

Of Swans and Ugly Ducklings: Bioethics between Humans, Animals and Machines

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Only some will make it: enter The Swan (and a few ugly ducklings)

“Four months ago, these nine women were given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change their lives forever. They underwent the most radical transformations, both inside and out. They went from ordinary women to extraordinary beauty queens. Tonight, in the most dramatic pageant in the history of television, one of these lucky women will be crowned The Swan.”

“This is the most unique experience of our lives.”

“Our goal is to transform average women into confident beauties.”

“It’s a brutal regiment over three months.”

“Only some will make it.”

“But all will be changed forever.”

(The Swan, Fox, 2004)¹

This article takes as a starting point a consideration of the extreme makeover show The Swan - in which contestants undergo a “total transformation” via radical cosmetic surgery as well as confidence training - within the context of Michel Foucault’s and Giorgio Agamben’s work on biopolitics. Biopolitics is a form of political regime under which bodies and minds of citizens are administered and under which life is

“managed.” I want to argue that what is at stake in extreme makeover shows such as The Swan is precisely the subjection of the participants’ bodies and lives to the disciplinary techniques applied by the dominant socio-political institutions. The Swan belongs to the recently popularized genre of “extreme makeover TV”, which treats post-Big Brother audiences to documentaries featuring the remodeling of real people’s homes, gardens, wardrobes, and – as has been the case with shows such as ABC’s Extreme Makeover, MTV’s I Want a Famous Face and Fox’s The Swan – bodies.² There is, however, something singular and unique about the way in which The Swan treats the subject of makeover by framing it in bio-zoological terms, and by introducing the survival of the fittest as its principle of entertainment. The program is designed as a competition between a group of average looking women, who are all undergoing a three-month long “total transformation.” This involves cosmetic surgery, weight loss program and “personality training,” all undertaken without being able to see themselves in a mirror. Each episode features two competitors who are then judged by a panel of experts on the success of their transformation, with the overall winner of the series being crowned “The Swan.”

While I suggest that extreme makeover TV is part of the global biopolitics of life management, the aim of this article is not merely diagnostic. I am first and foremost interested in the possibility of developing a counter-narrative to this rather gloomy story of biopolitical disciplinarity. It is in the area of bioethics that I want to locate this counter-narrative. Bioethics is not conceptualized here as yet another disciplinary practice telling us in advance how our bodies should and should not be treated. Eschewing the systematic normativity and formal prescriptiveness of many traditional forms of bioethics, my bioethical project arises in response to the beautifully

monstrous bodies of The Swan's participants. Proposing to read the show's "swans" as twenty-first century neo-cyborgs bearing the marks of technology on their bodies, I want to explore the promising ethical ambivalence of the kinship between humans, animals and machines these bodies exemplify (even if, it may be argued, the program itself ultimately forecloses on this promise).

"Ladies, always remember where you came from and how you got here, and don't forget to live HAPPILY EVER AFTER!"

(The Swan, Fox, 2004)

The biopolitics of makeover culture

First of all, a few more words about biopolitics, a concept that is being increasingly used by cultural theorists to describe the political regime of modern Western democracies. Foucault traces back the origins of this regime to the classical rule of power over life and death, whereby the sovereign exercised "his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing." The sovereign's "power of life and death" amounted to the right to take the life of his subjects and to allow them to live.³ In modern times, however, this power has undergone a process of transformation, with more focus on the positive management of the life of the whole population rather than just on the defense of the sovereign. What is at stake in modern political regimes, claims Foucault, is "the biological existence of a population."⁴ Even though sustaining and multiplying life has become the highest prerogative of modern

power, war, genocide and putting to death are seen as a necessary, if undesirable, part of this regime of “life management.”

Foucault distinguishes two levels on which this regime of life and death has been operating since the seventeenth century: that of individual bodies and that of whole populations. The first one of these is centered on the body as a machine:

its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this [is] ensured by the procedures of power that characterize[] the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body.⁵

The second level of power works on the species body, “the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes.” It takes care of issues such as propagation, births and mortality, life expectancy and general health. It is the regulation of these latter issues that Foucault describes as “a biopolitics of the population,” although we could argue that these two levels are interpenetrated and that biopolitics entails an anatomo-politics, i.e. the disciplining of the body-machine, the control over the mechanics of life. Biopolitical life is therefore seen as a set of mechanical processes which need to be properly controlled – and this control becomes an important task for the modern sovereign. Significantly, the Greek etymology of the word bios, which in common parlance stands for the material “stuff” of life, points to “a form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.”⁶ Biological life is thus always already a political existence, it occupies “the very center of the political scene

of modernity.”⁷ From this vantage point, the population can be described as both a political and a material entity, consisting of machinic elements which are endowed with “life” and which need to be properly administered.

Taking Foucault’s ideas further, in Homo Sacer Agamben positions violence as constitutive to sovereign power while also identifying the concentration camp and the great totalitarian state of the twentieth century as two exemplary places of modern biopolitics.⁸ In either of these places, biological life enters the political realm in most explicit ways – however, it does so only as an exception; it “presents itself as what is included by means of an exclusion.”⁹ Agamben therefore challenges Foucault’s claim that, on the one hand, modern biopolitics is a new form of politics that constitutes a decisive break from classical political formations and that, on the other, sovereignty is losing its political purchase in the era of biopolitics. He also radicalizes Foucault’s concept of biopolitics by arguing that it is not really the inclusion of zoē (life itself, the simple fact of living) in the polis or even the fact that “life itself” becomes a principal object of the calculations of state power that is most significant about modern politics.¹⁰ What is even more important for Agamben is that in modern democracies “the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, bios and zoē, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction.”¹¹ In contemporary politics the original exclusion of zoē from the polis (which is actually “an inclusive exclusion,” an exceptio) thus becomes extended and generalized to the point where it becomes the rule, i.e. “the fundamental political structure.”¹² In an article written for Le Monde in 2004, Agamben quotes “bio-political tattooing,” i.e. being finger-printed and iris-scanned and then having

one's biometric data entered into a digital database when entering the United States, as one example of this exceptional procedure, which used to be "imposed on criminals and political defendants"¹³ but is now being extended onto citizens of all states who physically and politically find themselves on the threshold of the USA. The inherently violent structure of the political, which Agamben identifies in the concentration camp and the totalitarian state, thus seems to have been transferred to both the globalized and localized spaces of governance in the twenty-first century. In the light of the "global war on terror" post-9/11, the establishment of "terrorist" detainment camps such as Guantánamo Bay, which are exempt from international jurisdiction, and the development of stringent immigration policies which involve the setting up of asylum seeker detention centers both within and outside the borders of the European Union, the list of the exemplary places of modern biopolitics proposed by Agamben in his 1995 book Homo Sacer (Engl. translation 1998) needs to be revised or expanded. Indeed, in State of Exception Agamben himself extends the biopolitical framework to the "military order" instituted by the president of the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 - a paradoxical state of events in which law is suspended by the force of law, thus leaving in operation "a force of law without law."¹⁴

