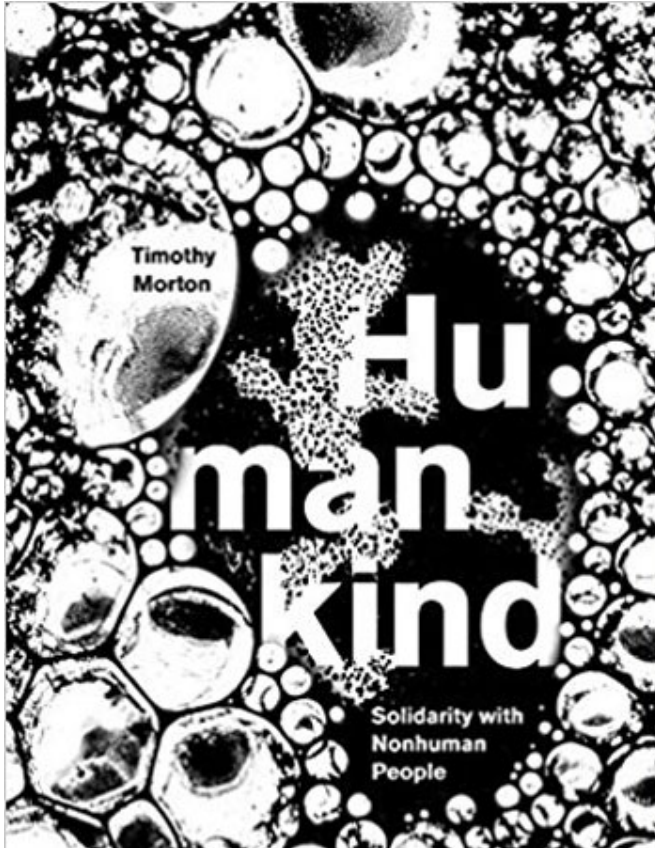


New book a call for solidarity between humans and nonhumans

8 September 2017, by Jeff Falk



In our relationship with nonhumans we decided the fate of our humanity. That is the premise of a new book by Rice professor and acclaimed object-oriented philosopher Timothy Morton. [Humankind: Solidarity With Non-Human People](#) was published in August by Verso Books.

As science and technology challenge the boundaries between life and nonlife, between organic and inorganic, the ancient question of what it is that makes humans human is more timely than ever, said Morton, the Rita Shea Guffey Chair in English. His 224-page book invites readers to

consider this philosophical issue as eminently political. Morton proposes that becoming human actually means creating a network of kindness and solidarity with nonhuman beings, in the name of a broader understanding of reality that both includes and overcomes the notion of species.

"The takeaway is that we are all the same, in a nonracist, nonsexist, nonspeciesist way," said Morton, who wrote the book in the first half of 2016.

"Humankind" in part explores the 2015 killing of Cecil the lion, who was shot with an arrow by an American big-game hunter, Walter Palmer. Facebook and Twitter erupted in outrage against Palmer, who was subsequently stalked. United Nations resolutions were passed amid calls for him to be extradited to face charges in Zimbabwe.

Morton takes the reactions to Cecil's killing as a hopeful sign during the epoch he and other thinkers call the Anthropocene, in which humans have committed ecological devastation and presided over the sixth [mass extinction event](#).

"Cecil was an impetus for sure," Morton said of his inspiration to write the book. "And having written a lot about nonhumans, I wanted to turn the camera around to face our way."

In a review, The Guardian called the book "exasperating, beguiling, intellectually reckless and restless." Avital Ronnell, a New York University philosophy professor, said in a review: "Sassy, brilliant, a genuine engagement with and of thought, this work tunes us to a thrilling, endorphinating way of thinking: my drug of choice."

Since coming to Rice in 2012, Morton has been building programs in ecological theory, energy and sustainability. In 2014 he collaborated with singer-songwriter Björk on "Björk: Archives," a book and visual tribute to the enigmatic Icelander. Morton is the author of several other [books](#), including

"Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World" (2013), and he blogs daily at www.ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com .

Provided by Rice University

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