CHINESE SURPLUS

BIOPOLITICAL AESTHETICS AND THE MEDICALLY COMMODIFIED BODY

ARI LARISSA HEINRICH

PERVERSE MODERNITIES

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FOR SANDY

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Biopolitical Aesthetics and the Chinese Body as Surplus

While the image of a dead specimen *potentially* yields a grisly reminder of the material exercise of power upon which the birth of the nation is historically contingent, it *actually* works to render the material violence of the nation merely metaphorical for our times.
—Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital*

A performance artist sets off a scandal when he bites into the forearm of a fetus. The middle-class protagonist of a horror film sees ghosts through the transplanted cornea of an impoverished donor. A cirrhotic liver, preserved in polymer, lies glistening on a table in a shopping mall, not far from a food court and an expensive jewelry store. We live in an age of unprecedented medical commercialization of the body, a time of routine exposure to the agnostic aesthetics of spare kidneys and facial transplants, cosmetic "corrections" and designer blood—a time when the "value" of the medical body has become explicitly literal.

Yet when representations of this medically commodified body appear in art or public culture, we often dismiss them as sensationalistic: either we read them as shameless bids for celebrity or we assume they function autopoietically to critique their own conditions of production. Instead of asking what such works can tell us about the syntax of race, medicine, and

corporeality in the grammar of history, we read them tautologically, as the self-fulfilling product of biotech's dark prophecy. In visceral terms, of course, it is not hard to understand the desire to dismiss or even to censor such violent images. Representations of the dismantled, dismembered, or uncanny body are designed to disturb. It is in the nature of the material.

But a closer investigation of representations of the medically commodified body in literature and visual culture can illuminate (and productively complicate) our understanding of the ongoing effects of biopolitical violence in contemporary life. While the medically commodified body itself may be highly confronting, its status as both a transactable and an aestheticized corporeal object is precisely what enables it to speak directly to the legacy of postcolonialism for embodied hierarchies of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, class, and ability. If we read these challenging figures only for their shock value or their function as artifacts of biotechnological change—if, in essence, we refuse the responsibility of witness—then we risk perpetuating the many historically embedded violences that inform what Nicole Shukin has described as "life in biopolitical times," our particular moment of geopolitical contraction and biotechnological expansion.[1] By contrast, turning a more measured attention to the figure of the medically commodified body in literature, art, and popular culture offers us insight into what Alexander Weheliye has called the "alternative modes of life" that can coexist with "the violence, subjection, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human."[2] A naked body shrink-wrapped like a cut of meat, a stolen plastic kidney, a tale of fraternal dissection: these figures are uniquely positioned to bridge the divides of past and present, and of colonial and contemporary, *as well as* to expose the fictions of their own production (including fictions of what counts as "human," as "universal," or even as "human rights").[3] Moreover, they are inherently transnational: just as the emergence of biopolitical regimes coincides with the rise of neoliberal (il)logics, the emergence of the figure of the medically commodified body coincides with the increasingly global character of material exchange and its associated mythologies around bodies, technology, and information. Thus when we engage more deeply with the meaning of a given example of the medically commodified body in contemporary literature, visual culture, and popular media, we also begin to see more clearly the subtle connections (or "intimacies") that can link a contemporary popular anatomical display to histories of colonization and enslavement.

The case studies I examine in this book may be grounded in Chinese and cultural studies, but they speak directly to a web of intimacies that extends well beyond.[4]

Consider the case of the *Body Worlds* exhibits—those globe-trotting, hugely lucrative exhibitions of plastinated human cadavers posed in "anatomical" tableaux that started in the mid-1990s with the development of a polymer-impregnation technique by the enterprising anatomist Gunther von Hagens. Despite the fact that the exhibits have been dogged by accusations that the bodies are "sourced" from executed Chinese prisoners, the majority of scholarship about them elides discussions of race and provenance in favor of debates about the ethics of anatomical display or the role of the cadaver in entertainment, education, or art since the days of Frankenstein.[5] This omission occurs not because humanities scholars do not *care* about race and provenance in the *Body Worlds* exhibits (we do, sometimes), nor even because reliable information about the bodies' actual provenance is notoriously hard, if not impossible, to come by (it is). Rather, it occurs because sometimes we unconsciously impose established but ill-fitting templates on familiar forms of the "human" in ways that lead us to overlook and even perpetuate the "human's" constitutive hierarchies of race, class, gender, ability, and enfranchisement: we cannot see the forest for the trees.

The case of the *Body Worlds* epitomizes this kind of forest-blindness. Treated using a method analogous to perimineralization (the natural process that yields petrified wood), plastinated cadavers are, in fact, mostly plastic: apart from a scaffolding of tissue, all liquids and fats have been replaced by, or impregnated with, liquid polymers. These polymers in turn have been cured so that the resulting specimens can be displayed indefinitely, each one poised in an eternal rigor of normative "life": holding a tennis racket, doing a yoga pose, raising a conductor's baton, or even engaging in heterosexual intercourse. Like a diorama of lifestyle choices in a natural history museum from the future, the plastinated human bodies encourage cathexis because they look so *real*, more or less like the audience members whose class imaginaries they are meant to perform. At the same time, any sense of familiarity is displaced by the specimens' varying states of dissection, their status as objects, and their association with death.

Such quintessentially uncanny tensions are only compounded when an audience member learns that the bodies may be the product of Chinese

human rights abuse. In ten years of attending exhibits around the world, I have eavesdropped many times as visitors speculate on the origins of a given specimen, scrutinizing it for evidence of Chinese ethnicity as carefully as for liver disease or smoker's lung. Meanwhile, exhibitors make little effort to satisfy the visitors' curiosity; on the contrary, to preserve donor anonymity they typically obscure the identities of the bodies, proactively removing features such as tattoos, scars, and growths, and referring exclusively to morphological details in the literature.[6] Indeed, in a majority of specimens, even that most metonymic of racial markers—the skin—has been altered or removed entirely to expose the vascular, fascial, nervous, and skeletal systems beneath in what Eric Hayot refers to as a kind of "hypernudity of muscle and organ, vein and bone."[7] The chief exception to this process of identity-blocking is that the exhibits commonly accentuate the values associated with certain biodeterministic and heteronormative gender imaginaries, not to mention fantasies of the "able-bodied," such that "male" bodies disproportionately outnumber "female" bodies, and "female" specimens, when not demonstrating various gynecological phenomena, often assume a kind of quasi-parodic burlesque, straddling a chair, striking a pose, and, of course, growing a baby.[8] Between the audience's curiosity about Chinese provenance on the one hand, and the shows' refusal to disclose details on the other, a tension thus emerges whereby race—especially Chinese race—becomes the exhibits' ulterior subject. In a postmodern twist on racial profiling, intrepid viewers are left to assess the Chineseness of a plastinate by evaluating the shape of an eye, the distribution of body mass, or the imagined contours of other "secondary" race characteristics.[9]

From the deliberate leveling of identity to the strategic flaying, this sublimation of race and ethnicity in favor of constructions of a more universal "human" has troubling implications. For one, it represents the implicit disavowal of the anatomical exhibits' debt to the more overtly spectacular traditions of medical and natural history museums, colonial archives, freak shows, zoos, wax museums, and Worlds Fairs.[10] For another, it epitomizes the elision of the Chinese body's role as an unknown soldier in the construction of contemporary narratives of race and "the human." When we attend an exhibit of plastinated human cadavers, in other words, we are asked to accept that what we are viewing is the "human" body, an example of "universal" or "biological" anatomy to which the details of race and provenance are meant to be superfluous. But in the end this is a convenient

fiction. When we account for rhetorical and visual traditions of display and consumption in the context of biopolitics, it becomes clear that what we are often viewing (and what we are sometimes complicit in creating) is not a "universal" human at all but a Chinese (or "Chinese") human, a source of profit whose humanity is qualified or conditioned by its availability as a kind of global corporeal surplus.[11] In supporting this tacit dichotomy between the "human" (the first-world viewers whose ethical practice is constructed as superior) and the specimen (the ethically evacuated nonwhite or subaltern bodies meant for display), the promotional materials and even the microcultures of the traveling plastinated cadaver exhibits—and thus the scholarship that fails to address these questions—reproduce colonial race dynamics as faithfully as they do the bodies themselves.[12]

Although the technologies, methods of display, and promotional materials may be novel, therefore, the cultural architecture of the plastinated cadaver exhibits is not. On the contrary, it represents an archetypal expression of postcolonial race dynamics whereby Chinese and other subaltern identities are subject to historiographical censorship or suppression even as they directly inform constructions of the "human" or "universal" in contemporary life.[13] Although they are crucial to consider, then, when we focus exclusively on concerns related to the ethics of anatomical display without questioning the universality of the "human" that informs them, we risk reproducing this structurally embedded hierarchy of suppression. This book addresses the legacy of such suppression for contemporary Chinese and transnational literature, media, visual culture, and popular science by reading more recent provocative representations of the medically commodified body (the body modified or enhanced by transactable biotechnologies like organ transplant, blood transfusion, skin graft, and plastination) against changes in representations of the body over time, arguing that such provocations articulate a critical engagement with the increasing commodification of the body, and in this case the Chinese body, in modern life. Scanning as far back as nineteenth-century exchanges between European political satirists and Chinese intellectuals about the nature and meaning of the term *Frankenstein*, and as far forward as experimental art by the "Cadaver Group" at the beginning of the twentieth century, I contend that controversial representations of the medically commodified body by transnational Chinese writers, artists, filmmakers, and even plastinators in China—far from indicating some fundamentally Chinese disregard for the

