feral feminisms
issue 10 · fall 2021

HACKING THE ANTHROPOCENE: DO-IT-TOGETHER (DIT)

Edited by Hayley Singer, Anna Dunn, Blanche Verlie, Stephanie Lavau, and Tessa Laird

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Cover Image

Long-footed potoroo / winnenerbee (Gunai)

Linda Knight
Pencil on Canson paper, 2020, as part of the *Mapping Extinctions* series

Working from a speculative, more-than-human ontological position, inefficient mapping is an experimental cartographic practice and non-representational methodological protocol that attunes to the subaltern genealogies of sites and places, proposing a wayfaring practice for traversing the land founded on an ethics of care.

Mapping Extinctions explores beyond-the-human timescales by speculating on how we might map nature and wildlife during geologic upheaval. Soon the only way to experience wildlife will be through web videos. The work takes as its starting point the devastating effects of the 2020 Australian bushfires which burned 11 million hectares and killed 5 billion animals. Dis-located drawings of animals reference the dispassionate specimen drawings made by botanists on early colonial sailing ships, and their blue colour is a deliberate pun on the idea of recording something in perpetuity—as a form of blueprint should animal cloning become a possibility. The lost orientation of the animals in *Mapping Extinctions* comments on the long-term impacts of colonisation on Indigenous lands, enacted through the catastrophic effects of bushfires that occur more frequently due to improper land knowledge and management.

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Credits

Feral Feminisms

Issue 10 · Fall 2021
www.feralfeminisms.com

This Special Issue was edited on the stolen and unceded Country of the Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung (Kulin nation) and Gadigal (Eora nation) peoples of so-called Australia. The Guest Editors wish to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of these lands and the Indigenous peoples of all the lands on which the contributions to this Issue were created.

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Thank you to the following sponsors: Michelle Meagher, Kate Cushon, Lorna Weir, Jonathan Allen, and the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Brandon University.

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Do-It-Together (DIT): Collective Action in and Against the Anthropocene

Hayley Singer, Anna Dunn, Tessa Laird, Stephanie Lavau, Blanche Verlie

This special issue features creative-critical responses to the theme, "Hacking the Anthropocene: Do-It-Together (DIT)." The "Anthropocene" is a term that has gained significant cultural and academic cache, even though it is wildly out of touch with the analyses and calls of such movements as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, youth climate strikers and land defender activists. Building on the work of critical feminists Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Hamilton (and collaborators), in this editorial we explore hacking as a multivalent method for resisting, ejecting, adapting and disrupting the anthropocentric "settler atmospherics" (Simmons 2017) of our times. Considering how we might hack the Anthropocene together, the works in this special issue negotiate a series of co-constitutive tensions, between inclusion/exclusion, good/bad relations, and holding on/letting go. They not only question who or what the "we" in the "together" is, they also trouble the "it," and ask what it means to "do," or even be, together.

Introduction

This special issue features creative-critical responses to the theme "Hacking the Anthropocene: Do-It-Together (DIT)." We inherited the project of Hacking the Anthropocene from two interdisciplinary feminist scholars, Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton (see e.g. Hamilton and Neimanis 2019). They have, among others, brought a critical ecological, queer and feminist lens to the colonialism of the term "Anthropocene," a name coined for our contemporary geological era which centres humans as the dominant planetary force. Intended to evoke ecological concern, this term is arguably just as devastating as the conditions it names, drawing on settler-colonial discourse, problematically homogenising all humans as planet destroyers, and implying that we are locked into these petrified and petrifying ways of being (Verlie 2022).

Hacking offers a viscerally gripping way out of narrow anthropocen(tr)ic loops of thinking, knowing and being. To hack can mean to cut up, damage or mutilate; to cope; to survive; to gain unauthorised access; to cough up and expel something you need to be rid of; to find shortcuts or tricks; to intervene or repurpose. All of these are suggestive of an effortful response, whether that be disruptive, ejective, or adaptive.

In the first three Hacking the Anthropocene symposia, Neimanis and Hamilton (with a host of other environmental scholars and artists) went looking for alternative entry points for understanding the shifting relations between humans and those who are more-than. We are building specifically, but differently, on Neimanis and Hamilton's ground/works, which amplify the personal, political and playful as planetary forces (Hamilton, Reid, van Gelder and Neimanis 2021).

Figure 1: 'Welcome to Hacking the Anthropocene IV symposium." Architect Laura Bulmer collected plane tree leaves for this installation piece. As a non-native species brought to Australia, plane trees are both colonised and colonising. Their hardy leaves clog and overshadow other plants when they fall in autumn. This architectural hack invited participants to crush the plane tree leaves while attending the symposium. Participants were asked to think of colonial and colonising practices they would like to break down in their own work-life-practice/s as they crushed the leaves. The leaves were later re-distributed, in their now compost-friendly form, to gardens in the region.