I want to suggest that radical makeover shows such as The Swan produced in the US and the UK, and aired on satellite TV stations across the world, constitute yet another example of such exemplary places of modern biopolitics. Even though it might seem imprudent to put The Swan in the same category as concentration camps, asylum seeker detention centers or Guantánamo, I am convinced that in the context of the "Iraq makeover" that US and UK politicians have orchestrated together with international news stations,¹⁵ the examination of extreme makeover shows such as

The Swan as applications of the dominant technologies of life management is extremely urgent. And it is the exploration of the “zone of indistinction” between biological and political life that becomes crucial for my parallel reading of the extreme makeovers of the individual bodies of American women and the collective lives of Iraq’s population - both accessible to us via TV screens.

The link between bodily and political transformation is well documented in both European and American political history. Sander L. Gilman, the author of Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery, traces the ideas and fantasies associated with a bodily makeover via cosmetic surgery back to the late eighteenth-century ideology of autonomy, the belief in the revolutionary potential of the individual and his/her right (or even injunction) to happiness. Speaking about the period following the American and French revolutions, the revolutions of 1848 and the American Civil War, Gilman argues: “The transformation of the Enlightenment notion of self-improvement moved from the battlefield of liberalism to the laboratories and surgical theaters of the later nineteenth century.”¹⁶ The reconstruction of the state was perceived as necessitating physical transformation and the creation of new, healthy and happy bodies – the conviction adopted by the dominant revolutionary movements of the late nineteenth century, such as Zionism, Communism and Fascism. The visibility of the transformation on the individual level could serve as proof of the broader political change. Gilman writes, “The Enlightenment self-remaking took place in public, and was dependent on being “seen” by others as transformed.”¹⁷

The “before” and “after” images of cosmetic surgery patients are a legacy of this need for visibility – and so are the photographs and video clips on The Swan which constantly compare the participants’ “old selves” with their new transformed looks. However, Gilman also points out that the satisfaction resulting from being finally perceived as “normal” is underpinned by the opposite sentiment on the part of the viewers of such a transformation. The viewers take delight in being able to reassert the difference between their own “authenticity” and the makeover participants’ phoniness: the latter are only passing themselves off as the “real thing.” In the context of this analysis, I want to suggest that the success of The Swan as TV entertainment depends precisely on the gap between “normal” viewers and the contestants who want to undergo a transformation. Contrary to a number of TV critics who focus on the identification of both The Swan’s audiences and its participants with the American dream – i.e. a belief that we can all be happy, beautiful and successful one day – I claim it is rather the disidentification between the two groups that is being achieved here, something that reasserts the viewers’ moral superiority and confirms their distance from someone else’s physical and emotional pain. It is precisely this disidentification with those in need of a makeover that serves for me as a hinge between the two layers of contemporary biopolitics The Swan embraces - that working on individual bodies and on whole populations. This psychological hinge serves to drum a conservative message home: namely that it is only others “out there” – overweight “ugly ducklings,” depressed women with facial scars and gapped teeth, but also, by (perhaps too quick an) extension, “diseased immigrants” or “oppressed Iraqis” - who are in need of a makeover. It is they who need the restoration of the signal points of liberalism: freedom, autonomy and the right to happiness (translated on The Swan into “becoming your absolute best”). By isolating the “freaks” on the

TV screen for the pleasure and relief of the nation, by making freedom and happiness only skin-deep, the health and well-being of the American (as well as British, Australian, etc.) population is confirmed.

If we follow Gilman's statement that "A concern with "hygiene" in the broadest sense and aesthetic surgery's role in the physical alteration of the "ugliness" of the body led the aesthetic surgeon to become the guarantor of the hygiene of the state, the body and the psyche,"¹⁸ we could perhaps go so far as to say that The Swan is making post-9/11 America feel beautiful again, it is rebuilding her self-esteem and publicly healing her wounds. As Rachel, the winner of the first Swan series, declares in the final beauty pageant, "The reason I would like to be The Swan is that I believe that this program has given me so much. It's given me my self-esteem and a sense of who I am, and now I'd actually like to be able to give that back, and teach everybody else that they matter. That they have a place in this world, and they have to believe in themselves and that they can bring out the best that they can possibly be". The public confessions of the final pageant's participants on why they deserve to be crowned The Swan could be seen as exemplifying "the aesthetic and moral sensibility of the new citizen, ... beautiful and moral and healthy."¹⁹ I should perhaps mention here that I am not attempting to establish a causal relationship between the 9/11 attacks and the radical makeover shows such as The Swan. I am only suggesting one possible line of interpreting TV makeover culture at a time when human bodies are being represented as increasingly malleable or even disposable, when they are seen as playthings of different political forces, and when tortured bodies, bodies falling down from high buildings to their imminent death, and male bodies sexually abused by females in US military uniforms have become a regular presence in contemporary news media.

I would now like to turn my critical attention to specific techniques of power through which biopolitics operates on the lives and bodies of the population. The ambivalence of the distinction between the anatomo-politics of the human body and the biopolitics of the population is of particular interest to me when considering the disciplinary technologies of power exerted over the bodies and lives of The Swan's participants (and, by proxy, its audiences). It is perhaps not too far-fetched to say that The Swan is consciously evoking comparisons with an army training camp in its description of the regime the contestants undergo for three months after they sign on to the program. The disciplinary procedures the girls are subjected to, all planned with military precision by a panel of surgeons and therapists led by the "life coach" Nely Galán (who is also the creator of this show), include: nose jobs, eyebrow lifts, lip enhancement, liposuction, collagen injections, dermatological treatment, Lasik eye surgery, breast augmentation, teeth bleaching, the implantation of DaVinci veneers, 1200-calorie-a-day diet, gym training and, last but not least, "weekly therapy and coaching for confidence and self-esteem." The contestants are supervised on a regular basis – they are being constantly surveilled without the possibility of actually seeing themselves in a mirror for the three months of the "transformation program." The army-general manner in which the show's master and commander Galán orders the contestants and publicly humiliates them for breaking the show's rules (eating a yogurt or, worse, not wanting to exercise enough) playfully employ the tropes of the military regime. Military associations are further drummed home through the choice of the contestants: in the first series - an army wife, in the second – a Texan army captain. The training camp (if we are prepared to call it this) becomes here a zone of exception ruled by martial law, where the lives of the contestants are placed outside

