Introduction: Posthumanist subjectivities, or, coming after the subject …

Posthumanist Subjectivities

Posthumanism is now well installed within the humanities and the social sciences as a critical discourse (see Wolfe, 2010) influenced by the wider technological condition (see Scharff and Dusek, 2003), the technological unconscious and *non*-conscious (see Thrift, 2004; Hayles, 2006) and by the academy growing increasingly inured to 'switching codes' of thought (see Bartscherer and Coover, 2011). It seems that the overriding task for post-humanism, as a critical discourse, is reflection on how the effects on and of contemporary technoculture and biotechnology force through a rethinking of the integrities and identities of the human: not forgetting, either, those of its non-human others, many of them of humanity's own making and remaking – gods, monsters, animals, machines, systems (see, for instance, Graham, 2002; Derrida, 2008; Haraway, 2008). Critical narratives of 'posthuman metamorphoses' (Clarke, 2008) or of the 'posthumanities' (to use the term of a landmark series in the field, published by the University of Minnesota Press under the editorship of Cary Wolfe) all dwell on those themes. They tend to avoid transhumanist speculation on humanity's 'trans-formation to nonbiological experience' as a result of technology (see Kurzweil, p. 324). Neil Badmington's *Posthumanism* (2000), for example, typified this approach early. It provides an anthology of familiar texts within late twentieth-century thought that could, in retrospect, be seen as proto-posthumanist: ostensibly unlikely but in fact eminently apt essays by Barthes, Foucault, Fanon and Althusser are included there, in reflection of the fact that as a critical discourse posthumanism does not necessarily seek emancipation from humanism, philosophy, modernity or postmodernity, but remains rooted in their cultural memory even while aware of the specificities

of the present and of the various changes it heralds. Investigating posthumanist subjectivities, accordingly, need be neither extreme nor epistemology-radicalising, at least not violently so. This is precisely because there arguably remains an immutability to the human which calls for a reinscription of concepts, categories and philosophemes that are on the way to revision rather than superannuation.

Clearly, this is not a reassurance justifying complacency. That would not be viable in a time when we can glimpse 'homo technologicus, a symbiotic creature in which biology and technology intimately interact', so that what results is 'not simply "homo sapiens plus technology", but rather homo sapiens transformed by technology' into 'a new evolutionary unit, undergoing a new kind of evolution in a new environment' (Longo, 2002, p. 23). The accents, the idioms, the terminologies, the tones, the styles, the pitches of critical inquiry inevitably undergo transformation in apprehending all that. Attempts at reinscription and re-application of concepts and terms which have served us well in the past – including subjectivity – are affected, and rigour demands that they allow themselves to be *read back* by the current realities that they attempt to read. This special issue of *Subjectivity*, on 'Posthumanist Subjectivities', seeks precisely that kind of (re)addressing. It addresses itself to the posthuman, as a condition that bears the cultural memory of a famous 'report' on its postmodern analogue (Lyotard, 1984) but which is, indeed, dramatically refashioned by technology. It addresses itself to subjectivity, as that field of study for 'theories of the self from Freud to Haraway', as the subtitle to one prominent guide has it (Mansfield, 2000) – where the inclusion of Haraway, in its reminder that forgetting cyborgs and other species would now be anachronistic (see Haraway, 1991 and 2008), is a cautionary indication of just how keenly the subject demands review in posthuman times. In this (re)addressing, the voice that this issue has opted for, mindful that the objective within these pages must be consistency rather than polyphony, is, tendentially, poststructuralist.

The choice of that voice might initially come across as surprising. Is it quite modulated for purpose? Can it reach far enough? Poststructuralism can seem overdependent on the resources of the linguistic turn or on the kind of gambit that can assert that the resistance to theory is a resistance to the use of language about language (see De Man, 1986, pp. 19–20). Karen Barad exemplifies the resistance. 'Language has been granted too much power', she says, adding: 'How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter?' (Barad, 2003, p. 801). In posthumanism, the question seems particularly pertinent. Its sentiment is echoed by Hayles: 'Language isn't what it used to be' (Hayles, 2006, p. 136). *Code*, instead, appears more relevant. '[C]ode becomes a powerful resource through which new communication channels can be opened between conscious, unconscious, and nonconscious human cognitions' (p. 140). The consequences

for the thinking of subjectivity, even if this is not directly invoked as such by Hayles, will be clear:

> No longer natural, human-only language increasingly finds itself in a position analogous to the conscious mind that, faced with disturbing dreams, is forced to acknowledge it is not the whole of mind. Code, performing as the interface between humans and programmable media, functions in the contemporary cultural Imaginary as the shadowy double of the human-only language inflected and infected by its hidden presence. (p. 157)

In the consequent distancing from 'the linguistic turn', which made the theoretical humanities go round not so long ago, what is symptomatic in such moves on code and away from what is predicated on 'human-only language' is some degree of conviction that posthumanism is the theory of 'replenishment' compensating for poststructuralism's theoretical 'exhaustion' (compare Barth, 1997, on the literature of exhaustion and the literature of replenishment). But the posthumanism-labelled thinking that subscribes to that idea risks, to our reading, appearing tautological. That is because it is not quite clear to us how a posthumanism based, for instance, on 'agential realism' (to take the example proposed by Barad) as 'an account of technoscientific and other practices that takes feminist, antiracist, poststructuralist, queer, Marxist, science studies, and scientific insights seriously, building specifically on certain insights from Niels Bohr, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Vicki Kirby, Joseph Rouse, and others' (p. 811), differs from that brand of posthumanism that already strongly informs a series like 'Posthumanities', for instance. Certainly, there is nothing in that claim that would not be endorsed by figures like Wolfe, Clarke, Braidotti or, indeed, the contributors to this volume, all of whom also maintain conceptual investments in language's continued trenchancy. The essays in this issue of *Subjectivity* do bear affinities with and exemplify what Barad invokes: namely, through attention to 'agential realism', the prospect of 'a specifically posthumanist notion of performativity – one that incorporates important material and discursive, social and scientific, human and nonhuman, and natural and cultural factors' (p. 808), in which 'it is once again possible to acknowledge nature, the body and materiality in the fullness of their becoming without resorting to the optics of transparency or opacity, the geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority, and the theorization of the human as either pure cause or pure effect while at the same time remaining resolutely accountable for the role "we" play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming' (p. 812). It is difficult, however, to conceive how a posthumanism that is not transhumanist in its affiliations could avoid doing that. To our mind, this is not a 'value added' that other posthumanisms or, indeed, poststructuralism fail to find.

