Afterword

The Spill and the Sea

On September 19, 2010, the oil well in the Macondo Prospect region of the Gulf of Mexico—which had ruptured five months earlier, on April 20, spilling an estimated two hundred million barrels of oil into the Gulf—was finally declared to be sealed. This closure led to a wave of relief that the threat had somehow been contained, and that further pollution of the Gulf would no longer occur (at least not at such an uncontrollable pace). The next day, the spill's National Incident Commander, Thad Allen, acknowledged in an interview that "we're actually negotiating how clean is clean," going on to explain that this phrase was "a euphemism we use at the end of an oil spill to say, is there anything else we can do? And, sometimes, there will still be oil there, but then the agreement is that there can be no more technical means applied to it, and we're all going to agree that this one is done as far as what we can do."[1]

Allen concluded the interview with a lively mixture of metaphors: both immediate "cleanup" and long-term "recovery" should be the goal; the residents of the coast have had "a lot of stuff laid at their door" and they "have a way of life that has been threatened down there." It was unclear whether "recovery" meant the health of the Gulf or the economic well-being of the human residents of the Gulf, but clearly some kind of affliction was implied. Of course, metaphors of health and treatment have a peculiar history in national economic discourses; consider the phrase *shock therapy* (commonly associated with

the economist Jeffrey Sachs) used to describe a radical economic reform in the direction of free markets, deregulation, and public disinvestment.[2]

More often than not, articulations of the oil's danger, or the oil dispersant's toxicity (untested at such quantities), to sea creatures were made not for their sake but for the purpose of identifying a risk to an economic source of "livelihood" for the human professional residents of the U.S. Gulf shores, the fishermen and fisherwomen and the economy built around them. Many of the fishermen and -women (though it is unclear how many, and it is hard to disentangle such language from locally controlled BP media interests) were content to rely on their symbiotic relationship to their local environment, using cash payments and barter systems, and did not see fit to record and report income to the IRS tax system, habits of nonengagement which imperiled their future compensation by BP. In interviews with those workers, however, the distinction between "sources of revenue" and "living beings" was often blurred; their expressed pain did not appear to distinguish between the lost generations of shrimp and their own generativity of income.

The well was one of a newer generation of offshore deep-ocean wells, part of an adventurous effort by state governments and corporations to control heretofore inaccessible domestic resources by supporting deep-sea oil drilling offshore at ever-greater depths. When the well "blew," Allen acknowledged that containment efforts at such depths were "unprecedented," raising questions about what kinds of design principles and fail-safe procedures had been pursued in the case of the newer deep-well ventures. The politics of ownership of the well and its products and the responsibility for the spill's casualties are extremely complex, as with virtually any transnational projects involving property. While the Macondo well itself is owned by BP, the Exclusive Economic Zone where the Macondo Prospect was located is a geocapital entity that extends spatially into waters defined as "international" while retaining U.S. control over marine resources.[3] Additionally, BP was working with a leased drilling rig, the Deepwater Horizon, as well as subcontracting with Halliburton Energy Services, which was responsible for establishing the seal over the well. Under BP's directive, the seal process was hastened and security measures were reduced (some against Halliburton's recommendations). Due to an inappropriate seal, methane gas escaped and flew up the drill col-

umn, exploding upon its rapid expansion into the ship. A faulty blowout preventer failed to cut off the gushing oil that ensued, at the level of an estimated tens of thousands of barrels a day.

Leading up to and following the sealing of the well on September 19, 2010, the news media stuck with extreme regularity to a number of phrases referring to the state of the well: "killed," "killed for good," "dead," "effectively dead," and even "permanently dead." Such deathly—and lifely—language was summoned to refer to a situation that was much more complicated and only raised further questions. To what degree was such language strategically used to motivate a wave of transformed affect of relief or newfound security across the United States and beyond, a wave of assurance that the monster had been vanquished?[4] How and in what sense was the well ever *alive*? Was the well conceivable, in strictly biological terms, as a single living unit? As the well is a general vessel for pools of oil, the burden of living proof then falls on the oil; hydrocarbons, oil's primary constituent, thus continue to comprise the matter of contemporary industrialized energy.

