—making ourselves laugh.

For example, Annie Sprinkle's *Public Cervix Announcement* crystallizes object-oriented feminist humor through performance art. Sprinkle, reclining with a speculum inserted into her vagina, invites audience members to approach her with a flashlight to familiarize themselves with the cervix's hidden beauty.⁴⁵ For OOF, this performance is seminal (pun intended) first and foremost for placing the object of the cervix, quite literally, on center stage. Moreover, as a former sex worker and porn star, Sprinkle is uniquely self-possessed of her own status as a sex object, and by objectifying herself in her performances, she foments radical laughter, joy, and pleasure. Writing with characteristic cheeky cheeriness about this project, Sprinkle states, "I adore my cervix. I am proud of her in every way, and am happy to put her on display." To those who call her work demystification, she quips, "You can never demystify a cervix."

This generative aspect of laughter brings to mind the erotic, precisely as it complicates science's truth claims. Fox Keller writes, "The image of science is antithetical to Eros."⁴⁶ She perceives a connection between the desexualization of science and its masculine gendering, which, she observes, "connotes a radical rejection of any commingling of subject and object . . . consistently identified as male and female." And so Isabelle Stengers laments, "Our sciences no longer make us laugh."⁴⁷ Like the preference for lowbrow artificiality over purebred knowledge, Stengers's laughing science aspires to the passion of amateurism and the promiscuity of outside influences. "Scientists," she affirms, "might ally with other passions."

The serious endeavor of science as such hinges on prohibiting both erotic generativity and nonheteronormativity. To this end, Angela Willey calls for "new conceptual resources that problematize biology as the locus of claims about the materiality of bodies" that she finds problematically invoked in feminist new materialisms.⁴⁸ The existing methods will not do. Willey draws on Audre Lorde's expansive erotics: inclusive human–nonhuman intimacies that "[postulate] . . . no qualitative difference between the experiences of building a bookcase, thinking about an idea, making love to a woman, listening to music,

and writing a poem.”⁴⁹ All of these “other passions,” as Stengers puts it, revivify joy.

Although Lorde’s eroticism accepts nonhuman entanglements, it remains life- and self-affirming. Perhaps surprisingly, then, OOF’s erotics are better aligned with a version of eroticism theorized by Georges Bataille, as the radical surrender of self in becoming other-than-subject. Through physical, emotional, and religious eroticism, “discontinuous” individuals attain continuity with the object world. Forgoing the subject’s instinct for self-preservation, eroticism heeds no boundary, neither the boundary between self and other, nor even the boundary between life and nonlife, putting connection and continuity with the world above self-annihilation. “Eroticism,” Bataille writes, “is assenting to life even in death.” Bataille’s eroticism remains grounded in a humanist subject-position of sovereignty (doomed insofar as it is precisely the position eroticism seeks to overcome), a transformational aesthetics that assumes movement between subjects and objects rather than a flat ontology of objects alone, and a gendered dynamic that cannot begin to hold up to contemporary feminist analysis. Still, Bataille’s erotic ideas about eschewing subjecthood through excess, unholy alliances, and nonlife are influential for object-oriented feminism. Like laughter, fomenting erotic fusion with an object, as a means of becoming object, is a creative, generative act.

Such important prehistories for today’s object-orientation also include feminist practices around the body, like fetishistic subcultures and body art. While as we have seen, with Sprinkle’s performance, some strategic, erotic reclamations of objecthood can make us laugh, others are plainly politically resistive. For instance, in an expanded cinema work, *Touch and Tap Cinema*, the artist Valie Export became an object, twice over.⁵⁰ Attaching a cardboard maquette of a movie theater to her bare chest, and offering passersby a free grope, she used her body to embody the cinematic apparatus. Export turned herself simultaneously into the architectural object of the theater and the filmic object of the male gaze, later canonized in feminist film theory by Laura Mulvey’s 1975 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”⁵¹ The erotic affirmation of being *both and* presents viewers with an internal contradiction, and has the effect of doubling down against objectification, making clear that her political statement, even when disguised as half-kidding, is entirely serious. Returning then to

Aristarkhova's lucid question, *Is OOF a joke?*, object-oriented feminism maintains an always charged relationship with earnestness and the seriousness of sovereignty. Erotic nonsense breaks down ideology's common sense. Problematic erotic pairings provoke insights into things' innards. And perhaps most important, erotic agility sidesteps the weighty burden of truth claims.

This last concern, with truth, is equally crucial for object-oriented feminist methods, ethics, and politics. It is often the case that humor carries a note of truth, but at least on the face of things, object-oriented feminism appears to keep its distance, remaining aligned with artifice and unconcerned with being complete or being right. On



Figure I.2. Valie Export, *TAPP und TASTKINO* (*Touch and Tap Cinema*), 1968. Document of performance action by Valie Export. Tapp and Tastfilm—street film, mobile film, body action, authentic woman film. Photograph by Werner Schulz. Copyright 2015 Valie Export/Artists Rights Scoeity (ARS), New York/Bildrecht Vienna.

the one hand, object-oriented feminism draws from a postmodern legacy in which truth is first and foremost radically relativized. On the other, it recognizes that insisting on the salience of post-structuralism, capitalism, and psychoanalysis to explain *everything* turns those relativizing gestures back into master narratives.

