

## Objects

## The Literary Object and the Object of Literature

Continental philosophy has recently seen a turn away from questions of subjectivity toward a renewed interest in things and objects in their own right. In this vein, thinkers have been theorizing thing-power, subjectless objects, and their fourfold constitution.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, discourse on objects has long been a staple of analytic philosophy, which presents us with a dizzying array of all kinds of objects: ordinary objects, abstract objects, fictional objects, possible objects, and even nonexistent objects.<sup>2</sup> All these approaches – continental and analytic – are concerned with what could be called the “objecthood of objects” (or the thingliness of things), whether general or particular. In contrast, while this chapter is dedicated to two particular kinds of objects, namely the literary object and the object of literature, it is concerned not so much with their objecthood as with their essential qualities. In other words, I will focus on the literary and the very aim of the literary. This constitutes another attempt at answering what seems to be a perennial question: What is literature? But in the context of this volume, a second question immediately arises: How is the question of literature, arguably the epitome of a *humanist* question, related to posthumanist concerns? I will thus tackle the relation between literature and the posthuman in the most direct of ways to suggest an answer that goes precisely *beyond* the human. Coupling Russian formalism with Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of difference and presenting two exemplary readings – of Margaret Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* and Charles Olson’s “The Ring of” – I will go against the grain of much recent mainstream literary theory to demonstrate nothing less than the essentially posthuman status of literature per se.

For decades, the question of what literature is has been either side-lined as impossible to answer, due to its essentialist and therefore self-deconstructive thrust (as the well-known argument goes), or deliberately deflected onto a socio-historical level, thus yielding only temporary and provisional answers. In fact, since these two claims easily reinforce one another, they often appear conjointly in what could be called “the historico-deconstructionist two-step.”

In this vein, literature is presented as something essentially elusive (that is, something essentially without essence) that can only ever be temporarily and provisionally determined, depending on the given social, cultural, and historical context and its concomitant ways of reading.<sup>3</sup>

But things have not always been this way. Indeed, whereas the second half of the twentieth century saw the gradual establishment of the explanatory framework sketched above, much of the first half was devoted precisely to attempts at pinpointing the essence of literature. Among the most notorious is Russian formalism. Thus, in his famous essay “Art as Device,” Viktor Shklovsky introduces his concept of “enstrangement,” coined to capture literature’s defining quality and power to *re-familiarize* us (rather than *de-familiarize*, as the most well-known translation of Shklovsky’s Russian neologism *ostranenie* has it) with both our own perceptual processes, which otherwise tend to go unnoticed, and the very essence of that which we perceive, which is otherwise lost in the process of cognition.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Shklovsky conceives of literature as a tool (the very “device” of his essay’s title) that makes us aware of what we otherwise are not aware of: *that* and *how* we perceive and *what* we perceive. His account will lead us directly to the chapter’s more explicitly posthuman concerns.

According to Shklovsky, the reason why we are not aware of perception and so need this tool called “literature” is grounded in the fact that our cognitive apparatus, our predisposition to conceptual thought, tends to override perception; rather than “simply” perceive things, we incessantly recognize them. While the economizing abstractions of conceptual thought – its subsumption of particulars under a general term – are a prerequisite for both human communication and abstract reasoning, they lose sight of the very particularity of the particular. In other words, conceptual thought gives us objects in general and in the abstract – as concepts – but misses out on the concrete object itself – the particular thing. In contrast, art in general and literature in particular (it is notable that Shklovsky, despite his essay’s title, discusses only literary works) can give us the very thing in its particularity. Literature is a “tool” that makes us “feel objects,” makes “a stone feel stony” as Shklovsky’s famous expression has it (“AD” 6). Works of literature are thus quintessential *aesthetic objects*: the literary object, qua tool, pries open any object whatsoever by virtue of being a tool of *aisthesis* – of feeling, perception, sensation. In addition, the literary object also discloses the very process of *aisthesis* itself. The literary object is an aesthetic object constituting a preeminent site of *aisthesis* at work, while the twofold object of literature is both the very process of *aisthesis* itself and any object whatsoever that it is apt to disclose by means of *aisthesis*.

