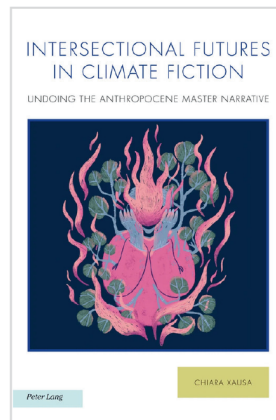


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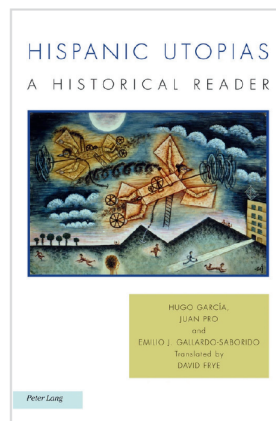
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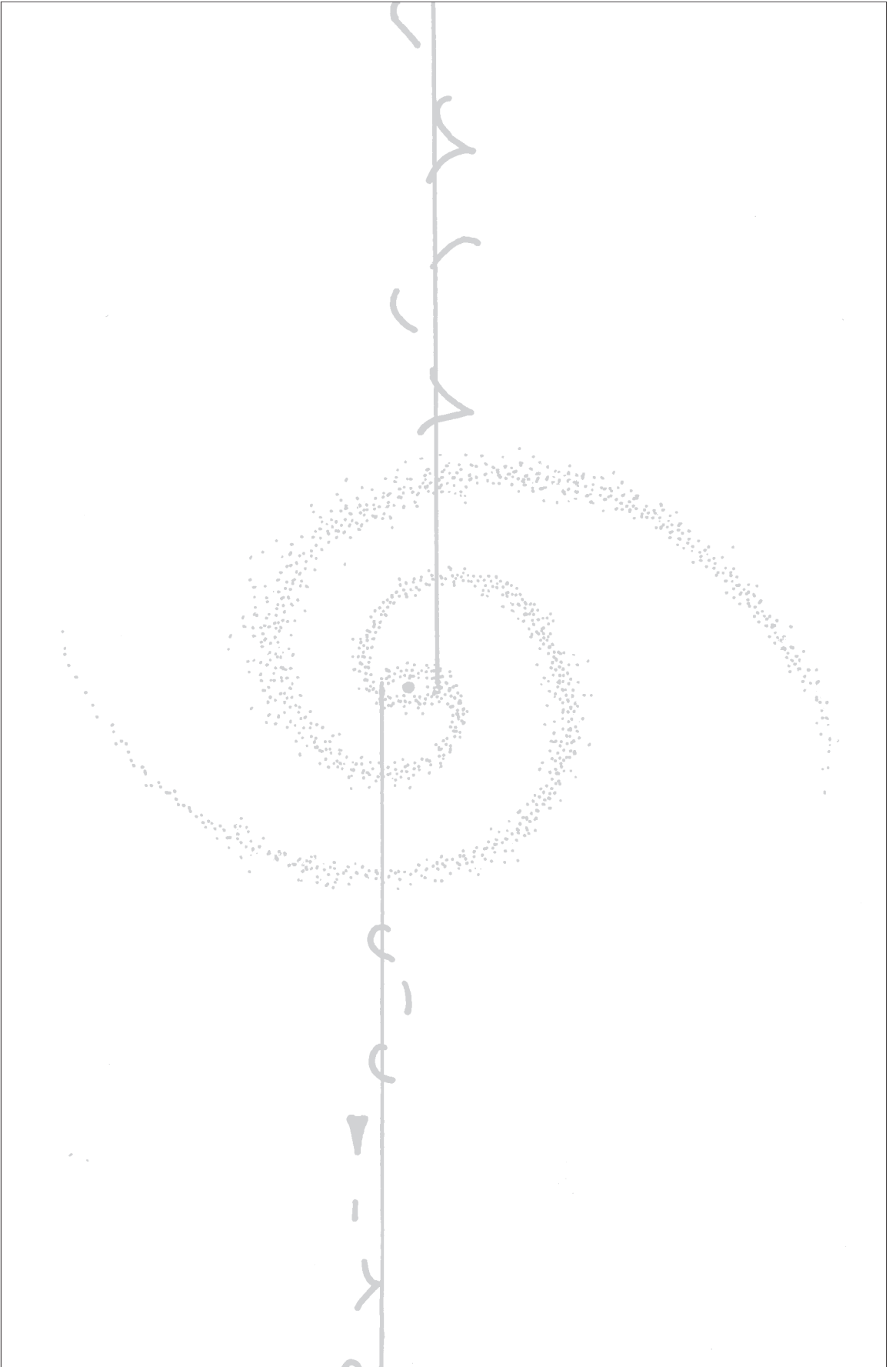
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Thinking-with Muñoz: A Posthuman Queer Ecological Cruise

Başak Ağın

TED University

Güvenç Arman Ari

TED University

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to reexplore José Esteban Muñoz in a posthumanist light. Deriving energy from eco-art and street art, it establishes a route from queer time to posthuman temporality and materiality, taking Karen Barad's diffractive methodology as its model. Following a posthuman narrative framework, supported by theoretical developments in new materialisms and various art forms combining human and nonhuman actors, the article discusses how reading Muñoz and Barad through one another can contribute to queer utopianism when aligned with a posthumanist mode. The examples of artistic practices referred to while navigating the fluid terrains of nonlinear temporality and the posthuman queer materiality include eco-artistic endeavors that employ time and earthly bodies as their theme, the gutter art of Stephen Varble, and sticker art as performance, which solicits responses from spectators in Muñoz's view. The article is thus a lively engagement between Muñoz, Barad, several artists, and the researchers themselves.