The well's excessive porosity, mainly in the form of a single leaching point, was used to deem its sudden *lifeliness*; indeed, the very fact that it was not generally containable rendered it alive, when common conceptions of the living body are that it is generally a contained unit. But if we accept this definition of "alive," then how "dead" was the well upon being sealed? In human cases, physicians declare death under certain precise neural conditions (generally the irreversible ceasing of all brain function), often while certain tissues and organs are still biologically valid. The preoccupation among media and among government and BP representatives with declaring the well "dead" is remarkable. Slippages occur, however, in the category of "dead": even though "effectively dead," the well had not yet been subjected to "plugging and abandonment," in the words of Allen, suggesting that irreversible containment needed to be complemented with a withdrawal of vital engagement.

Working with Allen's articulations of the closing process, we could say that the conceptions animated in the closure of this human-led natural disaster were, on the one hand, life and death and, on the other hand, dirtiness and cleanliness, where "dirtiness" was paired with "death" and "cleanliness" with "life." The pure animation of the oil—until some of it evaporated, and some of it settled, and some of it got consumed by the "naturally occurring" bacteria in the Gulf—

was dramatized and literalized by video coverage of the spewing drill pipe in the water. Its animacy, spectacular to the degree that it dramatized the uncontrollable shifting or transformation of matter at scales that dwarf and overwhelm human bodies, resembled other "natural disasters" like tornadoes, whose rapid shifting of matter occurs in the air rather than in the water, and even monster and horror movies such as *Godzilla* or *Twister*, whose horrific elements operate similarly as a threat of uncontrollable scale.

Visual and affective politics, and decisions thereof, surrounded the spill and its aftereffects at multiple levels. The people hired to clean up the surface oil included local fishermen in need of replacement income and so-called disaster migrants, largely made up of Latinos who relocate to work at changing disaster sites. We learned, in a few quietly released news stories, that initially the cleanup workers were not only not provided protective respirators but actively forbidden from wearing protective equipment, as reported in at least a few cases. While BP restricted news reporters from being anywhere in the area and should therefore theoretically have been safe from image-based indictment, it still desired any images of the cleanup to show humans free of apparent threat. (For reasons unknown, I was unsuccessful in obtaining permission from BP's Video Department for the publication of before and after—"alive" and "dead"—images of the Macondo well.) For BP, whatever threat existed seemed to be divided into two irreconcilable domains: any threat to the "environment" was to the aesthetic preservation of the shore, and any threat to "humans" was only economic (that is, the reproductive cycles of some Gulf seafood, the fishing that they depended on for income, might possibly be interrupted). The notion of toxicity, which would have connected these stories, was largely bypassed in favor of the cleavage of these narratives.

Still, clashing layers of disease discourse piled up on one another: the oil that "contaminated" the landscape had to be cleaned up by human workers, and a further contaminant was represented by the dispersants themselves. Human cleanup workers on the surface were being subjected to toxic exposures while "protecting" the contaminated environment. BP's attitude was that the mere viewing of safety equipment, presumably across the nation, could lead to mass "hysteria," an unacceptable gendering of a nation already on the (bio-) defense. It is no surprise, somehow, that "dead" and "killed" were recruited to perform a kind of cognitive blanket to augment BP's ap-

parent power, control, and masculine righteousness over all forms of matter.

At bottom, the overbearing use of *dead* and *killed* functioned as an admission that a toxic spill was a *lifely* thing: lifely, perhaps, beyond its proper bounds. The well itself was alive, and not only because something had flowed out of it with such vivid animation. It was a threat *to* life in the Gulf, as well as to a *way* of life. This occlusion of life over marginal life speaks, as I see it, to the inadequacy of lifely notions as a framework for governance, medicine, and vernacular affect and makes room for a concept like animacy, which encodes forces without being beholden to the failing categories of life and nonlife. As I have argued in this book, animacy permits an even more thorough registration of the role of racial, geopolitical, affective, and sexualized politics therein.