From a posthumanist perspective, what is interesting in this conception of literature is that Shklovsky presents literature as the very *human* means of going *beyond the human*. It gives us access to the essence of things, for example, the stoniness of stones, because it bypasses conceptual thought and operates directly on and via sensation. The literary work is an object of sensation created by humans for the purpose of getting out of themselves and into things. Viewed in this way, Shklovsky's theory of art undercuts Immanuel Kant's ban on speculation. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously distinguishes between *phenomena* and *noumena*, things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves, restricting thought to the realm of phenomena and maintaining that things in themselves remain beyond the limits of thought and thus inaccessible. In contrast, Shklovsky maintains that while things in themselves might be inaccessible to conceptual thought, they are very much accessible to non-conceptual sensation. In this sense, literature per se is essentially posthumanist.

### Literature as Speculative Experiment in Metaphysics

Despite all of the above, Shklovsky does not say much about the stoniness of the stone – the essence of the very things that literature is apt to disclose. This is consistent with his focus on aesthetic experience: he gives us an account of the kind of experience that literary texts provide, not of what is being experienced. His focus is on the function and essence of literature, not on the essence of the things that it is the essence of literature to disclose. Shklovsky thus remains within the sphere of lived experience. While he indeed highlights literature's anti-Kantian thrust beyond the limits of thought, he himself desists from following through on this trajectory. Put differently, while he emphasizes literature's speculative drive, he refrains from its genuine metaphysical implications. In yet other words, Shklovsky remains on the level of surface appearance but misses out on the depths of its essence. Everything Shklovsky lists as characteristic features of literature belongs to this level of surface: employment of rhetorical schemes and tropes, of narrative strategies, certain uses of syntax and linguistic devices in general; in short, employment of what he terms "poetic language." As they are the *form* in which the underlying essence of literature *appears*, these features are important, of course, but they constitute only half the story. If one wishes to explore the depths of literature, one needs to turn elsewhere. I want to suggest the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (and, to a lesser extent, Félix Guattari) as an apposite resource here. Like Shklovsky, Deleuze sees literature (and art in general) as primarily engaged with sensations. He also thinks that literature is a device to get us out of ourselves, but unlike Shklovsky, he

actually provides the metaphysical grounding to do so. While Shklovsky remains preoccupied with the very human realm of language even as he takes its poetic use to be disclosing the beyond of language, Deleuze zooms in on this beyond.

In accordance with Shklovsky, Deleuze and Guattari bluntly state that whether “through words, colors, sounds, or stone, art is the language of sensations.”<sup>5</sup> It is precisely in their concept of sensation, however, that they markedly differ from Shklovsky’s traditional take where sensation refers to the human sensorium and its attendant range of human perceptions and feelings. Their concept of sensation is genuinely metaphysical and nonhuman, as it denotes what they call percepts and affects, “*beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived” (WIP 164; original emphasis). Sensations qua autonomous beings are thus not necessarily correlated with humans, or only insofar as they make up the nonhuman aspect of this correlation: “*Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man*, just as percepts . . . are *nonhuman landscapes of nature*” (WIP 169; original emphasis).

Deleuze’s earlier work *Difference and Repetition* helps to unpack this rather obscure-sounding remark. Here, Deleuze notes that “aesthetics” understood as the “science of the sensible” cannot be possibly founded on representation (that is, cognition).<sup>6</sup> In that case, there would simply be no proper science of the sensible as the sensible would remain subsumed within the intelligible – it would cease to be an autonomous realm of inquiry. But neither can it be determined by simply subtracting representation. In this case, it would be completely cut off from thought, something we could not possibly make any sense of, something that by definition could not ever enter our cognitive processes, not even in altered form, and thus would have to remain unnoticed and irrelevant. Deleuze’s solution to this problem is what he terms “transcendental empiricism”: in addition to our everyday empirical use of the senses, there has to be a genuine transcendental use, a use that goes beyond our familiar everyday empirical realm. “Empiricism truly becomes transcendental,” Deleuze says,

and aesthetics an apodictic discipline, only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being of the sensible: difference, potential difference and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity. It is in difference that movement is produced as an “effect,” that phenomena flash their meaning like signs. (DR 68)

In short, Deleuze connects the realms of the intelligible and the sensible without subsuming the sensible under the intelligible. Whereas the empirical use of our senses is immediately taken up in processes of cognition and thus

indeed tied to representation, the transcendental use bears directly on that which can *only* be sensed (that is, which cannot be thought). Sensibility thus preserves its autonomy *and* becomes our means to access the beyond of thought and representation. Aesthetics gets directly at the heart of things – Deleuze’s realm of intensive difference. In Deleuze’s philosophy, intensive difference is the underlying principle that generates extensive identities. In this way, Deleuze inverts the usual relation between identity and difference. With difference, the grounding principle is no longer a unity, as it is now fractured from the outset – it becomes a differential field rather than a unitary point. But what exactly are these differentials and what is this field? They are the very Deleuzian nonhuman landscape and nonhuman becomings of affects and percepts, that is, sensation. In other words, Deleuzian difference is essentially sensational and Deleuzian sensation is essentially differential. This is how sensation assumes general ontological weight. And it is in this way that literature, as the preeminent site of *aisthesis* at work, offers the very human means of accessing the nonhuman sensational fabric of things. Literary works thus become veritable speculative experiments in metaphysics.