"human"—indicate a kind of dialogue with, and even suggestion of alternatives to, the historically overdetermined idea of Chinese life as surplus.[14]

At the same time I also take care not to segregate science from culture along familiar fault lines, insisting instead that the relationship between advancements in biotech and developments in literature, art, and culture is more than circumstantial, and by extension that a productive critical analysis must incorporate both political economics *and* aesthetics if it is to account for the rapid multiplication of representations of the (Chinese) body as surplus in contemporary life. Biopolitical theory provides an attractive foundation for an approach incorporating science, medicine, and commodity because of its attention to the body as a nexus of individual and political power in capitalism, as well as its recommendation that (as Melinda Cooper puts it) "the development of the modern life sciences and classical political economy . . . be understood as parallel and mutually constitutive events."[15] I am not the first to look at biopolitics and China, of course; scholars such as Susan Greenhalgh, Andrew Kipnis, Matthew Kohrman, Everett Zhang, Zhu Jianfeng, and others have all investigated applications of biopolitical thinking to questions of demographics, medicine, and the life sciences from sociological and anthropological disciplinary perspectives, and of course non-China scholars in diverse fields have already adapted Foucauldian biopolitics' constitutional affinity for the historical dynamics of medicine and colonialism to studies of everything from the relationships among specific biotechnologies and global labor flows to the associations between public health legislation and corporate interests, the religious right, abortion politics, and U.S. debt imperialism.[16] But this book has drawn even more directly from works that focus on the political economics of race, nation, and distribution of resources in situations where medicine comes into play. Where Catherine Waldby and Robert Mitchell pioneer the study of applied medical ethics and political power in their comparison of different approaches to managing "value" in the exchange of human tissue, blood, and other "products" of the body, for instance, Cooper develops a Marxian approach to "life as surplus" to explain not just the emergence of a figuration of a global "surplus" of biological materials (especially those that can be easily commodified) but of the idea of a surplus of *life itself*, the capitalization of which calls for the valuation of some lives over others.[17] Kalindi Vora takes "life as surplus" to the industries of surrogacy, call centers, and affective labor in India, abstracting the

idea of the value of human life from its usual home in ethics to its place in the real-time dynamics of capital that increasingly construct some lives as *socially* valuable (typically the "consumer" or "recipient" from the Global North) and some as merely *commercially* valuable, consumable (the labor provider or "donor" from the Global South).[18] Crucially, these scholars use the Foucauldian algorithm (e.g., modern life sciences + classical political economics = biopolitics) to highlight the contrast between those products of the human body that may be assigned "value" as discrete units of measure—the more or less quantifiable nature of which renders them subject to regulation, such as kidneys, semen, or blood—and whole bodies, like pharmaceutical testing subjects or pregnancy surrogates, the more abstract "lives" of whom accrue a market value inasmuch as they exist beyond or outside of rights, or as a condition of those rights, in a "state of exception."[19] Scholars like Alexander Weheliye, meanwhile, emphasize that biopolitics itself (re)produces a blind spot around race and the human, such that "crucial viewpoints [provided by] black studies and other formations of critical ethnic studies [are] often overlooked or actively neglected in bare life and biopolitics discourse, in the production of racialization as an object of knowledge, especially in its interfacing with political violence and (de)humanization."[20] This book starts with the premise that reading scientific and sociopolitical phenomena against each other consistently reveals the contradictions embedded in the discourses that produce and shape claims to authenticity by vested sovereign interests—even as any reading of these discourses must also foreground race as one of biopolitics' constitutive hierarchies. I argue that careful critiques of the biopolitical dynamics informing the "technologies" of contemporary medical aesthetics in literature, art, cinema, and popular culture can vastly expand how we think about (Chinese) race, medicine, and value "in biopolitical times."

At the same time this book aims to incorporate race into biopolitical critiques of aesthetics in medicine, science, and history, however, it also acknowledges that models for the more precise relationship of biopolitics to aesthetics—by which I mean all those things that describe how something looks, feels, sounds, or acts on the senses, the arts of *perception* broadly speaking—remain harder to find.[21] Perhaps the relative challenge of finding discussion of the relationship of biopolitics to aesthetics is, in the end, a by-product of the alienation of the humanities from the sciences. What Sander Gilman once observed about the relationship of illustration

to history applies equally to aesthetics: typically, aesthetics has been more of a "stepchild" to science, political economics, and even history, when it is included in the family tree at all.[22] Yet aesthetics is not peripheral to cultural production in the life sciences and beyond; surely it is now a truism that aesthetics plays more than a passive or supporting role in the manufacture and reproduction of political economic value.[23] Perhaps more importantly, aesthetics plays a key role in the establishment and maintenance of—but also resistance to—colonial and neoliberal hierarchies of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, place of origin, and other formations. How can we write biopolitics into the script of literary, visual, and popular cultural critiques of contemporary materials featuring the human body? When we encounter a piece of literature or a work of visual culture that seems to do perplexing violence to the human body in the name of "art"—particularly one that invokes the authority of science and medicine—how can we approach it without falling back on conceptual frameworks that ultimately reproduce the very hierarchies we wish to critique?

I first addressed this problem in my monograph *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West*. There I explored the relationships between science and aesthetics in various examples of "Western" and "Chinese" textual (and cultural) translation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, looking among other things at ways in which the languages of medicine, science, and realism became imbricated in definitions of the body over the course of the emergence of a new politically "modern" Chinese identity in literature and culture of the early twentieth century. I was especially concerned with the question of how the aesthetics of corporeality—as exemplified by illustrations of the body in translated historical artifacts of science and medicine—impacted representations of the body in modern Chinese literary "realisms." Here I often returned to the late literature scholar Marston Anderson's observation that "in realist metaphysics it is always the body that is accorded substantiality, [and] it is above all those features of the natural world that invasively trespass the imagined autonomy of the body that achieve status as emblems of the Real"; because of its inherent emphasis on the importance of the body (and by extension its association with "the life sciences"), Anderson's comment became for me a kind of intellectual shorthand for the integration of literary and visual cultural aesthetics into biopolitics.[24] This shorthand allowed me to examine how illustrated exchanges between and

among Western medical missionaries and Chinese interlocutors (paintings, prints, anatomical illustrations, photography) contributed not only to the radical (re)invention of new approaches to the body in anatomical science but to the development of new understandings of the parameters of self and body in literature and visual culture. Although the book therefore began as an investigation of representations of pathology in Chinese literary modernism, eventually it became an exploration of the mechanics of exchanges between science, medicine, and early modern literary realist aesthetics in the period leading up to literary modernism—in retrospect, the foundation for my thinking around biopolitical aesthetics. The present volume continues in this vein but now examines the legacy of these late imperial and early modern interactions between science and the aesthetics of "realism" for more recent representations of the body. How might the "parallel and mutually constitutive" categories of modern life science and political economics be expanded to include aesthetic practice and representations of Chinese "racial" and cultural identity? How might the strategic incorporation of scientific and medical aesthetics into biopolitical theory enhance our understanding of the relationships between modern life sciences and political economics in the age of globalization and biotech? Rather than merely supplementing or illustrating political economics and the life sciences in the original formula for biopolitics, what if we advance aesthetics to equal partner?

Aesthetics

As a model for the complex engagement of biopolitical theory with medical and scientific aesthetics, one of the works this book is most directly indebted to is Catherine Waldby's *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine*."[25] Published in 2000, the book uses the case of the mid-1990s "Visible Human Project" to examine the relationships among aesthetics, biopolitics, and the emergence of new medical technologies designed to map, quantify, and ultimately aestheticize hard knowledge of the body in a time when "the body . . . is utterly available as visible matter"; the book also addresses the incidental (re)production of soft knowledge around various cultural values and hierarchies built in to the Visible Human Project's very architecture.[26] Paying particular attention to the archival, for instance, Waldby observes that "if human bodies can be rendered as compendia of data, information archives which can be

stored, retrieved, networked, copied, transferred and rewritten, they become permeable to other orders of information, and liable to all the forms of circulation, dispersal, accumulation, and transmission which characterize informational economies."[27] Central to this figuration, moreover, is the understanding that "biotechnology is a means of gearing the material order of living matter, and biomedicine in particular seeks to produce . . . 'biovalue,' a surplus value of vitality and instrumental knowledge which can be placed at the disposal of the human subject."[28] Against such a posthumanist backdrop, the *aesthetics* of this virtual or representational body become even harder to dismiss as a determining factor in the development of—and assignment of surplus value to—the body itself.

