

Long Live the New Flesh

Trans Identity, Body Horror, and *Videodrome*

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Every horror film fan has a particular favorite subgenre. Some people like slasher films; some prefer home invasion; others enjoy supernatural stories or tales of the occult. For me, the answer is body horror. Body horror is typically concerned with the graphic destruction or degeneration of the human body, typically by way of processes such as decay, disease, or mutation. I see myself reflected in and I identify with this subgenre, as do many other trans people. Historically, much film discourse has linked body horror to queer cinema through readings influenced by the AIDS epidemic, but I feel that body horror is also a key genre in transgender cinema. There are many body horror films which lend themselves incredibly well to trans readings; here, I will be focusing specifically on David Cronenberg's 1983 film *Videodrome*. I will detail the history of the body horror genre, as well as some history of and context for trans identification with the monstrous, and examine critical analyses of Cronenberg's work in relation to queer cinema before providing my own reading of Cronenberg's film.

As a subgenre of horror (and by name alone), body horror is necessarily one of the body genres described by Linda Williams in her essay "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess", alongside pornography and melodrama. Williams notes that "...it seems to be the case that the success of these genres is often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen."¹ With regards to horror, this means that a horror film is successful if audience members' bodily reactions mirror those of the characters in the film; if a character screams, the audience will scream with them (or perhaps even faint, if the film is frightening enough). The horror director Jen Soska stated in an interview that "The fear that we all have is when we see blood is that it's going to be our own blood; when you see someone

¹ Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): pp. 2-13, <https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.1991.44.4.04a00020>

getting hurt, you're thinking about your own flesh being hurt."² I believe that with body horror, this mirroring effect is heightened because of the extreme levels of gore and abjection inherent to the subgenre. Julia Kristeva's original concept of the abject is a liminal or hybrid state identified with base, degrading physicality and its manifestations (particularly bodily fluids and wounds). Kristeva writes that the abject is

A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing.³

In body horror, characters fear the loss of the body and thus the loss of the self. The body, which is ordered, *heimlich*, becomes disordered and *unheimlich*—familiar, yet unfamiliar, like a lock of hair that has been cut and fallen to the ground. Many horror subgenres deal in abjection, such as slashers and torture porn; however, body horror differentiates itself in a few key ways. First, in body horror, bodily distortion is rarely the result of an immediate or initial violence; instead, distortion comes from a gradual loss of conscious control and an uncontrollable transformation. Additionally, body horror films are generally slower paced and may have more fully realized stories than horror films of other subgenres. Torture porn movies, by contrast, are often less about story and character exploration than they are simply vehicles for a singular shocking event or occurrence (for example, the 2009 film *The Human Centipede*).

While the actual term "body horror" was not in existence until Phillip Brophy coined it in 1983, Mary Shelley's seminal novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, published in

² Josh Millican, "Interview: Jen and Sylvia Soska Talk Rabid, David Cronenberg, and Transhumanism", Dread Central (Dread Central, March 28, 2018), <https://www.dreadcentral.com/news/269430/interview-jen-and-sylvia-soska-talk-rabid-david-cronenberg-and-transhumanism/>

³ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982)

1818, is widely considered to be one of the earliest examples of the body horror genre.⁴ Of *Frankenstein*, J. Halberstam writes, “By focusing on the body as a locus of fear, Shelley’s novel suggests that it is people (or at least bodies) who terrify people...the landscape of fear is replaced by sutured skin.”⁵ Halberstam here notes that Shelley has shifted the focus of fear from Gothic ideas of the uncanny in nature to, instead, the disordered human body. And Halberstam is far from the only trans scholar to have focused on *Frankenstein*. Susan Stryker takes her own analysis a step further into performance; she draws on the writings of Mary Daly and Janice Raymond to assert that

The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Like the monster, I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster’s as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist.⁶

Not only does Stryker offer a trans reading of *Frankenstein*, she also explicitly identifies herself with the monster because of the way hegemonic society rejects and excludes her on the basis of her existence as a transsexual woman.