### Case Studies

I will now provide two brief case studies in order to trace literature’s capacity both to access the very essence of things and at the same time to make the very procedure of this accessing explicit. Literature thus always also sheds light on its own essence. My tutor texts will be Margaret Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* and Charles Olson’s poem “The Ring of.” As befits my universalist claim, namely that my above account holds true for all literary works, these texts are marked by both a clear generic and a clear literary historical difference with a romantic travel narrative on the one hand and a late-modernist poem on the other.<sup>7</sup>

#### Romantic Travel Narrative

*Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* records Margaret Fuller’s experiences, impressions, and thoughts during her travel through the Great Lakes region. Clearly a travel narrative, the text presents a peculiarly disjointed, impressionistic, digressive, and fragmented account that is interwoven with illustrations, poems, dramatizations, a fictionalized autobiographical sketch, and a retelling and part-translation of a German esoteric novel that is itself the fictionalized retelling of the life and death of Friederike Hauffe, the so-called Seeress of Prevorst. These formal peculiarities go hand in hand with Fuller’s

thematic interests. While the travelogue time and again touches on highly pertinent social and political issues, particularly with respect to the situation of Native Americans and that of women at the frontier, these considerations always rest on a genuine transcendentalist concern with the relation of the human to nature. A passage toward the very end of the text presenting Fuller's musings on the elevated character of Native Americans makes this quite explicit:

There is a language of eye and motion which cannot be put into words, and which teaches what words never can. I feel acquainted with the soul of this race; I read its nobler thought in their defaced figures. There was a greatness, unique and precious, which he who does not feel will never duly appreciate the majesty of nature in this American continent.<sup>8</sup>

I do not wish to explore any further the political and ethical implications of Fuller's portrayal of Native Americans, whom she clearly aligns in these lines with nature rather than culture, just as she repeatedly evokes the noble-savage trope throughout her little book. Suffice it to say that, whatever the implications, she clearly positions herself on their side of the divide. Rather, I wish to emphasize that her political intervention on behalf of Native Americans (and women) rests on her philosophical valuation of nature and a certain non-conceptual epistemology, in that her transcendentalist philosophy of nature gives priority to *aisthesis* over *noesis*. The "majesty of nature" can be accessed only by means of the "nobler thought" – that is, the "language of eye and motion."

*Summer on the Lakes* introduces the importance of the aesthetic in its very first paragraph when it evokes the central romantic notion of the sublime: "Yet I, like others, have little to say where the spectacle is, for once, great enough to fill the whole life, and supersede thought, giving us only its own presence" (*SoL* 3). That Niagara Falls, the trip's first stage, does not turn out to unveil this spectacle is just the first in a series of failed encounters. But the stakes of the narrative are made unmistakably clear, namely to hunt down the fullness of life beyond the limits of thought. And, in due transcendentalist fashion, this fullness is to be found in nature, specifically American nature, which here means the American West. Accordingly, Fuller is interested not so much in accurate descriptions of the places she visits as in rendering "the poetic impression of the country at large," a country that, crucially, is "still all new, boundless, limitless" (*SoL* 42, 40). She immediately adds that "what is limitless is alone divine," clearly identifying the West as the site where the plenitude of life could potentially be unearthed.

However, the West's potential remains untapped as human culture relentlessly exploits nonhuman nature: Fuller decries "an age ... of

*utility*,” Americans’ general lack of “tenderness of feeling” (*SoL* 25), the settlers’ spirit of “calculation” and “accumulation” (*SoL* 12), and their “habit of imitating Europe” (*SoL* 40). These traits keep them from living up to the potential of what Fuller does not hesitate to call “Elysium” (*SoL* 29), “Eden” (*SoL* 75), and “the capital of nature’s art” compared to which “Rome and Florence are” mere “suburbs” (*SoL* 33). For Fuller, only women and Native Americans seem to have the sensibility needed to reach beyond calculative thought and unearth divine being. But the former are locked up in the domestic sphere and the latter are driven away or killed. Women and Native Americans are thus emblematic of the missed opportunity, the untapped potential. This is why Fuller devotes long stretches of her narrative to the plight of Native Americans and gives us the rather curious accounts of Mariana – the fictionalized autobiography – and the Seeress of Prevorst in the book’s two central chapters. Both these stories are symptomatic of how the West’s true potential is not recognized and even impeded.

