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Comics and Graphic Narratives

In recent years, comics and graphic narratives have become a popular and innovative form for telling auto/biographical stories of selves and others in a medium that artfully combines – or co-mixes – words and images. Various terms have been used to capture this emergent form of graphic autobiography and memoir, including Art Spiegelman's neologism for comics, "co-mix," a term now often associated with the underground work of Spiegelman and others beginning in the 1970s, and the more recent term "autographics," coined by life-writing scholar Gillian Whitlock.[1] The touchstone text of the form is *Maus*, Spiegelman's graphic narrative of his parents' experience of the Holocaust and his own transgenerational trauma, parts of which were first serialized in *Raw* magazine between 1980 and 1991, before appearing in book form in 1986 (volume one) and 1991 (volume two). Since *Maus*, other key texts in the hybrid autographics genre include Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2003) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2004), and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006) and *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama* (2012), all of which have reached a wide readership and garnered popular and critical acclaim, as well as scholarly attention. These texts share a preoccupation with exploring how subjects come into being in relation to experiences and events that are both ordinary and extraordinary, such as childhood, war, illness, trauma, shame, stigma, love, and hope. I argue here that this new, hybrid form is particularly well suited for treating the "posthuman condition."

According to feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, the "posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming."[2] Many graphic narratives render this condition through various formal practices, including radical juxtaposition and assemblage as method, as well as through the articulation of a concept of the subject as always in the process of becoming in relation to both human and nonhuman others. I will discuss these graphic treatments of the posthuman condition using some

examples from a sub-field of comics and graphic narratives – graphic medicine, a fascinating conjuncture between graphic narratives and clinical medicine. Focusing on graphic medicine allows me to think about some of the ways in which comics and graphic narratives have become important resources for communicating and discussing a range of ethical and aesthetic issues within particular contexts – in this case, within the discourses, practices, and institutions of medicine and healthcare. For medical practitioners, patients, families, and caregivers dealing with the experience and event of illness, such graphic narratives in their hybrid verbal/visual form help to reimagine the boundaries of "health," "illness," "life," and "death" and to rethink the status of the human in its entanglement with the nonhuman in everyday life.

Graphic Medicine

The phrase "graphic medicine" was first coined by the general practitioner and graphic artist Ian Williams as the name for a website he created in 2007, and since then, many other discourses, genres, and practices of graphic medicine have arisen or have been identified as operating *avant la lettre*. For Williams, graphic medicine is a "handy term to denote the role comics can play in the study and delivery of healthcare,"[3] suggesting a link, historically and methodologically, between the emergence of graphic medicine and the emergence of the interdisciplinary field of the medical humanities and one of its key methods, narrative medicine.[4] Narrative medicine takes seriously the writing, reading, and telling of stories in medicine, by doctors, patients and their families, nurses, and other health care practitioners. Michael J. Green and Kimberly R. Myers also point to the role that graphic narratives can play for narrative medicine. In these accounts, graphic narratives are instrumentalized as the means by which something – say, "compassion" or the "patient's experience" – is delivered into medicine. In this scenario, what is delivered is conceived of as always already other and external to medicine, warranting a call to bring in that which is other. Graphic narratives are most commonly understood, I argue, to provide a kind of "delivery system" of otherness into medicine under the auspices of a more expansive medical education.[5] Such a genealogy works to connect graphic medicine directly with the humanistic project of the so-called Medical Humanities, so much so that we might even describe graphic medicine as a subfield of the Medical Humanities. Without denying that this is one of the more obvious genealogies of graphic medicine, however, in my work I am more interested in tracing other, more indirect genealogies, what we might call graphic medicine's posthumanist genealogies; or, put another way, how graphic medicine

articulates some of the key concepts and practices of posthumanism, including assemblage as method and becoming in relation.

Assemblage as Method

Graphic medicine can formally render illness as an assemblage, a complex interplay between and among bodies, minds, diagnoses, treatments, and clinical, critical, political, and narrative discourses and practices. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari delineate the concept and practice of assemblage in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, noting that the "functioning of the assemblage can be explained only if one takes it apart to examine both the elements that make it up and the nature of the linkages."[6] Thus, Deleuze and Guattari are interested in both the form and content of assemblages, as well as the mechanisms by which assemblages are formed and unformed in time and space. How might we put this abstract concept of assemblage into practice? And what might be the political and therapeutic effects of such practices?