This is one vision of a contemporary biopolitical "ending": the plugged Gulf well, good and dead, no longer a threat to a vulnerable sea. But I do not wish to end here, for the lessons of the Gulf spill feel disingenuous, particularly in a book that has been very much about places and sources of unexpected life. So let us also consider the inhabitants of Hayao Miyazaki's animated film *Ponyo*, released in 2008, which is, like the BP oil spill catastrophe, a land-water drama, though one revealingly designed as a dreamscape in which "the ocean is a living presence."[5] The titular character, Ponyo, is a little fish (ambiguously raced) who desires to become a human and has strong affective ties to a little boy, Setsuke. She is not alone: she has a father, a kind of magician of the ocean who tends to its health by summoning potions which move and transform ocean matter, living or dead; a mother-goddess who seems almost metaphysical in form, but who makes occasional human-size departures; and a whole lot of little sisters who resemble her fish form, but are smaller in size, literally her "little sisters" (figure 19). They are her comfort and support when she is in the ocean. And this sea, as Miyazaki comments, "is animated not as a backdrop to the story, but as one of its principal characters."[6] Animation here works in multiple ways: both conjuring animacy and referring to the illustrated style and fantastical figuration of the film itself.

In Miyazaki's visual narrative, however, the distinction between land and sea is blurred: indeed, it is hardly a hostile relationship or, as in the case of the BP spill, an economic one primarily. The border between land and sea simply shifts upward in the wake of a tsunami-

19. Ponyo's little sisters. *Ponyo* (dir. Hayao Miyazaki, 2008).

induced flood. Miraculously, despite the flood, death seems not what is at stake ("terror" and "contagion" is displaced by "magic," perhaps?), and the anxieties that exist are based on a disparate bunch of concerns, including electricity, protection for the elderly residents of the retirement home, and Setsuke's father being lost at sea. Ultimately, no one is killed; the big fish simply swim along what were formerly roads for automobiles; Setsuke's house remains above water; and the humans have simply remained buoyant, in boats, on the surface. Ponyo's little sisters are the ulterior oil plumes, animated little particles that have shared feelings. Collectively, they are affective matter.

I am reminded here of J. Jack Halberstam's work on animated movies featuring bees. Halberstam observes that animation films which center on bees display alternative political organizations despite not going so far as to observe, for instance, the matriarchal aspect of bee societies. That is, there are moments when more exact investigation of lived animal formations is generative. Halberstam nicely assumes this appropriability of reference not as a means of restoring final honesty to a signifier, but as a means toward political ends, suggesting that if mainstream animation filmmakers did study the lives of actual bees, bee fiction might do better than its currently middling job at representing a kind of feminist or otherwise progressive politics.[7] The case of Ponyo's little sisters presents an alternative political organization of a hybrid posthuman-goddess-fish family which, in Miyazaki's configuration, is matriarchally structured and, unlike what human pro-

creation predicts, involves a set of hundreds and hundreds of siblings, siblings that are not necessarily the less-autonomous "little sister" deserving of protection.

Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli is known for being judicious about when it takes advantage of the convenience of computer-generated imagery (CGI) technologies, which Halberstam has observed is technology's latest imaginative feat in the representability of enormous collectivities ("hordes") and their accompanying political formations within animation. Ponyo's many little sisters, even if they were so numerous as to make up a "horde," were thus not multiply generated copies of a replicated single sister, launched at different points in her repeating dynamic smiling, speaking, and fluttering actions to induce the perception of difference and individuation. Rather, the supervising animator of the film, Katsuya Kondo, explained:

> It wasn't enough just to have a lot of sisters onscreen. Each sister needed to move as an individual character. The scene in which the sisters rescue the half-fish, half-human Ponyo was divided into three stages—beginning, middle, and end—and the assistant animators drew each sister carefully. We didn't use any copies or CG, of course, because everything was drawn by hand this time. While the work was painstaking, it was easier to create the movements of an ensemble by hand than by CG, and we took on this task because we wanted to render those movements to our hearts' content.[8]

The technicality of Kondo's focus on mobility did not mitigate its sweetness to me, for the sisters were "painstakingly" given life one by one to the animators' "hearts' content." The "animation" of Ponyo was enriched by the multiple factors of animacy: sentience, movement, faciality, speech, and action upon something else—as well as the many imaginative animations dreamed up by each creator for which the final embodiment of a single sister was the culmination. Animation is thus the end point of the setting-off of many different animacies; its careful consolidation of these animacies, particularly in the case of Ponyo, is what sets it apart.