the politico-ethical normativity of the democratic polis. In the camp, their bodies can be cut open, abused and remolded beyond recognition so that they can be returned to the “normal world,” the eschatological space “after the transformation.” However, if we pay heed to Agamben’s diagnosis that the camp functions as the originary structure of the current world order,²⁰ The Swan’s training center may actually be a visual representation of what is the fundamental political structure today: a space where bodies and lives of all citizens are always in the state of exception, where they can be abused, transformed and discarded at will in the name of transcendent values, and through the invocation of a fictitious space “outside” – in which beauty, health and world peace are to be celebrated. (Although the program explicitly repudiates any such identification.)

Of course, we need to distinguish here between the concentration camp (which lies at the core of Agamben’s argument in Homo Sacer) and the military camp, and the very different relation to life and death enacted in them. If death is seen as an exception in the latter, in the concentration camp the exception becomes the rule. However, it is the troubling structural proximity of these two sites of biopower and the fact that exclusion and inclusion, as well as life and death, enter the zone of indistinction in a number of different contemporary political formations, that allows me to position the (non-determined) “camp,” after Agamben, as the dominant political structure today. Agamben himself draws on this ambivalence of the (military/prison/concentration) camp, and on its uncanny proximity to the world outside the camp, when he analyses current international politics practiced by the US:

What is new about President Bush's order is that it radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnameable and unclassifiable being. Not only do the Taliban captured in Afghanistan not enjoy the status of POWs as defined by the Geneva convention, they do not even have the status of persons charged with a crime according to American laws. Neither prisoners nor persons accused, but simply "detainees," they are the object of a pure de facto rule, of a detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight. The only thing to which it could possibly be compared is the legal situation of the Jews in the nazi Lager [camps], who, along with their citizenship, had lost every legal identity, but at least retained their identity as Jews. ... in the detainee at Guantánamo, bare life reaches its maximum indeterminacy.²¹

In the light of the above analysis the playful employment of the camp rhetoric and aesthetic by major media companies – we can mention here Fox's Boot Camp, MTV's Fat Camp and NBC's The Biggest Loser, alongside Fox's The Swan – raises serious concerns about the media's role in the performative enactment of this ongoing indistinction between exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, bios and zoē.

Taking a further cue from Agamben, we could perhaps go so far as to suggest that The Swan's participants are made to perform the role of homines sacri, people whose lives are devoid of a sacred function in a community and who can be killed but not sacrificed. Originally functioning as a limit concept in the Roman social order, for Agamben homo sacer is positioned "outside both human and divine law;"²² s/he can

undergo abuse which is unpunishable because it functions in the zone of exception. Homo sacer thus serves as a constitutive outside to the socio-political order, ensuring its survival and wellbeing by being banned from it.²³ Significantly, for Agamben it is this ban that constitutes the original political relation. In The Swan the ban takes the form of a self-imposed exclusion, which is made evident in pre-op interviews. During these interviews the candidates explain why they do not belong in the human order and express the desire for joining it. This diagnosis is confirmed by the panel of experts and handed over to the viewers, who are allowed to “see” the unquestioned need for all these normalization procedures the candidates undergo. The bodies and lives of those “ugly ducklings” literally demarcate the borders of the healthy community, they make America whole. Any ambivalence about the candidate’s “abnormal” bodies and lives that they could possibly share with the viewers on the other side of the screen is quickly erased via the triumphalist rhetoric and aesthetic of revelation employed in each episode’s finale. When the contestants are placed before the veiled mirror, the success of their transformation depends on the misrecognition they experience when the veil drops and they are faced with their new look. This is the moment when the viewers can rejoice at their own cognitive knowledge, for which they have been prepared throughout the program – having killed the homo sacer, they are now ready to welcome its resurrected alter ego into the healthy community of the living. Like the medieval werewolf, remaining “in the collective unconscious as a hybrid of human and animal,”²⁴ divided between the state of nature and polis, the ugly duckling can be “charmed out” of its abnormality. As a swan, a “good animal,” it can rejoin the dominant political order from which it was previously banned.

To sum up, we can see here that the participants' bodies are being treated as pieces of machinery; they are objects to be owned, manipulated and symbolically annihilated. However, this anatomo-politics of the human body coexists with the biopolitical management of the population as a whole, including the show's viewers, producers and participants. What Foucault describes as technologies of the self – “which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”²⁵ - have become here another form of disciplinary technologies, whereby an act of self-fashioning partakes of the wider regime of biopower that disciplines individual bodies and regulates populations. The contestants' real and symbolic passage from the banned underworld of ugly ducklings to a eugenically driven world of swan beauty in which “only some will make it” is confirmed (or not) by a successful “passing” as a legitimate member of this new community, beautiful enough and transformed enough. The concept of passing, pejoratively understood in the nineteenth-century as an attempt to disguise one's real racial self, works well, according to Gilman, in analyzing cosmetic surgery precisely because it foregrounds the racial, eugenic connotations of makeover practices. We can thus conclude that the competition between the two contestants in each episode, culminating in a pageant contest between the winners of all the preceding episodes, reminds us that only the fittest pass successfully, and that a total transformation is an impossible dream.

Desire for the face “before the world was made”: from biopolitics to bioethics

However, it is not only passing on the biological level that is supposed to be achieved in such makeover practices. Gilman links physical transformation with a transcendent desire for mastery and closure:

It is the desire for control, for the face that existed “before the world was made,” before we came to recognize that we were thrown into the world, never its master, that lies at the heart of “passing.” Mortality is the ultimate proof of this lack of control over the world, but real history, real politics can have much the same effect. Becoming aware that one is marked through one’s imagined visibility as ageing, or inferior, or nonerotic, concepts that become interchangeable, can make one long for the solace of that original fantasy of control.²⁶

For Gilman the desire for a physical makeover is thus an expression of a deeper fantasy of totality and closure, a yearning for the face that existed “before the world was made.” This is also a desire for a world without difference, without the subjectivity of the self that emerges in response to the alterity of the other, and that has to learn how to live with this alterity.