The present volume likewise foregrounds the role of aesthetics in determining what counts as "human" in contemporary biotechnologies. Paying explicit attention to questions of race (especially Chinese race) and the medically commodified body in contemporary literary, visual, and popular cultural configurations, it draws in particular on two key theoretical works, both of which ultimately identify mimesis—and in particular its imperfect articulation through literary and visual realisms—as the vehicle par excellence of biopolitical aesthetics. The first of these is Nicole Shukin's 2009 *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, in which Shukin outlines her intervention into the cultural politics of nature, citing "a critical need within the field of cultural studies for work that explores how questions of 'the animal' and of capital impinge on one another within abysmal histories of contingency." Aiming "to historicize the specific cultural logics and material logistics that have produced animals as 'forms of capital' . . . across the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries," she attends to the "semiotic currency of animal signs *and* the carnal traffic in animal substances across this period," arguing that "animal memes and animal matter are mutually overdetermined as forms of capital." Shukin contends that an inquiry into the "historical entanglements of 'animal' and 'capital' not only is long overdue within the variegated field of transnational cultural studies, but arguably is pivotal to an analysis of biopower, or what Michel Foucault describes as a 'technology of power centered on life.'"[29] As a kind of mission statement, therefore, *Animal Capital* aims "to lay some groundwork for studying mimesis in the theoretical and historical context of biopower."[30]

Shukin's attention to the "semiotic currency" of the "animal" facilitates the abstraction of "life" from the "human" (as between *bios* or *zoē*) that has been so important in recent applications of biopolitical theory, and indeed in this book I return regularly to the imperative to differentiate among what Aihwa Ong might call "situated" understandings of what constitutes life (and death) in diverse media, geographical locations, and historical contexts.[31] At the same time, Shukin's focus on mimesis speaks directly to this volume's concerns about aesthetics. In exploiting the multiple meanings of the term *rendering* to evoke "both the mimetic act of making a copy . . . *and* the industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains," for example, she describes her intention "to begin elaborating a biopolitical, as opposed to simply an aesthetic, theory of mimesis" that can contribute to illuminating "the discomfiting complicity of symbolic and carnal technologies of reproduction."[32] Quite apart from its obvious relevance to any discussion of the process by which human cadavers are "rendered" as biopolitical artifacts in the global circulations of the plastinated cadaver exhibits (a process to which I return later in this book), Shukin's adaptation of the term *rendering* makes space for an explicitly biopolitical reading of mimesis. While more canonical approaches to mimesis have been associated primarily with realism (or "*realist* rendition"), for example, she argues that the "textual logics of reproduction can no longer be treated in isolation from economic logics of (capitalist) reproduction," demonstrating instead that a biopolitical theory of mimesis can "encompass . . . the economic modes of production evoked by the 'literal' scene of rendering." Instead of subscribing to the "belief that under the mystique of the mimetic faculty lie the real workings of power," in other words, *Animal Capital* asserts that mimesis actually "*constitutes* the real workings of power, at least partially." Consequently, Shukin illustrates how "the material rendering of animals is not the empirical 'truth' that gives the lie to its other, the representational economy of rendering; [rather,] the two are the immanent shapes mimesis takes in biopolitical times."[33]

In refusing to relegate aesthetics to its more familiar role as a passive or primarily illustrative partner in biopolitical dynamics, *Animal Capital* thus highlights the *agency* of aesthetics, and of mimesis in particular, in reproducing the hierarchies of power that inform representations of the "animal" in contemporary life—and in so doing suggests a pathway toward

actively incorporating aesthetics into biopolitics. As I will demonstrate in coming chapters, Shukin's intervention, though focused on the "animal" at least partly to correct for the sapio-centrism of existing scholarship, can nonetheless be brought full circle to bear productively on the human. This is because what counts or does not count as "human" in the age of biotech can no longer be said to be "universal," nor even "biological," so much as the circumstantial grouping of various organic materials (or "products") in a matrix of neoliberal hierarchies where—even with the support of heretofore unimaginable developments in biotechnology and communications—value and indeed *life itself* are still divisible by race, class, gender, "health," wealth, ability, and of course species. "The power to reduce humans to the bare life of their species body," after all, "arguably presupposes the prior power to suspend other species in a state of exception within which they can be noncriminally put to death. . . . The biopolitical production of the bare life of the animal other subtends, then, the biopolitical production of the bare life of the racialized other."[34]

Lydia Liu's important 2009 article "Life as Form: How Biomimesis Encountered Buddhism in Lu Xun" also looks at questions of mimesis and realism, examining the problem of "life as form" in light of "the growing presence of biomimetic technologies since the beginning of the last century." Liu's concept of "biomimesis" figures centrally in my argument about updating the tools of literary and visual cultural analysis to meet the challenge of contemporary biopolitical aesthetics, and in many ways is continuous with Waldby's earlier discussion of the "photorealism" of bodies in the Visible Human Project.[35] Using the literary realist experiments of the twentieth-century author and erstwhile medical student Lu Xun as an entry point, Liu describes how Chinese intellectuals, exposed simultaneously to evolutionary biology and literary realism in the early twentieth century, married the two, to "raise . . . such fundamental questions as, what is life? Can the idea of organism, cell, or mutation lead to ethical views of life? . . . Where are the boundaries of the real in this fast-changing world?"[36] Citing various types of medical imaging, Liu engages directly with the role of mimesis as a practice in the aesthetics of science, describing how "realist" or mimetic illustrations can function to "verify" the "truth of life," rather than simply (e.g., passively) illustrate it; she describes how images have come to operate as "proof," even to the extent that scientific or medical phenomenon cannot exist, or can no longer be said to exist (or to be recognized

by science as existing) without it. Although the case studies Liu focuses on involve the origins of modern Chinese literature in the early twentieth century, they speak directly to contemporary concerns. For example, the simultaneity of the introduction of literary realism and biological or evidentiary thinking in anatomy and science in early modern China—the introduction of microscopes, anatomical illustrations, photography, all of which constitute what Liu calls "technologies of mimesis"—means that it is impossible to disentangle the development of *literary* realist aesthetics from *scientific or medical* realist aesthetics in this period. Rather, they shaped each other. Biorealism as form is as important as content and can change over time, Liu demonstrates, interacting with content dynamically. Thus, as Liu remarks, "So much depends on the technology of mimesis in modern life. Like other mimetic events, iconographies of evolutionary biology act on our senses in powerful ways and [even] raise the possibility of structural parallels between genetic cloning and literary mimesis."[37]

Susan Stewart once observed that "realistic genres do not mirror everyday life; they mirror its hierarchization of information. They are mimetic of values, not of the material world." Over the years I have taken this statement, alongside Anderson's, as a powerful encapsulation of the idea that form can be as effective as content in conveying a sense of the "realistic," and by extension that even something as promiscuously "universal" as the human body may be subject to distortion or variation according to the values of the culture(s) in which it is produced, immersed, and represented, as well as of the audiences who witness it.[38] To this postmodern understanding of realism, Liu now adds the important coda that medical and scientific realisms sometimes require special handling: having acquired a kind of agency in the mythologies of contemporary life around what constitutes "proof," medical and scientific realisms are now expected not only to *describe* or *reproduce* the objective nature of "reality" but also to *verify* or *determine* it. Put another way, if a medical or scientific phenomenon can be mapped or scanned—if it can be witnessed or even *created* as evidence through the process of witness—then for all intents and purposes its documentability or reproducibility (or, for that matter, its diagnosability) becomes a condition of its reality or existence, its proof of life. According to the quantum logic of biomimesis, then, images related to the biological sciences determine or verify what is real, not the other way around, and form—not content—determines the "reality" of the object in question.

So when Liu refers to the phenomenon of "life as form," she is describing a kind of feedback loop in which mimetic technologies in science and medicine not only describe but also *produce* what counts as biologically "real."[39] If, therefore, we agree that realism is ultimately grounded in the capacity of a work of art or literature to evoke the body's perceptions and vulnerabilities, and if we also agree that realist genres are more mimetic of values than of the material world, then "biomimesis" is the doubly inscribed corporeal aesthetics describing the boundaries of "life as form." In her articulation of the idea of biomimesis, Liu, like Shukin, thus reverses the usual order of aesthetics so that aesthetics becomes the precondition for, or agent of, cultural and scientific change rather than its by-product—a central concern of biopolitical aesthetics.[40]

Biopolitical Aesthetics

What I propose with this book is therefore essentially a synthetic approach: not so much a critical method as a conscious attention to, or vigilance around, representations of corporeality in the age of biotech (Shukin's "life in biopolitical times"). If Cooper draws our attention to the reticent calculus of life in neoliberalism that figures some lives as valuable and others as surplus (and if, along with Lisa Lowe, Waldby, Vora, and others, she gives us—via Foucault and Karl Marx—the neoliberal underpinnings of the capitalization of "life"), while Liu offers us a critical formula that can account for evolutions in the relationships between science and aesthetics (and in particular for the tautological capacity of mimesis to be understood as proof of life), then what I am advocating with this book is a dedicated attention to what happens in the space between. "Life as form" and "life as surplus," read in concert, yield a strong foundation for studies of representations of the medically commodified body, not only Chinese but Other, in contemporary cultures, all while opening up a space to discuss active hierarchies of race, class, gender, and even species. Biopolitical aesthetics is what happens when life as surplus meets life as form.