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KEYWORDS: *posthuman temporality, materiality, queer, eco-art, performance and performativity*

Imagining queer utopia not as *here-and-now* but with an anticipative destination of *there-and-then* and *not-yet-here*, José Esteban Muñoz's 2009 *Cruising Utopia* did not follow a "straight" path, but steered along the wavy coasts of aesthetics, pleasure, and joy in his journey to futurity toward "queering" queer studies further. In her 2011 review of the book Sara Warner revisited this act of further "queering" queer studies by referring to the author's style as "cruising," alluding to the work's title: Muñoz, she writes, "cruise[d] art objects . . . with the same urgency and rapacious appetite as he cruise[d] theory, lingering for no more than a moment on any one person, place, or thing."¹ With his argument that "queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world,"² Muñoz indeed established a meandering route through theory, art, poetry, and performance to locate queer as a utopian mode. Inspired by this mode, we seek in this paper to re-explore Muñoz's queer utopianism as a posthuman enactment of queer temporality and materiality, by building analogies between his queer utopia and the concept of the posthuman in the new materialist sense, where the researcher's embeddedness in the research material is a crucial aspect.

The link between the posthuman and queer is not new, as several scholars contend that these concepts "align on several fronts," and "share a drive to dissolve normative boundaries and forge radical connections."³ Patricia MacCormack, for instance, maintains that "the creations of connections—life as relation not dividuation—is posthuman living." "Desire is," she writes, "the need to create connections with other things, not to have or know but collapse the self with other(s). In this sense posthumanism is a form of queer desire, or queer 'life.'"⁴ Likewise, Claire Henry acknowledges the ways in which posthumanism and queer theory "bolster each other's critical aims" and states that Muñoz's queer utopia "present[s] a model of queer posthuman relationality."⁵ Karen Barad's diffractive methodology reevaluates Judith Butler's concept of performativity and offers both a queering of the posthuman and a posthumanizing of the queer.⁶ Despite all these potential alliances between the posthuman and queer, Muñoz's queer utopianism has not been a part of the posthumanist discussions, at least not directly; except in a few new materialist encounters between eco-art and queer ecology. In describing

several instances in this essay, we find that Muñoz has never been (re)read in a posthumanist light.

In what follows, therefore, we offer a means of thinking-with Muñoz through a posthuman narrative framework, embracing Barad's diffractive methodology as our model and basing our arguments on premises grounded in eco-art, performance art, and queer ecology, or what we call "posthuman queer ecologies." As scholars with backgrounds in literature, we believe in the power of narratives. Advancing Donna Haraway's idea that "some of the best thinking is done as storytelling,"⁷ we present our argument as three "cases," each of which flows into and *as* a story in which we ourselves are also embedded. Reading our own experiences diffractively then stages a further diffractive dialogue—in this very essay—between Muñoz and posthumanist ideas exploring queer (multi)temporalities, queer utopian materiality, and a queer sense of thinking- and becoming-with.

But, then again, what does it mean to *think-with* Muñoz?

Thinking-with, Thinking Diffractively: Haraway, Barad, and Muñoz

Thinking-with is a posthumanist term brought to life by the post-qualitative turn that has dominated the new materialist educational arena, particularly since the 2010s. Following the key Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of "becoming"—and its new materialist derivative "becoming-with,"—thinking-with is a course of thought, action, and existence in which the posthuman is understood as the cumulative agencies or the generative assemblages of the more-than-human forces that what we think of as "human" comprises. The individual human body is no longer understood as a self-contained entity, but as a leaking body with countless intra-actions occurring in (and as) its becoming.⁸ The body is always already a hybrid form, according to this queer understanding of life, as MacCormack also outlines. Thinking-with, therefore, is a nonlinear process that "challenges the imperative to consider context as a stable, referential and foundational site of meaning-making," which inevitably requires a shift in analysis "*from a human (i.e., contextual) experience of objects to the vibrant matter animating an agential assemblage.*"⁹ The question is, then, how we can reposition Muñoz's queer utopianism and navigate it toward a more-than-human landscape. To answer this question, we need to think diffractively.

Based on a Harawayan metaphor,¹⁰ a diffractive method means "reading insights through one another in attending to and responding to the details and

specificities of relations of difference and how they matter.”¹¹ Exemplifying such an attentiveness and responsiveness to details, Muñoz’s approach to relationality strikes us as very close to Barad’s explanation of “the indeterminate nature of existence,” wavering “on the cusp of stability and instability, of possibility and impossibility.” Barad sees “the dynamic relationality between continuity and discontinuity” as “crucial to the open-ended becoming of the world.”¹² And for Muñoz, such becoming is what he calls a “*doing in futurity*,” typically involving performance and performativity. Diffracting Muñoz, then, requires reading Barad and Muñoz through one another, while “stretching, kneading and dissolving the boundaries that make up the terrain”—a practice that is “inspired by the ontologies of difference and relationality and a methodological thinking that appears fluid, unstable and with uncertain and indeterminate dimensions.”¹³ Viewed in this light, thinking-with Muñoz entails cruising such terrains of fluidity, instability, uncertainty, and indeterminacy; cruising, we contend, connects the posthuman and queer.

These terrains, we argue, also highlight Muñoz’s concept of queer time, which is driven by the instrumental *not-quite-conscious*, as a type of apparatus that is also an active participant in queerness’s becoming. Muñoz defines queer time as “the ecstatic unity of temporality—Past, Present and Future,” a notion which he draws from a supposed alignment with Martin Heidegger’s account of “the activity of timeliness and its relation to *ekstatisch* (ecstasy).” Muñoz adds, further expressing that

straight time is a self-naturalizing temporality. Straight time’s “presentness” needs to be phenomenologically questioned, and this is the fundamental value of a queer utopian hermeneutics. Queerness’s ecstatic and horizontal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world.¹⁴

Questioning the “presentness” of straight time, then, requires the queering of “the human” as a “pure” category. If queer is one of those Others that “humanist modernity had to expel” to be able to “keep the human ‘proper,’”¹⁵ then it is only to be expected, as MacCormack argues, that “the posthuman, like the queer, is the materially incarnated agency emergent from an alteration of paradigms of humanism.”¹⁶ Such a material incarnation of (other-than-human) agency, which casts out the constructed identity of the heteronormative Man, inserts more-than-human materiality into the heart of the queer conceptualization. Conceived this way, queer time is a posthuman

phenomenon, and Muñoz's insistence on stepping out of straight time by "ask[ing] for, desir[ing], and imagin[ing] another time and place"¹⁷ is a post-human enactment that vibrates alongside Barad's exploration of matter as something that "feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"¹⁸ and materiality as a dynamic flow of desiring.

