Coda

Unfolding Technics

We live with and through the negotiability of the human on a daily basis, continually confronting the instability of this category and the biological, political, visceral experiences the human works to circumscribe. This variability requires our continual reconsideration of the politics, ethics, culture, and parameters of modes and forms of life, from cochlear implants for deafness, identity theft, reproductive technologies, ravens’ facial recognition of humans, Botox, manufactured meatless food, artificial DNA, or life-expectancy by zip code, just to mention those I have encountered over the past day or two. If the practices prompting us to query the boundaries of life were not now so commonplace, they might be (more comfortably) relinquished to the news of the weird. Instead, such constant incursions and excursions across boundaries believed to secure the irrevocably human, nonhuman and their lifeworlds are increasingly everyday. These movements—at once conceptual, technical, and material—are no less unsettling in their ubiquity.

And yet, remarkably, the question of what to do with or about the continually recalibrated plasticity of the human, its relations to the nonhuman, and their shared lifeworlds remains elusive. Answers are elusive, in part, because these are questions provoked by technics at multiple sites and scales ranging from DNA, to writing technologies, to subjectivities, to foodways, to global information networks, and geopolitics. Relatedly, yet even more importantly, the emerging technics that preoccupy this book involve complex relations between material, social, cultural, and technological life that insistently confound the usual ways of approaching and, however momen-
tarily, resolving such questions, not just the scope and scale at which we grasp and retrace such processes. As the book illustrates through its literary queries into U.S. digital cultures, these emergent technics require new ways of approaching and grappling with these questions.

*Tactics of the Human* reveals how the comparative methods through which these literary texts creatively engage with early digital cultures might enable and equip us to reapproach some of the unsettling questions raised by technics, to think about them in a different way, and even begin to more reflexively acclimate ourselves to their processual systems thinking. As invested as it is in the specific contributions of these literary texts to emerging posthumanist perspectives on the human, the book is equally determined to elucidate their methods and the resulting reconceptualizations of technics they open onto. Together, they point toward compelling ways to differentially register the boundary formation of the human. As should be quite clear by the end of chapter 5, the book does not offer a unified, programmatic answer to the question of how to live with the negotiability of the human so apparent in contemporary digital cultures. In fact, I reveal why posthumanism, alone, is not an adequate answer to these quandaries. Since we are already living with variously posthumanist practices and perspectives on the changeable, plastic boundaries of the human, simply invoking the posthuman and calling into question the absolute, unchanging boundaries of the human that previous print cultures and strains of humanism took for granted is clearly inadequate. As the analysis of Eugenides’s *Middlesex* reveals through this diagnosis of increasingly flexible modes of American nationalism and neoliberal capitalism, it is politically naive or, at the least, very shortsighted to embrace posthuman becomings *tout court* if the negotiability of the human already entails economic renegotiations that play directly into neoliberal capitalism’s least sustainable, most suspect tendencies. Assuming posthumanisms provide a clear antidote is also, as the book illustrates, to overlook the unexpected similarities and continuities between emergent perspectives on the human and their liberal humanist, print companions.

As importantly, posthumanisms’ nonsubstantialist accounts of the human are not necessarily accompanied by a revaluation of nonhuman animals, modes of life, or the human beings categorized alongside them as the “meat” or medium for reproducing and sustaining national life. The renegotiation of the human can work in the other direction, a reminder that recognizing the plasticity of species distinctions is the beginning, not the end of cultural, ethical, and political inquiries into technics, as *My Year of Meats* makes clear. For these reasons, I have avoided using the term posthumanist
as a primary distinction in the book in favor of comparing a range of post-humanisms as they reconceive and reorient twentieth-century humanisms in quite different ways. Those differences and the complexity they betray is at the core of our difficulties in assessing emergent technics and the perspective on the human and her systems relations they actually or potentially unfold.

Cognizant of the posthumanist perspectives on the human digital cultures are opening onto, these literary texts recommend a way to comparatively examine technics and, by rerouting these material, discursive, and technological processes poetically, to elaborate on the systems relations distinct technics afford and on their political consequence to twentieth- and twenty-first century digital cultures. Their comparative modes of inquiry into systems relations—the technological, social, cultural, and material practices through which differential boundaries of the human and nonhuman are established, stabilized, and destabilized—provide a crucial methodology to query the social, cultural, and political orientations these technological apparatus further. By playing out and upon emerging technics as they enter into and transform key, previously print-based social processes in the United States, they encourage us, through such speculative modes of observation and inquiry, to gain a material, conceptual, and socially attuned grasp on the multilayered, mutually transformative, distributed processes through which contemporary social spaces, intersubjective modalities of relation, and embodied subjectivities emerge. In the face of such complexity, their microcosmic fictional systems generate the momentary traction that can facilitate more adept diagnosis and tactical reelaboration of distinct systems relations toward alternate futures.

