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Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future

Myra J. Seaman

The human long presumed by traditional Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment humanism is a subject (generally assumed male) who is at the center of his world (that is, *the* world); is defined by his supreme, utterly rational intelligence; does not depend (unlike his predecessor) upon a divine authority to make his way through the world but instead manipulates it in accord with his own wishes; and is a historically independent agent whose thought and action produce history.¹ It is *this* human—who is, as Tony Davies notes, “always singular, always in the present tense, . . . inhabit[ing] not a time or a place but a condition, timeless and unlocalised” (32)—that is the subject of traditional liberal humanism. His power and superiority inhere in his human essence. Yet in a posthumanist world, this human is an endangered species.

Such a statement is hardly news.² Foucault, in 1966 in *The Order of Things*, and Levi-Strauss, in 1962 in *The Savage Mind*, both revealed that “the human” had been invented by the Enlightenment when it “discovered” this supposedly sovereign subject. The ensuing denaturalization of this subject has challenged the ontological foundations on which traditional humanism, and thus much of Western society, has been based. The recognition that human subjectivity has been constructed by those who have claimed it as their exclusive feature has made room for alternative posthumanist philosophies.³ Posthumanism observes that there has never

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been one unified, cohesive “human,” a title that was granted by and to those with the material and cultural luxury to bestow upon themselves the faculties of “reason,” autonomous agency, and the privileges of “being human” (Davies 19; Hayles 286). As a result, not everyone whose biology would identify them as *homo sapiens* have “counted” as human (Fuss 2). Ideologically shaped distinctions have determined inclusion and exclusion, so that features with cultural significance, such as race and gender, have been misinterpreted as biologically significant and used as markers of supposed superiority or inferiority within the “species.” Posthumanism rejects the assumed universalism and exceptional *being* of Enlightenment humanism and in its place substitutes mutation, variation, and *becoming*.

The posthuman subject involves a critical deconstruction of the universal, liberal humanist subject, with the thought of Freud, Marx, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, and Derrida, among others, as central influences in this deconstruction (Badmington 4-10). Yet, outside of theoretical circles, the posthuman subject is often described as a physical counterpart (and successor) to the universal human. This alternative, or extended, human appears in popular culture as a corporeal being whose existence is the hypothetical result of certain developments in techno-science. It is a deliberately engineered form, the imagined product of breakthroughs, both fictional and real, in genetic manipulation, reproductive technologies, and virtual reality, and it reveals certain cultural anxieties about embodiment—perhaps most especially when that embodiment is rejected or overcome in the attempt to release a supposedly “pure” cognition. Embodiment always troubles the human “person,” and is a highly slippery entity despite its apparently concrete givenness. Caroline Walker Bynum writes,

Sometimes *body*, *my body*, or *embodiedness* seems to refer to limit or placement, whether biological or social. That is, it refers to natural, physical structures (such as organ systems or chromosomes), to environment or locatedness, boundary or definition, or to role (such as gender, race, class) as constraint. Sometimes—on the other hand—it seems to refer precisely to lack of limits, that is, to desire, potentiality, fertility, or sensuality/sexuality . . . or to person or identity as malleable representation or construct (1995b, 5).

The second view—with the human “person” a “malleable representation or construct” and embodiment as unconstrained—has many affinities with theoretical posthumanism. The inherent pliability of the culturally produced body is celebrated by cultural theorists such as Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, who describe posthuman bodies as “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. . . . The human itself is no longer part of ‘the family of man’ but a zoo of posthumanities” (3). Theoretical posthumanism transforms the humanist subject into *many* subjects, in part by releasing the body from the constraints placed on it not only by nature but also by humanist ideology, and allowing it to roam free and “join” with other beings, animate and inanimate.

The popular culture posthuman, by contrast, envisions the challenges to the human as largely corporeal ones resulting from our supposedly intractable situatedness in the so-called natural world. In this case, what is called for is not a reconceptualization of what “counts” as human, but rather, an entirely new and supposedly better human form. In this view, the body limits and constrains individual freedom. Physical alterations—many of them quite radical and risky—are pursued not, however, to simply replace the weak body but to attain an extended lifespan and improved capabilities for the already-existing embodied human self. Modern technoscience, especially as depicted in the news media, encourages us to understand that self in terms of scientific discovery: we conceive of our personalities and dispositions as a genetic inheritance and chemical mixture, our brain as a computer hard drive, our memories as a series of snapshots, our minds as processors of encounters and observations that can be reprogrammed or even erased. Our bodies are machines to be fine-tuned and perfected through add-ons. So while technological and biological modifications to the body are intended to improve its inadequacies, their use indicates an investment in a distinctly individual and already human identity.⁴ Likewise, in the posthuman as it is imagined in popular culture, the bodily modifications are pursued because of the superior capabilities they can add to the already-established self. The “idea of person” indicated by such a desire reflects the “idea of person” in the Middle Ages: “not a concept of soul escaping body or soul using body [but] a concept of self in which physicality was integrally bound to sensation, emotion, reasoning,

identity” (Bynum 1995a, 11). The theoretical posthumanist conception of “person or identity as malleable representation or construct” is adamantly refused by popular posthumanism: the forms of our person may change, but identity—typically expressed in terms of “sensation, emotion, and reasoning”—persist.

Popular posthumanism cannot avoid recognizing, however, that altering the body through mechanical and biomedical improvements necessarily challenges our sense of identity, “integrally bound” as it is to “physicality” (Bynum 1995a, 11). Long-familiar processes and events such as aging, disease, and accident are made aberrant and deviant (Turner 28–29), and previously sturdy expectations of selfhood are shaken. As expectations of body change, expectations of selfhood change as well. This is the appeal but also the threat addressed by popular culture engagements with the posthuman. The pervasiveness of such a connection was exhibited in Rush Limbaugh’s response to Michael J. Fox’s appearance, during the 2006 mid-term elections, in a series of political ads supporting candidates in favor of stem cell research. In these ads, the symptoms of Fox’s Parkinson’s disease (typically controlled pharmaceutically when Fox is acting) were fully evident. On his radio program, Limbaugh attacked Fox by saying, “He is exaggerating the effects of the disease. He’s moving all around and shaking and it’s purely an act. . . . Either he didn’t take his medication or he’s acting” (qtd. in Montgomery C01). Limbaugh argued that Fox was performing, rather than being his natural or “true” self, by allowing his disease to reveal itself through its symptoms; the honest thing, the most authentic thing, according to Limbaugh, would be to cover up or alleviate the symptoms through medical treatment. His unmediated physical state thus becomes false, disingenuous, because medicine makes it avoidable. Not only Fox’s body but his very identity is altered by the disease. Such changes through disease leave us uncertain of the source of our identity; Bynum wonders for us all, “Are we genes, bodies, brains, minds, experiences, memories, or souls?” (2001, 165).