While a constructivist edge coupled with rhetorical levity are features that object-oriented feminism shares with both art and OOO, the latter remains invested in philosophical truth claims about an accurate ontology. Likewise, new materialism claims truths surrounding nonanthropocentric science and the nature and inherency of matter as such. But based as it is on a redundant paradox, and riddled through with artifice, object-oriented feminism is on track for being beyond untrue, in an erotic sense, in excess of singular truth. So it strives to be wrong, but not in the sense of being incorrect. Its promise is to be wrong as in being *botched*, as in “girl, that’s all wrong”—flat indifference to correctness. Being wrong in this way is radical, political work. It means setting aside truth and correctness in favor of being artificial and botched, all to make room for an erotics of generative thinking and doing. The underlying wager is that right thinking gets worked out in the doing of the making.

Only in willingness to be all kinds of wrong can we arrive at being in the right, in the ethical sense. In her film work, Povinelli points to how variance in truth claims produces varying worlds, which is to say, an array of differing political arrangements. Philosophical, fictional, scientific, and everyday truth claims all wield social power to different degrees, such that power relations and unevenness emerge in what the OOO author Levi R. Bryant calls a flat ontology.⁵² Bryant refers to a “democracy of objects,” but notions of democracy are complicated by uneven power everywhere that objects are systematized into arrangements. Biomedicine and datafication are cases in point. For example, although the research of the geneticist Rick Kittles reveals that 30 percent of African American men have a Y chromosome indicating European descent, Kittles emphasizes that you cannot show a Y chromosome to a policeman who pulls you over.⁵³ From new science comes new objects, but old problems persist.⁵⁴

Wrong truths and reclamations of objecthood often reveal that feminist objects are inaccessible, at once obdurate and retiring. By removing the cinematic screen and providing “access” to her body

as object, Export's performance exposes the emptiness of cinema's promises: the haptic experience is equally dry. Likewise, the Y chromosome keeps quiet, refusing to speak until it becomes woven, in Haraway's sense, in just such a way as to form specific fabrics binding genetic research and the Atlantic slave trade. OOO's conception of objects as fundamentally withdrawn and self-contained resonates with feminist objects that resist us, and the feminist notion that as objects, we resist. Yet, forsaking that ambition for exclusive or conclusive truth in truth claims (and for grandeur in all such grand claims) makes for a modest theory and a humble practice. Like assenting to erotic self-erasure, insistent self-implication and meticulous modesty are methodologically necessary if the hope is to achieve anything resembling nonanthropocentrism. And this is the hope on offer: to be objects, generously and generatively, together; to recognize how fraught that position is, always for all parties, as power articulates itself through each and every arrangement of objects; and from this recognition about objecthood, which is to say self-recognition in objecthood, to cultivate a praxis of care.

Ethics: Out of the Closet or under the Carpet

So, as a case study for OOF analysis, let us return to that earlier "troubling" example pertaining to feminism to ask, how exactly did the bunny come to be swept under the carpet of carpentry? Something is wrong about this.

The truth claim of ontologies is to account for being; as such, they profess completeness and suggest neutrality. An ontologist will assert, "This is the way things are." But is an ontologist also alleging something more? "This is (just) the way things are." In short, are ontologies subject to ethics? OOF submits that they are. Recall that carpentry, OOO's mode of thing-praxis, "entails making things that explain how things make their world." Not only the object or artifact is of import here; tantamount is the sense of orientation. The thing, not the maker, explains the world; so orientating or listening to things begets ontology.

In Bogost's larger discussion, the image toy is one of two examples of carpentry he coded. The first is the *Latour Litanizer*, a piece of software that generates lists of incongruous objects in the style of those

found in the writings of Bruno Latour. Mimicking Latour's predilection for lists of things, the *Latour Litanizer* operates in a similar fashion to the image toy. The software calls up series of titles of random Wikipedia articles with links, and generates a novel list of objects (i.e., entries) with every refresh. Importantly, Bogost submits that in the interest of nonanthropocentrism, his *Litanizer* improves on Latour's handwritten technique by eliminating the bias of human authorship.

The *Latour Litanizer* makes less "trouble" than the image toy in that it requires no editing to remove the offensive presence of women, girls, or sexiness, but only because that "editing" has taken place in advance. The sexist skew of Wikipedia is well known. Its "systematic gender bias" was the subject of two National Science Foundation grants in 2014,⁵⁵ and despite activist Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons that seek to increase articles about women, it is estimated that a measly 10 percent of Wikipedia contributors are women.⁵⁶ For this reason, it would be redundant to code the *Litanizer* to remove women from Wikipedia. This tiny ontology already reflects a bigger problem.