Through their experimental technics, which move between print and digital media and modes, they register and trace ongoing processes of human boundary formation at multiple sites and scales. Patchwork Girl pursues digital hypertext writing technologies to comparatively register their impact on processes of gendered and racialized subject formation. Receiving the relations of nonidentity that suture subjectivities to their shifting technological, discursive, and material lifeworlds in terms of hypertextual links that both differentiate and join discrepant bodies in specific relations, this early digital fiction recommends how we might more actively develop upon the nonoppositional modalities of relation such technics seem to afford. And in Almanac of the Dead, the novel’s spatiotemporal remapping of the symbolic and material practices that jointly realize and resolidify social spaces such as the nation-state or transnational global capitalist networks reveals how tactical media practices and, similarly place-based, spatiotempo-
nal narratives can serve as reorientation devices that change experiences and understandings of social spaces. From this vantage, space-making processes come to be understood as generative material practices that realize culturally specific orientations, yet must also reckon with preceding and competing orientations as well as with the nonhuman and material multipotentiality of lifeworlds. At the micropolitical scale, *My Year of Meats* traces shifting practices of food production, reproduction, cuisine, sexuality, and other material and symbolic transmissions to reveal their importance to U.S. nationalism and, in particular, to the affective economies through which the nation reproduces and prohibits distinct modes of life and their intermingling. Or, reapproaching U.S. nationalism from the evolutionary, spatial, and temporal perspective of a gene, *Middlesex* encourages us to explore the dense interrelations between cultural and biological processes, suggesting we reconceive these interdynamics as smuggling operations to fully credit the competing microagencies with which any formation of biopower is required to contend.

If there is a single axiom to be drawn from the book’s inquiries it is that taking U.S. digital cultures on their own terms is never a good idea. Taking hegemonic U.S. digital cultures on their own terms, as we’ve learned over the past fifteen years, consigns us to the socially and cognitively fatal grip of their combined novelty (emergent forms of neoliberal global capitalism, social media consumerism, high-stakes futures trading, a state of surveillance, etc.) and familiar legacies (enforced poverty, environmental devastation, ultra-stratification along combined lines of class, gender, race, and nation, among other legacies). These literary texts purposefully opt to think the technicity of contemporary U.S. digital cultures beyond their present, privileged terms, sustaining self-descriptions, and imagined actualities in several, interrelated ways. Their multidimensional, multiagential approach to technics as systems relations changes the way we perceive technics as they co-realize subjects, national and transnational social formations, and the micropractices supporting various modes of life.

As a result, this literary fiction clarifies defining dimensions of technicity as it participates in the boundary formation of the human in U.S. digital cultures. It reveals the spatially, materially, and culturally embedded historicity of technological systems and their ongoing, dynamic reciprocity. While enhancing our understanding of how technological and media systems work in various social fields, this approach also enables one to directly confront the ongoing relays between print and digital technics, which remain central to processes of subjectivity, social formation, U.S. nationalism, and trans-
national critical geographies. Such a comparative, cross-media view attends to the social practices and cultural relations print and digital cultures still jointly facilitate more than fifteen years since political theory predicted the end of the nation-state in the wake of digital information economies, and proponents of the “digital revolution” claimed the latter information networks were soon to resolve the conflicts and class warfare endemic to industrial capitalism. In addition to explaining the uneven character of transitions and points of interchange between print and digital cultures and media, this attention to technics as they unfold in distinct social fields brings forth the, at once, social, cultural, and material processes through which technics are co-realized. This clarifies both how and why material lifeworlds and social relations are so subtly, unevenly, unpredictably transformed. It also undercuts the digital’s continued, self-described newness and self-originating claims, which support celebratory and fatalistic accounts of these emerging, supposedly unique technics, which are, thereby, presumed to change everything.