Of course, comics are themselves a kind of assemblage. As Will Eisner explains in his now classic instructional book, *Comics and Sequential Art*, first published in 1985, through the varied mix of panels and frames, as well as the lines, borders, and gutters linking and separating panels and frames, comics encapsulate events through their form as much as their content: as Eisner puts it, the panel "is used by the artist to capture or 'freeze' one segment in what is in reality an uninterrupted flow of action."[7] In comics, time becomes spatialized. In Eisner's realist formulation, success "stems from the artist's ability (usually more visceral than intellectual) to gauge the commonality of the reader's experience," suggesting that comics present experience as self-evident rather than as always already an interpretation open to further interpretation. Yet, on a formal level, I would argue, contra Eisner, that many, if not most graphic narratives work to *re*present and interpret "experience" as a category of analysis, by demonstrating both the desire to encapsulate an individual's "experience" in history and the impossibility of doing so. Illness narratives often offer what I have called an ethics of failure; this ethics emerges out of the situation of being at a loss, yet exploring various routes – the creative combination of failure and further exploration.[8] The experience of illness is multiple, and tracking that multiplicity demonstrates that even as diagnostic categories, treatments, and illness narratives seek to contain and reduce – or to frame in the language of graphic medicine – an illness experience, the experience always also falls outside the frame, overspills the container, gets messy. Similarly, in an early instantiation of posthumanist theory and practice, Margrit Shildrick argued

that "leaks and flows across categories signal not so much the breakdown of security as the impossibility of fixed definition."[9] In their very form, comics thematize boundaries and their leakiness: panels are breached, borders dissolved, lines are drawn and undrawn, boundaries are played with, on, and beyond.

The practice of graphic medicine, then, materializes a means to think the multiplicity of illness as an assemblage. In thinking through how this happens on the page and beyond, we can explore the experience of drawing in general, and drawing the experience of illness, diagnosis, and treatment in particular, as central to the practice of graphic medicine. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari use the term "drawing" to help delineate their conceptual apparatus; in their collaborative work, they "draw" together the graphic, formal, and conceptual. As Brian Massumi explains, "to draw is an act of creation. What is drawn … does not preexist the act of drawing. The French word *tracer* captures this better: It has all the graphic connotations of 'to draw' in English, but can also mean to blaze a trail or open a road."[10] In the graphic memoir *Epileptic*,[11] for example, I would argue that French cartoonist David B. attempts to draw his brother's epilepsy as a multiplicity and not a "pretraced destiny."[12] Through drawing in general and the creation of *Epileptic* in particular, David B. struggles to find a form to answer the question people ask him when they hear about his brother's condition: "So what's it like, a seizure?"[13] The graphic resolution that David B. arrives at over time is to draw his brother's epilepsy as a serpent that takes hold of and transforms his brother's body, emotional responses, and cognitive functions. The serpent also makes visible the way epilepsy insinuates itself into this otherwise mundane story of one French family; it slithers across and between panels, sometimes serving as that which connects and binds individuals and scenes or as that which borders and gives shape to panels and whole pages.

Epileptic shows epilepsy as serpent to be a slippery illness category – one that defies any easy delimitation as either a wholly mental or physical illness. Perhaps because of its ability to materialize an experience of illness, the graphic form is also effective in making visible – and giving form to – the varieties of experiences of mental illness, and the widely divergent diagnoses and treatments of mental illness across time and space.[14] To give just one example of how this might be done, Ellen Forney, in her graphic memoir *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me*, visually contrasts graphic scenes of mania with graphic scenes of depression, which together provide a harrowing yet also life-affirming view of manic-depressive illness.[15]

FIGURE 8.1 A scene of mania from Ellen Forney's *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me.*