This reconfiguration of materiality with seemingly anthropomorphized qualities has important implications for our thinking-with Muñoz. Barad states that "Eros, desire, life forces run through everything, not only specific body parts or specific kind of engagements among body parts,"¹⁹ which is a theorization similar to Jane Bennett's "thing-power,"²⁰ innate to matter as a form of "desire" to imagine things and phenomena that are *not-there-yet*. This is the kind of Spinozist force that derives its power from *conatus*, which, we argue, resembles Muñoz's queer desire, *the not-quite-conscious*. Muñoz's utopia is a futurity, an ontological possibility that is always becoming precisely because it is always in a state of flux.

The similarity between Muñoz's queer utopia and the new materialist positioning of matter as something with inherent desire becomes even clearer when we read the following lines from Barad, explicating the nature of double-slit experiment: "When the atom gets energy, the electron that is in the inner orbital of rubidium gets kicked up to a high energy level from the energy it got from the laser beam."²¹ Explaining that this is the "excited state" of the atom, Barad draws a parallel between this "excitement" and "desire," implying a readiness to act, to induce effect, or to imagine a possibility, as in the case of Muñoz's "cruising utopia." But just as with the thought experiments of Bohr and Heisenberg, which "were meant to be experiments to *think with*, just tools to think with"²² but that can now be performed in an actual laboratory, we believe Muñoz's queer utopia now holds the potential *to be actualized within its becoming*. There would be no longer a disjunct between queer utopia's material and ideal formulations in its performative enactment through eco-art, queer performances, and other possible mediums of posthuman tools of thinking-with.

Echoing Muñoz, therefore, we take futurity as a *doing*; but rather than conceive of this "doing" as an *either/or* state, as if there were a delay in the transition from the here-and-now to the there-and-then, we call for a *both/and* case, parallel to the intra-action of all matter, acting as both particles and waves: the here-and-now as well as there-and-then. This, we believe, is already inherent to Muñoz's concept of futurity. By putting Barad and Muñoz into conversation, we take the diffractive path, which we believe is characteristically

a queer matter(ing). “Diffractively reading” queer utopia and the posthuman “entails thinking” together “what often appears as separate entities,” as Barad would confirm. This is “not a static relationality” but a relation of “exteriority within,” where “the enactment of boundaries” involves “constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability.”²³ In Muñoz’s case, this means the accountability for and to the future generations of queer that are not there *yet*, which resonates with the posthumanist concept of response-ability in its link to temporality.²⁴

Because Muñoz was leaving anti-relational terrains for a more relational approach, Barad’s notion of diffraction illuminates the route along which Muñoz was cruising. Furthermore, we would emphasize that posthuman temporality does not designate a separation between the knower and the known, between subject and object (hence the embeddedness of the researcher within their own research), or between the past and the present—nor does such a nonlinear temporality postpone “the future.” Posthuman time is always an ongoing, dynamic flow and flux of desire. Human and non-human timescales enmesh in one another in a state of being-in-flux, where “matter itself,” as Barad states, “is not a substrate or a medium for the flow of desire. Materiality itself is always already a desiring dynamism, a reiterative reconfiguring, energized and energizing, enlivened and enlivening.”²⁵

Along similar lines, Muñoz regards the reiterative energizing of asking, wishing, and desiring as being enacted “to perform a desire that is both utopian and queer.”²⁶ His queer utopia entangles the past, the present, and the future, and thus re-presents futurity as a self-determined and self-sufficient entity that supersedes the present in time and space. It looks back at the past and draws ideas from it, does exist in the present, and predicts the future, but *does futurity* in a performative way in which it formulates a queer worlding. This, we argue, is posthuman performativity in itself. *Queer utopia, therefore, is always already a posthumanist imagining.* In other words, what Muñoz refers to as futurity implies a posthuman temporality whereby the past, the present, and the future are built upon one another as intra-active multitemporalities, as opposed to a heteronormative linearity.

These multitemporalities emerge and merge in our own act of thinking-with Muñoz, as exemplified by these very lines that you the reader is engaged with, which takes us back to our main “embedded” case, to the human-time marker, December 19, 2023, when we are immersed deeply in the world of the posthuman through our “Contemporary Ecocriticisms” course at the graduate level, which Başak teaches and Arman takes. During

a student-led seminar delivered by Arman, we discuss queer ecology, which offers “a new practice of ecological knowledges, spaces, and politics that places central attention on challenging hetero-ecologies from the perspective of non-normative sexual and gender positions.”²⁷ The discussion then evolves toward the parallelisms between queer and the posthuman. Such parallelisms, we observe, reiterate a posthumanist undertaking of de-normativizing the socially constructed nature of truth, reminding us of MacCormack’s remarks:

Like queer, the posthuman does not seek to exchange or go beyond toward a set goal. Both interrogate the arbitrary nature of systems of power masquerading as truth. Through a negotiation of alterity within self and an address to oppressed entities, queer theory and the posthuman mobilise and radicalise the here and now through desire, pleasure and pure potentiality.²⁸

These lines reverberate not only in Muñoz’s cruising, which sets out to “decipher the networks of commonality and the structures of feeling that link queers across different identity markers,”²⁹ but also Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands’s comment that connects “queering” with confronting power dynamics: “the ways in which natural and ecological relations have been read and organized to normalize and naturalize power, and likewise the ways in which cultural relations have incorporated and shaped other-than-human actors and processes in the unfolding and re/production of power.”³⁰