Such is not the case for the image toy precisely because while encyclopedia articles that feature women and their achievements remain statistically rare, images that objectify women proliferate online. Hence it is both easy for a dean to see a bunny, and easy for her to "conclu[de] that object-oriented ontology [is] all about objectification." Bogost acknowledges that the dean's interpretation was "understandable," although "unintended," while insisting that "sexist objectification" is "certainly unsupported by OOO thought itself."⁵⁷

While the implication of nonsexist objectification remains an open question, Bogost correctly notes that in the object-experiment of his tiny ontology, his "change also risks excluding a whole category of units from the realm of being!" Certainly the choice to erase the ontological status of women, girls, and sexiness is a move that deserves further scrutiny. I would argue that by coding against further incursions of sexually objectified women into a programmed ontological purview, OOO misses the point. Sexual objectification is not "certainly unsupported by OOO thought." *On the contrary, objectification, utilitarianism, and instrumentalization are presences that haunt OOO, and are among the very questions at the heart of object-oriented feminism.*

Orientation toward the object of carpentry should teach us that the bunny in our midst is not "the problem." Rather, the bunny stands,

objectified and objectively, as evidence that OOO rests precisely on an ontological condition that includes objectification, as uncomfortable as that realization may be. The dean's question of "why Playboy bunnies would be featured at a philosophy conference" is not a matter of misinterpretation; rather, the comment astutely identifies the messy, nay, wrong philosophical intervention that this ontology, by orientating to objects, would have been poised to make. And such an intervention truly would have been profound. The status quo, in which philosophy conferences are devoid of Playboy bunnies, is entirely in keeping with the comfort zone of humanist morality, not to mention with patriarchal institutional mores that prefer to engage female bodies in the abstract if at all. The dean's response very well may have been motivated by this sort of politically correct (and thus politically impotent) feminism. But by abolishing women, girls, and sexiness, OOO perpetuates this same abstraction and silencing.

Bogost states that the image toy's "philosophical accomplishment comes from the question it poses about the challenge flat ontology and feminism pose to one another." But the OOO response has the opposite effect—disposing of rather than posing any questions at all. Here carpentry performs the sad inverse of object-orientation. By reasserting authorial control, OOO reinserts the same biased human decision making that it has been argued contaminated Latour's hand-composed lists. In the end, we may know ontologies as subject to ethics if simply because they provoke such censorship.

Returning to the definition of carpentry as "making things that explain how things make their world," if we are to understand the world as explained by the image toy object, this sexist plaything—if we can call it that—flips our expectations. Outmoded humanist politics asks who counts as a subject (and criticizes the objectification of women on the basis that classing women as objects means that they are less-than-subjects). Object-orientation sets forth an entirely different political problem: the question of what counts as an object. Perversely, in this example "being objectified" prevents "being" in the ontological category of "object." In setting out to correct the first problem about who counts as a subject—which it must be stressed is ontologically irrelevant, even if it is socially awkward, OOO produces the second problem concerning what counts as an object—which does carry important ontological stakes.

This is not to diminish the value of carpentry in itself—far from it. The lesson to be gained, it would seem, is about the power of carpentry, the potency of praxis, and the ethics of establishing ontological orders.

Politics: Retooling

Finally, and to this end, object-oriented feminism contributes a critical reorientation of the concept of object-orientation itself. When asked, OOO's proponents insist that the term *object-oriented ontology* has nothing to do with "object-oriented programming" (OOP). Harman, the story goes, simply found the term appealing and appropriated it. But what is OOP?

Object-oriented programming is a form of computer programming that makes use of "objects" to organize information. In OOP a programmer creates objects, prototypical entities in code that have defined qualities, known as "attributes," and capabilities, known as "methods." This allows the programmer to subsequently generate multiple instances of that object, each of which, while unique, conforms to its template.

While OOO may deny the association, much work conducted under the mantle of object-oriented feminism suggests that a connection does exist. In speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, and new materialism, we find a new wave of theories that takes objects, things, and matter as fundamental units. These ideas are emerging now amid a particular set of historical conditions. Although OOO's and new materialism's assertions about being transcend history, object-oriented feminism suggests that some form of historical contingency is at work. Alexander R. Galloway critiques OOO similarly for reiterating the language of post-Fordist capitalism, yet OOF has stakes in a different formulation of OOO's historical specificity.⁵⁸ Materialism and object-oriented thought are popular now, for a reason, and it is not because the linguistic turn rewrote distinctions like gender as seemingly irrelevant constructs. Rather, at this moment, paradigms like gender are all the more worthy of our attention because they are in the process of becoming something other than what we thought we knew. Increasingly, we understand them as secondary qualities of objects. The primary quality of objects is that they are, simply, objects

qua objects, in exactly the sense that for a philosopher like Harman, objects are objects through to the core.

But being objects first has direct implications in programming. In OOP, secondary qualities, like gender distinctions, are simply attributes. From the perspective of code, when all things are objects, they are individually nameable and, as such, can be interpolated into a program. This means that all things, as individuals, can be networked together, subsumed in software, and thereby systematized, operationalized, and instrumentalized.

Now OOP may look more like OOO's Freudian slip. And here is the catch: If in OOP, *all things as individuals* can be networked and instrumentalized, in OOO, *all individuals as things* can be so instrumentalized. Although OOO disavows the "P" dropped from its name much as it repudiates politics, programming lends shape to object-oriented politics. It can be no coincidence that this theory is emerging from within a global culture that fetishizes programmability. An aura of programming saturates these philosophies, hinting at something fundamental about contemporary objecthood.

