

Uncomfortable Encounters

Cockroach Narratives, Selfhood, and Togetherness

NATHANIEL OTJEN

Why do we turn from insects in loathing? Our competitors are not only cold blooded, and green- and yellow-blooded, but are also cased in a clacking horn. They lack the grace to go about as we do, softside-out to the wind and thorns. They have rigid eyes and brains strung down their backs. But they make up the bulk of our comrades-at-life, so I look to them for a glimmer of companionship.

—Annie Dillard

Seeking a break from the bustle of conference activities, I set a few hours aside one rainy spring morning in 2016 to explore the Harvard Museum of Natural History. While wandering through the museum's arthropod exhibit, I came upon a minidisplay of Madagascar hissing cockroaches. Dozens of "hissers" crawled over and clung to the wood branches, stump, and detritus that constituted their aquarium habitat. Upon seeing these shiny, creeping arthropods, I stopped moving, my breathing grew shallow, and I experienced a series of chills course through my body. Overcome by an unsettling emotional and physiological response, I momentarily experienced feelings akin to vulnerability, disgust, and even fear. In a word, these beings made me feel *uncomfortable*. Luckily enough, I experienced a similar uncomfortable encounter with cockroaches just two months later while visiting the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. The same unsettling response came over me as I observed several Peruvian cockroaches sunning themselves under a heat lamp. Through these repeat encounters, I began to wonder what ecological

opportunities emerge from sustained encounters with beings that cause discomfort.

Because the cockroach simultaneously disturbs and fascinates many of us and because the roach has cooccupied our dwellings for millennia, this creature has long been a figure of literature and lore. As Marion Copeland notes, “Cockroaches have been part and parcel of human story since humans began telling stories.”¹ According to Copeland, an “ecocentric theme” characterized by “empathy and compassion” tends to run through the cockroach novel of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.² These accounts “show concern for the health of the biotic community . . . and for championing humans’ acceptance of their own membership in, and therefore their responsibility to, that community.”³ A similar “ecocentric” approach characterizes contemporary nonfiction accounts of cockroaches, which often feature narratives that describe uncomfortable encounters with these arthropods. During the last two decades, several uncomfortable-encounter narratives have developed as part of the larger literary subgenre I am calling the “multispecies memoir.” Multispecies memoirs describe how one’s sense of self emerges through relationships and encounters with other species. A subset of multispecies memoirs explores relations with beings that make people uncomfortable. With its status as the most disliked creature on the planet, it is no surprise that the cockroach has been a favorite critter of uncomfortable-encounter narratives.⁴

By examining the ways in which all beings, including human groups, mutually shape one another and get along together, multispecies studies provides a framework for interpreting personal narratives of cockroach encounters. Recognizing multiple worlds of species and material agents constantly creating themselves anew in acts of transformation, multispecies studies examines the moments, sites, and manifestations of cobecoming. As Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster explain, “A multispecies approach focuses on the multitudes of lively agents that bring one another into being through entangled relations that include, but always also exceed, dynamics of predator and prey, parasite and host, researcher and researched, symbiotic partner, or indifferent neighbor.”⁵ With a focus on the processes, relations, and transmutations that bring “multitudes of lively agents” into being, this orientation centers and celebrates modes of togetherness. What

are environmental humanities scholars to make, however, of beings, such as cockroaches, that complicate togetherness? Many people, after all, seek to disrupt or end any relations that brought themselves and cockroaches together in the first place. Is togetherness possible with cockroaches and other discomfiting species? If it is, how does it differ from accounts in multispecies studies, and how might it lead to a reconsideration of the concept altogether? Indeed, if scholars are to take seriously Donna Haraway's call of "staying with the trouble" and Anna Tsing's demand to cultivate "arts of inclusion" with other beings, then we must critically examine how "multispecies flourishing works when the creatures are awkward, when togetherness is difficult, when vulnerability is in the making."⁶