In the scenes of mania, the thought and speech balloons become increasingly confused and difficult to follow. In one sequence of panels, Ellen's therapist asks, "How's work?" which generates images and texts that together appear to lose form, coherence, and sense (Figure 8.1). Forney

creates an increasingly abstracted and vertiginous image of Ellen's manic face, with the mouth drawn as an ever-widening cavern and the eyes drawn as having become radiating black suns. In this scene, Ellen's abstract, manic face becomes unmoored from her body, eventually blasting off from the head of the Ellen who is shown to be still sitting in the chair talking to her therapist. This graphic experience of transcendence is short-lived as the mask-like manic face hits the top of the panel with a resounding "Konk!" surrounded by empty speech balloons, suggesting that the experience is both captured and contained by Forney's representation and, at the same time, uncapturable and uncontainable. Two manic double pages follow the page of Ellen's head blasting off: in the first, a larger-than-life Ellen strides forth across two pages to organize her 30th birthday party, and in the second, Ellen has become a strange human/nonhuman hybrid, with her head attached to several stretched nerve-like rope fibers connecting the many disparate friends and creative activities planned for the big party. These images suggest that a manic Ellen both is and isn't entirely herself and is and isn't entirely human, not unlike David B.'s depiction of epilepsy as human/serpent hybrid.

Graphic scenes of depression will replace these graphic scenes of mania, and the exuberant, full, and busy pages will become lethargic, empty, and still (Figure 8.2). On one page that serves as a chapter divider, Forney has assembled 14 small, simple line drawings that together tell a visually iconic story of depression. If Forney's graphic scenes of mania threaten to burst the boundaries of the panels and pages, these graphic scenes of depression take up as little space as possible and, although connected in a graphic narrative sequence contained on a single page, each drawing also seems to stand on its own in a little capsule of self-protection. The story begins and ends with a depersonalized lump on a surface. Through the graphic elements, even simplified as they are, we come to realize that the lump is a person, but the person is empty of personhood and seems to be trapped in immanence. We first see the figure lying in bed under a blanket, though, like the drawing of the elephant eaten by a snake from *The Little Prince*, we don't know what we are seeing until the drawings that follow give us more information and context. The figure wakes up, slowly and seemingly unwillingly. A head appears and disappears, turtle-like, before the figure finally sits up on the bed. Yet, even when the figure sits up, the bed seems to pull it backward, the head appears too heavy to hold up. As if for protection, the figure wraps the blanket around itself, de-personalizing the figure again. Wrapped in its blanket, the figure passes through a door from one empty, formless room to another. The figure ends up on a couch, and the earlier sequence of the head slowly appearing is reversed as the head sinks back into the blanket and