Another prominent example of early body horror is the novel *Les Mains d’Orlac* by Maurice Renard. Originally published in 1920, it was adapted into a film multiple times, most

⁴ Philip Brophy, “Horrority—The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films,” *Screen* 27, no. 1 (January 1986): pp. 2-13, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/27.1.2>

⁵ Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)

⁶ Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (1994): pp. 237-254, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-3-237>

notably as *Orlacs Hände* (1924) and *Mad Love* (1935). The story involves Orlac, a pianist whose hands are crushed in an accident. A talented surgeon miraculously gives Orlac a transplant of new hands from a deceased killer, but Orlac comes to believe that the hands have given him the desire and ability to kill. Ruth Goldberg writes for Kinoeye that, in *Mad Love*, “...the ambiguous self is revealed to be more monstrous than any external horror, and...true horror is rooted in the vulnerability of our physical form.”⁷ This reads as an earlier version of Halberstam’s point regarding *Frankenstein*. In *Mad Love*, the true horror comes from Orlac not knowing whether his body is truly his own; as Goldberg asks, “Can the self fracture and yet be restored to integrity?”⁸ This question, to me, echoes narratives of medical gender transition—for myself, when I began hormone replacement therapy, I wondered whether my internal self might change with my body or if it would remain the same. If the physical body is altered, does the self remain stagnant?

As the element of fear in the body horror subgenre comes from the lack of identification with a physical body preceding total loss of the self, it is apparent that transgender identification with body horror stems from narratives of gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria (commonly referred to as simply dysphoria) is the sense of unease one might feel either when their physicality does not reflect their internal sense of gender, when they are assumed or perceived to be a particular gender by other people, or both. Film critic Willow Catelyn Maclay writes that

In order to accomplish something resembling a real transgender cinema, cisgender filmmakers (and transgender ones too) need to work from the inside out, and they shouldn’t be afraid to obscure or unsettle the image...The genre [of body horror] is rich in

⁷ Ruth Goldberg, “Of Mad Love, Alien Hands and the Film Under Your Skin: Some Further Meditations on the Horror of Identity,” Kinoeye (Kinoeye, February 18, 2002), <http://www.kinoeye.org/02/04/goldberg04.php>

⁸ Ruth Goldberg, “Of Mad Love, Alien Hands and the Film Under Your Skin: Some Further Meditations on the Horror of Identity”

transgender stories, because it's a mode of storytelling which fundamentally concerns itself with bodies, and as trans people we can never remove ourselves from the knowledge that we're inside of our own skin.⁹

Trans people are perpetually aware of being “inside our own skin,” as Maclay writes, though may feel disconnected from physicality or from society due to dysphoria. Therefore, it makes sense to see this narrative of disconnect reflected back in body horror films where characters must grapple with their sense of self, both in relation to the body and in relation to the world at large. Maclay and fellow critic Caden Mark Gardner continue this discussion of the presence of dysphoria narratives in body horror films by exploring the example of horrifying puberty. This trope, while not intended to reflect narratives of dysphoria, has been and continues to be meaningful for many trans people, who can relate to the imagery and emotion of suddenly experiencing a great number of unwanted and often frightening bodily changes. “Puberty is hell,” Willow Maclay writes, “but the puberty you never asked for is deadly.”¹⁰ This trope appears in many horror films, though perhaps most notably in *The Exorcist* (1973), *Carrie* (1976), and *Ginger Snaps* (2000). These three films all include what Andrew Scahill, in his essay on *The Exorcist*, refers to as the figure of the “revolting child”.¹¹ This figure is twofold: they are a child who is both revolting—that is, the child’s body violates natural laws, is inhabited by a demon, or becomes an animal—and is also in revolt. Scahill sees children as liminal and ungendered beings; the revolting child is a child who has failed at “proper development” (that is, failed to progress to an appropriately cisgender heterosexual adulthood), and who thus poses a threat to

⁹ Willow Catelyn Maclay and Caden Mark Gardner, “Body Talk: Conversations on Transgender Cinema with Caden Gardner (Part Six),” *Curtsies and Hand Grenades*, June 7, 2018, <http://curtsiesandhandgrenades.com/index.php/2018/06/07/body-talkconversations-on-transgender-cinema-with-caden-gardner-part-six/>