In her attempt to transmogrify into a human, Ponyo enters intermediary stages where she sprouts chicken legs (figure 20). She experiences her greatest exhilaration and exuberance at that in-between juncture: that chickenlike embodied site of interstitial land-water and fish-human, rather than a site of confusing or distressing liminality,

20. Ponyo sprouts chicken legs. *Ponyo* (dir. Hayao Miyazaki, 2008).

yields an intensity easily read to viewers as pleasure. For Ponyo, the promise of humanness exists in spite of all that humans have done.

The fish/chicken/little girl is far from a binary logic; she is a blending that is partial and contingent and enacted across time, yet the blending is simultaneously robust and profound, effective and affective. Both air and seawater are the stuff of blends, the stuff of human, animal, and godly mattering. If lungs no longer critically matter for breathing, then the material difference between air and water also dissolves. The air-seawater is also the stuff of sex, of the sensuous, sensible exchange of breath, fluids, and parts; of meetings and interpenetrations which may be "actual" or "virtual," within which we need feel no particular responsibility to any exceptional organs; of reproduction, of penetration, of reception, of animacy itself.

Still, "the real world in which matter matters most" inevitably haunts even this promise of gratifying transmogrification. For all its fictive identity as the ostensible setting of an animation film, the "Japan" that quietly informs the villages, personalities, languages, and socialities of Ponyo, as I write in spring 2011, too easily comes up against the Japan that was devastated—in an overwhelming way in Fukushima, Miyagi, and Iwate prefectures, as well as economically and affectively in its national ensemble—by an earthquake-instigated tsunami ranging from eight to twenty meters high on March 11, 2011. The tsunami, engulfing smaller towns in the north of Japan that largely engaged in farming and fishing, disproportionately killed and displaced the elderly,

putting into aching relief Miyazaki's rehabilitative image of elderly Japanese who have been submerged by a tsunami cavorting at the bottom of the ocean (to their surprise).

Yet to construe this contemporary and actual tsunami-radiation compound event exclusively in ready terms of failure, loss, and death risks a certain narrowing of imagination (surely justified for many closest to these events) that relies on the dubious construct of "natural disaster" and necessarily prioritizes economy, humans, locality, and national security. Once this kind of narrative is launched, it has only a narrow path that leads to blaming either "the Japanese," or the bad disaster preparation, or the nuclear industry, or energy dependence, or something else; perhaps there is even a quieter rejoicing at the apparent failure of Japanese industrialism's grasp on modernity, for all its recent decades of challenge to the United States's tale of economic dominance. In the opening song to Ponyo, "Umi no Okasan" (Mother sea), the lyrics sing of lost unity and beckon a return to the family of countless siblings:

> The sea lilies sway
> In a world of blue
> To brothers and sisters uncountable
> We spoke in the bubbly, watery language of the sea
> Do you remember when
> So very, very long ago
> We dwelt there together
> Deep in the blue, blue sea?
> The jellyfish, the sea urchins, the fish and the crabs
> Were our family.[9]

The ending scenes of the film execute this new possible kinship between land and sea with the long-desired transmogrification of Ponyo into a human (albeit one who has a memory of being a fish) and the compacting of this transition by an agreement between a human (Sosuke), who agrees to care for her, and Ponyo's mother who commands the sea and makes the transition so. The antinomic controlling magic of Ponyo's waterborne father Fujimoto (an "exhuman"), which allows him to transform and animate (and imprison) all kinds of matter, has been attenuated; in its place, we viewers have been transformed into such magicians of imaginary and imaginative possibility by our very witnessing of the transmogrifications that populate this

animation film and the gratitude and affection that attends the new unities.