This recognition of, and response to, the alterity of the other is precisely what the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas described as ethics. No matter how many fantasies of my own supremacy, moral superiority or political power I harbor, for Levinas I always find myself standing before the face of the Other, which is both my accusation and a source of my ethical responsibility. An ethical demand is made on me precisely through the face of the other. It is both mine and the Other’s mortality, our being in

the world as “being-towards-death,” that inscribes our lives in an ethical horizon; and it is the Other’s death in particular that challenges me and calls for my justification.

Levinas writes:

[I]n its mortality, the face before me summons me, calls for me, begs for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced by the Other, pure otherness, separated, in some way, from any whole, were my business. It is as if that invisible death, ignored by the Other, whom it already concerns by the nakedness of its face, were already “regarding” me prior to confronting me, and becoming the death that stares me in the face. The other man’s death calls me into question, as if, by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other, who cannot see it, is exposed; and as if, even before vowing myself to him, I had to answer for this death of the other, and to accompany the Other in his moral solitude. The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question.²⁷

The face Levinas talks about goes against our everyday understanding of this word, as it exceeds the collection of bodily features: “The face is a living presence”, “more direct than visible manifestation,” “it is expression.... The manifestation of the face is already discourse.”²⁸ The face refuses to be contained, comprehended or encompassed, it cannot be seen, touched or possessed in any other way by me.²⁹ What Levinas means by the face can perhaps thus be described as a face “before the world was made” – but we are talking here about my world: the face of the Other is always

already there, waiting for me before I emerge as a subject.³⁰ Indeed, it is in relation to difference, to what is not part of me, that my subjectivity will only be produced.

Naturally, there is no guarantee that I will respond ethically to this “visitation” from the Other’s face, and that I will not attempt to ignore or destroy it. But my murderous desire, my fantasy of control and mastery, does not change the fact that I am not the source of meaning in this world, that I am just thrown into it.

The desire to possess the face from the time “before the world was made,” which Gilman talks about in relation to cosmetic surgery, can be translated into a desire for a world without alterity, for the annihilation of difference and return to a fantasy moment when the self was a master of time, space and language. Even though this fantasy can be said to arise out of a fear of difference and be driven by racism, sexism or homophobia, I want to suggest that we can also interpret it as an attempt to escape from the biopolitical regime that marks some bodies as different – racially, erotically, or in terms of their ability to perform well in the labor market. In other words, we can see it as a psychological defense mechanism that actually incorporates the splinters of the biopolitical thinking it wants to escape from, in the form of racism, sexism or body- and beauty-fascism. Of course, this is not to say that all those who opt for cosmetic surgery are racist or fascist, or to decide in advance that having a nose job or liposuction is politically and ethically “wrong.” On both an emotional and political level, I can understand why people may want to have hair transplants or teeth veneers done, why they want rid of their “ugly” nose,³¹ or why Michael Jackson wants to be white – even if each one of these transformations calls for a singular ethical response, which is likely to be different when surgery involves tooth correction and when it involves “race correction.” I also need to stress that by no means do I want to dismiss

cosmetic surgery clients as mere victims of the biopolitical regime, a pitiful object of analysis for a cultural critic who is somehow “above” them.³² Neither do I want to valorize different cosmetic procedures in advance as “politically or ethically acceptable” (or not). Recognizing that there is no “pure” position when it comes to bodily transformation, and that we are all, in one way or another, participating in the culture of body makeover, I am only interested in denaturalizing this desire, as well as raising some questions for the media institutions (e.g. The Swan’s producers) that strengthen it. At the same time, drawing on Levinas’s ethics of alterity, I want to develop a counter-narrative to this story of biopolitical hegemony.

The area in which I locate this counter-narrative is bioethics. Bioethics is not for me yet another disciplinary practice telling us in advance how our bodies should and should not be treated. Eschewing the systematic normativity of many traditional forms of bioethics (usually rooted in utilitarianism or universal prescriptivism), my bioethical project arises as a response to the beautifully monstrous bodies of The Swan’s participants (and, indeed, its “experts”), and to the promising ambivalence of the kinship between humans, animals and machines these bodies carry (even if, it may be argued, the program itself ultimately forecloses on this promise). If, according to Agamben, in the modern state life and the body have become biopolitical concepts in which the materiality of life, its biological stuff and vegetative functions crisscross our bodies’ political and legal roles and positions, this new bioethics I am proposing has to be thought through the zones of indistinction between bios and zoē, matter and concept, human and nonhuman.³³

It is the interrogation of the last opposition, and of the principles of its constitution, that is the most urgent not only for Agamben but also for Jacques Derrida in the thinking of a new politics and a new ethics today.³⁴ Within this zone of indistinction or indetermination the human functions as “the place of a ceaselessly updated decision in which the caesurae and their rearticulation are always dislocated and displaced anew.”³⁵ This obligation to make a decision, always anew, without merely resorting to fixed genealogical categories, is the source and task of this new bioethics. Within this new ethical framework, the question of the human is inextricably linked with the question of the animal, since it is against the latter that the human is defined as the subject of morality and the agent of politics. Agamben points to the emergence of man “as man” through self-knowledge, a reflexive process which allows man to raise himself above himself and thus become different from himself. The process of differentiation at work in the constitution of the humanist definition of man seems double-edged, as man needs to become different from both the nature and the technology that frame him. Homo sapiens thus emerges as “a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human.” In this process the nonhuman, the bestial, the technological and the machinic function as man’s conditions of possibility above which he needs to elevate himself.³⁶

And yet it could perhaps be argued that Agamben does not give due recognition to the technological element in the emergence of the human: technology still seems rather instrumental in Agamben’s own argument (even if it is foundational to this definition of homo sapiens). We therefore need to turn to some other thinkers in order to explore the role of non-humans as both constitutive of humanity and a source of active “world making” in their own right. Donna Haraway and Jacques Derrida have, in different

ways, taught us to understand the active being of non-humans as well as the “originary technicity” of humanity.³⁷ Indeed, for Derrida the demand that the radical alterity of technicity poses to the human is rerouted precisely through the animal. In a similar vein, Haraway’s concept of the cyborg as our technological “other,” outlined in her “Cyborg Manifesto,” can be read as a productive zone of indistinction between ontological categories, as “[t]he cyborg appears precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed.”³⁸ The concept of the cyborg – a cybernetic organism which hybridizes machine and living organism, “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction”³⁹ – was introduced by Haraway not only to challenge the imperialist fantasies of the technohumanism of the Star Wars’ era but also to interrogate both the constitution of what she terms “natureculture” and the role of technology in constituting what we understand as “the organic.” Illicit kinship between the human and the non-human has thus always featured highly on Haraway’s politico-ethical agenda. Taking a cue from Haraway, I propose to read the “swans” and “ugly ducklings” from Fox’s TV show under discussion as twenty-first century neo-cyborgs, bearing the marks of technology on their bodies. The monstrous beauty of the show’s participants (as well as its “experts”) acts as a testimony to cosmetic surgery in the age of mechanical reproduction, in which the biopolitical distinction is established not between normal and abnormal bodies (as it is in traditional bioethics), but rather between pre- and post-op ones. Indeed, in the Swan universe, it is the transformed bodies that are situated on the side of normality, and it is the most transformed participant that wins the coveted title of the swan (even if, as I argued earlier, the show’s success depends on the disidentification between “real” and “transformed” bodies, and on the resulting moral elevation of the former over the latter).

