

Past the Human

Narrative Ontologies and Ontological Stories

Editorial

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Our existence, the existence of our species and its cognitive evolution, is far from being pure and confined within secure margins. Starting from mitochondria and all the way up, the human is constantly mixed with the nonhuman. It reveals itself by way of hybridizations. For this reason, a perfectly consistent atlas of human biology would actually be a treatise on xenobiology. A compelling example is that of the bacteria colonies that constitute our microbiome. Even though they do not have anything “human” in their genetic code, they are an integral part of our body and our health. Open to transformations, the human is materially and historically permeable to other natures, other matters, and other cultural agents. To be properly human is therefore, in a certain sense, to go past the boundaries of human “nature”. This is the meaning of posthumanism, as theorists such as Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Roberto Marchesini, Bruno Latour, Andrew Pickering, Rosi Braidotti, or Cary Wolfe conceptualize it. For these authors, posthumanism is a vision of reality according to which the human and the nonhuman are confluent, co-emergent, and define each other in mutual relations.

“Narrative Ontologies and Ontological Stories” is the main thread of this issue of *Relations* focused on the Posthuman. The editors (Serenella

Iovino, Roberto Marchesini and Eleonora Adorni) chose it because it highlights how there are no rigid dimensions, autonomous fields of knowledge or reassuring horizons in the “posthuman house”. In the posthuman reflection a significant transition takes place: the fortress of single identity – traditionally seen almost as a medieval castle, capable of segregating and isolating, dichotomous in its exclusive dialectic and in its rejection of the “other” – gives way to a communal identity founded on exchange and hospitable processes. For these very reasons, the latter is metamorphic and plural, rhizomatous and inclusive, contaminated and impure. But what are we talking about when we refer to the posthuman? What are its theoretical implications and its literary, philosophical and anthropological developments? The double issue of *Relations* on posthumanism will explore these topics from two points of view: that of literature and ecocriticism (4.1) and that of the ethical-ontological approach of zoo-anthropology (4.2).

Edited by the ecocritic and philosopher Serenella Iovino (University of Turin), issue 4.1 features five essays that explore posthuman stories in various fields and authors, from the eighteenth-century interlacements of science and literary imagination to contemporary primate studies. The contributors – Oppermann, Sullivan, Carretero-González, Amberson and Past, and Villanueva Romero – are all scholars working in different areas of ecocritical research, whose trans-disciplinary engagement with posthuman literature and criticism is internationally acknowledged. Along with reviews of recent publications, the section *Comments, Debates, Reports and Interviews* includes a conversation on “posthumanities” with Rosi Braidotti.

Issue 4.2 aims to delve into the theoretical approaches of posthumanism. The editors, Roberto Marchesini and Eleonora Adorni (respectively director and researcher of the Study Centre of Posthuman Philosophy, Bologna, Italy), have collected contributions written by young and promising scholars who, from different perspectives, use the “posthuman laboratory” in order to explore new research fields of knowledge such as ecology, philosophy and pedagogy. The section *Comments, Debates, Reports and Interviews* gathers very interesting reports on the Italian landscape of posthuman philosophy and an interview with the Italian movie-maker Michelangelo Frammartino, author of *Le quattro volte* (2010) – one of a very few cases of non-anthropocentric filmmaking. Finally, in the section on reviews, young researchers analyse some recently released books and movies that are deeply intertwined with the posthuman stances.

The covers of both issues complete these posthumanist stories with artistic visions of interspecies bonds. Created by Spanish artist and ecofem-

inist activist Verónica Perales, these drawings really open, to quote from Diana Villanueva Romero's essay, a "space of relation between the human and the nonhuman that responds creatively to the kind of configuration of the humanities that is needed" in a time when human culture is called to cross the borders of our species.