¹⁰ Willow Catelyn Maclay and Caden Mark Gardner, “Body Talk: Conversations on Transgender Cinema with Caden Gardner (Part Six)”

¹¹ Andrew Scahill, “Demons Are a Girl’s Best Friend: Queering the Revolting Child in *The Exorcist*,” *Red Feather Journal* 1, no. 1 (2010): pp. 39-55, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137481320_4

the dominant social structure. Through this interpretation, these iconic horror characters can be read as queer and trans figures who fail to conform to hegemonic expectations of gender performance. Thus, we can see how the dysphoria narrative is often implicit within body horror tropes.

In 1992, B. Ruby Rich coined the term New Queer Cinema to describe a movement of similarly-themed films by gay and lesbian independent filmmakers in mainly North America and England. New Queer Cinema challenged heteronormativity by depicting queer characters, but it also challenged homonormativity (gay relationships which, although certainly not straight, still contribute to the perpetuation of dominant social norms, such as monogamy). The characters depicted in the films of New Queer Cinema were typically presented as being outside of conventional society, and New Queer Cinema filmmakers frequently resisted promoting the positive, assimilationist images of lesbians and gay men which had become so prevalent as a result of the gay liberation movement of the 1970s and 80s. In addition, the films of New Queer Cinema were known for dealing with topics such as the AIDS epidemic and conservative politics, and often did so through the use of non-traditional and experimental form. For example, Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993) features only a single shot of a completely blue screen with a voiceover by Jarman; Marlon Rigg's *Tongues Untied* (1989) depicts life as a Black gay man through experimental documentary involving performance, humor, found footage, and more.

Perhaps most relevant to the discussion of body horror, however, is Todd Haynes' 1995 film *Safe*. The film's main character, Carol White, is an upper-class housewife living in Los Angeles who, through exposure to various chemicals, develops environmental illness and eventually leaves her home to live onsite at a New Age clinic. *Safe* is typically read as an allegory for AIDS, but functions on several different levels. Of the film, Caden Gardner writes that

The moment where Carol gets a perm is her cataclysmic event. Those events expose her to chemicals that reveal she is a sufferer of environmental illness, a real life illness, that is tied to her trying to assert her femininity and identity...She goes to Wrenwood, a New Age community that is all about positive affirmations, but is a community that avoids confronting their problems. Their issues stem from their place in society. The world doesn't know what to do with them, let alone the medical community. There isn't a word for what they're experiencing and their place in the world is fractured because there isn't a language to discuss their problems. Sound familiar?...*Safe* was made after the height of the AIDS/HIV crisis and serves as a conscious allegory of it by a queer filmmaker that correctly presented how society did treat people with AIDS/HIV at the time. If you did not die from the disease, that did not mean society understood or was willing to help you. You may seek out communities but getting actual help in confronting your illness beyond positive affirmation was a serious issue.¹²

Gardner here acknowledges that *Safe* can be read as an allegory not only for AIDS, but also for dysphoria; Carol herself is a sort of gender failure who is unable to live up to society's expectations of her as a white upper-class woman. She is even unable to complete simple tasks, like purchase the right couch for her living room. As her knowledge of her own body is not believed by those around her, she grows more and more detached from her physical form and attempts to take up as little space as possible, which is reflected in the way in which Carol is framed in various shots throughout the film. Gardner and Maclay note this as being mentally and emotionally similar to their individual experiences of dysphoria.

This thinking marks what I see as a general movement in critical film theory from reading films that have been generally read as AIDS allegory to providing additional and concurrent

¹² Willow Catelyn Maclay and Caden Mark Gardner, "Body Talk: Conversations on Transgender Cinema with Caden Gardner (Part Six)"

readings of these works as trans allegory or dysphoria allegory, coinciding with the amplification of transgender voices in film criticism. The AIDS epidemic was such a hugely important moment that, in film theory and criticism of the 1980s and 1990s, it was unavoidable in discussion and interpretation. Owing to the evolution of language surrounding trans and nonbinary genders, contemporary trans scholars and critics have been able to draw on these existing readings, allowing films that historically have been read predominantly as AIDS allegory to also be interpreted as examples of transgender cinema. Willow Maclay highlights the importance of broadening the scope when thinking about what is and is not transgender cinema, noting that

...the literal texts so often miss the point. It's also why queer cinema has to move beyond just what pertains to sexuality. Sexuality is important and so are stories that are literally about transgender people, but as an art form cinema can handle topics of a wider scale in different ways than direct representation.