As reflected in popular culture depictions of the posthuman, this uncertainty is responded to with the assertion that although all of these possible features of our person can be modified (except, it is maintained, the “soul”), the experiences of the body—perceived through sensation and processed through emotion—remain the locus of individual identity. The self thus envisioned is most readily identifiable through its affect, a feature

that holds open even the biomechanically modified human to a vulnerability seen as essential to maintaining humanness. The techno-scientifically enhanced human—and the line between human and posthuman that it evokes but cannot define with exact precision—provides the opportunity to investigate those qualities supposedly associated exclusively with the human. It further reveals a desire to find a human identity that remains constant within a flexible and mutating body, and a key feature that tends to endure, in such scenarios, is emotion, especially as a conduit for significant encounters with and incorporation into the world. If the brain is a hard drive and the body a programmable machine, what distinguishes one human from another is the unique way these “parts” function to express a unique and holistic self that always remains just to the side of any hardware that might try to define it.

Medieval persons conceptualized such scenarios, although in different terms; they, too, examined and extended their selfhood through a blend of the embodied self with something seemingly external to it—not the products of scientific discovery, but Christ, as well as the promised embodiment after death his sacrifice ensured. In this way, the contemporary popular posthuman is (perhaps surprisingly) tied to the premodern, the time before the “discovery” of the human that thus might be labeled “prehuman.” In both cases (medieval and modern) the posthuman is not a distinct “other,” an entirely new species; instead, the posthuman is a hybrid that is a more developed, more advanced, or more powerful version of the existing self. The concept of the posthuman revealed in medieval and contemporary imaginative texts is less an inevitable state of being than it is a “taxonomic category” that suggests what people mean by “the human” in a given place and time (Graham 42). As Diana Fuss claims, it shows “the human” to be an incredibly “elastic fiction,” a quality exhibited in its ability to “mutate many times over” as the characteristics determining inclusion and exclusion have been repeatedly “redrafted to accommodate new systems of classification and new discourses of knowledge” (2). Bynum argues that twelfth-century thinkers viewed change as a development of the already-extant form into a new version of itself, rather than a complete change into something it was not already (1995a, 8). This view is shared by the contemporary popular posthuman as well; while features are adapted and weaknesses improved through scientific application, the self is not lost but enhanced, made not into another species but ultimately more

like itself, yet better. Through the hybridization of human and supplement, what is supposedly best about the human remains—its supposedly always open susceptibility, rooted in its unpredictable emotional responsiveness.

As Bynum, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and others have demonstrated, a fluid conception of the human such as that represented by the contemporary hybrid posthuman—part human, part mechanical or biomedical adjunct—is hardly the new and unnatural offspring of postmodern thought and modern science. Cohen writes that theorists tend to use “posthuman” to describe a “challenge to the boundedness of flesh,” the possibility for which was supposedly provided only recently by modern techno-science (2003, xiii). However, in the medieval imagination, the human body was commonly blended with the non-human in stories and also in images in manuscript marginalia depicting werewolves, hybrid ox-men, humano-floral mixes, and the like. Medieval werewolf stories, in particular, demonstrate the resistance of the supposedly essential human self to full absorption into non-humanness, particularly when considered in contrast to stories about werewolves in ancient and more modern traditions, where werewolves often threaten human survival and bring to vivid life the violent and rapacious beast latent within the human, often at the expense of the human identity which is ultimately overtaken by the supposedly “alter” animal self. In contrast, medieval werewolves tend to be “sympathetic” (Bynum 2001, 94)—they are human victims who manage to maintain in their wolvisch bodies a rational mentality and human comportment. The werewolf’s physical state is not reflective of his inner corruption but rather offers him the opportunity to reveal his true (human) nature, through the great contrast between his appearance and his unexpectedly humane actions.

In his twelfth-century *History and Topography of Ireland*, Gerald of Wales relates a famous story about a priest’s encounter with a werewolf and his wife who ask the priest to give her the viaticum, which the priest agrees to do, but only after the she-wolf’s skin is peeled back to reveal a woman inside.⁵ To be a suitable sacramental recipient, her humanity must be confirmed. Gerald uses his example of the she-wolf to investigate whether such beings are human or brute animal, relying for judgment on Augustine’s example, in his *City of God*, of humans whose bodies become bestial while their minds remain human, having the capacity to reason (see Mills 33–34).⁶ This split, in Gerald’s story, is what permits the characters’

inclusion in the Christian community. The potentially more radical hybridity—a being both human and wolf simultaneously—is only suggested, for once the wolf skin is removed a complete human, both body and soul, remains. The wolf body was only superficial, like a suit of clothing, of a piece with itself and not physically integrated into the human inside.

In werewolf stories of the sort found in romances such as the fourteenth-century Middle English *William of Palerne* and Marie de France's twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Bisclavret*, the werewolf is more of a true hybrid, exhibiting human and wolf characteristics that appear interwoven, rather than being a human body and soul disguised in animal skins.⁷ However, the human nature of the individual is still exhibited amidst or over the hybridity, expressed through the human person's affect and reason rather than through his physical form. The werewolf is both man and wolf, not one or the other or one after the other; yet human nature—in these cases, a courteous nature—dominates over and directs the wolf's supposedly more ferocious instincts, which submit to the rational and sensitive "person" directing his movements and gestures.

In the opening lines of *Bisclavret*, Marie de France raises the specter of a monstrous transformation in which the bestial *does* overpower the human, when she explains that *her* werewolf, a Breton *bisclavret*, is not to be confused with the ferocious and rabidly inhumane *garulf* of Norman legend, who is a *beste salvage* ("savage beast") who devours humans. Marie's *bisclavret*, to whom she never assigns a proper name, is a victim of betrayal (twice over) who behaves not like a murderous monster and not even like a vicious wolf. The narrative traces the betrayal of an unnamed knight by his wife, who out of fear of his alter animal ego, arranges for his clothing to be taken while he is in werewolf form, thereby preventing him from returning to human body. It is important to note that even though the knight must regularly turn into a wolf, he always goes away from home to undergo this transformation, so as to leave his wife and household untroubled and unharmed. After being abandoned to his wolf form and all alone in the woods, he is recognized by a king for his noble demeanor and human-like gestures; the king goes so far as to publicly declare the werewolf rational and to make him a member of his household. After repeatedly proving the validity of the king's assessment, the werewolf uncharacteristically attacks two people who are visiting the court, surprising everyone who witnesses the assault, but only until it is learned

that the violence is not unprovoked bestial aggression but rather a case of rightful vengeance against his wife and her new husband, who was her accomplice in the earlier theft of his clothing. Thus the wolf's one act of brutality is acknowledged as evidence of his "real" human nature, in that he acted as a wronged husband requiring justice. The *bisclavret* has a complete human nature, as exhibited by his reasoned actions and courteous behavior, which nevertheless are expressed through his lupine form. Human and wolf work together to pursue justice, both public and private.