There may, indeed, be a larger problem. We are mindful of the fact that to bring one critical discourse, poststructuralism, to a reading of the critical discourse that reportedly supplants it, posthumanism, can seem retrograde, or nostalgic, or lazy, or unreconstructed, or ill-read, or unaware, or less than hip. But, together with the contributors to this issue, we are motivated by the conviction that the conceptualities of figures like Jacques Derrida or Jean-Luc Nancy do not lose their resonance easily. They have a demonstrable relevance to the posthumanist condition – which, after all, they intersect with chronologically and foreshadow. Derrida's own testy words in *Specters of Marx* on Fukuyama's brand of end-of-history/end-of-ideology-marked posthumanism attest to that. He observes that '[m]any young people today ... probably no longer sufficiently realize it: the eschatological themes of the "end of history", of the "end of Marxism", of "the end of philosophy", of the "ends of man", of the "last man" and so forth were, in the '50s ... our daily bread. We had this bread of apocalypse in our mouths naturally, already, just as naturally as that which I nicknamed after the fact, in 1980, the 'apocalyptic tone in philosophy'"' (see Fukuyama, 1992 and Derrida, 1994, pp. 14–15). It is a salutary reminder that posthumanism's antecedents have been more marked by poststructuralism, and for longer, than is sometimes acknowledged.

In addition, the resources of deconstruction – for instance, in facilitating a stance of vigilance in relation to the reading of both the blindness and insight in the foundational statements of any emerging critical discourse – are surely too well known to need any defending. Indeed, they can help us to read more penetratingly such shaping ideas of the posthuman as those invested in 'code' or the dismissal of language's centrality to posthumanist epistemology. For as Vicki Kirby, whom Barad invokes, notes, 'this sense that the life of language and information is as much a *bio-gram* as a grapheme' is already acknowledged by Derrida in terms of 'the peculiar proliferation of "writing"' as 'the analytical term that binds quite disparate intellectual endeavors' (quoted in Kirby, 2011, p. 289, emphasis added, see also Derrida, 1984a, p. 9). That occurs in those endeavours' referencing to 'pro-gram' in biology, for instance, so that 'the chatter of myriad informational ciphers, feedback loops, language codes, and algorithms is now so ubiquitous in the representation of knowledges that we are desensitized to the wonder of its very possibility' (p. 289). As Kirby points out, in her exemplarily careful reading of both the power and limit of deconstruction in relation to 'non-phonetic writing in genetics', for instance (p. 295, quoting from Derrida's unpublished seminar on *La Vie La Mort*, archived at UC Irvine Libraries), it is good to be alert to the fact that 'the system – "textuality", "writing", or "language in the general sense" – already, and at once – articulates the heterogeneity of biological algorithms, cybernetic communication, the discriminating grammars of molecular and atomic parsing, and the puzzles of quantum space/time configurations. What could [therefore] exceed the system's comprehending (of itself) if, as Derrida insists, "there is no outside-the-text"?'

(p. 295). Kirby's conclusion appears to be a cautious reaffirmation of deconstructive potential:

> Whether scientific modeling, natural languages, computational algo-rithms, or hormonal chatter, it is from within the grammatological textile, or universal *langue*, that the pragmatics of referential being materialize. How can modes of knowing – apparently second-order cultural models and representations – already animate the natural order? By interrogating the divisions that identify the human as inherently *un*natural, a positive science of grammatology might be appreciated. Indeed, inasmuch as certain aspects of science have always been in the process of discovering human complexity in alien (natural) literacies and numeracies, it seems that a positive science of grammatology is already underway. (p. 296)

Even if one might question Kirby's claims on grammatology's scientific status, the extension of the critique of writing and its mediations and encodings to bio- and neuro-scientific discourse clearly shows the continued relevance of post-structuralism in providing a critical vocabulary to address the posthuman. Nor is she alone in discerning the potential, as is illustrated by Christopher Johnson's judicious interventions on the same theme in a recent critical collection on *Of Grammatology* (see Johnson, 2011a, 2011b). It is a potential that is likely to be tapped further as poststructuralist approaches to posthumanist concerns evolve.

It is as well to remember, also, that other terms in posthumanism that bear extensive (re)significance, like 'animal' or 'life', derive clear impetus from deconstructive reflections, Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (2008) being one very evident influencing example. It is all quite sufficient to enrich rather than dull the repertoires of a journal like *Subjectivity*, which in its inaugural statement spoke of the importance of 'an ecletic inventory of subjectivity that reads prior intellectual conceptualizations in the light of current political priorities' and of the 'different registers of analysis' needed in that enterprise (Blackman *et al*, 2008, p. 10). To a context such as this, therefore, the reassessment in these pages of subjectivity's inventory according to poststructuralist-cum-posthumanist registers of analysis are an extending of that eclecticism.

Nevertheless, despite all this we continue to be aware that an approach to posthumanism that routes itself through 'French theory' (see Lotringer and Cohen, 2001) and in reference to 'avatars of the word' (O'Donnell, 1998) rather than 'avatar bodies' (Weinstone, 2004) can risk appearing miscast. Accordingly, the paragraphs that follow set out the rationale of the approach in this special issue more closely still. They revaluate poststructuralist thought on the subject and its pertinence to posthumanist subjectivities. They also prepare the way for the papers themselves and for the considerations therein on subjectivity and on how poststructuralism finds itself read back, counter-addressed, by the posthuman.

Coming After the Subject

More than 20 years ago, in their landmark collection *Who Comes After the Subject?* (1991), Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy assembled leading exponents of 'French Theory' or 'Continental Philosophy' and asked for their views on the survival of the subject after or 'outside' humanism. Nancy, in his 'Introduction', describes the context in which this question was asked:

> The critique or the deconstruction of subjectivity is to be considered one of the great motifs of contemporary philosophical work in France, taking off from, here again and perhaps especially, the teachings of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Bataille, Wittgenstein, from the teachings of linguistics, the social sciences, and so forth … (p. 4)

While acknowledging that context, Nancy is careful to distance himself from the 'critique or deconstruction of interiority, of self-presence, of consciousness, of mastery, of the individual or collective property of an essence'. His is not an 'obliteration' of the subject, nor a 'nihilism – itself an implicit form of the metaphysics of the subject' (p. 4). It is instead a critique with a view to delivering 'an entirely different thought: that of the *one* and that of the some *one*, of the singular existant that the subject announces, promises, and at the same time conceals' (p. 4). This haunted subject, haunted by what comes after it just as much as by what comes 'before' it, can never be fully present to itself. It always has someone or something else, an other, *coming after it*, in the punned senses in that phrase of succession and pursuit, and in the disjunctive times and spaces of an hauntology (Derrida, 1994) that announces, promises, threatens, withholds the extra-human. This other may be singular plural (Nancy, 2000a), or something else entirely, outside the order of the calculable. '[T]he *humanitas* of humanity', Nancy notes, 'itself appears as an excess that gives the measure or sets the standard against which we must measure ourselves' (Nancy, 2000a, p. 179), but 'this dignity, this *humanitas* is not itself given as a measure' (p. 180). Following upon that paradox, the posthuman would not be the only spectre to contend with for the dignity of *humanitas*, but in its own singular pluralities, in its immeasurability beyond the excess of the human, it will be one of them. It is on the implications of that possibility, which subtends the human as presently (re)constituted but also impends and portends with the potentialities of non-identification with the human subject, that this special issue on 'posthumanist subjectivities' is also focused.