The former portrays the very short life of Mariana, a young woman with both the “power of excitement” (*SoL* 51) and a “very intellectual being” (*SoL* 59), but who, confined to the domestic sphere, withers away and dies. The latter is the fictionalized account of Friederike Hauffe, a young woman who is said to have prophetic powers and direct access to the world of spirits, as she herself seems to live in a permanent state “betwixt life and death” (*SoL* 91): “The spirit of things, about which we have no perception, was sensible to her” (*SoL* 90). Crucially, the story of the Seeress also stresses that her states of somnambulism compel her to compose poems, something she is otherwise not prone to do (*SoL* 85, 92–93). Fuller thus posits the realm of spirit as the creative source of both things and poems and in this way runs together the creative principles of nature and poetry into one great principle of *poiesis*. Nonhuman nature and human poetry are thus presented as expressions of one and the same principle. This is why poetry – and by proxy literature and art – is apt to disclose this very principle. Ultimately, Fuller casts literature as just as somnambulant as the Seeress. In a sense, for Fuller, literature *is* somnambulism.

These two accounts are at the book’s center because they aptly capture what is wrong with settlement at the frontier as it closes down rather than opens up the very principle of life. They also highlight what it would take to open it up (again) and emphasize once more that this principle cannot be accessed rationally – rational thought in its calculations is precisely what impedes the access. Rather, one has to proceed aesthetically, by means of veritable visions. With these two central chapters, Fuller’s narrative also lives up to its own professed aim to render “the poetic impression” of the West as these

two accounts, rather than any accurate description of frontier wilderness, constitute the apposite rendering of the West's untapped potential.

And while the general tenor of the book might thus seem to be one of desperation and despair, formally, the account is a manifestation of joy as it performs a great counter-actualization, a re-opening and un-settling of the West, a speculative exploration of its potential, an investment in its untapped affects.<sup>9</sup> It is this constitutive tension between despair and joy that governs the whole book and that is expressed in its formal and thematic peculiarities. The very affects that circulate in the West and the calculative thought that overrides them can only be aptly captured by means of a disjointed, digressive, and fragmented narrative. Only such a narrative provides an adequate "vision," the very *aesthetic* means needed to tap the transcendental source of things.

### Modernist Poetry

Similar to Fuller's narrative, Charles Olson's poem "The Ring of," published in 1953, plays out the themes of creation and beauty in the two registers of human art and nonhuman nature. The relation itself is manifested via recourse to myth, one of Olson's recurrent concerns.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly suitable as myth itself is precisely determined by its negotiation of the human and nonhuman realms. Still, most of the poem seems to be concerned with the nonhuman world of gods and nature. Accordingly, the birth of beauty (stanzas 1–2) is presented as the result of a coming together of natural and divine forces (in myth the distinction tends to be indistinguishable), as Aphrodite is born from the ocean's "genital/wave" and "delicate/foam" and subsequently brought "to her isle" by the "west wind" (Zephyros), where she is then clad and brought "to the face of the gods" by "the hours" (the Horai). She rejects all of her suitors only to accept "the ugliest/to bed with" (Hephaistos; stanza 3) though "the handsome/mars ha[s] her" later. The poem then evokes Eros, "the arrow of/as the flight of, the move off/his mother" (stanza 4), and ends with an invocation of the powers of Aphrodite (stanza 5).<sup>11</sup> As a hymn praising Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, love, and procreation, the poem presents an allegory of the divine creation of beauty and, conversely, the beauty of divine creation.

Things become more complicated, however, when we turn to issues of form. First of all, the rendering of the poem's content happens by very *human* means – lyrical storytelling in the case of Olson and epic storytelling in the case of myth. This human factor is indeed already taken up within the poem's content when, just after the fourth stanza invokes the birth of Eros, his "mother" is said to "adorn[. . .]//with myrtle the dolphin and words." Having now transitioned into stanza five, the poem ends: "they rise, they



do who/are born of like/elements.” The poem here self-reflexively acknowledges the role of words, that is, the role of distinctly *human* creation, of poetry as human *poiesis*, as several meanings are run together and superimposed on one another in the poem’s ending: depending on what one believes to be the referent of the pronoun “they,” the final stanza can say that (1) anyone who is made of the same elements as Aphrodite rises just like her, (2) Aphrodite and Eros, made of the same elements, are both rising, (3) words are rising and they are made of the same elements that Aphrodite was made of, (4) words are rising and they are made of the same elements that Aphrodite *and* Eros were made of, (5) the dolphin and words are rising and they are made of the same elements, or (6) some or all of the above.