In this special issue, brought into being from the fourth Hacking symposium and allied events, we run alongside and intersect those conversations, working through the theme Do-It-Together (DIT). We do this to humbly and modestly participate in the proliferation of routes that take us away from some and towards other ways of being on, and with, Earth and each other. Working with the multivalent figure of hacking, we are effectively 'hacking back' against a series of undesirable and destructive practices and discourses that support rapacious extraction and developments that attempt to erase ancient pasts and create dangerous futures in the pursuit of endless "progress." In *The Extractive Zone*, Macarena Gómez-Barris (2017) points out that the colonial project acts against life-making multispecies communities and kinships. The colonial project renders territories and people as commodities for the taking, while also "devalorizing the hidden worlds that form the nexus of human and nonhuman multiplicity" (Gómez-Barris 2017, 5).

We are watching this devalorization unfold here in so-called "Australia." Over the past twelve months, we have witnessed myriad violences in quick succession. Estimated to be 350 years old, the Directions Tree was a sacred birthing tree and an ancestor of the Djab Wurrung people. It was razed by the Victorian Government to enable a highway duplication north-west of Melbourne. Multinational mining corporation Rio Tinto blew up a deep time rock shelter, Juukan Gorge (and its evidence of 46,000 years of human occupation), on the lands of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura people in Western Australia, for the short-term purpose of building an iron ore mine. Ancient grass trees have been cut and bagged to expand sand mining in the remnant coastal forests along the Bass Coast, on Bunurong Country. Entire nations' worth of land and wildlife has been burned thanks to climatic negligence, and this injustice

used to justify the ideal of pre-emptive deforestation in the name of "hazard reduction." This is, of course, a wildly incomplete list of the ongoing desecration and destruction of people, culture, creatures and Country—what Palyku scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina calls the "colonial apocalypse" (2018, 195)—across Australia.

Figure 2: "(Un)Making iuk." Adult human participants at the Hacking the Anthropocene IV Symposium, sitting in a circle on the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra River) wrapping iuk (short-finned eel). These are made of locally sourced poa grass and recycled yarn. This was part of the walkshop (Un)making iuk: Creekulum propositions on Wurundjeri Country led by Angela Foley and Sarita Gálvez. This fibre activity is based on the teachings of Gunditjmara weaver and artist, Aunty Bronwyn Razem.

Yet the hegemony of settler colonialism and extractive economies in this nation (as elsewhere) aggressively attacks interrogation of these violences. In March 2020, the arrival of COVID-19 in Australia coincided with the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook and the Endeavour sailing into Kamay, or Botany Bay. Victoria's Deputy Chief Health Officer, Annaliese van Diemen, posted a tweet that amplified the metaphorical and literal relation between the pathogen and colonial invasion of this continent:

> Sudden arrival of an invader from another land, decimating populations, creating terror. Forces the population to make enormous sacrifices & completely change how they live in order to survive. COVID19 or Cook 1770?

Van Diemen's provocation drew a range of aggressive responses—including calls for her resignation from members of the Victorian parliament (ABC News 2020)—highlighting the "settler atmospherics" (Simmons 2017) that remain powerful and pervasive in Australia. Defined by Kristen Simmons, settler atmospherics are "the normative and necessary violences found in settlement—accruing, adapting, and constricting indigenous and black life in the US settler state" (2017, n.p.). They work to erase, excuse and enable colonialism with explosions, chainsaws, deaths in custody and racist rhetoric, generating colonial "choke points" (Simmons 2017, n.p.) that disrupt intergenerational, multispecies practices of breathing and flourishing.