The reasons why for this editorial we have returned to the question 'Who comes after the subject?' are twofold. First, in our view, the 1991 collection has often wrongly had a somewhat 'homogenising' effect, as if placing the hugely different starting points, traditions and also controversies of the individual philosophers and thinkers, who, yes, all happen to be more or less 'French', in

one single volume could create the impression of completeness and the promise of some kind of dialectics. As we now have represented the whole variety of what in France is usually called 'la querelle du sujet' (in analogy to the well-known 'querelle des anciens et des modernes'), the temptation might run, we can hopefully 'resolve' the argument and 'move on'. An indication that, at least in France, thinkers have not been willing to simply 'move on' is provided by two recent major publications by two of the original participants in the 'querelle', two figures who probably stand at very different ends of the spectrum of arguments for and against the philosophical notion of the subject: Vincent Descombes, in *Le Complément du sujet* (2004) and Étienne Balibar, in *Citoyen sujet* (2011). Both specifically refer back to the 'querelle française du sujet' (Descombes, 2004, p. 7), and, in Balibar's case, even more specifically, to Jean-Luc Nancy's question 'qui vient après le sujet?' We take this as proof that the philosophical discussion around the notion of subjectivity, which in fact is coterminous with modern European philosophy, and philosophical anthropology in particular, is unlikely to lose its dynamic any time soon. It is therefore important not to forget the variety of positions and the contexts of the controversies that in fact constitute the notion of 'subjectivity'. And this is the second point. If today it seems that the debate has apparently shifted to new terrains, at least in Anglo-American contexts or according to the Anglo-American version of (translation of) 'French theory', it is worth stressing that in the 1991 volume there is no separation between what is, in the Anglo-American context at least, sometimes referred to on the one hand as a 'too linguistic' or 'textualist' or 'deconstructive' and, on the other, as a more 'experience-based', 'phenomenological' or 'materialist' range of positions (see, on this, the positions by Barad and Hayles reviewed above). A feminist like Sylvaine Agacinski ('Another *Experience* of the Question, or *Experiencing* the Question Other-Wise' (our italics; see pp. 9–23 in Cadava, Connor and Nancy, to which the page references in this sentence and the next refer)) sits (uneasily, for sure) aside Maurice Blanchot ('Who?'; pp. 58–60). The (Lacanian) psychoanalyst Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen ('The Freudian Subject, from Politics to Ethics'; pp. 61–78) coexists with Gilles Deleuze ('A Philosophical Concept …'; pp. 94–95) and Jacques Derrida ('"Eating well," or the Calculation of the Subject'; pp. 96–119). Figures as incompatible with each other as Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, Jean-François Lyotard, Emmanuel Levinas, Luce Irigaray, Sarah Kofman, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and others, feature in this collection, which testifies to the number of synchronic 'differends' that constitute the richness of a concept like 'subjectivity'. 'Subjectivities', in the plural, does seem the operative term. It is a cautionary reminder that to speak of epistemological moments or trends – posthumanism, poststructuralism or theory, for instance – is to impose a unity and cohesion that probably do not obtain.

Consequently for 'inheritors' of the 'querelle' and for those mindful of the anxieties of influence arising there, it seems that the task is one of doing justice

to the differends that it has produced, without necessarily wanting to 'resolve' or 'sublate' them in dialectic form. A politics (or ethics) of the subject that would understand itself to be not only the 'inheritor' but also the adjudicator of the debates – that is one purporting to *know* who and what the subject *is* – would open itself up to the worst ideological blindness and self-deception. Therefore, while the recent emphasis in the discussion about subjectivity on embodiment, materiality, affect and experience is certainly valuable and energising (epitomised further, maybe, by the shift away from Derrida and deconstruction, towards Deleuzian vitalism) this should not make us forget that subjectivity is not a 'pick'n mix' tool-box, but an intellectual 'arsenal' that has many weapons (some of them, admittedly, mutually incompatible, though that doesn't mean they cannot still be put to 'good' use). We are using this somewhat militaristic analogy to show that subjectivity – since it lies at the heart of what it means to be human (and, today, also increasingly, what it means to be non-human, inhuman, posthuman …) – is inevitably a highly politicised affair. We believe that it is the task of theory or 'thinking' (or 'philosophy') – regardless of whether it takes place in the humanities, the social sciences or the sciences – to 'keep an open mind' and to be critical: not least in our own attempts at politicisation. This is what we take the original editorial statement of *Subjectivity* to mean: namely that it is still opportune (still, or even more so, now) to 'identify the processes by which subjectivities are produced, explore subjectivity as a locus of social change, and examine how emerging subjectivities remake our social worlds' (Blackman *et al*, 2008, p. 1).

To keep with that statement: 'So what happened to experience?' This was one of the leading questions asked in the statement, which was called 'Creating Subjectivities' (Blackman *et al*, 2008, p. 14). Posthumanism, it is easily assumed, creates new subjectivities in the forcing of forms of experience linked to humanity's new theatres, so that posthumanism intensifies subjectivity as 'a force for making worlds that is indefinable and undecidable, … incompatible with any notion of predetermination, transcendence, or timelessness' and amplifies subjectivity's 'unfinished, partial, non-linear' nature (p. 16). This is why we believe it is one of the most important tasks for 'theory' (wherever it takes place) to apply its full 'arsenal' to the arguably most pressing (social, political, ethical …) issue that faces 'humanity' and thus subjectivity today, namely the question of the 'posthuman'. Consequently a return to Nancy's question in an 'amended' form is vital: 'Who comes after the human(ist) subject?' 'What *is* created there?' These questions, while already being somehow present in Nancy's introduction, are being asked more and more forcefully today, partly because of changed socio-historical and hence material and technoscientific conditions, partly because of additional elaborations on the 'querelle du sujet' since. It seems, for example, that Alain Badiou's rather optimistic statement 'On a Finally Objectless Subject' (see Cadava, Connor and Nancy, 1991, pp. 24–32), 'finally', has taken an unexpected turn towards