To better understand the uncomfortable encounter itself and the ecological opportunities that emerge through these strange interconnections, this article studies literary depictions of uncomfortable encounters with cockroaches in two contemporary multispecies memoirs: Hugh Raffles's *Insectopedia* (2010) and Richard Schweid's *The Cockroach Papers: A Compendium of History and Lore* (1999). I argue that the unsettling encounters storied in multispecies memoirs facilitate moments of unknowing as both species seek to understand the disturbing other, asking people to appreciate and reimagine the multispecies entanglements in which we all participate.⁷ Peter de Bolla, in *Art Matters*, argues that affective experiences (he uses the term *aesthetic*) "point toward the limit of my knowing *that*, make visible what is unknown or unknowable."⁸ Experiencing discomfort in the face of the insect other renders visible the limits of knowledge and hermeneutics. This understanding led Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to theorize the affective encounter as "a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons . . . endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation."⁹ Reading discomfort as an affective mode reveals the various ways cross-species alterity breaks down during encounters with other species, and it opens up space for interspecies flourishing. Discomfort accomplishes this work, I argue, by redrawing the boundaries of the self. Uncomfortable encounters open the self to the worlds and perspectives of other species, blurring the boundaries that separate self from other. Togetherness, therefore, is still possible with unloved species, but environmental humanists and multispecies scholars must rethink the concept in more productive ways. The follow-

ing critical reading of *Insectopedia* and *The Cockroach Papers* contends that togetherness must be seen as a set of affective feelings and practices that redraw the self. Affinity for others can, in fact, emerge through difficult and uncomfortable encounters with disliked species.

This article uses the cockroach as a point of departure for studying other uncomfortable, awkward, or vulnerable relations. While this analysis ultimately asks people to more readily participate in uncomfortable encounters with underappreciated species, it must be acknowledged that cockroaches—and other despised beings—make togetherness difficult in fundamentally challenging ways, especially for vulnerable communities. Roaches pose significant health risks, inducing asthma and allergies.¹⁰ In addition, their household presence creates a multitude of social consequences.¹¹ Associated with less-than-adequate living conditions, cockroaches disproportionately impact communities of color and impoverished communities, where the risks to asthma, allergies, and social punishment are greatest.¹² Therefore, with these very real ramifications in mind, I argue that *the structure* of the uncomfortable human-cockroach encounter itself must be studied and that the structure of this experience provides a way to think through the entangled relations that constitute this world. In short, cockroaches provide *a way to think about* the possibilities generated through these encounters. As such, this article makes two necessary contributions to multispecies studies and literary criticism. First, it offers an examination of human relationships with life overlooked, providing a model for future study of the uncomfortable beings that cohabit and cocreate this world. Second, it identifies and delineates the genre of multispecies memoir, propounding a way to read selfhood as emerging through interconnections with other species.

“An Understanding beyond Words”:
The “Water Bugs” of *Insectopedia*

Insectopedia explores the often-fraught relationships between people and insects from around the world, weaving personal anecdote, history, popular culture, and images into a multispecies narrative. While Raffles discusses a dizzying number of insects, he devotes an entire chapter to the cockroach. And while Raffles figures himself as a character throughout the book, his roach chapter is one of the few that solely

recounts autobiographical experiences. In the chapter “The Unseen,” Raffles explores his relationship with American cockroaches in his New York City home, ruminating on what it means for the cockroach to be unseen (by humans) and to still exist. “The Unseen” features two cockroach-encounter stories; both explore discomfort and the possibility of mutual togetherness.

In the first story, Raffles describes the feelings of guilt, frustration, and confusion that follow killing a cockroach in his upstairs study. He opens this particular narrative by figuring himself as a resident in a multispecies cityscape. “Cardinals, finches, blue jays, squeaky mourning doves, and raggedy pigeons” all perch on his railing. “Sparrows go crazy in the trees below.” Feral cats and raccoons roam the streets as Raffles watches other “urban wildlife forage garbage in the gloom of the streetlamps.”¹³ Squirrels play in the gutters, and mice inhabit the drywall in his home. They are accompanied by swarms of mosquitoes, bluebottles, crane flies, ladybugs, and winged ants.¹⁴ As Deborah Bird Rose explains, in the context of urban expansion, “an ever greater diversity of nonhuman animals are living in crowded cities. . . . Many of these animals are incorporating into their habitat repertoire areas that humans had thought of as strictly-for-humans.”¹⁵ Perhaps most revealing, these creatures who cohabit the urban landscape are all so-called “trash” species, or beings considered worthless by many people.¹⁶ Their participation in the world is often unseen, yet Raffles pays attention to their ways of doing and being.