The genealogy of relationships between science and form that Liu's idea of biomimesis advances (and the effects of which Cooper and Shukin effectively chronicle) allows us to trace the historical processes by which life goes from having been at least nominally a *subject* of medical aesthetics under colonial regimes to being a *medium* for it under neoliberalism. This transition coincides with the movement from an overtly programmatic or

declarative articulation of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to what is now the repressed but still coercive condition of de facto enslavement—in Stewart's logic, the continuation of slavery's biopolitical principles, its "hierarchization of information."[41] In *The Afterlife of Images* I traced the movement from the pathological Chinese body as portrait subject (as in the hybrid early nineteenth-century paintings of Lam Qua) to the medical body as racialized specimen (as in early medical photography in China) to the translation of unfamiliar modes of vision in the first "Western-style" anatomy textbooks, where not only new corporeal concepts but new technologies of vision were communicated, exemplifying what I called "anatomical aesthetics."[42] The present volume examines the movement from representations of the newly embodied nineteenth-century anatomical subject to the vocabulary of abject surplus that gives contemporary corporeal aesthetics its signature. It focuses on literary, visual, cinematic, and popular scientific representations of the medically commodified body—a body that can now be taken apart, assigned market value, and distributed to wealthier consumer bodies in unprecedented ways, or to quote Nikolas Rose, a body the "vitality [of which] can now be decomposed, stabilized, frozen, banked, stored, commoditized, accumulated, exchanged, traded across time, across space, across organs and species, across diverse contexts and enterprises in the service of both health and wealth."[43] The book then considers the legacy of this more modular embodiment for understandings of the body as capital in the age of biotech. In this sense, this book's engagement with "China" and Chinese examples, however specific, is nonetheless meant to support broader questions about transformations in the relationships between biopolitics and aesthetics in times of unprecedented global interconnectedness.

But the book also takes into account that, especially when exploring relationships among aesthetic objects over time, conventional genealogies often fail us. A more conventional genealogical approach might, for instance, aim to establish a direct and even specifically developmental relationship between the pathological body of the late nineteenth century and the medically commodified body under biopolitics. Similarly, biopolitical critique sometimes suggests a kind of teleological trajectory—the eventual convergence of "tautological" time when the "reproduction of capital's conditions of production and the very biophysical conditions of '*life itself*' [will] become one and the same thing."[44] In this book I resist

the tendency of teleological thinking to discount or dismiss the less linear, more disobedient processes of creative mutual exchange that inevitably shape the routine course of translation, adaptation, appropriation, and collaborative construction across languages and cultures.[45] Rather than emphasizing a strictly vertical relationship between, say, pathologizations of Chinese identity in nineteenth-century medical portraiture and the biopolitical hierarchies embedded within (or indeed reproduced by) twenty-first-century bioimaging technologies, I arrange examples in this book to underscore the dialectical relationships that inform the emergence of these technologies—relationships that are not necessarily disciplined by culture or chronology.[46] In this book I therefore identify certain recurring thematic "bodies"—clusters or concentrations of corporeal characteristics—common to biopolitical aesthetics, and frame them in relation to the neoliberal hierarchies that inhere in the age of stem cell harvesting, multiple transplant technology, gene therapy, and cloning.[47] Instead of looking at cause and effect, this book looks at the dystopian legacy of Stewart's "body-made-object" for biopolitical times, placing earlier iterations like the portrait body, the specimen body, and the anatomical body (as introduced in *The Afterlife of Images*) on a tesseracted continuum with later-emerging figures like the composite body, the diasporic body, the transplant body, and the anonymous or surplus body.[48]

On the one hand this book therefore proceeds chronologically, moving in a broken line from the nineteenth-century appearance of a "composite" corporeality epitomized by the popular reading of Frankenstein's monster as a discrete soul housed in a body composed of cadaverous parts to the emergence of a "diasporic" figure whose vital components are so interchangeable that they can be shared—harvested to bestow the "gift" of life—and are therefore capitalizable or commodifiable, with profound consequences for identity. But on the other hand, the book asks how transitions in the relationships between identity and corporeality play out across biopolitical topographies of race, culture, nation, gender, and geography. So besides looking at various figures of the medically commodified body through time, it also examines the aesthetic implications of global neoliberal dysphoria, according to the unsentimental logic of which "humanity" is conditional, such that the value of one life correlates inversely to the evacuation or divestiture of another, with some bodies (especially white, wealthy, and masculine-enfranchised bodies of the Global North) being

more valuable (or more "human") than others (often brown, resource-deficient, and gender-disenfranchised bodies of the Global South). As I will argue, such inherently hierarchical definitions of the "human" surface not only in debates about the property value of the body and its products in medicine and science but, naturally, in art. We can find no better illustration of the central dilemma of the "human" in biopolitical times than in battles over rights to the body-as-object in aesthetic contexts, where the body must maintain simultaneous claims to uniqueness (irreproducibility) and universality (the ability to be manufactured and reproduced, e.g., patented or subject to copyright).[49]

The first chapter thus opens by asking how to explain the phenomenon of the Chinese "cadaver artists"—the controversial millennial "flesh artists" (玩屍體的的藝術家, *wan shiti de yishu jia*) whose work uses cadaverous limbs, preserved fetuses, blood, and other materials of the body as mediums. Many critics have described these artists primarily in terms of their shared vocabulary with contemporary European and American "shock" artists from the same period, while others have speculated about the effects on artistic production of a new zeitgeist of alienation regarding the coincidence of globalization, advancements in biotech, and neoliberal economies generally. My study instead situates the phenomenon of the cadaver artists against the backdrop of an evolving historical and transnational aesthetic "environment" that is distinguished by both the literal and the figurative materialization of an increasingly dissociated corporeal aesthetics—a culturally "composite body" with interchangeable parts whose emergence coincides with the beginning of the machine age (and therefore the age of biopolitics). In particular, chapter 1 finds in the discovery of a specific relationship between the figure of Frankenstein and the transnational stereotype of China as a "sleeping lion" a way to explain certain key shifts in the evolution of corporeal aesthetics since the late nineteenth century. The chapter therefore opens with a discussion of contemporary experimental art and aesthetics related to the cadaver artists but soon narrows to trace the exact route by which Frankenstein entered China, revealing along the way a surprising link between early characterizations of China as a "sleeping lion" and a well-known eighteenth-century automaton in a British museum.

The second chapter then revisits the work of the cadaver artists in light of this newly recovered aesthetic genealogy. Rather than writing them off

for their "shock value," I suggest that the more provocative works of the Cadaver Group enable a fresh dialogue between past and present, marking in particular the transition from a "composite" figure like Frankenstein to the more diasporic figure made possible by contemporary advancements in biotech. Under the sign of the diasporic body, I argue, life can be reduced to "bare life" and reenlisted in the service of art (albeit art under biopolitics), with surprising results. In chapter 2 I propose that some of the tension we observe in various works of the Cadaver Group derives less from a kind of cross-cultural anxiety of influence than from residual anxiety about the transition from earlier composite models to models more directly in dialogue with the global biopolitical commons of contemporary Chinese identity. Thus I begin this section of the book by looking at the development of a proto- or bridging "vocabulary" for the diasporic body in experimental literature of the 1980s, and then juxtapose close readings of individual works by artists like Zhu Yu (朱昱), Sun Yuan (孫原), and Peng Yu (彭禹) with shifts in popular understandings of the medically commodified body today. I determine that the contemporary artists succeed in developing the terms of a fresh critical engagement not only with identity and embodiment but with language and form.

Yet while these opening chapters situate the history of biopolitical aesthetics in transnational Chinese contexts historically, their scope is still limited: they feature discussions of exchanges among the intellectual elite of Liang Qichao's (梁啟超) day, or debates among critics and government officials about a small group of experimental artists whose work, though influential, is now mostly archival. The next chapter takes up a more popular, and ultimately more intuitive, medium for contemporary biopolitical aesthetics: transnational Chinese cinema. Exploring allegories of organ transplant in new millennial film from Hong Kong, chapter 3 analyzes how directors like Fruit Chan (陳果) and the Thailand-born twin directors Danny Pang and Oxide Pang (彭發 and 彭順) plant concerns about the dilution of identity in the rich symbolic soil of the evolving technologies and ethical dilemmas associated with a growing black market in organs. Waldby and Mitchell, for instance, highlight the flawed logic that suggests that "the exploitative nature of black markets" might be successfully "undercut [by] regulated organ markets" when they note that the demand for a life-giving organ is inherently "insatiable," and therefore that "pricing signals sent by the market may have no purchase. For the wealthy on organ

waiting lists, a kidney is literally priceless."[50] In Fruit Chan's 1997 film *Made in Hong Kong* (香港製造), the inequalities that Waldby and Mitchell cite are realized as narratives in a rough-hewn but poignant critique of the unequal distribution of resources to lower classes in the period leading up to the handover of Hong Kong. A surprise success, the low-budget film paints a dark picture of the opportunities presented to an otherwise decent young man whose girlfriend suffers from acute kidney disease and cannot find a transplant through official channels. In its simultaneous portrayal of the vulnerability of bodies and the permeability of borders, *Made in Hong Kong* subverts the more propagandistic rhetoric that dominated public discourse before the handover with a fierce critique of the economic and social inequalities perpetrated by both regimes. The Pang brothers' more commercially oriented 2002 film *The Eye* (見鬼), meanwhile, pushes anxieties about the potential dilution of identity in Hong Kong into the realm of horror, using the literal diaspora of a haunted corneal transplant from a poor Thai Chinese donor to a middle-class Hong Kong woman to critique the inequalities of global labor flows (including those that produced the film itself). By marrying the easily compromised technologies of vision (photographs, home video clips, surveillance camera footage, etc.) with the unreliability of the human eye (the haunted cornea), *The Eye* in many ways perfectly illustrates Lydia Liu's notion of biomimesis as a paradoxical condition where something is only as real as the technology that records it—in this case the uncanny anxiety of identity in the millennial marketplace of Hong Kong.