postanthropocentric futures that Badiou himself, despite his radical antihumanism, would never have foreseen. A subjectless object is of course no longer humanist, but why, indeed, should it (still) be 'human'? And why should the 'truth-event' that gives rise to the subject have in fact any 'relevance', whether it be political or ethical, social or technocultural, to some kind of human truth or truth 'for' humans? While Badiou does not specifically exclude that possibility it nevertheless seems unlikely that Badiou's ideal addressee – his subject, one might say – should ask herself questions of anthropocentrism. But here, precisely, lies the new 'truth' of 'our' moment in the ongoing 'querelle'. A similar argument would apply to Deleuze's candidate for post-subjectivity: 'hecceities' as 'individuations that no longer constitute persons or "egos"' (Deleuze, 1991, p. 95). It is, rather, Derrida's contribution which, to our taste, comes closest to the radical posthumanist or postanthropocentric opening of the question of 'who comes after the subject'. This occurs when he points out that 'the discourse on the subject, even if it locates difference, inadequation, the dehiscence within auto-affection, etc., continues to link subjectivity with man' (Derrida, 1991, p. 105). Since then, theory has been engaging in thinking through the postanthropocentric implications of this statement, and has been exploring animal subjectivity, object ontology, actor-network theory, new forms of materiality and materialism, the distinction between the living and the non-living and so on. While it is vital, of course to explore these new forms of subjectivity and question whether they are, in fact, still subjectivities, or to ask to what extent at least they change the notion of subjectivity, there is also a need to investigate what these developments and changes mean for the human subject, and whether the human subject turns, is about to turn or has turned into something else: something as yet relatively indistinct, amorphous even and – for want of a better term – 'posthuman'. This is what the articles in this special issue of *Subjectivity* wish to explore. It will be useful, therefore, to now situate those developments and changes within posthumanism more broadly.

This Will Also Have Been Posthumanist, or, Subjectivity by Design

How, indeed, has posthumanism – as a body of thought – configured itself? And how, in that reconfiguration, does it avoid what one of its key filmic expressions – *The Matrix* – allegedly doesn't? In their reading of *The Matrix*, Laura Bartlett and Thomas B. Byers suggest that '*The Matrix* places posthumanist subjects at the center of its action and flirts with a theoretical postmodernism only to reject the posthumanist configuration of subjectivity in favour of resurrecting a neo-Romantic version of the liberal-humanist subject' (2003, p. 30). In other words, is posthumanism sufficiently radical in its rethinking of subjectivity? Or does it fall back too readily on established repertoires? Is that what is taking place in these pages, in the resourcing of the voice of poststructuralism, of 'theory'?

Any response to that must set out by acknowledging that posthumanism, objectively speaking, is firmly on mainstream agendas within the Arts and the Humanities. We have already gestured towards this in our opening, above. In fact, there are works on the posthuman in remarkably broad fields of trans-disciplinary inquiry. The best-known studies in the area (for example Hayles, 1999 and 2005; Clarke, 2008; Haraway, 2008; Wolfe, 2010; Braidotti, 2013) have been recently supplemented by titles that draw in international relations, chemistry, education and religion, among others (Weaver, 2010; Baofu, 2011; Cole-Turner, 2011; Cudworth and Hobden, 2012), as well as more predictable areas that in this context are not as incongruous as they might be in others: for instance, zombie studies (Christie and Lauro, 2011). Is there anything that connects these disparate modes and foci of inquiry? This question is most uncontroversially answered, it would seem, by speaking of 'technology' and of 'biomedia' (Thacker, 2004). If there is anything monolithic in the posthuman it is here, in this technological imperative to which posthumanism appears subject. Even more so than the 'after the human (subject)' scenario considered in the first and second sections to this introduction, posthumanism appears determined by the question concerning technology (Heidegger, 1977). It appears a truism to say that the posthuman is overdetermined by technology and by the idea that it might be possible to re-engineer the human itself, to stand in anticipation of 'the future of human nature' (Habermas, 2003). This has moved us in other work to posit an alternative 'posthumanism without technology' (Callus and Herbrechter, 2007) and to reflect on the basis of reference to a subjectivity (Herbrechter and Callus, 2008) that would not necessarily be girded by talk of 'digital subjects' (Hayles, 2005) or the traumas of the various re-codings and trans-codings of life in our time (Hayles, 2006). Another way of pitching this is to say that this other posthumanism critically inherits the legacy of the largely antihumanist theory of the late twentieth century (poststructuralism, deconstruction, cultural materialism/new historicism, feminism, postcolonialism, systems theory, cyber-criticism, ecocriticism and so on) and engages with the 'transhumanising' aspects of new media, the life sciences, and the various bio-, nano-, cogno- and info-technologies that look to reshape the reach and the nature of the human. And this, indeed, will also have been posthumanism. Posthumanism, in this mode, may therefore be seen as an attempt to create an inter-disciplinary conceptual platform that draws together perspectives and investigations from the arts, the humanities and the sciences in the face of a radical and accelerated questioning of what it means to be human and what the re-imagined end(s) of the human might be. Accordingly, it focuses strongly on the contemporary technological, cultural, social and intellectual challenges to traditional notions of humanity and the institution of the humanities. However, in reimagining the human it is also aware of the historical dimension to critiques of more than 500 years of humanism. Posthumanism, in other words, is both an established and cutting-edge discourse and practice, with histories and canons,

pieties and orthodoxies, innovation and experiment, projects and visions. Indeed, however we define it, it has come a long way from the days when it needed to be provocatively announced (Hayles, 1999) and is already in mature stages of self-redefinition (Herbrechter, 2009; Wolfe, 2010; Braidotti, 2013).

In all that, the question of the posthuman subject appears to be one that is particularly alert to the challenge that the erosion of the boundaries setting off the human from its others poses. This challenge turns on maintaining awareness of, on the one hand, the questioning of humanist ideology in literary, critical and cultural theory and, on the other, the brave new worlds brought about through the order of the digital and through developments in communications, artificial intelligence, bioengineering and so on. This challenge brings another in its wake. If we raise the question of posthumanist subjectivities in this special issue, it is because we are aware, as are all the contributors, of the challenge to re-cognise the pressures brought to bear on the protocols and reflexes of established outlooks and operations in the humanities, and to accept that it is neither alarmist nor sensationalising to suggest that it may be crucial to render the humanities newly supple and to urge their sensitiveness and responsiveness to what it is that posthumanism opens onto. The temptation will be to take refuge in all the reassurances provided by texts like Heidegger's 'The Question Concerning Technology' (1977): texts that are undoubtedly rich and resource-ful, but which these pages invoke in the knowledge that the action of doing so must be re-adaptive, that 'the technics and time' (Stiegler, 1998, 2009, 2010) of the posthuman condition – however we define it – forces through the thought that there might be a literalised urgency to the question raised by Cadava *et al*, 'Who Comes after the Subject?'. If the posthuman condition is truly upon us then, it is also as a result of our awareness that something really is different now. The chronotopes are not such as to allow theory's reflexes of interpretation and analysis their habitual play and give and sway.

