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## Introduction: Posthuman Bodies

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*Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston*

If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. (Wordsworth 738)

Now that Wordsworth's entrepreneurial speculation of future collusion between scientific and cultural production has paid off repeatedly, the bond matured and the stock split and reinvested again and again to the profit of its stockholders, the loyalty of employees and customers of the human monopoly (Nature/Culture Systems, Incorporated) can no longer be assured. Science and its poetic sidekick have maintained the "household of man" through exclusions, subordinations, exoticizations, pathologizations, criminalizations—thus guaranteeing that the "transfiguration" that is upon us cannot leave intact any of Wordsworth's interdependent terms: neither "what is now called science," nor the "form of flesh and blood," nor the "household of man."

Posthumanities emerge not in the happy interdisciplinary family business imagined by Wordsworth, but (equipped with leaked secrets and embezzled powers) out of a disenchantment that is both anti-aesthetic and anti-scientific. It is in this volatile market that the medical/aesthetic disciplinary monopoly on "the body" is being challenged. If the announcement of the discovery that "the body" has a *history* has become conventional, the field that it inaugurates has only begun to be established. Even so, the emergence of "the body" in history, and thereby its partial reifica-

tion and relativization, also opens a space for posthistorical bodies to establish themselves.

"We're all connected," crooned a recent ad-campaign for New York Telephone: that was the kind of thing Wordsworth had in mind. The slogan performs an exemplary ideo/topo-logical maneuver. The organicist notion of connectedness—and its most extreme mystification, the Romantic imagination—had been invented as internalizations and de-politicizations of dominant material interests and their power/knowledge grid. The ad turns the heavily laundered Romantic imagination inside out to organicize the corporate body. The old humanist party line is sublated in the postmodern partyline, dogma mutated into a floating multiple conversation, couplings into switchboards—looking forward to an operatorless networking that is both and neither perfect freedom and the perfect police state (which, as William Burroughs reminds us, has no need for police). But if the extension, attenuation, miniaturization, and cross-wired interdependence of the networks that implicate the body are Control strategies (and they are), the time has passed when resistance could effectively be imagined in terms of a sovereign, local, man's-home-is-his-castle body. The price of indulging nostalgia for the immediacy of edenic nakedness, or for the spontaneous and bodily unity of the revolutionary crowd, is too high. The urgency for new kinds of coitions and coalitions is too compelling in an age of continuous and obligatory diasporas.

The constructionist body is not equal to the task if it is merely a compensatory or reactionary opponent to the humanist body. The proletarianization or automatization of the body with respect to "discursivity" is an anxious reaction-formation to the "loss" of an autonomy that was itself an exclusive fiction. Posthuman bodies are not slaves to masterdiscourses but emerge at nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourses of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context. Posthuman embodiment, like Haraway's "feminist embodiment, then, is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations. . . . Embodiment is significant prosthesis" (195).

### Sign Posts: Some Posthuman Narratives

Postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, postindustrial capitalism: the proliferation of academic "post-isms" marks simultaneously the necessary or regrettable failure to imagine what's next and the recognition that it must always appear as "the as yet unnamable which is pro-

claiming itself and which can do so, as is necessary whenever a birth is in the offing, only under the species of the non-species, in the formless, mute, infant and terrifying form of monstrosity" (Derrida 293). But the rough beast that now slouches towards the next century is not monstrous simply by virtue of its status as a non-species: posthuman monstrosity and its bodily forms are recognizable because they occupy the overlap between the now and the then, the here and the always: the annunciation of posthumanity is always both premature and old news.

Posthuman bodies are the causes and effects of postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality, sex and its consequences. The posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image; it is a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a techno-body; it is, as we shall see, a queer body. The human body itself is no longer part of "the family of man" but of a zoo of posthumanities. In their recent world tour, the rock group U2 coined the concept "Zoo TV" and performed the becoming-posthuman of the body on stage and on camera, somewhere between desire and captivity. Zoo TV was a remarkable performance of identity in mass media culture for several reasons. Bono's various couplings on stage with mirrors, cameras and video equipment fundamentally undermined otherwise stable relationships between fan and star, disconcerting the technology of rock stardom by insisting that the star is a trick of the dazzling lights, a feedback effect rather than an emotional center that anchors the rock performance in time and space for each individual fan.

Is the performer screen or image, reflection or production? By calling the rock extravaganza "Zoo TV," U2 confuses the distinction between who is looking out or in, who is in the cage, who looks on, who is exoticized, what is rare, who is catalogued and how. We might ask how Zoo TV collapses nature and culture into each other, into a place where captivity refers to a state of desire (fan captivation) rather than a state of siege. But is captivity on screen or off?