Aesthetic Responses to Utopian Cruising

Considering that Muñoz’s attentiveness and responsiveness to details were mostly built on queer *temporality*, we offer here several “embedded” cases of “utopian cruising,” which flow from our main case above. The first of these embedded cases involves two stories that reconfigure time through eco-art. In the human-centered linear timescale, the first story of this case started on September 14, 2023, when TED University in Ankara, Türkiye, hosted a conference on theater, drama, and performance. One of the performance-based talks was given by Ozan Atalan, a transmedia artist and scholar whose work is strongly inspired by the new materialist-posthumanist theories and sometimes falls into the scope of eco-art. A few months prior, before meeting him

in person for the conference, we got to know him online, as he initiated a lively conversation over email to collaborate with us in producing content for *PENTACLE*, a website for a Turkish posthuman network that Başak founded, and to which Arman contributes creative content.³¹

On his visit to Ankara, where we are based, Ozan brought along his own “invention,” which he calls “Branches in Motion,” as a gift to each one of us. Originally a part of a work entitled *2’48” or Some Number of Waves*, “Branches in Motion,” comprises a series of videos shot between 2013 and 2017 in Syracuse, New York, and Istanbul respectively (scan QR codes in figures 1 and 2), visualizes a model for Haraway’s concept of naturecultures. According to Ozan, “the work resists the constructed duality of culture-nature and an anthropocentric worldview”³²; and for us, beyond the nature-culture continuum, the moving branches exert an agentic capacity of narration, through which they tell several layered stories. With the mini-clock temporal structure of the work running on battery, the work encompasses both motion and stillness (when the battery runs out, for instance, or when the video is paused), thereby demonstrating a concept of time as both fluid and stable.

This artwork’s conceptualization of time then flows into a second story: one of us visits Mersin, a city on Türkiye’s Mediterranean coast, to deliver an invited speech, on June 8, 2024, in the *Fifth Circular Environment and Art Event Series*, which focused that year on *Toprak* (soil, earth, terra in Turkish). One artist also joining the event is Oya Şener, whose work *Zaman* (Time) stages a dinner table for four, where each plate is filled with soil (along with its inhabitants like mini rocks and worms). This work too hosts a clock mechanism,



Figure 1. Ozan Atalan’s “Branches in Motion.” Scan QR code.

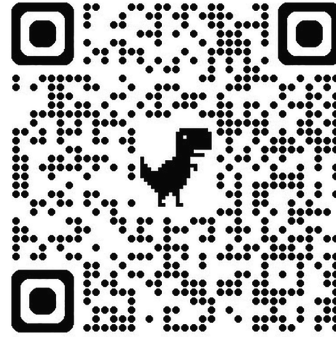


Figure 2. Ozan Atalan’s *2’48” or Some Number of Waves*. Scan QR code.

almost insisting that the visitors of the art exhibit should question the coterminous existence of humans and nonhumans (see figures 3 and 4).³³ We must note here that, despite their similar backgrounds, the two artists Ozan and Oya do not know one another, but they have both produced artworks that similarly engaged with overlapping concepts of time, with one artist (Ozan) working with water, and the other (Oya) with soil. We bring them together here, on *our* timescale, in this very article on queer, posthuman, and nonlinear temporality.

The sense of discrepancy between human and nonhuman timescales evoked by Oya's work builds a meaningful conversation with a John Fiske quotation that Ozan summons as an epigraph to his own work: "Putting sixty marks around the perimeter of a clockface is a metaphor of how we impose meaning



Figure 3. Oya Şener's *Zaman* (installation).



Figure 4. Oya Şener's *Zaman* (close-up).

upon reality.”³⁴ Ozan’s invocation of Fiske announces his work’s critique of the social construction of linear, calculable time, while Oya’s work, which incorporates food imagery into the timescale of nonhuman (often nonfood) beings and objects, also deconstructs human time. This deconstruction of temporality is echoed in other scholarly contexts. Black and African Studies, for example, challenge the taken-for-granted relationship between time and human-based meaning-making, as in Julius B. Fleming’s reference to time as “a discursive construct through which knowledge, power, and experience are produced and policed.”³⁵ Similarly, Michael Hanchard’s critique on “the inequalities of temporality that result from power relations”³⁶ recalls Homi Bhabha’s reference to the “unifying and totalizing myths”³⁷ on white time and its epistemologies.

But as Ozan’s and Oya’s works also highlight, beyond such postcolonial attempts we must emphasize that time and temporality are also essential to “mattering,” as temporality involves more than human-inflicted meanings attributed to an already existing natural phenomenon. In its nonlinear formulation, time is relational and a part of mattering, superseding social constructs of meaning and human-centered power relations; mattering is thus “simultaneously.” If as Barad notes here, matter and meaning are “inextricably fused

together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder,”³⁸ then how can we further deconstruct and rethink time beyond its white, (hetero-)normative, linear, anthropocentric construction?