The cockroaches, or “water bugs,” are, in many ways, no different from these other beings, except for the fact they are not allowed to reveal themselves in Raffles’s home. Sharon, his spouse, is phobic, which forces Raffles to kill sighted cockroaches—a task he is reluctant to perform. In addition, unlike these other urban dwellers, the American cockroaches cannot visibly be seen, but their presence can still be detected. As Raffles explains, “Sometimes in summer, when it’s hot and humid, the night is interrupted by rustling. . . . It’s the big water bugs, the American cockroaches, come to scratch along the walls, doing what they do.”¹⁷ The rustling sound figures these roaches as participants in the local multispecies cityscape. For Raffles, these noises stir up feelings of discomfort and dread; he knows that if he sees a cockroach, he must kill it. “When I hear the scratching,” Raffles explains, “I turn the lights down even further. My skin crawls in anticipation. If she [Sharon]

doesn't see it, if I don't see it, if it remains unseen . . . I don't want to know it's there."¹⁸ If the cockroaches remain unseen, they do not have to be killed. However, their scratching signals the possibility of being sighted. Indeed, in an earlier chapter titled "My Nightmares," Raffles catalogs a list of "nightmares" about insects, and the "nightmare of being seen in the dark" along with the "nightmare of . . . invisibility" top the list.¹⁹ Like many narratives of discomfort, this nightmare becomes realized when Raffles finally encounters a cockroach in his home.

One night, distracted and without thinking, I swiveled around. A healthy-looking water bug was sitting on a pile of books behind my shoulder. We locked eyes. . . . An understanding beyond words. But I must have moved too suddenly, and it took off and I took off after it, grabbing a broom—everything all of a sudden kinetic—trapping it in a cluttered corner, its legs a whirl of mad scrambling, and caught up in the moment, I beat it and beat it, until I realized I was trembling and disgusted and confused and it was just a smush of fat and chitin on the wooden floor.²⁰

Both species seek to evaluate and understand the other in this initial encounter. Their eyes momentarily lock as they recognize their shared presence and existence. Raffles, knowing that he must now kill this creature, experiences significant discomfort. The cockroach, unsure of the moment, must also be anxious. This encounter is one of unknowing—it becomes "a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility," or, as Raffles puts it, "an understanding beyond words." In *About Looking*, John Berger describes the indetermination that characterizes such an encounter: "The animal scrutinises him across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension. This is why the man can surprise the animal. Yet the animal . . . can also surprise the man. The man too is looking across a similar, but not identical, abyss of non-comprehension."²¹ The shared "understanding beyond words" appears to surprise them both. Raffles does not want to kill this innocent insect, remarking that "Kikuo Itaya, the twentieth-century Zen Buddhist short story writer, lived among cockroaches, refusing to harm them, allowing them to share his home. . . . I think of him when I kill them." After Raffles brutally kills the cockroach, he is left "trembling and disgusted and confused." The unconscious, reflexive act of killing the roach overwhelms Raffles with further discomfort, filling him with regret. By creating emotional

discomfort, this violent encounter paradoxically facilitates remorse and the appreciation of multispecies worlds. To avoid repeating this act of violence in the future, Raffles explains, “I keep the lights down low and the shadows deep. I know it’s there, but I can’t see it. If I don’t see it, we’re safe. The night protects us both.”²² Even though Raffles has a “nightmare of being seen in the dark,” the cockroaches are permitted to share his home as long as they remain unseen.

Not long after this initial incident, Raffles experiences a second uncomfortable encounter with a cockroach; this encounter, however, claims his home as a multispecies territory. As Raffles recalls, he was in the shower, “daydreaming as usual under the soothing warm water . . . when, out of nowhere, a three-inch water bug dropped from the bathroom ceiling and landed at my feet.” The roach’s sudden appearance shocks him.