Having established the symbolic and allegorical function of the composite and diasporic bodies in various mediums, from literature to experimental art to cinema, the book returns in chapter 4 to the example of the traveling plastinated cadaver exhibits, seeking to decouple the densely layered rhetoric of the "human" in the context of Western exhibitions from the bodies' manufacture, circulation, and reception as spectacular artifacts worldwide. As I indicated earlier, a firestorm of human rights critiques often greets the opening of an exhibit of plastinated human bodies in Europe and North America, obscuring any attempts to critique the notion of the human (and indeed of "rights") in the smoke from its blaze; as Hayot has noted, "No newspaper article reviewing the exhibition is complete without a mention of the disputed human rights charges"—charges that are in turn an extension of existing allegations about the telltale "availability" (code for

surplus) of vital organs for transplant from China.[51] By contrast, Chinese-language media from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong often emphasize the exhibits' educational merits or their potential to inspire nationalist sentiment over shock or entertainment value, debating the propriety of displaying the body publicly but only alluding occasionally to rumors about provenance.[52] This chapter asks what a comparative examination of worldwide discourses about the plastinated human cadaver exhibits might reveal about the historical processes, as well as the political economics of race and capital distribution, that inform these highly divergent approaches to the medically commodified body in contemporary life. It begins by summarizing some overall trends in Western responses to the exhibits that I have already highlighted above, taking care to clarify some of the mechanics of the origin stories of the various shows circulating the globe—mechanics that can be confusing when trying to make sense of often conflicting information about provenance, content, production, and promotion of exhibits. But then it considers hundreds of media reports from newspapers, journals, radio, and other Chinese-language accounts of the same exhibits as they were mounted in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong through about 2006. Besides providing a counterpoint to the more prescriptive discourses that so often frame the exhibits in Europe, North America, and Australia, this survey of a selection of Sinophone media also flushes the elusive figure of (Chinese) race from the obscurity of human rights critiques, by describing settings where the body on display is not (or has not been) some racially and postcolonially determined "Other" (nor for that matter a long-term competitor for market capital) but instead originally "one of us"—a Chinese body on display for Chinese audiences. My argument here is not meant as an apology for controversial practices around the disposal of bodies, nor do I attempt to address the truth or falsehood of claims about the use of Chinese prisoners as sources for organ transplant and plastinated cadaver exhibits. Rather, I focus on discursive practice: I treat the global phenomenon of multimillion-dollar plastinated body exhibits as an example of contemporary transnational Chinese cultural production, and the divergent Chinese- and Western-language media treatments of these exhibits as an occasion for comparative discourse analysis. As such, I propose that a critical reassessment of Western-language human rights discourse in light of Chinese-language treatments of the same exhibits can complicate our assumptions about both the universality of the

"human" that they advance and the collaborative fiction of "Chineseness" that enhances their value.

Finally, however, a comparative analysis of responses to the traveling plastinated cadaver exhibits also reveals the extent to which questions of property inform nearly every aspect of the plastinates' production, from provenance to manufacture to display—sometimes in surprisingly literal ways. Earlier I suggested that the plastinated bodies' scientifically engineered anonymity (or "universality") is belied by the open secret of their Chineseness, and I suggested that this implied or inferred Chineseness paradoxically adds a kind of "value" to the overall spectacle for audiences.[53] In the epilogue I explore how exposing this culture of incidental value can amplify the subtle murmur of voices still emanating from the bodies themselves, voices that are sometimes drowned out by the ideologically vested urgency of debates about human rights. As a touchstone, I look at the intellectual property case brought by the Austrian anatomist Gunther von Hagens (who created the original *Body Worlds* exhibits) against a Taiwanese "copycat" when the two exhibitors found themselves competing head-to-head for audiences in Taiwan in 2004; von Hagens accused his competitor of copying his designs for poses of individual human body specimens. Contests between Western and Chinese entrepreneurs for the right to profit from a given manufacture or idea are not new, of course, ranging from quests for trade secrets in British and Chinese porcelain production to battles over the production and distribution of opium to our present loggerheads over copyright enforcement in everything from fashion to technology.[54] Yet because the "manufacture" in question is neither a piece of porcelain nor an ersatz iPhone but the human body, in the epilogue I argue that any discussion of valuation and property, whether abstract or concrete, calls for a more targeted attention to biopolitical dynamics. I suggest that a discussion of biopolitical aesthetics via intellectual property disputes allows us to frame the progression from the figure of the composite body to the figure of the diasporic body in literature and art as a historical process of commodification, which also includes a gradual omission or dislocation of (Chinese) identity from the body-as-commodity that culminates in anonymization. The debut of the figure of the anonymous body is therefore heralded by the plastinated cadaver, a body touted by promoters as universally "human" and "real" even as it is made more valuable by the curated evidence of its "racial," cultural, and sexual specificity.

If we add historical constructions of the Chinese laboring body in global circulations into the mix, we begin to see just how deeply plastination's epistemological roots run. Lisa Lowe describes, for example, how, after the 1807 abolition of slave trading in the British Empire, Chinese and Indian "coolies" were strategically introduced by British policymakers into colonial labor forces to replace or reduce imperial dependency on enslaved peoples and native workers. Lowe points out that local early colonial legal and criminal justice systems in Hong Kong also supported this enterprise on the supply side by "target[ing] the poor Chinese migrants in Hong Kong [and] virtually 'produc[ing]' the surplus population for export as 'coolies.'"[55] One could argue that today's plastinated (Chinese) cadavers are similar: they too seem to come from undocumented, disproportionately male rural migrant populations in big Chinese cities, structurally analogous to the semi-indentured, visa-blind labor force represented by "coolie" bodies, and they too are subject to anonymization as a condition of their commodification.[56] Unlike with the "coolies," however, the translation of the plastinated bodies into objects of value only happens *postmortem*, since they acquire value as commodities only once their productive time as a *living* labor force is over as the capitalization of a kind of biomedical "waste."[57] As a result, the plastinated cadavers take the legacy of the anonymous "coolie" to a new level, relinquishing in the course of production any remaining pretense of individuality and becoming not a group of hypothetically distinguishable bodies but a collection of fully commodified specimens. Such a shift is important to acknowledge because, while an individual body may function as an anatomical model, when pluralized it becomes a collectivity; it becomes a generalization about race or culture.[58] Thus the epilogue demonstrates how the figure of the anonymous (Chinese) body in the plastinated cadaver exhibits, far from unique, functions as a historical signifier deeply inflected by postcolonial race hierarchies and invoking the specter of other histories of enslavement. Bearing in mind the challenges of applying copyright to the products of the human body, then, the epilogue suggests that the fact that the plastinated human bodies as a collection (or even, dare we say, as a "class") attract ongoing debate about intellectual property rights is no coincidence. Rather, it signals the (Chinese) laboring body's advancement from fetish object to commercial artifact. The problem of applying intellectual property laws to plastinated bodies therefore lies less, I contend, in the ethical dilemma of who may profit from the

human body—a dilemma that often functions in popular media as a kind of decoy—than in the Benjaminian challenge of managing the effects of technological reproduction on the value of an otherwise "authentic" work of art. When the human body becomes a work of art, the rules of reproduction shift. Presently the modes of reproduction preserve both the form of the body and the metaphysical tensions that animate it with equal fidelity. But it's only a matter of time before the problem of exceptionality has been solved and we enter a new phase in the production of the (Chinese) body as surplus.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The phrase "life in biopolitical times" is from the title of Nicole Shukin's *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), which I discuss later in this chapter.
2. Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 1–2.
3. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *The Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
4. In stating this ambition, I take to heart Lisa Lowe's injunction to consider the epistemological invisibility of Chinese subjects not as "the particular exclusion of the Chinese" but rather as one manifestation of the more "extensive erasure of colonial connections" that are a trademark of neoliberal globalizations. In her trenchant discussion of the "particular obscurity" of the "figure of the transatlantic Chinese 'coolie' within the modern puzzle of the 'new world,'" for instance, Lowe writes: "While we might suspect that Chinese indentured labor in the early Americas has been 'lost' because of indenture's ambiguous status with respect to freedom and slavery, dialectical terms central to narratives of modernity, it is important not to treat this as the particular exclusion of the Chinese. Rather, this 'forgetting' attests to the more extensive erasure of colonial connections that include but are not limited to indentureship: that implicate the dispossession of indigenous peoples and the settler logics of appropriation, forced removal, and assimilation that are repeated in contemporary land

seizures, militarized counter-insurgency at home and abroad, and varieties of nationalism in our present moment; that allude to the ubiquitous transnational migrations within neoliberal globalization of which Chinese emigrant labor is but one instance. Moreover, the forgetting reveals the politics of memory itself, and is a reminder that the constitution of knowledge often obscures the conditions of its own making. In this sense, my interest in Chinese emigrant labor is not to pursue a single, particularist cultural identity, not to fill in a gap or add on another transoceanic group, but to explain *the politics of our lack of knowledge*, and to be more specific about what I would term the economy of affirmation and forgetting that characterizes liberal humanist understanding." Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 38–39. Lowe adds: "If I inquire into the absenting of Chinese emigrant labor within modern histories, it is not to make that group exceptional, nor is it to suggest that the addition of this particular group would 'complete' the historical portrait; it is not a moralizing admonition about what 'should have been.' Rather, it is to consider this absenting as a critical node—a cipher, a brink—which commands us to attend to connections that could have been, but were lost, and are thus, not yet" (174).