The relation between the posthuman and the postmodern in a Zoo TV society relies on a new technological order with the body at its helm and a troubling relationship to history. Speed and its possibilities—the speed of the new, the speeds of potential futures colliding with the fast approaching past—create a crisis in the category of "history" and the narratives it inspires. History is inefficient as a method of processing meaning; it cannot keep up. As history slows down relative to events in the realm of information and meaning, the future remains on hold. History as social or chronological history is dying with the white male of western metaphysics and consequently it is no longer enough to say where we have

been. We struggle instead to articulate a present laden with the debris of inert pasts. Posthuman bodies do not belong to linear history. They are of the past and future lived as present crisis. This present, this crisis does not glide smoothly along a one-dimensional timeline but erupts or coalesces non-locally across an only partially temporizable realm of meaning.

*Posthuman Bodies* represents attempts to keep up with the present and to process the identities that rub up against the body and then dissolve in the maelstrom we call postmodernism, posthumanism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, postindustrial capitalism. The essays in this volume work to engage posthuman narratives that have all but replaced previous masternarratives about humanity, its bodies, its subjects, its pains, and its pleasures. These narratives show how the body and its effects have been thoroughly re-imagined through an infra-disciplinary interrogation of human identity and its attendant ideologies.

#### Out Posts: Some Subcultures without Culture: *Paris Is Burning*

Posthuman bodies thrive in subcultures without culture: there are only subcultures. Culture processes and appropriates a subculture only as quickly as the subculture becomes visible as culture: the Imaginary of dominant culture is always only a culmination of appropriated forms and plagiarized lyrics (if a mirror can be said to appropriate anything).

Voguing, now a famous instance of the signifying dance of the hyper-stylized body, began as a predominantly black and latino transvestite sub-cultural denaturalization of haute-culture gender performance (before being mainstreamed by a very white Madonna). But to identify voguing as parasitical on Big Culture (e.g., under the heading of "parody") would be as reductive as to try to understand voguing as Romantic Creativity. Instead, voguing and other subcultural practices work to undermine the one-eyed pyramid of generic hierarchy, to trouble the smooth flowchart of cultural circulation, somewhat like films that precede novelizations, sequels that precede prequels, mafia bosses that model themselves on movie mafia bosses, actor-presidents, TV-doctors who endorse pills, polls that pit sitting vice presidents against the TV characters they denounce, infomercials, docudramas, and so on and on.

Madonna mimics black and latino gay prostitute culture and translates it into a million-dollar stage act; her performances are attempts to originate the forms she has appropriated. This is exactly the process by which some performances are given the weight and authority of "reality" while others are relegated to shadows and imitations. But if authority and origi-

nation are conferred by the circulation of capital, this circulation can never quite establish its priority over the counter-fluencies of subculture.

Judith Butler exposes the relationship—between simulacrum and "original"—that troubles gender and compulsory heterosexuality. By inverting the dominant narrative of the relation between heterosexual gender performance and butch-femme lesbian gender performances, Butler is able to claim that "the parodic or imitative effect of gay identities works neither to copy nor to emulate heterosexuality, but rather, to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized idealization" (22–23). This inversion is powerful because of the way it intervenes in the construction of gendered subjectivity at the point where it becomes a model of humanness. It interrupts a linear continuity among gender, heterosexual norms, and human sexuality by showing how heavily heterosexuality and gender depend on gay identities to idealize, humanize and naturalize their own definitions. This dependence is too often left out of accounts of the "Other" that stress marginalization. While clear and present oppression of "Others" is by no means to be understated, the Other is also the matrix against which the self is made to appear and from which it can never be extricated; the "conservation of Otherness" dictates that any "assimilation" or "incorporation" will also be a transfiguration.

Madonna inverts the relation between subculture and culture in a rather similar way to give the illusion of a monolithic culture of white monied heterosexuality, under whose camera eye she squirms. The release of Jennie Livingston's film, *Paris Is Burning*, drained Madonna's voguing extravaganza of its reality effect even while being pulled part way up by her bootstraps. Not only do New York City's drag queens give an alternative history to the origin of voguing, they also give an alternative history of gender and its performances. It is worth looking closely at this film in order to engage the posthuman narratives that saturate transitions between cultures and subcultures.

Balls, houses, legends; reading, throwing shade, walking; realness, categories, vogue: the subcultural "dictionary" that organizes *Paris Is Burning* insists on thoroughgoing rearticulations. At a ball, reality itself is up for grabs—and may the best queen win. Voguing, one drag queen explains, is a form of street-fighting; a competition waged between two houses or gay gangs. Houses are like families and they take their names from designers (House of Chanel, Saint-Laurent, etc.) or from their founders or Mothers (House of Labeija, Ninja, etc.). Between "tribe" and "family" and "profession" and "commune" and "corporation," the House is an unromanticizably opportunistic posthuman assemblage that could never be mistaken for the cozy privacy of Wordsworth's "household of man."