Harman's conception of objects rests on his Heideggerian tool analysis, and his view that objects are always fundamentally tools ready-to-hand, or broken tools present-at-hand, pervades object-oriented thought. With this in mind, object-oriented feminism links Harman's "tool-being" to the instrumentalization of all objects, irrespective of their utility or unusability. Networked through code, all objects are compelled to generate that "hyperobject"—to borrow Morton's term—data itself. This is true, R. Joshua Scannell has noted, even when an object does nothing at all. A broken tool generates "no" data in real time, which itself is commodifiable information about its brokenness.

In some of the chapters that follow, object-oriented feminist thinking turns to necropolitics. In necropolitics, the capacity of all objects to be instrumentalized, whether living or dead, puts a different spin on dark ecologies' investments in the nonhuman and nonlife, and indeed returns "darkness" to the question of racism. Here Harman's broken tool resonates, but not with vibrant animism. Instead, this notion of the tool connects with Achilles Mbembe's assessment in his seminal essay that "the slave's life is like a 'thing,'" a "mere tool and instrument of production."⁵⁹ Just as biopower asserts a racial division, "a split between the living and the dead," necropower translates

the sovereign right to distinguish those who live and those who die differently.⁶⁰ Mbembe, writing on slavery, could be describing the brokenness of the tool when he writes, “As an instrument of labor, the slave has a price. As a property, he or she has a value. His or her labor is needed and used. The slave is therefore kept alive but in a *state of injury* . . .” He continues, “Slave life, in many ways, is a form of death-in-life.”⁶¹

OOF’s fundamental tension between objectification and self-possession is brought to the surface in the artist Barbara DeGenevieve’s *The Panhandler Project*.⁶² DeGenevieve photographed and video documented five homeless men in Chicago between 2004 and 2006. The men agreed to pose nude for her in exchange for lunch and dinner, \$100, and a night in a hotel room. As DeGenevieve explains to one of the models during their shoot, “Just because you’re homeless, there’s going to be someone who says I’m exploiting you because I’ve asked you to take your clothes off. . . . That is the ultimate in the art world of exploitation.” DeGenevieve’s project unsettles what she calls the “knee-jerk political correctness” of the art world and academe by targeting power conventions of gender, class, and race, and empowering naked homeless black men to make choices about their objectification by a white female university professor. She asks rhetorically, “Did I exploit them? They’ve all answered no. . . . It was a matter of how much it was worth to me versus how much it was worth to him.”⁶³ And indeed, as she points out, she would be without a project were it not for their consent. *The Panhandler Project* asks who controls this interaction. What is more, it reflects a critical question for object-oriented feminism: is it time to abandon subject-oriented terms like control, consent, and coercion if our aim is object-oriented self-possession?

OOF emphasizes ontology as a political arrangement, realism as an arena for self-possession and relation, and objecthood as a situational orientation, so as to apprehend and alter objects’ intersectional prospects for self-determination, solidarity, and resistance. The internal resistant quality of objects may deserve our closest attention. In object-oriented feminism, objects carry internal resistance, even insofar as an erotic whisper of death-in-life, of self-destruction, always haunts objecthood. In this kind of “being wrong,” where the modest ethics of self-implication joins the necropolitical erotics of self-sacrifice, OOF



Figure I.3. Barbara DeGenevieve, *Mike #6*, 2005. Inkjet print, 12 × 14³/₈ inches. Courtesy of the Estate of Barbara DeGenevieve and the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago.

retools its politics. In the essays collected in this volume, we deploy them into the feminist, queer, postcolonial, anticapitalist concerns discussed above.

Chapter Overview

OOF's emergent methodology, set into practice in the following pages, traffics in art and artifice, technology and humor,otics and politics. Several of the chapters below were composed for this volume; others developed out of papers first presented at OOF panels convened at the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts conferences between 2010 and 2014. Many of the themes of those panels, *Programs*, *Parts*, *Closer*, *Deviance*, and *Futures*, echo throughout this collection. In

object-oriented fashion, readers may approach these essays individually, sequentially, or in any order. Here, they are arranged into three suggestive proximate groupings.

The first essays take on questions about the independence of and relations between objects. How do objects self-constitute or constitute one another? What distinguishes one object from a neighboring object or a whole from a part? How do objects self-identify and self-objectify, particularly in a cultural milieu? How can we account for and even characterize relations between objects?

Excavating the distinction between objects and things, which is often elided in object-oriented theory, Aristarkhova returns to Martin Heidegger's account of the "assaultive" process of objectification by which things become objects. Heidegger defines a girl as "a young thing" (neither object nor fully human) and suggests that philosophers and artists have a special relationship to and even protective responsibility for such "mere" things, different, for example, from objects of science. Examining this relationship in the context of human artists and nonhuman art objects, Aristarkhova considers feminist artworks aimed at troubling objects' objectification and theorizes the difficult ethical potential for "a feminist object."

Following OOO's principle of the withdrawal of objects and arguing against the metaphysics of presence, Morton develops the concept of weird essentialism. Morton suggests that withdrawal makes all objects inherently deviant, "looping" through other objects, and in a loop with themselves. He suggests that all objects perform an internal deviant self-differing, which he compares to Luce Irigaray's theorization of woman's divergence from phallogocentric logic.