Instead, these literary texts open lines of inquiry into the multipotentiality and determination, as well as the historicity, of technics. They register the socially embedded and embedding processes in which technics participate without ever being fully determined or delimited (either materially or temporally) by their contexts. Attending to technics as they enter into U.S. processes of social and subject formation at distinct, yet co-articulated, scenes of writing and materially realized spatial formations, and through the identificatory and biopolitical practices of U.S. nationalisms and transnationalisms, the book underscores the somewhat different trajectories similar technological infrastructures and processes take at these different sites. Narrowing in on the multipotentiality and, thus, inherent multistability of these interrelations, while also evidencing their sedimentation and force once in play in the social field, these texts’ comparative methods and their systems thinking enables reflection, diagnosis, and potential reorientations of the gendered, racialized, and subaltern intersubjectivities, social spaces, micropractices of the nation, and textual practices distinct technics co-realize.

As the book intends to illustrate, these texts’ methodologies encourage an understanding of technics as tactics of the human through which late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century American social systems unfold, stabilize across time, and are reimagined, for better and for worse. Developed over the course of the book, this view on technics reconceives subject-technology relations as co-productive reorientations of evolutionary, material, and historical processes that always precede and exceed existing interrelations (i.e.,
they remain both sedimenting and open to recalibration). Contrary to previous understandings of subject-technology relations as relations of user and tool, through this posthumanist, systems-theoretical reformulation, agency is reconceived as a force released through these distributed interrelations and subsequently attributed to distinct human, nonhuman, material, and technological agents. It suggests how we might reformulate both human-centric and technology-centric views of agency in social systems in this way.

Redescribing technics as tactics of the human, the book finds traction in American social and cultural life through such creative, circumspect engagements with, and a retrospective retracing of, these transformative interrelations. It reveals how literary texts and the comparative media practices they develop to work through emerging technics can help register the impact of shifting relations on the human and nonhuman and their lifeworlds. Their diagnoses provide new ways to tactically reengage the topographies of late capitalism and, in doing so, to shed light on the spatiotemporal orientations and material practices sustaining digital cultures and their circulatory systems. Drawing on network topographies influencing geopolitical space well before the World Wide Web rendered the idea of an information network commonplace, Almanac of the Dead, for instance, questioned capitalist economic networks’ clear disregard for existing place-based social formations and challenged their much-celebrated supra-territoriality. The novel not only provides a prescient vision of transnational, informational “network societies,” it recommends how tactical literary and digital practices can help redescribe and reorient networking and other material practices through which social knowledges are embedded and unsettled, encouraging other agencies and kinds of lived space. Close attention to the spatiotemporal, place-based or locative, and tactical dimensions to narrative practices in increasingly pervasive computational environments has only increased since Silko’s novel identified the literary’s potential, in this way, to change the way we see and move through computationally networked, social spaces. Through this and other tactical methods, these literary texts help elucidate the variability, contingency, and force with which specific technics unfold in U.S. digital cultures. They recommend how we might develop adequate abilities to retrace, diagnose, and differentiate between distinct posthumanist practices, materialities, and spatiotemporal becomings rather than taking technics in digital cultures at face value, as an unquestioned and stable given. They encourage recognition that not all becomings, systems, or networking processes are the same, for instance, and increase awareness of their unique
material and epistemological limits, enabling otherwise unperceived alternatives, other ways to “realize these possibilities,” to borrow Almanac of the Dead’s terminology.

This understanding of technics as tactics of the human that work discrepantly for and against highly differentiated social formations at multiple sites, in turn, prompts a reconception of the literary’s possible modes of address and its relations to digital cultures, questioning the terms in which we’re encouraged to greet and inhabit these emerging social and cultural formations and the technicity of the human they rerealize. In the introduction, I broached the question of how literary texts participate in and are relevant to contemporary digital cultures and the bioinformatic scientific, technological, and cultural practices that sustain them. I want to return to that question to unpack the full significance of these texts’ reapproach to digital cultures, their concerted, critical, yet notably non-oppositional reengagement of the privileged concepts, practices, and traits of digital cultures (and the twentieth-century advances in physical, biological, and informational systems sciences they draw upon) to socially, culturally, and politically attuned literary ends.