The new bioethics of human-animal-machine kinship that I propose here attempts to undo the dominant media practices of biopolitical control The Swan explicitly draws on, which are directed at the erasure of alterity. In particular, this bioethics challenges the perception of the animal as a caesura of human-nonhuman separation and reveals the human as always already existing in a prosthetic relationship to its technologies. If, according to Stanley Cavell, how we respond to animals, how we see ourselves standing in relation to them, is a test of how we respond to difference generally, how ready we are to be vulnerable to other embodiments in our knowledge of our own,⁴⁰ the use of “the swan” as a framing device for the show requires further analysis. It might be rather tempting to dismiss the use of the swan as just a conceptual gimmick, a playful reference to a children’s tale in which animals serve only as metaphors for human behavior. And yet it is precisely this instrumentality in the use of the swan as a cultural concept representing radical visual transformation that deserves our attention. It is also the proximity between the animality of the swan and the imperfect humanity of the female contestants that is of particular interest to me. Earlier on I suggested that the show’s participants, under the guise of ugly ducklings, were made to perform the role of homines sacri, people whose lives were devoid of a sacred function in a community and who could be killed, mutilated and abused, but not sacrificed. But the sacrificial role of the ducklings and swans is not insignificant either. Cary Wolfe, author of Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory, argues that “the full transcendence of the ‘human’ requires the sacrifice of the ‘animal’ and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in a ‘noncriminal putting to death’ (as Derrida puts it) not only of animals, but other humans as well by marking them as animal.”⁴¹ We

should understand by now that we are not talking about a straightforward sacrifice but rather a disavowed one, in which both the act and the sacrificed object are reduced in significance. The ultimate disavowal seems to belong to the animal (of the bird variety).

The Swan can thus be said to be enacting the sacrificial economy of our culture, which structures the humanist idea of the human. The logic of this economy is precisely one of disavowed sacrifice: it is not based on a simple substitution through which animals would be killed instead of humans. Wolfe observes that, as “we do indeed kill humans all the time ... it is in order to mark such killings as either ‘criminal’ or ‘noncriminal’ that the discourse of animality becomes so crucial.”⁴² (The use of the allegedly innocent “concepts” of the swan (and the evocation of the never-actually-named ugly duckling) is exemplary of the ideological work of othering not only animals but also other humans that do not conform to a biopolitical idea(l) of humanity – in this case, those with leaky, disabled, obese bodies, crooked teeth and racially suspicious noses. The female participants on the show are temporarily objectified precisely by being reduced to “meat,” by being dismembered, cut open, remolded – all with a view to achieving eventual cultivation.⁴³ Indeed, it is only after undergoing husbandry at the hands of the experts that the participants’ bodies are sexualized – at the mini-pageants at the end of each episode disposable (non-human) meat is transformed into desirable (female) flesh. Sexism is thus revealed as the flip-side of speciesism.⁴⁴ Both of these function as structuring conditions of the biopolitical logic of modernity, which sees the bodies and lives of others – fat women with crooked teeth, not-yet-democratic-enough Iraqis - as always already in need of a makeover. However, even if The Swan (unknowingly) reveals this logic of disavowed

sacrifice as a structuring device of modern biopolitics, in which the value of the human depends on the sacrifice of both women and animals, the show itself forecloses on any further interrogation of this logic. Culminating in the sacrificial pageant on which animal (swan) is both replaced and enacted by woman (at the start of the final episode, each of the pageant's participants arranges her body into a swan-like figure), and in which woman is replaced by a mechanically reproduced "cyborg" version of herself, the show denies any kinship between animals, humans and machines. It thus withholds the possibility of a non-human(ist) bioethics.

And yet the use of "the swan" as a framing device for the program cannot be easily overlooked. Indeed, the question of the animal is fundamental to any enquiry into culture, politics and ethics today because of the animal's role as a "constitutive outside" in the dominant Western conceptions of moral and political philosophy. A generic animality of the animal has served as a fault-line against which the humanity and superiority of the human – including the ability of humans to order the world according to their own categories of preference and pleasure – have been ascertained. It is through Donna Haraway's encounter with animals in her 2003 The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness that I would like to explore the possibility of opening up this "catch-all concept." The book provides a useful starting point for thinking about a new bioethics which embraces the kinship of humans, animals and machines through the concept of "companion species." The Companion Species Manifesto can be seen as an update on Foucault's analysis of biopolitics, foregrounding the coexistence of different species through technologies of biopower, and working out a bioethics of significant otherness which raises questions for the superiority of the human in the ecosystem. Initially it might seem strange that

the author of the celebrated “Cyborg Manifesto” and an astute critic of technoscience should turn her attention to animals in this 2003 pamphlet. However, Haraway is a zoology graduate who has done extensive research on primates.⁴⁵ As I explained earlier, animals were already of interest to her in her celebrated “Cyborg Manifesto” from two decades ago.