Memory here seems to be both the foundation of togetherness and the target of extinction: Fujimoto's "exhumanness" shifts from its substantive status as a toxic trace in his management of his world to a feckless trace barred from boundary-enforcing potency. At the same time, the memory that constitutes the longing opening song permeates the film: a longing for remembered togetherness can bring about that worldly interanimation which yields the possibility of new relations as well as beloved possibilities. Such contradictory tropes of time provide us with anachronisms not constrained by progressivist "healing," appropriative or recuperative phylogenetic racial longing, but rather by a queer "temporal drag," or the "pull of the past upon the present" (to use Elizabeth Freeman's words), that retains a critical ambivalence about where, what, and who we are.[10]

Following the ocean has its lessons, too, and does not necessitate a well-articulated cosmology like Miyazaki's. Nor is it necessary to simply *reverse* the affective response to either delight or numbness, only to attempt to keep labile the affective economies that necessarily subtend modern life, especially in late capitalism when one is considering something like a "natural disaster." "Following the ocean," beyond the histories that oceans keep and the transterritorial human epistemologies they provoke, helps us scramble and interrupt the animacies that are both known and felt at the linguistic level, akin but not limited to the paradigmatic plays of Derrida and the associative games of Gertrude Stein, moving beyond streams of consciousness to the affectively orthogonal disregard for the deeply vested intricacies of "standardness" characteristic of English as a second language.[11] And beyond language, it helps us consider the minor, subtle, boundary-leaping memory traces that intoxications leave with us.

Though I began with language in this book, nowhere did I depend upon a dry vision of resignification; rather, I remained attached to a feeling for affect that subtends, exceeds, richly accompanies such otherwise mechanistic understandings of words, animals, and metals. It was against my own expectation for this book that I went back to my roots in linguistics. My explicit return began when I became quite attached to thinking about mobility (for instance, asking to what degree cosmopolitanism played in the uptake of queer theory's transnational objects, or asking after mobility's connection to abled embodi-

ment). I came to the understanding that different mobilities meant very different things, and that the differences often had something to do with the animacy of the mobile or immobile object. I realized that what might seem a stale debate about *queer*'s seemingly mobile meaning and effectivity could still be richly informed from the perspective of cognitive semantics. If any word's meaning could shift and flex according to its users, what was so special about the senses of *queer*?

While I could not, from this limited perspective, settle the debate of whether *queer* was finally and universally special, I did attempt to explain the reasons why it might be considered special by some. It came down to *queer*'s status as either matterlike (a noun) or something that affected, modified, the meaning, the very materiality, of other things (an adjective, verb, adverb). I began to realize that queerness had everything to do with animacy: it was an operator that shiftily navigated gradations of matter, including things, actions, and sensibilities. At the same moment, I took seriously the lessons of feminist, antiracist, and political-economic assertions that privilege had became solidified into a lexeme that otherwise got a lot of credit for being unfixable.

Privilege has ultimately played multiple roles in this book. For I attended, in some ways disproportionately, to the crafting of worldly matter by privileged beings. Animate hierarchies have settled into their current life as a palimpsest of a long journey through Aristotelian categorizations, Christian great chains of being, Linnaean typologies, biopolitical governances, capitalisms, and historical imperialisms; these are the traces and marks of privileged views upon the world. To the extent these hierarchies have been used to enact zones of deferral, they have produced extraordinary fungibilities of entities in the realms that lie below the white male at the top, the kinds of exchange of matter that allow humans to "be" animals to "be" inanimate objects, while that equally fungible zone of highest privilege has remained largely backgrounded. This is not to say, however, that only the privileged take up these perspectives on the matter around us. For their logics are written into the textures of this world, and our enmeshment within it bespeaks our vexed and often painful complicity. Those of us who can suitably duck them could be said perhaps to access the counterprivileges of biopolitical irrelevance.

