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ANTHRO-
PISCINE
WAR
MACHINE

APPENDIX
I & II

Son Kit
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Anthropiscine War Machine describes a constellation of projects in writing, video, installation, and sculpture all sharing the same premise: in response to climate disaster, humanity undergoes a forced evolutionary process to adapt themselves for aquatic survival. *AWP*'s present day exists in the far future, where after three distinct and massive evolutionary events, humanity (or, "humanity") still inexplicably is in the practice of making museums. Every work in the *AWP* continuum acts as a diorama, or recreation, or restoration, or primary document, or archaeological excavation in this future museum's imagined exhibitions.

The following sections are titled "Appendix I" and "Appendix II" to suggest their role as referents and citations in a longer work. Appendix I functions as a primary document unearthed from a long-gone publication. Appendix II presents a meta-archive of sorts; it unpacks some of the allegorical components present in the *AWP* series even as it functions as a primary document itself, with myself as the primary source. Together, they represent one point in the myriad future anterior projections available to me, or to any who have yet to swim.

APPENDIX I

WHISTLEBLOWER UNEARTHSL SLIPPERY ETHICS OF "SOLUTION" TO CLIMATE DISASTER


August 15, 2076

Inland New York, New York

In the latest escalation between the American Food and Drug Administration and biomedical research conglomerate MetaGen, an unnamed whistleblower has made public internal documents describing a highly experimental procedure previously rejected by a federal ethics board nearly a decade ago.

According to the documents, the research program formerly known as Project Biotite is well underway, with six viable specimens produced in the most recent trial currently under observation.

Project Biotite first came under public scrutiny in 2066 when sources disclosed a Pentagon "super black" exploratory request for MetaGen to develop genetically engineered personnel optimized for amphibious combat, ostensibly to be deployed by the man-made islands of Malath at the height of the



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Third Gulf War. The FDA-linked board assembled by the Joint Chiefs to review the experiment unanimously rejected it as non-viable and decried the project's "potential violation of study subjects' bodily integrity." A joint statement from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps confirmed at the time that the trial would not move forward, asserting "the well-being of our nation's soldiers is a primary consideration for the armed forces."

It now appears MetaGen was undaunted by this setback. According to an anonymous letter allegedly penned by the whistleblower and included with the released document cache, MetaGen's internal position was that "the government, the military, and the general public continue to underestimate the underlying technology's vast potential for long-term returns." The letter continues:


The Pacific Islands are basically gone. Bangladesh lost two-thirds of its land mass. Miami? Osaka? Rio de Janeiro? Underwater. I was assigned to the Busan office before the tsunamis took the city, then the peninsula. Seeing the ocean levels rise by the day and with no government solution forthcoming, I truly believed

in our mission, truly believed that MetaGen's gamble on amphibious capabilities (for civilian rather than military use) would give humanity a fighting chance at survival. But what we're doing here no longer feels like that. Whatever we have in those tanks certainly can't be called human. My hope is this dossier will catalyze research into other avenues for combating the effects of climate change, because to accept MetaGen's solution is to concede humanity as already lost.

Among the files included in the dossier are dozens of images depicting several specimens, ostensibly study participants, swimming in a glass enclosure. Their large, unlidded eyes, distended rib cages, and elongated, webbed feet give the uncanny impression of an abortive porpoise-human hybrid, something at once familiar yet so irredeemably alien as to be fittingly termed nightmarish. However, the photographs might be telling an incomplete story, which continues in the video footage also included among the disseminated files.

The extensive cache of footage is time-stamped, corresponding to various stages of the


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experiment, beginning around the time of the original Pentagon request, to the most recent, dated to this past Tuesday. This last file depicts unidentified alleged study participants seated at the edge of a large tank, giving a candid assessment of their conditions to two alleged researchers. The comments, delivered in a whistling creak more akin to a muffled scream than to normal conversation, are nevertheless surprisingly quotidian: complaints ranging from a tendonitis flare and eye strain from watching too much television, to the water temperature or meal plan-induced bloating. In one exchange, a quip about big feet is met with a response proposing gene-engineering a third leg. The humanoid subjects appear to laugh, and despite the thickened skin of their wide mouths preventing even the semblance of a smile, or the trilling, squeaking quality of their speech, one can easily imagine these creatures once were, or perhaps still are, people.

One need not imagine wildly either. The earliest video sequence in the cache comprises interviews allegedly conducted in late 2066, shortly after the project's hasty retreat from the public eye. In these scenes, the subjects from the later videos appear pre-metamorphosis, blinking and expressive,

waving human hands and sighing through human mouths. An offscreen interviewer asks them in turn, "Why do you think you're a good candidate for this project?" Proffered answers include self-sacrificing heroism for the sake of humanity, vitriolic disgust with the state of the world, and *curricula vitae* replete with research papers, advanced degrees, and awards in relevant fields. As the interviews continue and the scope of the proposed transformation becomes clear, however, the bluster and bravado fade. In their stead emerges a common thread, no less resolute but of a different cut—that of placelessness. If this documentation is corroborated as authentic, a careful examination of the available material may lead one to conclude that these are people who considered themselves already monstrous, or who felt themselves made irrevocably monstrous; who perhaps even shared an affinity with monstrosity so innate that becoming a monster felt like coming home.