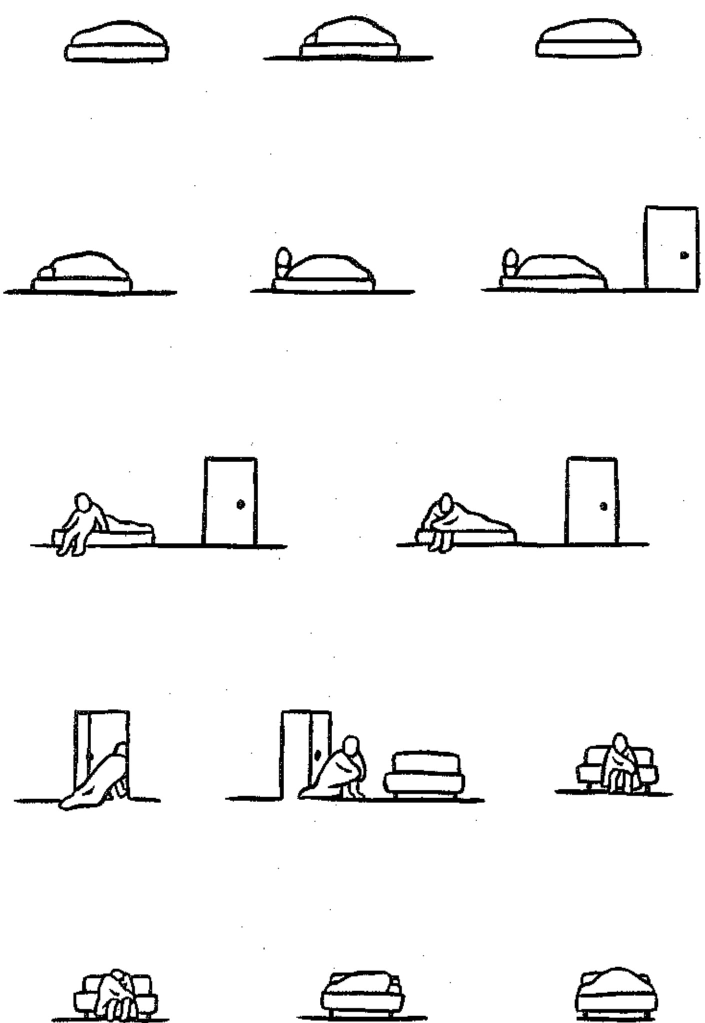

FIGURE 8.2 A scene of depression from Ellen Forney's *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me.*

further into the body itself. The hieroglyphic sequence ends with the return of the immobile, slug-like lump, rendered impersonal, unrecognizable as human, and suggesting the recurrence of heavy and isolating feelings of depression.[16]

In Forney's simple yet eloquent graphic syntax of depression, the subject who experiences depression begins and ends in formlessness.[17] Through Forney's drawings of the divergent experiences of becoming manic and becoming depressive, the subject is de-subjectified, becoming an object for graphic analysis. We witness the experience and event of de-subjectification through drawing. The process of de-subjectification is not rendered as wholly pathological; in Forney's graphic interpretation, the process is experienced ambivalently. In *Marbles*, Forney includes a photographic image of the outside cover of one of her sketchbooks, as well as photographic images of several pages from inside showing a series of self-portraits she had drawn as a kind of therapeutic practice. She confesses that the "drawings both scared me and gave me comfort" (92). On the one hand, by tracing the "familiar lines of my face," she would "calm down and come back into [herself]. Inert on a piece of paper, the demons were more handleable" (98). On the other hand, some of her portraits serve as attempts to depict feelings of what Forney describes as mental images she "needed to get outside of me" (99). Images from the sketchbook – including a mental image of a contorted, barely human figure wrapped around itself, and snuggled in a bird's nest – are themselves now nested within Forney's graphic narrative. In this nested assemblage, the mental images are, paradoxically, both doubly contained and yet also further externalized by Forney through the practice of drawing. The process of containment and externalization is representational, and also potentially therapeutic, for Forney not just in the moment of drawing them but also in the many moments after, when readers encounter Forney's drawn mental image on the page in front of them. In this process, Forney puts spatial and temporal distance between herself and the mental images she needed to get out of herself.

Becoming in Relation

Graphic narratives work formally to deconstruct subjectivity in general and the experience of illness in particular. By emphasizing the subject as becoming through drawing, graphic narratives work to render the posthuman subject not as something one *is*, but rather as something one *does*, in relation to nonhuman objects and other human subjects.[18] In a graphic memoir about, say, cancer, the cancer can become visible and have agency outside of or beyond the human who has cancer. While this can also happen in text-only illness narratives, the graphic elements allow for a complex demonstration of movement across and between scales, from micro-cellular to macro-social environments and back again, as a way to demonstrate the ongoing and recursive processes of subjectification and de-subjectification through particular formal elements, including juxtaposition, nesting, and assemblage.

For example, in a two-page vignette entitled "Mom in Mathemagic Land" in the graphic memoir *Mom's Cancer*, Brian Fies demonstrates the problem of seeing a three-dimensional object – the tumor on his mother's lungs – in only two dimensions. On the left side of the page, in a panel without a border, Fies provides a simple geometry lesson, showing the difference between one, two, and three dimensions with drawings of lines, squares, and cubes. On the right, in a boxed panel, we see Fies, his mother, his mother's doctor, and Fies's two sisters looking at scans and trying to discern the effect of two months of chemotherapy on his mother's tumor. Fies draws the scans showing the tumor on the lung before and after chemotherapy, and he places them side by side. We look with the family looking at the difference, and we "see" that the tumor appears to have barely changed – the reduction of the tumor in the drawing of the second scan is hardly visible to the eye. In a caption at the bottom of the drawing of the two images and of the family and doctor looking at the images, Fies writes, "Your crushing disappointment only betrays your mathematical ignorance" (53). When we turn the page, the "mathemagics" of tumor volume is explained, and the doctor tells Fies's mother and her children, "I'd estimate it's fifty percent smaller! That's **great!**" (53, emphasis in original). The family's gloom turns to hope, even as the captions anchoring the three panels on this page can't help but add a hint of skepticism in the form of a dubious-sounding query, "See how understanding math helps?" (53).