I admit it: I screamed. Wouldn’t you? I shut off the water. It took a moment to get over the surprise. And then there we were, the water bug and I, trapped and defenseless and covered in soapsuds. And we both stayed very still until that very big little animal, a female animal, I noticed, climbed swiftly up onto the towel rack and stopped there at eye level a few inches away, her handsome and intelligent face cocked at a philosophical angle, giving me a funny, quizzical look up and down as if amused by this unexpected situation and intrigued to see what would happen next. One of us was very calm. One of us—it was the bathroom, after all—began carefully to groom her antennae. I won’t go into the details of what happened next.²³

Like the earlier incident, the cockroach acts appropriately, while Raffles does not. Raffles, after all, is the one who is naked, covered in soap and water, vulnerable, and exposed. He screams, freezes in place, panics, and eventually kills his bathtub companion. The cockroach, on the other hand, climbs up the towel rack to escape the soap and water, stares at Raffles “as if amused by this unexpected situation and intrigued to see what would happen next,” remains calm, and cleans herself. In this uncomfortable encounter, the expected relationship between the so-called rational, respectable human and the thoughtless, disturbing insect are reversed. Raffles becomes the other as the cockroach becomes the proper inhabitant of the bathroom. This role reversal raises the question,

Who, then, belongs in this space? The cockroach, typically an unwanted outsider, claims the bathroom in this moment. Raffles is rendered strange and foreign, ceasing to belong. The bathroom, to borrow Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert's terminology, becomes a "beastly place" where the cockroach transgresses human attempts at containment and creates a unique place reflective of its "own 'beastly' ways, ends, doings, joys and sufferings."²⁴ This ability to exist outside human control frustrates anthropocentric notions of domination and superiority, troubling easy distinctions between human and nonhuman places.

The uncomfortable bathroom encounter between Raffles and the cockroach recalls Jacques Derrida's experience with his cat. As his cat gazes upon his naked body in the bathroom, Derrida feels vulnerable and experiences a flattening of difference. Echoing Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida explains, "As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called 'animal' offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say, the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself."²⁵ These "moments of nakedness"—as Derrida puts it—mark the limit of "the human" and open up spaces for togetherness.²⁶ Most informative, however, the uncomfortable encounter becomes, for Derrida, a deconstructive approach. By signaling "the ends of man," the uncomfortable encounter deconstructs and reformulates the pervasive human-nonhuman and self-other dualisms. Furthermore, as Derrida realizes, if discomfort is deconstructive, then affect itself is a deconstructive mode. Therefore, the uncomfortable encounter, by reversing the roles of cockroach and human, teaches Raffles to value the cockroach. Despite his fear and discomfort in this "moment of nakedness," he is able to appreciate his bath fellow, noting "her handsome and intelligent face cocked at a philosophical angle," her curiosity, and even her beauty.

The Cockroach Papers: Togetherness and Mutual Cohabitation

Like *Insectopedia*, Schweid's *The Cockroach Papers* tells stories about learning to appreciate a creature that makes togetherness difficult. First published in 1999 and then republished in 2015, Schweid's multispecies memoir is a compendium of personal narrative, cockroach stories, im-

ages, offset block quotations, interviews, and scientific research. While the text features dozens of biographical passages, a single personal narrative runs through the entirety of the book: Schweid's evolving relationship with several Madagascar hissing cockroaches. This narrative, coupled with the interviews, scientific research, quotations, and images, chronicles the difficulties of becoming with a creature that causes discomfort.²⁷ Indeed, as Schweid points out, "The uneasy coexistence between humans and roaches, with its frequent skirmishes, continues unabated, as it has for millennia."²⁸ Exploring the discomfort that so often characterizes this multispecies entanglement, Schweid tells a story of awkward interrelatedness, coexistence, and cohabitation.

Schweid opens the narrative with a tragic—and disturbing—uncomfortable encounter, which facilitates the recognition of human-cockroach interconnectedness. In 1967 the twenty-one-year-old Schweid lived with several friends in New York City. He slept on the floor, and one July morning, after insect exterminators had fumigated the apartment, he awoke to "the lightest of ticklings" all over his body.²⁹

Lazily, I opened my eyes. . . . My supine body was a charnel house, a killing field of dead and dying roaches that had come out from behind the walls, from the dark spaces under the refrigerator and the stove, from all their sanctuaries. They were driven out in confusion as their poisoned bodies broke down, and their nervous systems went haywire. They died slowly, on their backs, legs kicking feebly into the air. The spasmodically jerking legs are what I had felt upon awakening. The roaches covered the floor, thousands of them, and they were dying all over me. I leapt up screaming, my shout open throated and horrified.³⁰