Taking up key components and concepts of digital cultures to identify, unfold, or exploit their untapped uses or dimensions, these late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century literary fictions engage these sciences and the new processes of materialization and symbolization they introduce as poetic, conceptual, social, cultural, and political resources, as well as increasingly familiar actualities. They turn the defining processes, media, and conceits of digital cultures to alternate, expressive ends to reobserve such practices through a slightly different register. For example, they incorporate comparative literary moves between print and digital media into their textual signifying practices and fictions as a means to explore these key points of interchange between print and digital cultures and their social systems. In this regard, these literary texts anticipate the “expressive processing” Noah Wardrip-Fruin has identified in digital fiction and other expressive practices that unfold more directly through computational media. In particular they share the dual aims he attributes to creative engagements with computational media, which are to, at once, realize the creative affordances of digital media practices to help create a fictional world and in doing so, to use these experiments to reflect back on these same computation-based processes and their social and cultural meaning and impact. As he argues in relation to expressive processing in digital fictions, computer games, and software studies, “Coming to understand fictional worlds as systems—and exploring their
potential through play—is also a powerful means of coming to understand our evolving society, in which (often hidden) software models structure much of how we live now.” Without overlooking key differences in their media-specific print as opposed to computationally based methods of understanding “fictional worlds as systems,” and in their modes of fictional play with these systems processes (with the exception of *Patchwork Girl*), it is nevertheless worth noting the underlying similarities in some of their digital literary approaches and aims.

In elaborating on these texts’ experimental technics, their creative reengagements with emergent digital practices and social systems, I want to join in their wager that we can, in this intently differential way, come to understand how digital cultures work and find new resources for social, cultural, and political life well suited to these emerging contexts. Exploring technics across the supposed print/digital divide, these literary texts clearly refuse the positioning of literary print cultures outside or in opposition to U.S. digital cultures. More importantly, their comparative media practices proceed to register through their expressive processes, and to reflect on, digital cultures’ inclination and capacities to re- and dematerialize defining elements of our biological, economic, cultural, and social lives. They begin to come to terms with the fact that in contemporary late capitalism “the world of things has become a world of signs—a universe that both brings into being and is brought into being by symbolic codes.” Writer Steve Tomasula suggests that “perhaps it is for this reason alone that that most symbolic of all codes, the literary text, can foreshadow a future world while the contemporary world suggests the future of poetics.” He remarks on the reciprocal interplay between literary text and extraliterary world that now involves the literary’s anticipation of the significantly symbolic operations of the real world of finance capital and futures trading while the real world of things seems on the verge of outmaneuvering the poetic in the creativity, dynamism, and affective power of its symbolic, world-building maneuvers. At the core of these influential relays between the literary and its environments is this broader intertwining and interplay between symbolic and material processes today that confounds previous, oppositional understandings of the symbolic and material (and the cultural and economic spheres with which they are respectively aligned).

In this context, comparative media practices, involved in a similar transposition of symbolic practices from one medium to another, or a transposition that engages the material preconditions of digital or print media to divergent symbolic, expressive ends, can be understood as a poetic method
or micropractice designed to comparatively register and cast into differential relief precisely the kinds of de- and rematerializing processes that define late capitalist economic and cultural topographies and their privileged epistemologies. One begins to understand, in light of these literary texts, how the very operations of such comparative media practices register and critically respond to the “unprecedented things” “now being done with and to matter, nature, life, production and reproduction,” which theorists now actively query under the sign of “new materialisms.”

Rather than representing digital cultures and their emergent technics from the outside, as it were, these literary texts take up key concepts and practices from digital cultures and explore them through a literary register, momentarily reoperationalizing these kinds of systems relations to literary and poetic ends. It is no accident that they actively pursue the breakdown and recalibration of Cartesian dualisms between material and symbolic, outside and inside, spatial and temporal, feminine and masculine, body and mind, living and nonliving, vital and mechanical—reformulations that are catalyzed by the processes of materialization and symbolization currently transforming experiences and understandings of everyday life.

Through these literary relays, they examine the productivity and constraints of the literary in the context of digital cultures and, in turn, use the literary to differentially inquire into the productivity and constraints materially realized, computation-based system processes introduce to subjectivities and social systems in the United States. It is through this recursive, redoubling movement of reapproaching digital processes, media, and methodologies through a literary print apparatus and reconceiving the literary in terms of digital processes, media, and systems relations that these texts’ comparative media practices reckon with and shed light on the distinct “ontogenetic processes” accompanying digital technics, which increasingly, in Thrift’s insightful terms, render “the logic of the system, as it becomes both necessary and general,” “the logic of the world,” receding “from human perception, becoming a part of the landscape which the body ‘naturally’ adjusts to and which it regards as a normal part of its movement.” Adapting the dynamic recursivity of system formation and, in particular, of digital technics and computational processes, these literary texts poetically embody and, thus, elaborate on the charged interrelations between symbolic and material practices that so trouble prior assumptions about writing, cognition, gender and sex, narrative, cultural practices, space, economic circulation, agency, and politics today.