Math becomes a discourse through which Fies's mother and her children experience her illness, and the tumor and its volume before and after chemotherapy is an object – both human and nonhuman – that suggests the complexity of posthuman subjectivity. In this scene, Fies draws the abstract language of math as a means by which the doctor communicates hope to her patient and her family. The notion that we cannot fully see or comprehend what is happening and has happened in the body is used here not to produce more fear, but less. Yet, even as his drawings attempt to picture the hopefulness in the possibility of a 50 percent reduction of the volume of the tumor, Fies's captions inject a note of doubt into the otherwise cheery scene. I would argue that it is precisely this tension – between the doctor's certainty that the math tells us something good, and the narrator's lingering uncertainty even as he learns to do the math on his mother's cancer – that characterizes the experience and event of illness. The point/counter-point of images and words in Fies's text captures this tension. As he demonstrates in his graphic analysis, Fies becomes subject not only in relation to his mom but also in relation to his mom's cancer *and* in relation to the math on his mom's cancer. As with Forney's desire to use the graphic form to both contain and externalize her own mental images of her depressed self, Fies invents "mathemagic land" in order to both contain and move between the biological event of the tumor

inside his mother's body and the affective experience of his mom's cancer inside their family. The graphic helps us to "see" – and become in relation to – this double movement, between a biological event of cancer and an affective experience of cancer. Graphic narratives like Fies's provide a form for interdisciplinary encounters between the humanities and the natural sciences and medicine, as well as, in the more unusual case here, between literature and mathematics.

Such movements across and between biological events and affective experiences and across and between the human and the nonhuman can also be seen in Martina Schlünder, Pit Arens, and Axel Gerhardt's collaborative graphic narrative, "Becoming Bone Sheep," published in a special issue on Graphic Medicine for *Configurations*.[19] In her diagnosis of the posthuman condition, Braidotti is attentive to the ways in which "[a]dvanced capitalism and its bio-genetic technologies engender a perverse form of the posthuman. At its core there is a radical disruption of the human-animal interaction, but all living species are caught in the spinning machine of the global economy."[20] In her chapter on "Post-Anthropocentrism: Life Beyond Species," Braidotti explores not only the perverse forms of the posthuman predicament but also the possibility of "affirmative transformations," in particular of the interrelation between humans and animals as "a transformative or symbiotic relation that hybridizes and alters the 'nature' of each one and foregrounds the middle grounds of their interaction." For Braidotti, this "is the 'milieu' of the human/non-human continuum and it needs to be explored as an open experiment, not as a foregone moral conclusion about allegedly universal values or qualities."[21]

The graphic narrative "Becoming Bone Sheep" demonstrates both the perverse and affirmative transformations that Braidotti identifies as symptoms and signs of the posthuman condition. It also moves beyond the delivery of the patient's experience of illness into medicine as a function of the medical humanities by suggesting a new experimental form of graphic medicine, one that historicizes and makes visible spaces that help us "comprehend the structures of biomedicine."[22] What becomes visible in "Becoming Bone Sheep" is a real-life stable/veterinary hospital in the Swiss Alps in which "different sheep ontologies are produced" – that is, sheep produced not as meat to be eaten but as new knowledge for improving orthopedic surgery and bone fracture care for humans. The form for capturing this "odd mixture of farm, clinic and lab"[23] is itself an odd mixture – a collage of photographs, drawings, and words, intermingled together, sometimes bleeding into each other, sometimes cut up and rearranged.