To "walk the ball" is to compete, in one of a huge range of categories, against "Children" of other Houses for trophies. Categories include Butch and Femme Queens, Realness, Bangee Girl and Boy, and so on. In Realness, Children simulate a social role to the point where they could pass for real. For example, Executive Realness involves dressing as a businessman with suit, tie and attaché case. The Realness category allows poor, gay, often black or latino men to untangle for a moment the economic and social forms of oppression that stand between them and the so-called "real world." It also allows them, however, to recreate that real world in their own image, to repeople it and to challenge in an intensely artistic way the conventions of domination.

While many of the Femme Queens are satisfied to strike poses of femininity, others in the ball scene have had actual transsexual operations. Bodily operations suggest that "Realness" may in fact have something to do with physical organs, while the drag shows suggest that, on the contrary, the most Real woman is one who passes on the streets rather than between the sheets. This tension between "real" anatomy and real gender is articulated by several Femme Queens in the documentary. Pepper Labeija and Dorian Corey offer accounts of what they perceive to be the nuanced distance between performing realness and wanting to be real. Corey says that the Children hunger too much for something beyond the "small fame" of walking the ball. Labeija cautions against taking realness for real; he never wanted the operation because he knows that simply "having a pussy does not mean you will have a fabulous life." Labeija wryly implies that becoming a woman means facing a new oppression: to be a "real" woman is simply to face "real" sexism. On the other hand, Venus Xtravaganza wants the operation and longs to be "a spoiled, rich, white girl living in the suburbs." While this kind of sentiment drew horrified responses from some liberal critics who marveled at the willingness of people to embrace their oppressions, it is a fantasy that actually begs to be read within the context of the balls and their codes of signification. Venus's fantasy functions as fantasy precisely because its realization will always be frustrated. The "real" of her fantasy, of course, has little if anything to do with spoiled, white girls in suburbs. The posthuman element of this fantasy lies in its non-relation to real whiteness and its expression of the fantasy function of white realness. Whiteness, in other words, functions in this fantasy as a *limit* of the real and as a desired category only because it is unattainable or impossible. Not because whiteness cannot be simulated but because Venus Xtravaganza for one will never reap the rewards of even a successful simulation of whiteness. Real whiteness, however, the other end of this equation, becomes equally *vulnerable* insofar as

Venus's fantasy makes visible the lines of power that collide in the category "white" and which allow it to slide into the category "human."

Madonna performs the real "whiteness" that voguing exposes as drag in order to stabilize the categories and make her whiteness and realness work for her in a way that Venus never can. While Venus and the other queens imitate a whiteness they find in fashion magazines, Madonna imitates the imitation in order to reclaim and re-secure voguing for superstars. Madonna's performance and her blond translation of voguing make her a real millionaire; Venus dies before the film project is completed, a murder victim. This is not, therefore, merely a moral lesson about the dangers of thinking realness is mutable. Instead, Madonna and Venus are examples of the power of stable real whiteness versus the risk and insecurities of trying to perform white realness. These are not aberrations of the flow-vectors that define the structure of cultural space-time but indicators of the poverty of teleological and hierarchical narratives to account for cultural traffic.

The gridlock of signifiers and signifieds at the juncture of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality in the night world of voguing is a traffic jam of posthuman proportions, where the drivers may as well abandon their vehicles. The Human wanders, lost, into a maze of sex changes, wardrobe changes, make-overs, and cover versions that imbricate human reality into posthuman realness.

As definitions of bodies and their acts proliferate within subcultures, they shrink proportionately in what we call culture. One example, *Husbands and Wives*, one of Woody Allen's melancholic autobiographical confessions, registers the loss of a sexual vocabulary within normative heterosexuality. Judy Davis plays a frustrated and frigid divorcée who struggles to find the right sexual combination, the formula she hopes will unlock her desire. After a date with a caring, handsome man she seems to like but not desire, she is reduced to thinking of coupling as the union of "hedgehogs and foxes," a union that signifies the impossibility of complementarity. But the model for binary complementarity in Allen's film is a heterosexuality that here seems stuck always in a mode of either/or, with no alternatives in sight. Davis's character lacks a way of understanding the desire for difference and the desire for sameness; where they overlap, where they collide, where they come to blows. Hedgehogs and foxes? Meanwhile, minority sexual cultures generate elaborate and proliferating sexual vocabularies: so many words, so many acts, so few discrete identities—or only as many identities as there are bodies and then some. Hedgehogs and foxes? This definition registers the pathos of normative heterosexuality locked into a sad groove, constantly generating narratives of

sentiment and romance to cover over the obvious confusion and lack of faith that plagues all attempts to mate for life.

### Someness

Sex only has currency when it becomes a channel for something besides its own drive for pleasure. Turn-ons are not sexual; sexuality is a dispersed relation between bodies and things: some bodies (such as male lesbians, female cockwearers, baby butches, generationalsists, sadofetishists, women with guns) and some things (dildoes, pistols, vegetables, ATM cards, computers, phones, books, phone books). Some turn-ons: women in suits looking like boys, women in suits wearing dildoes looking like and being men, men without dicks, dicks without men, virtual body parts, interactive fantasy. What is bodily about sex? What is sexual about sex? What is gendered? Are posthuman bodies postgender? Is anything post anymore, or is this the beginning? The search for origins stops here because we are the origins at which imagined reality, virtual reality, gothic reality are all up for grabs. You're not human until you're posthuman. You were never human.