The challenge therefore becomes one of rethinking that which we thought we had already comprehensively rethought and deconstructed, picking up again for this challenge but also turning upon themselves the critical tools that we had resorted to and deployed when first asking who and what it is that comes after the subject: doing so, this time, in the midst of knowing that, past post-modernity, the answer to the question that rephrases Lyotard (1992), 'What Is the Posthuman?', occurs in the awareness that the time we are experiencing might be, to rephrase Latour (1993) too, our last chance to be modern. Or, to put it differently, *the posthuman is the modern that the human subject is (re)born to*. After this, in other words, after the subject, after the dignity of *humanitas* and 'the notorious weakness of all discourses of "measured" and measuring humanism' (Nancy, 2000a, p. 180), there stretches the posthuman, presumably more measureless still, within whose midst we surely already are. In which case, posthumanist subjectivities, which will always be plural, must be thought through.

The essays in this issue respond to these matters in various ways, but they share the strategy of revisiting the work of a number of poststructuralist thinkers to investigate in different ways the question of posthumanist subjectivities. Figures like Agamben, Blanchot, Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Latour and Nancy feature prominently (some as is only to be expected, even more than others) in interesting intersections with some of the most routinely cited figures in posthumanist intertexts, Haraway, Hayles, Luhmann, Wolfe and others among them. Five points that have a bearing upon that will need to be highlighted.

The first is the fact that the attempt at intersections between poststructuralism and posthumanism is not as common as one might think. This issue acquires value precisely to the extent that it helps to stake out that ground. The second is that neither poststructuralism nor posthumanism, as critical discourses, can be expected to cohere unproblematically. Rather, we are using these broad labels to designate general tendencies and typologies, as it were, while remaining mindful of our own points above (in relation to the figures represented in *Who Comes after the Subject?*) on the dangers of homogenising effects across the grouping of thinkers who might otherwise be characterised as much by disparities as affinities. The third point is that the essays revaluate and extend the resourcefulness of established theory in thinking through posthumanism itself, the question of posthumanist subjectivity, and some of the most insistent issues within the study of digital culture. The fourth factor to be remarked is that the essays are important for their (re)mapping function. They bring to posthumanist conceptuality and idiom topics which are both already canonical within the field and others that are less so, and in so doing they survey the recharted terrain comprehensively. Taylor, for instance, addresses the irrepressible issue of post-humanity in its apocalyptic, most literalised state – life without humans, post-people, indeed – and in the context of relevant perspectives on that question in a range of writers, thinkers and scientists, from Darwin to Alan Weisman; Herbrechter tackles the question of (post)human life itself and thence of autobiography as the post-human-ist genre by definition, the genre that recaptures and redefines (post)human(ist) life; DeShong looks upon notions of (dis)ability and human 'suffering' and their bearing upon posthuman (dis)articulations of subjectivity. There are, too – in what is the fifth point here – attempts to move to new ground in the thinking of the posthuman. Goh's essay, accordingly, proposes the notion of the 'reject' as a viable response in any rethinking of the human subject that is aware of the vulnerabilities of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism in twentieth-first century thought. Callus's, on its part, argues that reclusiveness might be the condition of existence that, as it were, most passeth posthuman understanding, and which to that extent is an aporia that posthumanism might want to think about with some intent.

In the wake of all that, and going back to the issue raised in the second section of this introduction concerning Nancy's awareness that after the subject lies a

haunting and a promise that cannot have arrived – not even there where the posthuman appears most indubitably present – one issue emerges more clearly. It is that posthumanist subjectivity is rich and fraught precisely because it offers the conceit of the hope of choice. The conceit and the hope emerge in a leading question of Ute Guzzoni, taken from a different poststructuralist context in an anthology called *Deconstructive Subjectivities* (Critchley and Dews, 1996). *Do We Still Want to Be Subjects?*, he prominently asks in his title (Guzzoni, 1996; emphasis added). Subjects – by design: this is the scenario that his question frames. The posthuman, which opens onto the prospect of humanity's redesigning of its nature, condition and being, is the discourse that more than any other presses that question upon the human. It finds, however, that its interrogations in that line have been forestalled by deconstruction. Whatever the genealogy – this, in the end, is not about precedence – speculation on the will to subjecthood suggests the possibility of choice. This was never thought to be available when the subject was (only) human, when there was not the thought of the techno-logical *non*-conscious (see Thrift, 2004; Hayles, 2006). To that extent, the hope *and* the fear is that the spectre of the posthuman, in all the inscrutability of its hauntology, appears to announce, promise, conceal an other subjectivity: *posthuman* subjectiv*ies*, in their othering to the human, in which the human might yet, very paradoxically, be self-transgressingly itself – and in a willed way.

In a move that brings us back to the opening of this introduction, we would suggest that it is precisely the potentialities opened up for that opting for such subjectivities – in both their viabilities and their impossibilities – that make up what is singular about posthumanism. Posthumanism, in other words, is singular because it can be monolithic about rejecting the condition and process of the human. This has implications for constructions of subjectivity which have entrenched themselves so strongly as to appear self-evident across transdisci-plinary boundaries. Thus, for instance, on intersubjectivity, Marcia Cavell: 'On a view that has come to dominate contemporary philosophy and psychology, a *creature* develops the capacity for thinking in a *specifically human way* only in community with others. I will call this the intersubjectivist position' (2006, p. 61; emphasis added). In addition, Kristeva's ideas on 'the subject in process', or on abjection, on our remaining 'strangers to ourselves' – on 'ecstatic subjects', in Patricia Huntington's reformulation (Huntington, 1998) – remain incisive, even if their reach is not quite as radical as Barad's attention to the 'intra-active' as a principle of agency's congruence with enactment rather than with attribute or property (see Barad, 2007). All of these points are well taken, and subsist comfortably on continued relevance. They restore us to some of the most profound rehearsals in subjectivity's theatres. They do so without risking thereby the kind of compromise discerned by Bartlett and Byers, as seen above. But, as Nick Mansfield has it, with technology's 'remapping of limits', particularly in relation to its speed, 'comes also a *reconfiguring of the scope of subjectivity*, the conditions of feeling, of interrelationship between the self