William of Palerne centers on two human-animal characterizations, one of which is a true hybrid, the other superficial: the werewolf is simultaneously wolf and man, with his two natures united in the pursuit of his (human) ends, while the hero and heroine of the story simply dress up as various animals to avoid capture. But whether the animal appearance is genuine or feigned, both reveal the consistency of what medieval English culture considered to be an ideal human nature. In this complicated narrative of noble sons wrongly robbed of their inheritance, one royal son, the heir to the Spanish throne, Alphonse, is changed by his stepmother into a werewolf so that her own son will become king. In this form, Alphonse rescues another wronged heir, William of Palerne, whose uncle attempts to have him assassinated. William is then taken in first by a cowherd and later by the Emperor of Rome, whose daughter, Melior, becomes William's beloved. When she is to be married off to the royal Greek heir, she and William escape, hidden (still wearing their noble clothing) inside white bear skins. Incapable of caring for themselves in the wild, they are fed and protected from predators by Alphonse the werewolf, who had previously rescued and raised William in his early youth. Later, their bear exteriors having been discovered by their pursuers to be disguises, the lovers switch to deerskins provided by the werewolf. The werewolf—who William proclaims is more human than he himself is—is indeed a wolf, with wolf instincts for hunting and protection against predators, unlike William and Melior, who are clearly just animal imposters: they can't feed themselves and are easy prey. The werewolf must repeatedly preserve and rescue them. However, he also is obviously and fundamentally human: he rationally determines how to distract those seeking William and Melior (with his means for doing so depending on his instinctual wolf skills to distract and lose the hunting dogs), and he helps the young couple because he recognizes their true nobility and pities their plight. Based on their ex-

periences with him, the lovers decide the werewolf is human, regardless of his physique. In the man transformed into a werewolf, whose hybrid state is the result of a curse placed on him by his stepmother, and in the threatened lovers, who must be disguised as animals in order to hide their nobility from their pursuers, the human is forced by others' inhumane behavior to take on animal form, but its self-identity is never fully replaced or covered over. Such stories present the possibility of physical boundary crossing but confirm the constancy of what medieval audiences believed was an essential human nature, one that was centered on reason and courtesy in Marie's story, and on noble affectivity in *William of Palerne*. For medieval audiences the flexibility of the physical form was not matched by a dangerous fluidity of mind or nature. Instead, certain identities remain stable at the "core" of the external, shifting body.

This idea of a stability of human identity in the Middle Ages can be seen as rooted in the medieval conception of the relationship between human beings and the divine. For medieval readers, the unchanging "core" of identity is made manifest by the shape-shifting of Christ who becomes man, body and blood, then bread and wine, with no change in his divine essence. Hybridity is essential to Christ's participation in the human, as he is both a human person embodied in a living history and also a divine transhistorical entity. In this regard, he models a posthumanity available to Christians who could share in his transhistoricity by ingesting pieces of his body and by believing in the resurrection of their bodies after death. Blendings of the human and inhuman—however discomfited many commentators showed themselves to be by such hybrids⁸—thus confirmed and authorized medieval conceptions of human nature, because Christ's hybrid embodiment as both human and God left undiminished his divine nature, a view that was officially supported by the Church. To that end, it declared heretical the Monophysite view that Christ had two wholly distinct natures, with his human nature being incomplete and his divine complete. A parallel view promoted by Nestorius held that these two natures are distinct but that the human is the more important, and it, too, was deemed heretical. Such attempts to discover a hierarchy within Christ's hybrid identity were refused by the Church in favor of a single, unified, humano-divine being. The apparently contradictory elements co-exist, producing a rich hybrid, which is nevertheless "one." If Christ's human self were only

metaphorical, or inferior, or purely human, theological claims for the unity and particularity of the individual in the afterlife would be lost.

The significance of that individual embodied identity was, within medieval Christianity, endorsed by the doctrine of bodily resurrection; as Bynum notes, the return of the physical self after death “makes the body crucial to the self in a way that it is not in most other cultural traditions” (1999). Hope in what Bynum terms the spatio-temporal continuity of individual identity, revealed in contemporary debates about the possibility of mind uploading,⁹ for example, was essential for medieval people as well. It inspired much of the period’s extensive theorizing about the logistics of individual resurrection. The issue now as then depends upon views toward the relationship between the tangible and intangible elements of personhood. In the Middle Ages, the fragmentation of a singular individual identity, a central question in debates about the doctrine of bodily resurrection, was rejected. From the very early days of Christianity, resurrection depended upon the extension of the self from this world to the next via the earthly body, which required (and assured) its material and spiritual integrity, even to, as Augustine was found of repeating, “the last hair on its head.”¹⁰ Theologians debated, for instance, how much of an individual body would need to be available after death (particularly a death involving dismemberment or digestion) in order for resurrection to be possible. Jerome and Augustine could not escape Tertullian’s concern with the re-assemblage of body pieces at resurrection (Bynum 1995a, 104), and the glory of resurrection was presented not in terms of a movement beyond the material through release into the spiritual, but instead in terms of the complete restoration of the body inhabited while alive, even with its scars, making it finally and permanently safe from further corruption. Bynum sees modern concerns over the integrity of the individual self in relation to a particular body, despite modern technology that allows for all sorts of “body-hopping,” as a product of the later Middle Ages, with its sense of personhood as comprising a “particular individual (not an essence)” and “a unity (not a mind/body duality)” (1995b, 33). Medieval views on resurrection required a continuity of identity, conceived of in terms of the continuity of the individual body that is necessary to sustain, or make palpable, a unique soul, or mind (see Bynum 1995a, 30, 37).

Because individual Christian personhood resided in both body and soul, both were involved in intimate communion with God. As Bynum

notes, in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries a new attitude toward the body accompanied Christocentric affective devotion, in which physicality was not an obstacle but a path to union with the divine (1988, 51). The existence of a perfect self is assured by the perfection of Christ's human body and is made possible through the ingestion and incorporation of Christ's body in the Eucharist (which does not decay, and thus protects human bodies from decay upon resurrection) (Bynum 1995a, 111). In 1428, a woman accused of Lollardy maintained that eating the Host "de-file[d] and debase[d] him by a passage through the most inward, the most profanely, and profoundly dissolving of the body's mediums" (Beckwith 24), but the Church disagreed, seeing ingestion and distribution as producing humanity's holy union with Christ. The act elevated the Christian, rather than degrading Christ, just as the Incarnation raised the human rather than diminishing the divine. Sarah Beckwith argues that the creative brilliance of this conceit lies in the way it does *not* "create the transcendent through simple denial of the immanent, but rather [makes] of the finite, of the immanent, of the physical and mortal its very source of generative power" (114).