Schweid explains that while he cannot remember much from those formative years in New York City, the "one thing I remember as if it happened yesterday was how those roaches felt dying all over my body."³¹ The feeling of extreme discomfort, the affective encounter itself, remained in his memory, coloring his future relationships with cockroaches. Despite the unbearable discomfort, however, Schweid writes this incident as a contemporary environmental tragedy. The roaches are the innocent victims of chemical contaminants, dying painful, prolonged deaths. Indeed, as the chemicals "broke down" their bodies and made their nervous systems go "haywire," they were

“driven out in confusion” from their “sanctuaries” behind the walls, refrigerator, and stove. They died slowly with their “legs kicking feebly into the air.” This is a tragic account of their mass death, and it painfully implicates Schweid. His sleeping body functions as the stage on which the dance of death occurs. Schweid becomes an unwitting participant in this awkward multispecies web. In this instance, extreme discomfort facilitates empathy and even mourning.

Once he accepts the roach as a companion species, Schweid’s discomfort begins to fade. As the narrative progresses and the stories of cockroach encounters accumulate, Schweid acknowledges the cockroach’s persistent copresence in his own life story. The two biographies—Schweid’s personal narrative and the American cockroach’s life history—become inseparable. The roach is recognized as an enduring life fellow, and their interconnectedness culminates in “Co-existence,” the book’s final chapter. Schweid recounts living in a small, damp basement apartment in Nashville. Unable to survive in New York City, Schweid returned to Nashville in 1971. He was “discouraged and defeated by the larger world outside” and sought to cope with his depression alone in his new living quarters.³² Luckily for him, the apartment was “teeming” with cockroaches.³³ He recounts,

I was so unhappy that I could not bring myself to cause suffering in any other life, and I left the roaches to their frolicking. I spent many evenings watching their activity, particularly in the bathroom, where at night, even with all the light cast from a bare bulb, they ran across the walls and the sink. I noted the appearance of nymphs and watched them go through stages of growth, fancying that I recognized individuals night after night. I experimented with music, putting on such diverse sounds as John Coltrane, Bob Dylan, and Ludwig van Beethoven, watching for differences in the roaches’ behavior, unsure whether they were actually reacting to the music or whether I was imagining it. The bathroom became a sort of aquarium, and I watched the roaches, mesmerized.³⁴

Schweid’s bathroom becomes a space of multispecies flourishing. His depression displaces prior feelings of discomfort, introducing the possibility of cross-species togetherness. Unable and unwilling to inflict harm on these housemates, Schweid becomes “mesmerized” by their actions, behaviors, and communal worlds. Observing and engaging

with the “frolicking” cockroaches brings him great pleasure and cultivates empathy. Schweid becomes an attentive caretaker. He acts as a parental figure, watching the nymphs grow and develop. The music that used to make him sink “further and further into gloom” now brings him joy as he shares it with the cockroaches and studies their reactions to Coltrane, Dylan, and Beethoven.³⁵ The roaches, in an unexpected twist, nourish Schweid’s psychological well-being. They “mesmerize” him, perhaps momentarily alleviating his depression. Their joyful “frolicking” and constant growth bring happiness. The bathroom becomes a shared space, neither beastly nor human. Instead, it becomes a site of multispecies coexistence and codependence. Furthermore, by watching the cockroaches, Schweid practices the “art of noticing,” which leads him to formulate an “art of inclusion.”³⁶ As Schweid notes in the preface to the second edition of *The Cockroach Papers*, “We owe these constant companions a bit of our conscious attention, and close observation rewards us with an understanding of a fascinating reality, so close to, and yet so far from, our own.”³⁷ This model of togetherness and mutual cohabitation requires “learning to be truly present . . . as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.”³⁸ As Tsing argues, learning to love other creatures cultivates “publicly inclusive well-being.”³⁹ Together in the basement bathroom, Schweid and the cockroaches practice multispecies flourishing.