They become even more important in The Companion Species Manifesto, but this does not mean that there is no room for cyborgs in Haraway’s later argument. Cyborgs join there a bigger family of “companion species,” a concept she finds more useful in guiding us “through the thickets of technobiopolitics in the Third Millennium of the Current Era.” In the age of soft technologies leading to the development of the patented, cancer-bearing OncoMouse™, or the first cloned animal, “Dolly the sheep,” it is perhaps to be expected that Haraway’s dogs are cyborgs of sorts, another example of “category deviants” inhabiting the complex networks of the technoscientific world, in which life is manufactured and nature is technological.⁴⁶ The singular, experiential materiality of dogs is of particular importance to Haraway, as dogs “are not here just to think with. They are here to live with.”⁴⁷ It is precisely the singularity of dogs, evidenced in her moving stories of writer J. R. Ackerley’s love for his German Shepherd bitch Tulip, or Haraway’s godson Marco’s training with the family dog Cayenne, that opens up the generic category of the animal. It is also from this singularity that Haraway develops her “bottom-up” theory of ethics in this manifesto. Her earlier texts, such as Simians, Cyborgs and Women and Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium,⁴⁸ were invaluable in tracing connections between bioethics as a neo-Darwinian philosophy that brings together organic and social processes on the one hand, and the corporate structures of

the biotech industry on the other. But it is only in The Companion Species Manifesto that Haraway actually puts forward some more specific ethical pointers. The origins of her ethics of companion species, developed on the basis of “many actual occasions,”⁴⁹ are experiential, and lie in “taking dog-human relationships seriously.”⁵⁰ Relationality is crucial to this ethics of companion species, an ethics based on an ontology of co-evolution and co-emergence between humans and dogs, in which “none of the partners pre-exist the relating.”⁵¹ It is thus important to emphasize that it is not dogs that constitute a companion species for us, but rather “We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh.”⁵²

Haraway’s ethics is hybrid in its origins: it draws on the phenomenological theory of embodiment, A. N. Whitehead’s concept of the prehension of actual relations, as well as Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, here translated into a contingent foundation of “multidirectional flow of bodies and values.”⁵³ Her objective is to interrogate the heterogeneous cohabitation of people and dogs, in specific natural territories which are always already shaped by technology, without rooting this interrogation only in the desires and needs of “man.” It is also to envisage ways of “living well together with the host of species with whom human beings emerge on this planet at every scale of time, body, and space.”⁵⁴ Haraway explains: “I believe that all ethical relating, within or between species, is knit from the silk-string thread of ongoing alertness to otherness-in-relation. We are not one, and being depends on getting on together.”⁵⁵ It is love that functions as an ethical bind between the companion species – although Haraway is careful to distinguish it from the technophilic or canonophilic narcissism, i.e. the belief dogs are either “tools” for human activity or sources of unconditional love and hence spiritual fulfillment for humans. Instead, love names the

ethical co-emergence and cohabitation between specific, historically situated dogs and humans. Love does not therefore mean a mere intensification of affect, or a more proprietorial form of possession (as in the phrase, “I love animals”) but rather a preparedness to examine the interrelations between humans and other species, and to enter the kennel in order to “listen to the dogs.”

Still, this idea is not without problems. Even though Haraway rejects a humanist standpoint in her ethical theory, and opposes the reduction or approximation of non-human companion species to humans, the values she promotes as crucial to her ethics of companion species – love, respect, happiness and achievement – have a distinctly human “feel” to them. Indeed, it is the human who defines the meaning of these values and their appropriateness for all companion species. It should be acknowledged that Haraway goes to great trouble to ensure that the needs of dogs are respected, and that the understanding of dogs develops from listening to them, from observing their bodies and behavior. She herself talks to those experienced in working with dogs, such as animal trainer Vicky Hearne, to provide a more thorough account of these “needs.” There is no escape, however, from the philosophical quandary that even the most committed effort to give the dogs what they want, not what humans want for them, inevitably depends on the human ideas of “want,” “satisfaction” and “gift.” Drawing on the environmental feminist Chris Cuomo’s “ethics of flourishing” does not get Haraway off the hook of humanism she is so keen to avoid either. This is only confirmed in her embracing of Hearne’s idea that dogs need to be seen as “beings with a species-specific capacity for moral understanding and serious achievement,”⁵⁶ whereby the ethics of companion species becomes, disappointingly, a mere extension of the moral standpoint rooted in the human as a rational, self-reflexive agent.

This is not to say that the (post-human) bioethics of companion species is impossible, or, more absurdly, that dogs should tell “us” what “they” want; only that a value-driven theory of the good is not the most appropriate basis for this kind of ethics.⁵⁷ At best, Haraway sounds like a well-meaning Habermasian who believes companions species such as humans and dogs can work out together, in the process of joint “deliberation,” a mutually satisfactory strategy for coexistence, at worst – e.g. when she calls for “agility” as a “good in itself” which allows both sides “to become more alert to the demands of significant otherness”⁵⁸ – as a good eugenicist. The narratives Haraway tells us about dogs are interesting and passionate: she teaches us how to engage seriously with other companion species, without resorting to either sentimentality or speciesism. Her analysis of the technoscientific apparatuses at work in the management of the lives of humans and animals – such as her account of the “Save a Sato” foundation which rescues stray dogs in Puerto Rico and prepares them for adoption in the US – raises important questions about the biopolitical character of Western democracies. But, as in her previous work, Haraway fails to provide a convincing theory of ethics for different species and kinds. What therefore starts as a radical enquiry into the conditions of inter-species coexistence ends up like a recipe for liking animals a lot.⁵⁹

Even if Haraway’s own “unrepudiated” (and unacknowledged) humanism or her unaccounted-for normativity disappoint here somewhat, The Companion Species Manifesto is nevertheless an important text when it comes to thinking about bioethics otherwise. I find it helpful in attempting to envisage a novel relationship between humans, animals and machines, foregrounding technology as the formative force in

the structuring of the “naturecultural” relationships between species. Haraway prompts me therefore to query the status of the swan as a conceptual ornament in a makeover program, but also to challenge the erasure of technologies – medical, broadcast or reproductive ones - in the emergence of “swan beauty” (where the participants are seen as finding their “true self”). By saying this I am not trying to reclaim agency for technology here, only pointing out that its placement in the service of (wo)man and her beauty reduces the complex network of connections between human and non-human bodies, relations, processes and practices. It can perhaps be argued in passing that it is precisely such a perception of both technology and the animal as being in the service of “man” that has added to the decimation of actual swans in our habitat. As the website for the Swan Sanctuary in Shepperton, Middlesex, explains: “In addition to the natural threats [swans] face from foxes, mink & botulism, modern society has added several more such as pollution, vandalism, uncontrolled dogs, fishing-tackle and lead poisoning, as well as unmarked pylons, overhead cables & bridges.”⁶⁰