What would happen if singularities ceased to anchor the ways in which we think? Not The Posthuman Body, but bodies. "The sex which is not one" is the plural paradigm for the species which are never one. Deleuze and Guattari revise the paradigm of the subject strung like a marionette to reduce the marionette body and the puppeteer mind to more cat's cradles of nervous fibers, sets of intersecting bio-psycho-social constraints that make the nodal body (8). This is not to replace a stuck mind-body dualism with a heterogeneous monism, but to insist on the "someness" of every assemblage. Posthumanity cannot be asserted by a kind of gender suffrage (each person their own gender) because the discourse of "infinite diversity" just plays the "good cop" to the "bad cop" of singularity and duality, to the tendency to set up one (system of gender) and two (m/f, gay/straight, gay/lesbian). For Haraway's "cyborg," "one is too few, but two are too many" (177); Homi Bhabha's postcolonial "hybridity" is "less than one and double" (179); Deleuze and Guattari's "assemblage" is enumerated as "n minus one":

In truth, it is not enough to say, 'Long live the multiple,' difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple *must be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available—always n minus one. (6)

How many races, genders, sexualities are there? Some. How many are you? Some. "Some" is not an indefinite number awaiting a more accurate measurement, but a rigorous theoretical mandate whose specification, necessary as it is (since "the multiple *must be made*"), is neither numerable nor, in the common sense, innumerable.

### Some Humans

The rhetorical crisis for the humanist is such that one minute he'll lay down the law of the jungle to you and the next minute he'll be aghast when everything isn't tastefulness, gentility, and rationality. The privilege of blindness to these contradictions is part of the arrogance of entrenched power; no doubt it will always be ready to sacrifice everything, beginning as usual with its subalterns, in order to go to the grave with the privilege of this blindness, with the delusion of its own disinterestedness or internal consistency, the proud fiction of its self-sacrificing fatherliness or motherliness.

The posthuman marks a solidarity between disenchanted liberal subjects and those who were always-already disenchanted, those who seek to betray identities that legitimize or de-legitimize them at too high a cost. No one comes naturally to this conjuncture; rather it must be continually forged within and among people and discourses.

When Air Force pilot George Bush dropped his bombload on his target and bailed out, regrettably but unavoidably leaving his fellow crewmember to crash, he could be proud enough of a mission accomplished to model his presidency on it; after murdering hundreds of thousands in Iraq and bailing out his friends' banks, he could again be proud, leaving the presidency to rejoin what he called the "real world." Those who are positioned, by various disjunctions from power, to see these contradictions do not labor out of some altruism or dedication to truth but because we are the ones left in the plane.

In times of crisis and great change the cost of various fictions becomes prohibitive, even for those who have traditionally been charged with maintaining them. It is not that Western Culture will be saved or lost (it will be both and neither; its identity has never been anything but a selective fiction); it is that laboring under notions of saving and losing—turf protection, damage control—has become more destructive, while the ongoing necessity of inventing more workable fictions has become more acute. Strategies which embrace contradiction will continue to be important: seeming to bite the hand that seems to feed us (whether an authorizing identity or discursive position), seeking to participate fully in a set of power relations from which our disjunction is also our enabling condi-

tion, and being driven rather than paralyzed by the double impossibilities of the detached ("ivory-tower") and the fully engaged ("organic") intellectual.

The human has been configured as a tribal circle gathered around the fire amid the looming darkness of a dangerous world, as the party of revellers sequestered from the plague, as the exclusive club of the Human, complete with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereunto (for example, the right to eat non-members of the club and the privilege not to be eaten). It is only partially our membership in the club that enables us to contest the rules, to beg to differ on how one must "assume the position" (take up the various crosses of identity, power, gender, authority). It is also because the darkness looms within the circle in a more virulent form, because some of the some that we are have been excluded; it is through multiple articulations among the constitutive roles of these others. Because otherness is not additive in the traditional sense, there is no "best" representative of the posthuman. Posthumans have been multiply colonized, interpenetrated, constructed—as well as paradoxically empowered—but neither virtue nor vice attaches automatically to this multiple position.

The posthuman does not necessitate the obsolescence of the human; it does not represent an evolution or devolution of the human. Rather it participates in re-distributions of difference and identity. The human functions to domesticate and hierarchize difference within the human (whether according to race, class, gender) and to absolutize difference between the human and the nonhuman. The posthuman does not reduce difference-from-others to difference-from-self, but rather emerges in the pattern of resonance and interference between the two. The additive other (who is subordinate in several systems at once) is not necessarily the geometrically other of the posthuman, who may well be "between between" in a single system. As a friend of ours likes to say, "I'm a feminist at a heavy metal concert and a metal advocate at a feminist meeting."