Christ's affect was emphasized through his physical weakness, with his body an object of adoration that depended upon its ongoing violation, on the renewal of his sacrifice (Beckwith 4). The medieval meditation on the Seven Wounds of Christ, for example, interprets these wounds as "human attributes [that] came to emphasize his vulnerability" (Turner 11). But he was not, of course, *only* body, although his affectivity could be readily expressed through his human form, and it is this quality that perhaps most fully articulates his humanity: Aquinas, through Aristotle, Bynum explains, "connect[ed] wonder with pleasure and . . . associate[d] it with a desire that culminates not so much in knowledge as in *encounter with majesty*." An encounter, not knowledge itself, is the ultimate goal. From this, Aquinas concluded that "the angel of the Annunciation shocked the Virgin because 'wonder is the best way to grab the attention of the soul' and insisted that *Christ's capacity to wonder was not an indication of discomfort but a proof of his humanity*" (Bynum 2001, 50–51; emphasis added). Christ shares the affective responses of his followers, rather than being above those responses. Because he looks and (generally) behaves like them, but also because he *feels* like them, his followers know they can be *joined* to, and *extended* through, him.

In the fifteenth-century autobiography of Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, we can witness the very personal relationship with Christ that Kempe develops, which strikingly reveals the union of the human and the divine through the emotional experience of suffering in the world, and of being vulnerable to the world's depredations. Kempe says that Christ told her, "I am in you, and you in me. And those who hear you, they hear the voice of God" (18), and thus positions his divinity as situated in a spiritual-physical fusion with her. Kempe's embodied and even sensual participation in Christ's posthumanity presented her readers with a voluptuous hybridity for which they were unprepared, despite the Church's promotion of such a communion. Indeed, Kempe's *Book* provides the details of her trial in Leicester, England for heresy, as well as her neighbors' fear and condemnation of her. Hers is such an intense case of union through the incarnation that the textual representation of Kempe's third-person subjectivity depends entirely upon her "imaging of the body of Christ" (Beckwith 5). In her first vision of him, Christ comes "in likeness of a man, most seemly, most beautiful, and most amiable that ever might be seen with man's eye" (7–8). Through Christ's beautiful, superlative body Kempe understands God's goodness. Consistently, she focuses on God's manhood rather than his godhood, explaining that the former is approachable, the latter frightening. When God asks for her hand in marriage in Rome, she "kept silence in her soul and answered not thereto, for she was full sore afraid of the Godhead, and she had no knowledge of the dalliance of the Godhead, for all her love and all her affection was set on the manhood of Christ" (63). She does not reduce God to mere man in her focus on Christ's "manhood," a gesture that would affiliate her with the Monophysite heresy; instead, the emphasis in her articulation of her communion with Christ is on multiple and shared identities. Christ tells her that "those who worship you, they worship me; those who despise you, they despise me. . . . I am in you, and you in me" (18). Christ and Kempe, like Christ's manhood and his divinity, are an indissoluble hybrid "one."

Kempe attains this communion with Christ through a type of mental illness—as she puts it, "through [losing] her reason and wits, for a long time until our Lord by grace restored her again" (3). By losing, or letting go of, what most identifies her as human, her reason, she experiences a posthumanity in which she is no longer held back by temptation but instead "was perfectly drawn and stirred to enter the way of high perfection,

which perfect way Christ our Savior in his proper person exemplified” (Kempe 3). In order to experience this state, Kempe must not reason but rather she must *feel*—be “drawn and stirred”—confirming Aquinas’s description of Christ’s affectivity as revealing his affinity with humanity. Kempe’s state is supposedly beyond human, yet it remains utterly human as well: embodied, and intensely physical. She does not lose her humanity but she does become something not *only* human, something that, as Christ assures her, shares in his simultaneously divine and corporal being.

For those such as Kempe living in the premodern world, Christ’s embodiment of the divine in human form not only grounded the truth of the Word but also revealed the divinity available to the human; the eventual salvation promised through the incarnate intervention of the divine in human history thus elevated the subject (individually and collectively) above its mortal and corruptible state. For medieval Christians, the promise of participation in Christ’s human-divine hybridity, in which the body could be exceeded yet not entirely left behind, would have offered a seemingly liberating image of the posthuman. Similarly, the contemporary techno-scientific posthuman offers another kind of emancipation, promising the self—typically conceptualized in the form of the brain or mind—freedom from the limitations of the body. This techno-scientific fantasy has much in common with liberal humanism, in its “unalloyed faith in the primacy of the Enlightenment subject—rational, autonomous, self-determining” (Graham 159), and it extends that faith by pulling the curtain back on a world in which individuals can direct their evolution and subvert their mortality through mechanical intervention. The aim is to free “the essential, rational self [to] endure unimpeded” (Graham 9), akin to the promise of resurrection offered the medieval Christian but based on very different ideas about what that freedom is.¹¹

The contemporary popular culture posthuman shares more with the medieval posthuman than with its historical peers: theoretical and scientific posthumanist discourses. It resists the loss of certain individually bounded identities celebrated by theoretical posthumanism and fears the reduction of self to the “all mind” hard drive promised by techno-science.¹² By contrast, the popular culture posthuman exhibits certain anxieties about the possibility of becoming *too* posthuman, which calls to mind the response to Margery’s celebration of her hybridity expressed by her medieval neighbors, who shared her faith and hope yet feared some-

thing of their “selves” would be lost in the final transformation. These apprehensions are also apparent in popular culture, where Francis Fukuyama’s concern with the end of history is often articulated: “[T]he most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a ‘posthuman’ stage of history” (7). Techno-science fantasy narratives tend to be more optimistic about the possibilities offered by the posthuman than is Fukuyama, but they also reveal a desire to protect, or mourn the loss of, something long associated with personhood (since before the “discovery” of the human in the Enlightenment) of which science often seems neglectful: the emotional self.¹³

Fictional considerations of the posthuman future generally revolve around nightmare scenarios (most familiarly in the form of posthumans such as Darth Vader and Robocop and the Terminator), often employing a version of the apocalyptic posthuman described by Elaine Graham as “the fully technologized successor species to organic *Homo sapiens*” (9) and by Katherine Hayles as “a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” wherein there is no “natural self” (3). This extreme, wholly other posthuman, though a common fixture in science fiction, remains at the periphery of texts which center on a hybrid posthuman who retains a very familiar “natural self” and is an extension of rather than “successor” to the human being. This hybrid posthuman suggests possibilities of adaptation and continuation of the human, not only in resistance to but even *within* the posthuman, as a synthesis produced through enhancement rather than a full metamorphosis. Despite the threat presented in such narratives by technologies often spun out of control, the hybrid posthuman possessed of a “natural self” regularly expresses a faith in the resilience of the human and optimistically affirms that in the posthuman world the self is retained and invested with the potential to sustain humanity even in its newly developed form. The resilient characteristic affiliated by these texts with the human—typically presented in terms of “human nature”—is not the quality most esteemed by liberal humanism or the scientific posthuman, the “universal instrument” of Cartesian reason (Badmington 5); rather, it is an embodied affectivity. While this affectivity makes the still-human (or, still *somewhat*-human) characters vulnerable to manipulation, suffering, and possible

extinction, it is also the one quality that allows them to overcome those who threaten to extinguish and replace the human.