5. Exceptions include Eric Hayot's *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Patrick Anderson's "I Feel for You," in Lara Neilsen and Patricia Ybarra, eds., *Neoliberalism and Global Theatres: Performance Permutations* (New York: Palgrave), 81–96; and Rachel C. Lee, *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian American: Biopolitics, Biosociality, and Posthuman Ecologies* (New York, NYU Press, 2014).
6. Exhibits by von Hagens and his competitors now offer general information about provenance. They either assert (as von Hagens does) that they no longer use Chinese cadavers, or they state (as Premier Entertainment does) that they "cannot independently verify" that the bodies don't belong to executed prisoners. For an excellent discussion, see the introduction in Rachel C. Lee, *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America*.
7. Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 254.
8. See Rebecca Scott, "Body Worlds' Plastinates, the Human/Nonhuman Interface, and Feminism," *Feminist Theory* 12, no. 2: 165–81.
9. No body part is ignored, including genitalia. See, for example, Stephen Doyns, "So Long, Pals," *San Diego Reader*, March 5, 2008, where the author describes another viewer evaluating penis size and relating it to her Asian boyfriend.
10. Not to mention the history of display mannequins in the context of commercial fashion. See, for, example, Hunter Oatman-Stanford, "Retail Therapy: What Mannequins Says about Us," *Collectors Weekly*, December 6, 2013.
11. Hayot remarks that corpses in the *Body Worlds* exhibits "interrupt . . . the universalist and identificatory appeal to 'wound culture' upon which [their] success depends," noting that "the mute and vulnerable corpses have—despite the exhibits' best intentions—continued to 'speak' from beyond their open graves,

thereby dislocating the identificatory structure that depends on the presumption of their universality. And what they have said is this: we were once, the vast majority of us, inhabitants of the People's Republic of China." Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 258–59.

12. A project of this book is to write Chinese constructed "race" back into the universal human of the *Body Worlds* and beyond in light of Alexander Weheliye's work with Sylvia Wynter's and Hortense Spillers's "reconceptualizations of race, subjection, and humanity" as "indispensable correctives to Agamben's and Foucault's considerations of racism vis-à-vis biopolitics," in particular his development of "racializing assemblages." I have found biopolitical theory indispensable from the perspective of history of medicine and science, for example, but it often comes up short around questions of race. Thus I am aiming for what Weheliye describes when he writes: "Where bare life and biopolitics discourse not only misconstrues how profoundly race and racism shape the modern idea of the human, it also overlooks or perfunctorily writes off theorizations of race, subjection, and humanity found in black and ethnic studies, allowing bare life and biopolitics discourse to imagine an indivisible biological substance anterior to racialization. *The idea of racializing assemblages, in contrast, construes race not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans*" (emphasis mine). He also argues that "black studies and other formations of critical ethnic studies provide crucial viewpoints, often overlooked or actively neglected in bare life and biopolitics discourse, in the production of racialization as an object of knowledge, especially in its interfacing with political violence and (de)humanization. Rather than using biopolitics as a modality of analysis that supersedes or sidelines race, I stress that race be placed front and center in considerations of political violence, albeit not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes of differentiation and hierarchization, which are projected onto the putatively biological human body." Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 4–5.
13. Lowe looks, for example, at the roots of contemporary political economic inequalities in the transatlantic circulation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century indentured labor and in the "liberal narratives" that emerged to distinguish among various classes of de facto enslavement, ensuring the perpetuation of the colonial economy in the West Indies even after the British "emancipation" of enslaved workers in 1807. Just as Cooper notes that "the neoliberal promise of a surplus of life is most visibly predicated on a corresponding devaluation of life," Lowe argues that "liberal forms of political economy, culture, government, and history propose a narrative of freedom overcoming enslavement that at once denies colonial slavery, erases the seizure of lands from native peoples, displaces migrations and connections across continents, and internalizes these processes in a national struggle of history and consciousness. The social inequalities of our time are a legacy of these processes through which

'the human' is 'freed' by liberal forms, while other subjects, practices, and geographies are placed at a distance from 'the human.'" Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 50; Lowe, *Intimacies*, 3. To contextualize my use of the (Chinese) parenthetical in this book, as well as for more on the racial conditionality of definitions of the "human," see Kalindi Vora and Neda Atanososki, "Surrogate Humanity: Posthuman Networks and the (Racialized) Obsolescence of Labor," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1–40.

14. I take care here to avoid the language of "resistance" per se. My investigation of the figure of the medically commodified body is closer to Weheliye's notion of "habeas viscus" than anything else (a wheel not needing reinvention). As Weheliye writes: "Building on Hortense Spillers's distinction between body and flesh and the writ of habeas corpus, I use the phrase *habeas viscus*—"You shall have the flesh"—on the one hand, to signal how violent political domination activates a fleshly surplus that simultaneously sustains and disfigures said brutality, and, on the other hand, to reclaim the atrocity of flesh as a pivotal arena for the politics emanating from different traditions of the oppressed. The flesh, rather than displacing bare life or civil death, excavates the social (after) life of these categories: it represents racializing assemblages of subjection that can never annihilate the lines of flight, freedom dreams, practices of liberation, and possibilities of other worlds. Nonetheless, genres of the human I discuss in *Habeas Viscus* ought not to be understood within the lexicons of resistance and agency, because, as explanatory tools, these concepts have a tendency to blind us, whether through strenuous denials or exalted celebrations of their existence, to the manifold occurrences of freedom in zones of indistinction. As modes of analyzing and imagining the practices of the oppressed in the face of extreme violence—although this is also applicable more broadly—resistance and agency assume full, self-present, and coherent subjects working against something or someone. Which is not to say that agency and resistance are completely irrelevant in this context, just that we might come to a more layered and improvisatory understanding of extreme subjection if we do not decide in advance what forms its disfigurations should take on." Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 2.
15. Cooper, *Life as Surplus*, 5. According to Foucault, "The control of society over individuals is not conducted only through consciousness or ideology, but also in the body and with the body . . . for capitalist society, biopolitics is what is most important, the biological, the somatic, the corporeal." Michel Foucault, "La naissance de la medicine sociale," in *Dits et écrits*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 210. See also Foucault's comments in an interview: "*Would you distinguish your interest in the body from that of other contemporary interpretations*? I think I would distinguish myself from both the Marxist and the para-Marxist perspectives. As regards Marxism, I'm not one of those who try to elicit the effects

of power at the level of ideology. Indeed I wonder whether, before one poses the question of ideology, it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it. Because what troubles me with these analyses which prioritise ideology is that there is always presupposed a human subject on the lines of the model provided by classical philosophy, endowed with a consciousness which power is then thought to seize on." Michel Foucault, "Body/Power" (1975), in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 58.

16. See, for example, Andrew Kipnis, *China and Postsocialist Anthropology: Theorizing Power and Society after Communism* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge Books, 2008); Matthew Kohrman, *Bodies of Difference: Experiences of Disability and Institutional Advocacy in the Making of Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005; Everett Yuehong Zhang, *The Impotence Epidemic: Men's Medicine and Sexual Desire in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Jianfeng Zhu, "Projecting Potentiality: Understanding Maternal Serum Screening in Contemporary China," *Current Anthropology* 54, no. S7 (October 2013): S36-S44, https://doi.org/10.1086/670969. See also Everett Zhang, Arthur Kleinman, and Tu Weiming, eds., *Governance of Life in Chinese Moral Experience: The Quest for an Adequate Life*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Outside China, see, for instance, Amit Prasad, *Imperial Technoscience: Transnational Histories of MRI in the United States, Britain, and India* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014) and Kalindi Vora, *Life Support: Biocapital and the New History of Outsourced Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015). On the associations between the religious right, abortion politics, and U.S. "debt imperialism," see Cooper, *Life as Surplus*, 163.
17. Catherine Waldby and Robert Mitchell's *Tissue Economies: Blood, Organs, and Cell Lines in Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) looks at contemporary ethical dilemmas related to the evolution of legislation and therapeutic practice around the cultivation and transfer of human body products such as organs, tissue, and stem cell lines. Waldby and Mitchell consider the "parallel and mutually constitutive events" of contemporary biomedical innovations, government regulatory prerogatives, and ethical conventions that contribute to determining the distribution of profit related to the human body and its products. In the case of ever-lengthening waitlists for noncadaveric transplant organs such as kidneys, for example, Waldby and Mitchell argue that "the relationship between these waiting lists and the growth of a global black market in 'spare' kidneys, sold by the poor in the South to organ brokers who arrange their transport to wealthy transplant patients," is less a problem of the "intrinsic inefficiency of gift systems" (to be remedied, as some suggest, by the establishment of regulated organ markets) than a reflection of how "a sense of entitlement to continuing life has become a feature of contemporary neoliberal medical subjectivity." Comparing various approaches to managing

transactions in biomaterials in the United States and Europe, the authors of *Tissue Economies* argue compellingly that the neoliberal motives underlying the establishment of certain regulatory practices and policies—as illustrated by detailed individual case studies—in fact ensure the disenfranchisement of exactly those "donor" populations whom ethics are meant to protect. Waldby and Mitchell, *Tissue Economies*, 30, 177. Cooper's *Life as Surplus* likewise has been crucial to this book for its attention to both macroscale and more "local" readings of biopolitical phenomena. Cooper's book takes as axiomatic the idea that "industrial production depends on finite reserves available on planet earth, [but] life, like contemporary debt production, needs to be understood as a process of continuous autopoiesis, a self-engendering of life from life, without conceivable beginning or end." Cooper, *Life as Surplus*, 38.