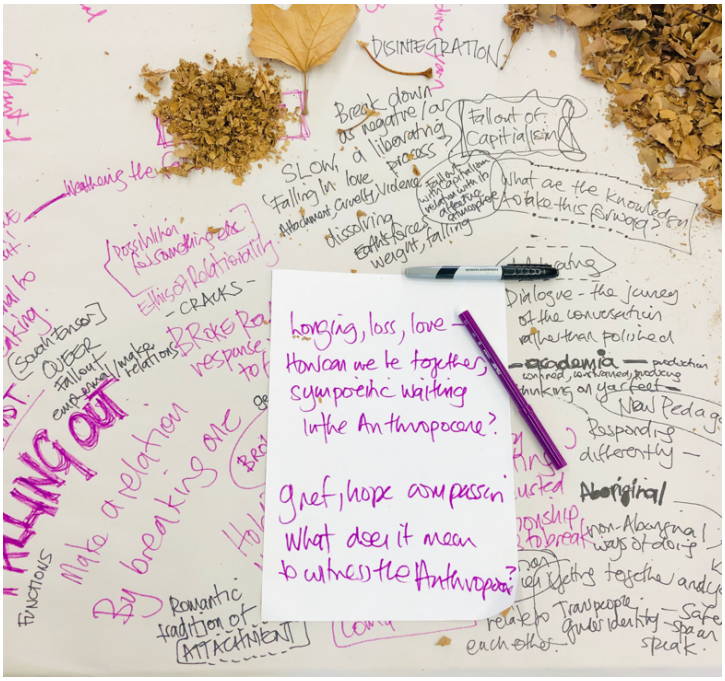

Figure 3: "Composting, composing, decomposing." One participant's notes from the Hacking the Anthropocene IV Symposium, recorded on the paper tablecloths, threading presenters' ideas and practices through each other, connecting and disconnecting, while breaking down the colonial legacies of plane tree leaves.

Epitomised in George Floyd, David Dungay Junior, Eric Garner and the Bla(c)k[1] Lives Matter movement's cries "I can't breathe," thinking the entanglements of air and colonialism through settler atmospherics reminds us, five white settler Australian women, that COVID-19 and climate change are not new nor unique respiratory crises. Writing of Nardi Simpson's debut novel *Song of the Crocodile*, Ballardong Noongar writer Timmah Ball says,

> If Anglo-Australian narratives are fixated on the *possibility* of losing the nation as a metaphor for the climate crisis we are living through Blak narratives like *Song of the Crocodile* remind us that this loss is *real*. We are not imagining the *possibility*. It has already and continues to happen to Aboriginal people—but we are surviving. We are walking towards the unknown bravely. (2021, n.p. italics in original)

Turning our attention to these atmospherics and those who have long been "walking towards the unknown bravely," we, collaborators and editors of this special issue, commit to forging ethical relations that hack back at the structures and stories built by our colonial and settler ancestors. Stories and structures that are still standing today. In this, we work consciously with the tensions of holding onto knowledge of our (individual and collective) inherited pasts, while attempting to loosen the grip of our own settler regimes of power. In hacking (back) at these regimes, we pull into our focus the many thousands of generations of breaths that have been shared and enabled through multispecies relations on this continent, and across the world.

Dwelling with/in the knowledge of histories, legacies and ongoing practices of extractive asphyxiation, we refuse the cliché that 2020 is *the* year we won't forget, *the* year that has changed how we think, feel, live. It is just one among many manifestations of a version of history forged as an embodied relation between colonists and pathogens, settlers and extraction. We also remember all those other years that should not be forgotten, those that have

soiled the planet's crust with plastics, concrete, radioactivity, the bones of billions and billions of broiler chickens, and carbon dioxide, creating geological, biological and atmospheric archives—in/human memories—of planetary suffocation.

This is draining, of course. A hack can also be a 'has-been,' one who is out-of-touch, outdated, and/or overworked from repetitive, routine service. We join many scholars, artists and activists who feel bone-tired by the work of reckoning with this now common term, "Anthropocene." Its settler-colonial discourse and action reproduces, yet again, those all too familiar homogenising impulses, evasions, exclusions and denials that we had hoped (though never truly believed) were becoming a thing of the past (Plumwood 1993; Todd 2015; Moreton-Robinson 2016; Yusoff 2018). The Anthropocene triggers listlessness, while at the same time acting as a catchphrase to support grant applications and career trajectories, signaling "cutting edge" future-oriented practice or contemporary critique. It has gained significant cultural and academic cache, even though it is light-years away from the decolonising language that speaks and acts as a love letter to life. Words like those from Charmaine Papertalk Green, a poet from the Wajarri, Badimaya and Southern Yamaji peoples, when she writes,

> Don't mind me Australia
> I just don't care for mining
> And your colonial bulldust
> I think all the time about minding
> This land for the next generations
> Am I allowed to do that? (2018, 14)

The Anthropocene. Highly legible within the neoliberal, colonial academy, yet wildly out of touch with the analyses and calls of Bla(c)k Lives Matter, #MeToo, youth climate strikers and land defender activists. The term allows one to *comfortably* dip one's toes in imaginaries of future apocalypse. This enables a pretence of understanding multispecies crisis and trauma, while often perpetuating inaction and anthropocentric managerialism. Ironically, to date, societal responses to anthropogenic change, while presented as adaptation, usually serve to secure unchanging patterns, structures and modes of being (Porter et al. 2020; Wakefield 2020). Despite ambitions to signal a threshold or transformation, the concept of the Anthropocene curtails what can be thought, normalising a narrow horizon of imagining, doing, funding, speaking, searching and re-searching. It delivers a version of the future that is merely an eternal present (Bingham and Lavau 2012).