Such narratives react against a techno-posthuman world in which the key components of the human—body and mind—are viewed as inherently flawed, with science as the rescuer of the human from its mortal self. In this world, the human becomes an assemblage of parts, conceived of in terms of a machine that can be fully understood, operated, repaired, and redesigned. Richard Dawkins exudes the delight of scientists that what used to be described even in scientific discourse as the “irreducible mysterious essence of life” has been replaced: “we’ve become wholly mechanistic when talking about life,” a situation he calls “most thrilling and exciting” (“Interview”). The “mysterious essence” is now a machine. Furthermore, for each “part” of this machine science establishes an ideal operating standard that, in a myriad of ways, an individual part can fail to meet. The role of science is to correct this failure, a failure that increasingly is viewed as resulting from genetic flaws, biological error. What has traditionally been accepted as “normal” or inevitable—shortsightedness, obesity, age-related illness, cancer, a tendency to addiction, or the inability of a boy to sit still and focus—is pathologized and offered up to science as yet another opportunity to perfect the species. In this scenario, science deems the human an unfinished and inherently malfunctioning organism, or clockwork, a view resisted in certain imaginative depictions of a posthuman world, in which an all too human vulnerability defies science and is endowed with redemptive and even salvific qualities, even while it is shown to be weak.

In the new incarnation of *Battlestar Galactica* (a very different creature than the on-the-verge-of-camp series from the late 1970s), the distinction between the humans and the scientifically produced Cylons is most evident in the Cylons’ physical, psychological, and cultural supremacy, which appears to make them nearly invulnerable. The humans of the series are the descendants of a people whose scientific prowess allowed them to produce the Cylons who, over time, evolved to become their peers and even superiors, sharing more with the gods the humans worship than with the humans themselves.¹⁴ The Cylons were originally created as robotic soldiers: shiny silver killing machines, towering overhead with a single “eye” that continuously scans the environment, seeking only humans to kill.¹⁵ The Cylons were programmed so effectively that they evolved at a

much more rapid pace than did their creators, such that each of the qualities they were endowed with developed to an extreme the humans neither intended nor anticipated. In the process, the most evolved Cylons become humanoid, with a biology and psychology that mimic people so closely that only a complex computer test can distinguish the humans from their products. These Cylon bodies and minds, however, lack many of the weaknesses of their producers' bodies and minds, for their "bodies" can be replaced through reincarnation (a kind of material replication) and their "minds," which are conversant with computers, are unimpeded by a mortal body. The Cylons even become culturally independent, to the point of developing a strong evangelical monotheism that motivates their encounters with the humans. The narrative paints the humans as less evolved not only in their relative physical fragility but also in their apparently inferior cultural structures: they are nearly tribal in their polytheistic religious expression, their supposedly universal morality is relative and self-centered, and their application of their judicial system is repeatedly shown to be hypocritical and cynical.

And yet the human is so precious that the central concern of the series is the survival of the species in the face of repeated Cylon attacks. Human nature is so esteemed by the narrative, in fact, that Cylon evolution is, in the current third season of the series, in the process of producing what appears to be a hybrid of the humans who created them and the inhuman machines the Cylons originally were. These humanoid Cylons have certain significant limitations, physical (they are susceptible to viruses) and emotional (they love, and they have even betrayed their own kind for this love). While the first generation of Cylon was all machine, and the second human in appearance, the newest species is experiencing life *as* humans, which is to say, biologically and *affectively*. Their evolution seems to be taking them to a hybrid post-machinity, with the potential that they will ultimately become human, affirming human nature as the most desirable possible form, despite its many imperfections.

Battlestar Galactica attempts to identify the most salient features of humanity by exploring changes experienced by a posthuman other as it *becomes* human. Other narratives trace similar features through the changes humans might experience when taking on extra-human features. The 1998 film *Dark City* focuses on the Strangers, a frightening alien race "as old as time itself" that looks nearly human (in Gothic-Victorian attire,

with a mix of 1950s Martian). They are not posthuman in the way the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica* are (though their mechanical humanoid form evokes the post-apocalyptic posthuman), for they are not the products of human techno-science, but of some alien evolution in a distant world. The human protagonist, John Murdoch, unknowingly becomes a hybrid posthuman as a result of the Strangers' experimentation on him—an experimentation they are conducting in order to preserve themselves from extinction. Despite their enviable ability to “alter physical reality by will alone,” as the human doctor-narrator explains, “they were dying, their civilization was in decline, and so they abandoned their world, seeking a cure for their own mortality.” They seek this cure in the form of the human soul—the necessary component they somehow recognize they lack—by performing experiments on unsuspecting humans they have transported to a wholly fabricated world, the Dark City, whose landscape the Strangers control by collectively focusing their telekinetic energies on machines they have installed deep underground. They then treat each person as a “blank slate” and physically inject a series of memories into his or her mind (via a syringe to the brain), completely unbeknownst to the subject of the experiment. As the doctor-narrator explains, the Strangers are “trying to divine what makes us unique.” They do this by changing all aspects of an individual's identity—personal history, family, job, social status, etc.—to see what remains constant. As Mr. Hand, leader of the Strangers, explains at the moment of his own death, the Strangers “fashioned this city on stolen memories. Different eras, different pasts, all rolled into one. Each night we revise it, refine it, in order to learn . . . about you and your fellow inhabitants, what makes you human.” The Strangers seek a constant essence they assume is humans' defining characteristic.

The usual focus of Enlightenment humanism on the mind's capacity for reason is replaced in this narrative with the soul's capacity for emotion. Human behavior is depicted as naturally and inevitably rooted in feeling, which the film shows to be the key characteristic of the soul, as represented via Murdoch's hybrid posthumanity. Murdoch's identity is the result of an interrupted experiment that gave him the powers of the Strangers without removing his human identity: his particular individuality was lost, but his human nature was not replaced by Stranger nature. Like the Cylons, he is a case of science gone awry, yet (like the evolving Cylons themselves) his victimhood allows him a productively hybrid

posthumanity: because the experiment was interrupted, he can manipulate the physical world at will while also retaining his soul, as is exhibited through his capacity to love irrationally and to risk himself for the sake of his fellow humans, present and future. As a result, he is what the Strangers were trying to become. Unlike them, however, he understands the importance of making seemingly irrational yet principled choices, as is revealed through his decision love his wife, Emma, despite his discovery that the entire relationship was artificially constructed by the Strangers through false memories injected into Emma and himself. It is not simply a matter of Murdoch's having achieved the Strangers' "superhuman" skills that makes him capable of fighting them; it is the combination of those skills with his emotional orientations.