Furthermore, my own location with regard to privilege is not lost on me. As much as I track the empire's traces, indelible marks, re-

gurgitations, phobias, and abandonments—as much as I occupied a place of social toxicity by the genderings and transgenderings, disablements, and racializations that have befallen and become me—I, too, write from the seat and time of empire. I have not forgotten Jacqui Alexander's prompt ever since I heard it: what can we do as intellectuals within and without academies from the seat of empire, particularly to encounter the problem of the "here and now" versus the "then and there" that colonial and imperial time naturalize?[12] The concept of animacy has functioned for me in this book as one of many diverse and multimodal attempts to reach across this compacted condensation of time-space, always with the awareness that there is so much more to do and to imagine. With an eclectic traversal of objects and affects, this book tracked both the paradoxical naturalizations of animacy hierarchies (for instance, in the form of racialized animal anachronisms) and the rejoinders launched by contemporary animacies (unintended reimaginations of kinship and intense intimacies), only some of which remain in a human domain of disidentification. Some animacies remained quite corrupt; others seemed particularly enlivened by a capacity to romp through, under, and over such hierarchical knowledges. Finally, I claim the "eclectic," perhaps reflexively, while remaining keenly aware of its role as a disclaimer for exceedingly, rudely feral transdisciplinarity. My archive of apes, theories, turtles, sensoria, cartoons, mercury particles, airborne skin, signifying lexemes, and racialized humans has seemed entirely logical, that is, to *me*; yet the label of "eclecticism" rings true, in my view, from a perspective that is wedded to institutional typologies of intellectual reference and styles of thinking. At the same time, animate affinities *do* bring these bodies together, and that, whether delivered under the protective bandage of "eclectic," has ultimately been my point.

Animacy hierarchies slip and give, but they do not do so willy-nilly: I have suggested that they slip in particular privileged terms of sexuality, race, and ability, perhaps in part because these are the fragile grounds upon which they have been built in popular ontologies and political cultures in the United States: race because the formation of animal and animality has been enriched by colonial histories; sexuality because the discussions of kind, genre, production, and reproduction with regard to such an ontology inevitably call forth concerns of sexuality broadly conceived; ability because the human body and subject have resolutely been imagined as able-bodied, in a god's image. My

conviction that hierarchies are contingent and mobile lies in my sense that their rigidity must be promulgated and not simply rest in truth. Not only, for instance, might stones be multivalent, as both building materials and divine representants in some aspects of Inkan or Japanese cultures,[13] but they are, despite their mainstream representation as dead and inanimate, dynamic and even moving, changing and shifting at a time scale that seems to outrun human life spans (if we ignore that human bodies themselves are capable of making calcium deposits that are, for all practical purposes, stones) and that lies beyond the narrower time cycles of capitalism. What might it be to take stones as "more than a thing to ignore"?[14]

I take inspiration here from the artist, disability rights activist, and animal rights advocate Sunaura Taylor, who writes: "In my life I have been compared to many animals. I have been told I walk like a monkey, eat like a dog, have hands like a lobster, and generally resemble a chicken or penguin. . . . The thing is, they were right. I do resemble a monkey when I walk—or rather I resemble an ape, specifically a chimpanzee. . . . This resemblance is simply true, as is the statement I eat 'like a dog' when I don't use my hands and utensils to eat. These comparisons have an element of truth that isn't negative—or, I should say that doesn't have to be negative."[15] Taylor uses the recognition of this likeness—we might say a being-like—as a basis for a revised ethics. Such radical thingness as stoneness, I insist, can be visited, can be felt, and can have been; if that still seems more plausible than humanness being visited and felt *by* stones (with thanks, say, to humans' being rendered so pervasively as commodity), I have at least attempted to plumb the boundaries and animate conditions of such orders of plausibility and suggested ways we might divest from such unthought conditions.