We can no longer treat past patterns of life on Earth as a vital or reliable guide to the future, but we need to move beyond merely understanding that these rules and parameters are changing. So, instead, what might it mean to imagine modes of being that are *otherwise*? "Being is a question," insists geographer Bruce Braun "not a blueprint" (2020, in Wakefield 2020). In this special issue, we continue the work of the hack. We ask, what might it mean to imagine modes of being that are not just *other*-wise, but also other-*wise*? And what about those modes of being considered by the status quo as *un*wise—practices and knowledges that are ignored, erased or silenced precisely for their ability to "hotwire" (la paperson 2017) the hulking machines of the *anthropos*? We know there is still important work to be done in unsettling norms of what it is to know, and who can speak knowledgeably for and with, the Earth, its lives, forms and processes.

This special issue gives voice to artists and activists alongside academics, proclamation and provocation alongside invocation. It makes space (as did the precedent symposium and events) not just for questions of responding to the Anthropocene, but also questions of what it

might mean to respond knowledgeably. Or, other-wisely. Songs, stories, graphic narratives, poems *are* theories, sciences and philosophies done otherwise. The pieces included in this issue, as theory and as practice, responded to our call to hack the Anthropocene through considering what it might mean to Do-It-Together.

DIT: Negotiating Tensions, Reorienting Worlds

What happens to the notion of hacking the Anthropocene when the call to Do-It-Together (DIT) is held alongside it? In 2019, when this DIT project was launched, we were galvanised. We made rallying cries to each other, ourselves, and other others. Decompose! Eject! Co-opt and infiltrate the Anthropocene! Unpick the ramifications of 'DIY or die' stories! Reconfigure the notion of *Homo destructivus*! In response to the individualism of the notion of the Anthropocene, we asked ourselves, each other and other others:

> What forms of collectives are needed, and how can 'we' compose such collectives?
>
> - Are such collectives already emerging, and if so, how might we come to know of, support and/or participate in them?
> - How might sameness and difference co-labour within such collectives?
> - What does it mean to strive for collective action when queer, Indigenous, anticolonial and posthumanist artists, scholars and activists have so deeply problematised the anthropocentrism underpinning taken-for-granted colonial understandings of both collectives and agency?
> - What strategies are being used to "Indigenize the Anthropocene" (Todd 2015)?
> - How might emergent Indigenous-settler relations be navigated through environmental activism, art and scholarship? (Singer, Lavau, Verlie, Dunn and Laird, 2019)

These questions were urgent, *are* urgent. We ran workshops, seminars and a symposium inviting artists, activists and scholars to address these questions. And yet "circumstances" (a term that strangely absolves humans of responsibility) repeatedly disrupted the collective work as we had originally conceived it. As we finalised preparations the night before our symposium, our international keynote speakers were grounded in Tasmania's Tamar Valley by a thick fog and were unable to participate. As we curated this special issue, we experienced the intensification with which the Anthropocene hacked at life, itself. Bushfires raged in Australia and a global pandemic made face masks, computer screens, and (for some of us) suitcases and border rules our constant companions. We experimented with new ways of being and working together in producing this special issue, to varying effect. These ruptures reminded us not to take collectives for granted in their composition, in their achievement, or as inherently good.

Inevitably, new questions of collective action became layered into this special issue, both in its process and its content. What did physical distancing mean for our rallying cry of DIT? How are we to collectively shift, take on new forms, while so much of the world remains under threat, vulnerable, isolated? What are the implications of the brutal structural, social and economic inequalities materialised and intensified by the pandemic for collective action (Preciado 2020, Roy 2020)? In connecting people, species, goods and places to tend collectives in a virally-loaded world, how might one regulate movement and exchange to maximise the good and minimise the bad (Bingham and Lavau 2012; Foucault 2007)?

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the papers in this collection problematise or steer away

from romantic and affirmative notions of collectives. Collectives, rather than being naively celebrated as forms of utopia (e.g. "we're all in this together") or rejected as form of dystopia (e.g. "mindless masses"), are understood as the negotiation of a series of tensions; tensions between positions that may be co-constituted rather than simply oppositional. In introducing the contributions to this special issue, we highlight their propositions in relation to three such tensions: inclusivity/exclusivity; good/bad relations; and holding on/letting go.

Inclusivity/Exclusivity

One of the recurrent themes in the pieces in this special issue is the negotiation of inclusivity and exclusivity. If we are to Do-It-*Together*, then *with* who, *without* who, *against* who and *as* who should we do it? How are collectives made and unmade, and what practices of inclusion and exclusion contribute to this? How are "we" configured and reconfigured as we try to (re)compose "ourselves"? As Haraway (2016) reminds us, connections are never innocent and the details of the connections matter. Even in the pursuit of inclusivity, certain relations and participants are privileged at the expense of others, whether inadvertently or knowingly. And what does being inclusive even mean: giving presence to, acknowledging, engaging with, or enabling? Accounting for how collectives are bounded, and who benefits from such articulations and how (Barad 2007, van Dooren et al. 2016), are critical issues for Doing-It-Together.