Frenchy Lunning compares metaphor in Graham Harman's allure and Julia Kristeva's abjection. Where Harman's metaphor for allure describes a "come hither" gesture soliciting the otherness of withdrawn other objects, Kristeva's metaphor for abjection is a "violent repulsing thrusting aside of 'otherness.'" Delving into these twin movements from the perspective of performances of femininity, Lunning explores how allure and abjection play out in relation to the female body as fetish object. In her reading of Lolita subculture fetish fashions, Lunning uncovers a complex by which the abject menstrual body, covered over with signifiers of an alluring premenstrual body, is resexualized and compounded as abject again.

The next essays explore questions posed by object-oriented feminism concerning truth, art, and erotics. What truth claims does object-oriented thinking pose? What is the value of truth claims as such, and what is the value of that which exceeds truth, such as falsity or fiction? What ethics derive from truths and untruths, and what ethical and unethical insights can art and artificiality produce? What roles do art, artists, and artifice play in engendering entanglements with objects in experimental, experiential erotics?

Aesthetic allure claims to flatten the playing field for all objects, but as Povinelli points out, allure is impossible when there is no aesthetic encounter in the first place. Indeed, the social power accompanying certain objects can prevent encounters for subaltern objects. In contrast to Meillassoux's concept of ancestry, Povinelli discusses indigenous works of fiction. Two films, *When the Dogs Talked* and *The Origins of Bigfoot*, and a short story, "That Not Monster," articulate how fantastic and contested truth claims produce material relations among social and nonlife communities of objects, and are themselves results of such relations.

Using perspectives from media and performance art to counterbalance life-affirming vitalistic materialisms, I offer a proposal for necrophiliac ethics. Applying Catherine Malabou's concept of plasticity to works by feminist performance and body artists, in particular the plastic surgery artist Orlan, I recommend self-objectification through similar plastic procedures. Cosmetic Botox, employed in elective deadening of the face, provides an opportunity to radically objectify the self, suppressing faciality, and with it the subject-oriented Levinasian ethics of faciality and liveness.

The bioartist Adam Zaretsky considers object cathexis by focusing on adjectival modifiers in place of object-oriented nouns. Using modifying technologies like the "gene gun," transgeneticists and bioartists often produce failed and partial forms that suggest disability studies could well inform object-oriented feminism alongside discourses of gender and postcoloniality. Signaling an object-oriented feminist erotics, Zaretsky identifies how modification—through bioarts, transgenic technologies, or adjectives—produces differently abled, cross-coded, augmented qualities in radical excess of objects themselves.

Anne Pollock delves into the quandaries posed by "artificial" natures, exemplified by the case of endocrine disruption in birds. The

result of pollution, endocrine disruption appears to cause queer traits and behaviors like same-sex partnering or intersex characteristics in wildlife. Responding playfully and provocatively to the sex panic around this issue, Pollock carefully parses the competing feminist stakes involved in accepting nonreproductivity as an end in itself. Related to Zaretsky's queer adjectival erotics, Pollock exposes the multiple valences of being "trashed" or "intoxicated" with toxins, and toasts to the potential pleasures produced therein.

The final essays address economies that connect human and non-human objects. In economic circulation, all objects are continually repositioned as producers, consumers, and commodities. As these roles grow increasingly difficult to differentiate, we return to questions of relations between objects, and to questions of the human, understood here as political concerns. When drawn into histories of exchange and linked into systems of exploitation, how do objects talk back, and what forms of politics does this talk-back express? How do these economies mitigate and enforce categories of life and nonlife, productivity and nonproductivity?

Against those who would appeal to new materialism for a suitably nonanthropocentric politics, Marina Gržinić argues that, like OOO, new materialism participates in an ahistorical (perhaps even dehistoricizing) project. Going well beyond complaints about the objectification and commodification of humans, Gržinić shows how new materialism replicates what she terms the "humanization of capital." This move shifts the argument from a Marxist-feminist critique at the level of commodities to a far larger interrogation at the level of capital, which in turn echoes the shift from biopolitics to necropolitics. Gržinić implies that we are falsely concerned with objectification, that is, of humans in OOO; we should instead be concerned with humanization, that is, of capital in new materialism.

In her caring and careful sociological account of Tarot practices, Karen Gregory perceives inversions in the active and passive roles assumed by Tarot cards and Tarot card readers. The cards' agency and communicative liveliness is foregrounded, contrasting the passive stance of the human reader, listening meditatively for messages from the cards. But the cards also compel humans to activity in the form of affective work, cultivating a sense of self and personal authority. Nevertheless, this specialized self refashions the reader's skill or affective prowess into commodity.

R. Joshua Scannell considers the example of the New York Police Department and its Domain Awareness System (DAS), a vast proprietary experiment in statistical predictive policing using real-time data in what Scannell calls “governance by algorithm.” For Scannell, the DAS typifies how the pervasive object of “big data” conjures a reorientation away from human subjects and toward objects. In big data, a peculiar inversion sets in such that all objects must be rendered computational to be considered “real,” which is to say commensurate with systems in which algorithms demand “care” from humans, even “draw[ing] labor towards them.” Ultimately, algorithmic governance is directed not toward the human but toward the mathematical.