At the center of this graphic narrative is a haunting close-up image of a sheep's head, split in half (Figure 8.3). On the right side, the sheep is drawn

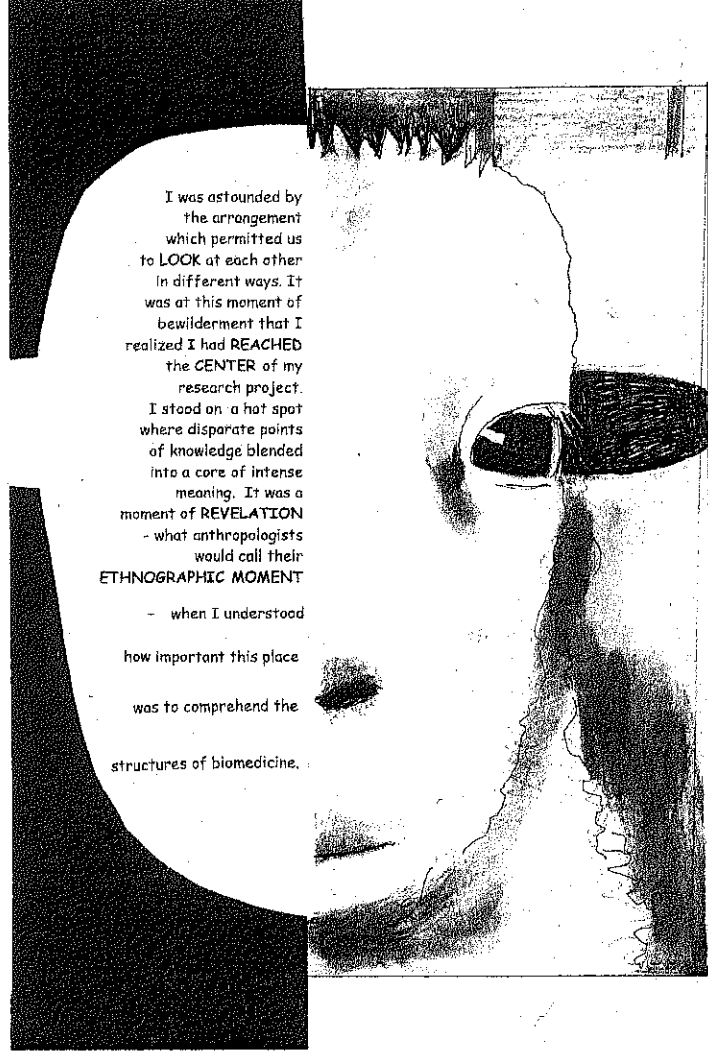

FIGURE 8.3 "Becoming Bone Sheep" by Martina Schlünder, Pit Arens, and Axel Gerhardt. (Copyright © 2014 Martina Schlünder, Pit Arens, and Axel Gerhardt. All rights reserved, reproduced with permission.)

looking at the human viewer/reader; the sheep's eye acts as the image's punctum, pulling the viewer into a relationship with the image/sheep. On the left, the outline of the shape of the sheep's head is continued, but in place of the left side of the sheep's face the graphic artists have included a contemplative text about the looks exchanged between the human narrator and sheep in the hybrid space of farm/lab/clinic; these exchanged looks, the narrator explains, create "bewilderment," "intense meaning," and "revelation" about the "structures of biomedicine."[24] The combination of words and image on this page enacts the human/nonhuman milieu Braidotti describes as "an open experiment, not as a foregone moral conclusion about allegedly universal values or qualities."[25] The experimental milieu is not only the farm/lab/clinic but also the graphic narrative "Becoming Bone Sheep" becoming another kind of experimental milieu for understanding the posthuman condition. Through their form as well as content, the graphic narratives I have explored here render the creative possibilities of posthuman/ist spaces, practices, and subjects.

NOTES

1. See Art Spiegelman, *Co-Mix: A Retrospective of Comics, Graphics, and Scraps* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2013), and Gillian Whitlock, "Autographics: The Seeing 'I' of Comics," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 52.4 (Winter 2006): 965–79.
2. Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 12.
3. See Ian Williams, "Why Graphic Medicine?," accessed January 22, 2015, www.graphicmedicine.org/why-graphic-medicine/. Williams notes that Michael Green and Kimberly R. Myers also give him credit for the term in their essay, "Graphic Medicine: Use of Comics in Medical Education and Patient Care," *BMJ* 340 (March 3, 2010), accessed January 22, 2015, www.bmj.com/theBMJ. Green and Myers's use of the term "graphic pathographies" adapts Ann Hunsaker Hawkins's term for illness narratives in her classic work, *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993).
4. For more on the practices of narrative medicine and bioethics, see *Stories Matter: The Role of Narrative in Medicine*, ed. Rita Charon and Martha Montello (New York: Routledge, 2002).
5. See David Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), and Lisa Diedrich, "Against Compassion: Attending to Histories and Methods in Medical Humanities; Or, Doing Critical Medical Studies," in *Narrative Matters in Medical Contexts across Disciplines*, ed. Franziska Gygax and Miriam Locher (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2015), 167–82.
6. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 53.

7. Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist* (New York: Norton, 2008), 39.
8. Lisa Diedrich, *Treatments: Language, Politics, and the Culture of Illness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); see especially the conclusion, "Toward an Ethics of Failure," 148–66.
9. Margrit Shildrick, "Posthumanism and the Monstrous Body," *Body & Society* 2.1 (1996): 6.
10. Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgments," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, ed. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.
11. B. David, *Epileptic* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005).
12. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 13.
13. David, *Epileptic*, 313.
14. Hillary Chute describes Lynda Barry's attempts to "map a process of memory – make it material on the page – through the spatializing form of comics," in "Materializing Memory: Lynda Barry's One Hundred Demons," in *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, ed. Michael A. Chaney (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 293.
15. Ellen Forney, *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me* (New York: Gotham Books, 2012).
16. See also Courtney Donovan, "Representations of Health, Embodiment, and Experience in Graphic Memoir," *Configurations: A Journal of Literature, Science, and Technology* 22.2 (Spring 2014): 237–53. Forney's drawings show "how the illness produces two distinct embodied experiences," mania and depression (253).
17. See Lisa Diedrich, "Graphic Analysis: Transitional Phenomena in Alison Bechdel's Are You My Mother?" *Configurations* 22.2 (Spring 2014): 183–203.
18. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), and Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).
19. Martina Schlünder, Pit Arens, and Axel Gerhardt, "Becoming Bone Sheep," *Configurations* 22.2 (Spring 2014): 263–94.
20. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 7.
21. *Ibid.*, 79–80.
22. Schlünder, Arens, and Gerhardt, "Becoming Bone Sheep," 278.
23. *Ibid.*, 277.
24. *Ibid.*, 278. See also John Berger's "Why Look at Animals?" in *About Looking* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 3–28: "In the accompanying ideology, animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are" (16).
25. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 79–80.

9

ANNEKE SMELIK

Film

Contemporary visual culture often features love relations between humans and posthumans. To give some examples: in Björk's videoclip *All is Full of Love*, two female robots tenderly make love. In the television commercial "Robotskin" by Philips, a man is seduced by a female robot who helps him shave under the shower, leaving her yearning for him.[1] In the film *Her*, the throaty voice of Samantha, a computer operating system, both comforts and seduces Theodore Twombly after his separation. In *Ex Machina*, Caleb falls in love with a humanoid artificial intelligence named "Ava" and reprograms the security system so that she manages to escape, "cross-dressed" as a "real" woman to pass as human in the world outside her confines, but leaving him behind to face certain death. And in the Swedish television series *Real Humans*, "hubot" Mimi falls in love with Leo, half-human half-hubot, a love that survives in her memory after the forced recharging of her system when she is kidnapped.[2] These examples point to a rather intimate relation between humans and different figurations of the posthuman: robots, androids, replicants, cyborgs, hubots, avatars, AI systems, OS (operating systems), and so on. They show how the figure of the posthuman entices, fascinates, and seduces humans. This chapter sketches how the development of the posthuman image in science fiction (SF) cinema over the last few decades moves from anxiety over identity to mediated memories, and from the awareness of affect to actual love relations.[3] I will link these different figurations of the posthuman to specific cinematic techniques, thematic tropes, and narrative forms. At the end, I will return to the vexed question of love between humans and posthumans.

The Cinematic Cyborg

In cinema studies, the notion of the posthuman is primarily a speculative image rather than a philosophical concept; in that sense, I work in this chapter on a posthuman *imaginary*. I treat the posthuman here as a hybrid