### Family?

The human tribe can never again be family. Postfamilial bodies celebrate the end of His-and-Her matching theories that endlessly revolve around the miserable imagined unit, the imagined comm-unity of an imagined kinship in an imagined house with an imagined dog and two (if only) imagined children. Still, the story of the victory of the middle class and the hegemony of its family, discipline, and rationality as unmarked universals is as exaggerated as the story of their imminent demise. The shift in the balance of powers from the coercive to the disciplinary did not, of

course, happen succinctly or uniformly, but unevenly and never completely. The rule of capitalism and the disciplinary power that has been its vice president is both total (no space is free of it) and partial (it does not reign uncontested in any of its locations). But its transnational and multi-dimensional ubiquity—its explosion to the horizon of global culture—can also be the precondition for other histories and powers to come into their own.

Lacan located the birth of human culture in the knowledge that heterosexual intercourse produces babies: the Name of the Father is secured by a system specifying who may be allowed to fuck what and how, producing mandates, prohibitions and selective freedoms in the circulation of fluids—breast milk, semen, money, gifts, information. The bio-taxonomy of species (and the order of knowledges of which it is an artifact) may be described as a similar set of mandates and prohibitions, along with the various "internal" divisions that it authorizes (species, order, family, genre, gender, divisions into sexual or asexual reproduction, warm and cold blood, etc.). Taxonomical discipline trains the branches of the genealogical "Tree of Life" to diverge neatly. Discursive bodies allow no such neat distinctions; they are both warm-blooded (self-regulating) and cold-blooded (sensitively dependent on their environments); both sexually and asexually reproduced. In any case, the ecology of interdependence problematizes the role of fucking in the life of species. When farting cows can be postulated as leading to catastrophic global climactic changes, who're you gonna call? A climatologist, a zoologist, a nutritionist, a Buddhist? What discipline has jurisdiction? If, magnified by technological interconnections, fear and hope can sweep across global stock markets as easily as they do across the Romantic humanist heart, shall we say humanism is dead or has reached its apotheosis?

If human reproduction, at least for the time being, necessarily involves the union of a sperm and egg, we are not created in, nor reducible to, their image (one per customer, please). Beyond the "little creatures . . . of love" of the Talking Heads song, allowed to name both sperm/eggs and adult bodies, is Dorion Sagan's "metametazoan," a multiple creature afloat in the non-complementary "omnisexuality" of bacterial exchanges, via which "the body becomes a sort of ornately elaborated mosaic of microbes in various states of symbiosis" and "health is less a matter of defending a unity than maintaining an ecology." Even so, the posthuman as "metametazoan" cannot therefore be subject to a "one-to-one linkage or reliably complete mapping" either with the multiplicities of microbes or with the planet Earth ("Gaia") conceived as a single/multiple organism (Sagan 369, 379). Posthumanities is alive to the ongoing danger of being shackled to the Great Chain of Being.



In practice as well as paradigm, sperm and egg unions have been repositioned. There are in any case multiple ways to bring about this union (tax incentives, in vitro fertilization, ideologies of family, turkey basters, etc.), or inhibit it (condoms, operations, tight jeans, abstinence, queer practices, etc.), and none of them are entirely reversible or irreversible. How can an Aristotelian hierarchization of causes separate the role of "the body" in reproduction from that of economy, technology, ideology, fashion? If biological reproduction is merely one possible function of one possible kind of fucking, as well as merely one of the many kinds of reproduction required to perpetuate the code of the human, then there is a curious lack of specificity in the term "fucking," a lack of coherence among its connotations, its variable association with pleasures and pains, with reproduction, with specific penetrations or frottages, with rhythmic frictions. What is allowed to be fucking? If the dissociation of female orgasm from generation that Laqueur locates in the late eighteenth century (1987) is what eventually allows female orgasm to signify the unspeakable ("jouissance") and unlocalizable mystery and the unreliability of signifiers, while male ejaculation (as in the "cum shot" of masculinist pornography) comes to guarantee the self-evidence of desire and truth in the binary of yes-or-no; this binary axiologization never could direct the traffics among power, pleasure, and bodies—traffics which include but are by no means exhausted by female ejaculation, sex-without-orgasm, orgasm-without-sex, sex-without-ejaculation, ejaculation-without-orgasm, reproduction-without-sex, sex-without-fucking, practices in which genitalia can become fetishes or second-order metaphors (a process impossible by definition in the one-way law of Freudian displacement and condensation), and so on. It becomes possible to assert a non-relation between fucking and reproduction—the relation upon which patriarchal humanity is predicated—partly because of the diversity of sexual practices, partly because of technological options, but mainly because the point where they converge is no longer an adequate anchoring point for a meaningful or workable system. Likewise, responsibility for conception and contraception, no less than for postnatal care, is not given but assigned.