New materialist scholars have attempted recently to answer similar questions by raising contemporary environmental concerns such as pandemics and the climate crisis, integrating nonhuman actors into their accounts, indicating that the geological time is very different from anthropocentric time. While Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu “reconfigure[s] time as a posthuman point of contact between clock time, viral time, and [Henri Bergson’s concept of] ‘duration,’”³⁹ Z. Gizem Yilmaz calls for a rethinking of time in the Anthropocene, when human-induced climate change has surpassed the tolerance limit of the planet’s ecosystem, stating that “Anthropocene time challenges clock time with its non-reductive and non-linear temporality.”⁴⁰ Yilmaz further notes, quoting from Michel Serres, that time “percolates,” i.e., “it passes and doesn’t pass,”⁴¹ meaning that time passes differently for different beings (and things) in different contexts. This understanding of time as a relational, layered, multidimensional concept, we argue, is essential both to Muñoz’s queer utopianism, which relies heavily on queer time, and to posthuman temporality, in which the past, the present, and the future coexist as a potentiality for thinking, being, and doing. Such reconfigurations of Baradian “ethico-onto-epistemology”⁴² function in tune with Muñoz’s queer utopianism as they lend themselves to questioning “what is epistemologically there” while they congregate in “a highly ephemeral ontological field that can be characterized as a *doing in futurity*.”⁴³

Here we can play around the Spinozist conceptualizations of new and vital materialisms, while deriving our core thinking material from posthumanist performativity. Queer time’s intra-active becoming extends to and affects the ontological realm, thereby designating queer utopia its materiality. Muñoz’s queer time constitutes the essence for queerness’s becoming, while the *not-quite-conscious* acts as its impulse. Temporality, therefore, is efficiently the cause for queer utopia’s becoming in its ontological aspects, rising out of the intra-active enactment of relationality. The way Muñoz tackles futurity as “not-yet-here,” with supporting ideas borrowed from Agamben and Badiou—namely “potentiality” and “thing-that-is-not-yet-imagined”⁴⁴—paints a queer picture of an entangled, posthuman temporality. Diffracting Muñoz’s queer utopianism with Barad’s posthumanist performativity through Ozan Atalan’s and Oya Şener’s eco-artistic practices thus reveals a nonlinear timescale that challenges white anthropo-hetero-chrono-normativity. In this queer picture,

Muñoz's queer time and Barad's posthumanist performativity constitute different shades of the painting's color spectrum. But how?

Despite its anthropo-normative appearance, Oya's dinner table serves food (soil and its bacteria and minerals) for worms, who are interestingly a part of the plate/food they eat. This constitutes a nonlinear, "circular" way of be(com)ing and of understanding of time. Alluding to both posthumanism and to the title of the Mersin event (*Circular*), the installation indicates the differences between the human time, the stone time, the worm time, and the soil time, as the sound of a ticking clock vibrates from the loudspeaker in the installation area, reminding us of the social construction of calculable time in human temporal scales. Likewise, Ozan's branches in motion do not move concurrently but follow one another in different timescales and turn toward different directions. His 2'48" or *Some Number of Waves* metaphorically explicates, we argue, Muñoz's queer utopia as a posthuman embodiment that defies the heteronormative, standardized, linear understanding of temporality. The title's opening time stamp (2'48") marks the duration of the video, while also mocking the so-called calculability of time. The second part of the title—or *Some Number of Waves*—hints at the discrepancy between a normative human timescale and the geological time of the planet. The quantifier "some number of" insinuates that a human standardization of time is meaningless to other-than-human bodies and environments. What then about the time of those more-than-human bodies, ranging from carbon- and silicon-based bodies—animals, plants, minerals, bacteria, robots, chemicals—and impersonal agents such as rocks, electricity, and rivers? What about the timescale of the wavy coasts that Muñoz was steering along, and those along which Ozan shot his video, for example? Is there a linear and calculable time for them, too? What about the soil, rocks, and perhaps the mountains, as Aldo Leopold would put it?⁴⁵ What time is it, say, for the countless microorganisms in our guts, or for Oya's worms, when it is lunch or dinner time for us?

We can count the ticking of the clock, but can we tally the waves, which are in a habit of endlessly moving forward and backward, creating a palimpsest every time they hit the coast? Do they not rewrite here-and-now and there-and-then over and over again? Such endlessness that goes back and forth between motion and stability—is this not a challenge to "the linearity of straight time" in an endeavor to *do* futurity, as Muñoz would propose?⁴⁶ This title's linking of culture and nature, in short, indicates the inseparability of queer ecological thought from posthumanist endeavors, and leads us to deduce that both the posthuman and the queer are matters of transformation,

fluidity, symbiosis, and relationality: both are terrains of learning and unlearning, doing and undoing, thereby, to quote Barad, “reiteratively materializing”⁴⁷ the cumulative effects of human and nonhuman performances.

Later, we discover that what we have deduced was also demonstrated by the 2022 series of seminars co-held by Institute for Postnatural Studies and the Institute of Queer Ecology.⁴⁸ The events that feature various artists, dancers, scientists, and scholars including Lee Pivnik, Nicolas Baird, Hayden Dunham, Sixto-Juan Zavala, Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle, Fereshteh Toosi, Jack Halberstam, and Christy Gast involve a variety of topics, ranging from visual art, evolutionary biology, biodiversity, environmental activism, synthetic biology, ecology, and queer theory. The announcement of one of the events, broadly titled as “Mutability and Mutualism II,” opens with the following statement: “Queerness and ecology together make visible the interconnected, entangled conditions of life on earth and honor the strange, multispecies amalgamation we live in community with.”⁴⁹ Although we do not directly find traces of such multispecies worlding in Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia*, his insistence on the minoritarian performance and minoritarian lifeworlds stands similar to the posthumanist reminder of the more-than-human entanglements:

Minoritarian performance—performances both theatrical and quotidian—transports us across symbolic space, inserting us in a coterminous time when we witness new formations within the present and the future. The coterminous temporality of such performance exists within the future and the present, surpassing relegation to one temporality (the present) and insisting on the minoritarian subject’s status as world-historical entity. The stage and the street, like the shop floor, are venues for performances that allow the spectator access to minoritarian lifeworlds that exist, importantly and dialectically, within the future and the present.⁵⁰

The idea of minoritarian lifeworlds initiates our time travel to our next “embedded” case, located on the human timescale of December 11, 2023, where Arman needs to submit his abstract for a term paper required for a “Research Methods” course, taught by Başak. Arman’s paper discusses Stephen Varble’s queer “gutter art” as a proposed model for queer eco-art,⁵¹ building links between Varble’s identity as a minoritarian subject and his activism-based performances in New York. These performances, enacted in public spaces such as in the subway or at banks, showcases minoritarian

lifeworlds existing on several timescales.⁵² And as one of the many sources of inspiration for this paper on queer utopianism, the late Varble's performances, including his guerilla-style Chemical Bank Protest and Costume Tours of New York City, are enacted once more as indications of the coterminous temporality of queer performance.