This book seeks not to define object-oriented feminism but to enact it. The ideas, methods, and aspirations found here have developed over several years in conversations and collaborations, both personal and professional. In many respects this book is as retrospective as it is forward-looking. Like any artifact of practice, it contains within it tacit logs of its past lives, and amendments and assessments accrued in all attempts along the way. For this reason, and if we comprehend OOF as a feminist object of collective thought, there are numerous contributors to this volume who deserve thanks within the body of this text. The authors: Irina Aristarkhova, Karen Gregory, Marina Gržinić, Frenchy Lunning, Timothy Morton, Anne Pollock, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, R. Joshua Scannell, and Adam Zaretsky; OOF panelists, respondents, and audience interlocutors: Jamie “Skye” Bianco, Ian Bogost, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Patricia Ticineto Clough, Melanie Doherty, Orit Halpern, N. Katherine Hayles, Eileen Joy, Danielle Kasprzak, Amit Ray, Steven Shaviro, Rebekah Sheldon, Susan Squier, and members of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts; and those who have offered generous support, encouragement, and insights along the way: Jane Bennett, Alexander R. Galloway, Graham Harman, Emmy Mikelson, Katy Siegel, Trevor Smith, and Iris van der Tuin.

Notes

1. Of the entire program of nine speakers, only the last, a respondent, was a woman. This gender imbalance is symptomatic of a larger trend in speculative realism. The encyclopedic *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*'s twenty-five chapters include only one woman. The same is true

of *Collapse II: Speculative Realism*, which includes just one woman among its nine authors. In *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn write that because the key speculative realist thinkers are men and more new materialist authors are women, some may see new materialist thought as more compatible with feminism than speculative realism. Michael O'Rourke was among the first to address these compatibilities and imbalances in his essay "Girls Welcome!!!: Speculative Realism, Object Oriented Ontology, and Queer Theory." See Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds., *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011); Robin Mackay, ed., *Collapse II: Speculative Realism* (Falmouth, U.K.: Urbanomic, 2012); Dolphijn and van der Tuin, eds., *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012); and O'Rourke, "Girls Welcome!!!: Speculative Realism, Object Oriented Ontology, and Queer Theory," *Speculations 2* (2011): 275–312.

2. The discussion of the image toy appears in the chapter "Carpentry" on pages 93–99. See Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

3. Bogost draws a distinction between his conception and the making of other things such as "tools and art." Object-oriented feminism embraces carpentry, though it is also aligned with experimentalist practices of making and engaging artifacts in every discipline. Indeed, the idea of "making things that explain how things make their world" is neatly embodied in the sculptor Robert Morris's canonical work of carpentry, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), a wooden box, sealed and withdrawn, that contains an internal speaker playing a hidden cassette recording of the start to finish process of the box's own construction.

4. For a nuanced discussion, see Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, "Sexual Differing," in Dolphijn and van der Tuin, *New Materialism*.

5. "Correlationism" is the speculative realist philosopher Quentin Meillassoux's term for philosophies following from Kantian transcendentalism in which thought can only access thought, never the world-in-itself. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, translated by Ray Brassier (New York: Continuum, 2009).

6. See Graham Harman, "On Vicarious Causation," in Mackay, *Collapse II*, 187–221.

7. Iris Marion Young, "Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 3 (1994): 713–38.

8. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–81.

9. Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

10. I borrow this phrase from Hasana Sharp, "The Impersonal Is Political: Spinoza and a Feminist Politics of Imperceptibility," *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (2009): 84–103.

11. Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002).

12. In fact, "tool being" aside, Lorde's essay harks to the current gender imbalance in speculative realism. Sadly, the avoidance patterns and justifications she identifies in white feminists' exclusion of queer people of color are at risk of resurfacing wholesale in this context, and her 1984 critique still stands ("The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* [Berkeley, Calif.: Crossing, 2007], 110–13).

13. Ian Bogost, "Object-Oriented Feminism: At the 2010 Society for Literature Science and the Arts Conference," accessed January 30, 2015, http://bogost.com/writing/blog/object-oriented_feminism_1/.

14. See Evelyn Fox Keller, "Gender and Science," in *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 75–94.

15. See Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, "Nothing Comes without Its World: Thinking with Care," *Sociological Review* 60, no. 2 (2012): 197–216.

16. Donna Haraway, "Cyborgs to Companion Species: Reconfiguring Kinship in Technoscience," in *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 295–320.

17. Elizabeth Grosz, "A Politics of Imperceptibility: A Response to 'Anti-racism, Multiculturalism and the Ethics of Identification,'" *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28 (2002): 463–72. See also Hasana Sharp, "The Impersonal Is Political."

18. Grosz, "Politics of Imperceptibility," 466.

19. On feminist new materialisms, see the special issue "Feminist Matters: The Politics of New Materialism," edited by Pita Hinton and Iris van der Tuin, *Women: A Cultural Review* 25 (1).

20. See Patricia Ticineto Clough, "Feminist Theory: Bodies, Science and Technology," in *Handbook of Body Studies*, edited by Bryan S. Turner (New York: Routledge, 2012), 94–105.

21. See Nigel Thrift, "The Insubstantial Pageant: Producing an Untoward Land," *Cultural Geographies* 19, no. 2 (2012): 141–68.

22. The "Anthropocene Feminism" conference held at the Center for 21st Century Thought investigated this topic directly and resonates strongly with object-oriented feminism. See the collected conference edition, *Anthropocene Feminism*, edited by Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

23. The argument for noncorrelationism is presented in Meillassoux, *After Finitude*; for a thorough account of this position, see Bryant, Smicek, and Harman, *Speculative Turn*.