and society and, inevitably, the subject and its being in the world' (p. 149; emphasis added). Mansfield further notes that 'although we need to be sensitive to the way the new enters our society and its politics, it never does so without reviving discourses that are not new, that have a deep and problematic purchase on our culture's soul (p. 161). Posthumanist subjectivities are here approached, as explained above, on the assumption of that lingering purchase, even on the posthuman, which poststructuralist discourse has. But, as we know, even poststructuralism approached the question of 'subjectivity by design' only theoretically – as in Guzzoni's question. It is posthumanism that is singular in pushing that question in the light of the praxis – not least theory's own – that follows upon the question not being, any longer, merely hypothetical or speculative. For even though the much vaunted affordances for posthumanism's biotechnological redesigning of the human and of the human condition do not quite emancipate us from what we have immemorially been, such that the memory does not seem one that the future can expunge, the fact remains that the singularity of human subjectivity now is related to its multiple finitudes – whether designed and willed or contingent and undesired. The singularity spoken of by Ray Kurzweil in *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (2005), which refers to 'singularity' as that point in the future when humanity will recognise itself as anachronistic and as out of step with autopoietic technologies of Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Life, is therefore different only in the extreme degree of its articulation of this idea. And in the context of all that, the nature of the poststructuralist purchase referred to above – both in its strength and weakness – can perhaps appear more clearly if this question of singularity can now come in for some consideration, even if only briefly.

Singularity, or the singular, is of course a fundamental term within poststructuralist thought. It is there in Nancy's *Being Singular Plural* (2003), for instance. It shapes Derridean thought on the relation between the exemplum and the universal and the former's subversive potentiality in relation to the latter (see Derrida, 1992) and on the nature of justice as something respectful of 'the force of law' but unawed by 'criteriology' (see Derrida, 2002). It is there in the intensity of the interest in specificity, most clearly seen in grapplings with what is singular to literature itself or to individual authors (see for instance, Derrida, 1984b), an interest extended in commentaries on the very poetics of singularity (see Clark, 2005). All this is admittedly very different to the singularity of the posthuman, predicated on humanity's (self-)exceeding. But the bringing together of poststructuralist ideas on singularity and posthumanist ideas on singularity (whatever the mismatch and incongruities) can be viable, incisive and revealing in the consequent critiques of the present and the imminent. If nothing else, posthuman 'matter' (to use a term that figures largely in Barad, 2003), in all its manifestations and diversities, may well reflect sets of realities and practices that, in spite of outwardly appearing singularly lacking in amenability to

poststructuralist purchase, might, in paradoxical reversal of the expectation that arises there, find themselves relevantly read by a discourse inured to discovering and powerfully reading precisely that which might have seemed distant from its readier interests (one thinks, for instance and by analogy, of Derridean responses to terrorism, or Nancy's investigation of Christianity: see Borradori, 2003, and Nancy, 2008). In the process, what must occur is mutuality and reciprocity in the reading, for poststructuralism will necessarily discover the urgency of self-reassessment in that encounter.

The essays in this issue do not presume to that level and reach of trans-disciplinary significance and reflexive critique. But they share the technique of focusing on certain specificities of the posthuman condition, which make the posthuman, indeed, singular and different again to that which is finely calculable within poststructuralist protocols – those protocols, ironically, which as is well known, themselves emphasise the incalculable. In the process they critique or at least critically extend, implicitly but also quite explicitly in places, those protocols even as they resort to them. In the poststructuralist re/counter-accommodations to posthumanism the essays propose we can witness a discourse embracing and influencing its own transformation through awareness of the active suppleness of its own extended conceptuality to an emerging body of thought: indeed, to the very thinking of emergence that posthumanism embodies.

That disposition is witnessed in DeShong's essay, in its focus on 'dis/abled posthumanism' and its critique of the manner in which posthumanist interest in human and/or bodily enhancement prolongs the presumption that 'humanity almost always, indeed perhaps necessarily, is conceived of as a matter of ability'. DeShong's approach serves to bring to productive encounter not only post-humanism and poststructuralism, but also posthumanism and disability studies, which can 'merge, or at least serve to invigorate one another', finding useful resources for that in the 'non-reciprocal ethics' envisioned by Wolfe as based 'on a compassion that is rooted in our vulnerability and passivity' and which is not to be constrained by either 'the "normate" subject itself, now returned to itself as *other* with a new sense of its own non-normative contingency', nor, it has to be said, by the transhuman, transnormate subject, whose potentialities become more immediate, in keeping with the human being 'subject to a logic of exceeding itself', to which disability becomes cautionary, wherein 'humanity is that whose ability of ability dis/ables its ability, and thereby the notion of ability itself'. Consequently the posthuman question becomes one of 'a critique that suffers itself, emerging as a critique that emphasises the dis/unity of human subjective ability, it is a critique by which such suffering reveals itself to be the nature of the human, yielding a definition of the human as that which suffers itself – the human as a significatory suffering, an encounter with internal difference, a kind of existence that is ability other than itself, always already passing outside or beyond itself'.

Such suffering is literalised all too powerfully in the prospect of humanity's finitude. The idea of 'a world without us' is analysed at length by Matthew Taylor, off the cues provided by Alan Weisman's book (Weisman, 2007). It is possible to see posthumanism as a study of 'folk-tales of the end' (DeLillo, 2010, p. 51), and no end narrative is more complete than that which brings about the passing of the anthropocene. The difficulty of that thought lies in the consequences of thinking through the voiding of subjectivity, of the human itself: of imagining and giving representation to a world subsisting without human reference, non-apparent to human consciousness, which would no longer be there to apprehend it, and beyond human agency also. The posthuman condition there is one of absolute, displacing and de-temporalising successiveness, which, as we know from the experience of Neanderthal humanity, is historically far from unprecedented, and one that could yet occur again. As Taylor points out, however, the narratives that fill in that void are legion. They configure a 'diverse tradition', which 'locates in non-human life a this-worldly means to transcend the limitations of our all-too-human selves', such that in 'leaving behind both our bounded individual bodies and our discrete species, we are absolved of the weight of their sins and freed to enter into the purity and immortality of life as such. Dying to ourselves, we become one with life eternal – not the afterlife, *per se*, but still a life after our own'. Taylor is aware that 'what's problematic about this model is not only its logical contradiction – allowing the subject to survive itself – but also its re-inscription of the same anthropocentric conception of life that it seeks to overcome', so that the posthuman remains all too human and precipitates the paradox of 'a self-saving extinction' in which 'we are offered an impossible life, which means that we need not die to go on, even if we must reincarnate what is meant by "we"'. This side of that extremity, meanwhile, is the subjectivity of the recluse. The recluse is positioned by Callus in his paper as the subject whom posthuman life and technology renders precarious. Intent on aloneness, indifferent to life, uncomprehending of and uncomprehended by contemporary cultures of connection, the recluse, as the figure of withdrawn and secluded humanity, embodies a vanity of human wishing that the posthuman disembodies. To this reading, the recluse – who seeks to reaffirm the agency of the self, or the possibility of self-remaking in a lifestyle regime of a life as starkly styled as possible yet, in another sense, styled to an absolute of life's absencing (not so much, indeed, a case of 'Get a life!' as one of 'Get life away!') – *is* the posthuman. In an intriguing irony, however, the recluse is the posthuman made virtually extinct by posthumanism. The recluse is the one standing apart from humanity. This, however, is a posthuman life that is increasingly hard to configure in technocultural, hyperconnected society. The secular, poststructuralist reclusiveness of Maurice Blanchot, evident in both the biography and the works, is the example of extra-human self-rejection from the human that comes in for close analysis in Callus's essay, which discovers a distinctly posthumanist paradox in the idea that, within digital culture, 'the unconnected space is the space to network'.