For prOphecy sun, Freya Zinovieff, Gabriela Aceves-Sepulveda, and Steve DiPaola, collaboration takes place at the cellular, as well as the social, level. In their polyphonic sound piece "Mitochondrial crossings", inclusivity means that any conception of ourselves must also attune to our bacterial co-habitants: we are always already multiple. Their layered, sonorous work of sound art is made by a network of human artists as well as processed digital samples of bacteria growing in laboratory conditions. These are "care-taking" bacteria, performing necessary functions in breaking down matter, yet they are frequently overlooked and excluded from our conceptions of self and the world. Bacterial attention towards the permeability, and vulnerability, of surfaces, offers pathways to rethinking connection. The searing static of the bacterial samples is entangled with ghostly human vocals, both keening and questing, creating a more-than-human entanglement of human, microbe and machine. Decolonial listening is necessarily an act of care and attunement, while bacteria "decolonise" or breakdown bodily toxicity, hacking the world so that all may flourish. "Mitochondrial crossings" attunes listeners to a materialist feminist sonic praxis, where boundaries between bodies and frequencies are intra-active (Barad 2007): inclusivity all the way down (Haraway 2008).

Pony Express advocate for multispecies representation in collective decision-making, through their speculative participatory process for re-naming the present moment. In "Epoch Wars" the artist duo asks "who gets to name the era we will die in?" They contend that the Anthropocene is a capitalist, patriarchal and colonial construct that must be parodied until it can be ultimately dismantled. Their hypothetical artist-run geological congress disputes the right to 'christen' our epoch, with the patriarchal, Judeo-Christian overtones that act of naming implies (Laird, 2020), instead demonstrating how humour and fabulation can be powerful tools for both hacking the Anthropocene and Doing-It-Together. Pony Express's alternative geological congress is notably inclusive. Their multispecies panel features artists and bats, comedians and a worm tribunal, as well as geologists and many more. Together with their multispecies panelists, Pony Express dismantle the *Homo destructivus* paradigm of the Anthropocene so that our artistic, academic and activist practices may be liberated from self-

replicating and toxic mindsets.

While these first two contributions to this special issue propose that we take more seriously (and humorously) the inclusion of nonhuman lives in the constitution of collectives, the third contribution endows inanimate objects with agency. Hira Sheikh and Kavita Gonsalves draw our attention to the promising possibilities for collectives that might emerge amidst the seemingly isolating desperation of the pandemic. They DIT in "sur_faces," a graphic narrative about the difficulties of navigating, as brown bodies already suffering from allergies, the settler-colonial state of so-called "Australia" under COVID-19. Like the art and healing collective or "informal support coven" Canaries (Fazeli, 2016), made up of women and gender non-conforming bodies that literally cannot tolerate toxic capitalism, *sur_faces* recognises that society was sick long before the coronavirus pandemic, which only serves to intensify feelings of objectification, surveillance, isolation and exclusion, while fuelling xenophobia and paranoia. A positive side-effect of the virus, however, might be a dawning awareness of the vitality and interconnectedness of things, including diseases and allergies, and inanimate objects which are highlighted in primary colours in the black and white narrative of "sur_faces." Face masks and hand sanitisers offer their musings, crucial players in the global assemblage of the pandemic.

Rosie Pham considers how exclusion from the centre can cultivate solidarity among the marginalised, as well as the capacity to think other-*wise*. In "Learning to Find a Place," Pham discusses the exclusivity, elitism and structural racism of academic institutions from her position as a woman of colour. She eschews traditional research conventions to better articulate a non-white subject position that sits outside the instrumentalization of the academy. While acutely aware of critical race theory, Pham is sceptical of systems which require her to theorise her own lived experience, and searches instead for a method which privileges personal and oral histories, communal ways of living, and non-hierarchical citational practices, generating different fields of inclusivity and accessibility. "Learning to Find a Place" emphasises that DIT is already the experience of many migrant and people-of-colour communities, and that much may be learnt from these collective practices.