Conclusion

Uncomfortable-encounter narratives provide a way to think through messy and fraught relationships with beings that complicate togetherness. Multispecies memoirists have been interested in exploring entanglements with life overlooked, finding ways to articulate the possibilities of togetherness that these encounters generate. Overlooking these beings, and the negative psychological and somatic responses known as discomfort that they tend to elicit, only serves to reinforce the detrimental distinction that separates people from other species. In an attempt to reevaluate these despised creatures and the discomfort they evoke, this essay examines literary depictions of uncomfortable encounters with the American cockroach. It demonstrates that encounters with creatures that make us uncomfortable actually

open up ecological opportunities for togetherness. Understanding togetherness, in other words, requires taking a careful look at the ways affect structures multispecies relations. Encounters with the displeasing other confuse the boundaries that separate people from other species, encouraging many of us to recognize a world more than ourselves and to think relationally about the multispecies imbrications we are always coconstructing. Moreover, these “moments of nakedness” weaken self boundaries. As Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon note regarding the psychosomatic response of disgust, “intimate relations” with the revolting other “may weaken disgust [itself] by blurring the self-other distinction.”⁴⁰ The deconstruction of the self triggered by the uncomfortable encounter operates in the same fashion.

If people were to recognize shared interconnections, instead of trivializing or ignoring them, many of us might find room for multispecies togetherness. Indeed, as Schweid comes to realize, “The cockroach lives in our dark spaces, it constantly reminds us that other worlds exist at the margins of our lives, worlds that obey drastically different orders from the one we know. Roaches construct a whole other reality, which they weave into our own. It is there under the sink, behind the refrigerator, inside the pipes, or just on the other side of the baseboards.”⁴¹ These interwoven worlds cannot be separated. Stacy Alaimo, while writing about the porosity of the home, notes, “Domestic territories are designed to keep wild creatures at bay, to ensure the domain of the human.”⁴² However, “it is possible,” Alaimo argues, “to imagine human habitation as living with, rather than walling out, other creatures.”⁴³ The uncomfortable encounter promotes this kind of imagining. We just need to pay attention.

Nathaniel Otjen is a PhD candidate in environmental sciences, studies, and policy at the University of Oregon. His dissertation, “Multispecies Memoir: Self, Genre, and Species Justice in Contemporary Culture,” examines how memoirists from diverse social categories craft alternate selves by considering their entanglements with other species. In articulating one’s self as a multispecies endeavor, the authors under consideration pursue a form of multispecies justice that reaches across human and species groups. His forthcoming and published scholarship can be read in *ISLE*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, and *Humanimalia*, among other journals.

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NOTES

1. Marion W. Copeland, "Voices of the Least Loved: The Cockroach in the Contemporary American Novel," in *Insect Poetics*, ed. Eric C. Brown (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 155.

2. Copeland, "Voices of the Least Loved," 157–58.

3. Copeland, "Voices of the Least Loved," 172.

4. Stephen R. Kellert, "Human-Animal Interactions: A Review of American Attitudes to Wild and Domestic Animals in the Twentieth Century," in *Animals and People Sharing the World*, ed. Andrew N. Rowan (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1988), 157–58. Contemporary authors have described uncomfortable encounters in nonfiction, fiction, and poetry, among other forms. For a fictional account of human-cockroach entanglement, see Donald Harington, *The Cockroaches of Stay More* (New York: Toby Press, 2004). For nonfiction accounts, see Bob Arnebeck, "Monthly Discussion Topics—Cockroaches," *H-Net Discussion Networks*, June 27, 2001; Gale Cooper, "Who Could Love a Cockroach?," in *Animal People* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 169–76; Rachel Nuwer, "Cockroaches: The Insect We're Programmed to Fear," *BBC*, last modified September 18, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140918-the-reality-about-roaches>; Carolyn Kraus, "Metamorphosis in Detroit," in *Trash Animals: How We Live with Nature's Filthy, Feral, Invasive, and Unwanted Species*, ed. Kelsi Nagy and Phillip David Johnson II (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 201–13. Finally, for poetic considerations, see Martín Espada, "My Cockroach Lover," in *Urban Nature: Poems about Wildlife*, ed. Laure-Anne Bosselear and Emily Hiestand (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2000), 180; Phillip Miller, "American Cockroach," in *Blessed 'Pests' of the Beloved West: An Affectionate Collection on Insects and Their Kin*, ed. Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb and Terril L. Shorb (Prescott, AZ: Native West Press, 2003), 95.

5. Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster, "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness," *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2016): 3.

6. Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Anna Tsing, "Arts of Inclusion, or How to Love a Mushroom," *Manoa* 22, no. 2 (2010): 191–203; Franklin Ginn, Uli Beisel, and Maan Barua, "Flourishing with Awkward Creatures: Togetherness, Vulnerability, Killing," *Environmental Humanities* 4 (2014): 114. In the aforementioned article by Ginn, Beisel, and Barua, the authors argue that the environmental humanities must "build an empirical repertoire and conceptual language that accounts for the vulnerable, absent, the unloved, and the (soon to be) disappeared." Ginn, Beisel, and Barua, "Flourishing with Awkward Creatures," 117–18. While this publication opened up a series of much-needed questions about despised

creatures and formulated several points of departure for future scholarship, the conversation about the unloved has remained marginal in multispecies research.

7. I use the terms *entanglement* and *entangled* to describe not only how all beings are connected with one another but also how all beings are constantly creating one another through relations and encounters. While multispecies studies frequently uses the term, its current articulation must be credited to the feminist theorist Karen Barad. See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

8. Peter de Bolla, *Art Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12, emphasis in original.

9. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 173. My use of Deleuze and Guattari, along with Jacques Derrida, is selective. As the feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway argues about these men, they have “scorn for all that is mundane and ordinary,” which has led to the “profound absence of curiosity about or respect for and with actual animals.” Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 27. Haraway has played an instrumental role in establishing multispecies studies, and her critique of these late twentieth-century theorists has positioned their work outside the field’s central debates.

10. Richard Schweid, *The Cockroach Papers: A Compendium of History and Lore*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 111, 133; Dawn Day Biehler, *Pests in the City: Flies, Bedbugs, Cockroaches, and Rats* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 184; David George Gordon, *The Compleat Cockroach: A Comprehensive Guide to the Most Despised (and Least Understood) Creature on Earth* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 1996), 53–55.

11. Biehler, *Pests in the City*, 84; Joanne Elizabeth Lauck, *The Voice of the Infinite in the Small: Re-Visioning the Insect-Human Connection* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2002), 73.

12. Biehler, *Pests in the City*; Jay Mechling, “From archy to Archy: Why Cockroaches Are Good to Think,” *Southern Folklore* 48, no. 2 (1991): 124.

13. Hugh Raffles, *Insectopedia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 298.

14. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 299.

15. Deborah Bird Rose, “Monk Seals at the Edge: Blessings in a Time of Peril,” in *Extinction Studies, Stories of Time, Death, and Generations*, ed. Deborah Bird Rose, Thom van Dooren, and Matthew Chrulew (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 118–19.

16. Kelsi Nagy and Phillip David Johnson II, eds., *Trash Animals: How We Live with Nature’s Filthy, Feral, Invasive, and Unwanted Species* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 4.

17. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 299.

18. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 299, ellipsis in original.

19. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 202.

20. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 299.

21. John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Vintage International, 1991), 5.

22. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 299.

23. Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 300.
24. Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, eds., *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations* (London: Routledge, 2005), 13.
25. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 12.
26. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore I Am*, 12.
27. Haraway coined the term “becoming with.” See Donna Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness,” in *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 91–198; Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4.
28. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, xi.
29. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 2.
30. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 2–3.
31. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 3.
32. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 155.
33. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 155.
34. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 155–56.
35. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, 155.
36. Tsing, “Arts of Inclusion.”
37. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, xiv.
38. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.
39. Tsing, “Arts of Inclusion,” 201.
40. Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon, “A Perspective on Disgust,” *Psychological Review* 94, no. 1 (1987): 38.
41. Schweid, *Cockroach Papers*, xiv.
42. Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 19.
43. Alaimo, *Exposed*, 19. For more on species disrupting the boundaries of the home, see Nathaniel Otjen, “Indigenous Radical Resurgence and Multispecies Landscapes: Leslie Marmon Silko’s *The Turquoise Ledge*,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 31, nos. 3–4 (2019): 135–57.