Murdoch confirms the narrative's investment in affect as the vital human capacity that the Strangers seek, in the form of the soul, although the Strangers fail to recognize it as such. In his final confrontation with Mr. Hand, who explains, "Your imprint is not agreeable with my kind. But I wanted to know what it was like. How you feel," Murdoch responds, "You wanted to know what it was about us that made us human. But you're not going to find it here [pointing to his head]. You were looking in the wrong place." His belief in love, which will not guarantee his survival—deliberately and knowingly choosing a pseudo-love over reason—produces his humanity. The movie's classic romance conclusion, with the hero and heroine reunited and starting their life together (albeit in a constructed landscape) shows that love, regardless of the lack of authenticity of their memories and geography, makes them human. The Strangers cannot develop this capacity, not because they are not hardwired as humans but because they think the soul is a tangible quality of the mind rather than, as Murdoch explains and demonstrates, an intangible quality of the heart, which, technically speaking, is a human fiction.

The film appears to imply that, unlike Murdoch, scientists have a tendency to devalue and deny the affective capacities that produce their very humanity. The Strangers reveal themselves to be operating not only from a liberal humanist worldview, in which an unchanging human nature directs behavior, but also from a techno-scientific perspective in which that human nature can be investigated and understood by taking it apart. The film confirms the first of these assumptions (there is something so universally essential to human nature that it cannot be eradicated by science), but

challenges the last in that there is something opaque about an essential human nature that cannot be *seen* as a “moving part,” nor mechanized. The film depicts the Strangers as artists, through the fictional tableaux they make for the characters they have so carefully constructed, yet they are incapable of learning from, or appropriately valuing, their art. They have faith only in science, and that prevents them from developing or imagining for themselves a soul. The human doctor shares this limitation: he is physiologically human, yet unlike Murdoch he uses his intellect alone (which allows him to collude with the Strangers despite their obviously evil aims). An image of the doctor performing experiments on a rat in a large maze makes a direct equation between the Strangers and today’s scientists: both seek scientific “answers” that will preserve them from decay and destruction and do so through controlled (and cruel) experimentation on living subjects. Both represent liberal humanism’s esteemed rationality, while also revealing techno-science’s insufficient ability to *feel*.

The hybrid posthuman represented in both *Battlestar Galactica* and *Dark City* is one that serves not to support a “new ontological state” but to highlight what the texts argue are centrally intractable human qualities, just as medieval werewolf stories did. *Dark City* expresses, moreover, a resistance to science’s distrust of the intangible, that which cannot (currently, at least) be understood, explained, and manipulated by science. Richard Dawkins describes religion, for instance, as a “by-product” of a “psychological disposition” in humans—more specifically, what he calls a “psychological weakness”—toward “believ[ing] things that they would like to be true even if there is no evidence for them” (“Interview”). *Dark City* and *Battlestar Galactica* confirms that this tendency *is* a disposition among human beings, but one that despite its capacity for making them gullible is also the one quality that truly sets them apart, individually and collectively, and provides value in their lives, no matter how vulnerable those lives might be as a result.

Kazuo Ishiguro’s 2006 novel *Never Let Me Go*, set in the late twentieth century, is narrated by a clone named Kathy whose body was scientifically produced as a site for growing organs to be “harvested” for the preservation of “normal” humans threatened by disease or other physical trauma. The narrative traces the psychological development of three young clones in particular who form a lasting friendship: Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth. They are raised and live together at Halisham, a boarding school (which is

a type of orphanage), where they grapple with the great divide between their understanding of themselves as humans and their society's consideration of them as non-humans—as mere bodies lacking deep interior selves or souls, artificial products of a human science whose sole purpose is to extend the lives of “genuine” humans. The clones are ultimately constrained by a system which demands that they contribute their bodies (which involves certain death, or “completion,” as it is called), as their major organs are “donated” one by one in a sequence organized to delay their death for maximum harvesting opportunities. Moreover, they are expected to donate their living services as well: most clones spend at least some time serving as “carers,” or caretakers, to other clones whose organs are being surgically removed. Both the humans and the clones they produce participate in an oppressive posthumanity: the clones (against their will) as the techno-scientific posthuman product, and the humans, willfully, through their acceptance that their own existence depends upon and justifies this system of the enforced service (and deaths) of others.

Both groups claim humanity, but only those who were not “artificially” produced are free to do as they choose. By focusing the novel on the experiences and feelings of the clones—represented through Kathy's narration of her memories and experiences, especially with her closest friends, Ruth and Tommy—Ishiguro makes clear that their identity is no different from that of the humans who created them, or those of us who are reading their story; they are concerned with competition (Ruth continually manipulates Kathy to test her loyalty), sex (Kathy anxiously tries to prove that her great interest in sex, which she perceives as unusual and undesirable in a woman, is an inherited predisposition), and the quest for an individual identity (Tommy struggles throughout his time at the school against his reputation for lacking artistic skill and is the favorite target of bullies). Their experiences are wholly indistinguishable from those presented by any modern narrative about children growing up in an institutional setting, discovering life for themselves, based loosely on what they are told (or, in many cases, allowed to believe) by the few adults who chaperone and educate them. Kathy, like the narrators in many of Ishiguro's novel, reveals a tendency to self-delusion as a coping mechanism. In fact, this quality is exhibited by all of the asexually produced characters, who develop a variety of stories to explain their experiences and observations and to give themselves the hope they need in order to survive the dehumanizing world

into which they have been thrust but about which they have only ever been given half-truths.

A key myth develops for the students as they approach the end of their education, which is followed by a short transitional period as they prepare to start their time as “donors,” that is to say, as they approach their death. Their desire to live, one of the many topics they silently place out of bounds in order to be able to carry on, takes the form of a belief in the possibility of a deferment for those who can “prove” that they are in love. This myth piggybacks on a myth that sustained them in their earlier childhood, when they were told that they could demonstrate their uniqueness through their artwork, their “creativity,” as it is repeatedly called. The young clones believe that their artwork is selected and collected by the school’s regional director, Madame, based on its aesthetic value, and placed in a special public gallery. As they age, they come to believe (in stereotypical struggling teenage fashion) that love will literally rescue them, and that if their love can be deemed “true” by the artwork they have produced throughout their lives that reveals their individual and “true” identities, they can be saved. They believe (though they can never articulate this openly) that their love and creativity, their ability to emote authentically, will confirm their humanity and thus preserve them from the inhumane death that is otherwise their fate. Kathy even dreams of one day being a mother. Indeed, it is revealed later that the teachers collected the best artwork in order to prove to those outside the school that clones have souls and thus should be treated with more equity, but the ultimate result of their efforts is that Halisham is shut down. Ruth dies, followed by Tommy, and the novel ends with Kathy still alive, but resigned to the fact that she will die soon.