The climacteric of the human dinosaur is a dangerous time, but no more than any other. The dying dinosaur still thrashes his tail, taking out hundreds of thousands in the process. Some of us cannot resist the risk that gnawing its scaly flesh entails; others strive to go about their business in discursive ecosystems in which the dinosaur could never compete, but all of us live in his shadow.

The infamous "family values" debate of the 1992 U.S. presidential election will be remembered as the discursive moment in which conservatives lost their hold on the imaginary place called "home." In what Jameson calls the homeopathy of postmodernism—the resistance through indul-

gence—family values dissolved at the touch. As soon as conservatives actually described the family they had in mind, its very visibility ruined its power as an ideological imaginary: there really is *no place* like "home." Discursive power operates from the imaginary, and identity registers its moment of failure. If the failure of "family values" has allowed a little sliding in what counts as "family," it has also bipartisanized the crusade on their behalf, making opposing positions still more difficult to articulate.

The posthuman repudiates the psychoanalytical and so the posthuman is also postpsychic, beyond any therapy that attempts to rectify the disorder and illogic of desires with health, purity and stability. Above all, purity dissolves in extrafamilial relations, where the body in culture is always a viral body, a time bomb of symptoms. Posthumanities embrace a radical impurity that includes the pure without privileging it. Extrafamilial desire exposes the family as a magic trick pulled by science and sustained by social science. Mommy and daddy are not sexy, and the Freudian family sitcom isn't funny anymore.

### Aliens

If the human is dead, the alien, the other, goes with it. Or does it? What is different about the alien? Does posthumanity prop itself up against a human body or does it cannibalize the human?

David Cronenberg's films refuse to grant the category of human any particular primacy over other identities that jockey for position within the body. In *The Fly*, the scientist played by Jeff Goldblum revels in the disintegration of his human form, collects his human parts and creates a museum/mausoleum in his bathroom medicine cabinet. The human is emphasized here as a scientific showcase, a medical exhibit, a show of force but always a threatened constituency of body parts and reason. Goldblum becomes more and more repulsive, more and more likable and interesting as his form becomes fly. When he merges fly/human with the genetic structure of the computer and its attendant hardware, the triple other of animal/human/machine cannot slouch anywhere to be born but only abjectly crawl and beg to be killed; posthuman embodiment is frustrated seductively in the final instance in order to be nurtured in an imaginary or perverse reading the film can only insinuate. In any case, the human has been reduced to a moment, but not an evolutionary moment: it is a moment of flesh that interrupts a more intimate relation between body and machine.

In *Dead Ringers* the male subject is two male subjects who disintegrate because they find out that the inside of the body, specifically the inside of a woman's body, is mutant, beautiful, mesmerizing, infertile, and in/

human. Claire's infertility refracts the terrible fertility that produced the male subjects as not one baby but two. The twin gynecologists tremble before the gothicization of a body they know scientifically but not sexually. Again, the film's work is apparently negative; the self-sufficiency of male narcissism and the body that it codes is imploded through its oblique contact with its other, but the powerful identity-vacuum produced by this very thorough implosion into abjection is exactly where and how the film invites the posthuman to emerge. Recognition of a posthuman agenda requires new protocols for reading the positivity of horror and abjection, not as representational (as pedagogical object-lessons: don't try this at home) but as functional dysfunctions that make other things happen.

### Catachresis

When Aristotle described "man" as a "featherless biped," Diogenes confronted him with a plucked chicken. To assert, in the spirit of this vaudeville philosophy, that humanity (and the human body) is a catachresis—a term unable either to ground itself adequately in a referent or to assert a common logic to unite its various referents—is a good first step, but the imaginary closure of the category of the human, even or especially if perpetually deferred, has very real functions. Unlike the human subject-to-be (Lacan's "l'hommelette"), who sees his own mirror image and fixed gender identity discrete and sovereign before him in a way that will forever exceed him, the posthuman becoming-subject vibrates across and among an assemblage of semi-autonomous collectivities it knows it can never either be coextensive with nor altogether separate from. The posthuman body is not driven, in the last instance, by a teleological desire for domination, death or stasis; or to become coherent and unitary; or even to explode into more disjointed multiplicities. Driven instead by the double impossibility and prerequisite to become other and to become itself, the posthuman body *intrigues* rather than desires; it is intrigued and intriguing just as it is queer: not as an identity but because it *queers*. Queering makes a postmodern politics out of the modernist aesthetics of "defamiliarization." "What intrigues me," k.d. lang asserts, "is being alternative and completely conformist at the same time" (98).