Haraway’s rigid critique of the (bio)political economy of our educational and business institutions which research, control and subsequently own life, explored most dramatically in her study of the development and patenting of OncoMouse by Harvard and DuPont laboratories in Modest Witness, raises bigger questions about the ownership of human and non-human bodies and their role in the flows of multinational capital. To return to our example, it is not only the swan that is transformed from kind to brand in the program: the participants themselves, sporting DaVinci tooth veneers and undergoing, amongst others, a Zoom bleaching and Lasik eye surgery, become brands; commercial, corporately produced and owned goods,

stamped with identical trademarked beauty procedures. (The winner of the Swan prize will receive a \$100,000 contract as a spokesperson for Nutrisystem.) They become nodes in the flows of capital, connecting beauty, diet and cosmetic surgery industries, global media programming and Hollywood makeover myths. Borrowing ideas from Haraway, we can develop a counter-narrative to the story of incredible transformation told by the program' producers and presenters if we examine what happens to both swan and woman in this transformation of the participants into mechanically reproduced versions of themselves (and of millions of other women subject to the Hollywood beauty regime). This counter-narrative is one way of ensuring we stop erasing animals from the story of the technocapitalist optimisation of life, as in the computer-driven jargon of mice, bugs and spiders' webs, whereby animals only function as metaphors for the disembodied world of technology, things to either use for our own pleasure and benefit, or kill in order to increase our comfort.

Thinking in terms of companion species which are both co-existing and co-emergent may deprive us of a fixed foundation for our new bioethics, but it does not absolve me of a responsibility to develop it. (This responsibility, I hasten to add, is "mine" rather than just simply "human," hence my vacillation here between the plural and singular pronouns, between "us" and "me"). To sum up, the bioethics I am attempting to trace as a counter-narrative to The Swan's biopolitical hegemony distinguishes itself from traditional normative bioethics on a number of accounts. It does not consist of a set of rules on how to treat human and nonhuman bodies and lives, but rather of a content-free obligation these other bodies and lives make on me, and that call on me to respond to them. Following Levinas and Derrida, the ethical response would consist in the minimization of violence, it would be a form of hospitality towards alterity that

responsibly negotiates, always anew, between the self's desire for sovereignty and self-sufficiency and the other's challenge to this sovereignty. This bioethical hospitality differs from the "no compromise" posture of deep ecology, so astutely critiqued by Tim Luke and Cary Wolfe for attributing human qualities, and giving at least somewhat human status, to the nonhuman realm of nature.⁶¹ It does not therefore amount to awarding all difference in all life forms – humans, sheep, salmonella, anthrax and cholera microbes - equal value, or promoting biodiversity as inherently and undisputedly good (as a consequence of which we would need to value a priori rare and endangered species – e.g. a California condor hatchling – over more abundant ones – e.g. a human child).⁶² Instead, bioethical hospitality as I understand it consists in making a "minimally violent" decision, always anew, under the conditions of impurity in which the defining concepts and material conditions of lives are always already implicated in those of other species and life forms. (It is on the level of "soft" and "hard" technologies – tools, genetic inter- and cross-breeding, machinic and digital reproduction, farming, immunization, computing, bioinformatics, patenting, flows of capital, language - that these co-implications are constituted.)

I should perhaps mention here that the appropriateness of Levinas's philosophy for devising a non-human ethics has been contested by a number of thinkers, given Levinas's dismissal of the animal as too stupid to have ethics, possessing no reason, and being unable to universalize its maxim. As Wolfe aptly summarizes Levinas's position, "the animal has no face; it cannot be an other".⁶³ And yet I want to suggest that Derrida's ongoing and passionate engagement with Levinas – starting from his early essay "Violence and Metaphysics,"⁶⁴ in which Derrida puts in question the possibility of there being an "absolute" alterity of the other, through to the book

arising out of his funereal oration to Levinas, Adieu,⁶⁵ and his 1997 Cerisy paper “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)...” – provides us with a way of thinking a non-humanist ethics of alterity rooted precisely in the demand of incalculable difference which has to be responded to always anew. While in Levinas, as Wolfe argues, “the alterity of the other is once again hypostasized (as ‘man’) rather than left open (to the possibility of the nonhuman other), so that the ‘incalculable’ essence of the ethical relationship turns out to be not so incalculable after all,”⁶⁶ in Derrida this alterity is radicalized by inhering the prospect of an uncertain, perhaps monstrous arrival of the other for whom we do not yet have a name or concept, but also by considering that the radical, non- or in-human alterity of the other is perhaps a (disavowed) part of what we designate as “human,” rather than being diametrically opposed to it. Derrida does not instruct us that animals, cyborgs or machines are like humans but rather that all these identitarian categories emerge only through fixing alterity as being always already “on the outside” of the one that is currently being defined. Through this process, the “animal” has become a “catch-all concept,” naming “all the living things that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers.”⁶⁷ It is “the word men have given themselves the right to give”.⁶⁸ This operation requires a prior fixing of the absolute difference of the human, a difference founded upon what is non-human and thus making the animal (hu)man’s condition of possibility.

The ethical impulse that emerges from Levinas and Derrida does not lead to the development of prescriptions on how to treat human and non-human life forms, but it does highlight the responsibility on the part of those who have designated themselves as human – on the basis of their rationality, sensibility and mastery of language – to

put these “human” characteristics to good use and respond responsibly to the current structuration of the world. It is therefore in Levinas’s thinking about ethics as unconditional demand on my being by the alterity of the other that I see a supplement to Haraway’s normative bioethics, and it is in Derrida that I trace a supplement to Levinas’s own humanism. It should be evident by now that the bioethics I am proposing here is not just concerned with human life, and that it does not merely extend the principle of life (and the requirement for its protection) to animals. Instead it raises questions about the animal as a border concept against which the distinction between human and nonhuman (including the machinic and the technological) is made. Importantly, my “new” bioethics of kinship between humans, animals and machines deals not only with biological life (zoē) but also with political life (bios). There is a double paradox implied here with regard to the traditional distinction between ethics and politics in philosophy, as this bioethics both responds to what Foucault and Agamben describe as biopolitics while also exceeding it in the form of an originary demand on life. While taking its impulse from Levinas’s thinking of alterity and Derrida’s radicalization of Levinas, it also turns to Foucault and Agamben for their analysis of the material conditions of “the outside,” of “the difference of the difference,” in biopolitical terms.