For the reader, the clones’ experiences and responses to those experiences regularly confirm their humanity, but within the posthuman world of the narrative, their humanity must be proven. For the clones—as they believed it is for the supposedly more “real” humans—to be human is to have an interior self that is able to express what it feels, and that feels love in particular. The clones who are the central figures of the novel are shown, through the narrative, to meet that requirement as fully as any humans. However, the more “real” and biologically enhanced humans are revealed to be lacking in the humanity expressed in so many ways by their scientific offspring. They, not the clones, are the nightmare posthumans

here, not because of their bioenhancements but because through their attempt to extend their own lives, they have inhumanely destroyed the lives of others purely for their own benefit and in order to sustain that, they must refuse to risk an affectivity that would allow them to *feel* for the clones. When Kathy and Tommy initially approach Madame to request a deferment, they eagerly announce that they are “in love,” to which her response (in a tone Kathy describes as “almost sarcastic”) is to ask, “You believe this?” and “How can you know it? You think love is so simple?” (253). She is shocked to learn that they believe in these old values, ones that she has sacrificed in order to benefit—to extend her now inhumane selfhood—from the biological possibilities offered by techno-science. This is not to say Madame does not regret her choices, as the situation of the clones over whom she keeps watch often distresses her. Kathy, Ruth, Tommy, and the other clones, however, make a more selfless sacrifice, having been “brought up to serve humanity in the most astonishing and selfless ways, and the humanity they achieve in so doing makes us realize that in a new world the word must be redefined” (Yardley). Once again, being human is revealed as a certain *feeling* vulnerability and ability to love others, even in the face of one’s own inevitable and untimely death; to be otherwise is to have moved beyond “being human.”

Dark City, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Never Let Me Go* engage current fantasies about science producing a posthuman world in which disease, frailty, and aging are the exception rather than the rule. Yet these narratives qualify that desire by retaining a nostalgia for the weaknesses that result from particular *embodied* affectivities, representing these characteristics as what ultimately separates a hybrid posthuman—and thus the human—from the alternatives. The texts promote an alternative to the techno-scientific quest for perfection that interprets every presumed weakness as a problem in need of repair. Science is represented as so certain of its own objectivity and reason that all kinds of atrocities are possible. In both *Dark City* and *Never Let Me Go*, medical scientists are purely selfish antagonists in their single-minded reliance on “objective” reason, while the hybrid and posthuman protagonists exemplify the “best” or more virtuous qualities traditionally associated with “human nature,” ones rooted in emotion and in aesthetic expression. Indeed, the human must move through and beyond reason to reach the hybrid posthumanity within which what has always been human can best express itself. John Murdoch—like

Margery Kempe—locates his humanness on the other side of a body and mind transformation, occasioned by an illness-produced irrationality: Murdoch is emotionally diseased (seeking out the doctor initially because of his anger over his real wife's affair), as Kempe experienced a loss of reason as a consequence of childbirth. Central human experiences such as love and childbirth produce supposedly irrational feelings and altered states of being, shown to be as fundamentally human as reason. A certain, inherently flawed human embodiment necessitates affectivity, which is seen as essential to human experience and understanding—more particularly, to *humane* modes of expression and understanding—in a way reason is not. The hybrid posthuman in its premodern and contemporary manifestations, for all of its “out of body” and altered states, remains rooted in a *feeling* human vulnerability.

In a culture in which human vulnerability—to pain, to supposedly aberrant emotional states, to aging, and even to death—is a state of affairs to be eradicated, science may not intend to reduce the self by conceptualizing it as a machine that is only a sum of its parts, but what these contemporary posthuman narratives argue is that a reduction of the human person's capacity for self-determination, and even happiness, is the inevitable effect of the realization of such a view. The posthuman that results from such a realization, these narratives imply, may be physically enriched, its capabilities and life extended, but in the process much of its identity and value as a singular work of human art—cognitive, biological, emotional—is lost. John Murdoch in *Dark City* and the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica* are physically more adept and powerful because of technology. And yet what makes Murdoch still human is his willingness to act extra-reasonably, to sacrifice himself for the good of “humanity” simply out of a belief, which can never be proven by a piling up evidence that would satisfy the scientific method, in the value of the vulnerable and frail human who would choose love over his own survival. Similarly, the biologically enhanced human beings in *Never Let Me Go* have made posthumans of themselves, and have thereby engaged in a devolution in which they retain their (more durable) human bodies but sacrifice their human nature, as represented by their lack of faith in love and hope and their cruel treatment of the clones who they refuse to view as fully human. But the clones are, in fact, more human than Madame and the other guardians because of their belief that they might have a future, despite all the evi-

dence to the contrary. These narratives ultimately support the sociologist Bryan Turner's belief that "[i]f the promise of modernity were ever to prove successful, it would reduce our vulnerability, and thus bring about the end of humanity" (32).

Indeed, without vulnerability, a society of extremely rational beings experiencing no loss to decay or disease would find little need to express their experiences, their individual selfhood, through art. Art—in the form of stories, especially—is used in these texts to fashion identities for the hybrid posthuman, providing hope for the clones in *Never Let Me Go* and producing the whole basis for John Murdoch's life in *Dark City*. The stories are completely untrue, yet they are necessary to survival. Both novel and film demonstrate that art is necessary to human expression and self-understanding, especially in the midst of a culture in which the greatest demonstration of humanness—of human superiority—is assumed to be scientific, rather than artistic. Through science, it is suggested, we can create ourselves as we wish to exist, and can do so in the material world rather than in the imaginary world of art. Yet art, these narratives argue, is where the always intangible yet most valuable aspects of individual existence can best be expressed, interrogated, and celebrated. Indeed, identity does not seem possible without stories—stories, moreover, that are grounded in an emotional life that cannot be quantitatively measured. In a song released in 2007, Isaac Brock of the band Modest Mouse takes on the persona of a scientifically produced individual and groans that he was “born in a factory, far away from the milky teat” and indicts his audience for “cheer[ing] as I was split in half, a mechanical sacrificial calf for you.” The song's refrain is the question driving this posthuman's lament, the central question to which contemporary posthuman texts also respond: “What's the use? Oh, what's the use?” Medieval Christians found “the use” in their hybrid relationship with Christ, who was both “divine” (i.e., perfect) and also human (i.e., feelingly and bodily vulnerable); contemporary persons, the science fiction dystopic narratives argue, can find it in their flawed affectivity, even when it is “joined,” perhaps more so, to their posthuman “bodies.”