18. Cooper also contrasts the underlying assumptions around organ transplant with regenerative medicine, where "if organ transplant medicine needs to maintain life in a state of suspended animation, regenerative medicine . . . is more interested in capturing life in a state of perpetual *self-transformation*." Cooper, *Life as Surplus*, 121. On clinical trials and testing, see Melinda Cooper and Catherine Waldby, *Clinical Labor: Tissue Donors and Research Subjects in the Global Bioeconomy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
19. See Vora's *Life Support* for a critical model for incorporating transnational flows of power; see also Vora and Atanososki, "Surrogate Humanity."
20. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 5. Weheliye advocates that "race be placed front and center in considerations of political violence, albeit not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes of differentiation and hierarchization, which are projected onto the putatively biological human body" (5). Vora and Atanososki provide a situated overview of Frantz Fanon and Wynter in "Surrogate Humanity." On Fanon: "Frantz Fanon emphasized the category of the human as a racial epistemological and ontological project that can be remade through revolution in *Wretched of the Earth*, his seminal work on the potentiality of decolonial movements. Decolonization, Fanon wrote, is 'quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men (Fanon, 1967, 27)." Writes Weheliye, "The revolutionary aspirations tied to decolonization, therefore, are fundamentally about aspirations tied to re-imagining who or what is human, and how they come to be so. At stake in the Fanonian concept of revolution is the reimagining of the human-thing relation as a precondition for freedom." And on Wynter: "Wynter's work is about the *unthinking* of contemporary epistemologies and ontologies, about their disruption, and about the unmaking of the world in its current descriptive-material guise. . . . As Darwinian notions of natural selection and race continue to author modern narratives of societal development and evolution, ongoing 'archipelagos of otherness,' including the jobless, poor, and 'underdeveloped,' are still undergirded by the colonial color line even if it is articulated

in economic rather than explicitly racial terms (Wynter, 2003, 321)." Vora and Atanososki, "Surrogate Humanity," 8–10.

21. See Tobin Siebers's elegant definition of the "aesthetic" in his *Disability Aesthetics*: "Aesthetics is the human activity most identifiable with the human because it defines the process by which human beings attempt to modify themselves, by which they imagine their feelings, forms, and futures in radically different ways, and by which they bestow upon those new feelings, forms, and futures real appearances in the world. . . . Disability aesthetics names the emergence of disability in modern art as a significant presence, one that shapes modern art in new ways and creates a space for the development of disabled artists and subjects." Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 2. Again, Lowe's *Intimacies of Four Continents* represents a kind of model in this regard, as she integrates archival research with close literary readings and spans multiple regions, disciplines, and time periods to trace tectonic shifts not only in history but in our ways of producing and transcribing knowledge itself. Because Lowe's work treats the Chinese body and its administration (and definition) in the form of the mass movement of global labor resources, I would argue that it can also fit reasonably within the rubric of discussions of "science" and the body over time.
22. Sander Gilman, "How and Why Do Historians of Medicine Use or Ignore Images in Writing Their Histories?," in *Picturing Health and Illness: Images of Identity and Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 9–32.
23. In Chinese studies I am thinking, for example, of books such as Andrew Jones's *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), a meticulous exploration of developments in, and translations of, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century evolutionary theory alongside modern Chinese thought. In trying to establish the parameters of a "biopolitical aesthetics," I am not necessarily talking about "bioart" per se, or art that deliberately appropriates scientific idioms as one of its source vocabularies. An example of a scholarly work that treats this phenomenon is the volume edited by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip, *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), which takes a more literal approach to the question of the collaboration of art and "science" as such, so that "bio" yields "bioart." For the purposes of developing "biopolitical aesthetics," what concerns me here are more the not-necessarily-cooperative intersections of the biopolitical and the aesthetic, that is, those places where aesthetics act as a *vehicle* for biopolitical critique, and where "science," itself an aesthetic, may turn out to be incidental to a given work.
24. Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 17.
25. Catherine Waldby, *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

26. Waldby, *The Visible Human Project*, 5.
27. Waldby, *The Visible Human Project*, 7.
28. Waldby, *The Visible Human Project*, 19.
29. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 7.
30. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 51.
31. Taking the question of historically conditioned notions of the "human" (and the "humane") to the problem of biotech, Aihwa Ong and Nancy Chen's edited volume *Asian Biotech* places contemporary developments in biotechnology—from stem cell research to placental banking—along a "highly variable and dynamic" spectrum of ethical, political, and cultural values. Critiquing what she calls "the ethics-as-moral-criticism approach" for "presuppos[ing] a clear-cut division between bad guys (biotech entities and scientists) and good guys ('victims,' as they tend to be characterized by impassioned anthropologists)," Ong proposes instead what she calls "situated ethics." Situated ethics, Ong explains, "rejects the common assumption that moral reasoning can be simply determined by class location, or reduced to the scale of the isolated individual." Rather, it accommodates the "assemblage of conflicting logics" that inevitably expands to fill the space where cutting-edge biotech meets a diversity of moral reasoning in Asian contexts. In this way, situated ethics provides an alternative to what have become dangerously overdetermined—even formulaic—assessments of Asian "human rights" violations by "Western" critics in the present day, as we will see in the case of English-language treatments of the plastinated cadaver exhibits and more. Aihwa Ong, "Introduction," in *Asian Biotech: Ethics and Communities of Fate*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Nancy N. Chen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 33–34. The idea of situated ethics reads well in conversation with *The Divided World* by Randall Williams, a work on the fiction of human rights.
32. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 20–21.
33. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 21.
34. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 10. It is helpful here to pair Shukin's critical approach with a praxis-oriented work like Lesley Sharp's *The Transplant Imaginary: Mechanical Hearts, Animal Parts, and Moral Thinking in Highly Experimental Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). In concrete ways, Sharp's book offers important grounding for any critical discussions of Chinese experimental artists as well as analyses of representations of organ transplant in cinema. Sharp's discussion of the "transplant imaginary," in particular, makes it possible to place scientific imaginings of transplant in dialogue with social and popular imaginaries of transplant (the more "purely" aesthetic, conventionally speaking, as represented in literature and art), not to mention with Melinda Cooper's critique of the economies of the "promissory future" that drive inequalities in access to, and distribution of, biomaterials in contemporary global medicine.

35. Lydia H. Liu, "Life as Form: How Biomimesis Encountered Buddhism in Lu Xun," *Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 1 (2009): 21; Waldby, *The Visible Human Project*, 74–75.
36. L. Liu, "Life as Form," 22.
37. L. Liu, "Life as Form," 23.
38. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 26.
39. Liu's essay addresses the famous modern Chinese author Lu Xun's early interest in Ernst Haeckel and science fiction, and examines in particular Lu Xun's translation of a work of science fiction called *Technique for Creating Humans*, as well as a well-known work of short fiction impacted by Buddhist avadana, but Liu's discussion of biomimesis stands alone as a critical resource for refiguring and updating contemporary understandings of realist aesthetics.
40. Liu explains, "First, the rapid dissemination of evolutionary biology suggests that biological sciences are poised to replace religion and literature as a privileged site for raising interesting and fundamental questions about life. Second, propositions about life depend increasingly on the technologies of biomimesis for verification, and there has been growing pressure on modern sciences to ground the truth of life in visual and textual realism. Finally, realist writing has emerged as a technology of biomimesis to grapple with the problem of 'life as form' in modern literature and should be analyzed as such." L. Liu, "Life as Form," 51.
41. Stewart's comment about how realism reproduces the hierarchization of information resonates with Lowe's positing of an "economy of affirmation and forgetting" (see note 4).
42. In *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body Between China and the West* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), I addressed what happened leading up to the early modern period in China in terms of the evolution of a realist aesthetics, arguing that individual portrait-style medical photography—itself a product of nineteenth-century fascination with Chinese "character" that represented a stage in the development of concepts of race to more familiar dominant topographies, evolved eventually to proto-clinical photography, in which every effort was made to remove individual characteristics as part of the transition from "character"-based explanations of cultural difference to race-based explanations. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—in the lead-up to the period when biomimetic theory is applicable—medical photography in China simultaneously transformed both horizontally and vertically from "cultural characteristics" into "race" and from "individual" to "specimen." (You can see this most clearly perhaps in the convention of the "before and after," described in *Afterlife*, which was also deployed in other mediums but eventually took on new characteristics as photographic technologies grew more advanced. Most notably, evidence of Chinese culture began to be strategically downplayed or pathologized—part of

the "before" rather than the "after.") In short, in this period we see the "disappearance" of cultural characteristics and the reduction of identity to racial or purely corporeal aspects in photography—so that more abstract "cultural characteristics" become increasingly superfluous: this is the emergence of the specimen, foundational to biomimesis.

43. Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 3.
44. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 17, paraphrasing eco-Marxist James O'Conner.
45. I am thinking here, for example, of a chauvinistic tendency to frame "Western" medical science uncritically in terms of "progress" or "advancement" such that real opportunities for discovery are overlooked. Lydia Liu's *Translingual Practice* is a key reference for any claims regarding the complexity of exchanges and "translations" of neologisms, new science, and other vocabularies in Chinese modernities. Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
46. Lowe notes, "The operations that pronounce colonial divisions of humanity—settler seizure and native removal, slavery and racial dispossession, and racialized expropriations of many kinds—are imbricated processes, not sequential events; they are ongoing and continuous in our contemporary moment, not temporally distinct nor as yet concluded." Lowe, *Intimacies*, 7.
47. In her "analysis of the ways in which everyday objects are narrated to animate or realize certain versions of the world," Susan Stewart contrasted what she called "the body of lived experience" with the idea of the "model" or "idealized" body, a body that she described as implicitly "den[ying] the possibility of death" by presenting "a realm of transcendence and immortality, a realm of the classic." Situating this "model body" ideologically within the advancing imperatives of capitalism, Stewart wrote that "in contrast to [the] model body, the body of lived experience is subject to change, transformation, and, most importantly, death. The idealized body implicitly denies the possibility of death—it attempts to present a realm of transcendence and immortality, a realm of the classic. This is the body-made-object, and thus the body as potential commodity, *taking place* within the abstract and infinite cycle of exchange." Stewart, *On Longing*.
48. Waldby and Mitchell likewise posit a "regenerative" body in *Tissue Economies*; Cooper elaborates a distinction between (for example) organ transplantation, which "might be compared with the process by which time-motion capacities of the laboring organ are abstracted from the worker's body and transformed into interchangeable units of time and money," and regenerative medicine, which "is more interested in capturing life in a state of perpetual *self-transformation*. Life, as mobilized by regenerative medicine, is always in surplus of itself." Cooper, *Life as Surplus*, 126–27.
49. Again, see Hayot's discussion of how the "history of the bodies' production as artifacts interrupts the mimetic effects of their representationality," in which he describes the "distinction made between the unique and 'uninterpreted' quality

of the bodies" and the "generic 'humanity' they represent." Hayot elaborates that it is "this strange combination of uniqueness and representativeness . . . that allows the corpses . . . to retain the forms of historical embeddedness and belonging that motivates the cultural anxiety about their origins." Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 260–61.

50. Waldby and Mitchell, *Tissue Economies*, 177. Waldby and Mitchell ask us to "consider the systematic blindness in these arguments to the insatiable nature of demand for transplant organs, driven by the elaboration in both transplant medicine and regenerative medicine of an idea of a regenerative body, whose every loss can be repaired" (30).
51. Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 259. Note that von Hagens actually claims no longer to use Chinese-sourced bodies, although he maintains his production facility in Dalian for "imported" as well as animal specimens as of the period in question (I treat up until approximately 2006). See for example, Anderson, "I Feel for You, 81–96. For a discussion of other media characterizations, see Yeesheen Yang, "Organ Ensembles: Medicalization, Modernity, and Horror in the 19th and 20th Century Narratives of the Body and its Parts" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2012).
52. A key exception being Falun Gong promotional materials, which merit a whole separate study. On Falun Gong materials, see Y. Yang, "Organ Ensembles"; for a more polemic approach, see David Mates and Torsten Trey, eds., *State Organs: Transplant Abuse in China* (Woodstock, ON: Seraphim Editions, 2012). Note that the material focus of my study stops around 2006.
53. By contrast, consider how (for instance) a wax museum exploits the abstract spectacle of *celebrity—not* anonymity—to add value to an exhibit.
54. On the concept of piracy and its origins in post-Reformation Western Europe, see Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): "The period of time that we need to traverse is a long one, but it is not indefinitely long. . . . Far from being timeless, [the concept of intellectual piracy] is in fact not even ancient. It arose in the context of Western Europe in the early modern period—the years of religious and political upheaval surrounding the Reformation and the scientific revolution" (8). In addition, "The invention of copyright itself was largely a response to a piracy feud overflowing with national resentments, namely the attempt of Scottish reprinters to compete with London's book trade in the first generation when both lived in a 'united kingdom.' Today we again see these territorial concerns loom large in our own debates about patenting and biopiracy, in which they are denounced as forms of 'neocolonialism' " (13). Finally, "In the eighteenth century . . . copyright was invented, and in the nineteenth century intellectual property came into existence" (15). Johns also discusses how piracy shaped the public sphere from the eighteenth century in a number of ways. One of the main ways was that "it raised questions of accuracy and authenticity"; he elaborates how "piracy of books—but also . . . of drugs, foods, and other

manufactures—paradoxically fostered an ethic of authenticity and completeness" (48–49). At this point there has been a fair amount written in English on the China-specific history of copyright engagements or entanglements with the "West"; I will discuss some examples of these in more detail in the epilogue to this volume.

55. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 129.
56. Lowe outlines the different contexts where Chinese "coolie" labor served to "supplement, replace, and obscure the labor previously performed by slaves, yet [still] differentially distinguished from them." She summarizes how "in the British West Indies, the Chinese were cast as a freely contracted alternative to slave labor, yet in the U.S. they were more often described as antithetical to modern political forms. . . . In Cuba, where the Chinese were indispensable to the modernization of the sugar industry, *coolies* were presented as a new source of unfree labor, a viable supplement to slavery. . . . In Australia, the Chinese replaced convict labor; the introduction of Chinese labor into New South Wales was not precipitated by the end of African slavery as it was in the Americas, but generated by the shortage of another form of unfree labor, that of prisoners in penal settlements in which over half of the population had arrived as convicts, yet whose numbers by 1851 had dwindled to fewer than 15 percent. . . . In Hawaii, the Chinese were introduced to replace indigenous workers. . . . In each context, the Chinese *coolie* figured not merely another labor supply, but moreover, a shift from colonial mercantilism to a new division of labor and the expansion of international trade." Lowe, *Intimacies*, 28. I am arguing that we might view the plastinated (Chinese) cadavers in this light, that is, as part of a lineage of anonymized or unarchived "coolie" labor signposting the transition from one kind of mercantilism to another. Lowe also takes care to point out that her primary interest lies in tracing contemporary political epistemologies: "I began this book," she notes, "by observing the particular obscurity of the figure of the transatlantic Chinese 'coolie' within the modern puzzle of the 'new world,' not in an effort to recuperate the loss of a particular laboring group, but rather as the occasion to inquire into the politics of knowledge that gives us the received history of our present" (173). Likewise, my interest in this volume is less with restoring the identities of the original "donors" of the plastinated bodies—a virtually impossible task, for a range of reasons not limited to the exhibits' own multilayered investment in keeping these identities secret—than with looking at how past biopolitical dynamics inform present patterns that would otherwise demand to be read as ahistorical, outside of history.
57. Especially around sourcing of plastinated bodies, but also around racialized flows of body-as-capital writ large, for example my thinking here is informed not just by Lowe's *Intimacies of Four Continents* but by a number of sources on social constructions of death, value, and waste, including but not limited to a range of later works in dialogue with Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Press, 1985) and Eric Cazdyn's *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); and queer theorizing of the idea of "necropolitics," beginning with Achille Mbembe's "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40, Jasbir Puar's elaboration of a queer necropolitics that attends to the *racialized* queernesses "that emerge through the naming of populations, often those marked for death" (*Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007]), as well as discussions of race and queerness in carceral cultures of death, and on carceral cultures as sources for "killable" bodies, in Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, eds., *Queer Necropolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2014) (see in particular the editors' introductory comments, in which they observe how "thinking through necropolitics on the terrain of queer critique brings into view everyday death worlds, from the perhaps more expected sites of death making [such as war, torture, or imperial invasion] to the ordinary and completely normalized violence of the market" [2]). On medical waste I read Waldby and Mitchell's *Tissue Economies* as a foundational text.

58. As Stewart notes, "The collection furthers the process of commodification by which [the] narrative of the personal operates within contemporary consumer society. A final transformation of labor into exchange, nature into marketplace, is shown by the collection. Significantly, the collection marks the space of nexus for all narratives, the place where history is transformed into space, into property." Stewart, *On Longing*, xii. But the "numerical abstraction" of the coolie as a figure is also important here since, as Eric Hayot observes in quoting Colleen Lye, "By working for cheaper than the white man would . . . the 'coolie' also came to signify the 'increasing transnationalization of labor markets' . . . representing both the 'biological impossibility' and the 'numerical abstraction' that was at the heart of industrial labor; the Chinese 'coolie' was a person, but also a machine. . . . It was this latter quality that allowed the 'coolie' to metaphorize both the *process* of industrial production and its *product*, as though the numberless faceless and identical Chinese workers had simply been stamped out on a production line like so many millions of pins." Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 140–41; Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 57.

CHAPTER 1. CHINESE WHISPERS

1. Scholar Erik Bordeleau observes that there was, in the late 1990s, "une veritable éclosion de la discipline." Erik Bordeleau, "Une constance à la chinoise: Considérations sur l'art performatif extrême chinois," *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 跨文本跨文化 5 (2009): article 3, para. 14, doi:10.4000/transtexts.269. He also highlights that this added "precisely a biopolitical dimension to the Chinese performance art scene" ("[. . .] vers la fin des années 90, une nouvelle vague de performances compliquera les choses, ajoutant une dimension proprement