Taking this queer temporality as a space intertwined, again, with time and mattering, open to all performances and performativities, human and more-than-human alike, we continue to think-with Muñoz in posthuman terms. We consider Varble and all performers at the Mutability and Mutualism II event to be minoritarian subjects: all are posthuman bodies, a "confederate agency of many striving macro- and microactants."⁵³ The performances of and the dialogues between the "actors" of the Mutability and Mutualism II indicate an assemblage of more-than-human performers, which Muñoz would call "world-historical entities."⁵⁴ Along similar lines, what makes Varble's queer performance posthuman is that he combined his body with costumes made up of egg cartons, used cables and wires, first-aid equipment, plastic waste, sponges, and so on.

As Arman's abstract implies, a certain embodiment, an "enactment" of this phenomenon (*i.e.*, minoritarian lifeworlds) can be characterized as to be found in queer eco-art—art that utilizes biological, or living material as part of its composition while incorporating queer as its becoming.⁵⁵ In line with what the Mutability and Mutualism II event and Varble's performance-art demonstrate, such events insert us into a coterminous time which comprises the past, the present, and the future. And because Muñoz's "utopian impulse," *the not-quite-conscious* is in itself "a call for 'doing' that is a becoming,"⁵⁶ we contend that queer itself is a state of becoming. This recalls Barad's account of queer as destabilizing: the term "is not a fixed determinate term," nor does it "have a stable referential context":

Queer is itself a lively mutating organism, a desiring radical openness, an edgy protean differentiating multiplicity, an agential dis/continuity, an enfolded reiteratively materializing promiscuously inventive spatiotemporality. What if queerness were understood to reside not in the breach of nature/culture, per se, but in the very nature of spacetime mattering?⁵⁷

In view of this rhetorical question, we cannot help but recall Muñoz's recognition of the past as performative. The "inventive spatiotemporality" that

Barad mentions shows itself in the following words of Muñoz: “It is important,” he argues, “to call on the past, to animate it, understanding that the past has a performative nature, which is to say that rather than being static and fixed, the past does things.” Diffracting Muñoz through Barad, therefore, “reiteratively materializes” the present, to repeat Barad’s words, thereby conjoining space, time, and mattering within intra-active multitemporalities. We thus “put the past into play with the present, calling into view the tautological nature of the present.” As Muñoz would probably agree, the present is then carried beyond “the parameters of straight time.”⁵⁸

Contemplating on the playfulness of the past and the present in a nonlinear, queer, posthuman timescale takes us back to the critical moment at which this essay actually is being written, which coincides with the human-straight-linear timescale of spring 2024. This is where yet another “embedded” case emerges. We dive deep into Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia*, and come across the part where he writes on stickers as performance art, stating that stickers “function as performing objects inasmuch as they solicit a response from spectators.”⁵⁹ On reading this, Başak immediately recalls a sticker on one of the walls surrounding the most crowded smoking area of our university campus: an image that features Green Day’s 2004 *American Idiot* album cover (see figure 5).⁶⁰ Başak’s memory of posting the sticker’s photo on her own Instagram account, as well as her thought of inserting the sticker into this article, are the kinds of performance that Muñoz refers to: the sticker solicits a response from the spectator with their own associations, who, in this case, is one of us. It is the memories, and their background, or more broadly the stories embedded in our consciousness, which elicit this kind of response. This, we argue, becomes a collaboration with the image itself. The point that we must underline here is, however, that the sticker creates a “space away from the corrupt mediatized majoritarian public sphere.”⁶¹ In this instance, through its reworked wording, the sticker presents the Green Day allusion itself in a “Turkified” version: the lines that should have read “Green Day” and “American Idiot” are replaced by the lines in Turkish, which read: “kalbimin içine attılar iki bomba,” meaning “they threw two bombs into my heart.”

The intended meaning of these lines are mysterious to us to this day, as their original context has been lost. But since the photograph was taken, the sticker has elicited more responses: some tried to scratch it, while others—perhaps the cleaning personnel confronting the glue’s thing-power of resistance—tried unsuccessfully to rip it down. Other-than-nonhuman responses



Figure 5. Green Day Sticker.

might include the unpredictable weather events in Ankara, triggered by climate change; the sticker might have been exposed to heat and direct sunlight, or been soaked up in the heavy rains that lately seem to dominate the spring evenings. And yet, the memory of having smirked at the arabesque nature of the sticker as a piece of street performance art still remains.⁶² This is the kind of (arabesque) pain induced by desiring the unattainable, which recalls Muñoz’s economy of desire: “This desire is always directed at that thing that is not yet here, objects and moments that burn with anticipation and promise.”⁶³ Yet in Muñoz’s case, this unattainability is never a source of pain or despair but is a matter of envisioning, a matter of response-ability.

Response-ability “is not simply or only the taking up of the responsibility that always already lay before us and constitute us, but also the iterative (re)opening of responsiveness toward the potentiality of perceiving and differently enacting possibilities and problematics within the distributive relations that we inherit.”⁶⁴ What this means for Muñoz’s queer utopia is that people can show the desire to opt for conceiving of something that is not-yet-here, or something that is not-yet-thought-of. The “economy of desire and

desiring,” then, expresses the orientation to direct one’s desire to realize what is not-yet-here or not-yet-thought-of. That is to say, people will choose to do utopia and envision a possibility in futurity as a collective act while others, happy with their ordinariness, will stay in the boundaries of straight time and place. As a result, what makes the economy of desire and desiring an ethical turn proves to be the people’s will to do utopia, or the unwillingness to contest straight time and place, in relation with utilizing the concept of hope in service of doing utopia. “To participate in such an endeavor,” for Muñoz, “is not to imagine an isolated future for the individual but instead to participate in a hermeneutic that wishes to describe a collective futurity.”⁶⁵ Here, Muñoz calls for a historical materialist critique, but we respond to this call from a new materialist position. This is where we see the ethical connotations of the notion of “economy of desire” becoming intertwined with the ontology of queer utopia.