### Queer

David Wojnarowicz, in *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*, writes:

Realizing that I have nothing left to lose in my actions, I let my hands become weapons, my feet become weapons, every bone and muscle

and fiber and ounce of blood become weapons, and I feel prepared for the rest of my life. (81)

The violence of a specifically queer posthumanity is realized when what Foucault calls the "reverse discourse" becomes something else, something more than the "homosexual talking on his/her own behalf." The reverse discourse ceases to be simply "the reverse" when it begins to challenge and disrupt the terms offered to it for self-definition. Coalition across what we have called the collectivity of someness creates a necessary space for queer articulations.

The AIDS body, for example, crumbles and disintegrates with the disease, but as Wojnarowicz shows, it also produces fear in those who do not have AIDS; it not only disintegrates, in other words, it produces disintegration at large. Disintegration as a political strategy attacks the oppressive imaginary gulf between the eternalized and "safe" body and the body at risk, the provisional body; it is this differential that constantly attempts to construct the Person-With-AIDS as "already dead," and beyond the human loop. Disintegration operates like a virus and infects people with fear of AIDS, exerting a weird kind of power, harnessed by ACT UP. The PWA, the junky, the homeless person, the queer in America also has power: as Wojnarowicz puts it, we have the power to "wake you up and welcome you to your bad dream." Queer tactics are not pacifist, embracing instead the "by any means necessary" approach: self defense and more. This is not simply an agenda of physical intimidation but a Foucauldian tactic of "discipline and punish," inspiring fear without actually laying a finger on anyone.

"Fear," Jenny Holzer writes, "Is the most Elegant weapon." *Close to the Knives* is really a manifesto for action, a proposal designed to strike fear into right-wing hearts; it is a call to arms, a call to live—to acknowledge that we live—close to the knives and close to the edge of violence. People who die of AIDS die violent deaths and Wojnarowicz proposes to make this violence visible.

The frame of reference within Wojnarowicz's personal holocaust is *viral*: the virus becomes an epistemology all its own, dividing the world into carriers and infected versus the possibly or potentially infected. The randomness of the disease means that everyone is affected by the infection of so many. This epistemology—knowing one's identity by measuring one's distance to or from the possibility of infection—opens up a window on other forms of knowing, on what he calls: "the unveiling of our order and disorder." Being Queer in America is a posthuman agenda.

At one point in Wojnarowicz's book, he describes videotaping the death of his friend in order to give the man a virtual existence beyond the grave.



Of course, Wojnarowicz's writing is also a technology that extends the body beyond death and beyond the disintegration of the body. Technologies that remake the body also permeate and mediate our relations to the "real": the real is literally unimaginable or only imaginable within a technological society: technology makes the body queer, fragments it, frames it, cuts it, transforms desire; the age of the image creates desire as a screen: the TV screen is analogous to self, a screen that projects and is projected onto but only gives the illusion of depth.

The image of an AIDS-related death being captured on film returns us all too quickly to U2's world of Zoo TV and its invitation to the reader to wonder which side of the lens she is on. While a connection between U2, an international mega-band, and Wojnarowicz, a queer artist dying of AIDS, may be arbitrary and coincidental, an odd image binds the two together. On the ZOO TV tour, U2 sold T-shirts featuring a silk-screened photo by David Wojnarowicz that appears as the cover of *Close to the Knives*. The photo shows buffalo stampeding over a cliff, and on the U2 T-shirt the Wojnarowicz caption, "Smell the flowers while you can," is scrawled underneath. The buffalo jumping to their doom, slipping off the edge of the earth and leaving their prairie zoo, resembles the medical zoo produced by the AIDS pandemic. This zoo cages AIDS-infected bodies and then drives them over the cliff. Smelling the flowers while you can means not simply hedonistic abandon but staving off apocalypse with pleasure. And then making your apocalypse one that requires witnesses.

"I'm carrying this rage like a blood-filled egg and there's a thin line between the inside and the outside a thin line between thought and action and that line is simply made up of blood and muscle and bone" (Wojnarowicz 161). Wojnarowicz trips over the line between inside and outside; he finds the meaning of his slow death in the anger that eats away at the human and the body and asks not for vengeance but for massive change and recognition that nothing is the same when you are dying a political death. The self disintegrates in this queer narrative into a post-human rage for disorder and uncivil disobedience. For the queer narrator, rage is the difference between being and having; it is a call to arms, a desire that the human be roughly shoved into the next century and the next body and that we become posthuman without nostalgia and because we already are.

### Quakes: The After Shock

Bodies depend on a network of signifying relationships. Following the San Francisco earthquake of 1990, there was a sharp rise in the battering of women by their husbands and boyfriends. The poor and homeless suf-

fered disproportionately from the loss of their temporary shelters, often situated in old and substandard buildings, and from the diversion of social services. Nine months after the quake, area hospitals reported a sharp rise in the birth rate. In other words, the same people got fucked as usual, only more so. Far from being a "natural" event, the earthquake operated to confirm and reinforce the social distribution of violence. The discursive tremors in what had been considered the transhistorically stable ground of the body will not be so easily channeled.