Trans film scholars and critics have been reading trans allegory into films for a long time; however, it is not until fairly recently that these readings have been given much attention from the rest of the film world. For example, people had been giving trans readings of *The Matrix* movies for years, but this interpretation suddenly gained traction and was perceived as more legitimate once the Wachowski siblings came out (or in Lilly's case, were outed) as trans. Providing trans readings of historically celebrated queer films is also a way for contemporary trans critics and scholars to both place themselves in a lineage of queer film studies, emphasizing the fact that transgender cinema has always been part and parcel of the queer film world, as well as to give added significance and relevance to films which might otherwise be overlooked by cisgender scholars.

At this point, we must now consider the works of David Cronenberg. Cronenberg, as a filmmaker, is arguably responsible for the contemporary idea of the body horror subgenre in

film. The bulk of his work that specifically falls into this subgenre was made beginning in the 1970s with *Rabid* (1975), and he continued to make body horror films through the end of the 1990s, culminating with *eXistenZ* (1999). He of course is still a working filmmaker; however, Cronenberg's work has seen a pronounced genre shift, and his more recent works are psychological thrillers and dramas. Notably, though, Cronenberg's body horror films overlapped in time with the work of many New Queer Cinema directors, and his films from this time saw critical analysis that was informed by not only the early works of New Queer Cinema, but also by current events, particularly the AIDS epidemic. Ernest Mathijs, in an article discussing criticism of Cronenberg's films, writes that

Cronenberg criticism abounds with allusions to the bodily exchange of viruses and to plagues and to the body as a site of both affection and infection. Importantly, it actively uses these allusions to demonstrate the cultural "relevance" of Cronenberg's films. References to AIDS are also included in this discourse...[These] references are closely linked to both rhetorical and topical concerns. Further, the references to AIDS (or AIDS talk) have provided critics with a medium through which Cronenberg's films have gained cultural significance...Specifically, most references to AIDS in Cronenberg criticism are linked to his representation of the body and issues of mutation [and] have led critics to comment on what they see as metaphors of (homo)sexuality in Cronenberg's films.¹³

Mathijs goes on to discuss various critical analyses of Cronenberg's work, beginning with Robin Wood's initial treatment of his films from the 1970s (in which Wood finds Cronenberg's films to be reactionary and not progressive). Mathijs then discusses readings of *The Fly* (1986) as an AIDS metaphor, and how the legitimacy of this critical reading allowed for Cronenberg's

¹³ Ernest Mathijs, "AIDS References in the Critical Reception of David Cronenberg: 'It May Not Be Such a Bad Disease after All'", *Cinema Journal* 42, no. 4 (2003): pp. 29-45, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2003.0019>, p. 30-31

successive films to be “...regarded as progressive, as not about ‘alternative social structures based on our world’ (as [John] Harkness said) but about cultural reality.”¹⁴ This led, then, to criticism of Cronenberg’s films that made references to AIDS becoming positioned in a particular reflexive and academic framework, which in turn ensured the long-term cultural relevance of the films themselves.