Rejection, as theme, trope and strategy, comes in for similarly close scrutiny in the work of Goh. The recluse, indeed, is only one figure of the posthuman subject as posthuman reject. In Goh's reading, the reject is not only 'the passive figure conventionally targeted to be denied, denigrated, excluded, banished, or exiled'. Rather, the reject 'may also be an active figure, rejecting the external forces that repress or oppress it'. This is not unlike the strategy of the recluse, for 'the *reject* as an active figure may even be rejecting others around it *first* with a force so overwhelming or unbearable that it is subsequently rendered a *reject* by those same others'. Goh, however, argues that 'the *reject* turns the force of rejection around on itself': not nihilistically, but to 'not hypostasize itself on a static or singular disposition or mode of thought' and to enable 'creative regeneration instead'. Questions involving ethics, again, are relevant, for 'the *auto-reject* here, contrary to the *subject*, ensures that there is no circumscribing of the other within its determinations. Put in another way, the other here, before the *auto-reject*, is always free to depart, always free even to *not* arrive before the *auto*-reject'. In that way, on the basis of the dynamic of auto-rejection, 'the *reject* can play a critical role in the future of posthuman discourse'. The *reject* can, indeed, be the figure of thought that comes after the *subject*, and which a future posthuman discourse seeks to posit. The posthuman auto-reject, then, involves 'a rejection of any claimed structure that presumably founds any supposed constitution of a self or subjectivity'. Goh's example, after acknowledgement is made of posthumanism's gallery of rejects – cyborgs, animals, machines – is, originally, bacterial life, studied in the context of 'microontology' and 'microchimerism'. Perhaps what is more significant than the originality of his example, however, is his readiness to think through the need for 'a posthumanism without subject', away from the 'enacted body' and the 'represented body' discussed by Hayles, for 'a posthumanism of *auto-rejection* takes its distance from a posthumanism of embodiment'. Such a posthumanism would 'not be so keen to be so productive, to produce a totalizing discourse or operation whereby it ascertains itself'. The radical move, one that is clearly central to this special issue, is '[t]o go beyond the present limits of posthuman discourse, and for a posthumanism that can respond to Nancy's question of 'who comes after the subject', so that what would be needed is not 'a posthuman *subject* that we should (re)turn to' but, rather, 'the *clinamen* of a *posthuman auto-reject*'. Both posthuman recluse and posthuman auto-reject, then, are as removed from intersubjective operationality as it is possible to be. In that sense, what comes after the subject is the rejection of posthumanist subjectivity.

But what, then, remains of life? What is posthuman life? Posthumanism, in its fascination with 'the death of the subject', only prolongs poststructuralism's take on that idea, which, as Herbrechter points out, 'has been the main target of poststructuralist theory for decades'. The subject has been a *ghost* or a *dispositif* long enough, therefore, to make (auto)*bio*graphy deeply suspect as

impulse, idea, practice, inscription. How, then, is the posthumanist subject to be (self-)addressed, in all these narratives and practices of its passing and its (auto)rejection? Herbrechter's essay repeatedly problematises the *me*. What, then, remains of that construction in the presumed posthuman subject's presumed object of (auto)reference and (auto)rejection? Herbrechter's essay usefully reminds us that the move of posthuman(ist) (auto)rejection of the subject by itself is anticipated in Derridean reflection on the auto-bio-thanato-heterographic. Further recalling Derrida's essay, 'As If I Were Dead', Herbrechter reminds us of poststructuralism's thoughts on 'auto-affection', 'auto-infection', 'auto-immunity', not to mention 'zoography', as a subset of the 'posthumanist life writing' that provides the focus for the last section of his essay. If the testimony of life is no longer done by human subjects, then 'the auto-hetero-thanatography' of the human or the entire human species becomes a subgenre of its own', radically beyond even the 'tech-memoir' form to which Herbrechter gives due importance in his attention to Jean-Luc Nancy's and Kevin Warwick's exemplifications of that in *L'Intrus* (2000b) and *I, Cyborg* (2002), respectively. Indeed, one would say that this *is* posthumanist writing: posthumanism coincides with the archiving, transcription and writing relays of life and lives deferred past human limit.

At the same time, the prospects envisioned in these papers present interesting intersections with, as well as extensions of, the idea current in a number of posthumanist outlooks: namely, that humans are 'phenomena, not independent entities with inherent properties but rather beings in their differential becoming' (Barad, 2003, p. 818). Certainly, Barad's idea of 'exteriority within' and the 'changing topology' across thinking on subjectivity (Barad, 2003, p. 825) is borne out here. So is 'the iterative intra-activity', which affirms the 'agential realist account' whereby 'discursive practices and material phenomena are not human-based activities but rather specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties and meanings are differently enacted', in a manner that confirms that 'agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has' (Barad, 2007, p. 178; quoted also in Kirby, 2011, p. 292). Even while these readings of posthumanist subjectivites bear that out, however, it is important not to accept this new piety, this new orthodoxy of the posthuman, too uncritically. For while it is true, as the papers by Herbrechter and Goh on the reject and on the posthumanist subject respectively demonstrate, that the idea of the (auto)directing self must be critiqued, it is also true, as the papers by DeShong and Callus suggest, that in posthumanism the cultural memory of the agency-initiating integrity of that self remains current even in its exceeding. Thus, for instance, disability activism must retain some degree of faith in the politics of self-advocacy, even as it must be, strategically, less complexly aware of subjectivity's modulation of selfhood – or defeatism might ensue. The would-be recluse will want to affirm some vestigial opportunity for a privacy not