Returning to the case of the Green Day sticker (figure 5), then, we may consider the creator/performer of the sticker and ourselves (as respondents to it) to be participants of doing utopia as a futurity. This is a dance, a queer dance in the Muñozian sense: “Dance, like energy, never disappears; it is simply transformed. Queer dance, after the live act, does not just expire. The ephemeral does not equal unmateriality.”⁶⁶ Echoing Muñoz, we argue that the sticker, as a piece of performance art, equates an ephemeral state of being-in-flux, but one that does not disappear. Its materiality is still present in the image used here, while the materiality of the responses it elicits from us remains without expiration, as we also participate in its thing-power, in its choreography.

How can we further elucidate this choreography? The mental processes of recalling again and again a feeling, a sense, or an experience, accompanied with the process of producing a scholarly text like this one embody the playfulness of the past and the present that Muñoz mentions. Having a background of enjoying all forms of graffiti and sticker art and taking pictures of them for a personal Instagram account also contributes to this overall experience. This background, in the posthumanist sense, is one of the performers, along with the other numerous actors that include but are not limited to the human spectators who have engaged in “conversations” with the sticker, the glue, the sun and the rain, the Anthropocene, as well as our memories and identities as Turkish citizens (as in our ability to read and interpret the “Turkified” version of the Green Day album cover). The sticker thus becomes a “forum for public debate,”⁶⁷ a site of engagement between us the writers

and you the readers, which Barad would explain as “the ongoing reconfigurings of the world.”⁶⁸

The public debate raised here, as can be seen above in our list of active participants, is not limited to the human actors of the assemblage alone. The sticker itself, as one of the performers (or perhaps the primary one), indicates an alignment between the posthuman thought and Muñoz’s queer utopianism. Although Muñoz was never associated with posthumanist scholarship, his lexical choice that involves “performing objects” is significant in the new materialist sense where agency is distributive and shared rather than localized or centralized on the human. The “dialogue” between the sticker in Figure 5 and us authors—and perhaps the readers of this essay—is the indication of such performances because it solicits a response in a way that perhaps even Muñoz himself would not expect: “Sometimes people attempt to rip the stickers down; at other times people write directly on the stickers,” he wrote.⁶⁹ And he was right as demonstrated by the case of our sticker shown above. But Muñoz did probably not imagine the kind of response where that one sticker would make its way into this special issue dedicated to his name.

The performance of the sticker further involves the multitemporal stories that are embedded in the inextricability of the researcher and the research material, the observer and the observed, and the knower and the known. Aside from the personal interest in murals and stickers as performance art as well as several other actors mentioned above, the culture we belong to as the authors/researchers is another of the many dancers of this choreography, as in the swift wit of the sticker’s creator that associates the arabesque lines of being heartbroken with the famous Green Day image of a hand, holding a heart-shaped hand-grenade. The reworked image with its Turkish title would mean different things for human actors of different backgrounds, but in our case, it spoke volumes and narrated a multilayered story that provoked a play between the past and the present, along with a play between Muñoz’s queer utopianism and posthumanism. This shared experience of viewers also plays its part within the entire performance. The numerous human and nonhuman performers in this story thus cruise their way toward Muñoz’s utopia, as a means of posthuman enactment, where each actor “help[s] writers clarify their arguments, to propel their thinking forward.”⁷⁰

Taking this entire act of writing and producing ideas as a dance between those countless human and nonhuman actors, then, we consider the posthuman as an enactment of utopia and utopia as a posthuman enactment—one

that is enacted through our thinking-with Muñoz, with the support of the questions he raises in *Cruising Utopia*. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz builds his queer utopianism on the playfulness of time and temporality, which we argue is a posthuman enactment that is never separable from materiality and response-ability. Following a diffractive path that re-reads Muñoz and Barad from one another's perspectives, we believe that the posthuman tool of thinking-with enacts new performativities and performances, where the mundane becomes the artistic and vice versa. This enactment is exemplified through Ozan Atalan's and Oya Şener's eco-artistic works, Stephen Varble's gutter art and minoritarian lifeworlds, as well as murals, stickers, and other street performances. This is the kind of choreography where both human and nonhuman actors play critical roles, including the authors/researchers, who are inevitably embedded in their own study. Therefore, if, as Muñoz comments, utopia "renders potential blueprints of a world not quite here, a horizon of possibility, not a fixed schema," then queer is always already a posthuman struggle, which should be thought of as a "flux, a temporal disorganization."⁷¹ Being always in the horizon, we believe, reveals the dynamic relationality on which our entire existence is based, so life itself is already a posthuman experience, a queer utopia.

BAŞAK AĞIN is Associate Professor of English literature at TED University, Ankara, Türkiye, specializing in material ecocriticism and posthuman theory. She is the author of *Posthümanizm: Kavram, Kuram, Bilim-Kurgu* (2020). She coedited *Posthuman Pathogenesis: Contagion in Literature, Arts, and Media* (2022) and *Beşerî Bilimlerin 50 Rengi: Çevreci, Dijital, Tıbbi ve Posthüman Sesler* (2023). She also edited M. Sibel Dinçel's Turkish translation of Simon Estok's *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* and translated Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010). Her scholarly articles appeared in such journals as *Ecozon@*, *CLCWeb*, *Neohelicon*, *Translation Review*, *Configurations*, and *EJES*.