In her text "Animation, Apostrophe, and Abortion," Barbara Johnson writes of the peculiar "animation"—the strange personification—realized in the specific poetic apostrophe form in which the addressee "you" refers to an aborted fetus. She asks: "For if apostrophe is said to involve language's capacity to give life and human form to something dead or inanimate, what happens when those questions are literalized? What happens when the lyric speaker assumes responsibility for producing the death in the first place, but without being sure of the precise degree of human animation that existed in the entity killed? What is the debate over abortion about, indeed, if not the question of

when, precisely, a being assumes a human form?"[16] I think this question is uncannily reproduced, albeit without a direct lyric addressee, in the animation of things unknown in their proximity to humanness, by their uneven agency, by their uncertain capacity to affect, by their unlikelihood of being "the effector of," by their uncertain possession of (human) life. For all its verbal coherence, with the exception of the interruption of a few pronouns, this book has also been a project of address, not so easily a diagnosable scene in which a living lyric speaker addresses a dead being whose animacy was uncertain, but a scene of engagement in which the "lives" on both sides are beholden to terms unknown. However you—my reader—have read this, I hope we have been engaged, you and I, in rediscovering existing forms of death, or deadness, as much as we have been engaged in the lifely absence of life and lively inanimation.

In deploying animacy and its forbidding hierarchies as a central figure in this book, I aimed to move beyond reifying its apparent hierarchal closures. I endeavored to show how animacy tends to hide its own contradictions, the transsubstantiations, the transmatterings that go on underneath, through, and across it: hence, my title *Animacies* is importantly plural. One could go so far as to argue that they are what keep it vital, they are that upon which it depends. However, that being said, I was interested in animacy in a very significant way *for* its assertion of hierarchical validity, an assertion that is found peppered across discourses of not only mainstream thinking but also science itself. The categorical humanism characteristic of such ontologies is one reason why the call for "new materialisms" has become so urgent. The new materialisms we can pursue are those that not only diagnose the "facts" by which humans are not animals are not things (or by which humans cannot be animals cannot be things), but simultaneously reveal such "facts" to be the real uncanny permeating the world we know. This is the beauty of *Ponyo*: it forgoes tensions borne of uncanniness, promising instead an airy *and* watery cosmology that animacy hierarchies only begrudgingly admit, one in which communing and transmogrification among unlikely kinds is not exceptional, but normal and unsurprising. Taking in animacy in this way also suggests an alternative means, outside of the strictly political or strictly emotional, to identify cross-affiliations—affinities—among groups as diverse as environmentalists, people with autism, social justice activists, feminists, religious believers in nature's stewardship, and antiracists, to

mention just a few. It is also to refuse prescriptive closures around the possibility of metamorphosis, imaginative or otherwise. Not mimesis or partial-morphosis, but the stuff of transformative commitment. I take to heart the words of the political scientists Noenoe K. Silva and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller when they say that the politics of indigenous sovereignty in Hawaii, given the critical relevance of competing ontologies including animals and landscape objects in which powerful spirits reside, comes down to questions of metamorphosis.[17]

These affinities, however, demand fierce sensitivity to their differences. In my own thinking I return often to Trinh T. Minh-ha's ethnographic ethics "not to speak about / Just speak nearby."[18] Well beyond rejecting either secularism or spirituality, I wish for an ethics of care and sensitivity that extends far from humans' (or the Human's) own borders. It is in queer of color and disability/crip circles, neither of which has enjoyed much immunity from the destructive consequences of contemporary biopolitics, that I have often found blossomings of this ethics of care and sensitivity, queerings of objects and affects accompanied by political revision, reworldings that challenge the order of things.

Thinking and feeling critically about animacy encourages opening to the senses of the world, receptivity, vulnerability. My care for a couch may well have stemmed from what some deem pathology, but that does not invalidate it as a peculiar kind of care that may at least truck with the more intensive valence that a couch acquires for one who cannot afford to replace it, and who cleans it; a dog who likes the taste of it and licks it; a relatively wealthy person who, due to some vague charting of proper liberal conduct, tries to give things away before sending them to the landfill; or a person of whatever neurological categorization who runs her finger along a slip of fabric ever so gently. Radical affection does not require intentional politics; and subjectivity itself, with its attendant danger zones of nationalism, individualism, whiteness, and rather anti-animate preference for typology and judgment, need not be core to this account. I seek not to end here with concluding words about animacy's ultimate failure or success, only that it is here and that it has its own regulatory forces which must be accounted for and met. If we must keep company with such ontological closure, it nevertheless remains eminently possible for us to seek out and affirm the wiliness within.