entirely overcome by digital supplementing of the 'topological manifolds of spacetime-matter relations' (Barad, 2007, p. 178) – or being-with-others may, precisely, be too othering. The recluse is in fact the figure in denial of *Mitsein* and of subjectivity's displacements of autonomy, stability, selfhood. The world without me, the-world-without-us, as Taylor reminds us, then figures as the chronotope, the folk tale of the end, to read as a caution against believing too readily the narratives – psychological, sociological, philosophical, political, poststructuralist, posthumanist, neuroscientific – that there is no self, no activity, no human agencing to deflect the abjection of the posthuman in its most literalised state, where intersubjectivity and intrasubjectivity collapse past the anthropocene, and into which could be read a historical humanity past the reception of its own history and the reception of history itself: past dystopia, past apocalypse, past futures opening up infinitely without us. In that, we would be, as Quentin Meillassoux puts it, in 'an anteriority … actually anterior to humanity insofar as it is the correlate of a thought that cannot be reduced to our empirical existence' (2008, p. 122).

However – and this *is* the salutary lesson of 'the posthuman explained to children' (to rephrase, again, Lyotard, 1992) – it is good to remember, as we drive on, that 'we are not there yet'. Not yet, then, in that atemporal atopos for the human. This side of any arrival there, or indeed of 'thought's retrojection of a past that gives itself to thought as anterior to thought' (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 122) – whereby posthumanism, we valuably learn, extends backwards as well as forward – there remains, just sufficiently, just apprehensible, the presence of the human to itself: in its distance, differencing and desire; in its being, performativity and becoming; in its rearticulations, reconfigurations, renegotiations. And if there is one thing that emerges in the pages of this issue from posthumanist-cum-poststructuralist surveys on subjectivity and subjectivities, it is that humanity is not so subaltern to its own process, or to the encroachments of different subjectivities – whether rehearsed or barely foreseen – as some accounts of the advent of the posthuman seem to propose. Human(ist) (self)projection is not quite exhausted or resourceless. Simply put, 'I' remains a powerful pronoun and 'me' is all too relative. Predication, in other words, is still the overriding practice of our human grammars. Grammar may be difficult and tedious, but we tend to know it better and more intuitively than grammatology. We have not unlearnt the one and outside the academy it is doubtful if we know how to conjugate the other. The subject, therefore, remains integral to the languages and the codes across which we simultaneously operate. In this specific context, however, where posthumanist subjectivities are the focus, reminding us that 'anthropocentrism, with its assured insistence upon human exceptionalism, is no longer an adequate or convincing account of the way of the world' (Badmington, 2011, p. 381), it is good to rediscover poststructuralism's singular pertinence to posthumanism's plurality, for 'posthumanism is not the property or progeny of any particular academic discipline; on the contrary, it touches and troubles across the lines that conventionally separate field from field, mode from mode' (p. 381).

All this, indeed – the readings in these modes that result in the opening up of the spaces of posthumanist subjectivity's new posthumanist leases of life – will also have been posthumanist. What results is not a poststructuralist reading of posthumanism that amounts to a poststructuralist audit – a checklisting, so to speak, of affinities between the poststructuralist and the posthumanist – for that would be reductive. Rather, the intent is to discover whether posthumanist subjectivities are prone to having a related claim made for them as that which was once made for 'deconstructive subjectivities':

> It [the title 'deconstructive subjectivities'] implies that, when the full range of what has been thought under the concept of the 'subject' comes into view, and when the possibilities of *genuine* alternatives are assessed, then the subject may appear, in many of its guises, to be one of the driving forces behind – rather than the prime defense against – that unravelling of metaphysics which has come to be known, after Derrida, as 'deconstruction.' Might it not be the case that the subject appears, disruptive and uncontainable, at the very point of breakdown of the foundational project of philosophical thinking? (Critchley and Dews, 1996, p. 1)

Once again, then, the subject reappears at the very point of breakdown of a foundational project of philosophical thinking – this time within the posthuman. The subject is that for which the posthuman cannot account. But this is too glib. For the singularity of the posthuman lies in its openness to whatever might happen to humanity, to 'the genuine alternatives' for the human and for subjectivity itself. Posthumanism bears this openness even as it closes in on humanity's plural finitudes and on subjectivity's alternative alterities. It remains, in an odd paradox, monolithically open to humanity's closure. This, indeed, is the singularity around which posthumanism can be said to cohere, to become posthuman*ist*. In this respect, posthumanist openness is reminiscent of the attunement within deconstructive thought to the *arrivant*, to the monstrous, to messianism and messianicity (see Derrida, 1993, 1994, 1995; Derrida and Vattimo, 1998; *passim*).

Posthumanism, as a *condition* determined through technocultural and biomediatic pervasion, renders the human an increasingly unstable category for reflection and opens onto posthuman*ism*: as the *study* of that condition, of those practices, of that pervasion, and of that instability, and hence of the specific ideologies, (re)groupings and (re)statements, across diverse discourses and (re)commitments, which (re)form in reaction to the prospect of the technoculturally inured and biomediated subject, whose existence proceeds alongside 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) *and* 'after life' (Thacker, 2010). In an unsettling simultaneity that weighs upon circumstancing and horizon, it plays the openness to the human's othering across, against and together with the prospect of humanity's closure. The subject, in consequence, can no longer be

approached with quite the same repertoires of thought that might have served their object well in the past. If the subject, as Critchley and Dews put it, is 'one of the driving forces behind – rather than the prime defense against – that unravelling of metaphysics which has come to be known, after Derrida, as "deconstruction"' then the driving and the unravelling is, surely, even more 'disruptive and uncontainable' now, and 'the point of breakdown' becomes more critical not only to the philosophical project but, more radically, to the human(ist) project (p. 1). The question of 'the posthumanist subject', therefore, of 'posthumanist subjectivities', has an urgency which is more than philosophical, which is all too material, and which calls for responses to the circumstancing and horizon referred to above. It is always already ideological about the diverse openings and closings of subjectivity by design, which, also, is coextensive with posthuman*ist* conceit. Hence, indeed, posthuman*ist*, not posthuman. The prefix is telling. The more neutral alternative is not credible, for the posthuman*ist* subject arrives predefined even to futurity. Coming after the subject, indeed, is posthumanist subjectivity: past thinking, but, indeed, past all the thinking already and extensively brought to bear there, informed by practice and history even in its projection to the disruptive and the uncontainable. And if we have, in this issue, chosen a poststructuralist voice, it is precisely because the practice and history of the disruptive and the uncontainable, which poststructuralism abundantly comprehends, gives it currency and point where it might be all too tempting to think that its memory is otherwise exceeded.

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