24. By way of contrast, speculative realism's noncorrelationism is understood as a rupture with a reigning philosophical canon. This narrative of rupture positions speculative realism as progressive and futuritive.

25. This diversity reflects the fertile interdisciplinary climate of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts conferences where OOF discussions originated. Some of these connections will be sketched in the anthology *After the "Speculative" Turn: Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism*, edited by Eileen A. Joy, Katerina Kolozova, and Ben Woodard (Earth, Milky Way: punctum books, 2016).

26. Resonances with art have been explored in recent exhibitions including *And Another Thing*, which I co-curated with Emmy Mikelson at the James Gallery in 2011, and *Speculations on Anonymous Materials*, curated by Susanne Pfeffer at the Fridericianum in 2013, among others. Focusing on art objects in circulation, Joshua Simon has coined the term "Neo-Materialism" in a three-part essay published in *e-flux journal* in 2010–11. More recently, in the edited volume *Realism, Materialism, Art*, Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey, and Suhail Malik have queried the relevance of speculative realism for curatorial practice; a longer history of art's "new" interest in objects is captured in Katy Siegel's essay "Worlds with Us." See Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson, eds., *And Another Thing: Nonanthropocentrism and Art* (Earth, Milky Way: punctum books, 2016); Suzanne Pfeffer, *Speculations on Anonymous Materials* (Kassel: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig, 2015); Joshua Simon, "Neo-Materialism, Part I: The Commodity and the Exhibition," "Neo-Materialism, Part II: The Unreadymade," and "Neo-Materialism, Part III: The Language of Commodities," *e-flux journal*, accessed August 1, 2015, <http://www.e-flux.com/journals/?user=8417>; Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey, and Suhail Malik, eds., *Realism, Materialism, Art* (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College/Sternberg, 2015); and Katy Siegel, "Worlds with Us," *Brooklyn Rail*, July 15, 2013, <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2013/07/art/words-with-us>.

27. The psychoanalytic dimension of object-oriented feminism is depicted in Patricia Ticineto Clough's contributions to OOF panels in 2010 and 2012, subsequently published as "A Dream of Falling: Philosophy and Family Violence," in *Handbook of Object Matters*, edited by Eleanor Casella et al. (New York: Routledge, 2013); and "The Object's Affect: The Rosary," in *Timing of Affect, Epistemologies, Aesthetics, Politics*, edited by Marie Luise Angerer et al. (Chicago: Diaphanes, 2014).

28. Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," translated by Charles Lam Markmann, in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, edited by Les Back and John Solomos (New York: Routledge, 2009), 257–65.

29. Lawrence Weiner, "Notes from Art (4 pages)," "Words and Word-works," summer issue, *Art Journal* 42, no. 2 (1982): 122–25.

30. On antirepresentationalism in new materialism, see Dolphijn and van der Tuin, "The Transversality of New Materialism" in Dolphijn and van der Tuin, eds., *New Materialism*.

31. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

32. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 112–17.

33. *Ibid.*, 116.

34. My thinking on the postracial is indebted to the rich discussion at "Archives of the Non-Racial," a mobile workshop organized by the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism in partnership with the University of California Humanities Research Institute Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory, which I had the opportunity to participate in during the summer of 2014. See the "Archives of the Non-Racial" website, accessed August 5, 2015, http://jwtc.org.za/the_workshop/session_2014.htm.

35. Indigenous studies is yet another field that has long conducted significant feminist and postcolonial object-oriented work, though often under different disciplinary terminology. For examples, see Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "The Four Figures of the Anthropocene," paper presented at "Anthropocene Feminism," April 10, 2014, Center for 21st Century Thought, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0gcOqWNG9M>.

36. Lorraine Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective," *Social Studies of Science* 22, no. 4 (1992): 597–618.

37. The recent upswing in materialist philosophies includes several noteworthy anthologies: Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); Dolphijn and van der Tuin, *New Materialism*; and of special import for object-oriented feminism's interdisciplinary interests, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds., *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a New Materialism through the Arts* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013); and Victoria Pitts-Taylor, ed., *Mattering: Feminism, Science, and Materialism* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

38. See, in particular, Barad's theory of "agential realism" discussed in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

39. Shaviro, *Universe of Things*.

40. On political formations of things, see Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005); Jorinde Seijdel, ed., *Politics of Things: What Art and Design Do in Democracy*, special issue, *Open: Cahier on Art and the Public Domain* 11, no. 24 (2012); and Noortje Marres, *Material Participation: Technology, the Environment, and Everyday Publics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

41. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.

42. Anne Pollock, "Heart Feminism," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 1, no. 1 (2015), <http://catalystjournal.org/ojs/index.php/catalyst/article/view/pollock/98>.

43. For David Berry, OOO's artificial objects, insofar as they are human-made "products of neoliberal capitalism," evince a blind spot in OOO's non-anthropocentrism. While Berry sees these objects as "contaminated" by human intervention, this impurity is precisely where OOF finds common ground. In answer to Berry's call to "catch sight of *what* is being listed in [OOO's] descriptive litanies," OOF observes that human and nonhuman objects are now equally products of neoliberal capitalism. See Berry, "The Uses of Object-Oriented Ontology," *Stunlaw: A Critical Review of Politics, Arts, and Technology*, May 25, 2012, <http://stunlaw.blogspot.nl/2012/05/uses-of-object-oriented-ontology.html>.