For LLana James and Ciann Wilson Doing-It-Together more inclusively is about teasing differences apart. In "Imagining Possible Futures for Black and Indigenous Relations and Wellbeing" they interrogate how racial discourse in Canada, that operates in a settler-native binary, provides an ahistorical and thus amnesic account of how African diasporic peoples have come to be in the nation-state of Canada. They examine how white "settlerism" attempts to engulf Black African diasporic peoples who are descendants of the transatlantic enslavement trade in the category "settlers of colour," while obscuring that fact that whiteness always excludes black peoples, as it does Indigenous peoples. James and Wilson, descendants of stolen Indigenous African people, write against this amnesia by carefully exploring what it means to live and work on the stolen lands of Turtle Island as diasporic scholars. They highlight the tensions between Black peoples and Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island who have been forced together under violent colonial conditions. They also acknowledge the challenges and rewards of engaging, together, in decolonial processes through the practical, hands-on work of health and wellbeing issues in their communities and the intellectual work of speaking back to political processes, always sustained by love for Black and Indigenous life.

Good Relations/Bad Relations

If inclusion and exclusion are recurrent themes, this is perhaps because many of the authors in this special issue problematise the outcomes and effects of collectives. Several contributions

specifically explore the ways in which collectives can also be a mechanism through which violences are enacted, and powerful hierarchies solidified. They remind us that a once-valued and nourishing collective can become poisonous, but equally, that problematic relations are not immune to positive transformation. If collectives are neither inherently nor uniquely good or bad, then we must constantly and carefully attend to questions of the effects of relations, as well as the limitations of judgemental registers.

In "E-waste…But Make it Fashion," Oriana Confente problematises the premise that relational entanglement is inherently good. Confente takes a DIY approach to upcycling "obsolete" electronics to make fashion accessories, in order to DIT with these materials. Her careful practice is cognisant of non-human potencies, acknowledging and intervening in the exploitative toxic relations of hyperconsumption, while exploring her own entanglement in the geopolitical and racialised flows of toxics and their animacy. Confente considers how individual interventions in techno-capitalism's escalating cycles of obsolescence can disrupt the aesthetics of extraction and waste disposal, even if these interventions are only minor in relation to the planetary machinery of the global electronics industry. Confente works *with* and *resists* the lively toxicities oozing from electronic devices, through her privileged access to personal protective equipment. These material engagements enrol her in complex relations with marginalised and exploited workers around the world, as well as the corporations, supermodels, designers and trendsetters that idealise and normalise fast fashion.

In "More-Than-Human Collaborations for Hacking the Anthropocene," Lauren Van Patter, Jonathan Turnball and Jennifer Dodsworth propose that collaborative relations can be at once good and bad. In inviting us to take seriously the question of what it might mean for nonhumans to be collaborators in knowledge-making and world-making, they articulate more-than-human collaboration as practices of storying, resisting and orientating. In doing so, they unsettle what can sometimes be an over-eager celebration of collaboration by posing a somewhat startling question: "Can collaborations be monstrous and terrible?" We need to remain attentive, they argue, to the ways in which collaborative relations may not be mutually beneficial or just for all. We are reminded that in seeking to resist anthropocentric fantasies of mastery and control, we must not fall victim to another fantasy, that of the perfection or innocence of convivial relations.

Deb Wardle asks what it means to maintain notions of "good" and "bad" relations in contexts of vast multispecies death. "On the Verge" draws on the imaginative possibilities of short fiction to think through deadly animal-human relationships that are simultaneously intermixed with relations of connection, care and even love. As critical animal studies scholar Dinesh Wadiwel points out in *War against Animals* (2015), in industrial societies, human-animal relations are currently organised on the basis of structural violence, incarceration and domination, even when hidden by screens of care. Wardle takes the complexities of this argument for a walk through fiction. She amplifies the impossibility of being disentangled from death, and thinks through what it means when certain bodies are articulated and disarticulated along spectrums of care and disregard. The story opens imaginative space to withhold judgemental and moralising registers when thinking about animal-human relations. Instead she pays attention to the ethical contours of sharing and/or refusing the pain of others.

In "Top Ten Tiger Snake Co-existence Tips for Beginners," Sue Hall Pyke suggests that relationships can be neither good nor bad. Pyke is unlearning how to avoid Doing-It-Together with tiger snakes. Pyke recognises that DIT with poisonous snakes involves other humans too, so she has written a list of beginner's tips for us to share with you. For Pyke, the primary aim of DITing with snakes is to co-exist peacefully—to avoid terminating a possible relationship

through death of snake or human. Pyke is cultivating a relation to snakes that may not be comfortable, nor necessarily good or bad, but that enables independent regard for snakes. She reconfigures her home environment as shared habitat and begins to recalibrate the relations which make this habitat comfortable for snakes too, such as letting the grass run wild and caring for the rodents and bugs that are their food sources.