Certain popular texts, both medieval and contemporary, intriguingly encourage what could be seen as a counter-intuitive hope for the posthuman, one which embraces the “weakness” of human beings to “believe things that they would like to be true even if there is no evidence for

them” (Dawkins). Margery (and the medieval theologians whose views she pursued to the heretical fullest), Murdoch (and his “wife” Emma, who accepts his experientially unfounded love), the evolved Cylons (who act, against “type,” in accord with their emotional attachments), and Kathy and her clone friends all value “the human” that their respective cultures have supposedly left behind so intensely that their posthuman situatedness does not prevent them from expressing, often with a kind of tenacious despair, what they believe to be their own singular, human identities. Like the medieval posthuman characterized by Christ, whose assumption of human nature required an acceptance of the frailties associated with (but not limited to) the human body, the contemporary posthuman defends the beauty of the singular human by deliberately retaining, within its machinery or altered physical state, the weaknesses and vulnerabilities that result from the memories of its old, historical body, and hence, its all too affected and affective self.

Notes

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1. Soper and Davies provide thorough and useful histories of the development of various strains of humanism, including its Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment manifestations. Badmington offers an overview of posthumanism, which he generally defines as “a refusal to take humanism for granted” (10), in a collection of essays that includes key foundational posthumanist texts by thinkers such as Barthes, Foucault, Fanon, and Althusser, among others. Posthumanism, like humanism, tends to be understood as a term that refers not to a single concept but to a cluster of related concepts, and the books by Soper, Davies, and Badmington demonstrate this. Hayles, Halberstam, and Haraway view the posthuman with some optimism, in ways that challenge many traditional humanist values.

2. In fact, the danger has been so broadly recognized as to generate the so-called “Crisis in the Humanities.” Perloff, former president of the MLA, wrote an article in 2001 titled simply “Crisis in the Humanities,” and the influence of the conceptual posthuman informs the title (and project) of Scholes’s 2004 Presidential Address to the MLA, “The Humanities in a Posthumanist World.” Soper and Davies have most strongly influenced my own thinking on the issue; particularly encouraging are their contributions to the development of a “new” humanism informed by poststructuralist critique and responsive to the challenges posed to humanism, post-Enlightenment and otherwise, by the transition to a posthuman world.
3. For an overview of the posthumanist critique of the liberal humanist subject, in the sciences as well as in the literary and other arts, see especially Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* and Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*.
4. The popular media makes much of techno-science’s imaginative potential. To take a randomly selected example, the cover of the May 2007 issue of the magazine *Discover: Science, Technology, and The Future* included eight headlines, half of which played up this feature: “The Plastic Brain: Keeping The Mind Forever Young”; “Morality Hardwired: Is Right And Wrong In Our DNA?”; “Mind-Controlled Robots”; and “Suspended Animation: How 10 Minutes in Limbo Can Save Your Life.”
5. The most accessible edition of this text in English is the translation by O’Meara. It, however, includes only the first recension. For a more complete text, see Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, distension 2, chapter 19, in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and G. F. Warner, 8 vols., Rolls Series, 21 (London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1861-91) 5:101–7. Analyses of medieval werewolves, especially those described by Gerald of Wales, are offered by Bynum (2001, ch. 2), Cohen (2006, ch. 3, and 2003, ch. 2), Mills, Bildhauer and Mills, and Mittman.
6. Bynum demonstrates through an extensive analysis of Gerald’s various versions of the story that his interpretation of the story’s significance, which depends upon a problematic analogue of Christ’s incarnation, actually reveals his own ambivalence toward the werewolves’ moral and human status (2001, 16–18).
7. The Middle English *William of Palerne* (based on a thirteenth-century French verse romance) can be found in the 1867 Skeat edition. An electronic edition by Gerrit H.V. Bunt was published in 2002 by the University of Michigan Press. Marie’s *Bisclavret* is one of her twelve *lais* (short Breton romances written in Old French poetic verse) and can be read in English translation in the edition by Hanning and Ferrante.

8. For instance, medieval theologians actively resisted a range of heresies that were declared such in large part because of their perceived “assault not just on pious practice but on fundamental notions of the human” through “denying the boundaries of things—for preaching metempsychosis or a deification in which person was lost in divinity” (Bynum 2001, 27). Bynum writes that we can “see such resistance in the thirteenth-century Church’s rejection both of metempsychosis and of antinomian or quietist teachings that the individual can become God” (2001, 32).
9. Mind uploading, also known as mind transfer or electronic transcendence, is the movement or relocation of the human mind to a hardware system (other than the human body) that is considered by Moravec, Kurzweil, and others to be the mind’s optimum condition, in which cognition is fully released from its “wet” and imperfect body; such views tend to envision an evolved state in which the human as we know it is replaced by a new age of machines/robots. See, for example, Moravec’s *Mind Children* and Kurzweil’s *The Singularity is Near*.
10. In Book 22, Chapter 21 of his *City of God*, Augustine wrote, “But even if by some grave misfortune or the savagery of enemies the whole [body] should be completely ground to dust and dispersed into the air or water, so that as far as it is possible, it has no being at all, by no means is it able to be beyond the omnipotence of the Creator, but not a hair of its head shall perish. Therefore, the spiritual flesh will be subjected to the spirit, yet nevertheless [will still be] flesh, not spirit; just as the carnal spirit was subjected to the flesh, yet will still be spirit, not flesh” (*De civitate dei* 48:841; my translation).
11. The concern in the Middle Ages was with retaining the body—in all its imperfect parts—whereas in the contemporary posthuman fantasy the concern is often to escape the body entirely, either by literally “getting out” or by making the body so close to perfect that it is an able and enduring assistant to the mind.
12. On the idea, again, that “mind” could be separated from “brain” (i.e., “body”) and uploaded to a computer database, without an interruption in the experience of self-identity, see Moravec and Kurzweil.
13. More recently, scientists *have* been turning to work on the emotions. See especially Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, *The Feeling of What Happens*, and *Looking for Spinoza*.
14. Such a scenario is common among apocalyptic posthuman narratives, such as the *Matrix* film trilogy, in which the humans create the very Artificial Intelligence that eventually seizes power and enslaves human bodies as energy sources, keeping the human brain distracted by engaging it in a virtual world, the Matrix.

15. Some key differences between the current incarnation of *Battlestar Galactica* and its precursor demonstrate a shift in interests on the part of those imaginatively investigating the posthuman world. In the 1978-79 television series (and its brief follow-up series in 1980), the Cylons are a reptilian alien race that produces a military robot that, it is implied, overtook its creator. In the current version, the Cylons are a product of the humans themselves, and the narrative traces the humans' vexed relationship with their own creation.

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