44. The early works of Rosi Braidotti, and other feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, build on the positivistic force of laughter in Nietzsche. On humor and the role of laughter in feminist creative and theoretical work, see Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a Difference," accessed August 1, 2015, http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies/rosi/cyberfem.htm#par1, which has an extensive section on humor and the role that laughter plays in feminist creative and theoretical work. A foundational text on laughter in feminist theory is Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1975): 875–93. On laughter and humor as a deconstructive gesture in feminist philosophy, especially in response to patriarchal "seriousness" of the Father, see Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

45. Annie Sprinkle, "A Public Cervix Announcement" (n.d.), accessed January 30, 2015, <http://anniesprinkle.org/a-public-cervix-announcement/>. In her current projects Sprinkle collaborates with her partner, Elizabeth Stephens, to take object-oriented feminist erotics to a nonanthropocentric extreme. In projects like *Dirty Sexology—Twenty-Five Ways to Make Love to*

the Earth and Green Wedding, Sprinkle and Stephens perform as “ecosexuals” pursuing erotic encounters of a planetary kind. See <http://anniesprinkle.org/projects/current-projects/dirty-sexecology-25-ways-to-make-love-to-the-earth/> and <http://anniesprinkle.org/projects/current-projects/love-art-laboratory/green-wedding>, both available online and accessed January 30, 2015.

46. Fox Keller, “Gender and Science.”

47. Isabelle Stengers, “Another Look: Relearning to Laugh,” translated by Penelope Deutscher, revised by Isabelle Stengers, *Hypatia* 15, no. 4 (2000): 41–54.

48. Angela Willey, “Biopossibility: A Queer Feminist Materialist Science Studies Manifesto, with Special Reference to the Question of Monogamous Behavior,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41, no. 3 (2016): 556. Willey carefully dissects a debate on new materialism’s “founding gestures,” which played out in the pages of *European Journal of Women’s Studies*. For more, see Sara Ahmed, “Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the ‘New Materialism,’” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 23–39; Noela Davis, “New Materialism and Feminism’s Anti-Biologism: A Response to Sara Ahmed,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 16, no. 1 (2009): 67–80; and Nikki Sullivan, “The Somatechnics of Perception and the Matter of the Non/human: A Critical Response to the New Materialism,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 19, no. 3 (2012): 299–313.

49. Willey, “Biopossibility,” 561. See also Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” in *Sister Outsider*, 53–59.

50. See Valie Export, “TAPP und TASTKINO, 1968” (German), accessed January 30, 2015, http://www.valieexport.at/en/werke/werke/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1956. See synopsis in “Valie Export: Tapp und Tastkino,” *re.act.feminism: A Performing Archive*, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=46&e=>. See also discussion of this and other works in Charles LaBelle, “Valie Export,” *Frieze* 60 (June–August 2001), accessed January 30, 2015, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/valie_export/.

51. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 4 (1975): 6–18.

52. Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Open Humanities Press, 2011).

53. Rick Kittles, interview, *African American Lives: Hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.*, “Beyond the Middle Passage,” episode 4 (PBS Home Video, Kunhardt Productions, Inc., Educational Broadcasting Corporation, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 2006).

54. Indeed, though projects like *African American Lives* seem to up-hold a scientifically determined notion of ancestry, they nevertheless demonstrate how statistics like these are relics of slavery and other material social relations.

55. Hannah Brueckner, "Collaborative Research: Wikipedia and the Democratization of Academic Knowledge," Award Abstract No. 1322971, National Science Foundation, accessed January 30, 2015, http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1322971. See also Elizabeth Harrington, "Government-Funded Study: Why Is Wikipedia Sexist? \$202,000 to Address 'Gender Bias' in World's Biggest Online Encyclopedia," *Washington Free Beacon*, July 30, 2014, <http://freebeacon.com/issues/government-funded-study-why-is-wikipedia-sexist/>.

56. Numerous sources discuss the gender bias in Wikipedia. On the gender gap in contributors, see David Auerbach, "Encyclopedia Frown," *Slate*, December 11, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/bitwise/2014/12/wikipedia_editing_disputes_the_crowdsourced_encyclopedia_has_become_a_rancorous.html. On gender bias in content, see Amanda Filipacchi, "Wikipedia's Sexism toward Female Novelists," *New York Times*, April 24, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/sunday/wikipedias-sexism-toward-female-novelists.html?_r=0.

57. Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*, 98.

58. Alexander R. Galloway, "The Poverty of Philosophy: Realism and Post-Fordism," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 2 (2013): 347–66.

59. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," translated by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 22.

60. *Ibid.*, 17.

61. *Ibid.*, 21.

62. An excerpted version of the fifty-minute video documentation gives an overview of this project. Barbara DeGenevieve, *The Panhandler Project* (video), accessed January 30, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/29540736>. See also the artist's profile, including photographs from the project, at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://www.mocp.org/detail.php?type=related&kv=7036&t=people>.

63. School of the Art Institute of Chicago, "Documenting The Panhandler Project by Barbara DeGenevieve," accessed January 30, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/52015733>.