Their literary explorations of the points of interchange between textual,
biological, discursive, technological, social, nonhuman, and physical systems processes diagnose new understandings of materiality and processes of materialization accompanying digital technics, physics, bioinformatic and computer sciences that have only intensified since 2002. Through these methods, they underscore the literary’s contributions to contemporary conversations surrounding the new materialisms. As the book has worked to illustrate, recent work in science studies, critical geographies, feminism and gender studies, philosophy, and political economy grapples with the altered status, efficacy, and impact of the material that has accompanied twentieth-century developments in particle physics, molecular biology, and complexity and systems theory. Whether they align themselves with new materialisms or not, these fields are all involved in thinking through emergent conceptualizations, elaborations, and practices of materiality informing contemporary technics at multiple, interrelated scales. The unpredictable dynamics to contemporary material life (at genetic, environmental, subjective, communicational, national, and geopolitical levels) “requires a well-informed understanding of new scientific and technological developments” and their “material implications and context,” as Frost and Coole stress in their introduction to the collection on New Materialisms. Furthermore, as philosopher and literary critic Pheng Cheah notes in his essay in the collection titled “Non-dialectical Materialism,” “what we consider as concrete political forms, institutions, practices, and activities, and the discourses that irrigate them such as rational choice theory, positivism, empiricism, and dialectical materialism are underwritten by ontologies of matter and life.” He stresses that as these ontologies of matter and life are increasingly called into question by twenty-first-century physical, biological, and system sciences and the technicities they open onto, so are the political and social concepts and practices, assumptions about the human and her agencies that prior frameworks for approaching matter and life have sustained.

These literary texts certainly grapple with the altered status, efficacy, and impact of the material that has accompanied twentieth-century developments in particle physics, molecular biology, and complexity and systems theory. They take an awareness of contemporary genetics, sociobiology, and intersex (Middlesex), or of theories of embodied cognition emerging from cognitive science (Patchwork Girl), or U.S. beef production, factory farming, and synthetic hormones and reproductive biotechnology (My Year of Meats), or of the productive power of capitalism to create social space and administer biopower through its material practices (Almanac of the Dead), or of rhetorics of web-based hypertext (“Click”) as the catalyst for their nuanced
reconceptualization of processes of materialization in light of such knowledges and practices. As importantly, they pursue the potential consequence of these emergent materialisms to the U.S. social field, to the political, cultural, and economic terms through which we map, navigate, and redescribe contemporary social life at multiple sites and scales. These fictions provide us with concepts drawn from these sciences and practices and, therefore, well attuned to the topographies of late capitalism and its computation-based technics. These concepts are then speculatively followed through to their expected or potential social, cultural, and political ends and, in this process, tactically reconceived and reoriented in light of a careful observation of this thick environment.

As a result, these literary texts reveal how such emergent knowledges and processes of materialization, and the complex interrelations they delineate between human cultures, social systems, and material lifeworlds provide quite essential conceptual and practical resources for literary, cultural, political, and social theories, as they, quite literally, work through contemporary U.S. digital cultures. In this way, these texts unleash the literary’s potential as a mode of diagnosis. It is a diagnostic mode that, as Isabelle Stengers stresses after Nietzsche, is grounded in a reflection on the present material, empirical realities, yet precisely because of that momentary entrenchment is capable of opening open onto speculative, prospective futures through its grounded, reiterative, creative diagnostic inquiries. Importantly, such diagnoses serve as immanent, nonoppositional, experimental modes of registering the present, empirical realities and finding openings through which these trajectories might otherwise unfold or bifurcate.

Borrowing and adapting key concepts and processes from systems thinking in cybernetics and information theory, biological and social systems theory, and the emerging technics already, notably, well under way in early digital cultures, the book joins these literary texts in creatively exploring the multipotentiality and necessity of these new modes of thinking through and, quite literally, grappling with materially realized technics and the systems relations they dynamically and forcefully engender. The book draws upon these late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century literary methods to devise new materialist tactics for engaging the technical apparati and processes under way in contemporary technoscience, neoliberal economic networks, and their U.S. digital cultures, tactics that are, thus, closely attuned to the latter’s blind spots and unpursued potential.