This semantic multiplicity directly showcases the very creativity and beauty of words, their procreative power. Poetry is thus posited as equally beautiful, as equally passionate, and as equally creative as Beauty (Aphrodite), Love (Eros), and Creation themselves. Art is explicitly projected, as Deleuze and Guattari have it, as an “enterprise of co-creation” (*WIP* 173). Ultimately, this is already apparent in the poem’s recourse to myth, since *muthos* means nothing other than *narrative*, and it is no coincidence that the poem, though highly lyrical, is narrative in nature. The poem thus interweaves from the get-go acts of creation with acts of storytelling. Crucially, however, this does not mean that nonhuman creation is thus always already correlated with human storytelling. Rather, as in Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes*, both human and nonhuman creation are posited as stemming from the same ground, as “born of like/elements.”<sup>12</sup>

But then, what are these elements? On the surface, what the poem suggests are the four primordial elements earth, water, air, and fire as they are evoked repeatedly in the poem, an allusion consistent with the poem’s elaboration on myth. Just as the birth of Aphrodite stands for the creation of beauty and the beauty of creation, the four elements stand for the principle of genesis per se. In his poetological treatise “Projective Verse,” Olson names this principle “breath.”<sup>13</sup> While this identification seems intuitive enough in the case of poetry, the context of myth elicits wider connotations: breath is also *pneuma*, the animating spirit, the very force that brings things into being. With its recourse to myth and specifically to the myth of the creation of beauty, then, “The Ring of” weaves together the specific and general senses of *poiesis* as human artistic creation on the one hand and the general nonhuman process of creation on the other. While on the level of content this superimposition plays out in the poem’s recourse to the myth of Aphrodite and the self-reflexive acknowledgment of the importance of words in casting this myth, on the level of form the poem is structured according to Olson’s well-known “composition by field,” his championing of “open verse,” for which breath determines

rhythm (“PV” 16, 15). The verses do not follow any specific meter, nor are they organized according to syntactical units. The rhythm is driven by enjambements, internal rhymes, alliterations, fragmented syntax, and a wealth of figures of repetition. But the most outstanding formal device is a curious bit of empty space, a caesura reinforced by means of layout, in line 4 of stanza 4. This little empty space coincides precisely with the birth of Eros:

mars had her    And the child  
had that name, the arrow of

The poem thus formally redoubles “the ring of sea pink” that gave birth to Aphrodite (just as on the level of content the birth of Eros redoubles the birth of Aphrodite). This empty space amounts to the formal rendering of “the ring of” creation, the eternal return of the in-between where all and everything is generated, that is, difference itself. This spacing is the poem’s manifestation of what Deleuze and Guattari call “a zone of indetermination” where “things, beasts, and persons” dissolve in the realm “that immediately precedes their natural differentiation” (*WIP* 173), the very realm of sensation, of affects and percepts. It is telling that Olson’s poem evokes this realm precisely in the context of the birth of love. It is thus a hymn not only to the interplay of creation and beauty but to the very passions involved in this relation. It is a hymn to love and passion – in both their spiritual and carnal senses – and their power to create, that is, to the very power of affect as such. It is a celebration of a generalized eroticism: the grand creative passion of the elements, the fructifying circulation of sensations, of affects and percepts. And it is precisely through its expression in the poem’s inextricable joining of form and content that this generalized eroticism becomes aesthetically tangible.

### The Great Outdoors Within

Although from different literary periods and pertaining to different literary genres and thus in very different ways, both of my tutor texts stress the principle of creation and literature’s aptitude to disclose this principle. What is more, both suggest that this principle grounds both human poetic creation and nonhuman natural (or divine) creation. But since the principle is itself clearly nonhuman, there is a fundamental asymmetry in the relation between the human and the nonhuman: the nonhuman turns out to comprise the human, and the human becomes just a variation of the nonhuman. I believe this to be what the two texts convey. But more importantly, they also convey that if the space of reason, that is, the space of representation, marks the level of the specifically human, then the space of sensibility, that is, the space of sensation, marks the level of convergence between the human and the nonhuman as it

permeates both realms. Sensation turns out to be the very stuff of being as such. This is why literature (and art in general), as the very manifestation of the Deleuzian transcendental use of the senses, is the adequate tool to unveil the relation that holds between the human and the nonhuman. Moreover, if sensation is the very stuff of being in itself, this is tantamount to saying that the nonhuman is as much within as outside us. This is precisely what literature takes advantage of. Otherwise it would not be able to disclose anything at all, as an unsurpassable gap would separate the human from the nonhuman.