[UPDATED: August 15, 2016 4:14 PM EST—
Note from the editors]

Although MetaGen has yet to respond to a request for comment at the time of this article's publication, a lead scientist on the project agreed to speak with us under the condition of anonymity. In defense of their work, they gave the following statement:

Every single researcher assigned to the project knew it was going to be controversial, perhaps unprecedentedly so. But consider that early stem cell therapies were controversial because of their proximity to the idea of human cloning. After all the outcry, we didn't end up with clones, we eradicated leukemia. Would anyone today still call a former leukemia patient a clone? Would you call someone with a prosthetic arm or a bilateral mastectomy a cyborg, a monster, or a survivor? The reality is that contemporary human experience is inherently unnatural. We've fracked, fished, cultivated, and mined all the Earth in such a way that we can't live without our imposed infrastructures—we're all already

cyborgs, monsters, and survivors. Using gene engineering to meet the latest environmental challenge is just an extension of our tool-making instinct, an accelerated step in the long history of organic and inorganic self-augmentation within our species.

While this is a rather heady argument to emerge from an endeavor conceived in the name of national security, it remains true that traditional boundaries are ill-suited to govern our fast-eroding world. After all, we are at war with our planet, and the planet is at war with us for making it this way. Science can be called upon to answer the questions of philosophy, ethics to justify leaving entire swathes of the population to drown. Perhaps these hybrid creature-people are the best equipped—in more ways than just physiological—to show us the way into this increasingly murky future. As one alleged Project Biotite candidate says, speaking from 2066, "...if I'm always going to be not-quite whole, then I'd rather be...grotesque."

The editors invite responses to this article at our Opinion node @121-387-8802-73.



APPENDIX II


The beach is a site of battle. The most famous instance of the beach as a site of battle is probably the Normandy landings, where on 6 June 1944, the Allied Forces conducted the largest seaborne invasion in history to begin the liberation of German-occupied France. However, this instance of the beach as a site of battle is not the first instance of the beach as a site of battle of which I learned. That distinction goes to the Battle of Incheon, where on 15 September 1950, the combined UN (United Nations) and ROK (Republic of Korea) forces executed a surprise amphibious assault that turned the tide of the Korean War and led to the recapture of Seoul from the KPA (Korean People's Army). All that to say, my favorite instance of the beach as a site of battle took place on the coast of Hong Kong, where on an indeterminate date in 2025, Marshal Stacker Pentecost deployed the jaegers *Crimson Typhoon*, *Cherno Alpha*, and *Striker Eureka* against two category-IV kaijus in Guillermo del Toro's masterpiece, *Pacific Rim* (2013).


So long as we remain a land-dwelling species, every coast, shore, and bank is an armistice.

An armistice is inherently liminal, an indefinite cessation of hostilities while maintaining a state of war. A major example of an armistice never followed by a definitive peace treaty is the 1953 Korean War Armistice Agreement. The average global sea level has been rising since at least the start of the 20th century from a combination of thermal expansion of seawater and melting polar ice, both instances of anthropogenic climate change. As water subsumes the coastlines, which side can be said to have broken the ceasefire? Los Angeles and Korea are separated by the Pacific Ocean. The beach as a border is a site of battle. The DMZ (demilitarized zone) snakes across the Korean peninsula like a river.

18 July 1950 saw the first large-scale amphibious operation since WWII, when UN forces landed in Pohang to secure the strategic port town against the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)'s 5th Infantry Division. Dad was born in Pohang in 1952. He said he'd stage amphibious landings as a child, splashing through the waves with friends, crashing onto the beach. He said he'd find skulls. He said he'd find entire skeletons.

A few years ago, Dad flew to Pohang to move his father's bones from their original burial site,






which had been purchased by a developer to build a high-rise luxury condominium. When he returned to Los Angeles, I asked him what going home had felt like. Dad made a noncommittal face. He said there was nothing there that looked like home. He said he'd been here (United States of America) 40 years, and this is what he knows. He showed me his own future burial site, a plot in the Hollywood Hills high up enough that I can't be sure if the sea will cover Dad the way it will most definitely cover Pohang, can't be sure if climate change is up to the task of making the Pacific Ocean a family grave.