Additionally, in looking back to these early literary engagements with digital cultures, which clearly begin to “understand fictional worlds as sys-
tems” (though not necessarily using computational media), I want to underscore an important trajectory linking these literary practices and more recent comparative literary and media practices. These texts evidence the literary’s capacity to inquire about, and differentially enter into, our understandings and practices of technics, and, in this way, to attend to these dynamic interchanges between textual practices, intersubjectivities, lived space, social systems, and their economic circulations. In the book’s view, there is much to be learned about print and digital technics, the technicity of the human, and contemporary late capitalist social systems from these literary and expressive texts (among others), if read with these relays and aims in mind. The book’s trajectory, thus, also points forward to more recent digital literary and expressive practices as a robust site for inquiries into not only the notoriously complex interplay of language and code in computation-based literary and expressive practices, but, equally, into the computational processes and wider digital cultures and “code/spaces” that these texts both engage and diagnose.13 In the introduction to their recent collection New Narratives: Stories and Storytelling in the Digital Age, Ruth Page and Bronwen Thomas describe a “fresh phase of digital narratology” that “concerns itself less with stylistic or textual characteristics than with the environments and social and cultural formations that produce and consume them, as well as the cultural uses to which narrative practices may be put.”14 Other recent work on digital narrative, electronic literatures, and expressive computational practices is similarly interested in exploring, more directly and thoroughly, the complex interrelations between these literary and expressive practices and the wider social, medial, technological, cultural, and political systems through which they emerge and gain meaning. In his recent work on “the novel in the new media ecology,” Daniel Punday illustrates how “the formal innovations of the contemporary novel” are “an embrace of the novel’s place within systems of dissemination and circulation.”15 In a recent review, he suggests that such efforts to think through the “causal, material links between literary works and their institutional and commercial context” and to understand the consequence of the latter for contemporary literary and cultural practices—a concern with “the networks within which writing is located”—are a “condition of this post-postmodern moment,” more broadly.16 Recent critical and creative work addressing the digital and literary’s complex co-imbrication are similarly interested to elaborate on the literary’s system relations, its dynamic, transformative relays to social, medial, material, and intersubjective processes. They join these earlier literary engagements with digital cultures in illustrating the value of reapproaching literary texts in relation to these
systems processes, social and cultural formations, and shifting material and technological infrastructures.

As suggested in the introduction of the book, how we understand the place and operations of the literary directly impacts, and translates into, its ability to facilitate our understanding and negotiation of digital cultures. The literary’s repositioning and reimagined occupations in relation to these emergent relays productively and creatively subtends our own approaches and lines and modes of inquiry and engagement within digital cultures. Reconceiving these literary texts and subsequent literary engagements with digital cultures and their computation-based systems processes as a resource in a broader toolkit for creatively retracing complex systems and the processes through which they emerge, transform, and are undone, this book suggests how such comparative work across the lines of the literary and digital is an invaluable response to the literary’s growing immanence to digital cultures. The literary now emerges from computers and circulates through digital technologies, and, increasingly, it will elaborate its poetics in greater degrees of direct interaction with computational methods and technologies, as do digitally based electronic literatures, interactive narratives, generative texts, Twitterature and other “bot” poetics, locative narratives, and a range of cross-platform, cross-genre literary hybrids. Further, as late capitalist economic practices become remarkably adept at manipulating symbolic and cultural operations through computation to their profit-driven material ends, it is even more pressing to differentiate between distinct literary, cultural, and economic practices and their privileged modes of realizing symbolic operations within material lifeworlds.

Reading these early literary encounters with U.S. digital cultures as one possible prehistory to an emergent digital literary may help us to appreciate and read the increasing prevalence of comparative media practices and other literary hybrids of the present for the diagnostic, speculative, and experimental work that they do at several levels through their negotiations with technics and media systems. The book’s project, demonstrating how literary poetics can take up, modulate, and cast comparative light on the actualized and unactualized potential of emerging technics to forestall, engender, and reorient shifting modes of the human and her social life, intends to remark on the persistence, relevance, and purpose to their comparative media practices, which reengage tactics of the human we cannot live without and, thus, one way or another, we learn to live with.