GÜVENÇ ARMAN ARI is a graduate student at TED University, Department of English Language and Literature. He graduated from Bilkent University, Department of English-French Translation and Interpretation with a minor in English Language and Literature. He works as an English Instructor. His interests in literary studies include transnational and global Anglophone and Francophone literatures, cultural studies, environmental humanities, and contemporary narrative theories and practices by minority groups.

Notes

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2. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2009), 1–2.
3. Claire Henry, "Queer Posthumanism: Figures, Fluidity, and Fluids," in *Screening the Posthuman*, ed. Missy Molloy, Pansy Duncan, and Claire Henry (Oxford University Press, 2023), 170.
4. Patricia MacCormack, "Queer Posthumanism: Cyborgs, Animals, Monsters, Perverts," in *The Ashgate Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (Routledge, 2009), 113.
5. Henry, "Queer Posthumanism: Figures, Fluidity, and Fluids," 170; Claire Henry, "Queer Posthumanism through the Wachowskis," *Synoptique: An Online Journal of Film and Moving Image Studies* 10, no. 1 (2023): 45.
6. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007); Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Qui Parle* 19, no. 2 (2011): 121–58.
7. Fabrizio Terranova, "Donna Haraway: Story Telling for Earthly Survival," video, Icarus Films, <https://earthlysurvival.org/>.
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9. Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa A. Mazzei, "Thinking with an Agentic Assemblage in Posthuman Inquiry," in *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*, ed. Carol A. Taylor and Christina Hughes (London: Palgrave, 2016), 95.
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11. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 71.
12. Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," 40.
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14. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 25.
15. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini, "Preface: Literature, Posthumanism, and the Posthuman," in *the Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (Cambridge University Press, 2017), xv.
16. MacCormack, "Queer Posthumanism," 113.
17. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
18. Karen Barad, "Matter Feels, Converses, Suffers, Desires, Yearns and Remembers," in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, ed. Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (Open Humanities Press, 2012), 59.
19. Barad, "Matter Feels," 59.

20. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010), 2.
21. Barad, "Matter Feels," 63.
22. Barad, "Matter Feels," 63; emphasis in the original.
23. Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28, no. 3, Gender and Science: New Issues (2003): 803.
24. We will discuss response-ability in more detail in later sections of this article.
25. Barad, "Matter Feels," 59.
26. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
27. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, "Introduction: A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies," in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics and Desire*, ed. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Indiana University Press, 2010), 22.
28. MacCormack, "Queer Posthumanism," 112.
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30. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, "Queering Ecocultural Studies," *Cultural Studies* 22, nos. 3–4 (2008): 458.
31. See <https://thepentacle.org>.
32. Ozan Atalan, "2'48" or Some Number of Waves, June 10, 2024, <http://ozanatalan.com/index.php/works/detail/23/248or-some-number-of-waves>.
33. Oya Şener, *Zaman*, 5th Circular Environment and Art Event Series, curated by Yasemin Ülgen, hosted by Mersin Municipality, Mersin, Türkiye, June 8–July 8, 2024. Photo taken by the artist herself.
34. See Ozan Atalan, "2'48." John Fiske: *Introduction to Communications Studies*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 1990), 66.
35. Julius B. Fleming, "Sound, Aesthetics, and Black Time Studies," in *College Literature* 46, no. 1 (2019): 282.
36. Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora," in *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 253.
37. Homi Bhabha, "Race, Time, and the Revision of Modernity," in *Oxford Literary Review* 13, no. 9 (1991): 210.
38. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 3.
39. Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu, "Quarantine Time is "Out of Joint": Re-Stitching Time as Posthuman Temporalities in Emma Donoghue's *The Pull of the Stars*," in *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews* 35, no. 4 (2022): 379.
40. Z. Gizem Yılmaz, "Past Present: Coal and *Hard Times*," in *Neohelicon*, published online June 3, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-024-00747-8>.
41. Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (University of Michigan Press, 1995), 58.
42. Again, like intra-action, this is Karen Barad's term, but has now become part of the posthuman vocabulary.
43. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
44. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 21.
45. This is an allusion to Aldo Leopold's concept of thinking like a mountain.

46. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 25.
47. Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," 29.
48. See <https://www.instituteforpostnaturalstudies.org/> and <https://queerecology.org/>.
49. "MUTABILITY-MUTUALISM-II," Institute of Queer Ecology, accessed June 10, 2024, <https://queerecology.org/MUTABILITY-MUTUALISM-II>.
50. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 56.
51. Stephen Varble, "An Antidote to Nature's Ruin on the Heavenly Globe, Prints and Video of the Early 1980s," curated by David J. Getsy, October 20–December 1, 2018. <https://www.institute193.org/exhibitions-stephen-varble-ky>.
52. Güvenç Arman Ari, "Queering Grosz's Möbius Strip as a Way to Materialize Queer Eco-Art," unpublished manuscript, 2024.
53. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23.
54. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 56.
55. Arman Ari, unpublished manuscript.
56. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
57. Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," 29.
58. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 27–28.
59. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 61.
60. As a fond listener of Green Day, due to being personally involved in Ankara's rock scene since the 2000s (when Arman was just a toddler, as if to evince the playfulness of the past and the present in the myriad layers of temporality), Başak took a photo of the sticker immediately on July 17, 2023 (see figure 5), to post it on her personal Instagram account, which is how the image is available to the readers of this article.
61. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 61.
62. Here we use "arabesque" to refer to a widespread music subculture in Türkiye, often associated with the pain and pleasure of love, with lyrics addressed to an indifferent, if not cruel, beloved like a Renaissance sonnet lady.
63. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
64. Marc Higgins, *Unsettling Responsibility in Science Education: Indigenous Science, Deconstruction, and the Multicultural Science Education Debate* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 274.
65. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 26.
66. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 81.
67. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 61.
68. Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 818.
69. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 61.
70. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 92.
71. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 92.