Posthuman bodies never/always leave the womb. The dependence or interdependence of bodies on the material and discursive networks through which they operate means that the umbilical cords that supply us (without which we would die) are always multiple. The partial re-configurability of needs means that our navels are multiple as well. You can kill a significant portion of a country's inhabitants by disabling the country's "infrastructures" more economically than by shooting people; fertility treatments are less effective than tax incentives to produce babies; the Human Genome Project will do less to increase overall health than the redistribution of health care and wealth; changing how you walk and talk and dress and who and how you fuck changes your gender as well as surgery. These strategic assertions move the question from the dependence or contingency of bodies on the discursive networks in and by which they operate, to a refusal to distinguish absolutely or categorically between bodies and their material extensions.

Posthuman bodies were never in the womb. Bodies are determined and operated by systems whose reproduction is—sometimes partially but always irreducibly—asexual: capitalism, culture, professions, and institutions, and in fact sexuality itself. It is not merely that environmental factors are downloaded into the gene as the privileged mediator of bodily reproduction, but that the gene itself is everywhere. The localized and privileged gene promulgated by the Human Genome Project is a fetish because it hysterically displaces and condenses causality; hysterically because it serves to organize Big Science itself into the image of its fetish, an articulated control mechanism, each bit doing its part. If recent initiatives to locate the "origin" of violence in the "real" of the fetishized gene are matched, predictably, by equally laughable attempts to find the American violence gene in the "representational" space of television imagery; the diversionary repressive strategies that generate and are generated by these initiatives may not be so funny.

Against such initiatives, the current proliferation of books and articles on "the body" participate in a series of epistemic changes of which the body is both seismograph and epicenter. But the story that begins two hundred years ago with *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Making of the*

*Modern Body* and ends, as we speak, with "The Death of the Author," *The Closing of the American Mind*, and *The End of History* is, after all, only the story of a body of discourse that always hysterically believed that it would die if its definite article were cut off, or revealed to have been detachable all along.

In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault suggested that the late eighteenth-century shift in power/knowledge was succinctly enacted when doctors stopped asking their patients, "What is the matter with you?" and began to ask "Where does it hurt?" We add a third question: what is happening to your body?

Bodily masternarratives authorize a very narrow range of responses: that it is maturing or evolving or deteriorating or remaining the same, becoming dependent or independent; that it is threatened by, succumbing to or recovering from illness; that it is gaining or losing, for good or ill, various features or functions (weight, hair, muscles, mobility, etc.); that it is growing, reproducing, dying.

This range of authorized answers is *noise* for the purposes of our inquiry, and for most of what we feel is significant about what is happening to our bodies. What comes after the human is not another stage of evolution but a difference in kind. How is your body changing in kind? In small ways: I had my ear pierced (the topology of my body is changing; there's another hole all the way through it; my body is the earring of my earring). I got a tattoo (I participate in the cultural marking of my body). In other ways: it is changing its gender or its sexuality; that is, my sexual practices are re-configuring my body. I am becoming variously cyborgized (re-integrated with machine parts or across various networks). It is changing its dimensions, not by getting smaller or larger, but by being rhythmized across different sets of relations.

The transnationalization of culture has reached such a point that local traditions tend to be transformed (fossilized, commodified) into second-order phenomena: the bodies of our ancestors line the medium in which we now swim; the reef of culture is made of their skeletons. Those who resist the inroads of transnational capital and culture (in the name of national or ethnic integrity, appropriate technology, human-scale), and those who seek to make it habitable are not simply opposed, though articulations between them may be tendential; for example, those who find Mall Culture oppressively difference-leveling, and those who walk the Malls to recode and reconstitute them into a viable public sphere. Posthumanity is not about making an authentic culture or an organic community but about multiple viabilities.

When Marx imagined being able, in a postcapitalist utopia, to "fish in the morning, rear cattle in the afternoon and criticize in the evening, just as I wish, without ever becoming fisherman, farmer or critic" (160), he

imagined a world in which the division of labor would neither divide people from themselves nor from each other; a world of practices without identities. To be able to (insert whatever sexual practice you wish) without becoming gay or straight, man or woman, requires not a productivist revolution that demands more options (more sexualities and genders, more discursive hybrids), but one which queries and queers the ways that the options are articulated and policed.

Queer, cyborg, metametazoan, hybrid, PWA; bodies-without-organs, bodies-in-process, virtual bodies: in unvisualizable amniotic indeterminacy, and unfazed by the hype of their always premature and redundant annunciation, posthuman bodies thrive in the mutual deformations of totem and taxonomy. We have rehearsed the claim that the posthuman condition is upon us and that lingering nostalgia for a modernist or humanist philosophy of self and other, human and alien, normal and queer is merely the echo of a discursive battle that has already taken place—and the tinny futurism that often answers such nostalgia is the echo of an echo. We stake our claim between these echoes and their answers.

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