Holding On/Letting Go

Given that relations are never inherently or eternally good or bad, and collectives require constant negotiation of inclusivity and exclusivity, our contributors present a range of practices for tending to collectives. Holding on and letting go, and the interplay between them, are a common theme in their propositions for intervening in, composing and decomposing particular collectives, ways of life, and worlds. Indeed, the hyphens in "Do-It-Together" themselves figure a tension between holding firmly to and making separation, the double act of cleaving (Lavau 2013) or "cutting together-apart" (Barad 2007). If we are to hack the Anthropocene, together, witnessing loss and violent transformation is a crucial task, as is experimenting with how to live in the ruins of life (Tsing 2015). This involves careful consideration of which DITs to let go of, and which to hold on to, nurture or regenerate, and how.

In "Falling Out Together," Jennifer Mae Hamilton and Astrida Neimanis offer a dialogue via email exchange that charts the beginning of a new collaboration, while coming to terms with their experiences of falling out—of friendships, mentorships, professional and creative collaborations—together. This exchange is offered up as a form of excessive scholarly production that holds onto philosophies and artworks that propel and give life to their thinking, while letting go of formulated, overworked, academic formulations. This letting go offers space for a rigorous but also loose exchange that foregrounds the context of its construction. These emails have been written the way all scholarship is—on the bus, on the way to meetings, before and after union actions, "piecemeal" and "outsourced" (Harney and Thompson 2018, 121). *Un*like traditional forms, these realities are not excluded from the final artefact. And so, this work holds onto the life of the work as the work of living. And this feels quietly radical. Palms open, this work says, "We think on the run and in tight corners!" This dialogue reckons with the sticky residues of speaking out and speaking up, of labouring against professional and creative isolation through questions, braindumps and dis/organising thoughts. It traces the lure of ideas that sometimes snap into form and at other times fall into necessary and constructive silences. Meditating on a living archive of fall outs, Neimanis and Hamilton are thinking (together) in an aftermath state. And this demands an unconventional mode of publication. It is a mode that makes us think of the secondary, and often forgotten meaning, of "aftermath," which is new grass, or, what grows after a harvest.

Daze Jefferies' "Blue Light as Ineffable Sensuous Other" can be thought of as an aftermath poem. Following the writings of Saidiya Hartman, Jefferies explores the possibilities of holding onto the aftermaths of slavery still present in the Atlantic while letting go of the settler-colonial world that birthed her. Letting go is not proposed as a comfortable, easy or even a finishable project. It is, rather, voiced as a matter of forging new political connections to place, history, identity; of creating new critical connections that facilitate certain necessary disconnections. Importantly, this is a poetic-citational work through which Jefferies openly thinks with a coalition of activist-philosopher-academics to understand Newfoundland's "past-present time of environmental racism." Doing so, Jefferies asks how a poem and its poet might

respond to the histories of slavery that live in the waters that surround us. This scholarly poem is an enactment of "sea-touched" resistance that bodies forth trans+Atlantic—transcontextual, transcontinental, transcorporeal, tranimal—citations that story critical atmospheres of re/membering, surviving and resisting through poetic coalition.

In "(Re)forming River-child-Blowie Relations: Questions of Noticing, Caring, and Imagined Futures with the Unloved and Disregarded," Mindy Blaise and Vanessa Wintoneak consider the complexities of loss in multispecies worlds. They "walk-with" young children and Derbarl Yerrigan, a tidal river on the lands of the Whadjuk Noongar peoples, and collectively explore the challenges of learning in times of ecological decline. Encountering dozens of dead "Blowies" (common blowfish), educators and children grapple for adequate and appropriate ways of understanding and responding to the loss of these generally unloved fish. As children pick up, hold, stroke, and then release Blowies into Derbarl Yerrigan, Blaise and Wintoneak "stumble" to find adequate ways to explore the tricky questions the slippery bloated bodies raise, such as, "what kind of a life do you think Blowie lived?", "What kind of a life might Blowie live once we put them back out, in Derbarl Yerrigan?" and "How might Blowie become?" As they collectively demonstrate, the challenges of the Anthropocene are not only blatantly obvious systemic violences, but also inexplicable, nonsensical, and easily-missed losses. Questions arise, and linger, about how to care and mourn for the dead who were unloved, overlooked and discarded when alive, and how to dwell within, resist and reconfigure the uncomfortable but unavoidable legacies of colonisation. Learning together with children and places in decline requires acceptance of clumsiness, as practices, rituals, and relations of holding on and letting go are attempted, remade, and undone.

Linda Stupart's eerily powerful "After the Ice, the Deluge" is a meditation on the collaborative promise of loss. This experimental split screen video visions the thawing and dissolving of ice in the Arctic circle and the subsequent emergence of pathogens. Performing a "hack" of arctic imaginaries, Stupart combines found footage with live-action fabulation. Arctic hares and tundra vegetation mingle with the emergence of an ancient being from the icy waters. This body, like the melting ice shelves, is traumatised and leaking: letting go of their own form and of what they hold. As dormant viruses hitherto locked in the permafrost begin to wake up, it is unclear whether Stupart's ancient being is also a virus, as they enact strangely cathartic rituals, collaborating with diseases and the traumatised body of the Earth. These ritualised gestures allow for porosity and leakage, in order to become-with, precisely by not holding on, but letting go.