I will unpack this point by means of a contrast. In *After Finitude*, French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux calls the nonhuman realm as it is in-itself “the *great outdoors*.”<sup>14</sup> Meillassoux is attacking the Kantian ban on speculation, which indeed expels things-in-themselves while at the same time erecting the unassailable realm of thought. Henceforth, everything is always already correlated to thought; nothing can be conceived in-itself, since the attempt to conceive something in-itself merely results in its conceiving, that is, thought. This is the position that Meillassoux terms “*correlationism*” (*AF* 5, original emphasis). Meillassoux’s program subsequently consists in the attempt to implode correlationism from within. Without getting into his complex argument here, let me merely note that Meillassoux thinks the sheer formalism of mathematics can build the bridges needed *to get us out* into the great outdoors. In contrast, what I have traced in this chapter is the way that literature opens up fissures in the bulwark of representation in order to let the great outdoors *seep in*. In this sense, literature inundates us with the nonhuman. This is not a mere question of directionality. While Meillassoux’s building of bridges essentially leaves intact the separation of the two realms, literature’s inundation of the human with the nonhuman makes us aware that the human is just one specific entity among a multiplicity of others. And all are grounded by the same nonhuman forces: differential affects and percepts.

Where, then, does this leave the literary object? Quite simply, literature amounts to the manifestation of this underlying realm of nonhuman differential sensations as seen *from the human point of view*. Literary objects are the very human manifestation of difference in-itself, that is, of the general principle of creation.

## NOTES

1. See, respectively, Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011); and Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester: Zero, 2010).
2. See, for example, Amie L. Thomasson, *Ordinary Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Edward N. Zalta, *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to*

- Axiomatic Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel/Kluwer, 1983); Stuart Brock and Anthony Everett, eds., *Fictional Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Graham Priest, *Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
3. A canonical expression of this view is Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (1983; Malden: Blackwell, 1996). See also J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002); Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004); Derek Attridge, "Introduction: Derrida and the Questioning of Literature," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 1–29; and most recently, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *This Thing Called Literature: Reading, Thinking, Writing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).
  4. Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Device," in *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2009), 1–14; hereafter "AD."
  5. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London: Verso, 1994), 176; hereafter *WIP*.
  6. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 68, hereafter *DR*.
  7. For a detailed account of literature's speculative thrust and genuine metaphysical connotations that is based on a reworked notion of narrativity and includes close readings of a range of contemporary North American fictions, see Ridvan Askin, *Narrative and Becoming* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). A shorter text that also includes analysis of a late nineteenth-century realist text is Ridvan Askin, "Prolegomenon to a Differential Theory of Narrative," *SubStance* 44.3 (2015): 155–70.
  8. Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 153, hereafter *SoL*.
  9. For an account of Fuller's "vision of an apprehensive creative energy" (117), see Bruce Mills, *Poe, Fuller, and the Mesmeric Arts: Transition States in the American Renaissance* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 115–36. See also Dorri Beam, "Fuller, Feminism, Pantheism," in *Margaret Fuller and Her Circles*, ed. Brigitte Bailey, Katheryne P. Viens, and Conrad Edick Wright (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2013), 52–76; and, on romanticism's general speculative character, Greg Ellermann, "Speculative Romanticism," *SubStance* 44.1 (2015): 154–74.
  10. See Miriam Nichols, "Myth and the Document in Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems*," in *Contemporary Olson*, ed. David Herd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 25–37.
  11. Charles Olson, "The Ring of," in *Collected Poems of Charles Olson: Excluding the Maximus Poems*, ed. George F. Butterick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 243; all subsequent references are to this page.
  12. On Olson's anti-anthropocentrism, see Mark Byers, "Environmental Pedagogues: Charles Olson and R. Buckminster Fuller," *English* 62.238 (2013): 248–68.
  13. Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," in *Selected Writings of Charles Olson*, ed. Robert Creeley (New York: New Directions, 1966), 15, 17; hereafter "PV."
  14. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2009), 7; hereafter *AF*.