Mathijs also notes that “Eventually, AIDS references were used to support other, novel interpretations of Cronenberg’s work, in particular with arguments on homosexuality.”¹⁵ He references a 1999 essay by Christine Ramsey, who argues that AIDS is one of several elements demonstrating how “queerness can in no way be seen to be in the margins of Cronenberg’s oeuvre.”¹⁶ In this way, Mathijs writes, AIDS becomes

a critical tool rather than a topical reality...Even when AIDS disappeared from the public agenda, critics continued to use references to AIDS...to show the cultural relevance of Cronenberg’s films and their own critical work.¹⁷

Following this trajectory, it is possible to use references to AIDS in Cronenberg’s work as well as past criticism of his films to support trans readings of his work, much in the same way that Todd Haynes’s *Safe*, as a film that is explicitly an AIDS allegory, can be just as easily read as a dysphoria narrative. To this point, Willow Maclay and Caden Garnder have noted Cronenberg’s cinema to be one of “bodies in disarray” in which characters are “grappling with various levels of control over their bodies”; as this can (and has historically been) read as AIDS allegory, it is possible to expand conceptions of queer and transgender cinema to include Cronenberg’s

¹⁴ Ernest Mathijs, “AIDS References in the Critical Reception of David Cronenberg: ‘It May Not Be Such a Bad Disease after All’”, p. 35

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37

¹⁶ Christine Ramsay, “Dead Queers: One Legacy of the Trope of ‘Mind Over Matter’ in the Films of David Cronenberg,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): pp. 45-62, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjfs.8.1.45>

¹⁷ Ernest Mathijs, “AIDS References in the Critical Reception of David Cronenberg: ‘It May Not Be Such a Bad Disease after All’”, p. 37

works.¹⁸ Along similar lines, scholar Nick Davis writes in *The Desiring-Image: Gilles Deleuze and Contemporary Queer Cinema* that

To watch [a Cronenberg film such as] *Dead Ringers* or *Naked Lunch* is to detect a strong sexual sensibility, but to remain unsure what kind it is. Given those films' cross-textual derivations and baffling erotics, plus Cronenberg's recurring synchronicity with scholarly trends, either movie might easily have resonated with enthusiasts of New Queer Cinema.¹⁹

Davis continues on to posit that Cronenberg's films are about desire, which can be sexual but is not always; in this way, Cronenberg estranges sexuality from both hetero- and homosexual conceptions, much in the same way that the films of New Queer Cinema rejected the assimilationist politics of hetero- and homonormativity. Cronenberg himself stated in an interview with Amy Taubin that "The sex in *Naked Lunch* is beyond gay."²⁰ Davis extrapolates this idea to Cronenberg's other works in order to assert how his films are neither straight nor gay; they are queer, in that in Cronenberg's films, sexuality and gender are estranged from and resist all norms both hetero- and homosexual.

This brings me, finally, to *Videodrome* (1983). The film follows Max Renn, the president of CIVIC-TV, a Toronto UHF television station known for its sensationalistic programming of shows featuring softcore pornography and gratuitous violence. Renn stumbles upon what he believes to be a pirate tape of a new show called "Videodrome" where people are brutally tortured and punished. Over the course of the film, Renn learns that Videodrome is actually a bioweapon produced by a private weapons manufacturer and being used to infect those who

¹⁸ Willow Catelyn Maclay and Caden Mark Gardner, "Body Talk: Conversations on Transgender Cinema with Caden Gardner (Part Six)"

¹⁹ Nick Davis, *The Desiring-Image: Gilles Deleuze and Contemporary Queer Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 37

²⁰ Amy Taubin, "The Wrong Body," *Sight and Sound*, March 1992, pp. 9-13

watch it (typically, people with a fixation on sexual and violent imagery) with malignant brain tumors. Spectacular Optical, Videodrome's producer, intends to sell Videodrome to various governments in order to tip the scales of a large-scale battle for control of the minds of North America. The film is most commonly read as a commentary on political propaganda and the effect of media, particularly television, on politics and nationalism. As is typical of Cronenberg, *Videodrome* engages in conversations around transhumanism as well, and the ways in which technology physically affects the body. However, *Videodrome* can also be read as a transgender narrative, moving from body dysphoria to, eventually, euphoria via the rejection of dominant social norms and pursuit of physical transition.