The ASW-G-08 Gundam Barbatos is a war machine. One of 72 "Gundam" frames produced in the Calamity War about 300 years before the events of the television series *Mobile Suit Gundam IRON-BLOODED ORPHANS*, Gundam Barbatos is unique among Gundams in its design, which allows it to easily exchange equipment on the field, including taking armor and weapons from defeated enemies to enhance its own fighting capabilities. Barbatos is a cyborg among cyborgs.

The cyborg is a metaphor for transgender identity. I assert this here because smarter people than I have already asserted it elsewhere. Although

trans people are not its explicit subject, Donna Haraway's 1985 *A Cyborg Manifesto*,¹ probably the most cited analysis of cyborgs in relation to gender, asserts the cyborg as a rejection of rigid boundaries and biological essentialism. Womanhood is presented as a societal construct rather than a natural one, and it's a short hop-skip to apply the logic of autonomous construction of womanhood to other genders. In brief and in my understanding, the transgender-as-cyborg argument consists of this decentering of "original" form, alongside a hyper-focus on the body as classifier, uncertainty about classification (as man, woman, human, or other), and the fear/disgust response triggered by that uncertainty.²

Smarter people than I have also written about the techno-orientalist cyborg. Examples of high-tech, ornamental East Asian women and faceless, neon-lit East Asian exteriors are easily found in seminal works of Western science fiction like *Blade Runner* (as well as *Blade Runner 2049*) and *Neuromancer*. The cyborg is the aesthetic prosthetic to the red-blooded white male protagonist—racialized, artificial, relegated to the future and denied the ever-proceeding present. Anne Anlin Cheng,





quoted in Danielle Wu's essay "Do Androids Dream of Whiteness,"³ writes, "Asiatic femininity is at once atavistic (the geisha, the slave girl) and futuristic (the automaton, the cyborg). The artificiality of Asiatic femininity is the ancient dream that feeds the machine in the heart of modernity."⁴

Once in 1995 and again in 2001, Mom had a silicone sac installed in her chest. Mom is a two-time breast cancer survivor. She said she looks at her scars and thinks she's grotesque. She said she feels like less of a woman [*and more of a cyborg* (my addition)]. She said the silicone sacs let her pass as whole when she's clothed.


I daydream about being less of a woman. I was fascinated by medical anomalies as a child. I read into the night about conjoined siblings, elephantiasis, dermoid cysts filled with teeth and record-breaking tumors. I told myself a story about how I'd swallowed my male twin in the womb, pathologizing myself by means of his embryonic genitalia slowly leaking imagined testosterone into my system.


Gundam Barbatos is not so much piloted as it is an extension of its pilot, who must utilize the Alaya-Vijnana system to interface with the machine.

The Alaya-Vijnana system consists of two parts: 1) a connection port installed in the mobile weapon and 2) nano-machines implanted in the pilot's spine. The pilot must receive the implant at a young age to allow it to fuse with their nervous system. The nano-machines coalesce into a pseudo-lobe that allows the pilot's brain to directly process mobile suit data through the physical jack.

An older but still popular narrative for trans people is that we were "born in the wrong body." This phrase suggests that I am distinct from the body I occupy, making the disembodied me the pilot-homunculus or pilot-teratoma of my body's mobile suit. The Alaya-Vijnana system functions as an armistice, troubling the clear distinction between a mobile suit and its pilot. Is the Gundam Barbatos the cyborg, or is the pilot, with their nano-machine implant, the true automaton? Are they cyborg only together? Am I the gendered driver of my sexed flesh weapon, or does my Asiatic femininity make me prosthetic entirely? The human body is up to 60% water, which means 40% is not. Every beach is a site of battle.

In an example of correlation not implying causation, the early 20th century saw marked





acceleration in both the rise of sea levels and the development of large scale modern amphibious warfare. Gundam Barbatos is the product of an arms race, a wager of violence created through violent and extractive means, the Earth ransacked for its metals and minerals by workers ransacked for their labor. If to be cyborg is to compromise one's bodily integrity, the coastlines will compromise the bodily integrity of entire populations. Death is the final compromise. Until we can be grown in vats, we will be born in blood.

- 1 Donna Jeanne Haraway. *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fictionn_ownnarrativemediaandtheoryinthe21stcentury/manifestly_haraway_----_a_cyborg_manifesto_science_technology_and_socialist-feminism_in_the_....pdf.
 - 2 A consolidation of these ideas can be found here: <https://medium.com/@towardsmorning/the-transgender-cyborg-an-inexhaustive-primer-11a0bb8d7344>
 - 3 Danielle Wu, "Do Androids Dream of Whiteness," *Unbag* 3, Reverie (Fall 2018), <https://unbag.net/reverie/do-androids-dream-of-whiteness>.
 - 4 Anne Anlin Cheng, "Ornamentalism: Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman," *Critical Inquiry* 44, no. 3 (Spring 2018): 442, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/696921>.
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