In "Snail-Oyster: Theories, Metaphors, and Praxes for De-anthropocentric Movement Toward Degrowth," Jane Affleck reflects on her experience of the pandemic to articulate a response to climate crisis, proposing "doing nothing together" as practices of "dropping out" (letting go) and "resistance-in-place" (holding on). Drawing on Odell (2019), Affleck understands "doing nothing" not as an absence of doing, but rather as "non-productive," as practices of maintenance rather than growth. Situating herself as a citizen of an intertidal zone on Epekwitk/Prince Edward Island, Affleck describes her practices of walking, drawing and meditative awareness on the shore; a shore endangered by sea-level rise. Here she encounters an Atlantic oyster shell bonded to a periwinkle snail. This conjoined "snail-oyster" becomes a figure through which Affleck interrogates "being-in-relation," from reciprocity and bioregionalism to awkward and ambiguous relations.

How to do-death-together when you are forced into isolation? Kavita Gonsalves' animated memoir and soundscape re-presents the "letting go" of a loved one at a distance, as enforced by COVID-19 restrictions. As a hybrid work of creative writing, animation and design

that foregrounds a citational practice, "How to Say Goodbye in a Pandemic" points to the fact that it takes a collective of intimate relations and strangers who come together across great distances through technology, philosophy, journalism and literature to fully experience and understand a death when it takes place at a distance. This work "hacks" at the notion that isolation and collectivity exist in a dichotomous relationship, and animates what it looks like to be alone-together.

Conclusion

The authors in this special issue help us make sense of and respond to our distressing times by complicating or unsettling familiar tropes about collectives, collaboration, and conviviality. Carefully attending to DIT, this Issue and its collectives not only question who or what the "we" in the "together" is, they also trouble the "it," and ask what it means to "do," or even be, together. The submissions articulate that we are always already multiple, and that being is always already becoming-with (Haraway 2008; Nancy 2000). This is not only because our bodies are ecosystems, nor simply because we are constituted by our relations with others, but also because we are constituted by our exclusions from and by others.

The contributions to this special issue speak to the "need to recognize…that purposeful acts of contesting particular relationships are sometimes necessary to create space for alternatives to emerge" (Giraud 2019, 11). They remind us that inclusion can constitute homogenisation, appropriation and assimilation. Sometimes we need to exclude ourselves or others for our own survival. They also emphasise the hard work of creating anti-hegemonic collectives that avoid reinscribing long running extractivist-colonial relationships.

The pieces in this issue emphasise that being in relation is not always a matter of choice, nor an easy situation to navigate. Relationality is how, who and what we are. The challenge is attuning to, intervening in, reshaping and acting-with those relational entanglements, despite our inability to control them, towards never-certain ethical aspirations. In times of multiple intersecting socio-ecological crises, this involves careful efforts to hold onto and/or let go of particular relationships or practices, as painful, unresolvable, and unsatisfactory as this might be.

In myriad ways, the pieces that are brought together in this special issue "break up with" (Tuck 2010) the Anthropocene, its structures of violence, its distances and intimacies in multiple and overlapping ways. As artists, academics, authors and activists working amidst a range of commitments, we/they are perhaps united by the following: We do not want to do *it* (solidarity, life, history, art, protest, future, agriculture, present moment, science, teaching, learning, making, anything!) under the sign of the Anthropocene. We want to do it differently, together. These collected works help us reimagine, restory, regenerate, detach, and reorient.

Notes

1. Contemporary artist Destiny Deacon, from the KuKu and Erub/Mer peoples of the Torres Strait Islands, coined the term 'blak' in 1994 to distinguish Australian First Nations struggles from those of African Americans (Munro, 2020). While sympathetic to Black Lives Matter, the Blak Lives Matter movement in Australia reminds settler Australians that since 1991 there have been more than 470 Aboriginal deaths in custody.

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank the following programs within the University of Melbourne for supporting the Hacking the Anthropocene IV: Do-It-Together project in 2019: The Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute (Seed Funding Scheme), the Center of Visual Arts (Small Grants Scheme), and the Faculty of Arts (MacGeorge Visiting Speaker Award). We are grateful to the presenters and participants at our Symposium, public lectures, and workshops for creating and sharing enabling environments for critical conversations (https://hackingtheanthropoceneiv.wordpress.com/program/). We acknowledge the work of our peer reviewers who brought so much creative-intellectual generosity to each of the contributions to this special issue.