In the context of the ethical issues concerning cosmetic surgery, body modification and women’s beauty regimes explored in this article, I realize that there may be something rather frustrating about a bioethics that refuses to evaluate the morality of the actions in which the producers, participants and audiences of the radical makeover show The Swan are engaged. And indeed, the kind of bioethics I have in mind here will not provide us with a definite set of values concerning cosmetic surgery; it will

not teach us where to draw the line between necessary and cosmetic procedures. Neither will it help us decide in advance whether people should or should not engage in beauty transformation, or whether the correction of a bumpy nose is more justifiable morally than a boob job or an ear one one's arm.⁶⁹ What it will do instead (perhaps adding to the frustration of those who already have clear expectations of the tasks bioethics should undertake and the questions it should answer), is shift the parameters of the ethical debate: from an individualistic problem-based moral paradigm in which rules can be rationally, strategically worked out on the basis of a previously agreed principle – e.g. that it is the sum total of happiness of all beings that counts, or that I should respect the (human or even non-human) other as much as I love myself – to a broader political context in which individual decisions are always involved in complex relations of power, economy and ideology. It is precisely out of this tension between the need to respond the alterity of the other always in a singular way, and the fact that there is more than one other in the world that is simultaneously making a demand on me, that a responsible nonfoundational bioethics can emerge.

Notes

1. The Swan voiceover, courtesy of Reality News Online,
<http://www.realitynews.com>, accessed on 5 July 2005.
2. Some other makeover shows which have gained international popularity include Bravo's Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, BBC's What Not to Wear, ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, BBC's Ground Force and Channel 4's 10 Years Younger.
3. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 136.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
6. Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 1.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. Ibid., p. 9.

11. Ibid., p. 9.

12. Ibid., p. 20. See also Giorgio Agamben, State of Exception, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 1-7.

13. Giorgio Agamben “No to Biopolitical Tattooing,” 2004,
<http://www.truthout.org/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/4/3249>.

14. Agamben, State of Exception, p. 39. I should add here that I remain somewhat sceptical of repeating verbatim Agamben’s argument that politics today can be best understood as biopolitics, as political economy, Marxist theory or psychoanalysis, to mention but a few theoretical frameworks, can provide equally compelling accounts of what is going on in the world today. I am also troubled by the negativity of Agamben’s argument, a negativity which I believe seriously constrains his search for a new politics and new ethics. I hope my own ethical proposition developed in this article offers a way out of what I see as an Agambenian impasse.

15. The inspiration for this chapter came from a piece by Myrna Blyth in National Review Online, “Skin Deep,” which opened with the following words: “This past Monday night was a makeover marathon on TV. While President Bush outlined his plans for the makeover of Iraq to the Army War College on the Fox News network, much of America was tuned into The Swan, the mother of all makeover shows, on the other Fox channel,” May 24, 2004,

<http://www.nationalreview.com/blyth/blyth200405270957.asp>, accessed on June 1, 2005.

16. Sander, L Gilman, Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 19.

17. Ibid., p. 18.

18. Ibid., p. 21.

19. Ibid., p. 30.

20. Agamben, Homo Sacer, p. 20.

21. Agamben, State of Exception, pp. 3-4.

22. Agamben, Homo Sacer, p. 73.

23. “‘To ban’ someone is to say that anyone may harm him.” Cavalca, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 105.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

25. Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in eds L. Martin et al., Technologies of the Self (London: Tavistock Books, 1990), p. 18.

26. Gilman, Making the Body, p. 333.

27. Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," in The Levinas Reader, ed. Sean Hand (Blackwell: Oxford, 1989), p. 83.

28. Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 66.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

30. Even if the shift to the first person singular may read somewhat awkward here, it is important to retain this pronoun – instead of using the more generic "one," "we," or "man" - in order to absolute the singularity and irreplaceability of the obligation that structures Levinas's ethics. This obligation and responsibility is only ever mine, rather than "human" or "ours."

31. In makeover programmes, this is often a codeword for the "Jewish" nose. See Gilman, Making the Body.

32. Foucault's work on the "care of self" would provide one possible way of interpreting plastic surgery clients and makeover show participants as agents of their transformation, not just victims of ideology and overbearing hegemonic power relations. Body makeover could then be read as a practice of self-transformation, an attempt to establish an ethical relation to oneself through a set of select techniques.

Mark Poster's article in this volume analyses The Swan's participants through this prism of the Foucauldian care of self. For more on the concept of "care of self" see Foucault, "Technologies of the Self".

33. See Agamben, Homo Sacer, pp. 186-7.

34. Giorgio Agamben, The Open: Man and Animal, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 6. Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)", trans. David Wills, Critical Inquiry 28: Winter (2002): 369-418.

35. Agamben, The Open, p. 38.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

37. See Dinesh Wadiwel, "Animal by Any Other Name? Patterson and Agamben Discuss Animal (and Human) Life," Borderlands: e-journal, 3: 1 (2004), http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au/vol3no1_2004/wadiwel_animal.htm. Bernard Stiegler, Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Cary Wolfe, Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 75-6.

38. Donna J. Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature (London: Free Association Books, 1991), p. 152. Originally published as: Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," Socialist Review, 80 (1985): 65-107.

39. Ibid., p. 149.

40. Quoted in Wolfe, Animal Rites, p. 5.

41. Derrida, "The Animal," p. 41.

42. Wolfe, Animal Rites, p. 101.

43. See *ibid.*, p. 105.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

45. In her second book, Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), Haraway explored the complex relations between humans, animals and technoscience, focusing on primatology.

46. See Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), p. 4.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

48. Donna Haraway, Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.

FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™ (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

49. Ibid., p. 9.

50. Ibid., p. 3.

51. Ibid., p. 12.

52. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

53. Ibid., p. 9.

54. Ibid., p. 25.

55. Ibid., p. 50.

56. Ibid., p. 53.

57. For an alternative non-systemic theory of ethics for humans, animals and machines see my chapter “Bio-ethics and cyberfeminism” in Joanna Zylińska, The Ethics of Cultural Studies (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 138-158.

58. Ibid., p. 61.

59. The last few paragraphs come from my review of Haraway's Companion Species Manifesto, "Dogs R Us?," parallax, 12: 1, 2006: 129-31.

60. <http://www.swanuk.org.uk/index%20frame.htm>, Swan Sanctuary's web site, accessed on June 1, .2005.

61. Wolfe, Animal Rites, p. 26.

62. See *ibid.*, p. 26.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

64. Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 79-153.

65. Jacques Derrida, Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

66. Wolfe, Animal Rites, p. 16.

67. Derrida, "The Animal," p. 402.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

69. The Ear Project by the Australian artist Stelarc, aimed at exploring alternate body architectures, involves constructing a replica of the artist's ear, equipping it with a microphone and implanting it on his arm. For information on the earlier stages of this project see Stelarc's website: <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/quarterear/index.html>.

BIO:

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