One of the most striking and memorable images from the film is a wound which appears in Max Renn's chest and is most commonly read as a vaginal opening or vulva. It is through this opening that agents of Spectacular Optical can violently insert VHS tapes in a manner which visually echoes a rape scene, thus "programming" Renn to do their bidding. At one point, Renn teases the vulva with a handgun, which disappears into Renn's chest after he inserts it. Willow Maclay reads this as "a suicide image...[Renn's] own latent anxiety at what's happening to him."²¹ This reading sees Renn participating in suicidal ideation as a result of dysphoria. This dysphoria, to extend the metaphor, is itself a direct result of living as a trans person with the dominant social and gender norms that exist under Western capitalism and are violently enforced by advertising and media—Videodrome. It is as a result of exposure to Videodrome, or perpetuated gender norms, that Renn develops discomfort with his non-conformative physicality, as well as discomfort with the ways in which his gender is perceived by others; namely, Harlan and Barry Convex, the producers of Videodrome who have a personal material interest in seeing Renn infected by their product.

²¹ Willow Catelyn Maclay and Caden Mark Gardner, "Body Talk: Conversations on Transgender Cinema with Caden Gardner (Part Six)"

When the gun next appears, it is after Renn has been programmed to work for Spectacular Optical—when Renn is attempting to conform to dominant gender norms. It becomes physically attached to his body through wires that enter the skin of his hand and arm. Thus the gun, originally a suicide image, becomes the image of internalized transphobia as a result of prolonged dysphoria. Internalized transphobia such as this harms both the trans individual (Renn) and those around them (Renn’s coworkers at CIVIC-TV and, as Spectacular Optical hopes, Bianca O’Blivion) as they reiterate harmful ideas about trans bodies and people.

However, just as Susan Stryker discusses her ability to rechannel her anger and suffering as a result of being made a social outcast into self-affirmation and political action, over the course of the film, the handgun also comes to represent the weaponized form of Renn’s transgender rage. Though Max is sent by Barry Convex to kill Bianca O’Blivion, she succeeds in removing the VHS tape that Convex had inserted into Max’s body, thus deprogramming him. Max is “the video word made flesh”; that is, he is an amalgam of all the media (and inherited gender norms) that he has consumed over the course of his life. Bianca can be read, then, as a radicalizing agent who introduces Max to radical acceptance of his transgender body as well as the complete rejection of dominant gender norms. This deprogramming is analogous to the real-world experience of seeing other trans bodies as well as reading radical gender theory. Once Max is deprogrammed, he seeks out Harlan in order to destroy him. When Harlan attempts to again violently program Max via a VHS tape in his vulva, Renn’s vulva turns Harlan’s hand into a bomb that then kills him. As Max’s dysphoria is alleviated by acceptance of his transgender body, he becomes empowered and is able to use his weaponized body and knowledge of the hegemonic social system to destroy it from the inside.

By the end of *Videodrome*, Renn is made aware that he can only continue onwards by transcending his physicality completely, and making the transition from a physical body into

something completely different and non-corporeal. This relates as well to the idea of destroying the system from the inside. Of course, as Audre Lorde has taught, the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house; similarly, in the film's final scene, Nicki Brand tells Max, "You've gone as far as you can, with the way things are...You've hurt them, but you haven't destroyed them. To do that, you have to go on to the next phase." That is, Max can only get so far by working from within the system; in order to destroy oppressive and hegemonic power structures, Renn must shift to exist outside of them completely. This scene of the film, which appears on the surface level to be a suicide, is actually a scene of transcendence through transition. Willow Maclay writes that as trans people (particularly those who transition medically), "we have to kill our past self to bring a newer version of us into existence."²² This speaks also to Ruth Goldberg's article on *Mad Love*: as the body changes, does the person inside remain the same? Yes and no. Through medical transition, trans people may become more complete versions of themselves. The individual remains ultimately the same, but a version of them is killed. Thus we can read *Videodrome*'s final scene as one of ultimate gender euphoria as Max transitions into the most complete version of himself. Trans bodies, in the world, are always being gendered forcibly and violently; it is only through the destruction of gendered conceptions of physical form that we can become free of others' perceptions, control, and influence. Long live the new flesh!

²² Willow Catelyn Maclay and Caden Mark Gardner, "Body Talk: Conversations on Transgender Cinema with Caden Gardner (Part Six)"

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