

From its anatomy and autonomy to its death and diet, this issue focuses on the motif *Body* and all its meanings, direct and indirect, for instance as in relation to human and non-human bearers of bodies, its inhabitants like bacteria and organs, its social, medical and juridical conditions, its intoxications, chemical processes, traumas, transitions, well-being, replacements, weaknesses, its opposites. Bodies take on different forms.

In the photograph *I Was Here* by [Clara Lena Langenbach](#), a drop of blood-like liquid sits in the palm of her open hand. The liquid is meconium, or pupal fluid, and was left behind by a butterfly transforming from its chrysalis stage into its final form. In such a holometabolous metamorphosis, the organism passes through distinct phases and the adult form doesn't resemble the larva form. Metamorphosis—from Greek “after form,” or “transformation,”—is the transition from one bodily form to another. In ancient Greek mythology, shapeshifting was common practice amongst the deities, especially for Zeus who regularly took on other physical forms—swan, satyr, snake, bull, other deities etc. to deceive mortal and divine women. Far less malignantly, shapeshifting to deceive or mislead others about one's true identity is just as commonly used by animals. Both the hawk moth caterpillar and the Eurasian wryneck take the form of snakes when under threat. While the caterpillar changes the pattern on its body and hangs its elongated body from a branch to resemble a pit viper, the woodpecker bends and twists its head from side to side as if in trance to imitate the typical movement of a forest snake.

“My core is boiling oil. My skin has started to grind and crunch.” In the text *Annihilation*, [Hasti](#) writes about a different form of physical transformation, an eerie change or process of metamorphosis that could result in a pregnant body. The title suggests a loss or destruction—Annihilation—of the former self, the self before the irreversible change. With this annihilation all traces of the former life are left behind, like the newly free and airborne butterfly leaves a drop of meconium, waste product from its pupal form. A premise for a change with a positive outcome is for the transformation to be voluntary. With their contribution *Have You Ever Bought the Morning-After Pill? Or How to Practice Reproductive Justice Activism* [Jolanta Nowaczyk](#) and [Alexandra Ivanciu](#) address the importance of choice by pointing towards activists on the verge of legality providing birth-control options in regions where these aren't easily accessible and therefore offering the choice to metamorphose, or not. The rights of one's own body, and how it's regulated by the state, is also discussed with the German judge [Henriette Maier](#) (alias) in the interview *Being a Body Within a State*. We look at abortion rights, surrogacy issues, reflecting on the metaphor of the state as a body, and how social change affects the transformation of law.

Tattoos are another way of transforming, of exercising control over changes to one's own body. “As a tattoo artist, I see my job as a facilitator of shape shifting, and I take this process of transformation seriously,” writes [Holly Hunter](#) in *Portal Archive*. Tattoo ink is a permanent addition to human cells, and shows the body as a porous entity with fluid borders not fully separate from its environment. Bodies are in constant exchange with their surroundings. They breathe, eat, drink, touch, smell, perceive and are therefore in a constant state of diligent transformation and merging. With the contribution *Leave at Twig at Branch at Trunk* by [Jannis Marwitz](#), trees insinuate anthropomorphic shapes, the embodiment of bodies merging with nature. Nevertheless it is unclear if this is the final stage of a human body fused with its surroundings or if the human eyes of the observer are only naturally searching for familiar shapes in the gnarled tree trunks, and windswept crowns. In *Clay Porn* by [Ingrid Jäger](#), another body coalesces with its environment: “Twitching, convulsing, I become one with the sludge. I don't sink, but gradually dissolve into this lava in one huge, eternal orgasm.” If anything, this metamorphosis is voluntary since the transformation, in this case the absorption into another body, results in an orgiastic experience. Similarly, in [Fanny Howe's](#) *End-Song*, in death, the body becomes sky or is at least supposed to:

Can't you burn into nothing?

Isn't the sky what I expected to become?

Death is the most mysterious metamorphosis of all, since no one can know exactly what will happen to the spirit, the essence, or simply the not-just-meat-and-bones part of oneself. Different cultures have very different ideas about this so-called afterlife. But there is a universal fear of dead bodies returning to haunt the living. This embodied fear of the uncanny, the eerie and the unknown part of death is the fear that the undefinable non-body part is not at peace, has not moved on from its former life and is therefore (not yet) free. Ultimately this idea of freedom is the incentive for many transformations, may they be tattoos, a different haircut, the refusal of or the decision for a pregnancy, or a change in one's gender expression.

In the poem *The Dream of Calories*, [Mag Gabbert](#) writes: “Like energy, we are an event—not ‘a thing.’” The event or the thing here admittedly refers to a (sexual) relationship between two humans, but bodies certainly are not things either. They are rather like energy, an event. Constantly in motion, constantly changing, and unconsciously in close dialogue with the immediate environment,

the body is anything but permanent. The myriad of bacteria living in, around, and on human as well as nonhuman bodies are in perpetual exchange. Bodies are not a single entity but rather a chain of events and little transformations, bacteria and cells exchanging information. Bodies as a collection of proteins, bones, cells, bacteria, blood and hormones become vessels for a poetic exploration of the small-scale processes within. With *Anatomic* [Adam Dickinson](#) looks at how blood, hormones and potentially toxic substances provide the framework for these explorations of the tiniest parts of the human body and their influence on the body as a whole. The collage *Free* by [A.L. Steiner](#) shows a collection of unapologetic bodies in all their shapes, forms, and transitional stages, whilst [Rebekka Endler](#) deconstructs the idea of the average body, normative genitals and the familiar in her essay *Haunted by Norma & Normman—On the Violence of Averageness and Normality*. With *Some Thoughts about the Relation of the Body and the Archive* [Hanne Loreck](#) opens a portal to even more written contemplations about the body via an online archive accessible via QR code: “The archive determines what the human body actually is, how it’s produced through processes of description, molding, modeling, imitation, and representation.”

[Sonja Yakovleva](#)’s silhouetted bodies break out of social gender norms, fight, and transform said norms by reshaping their bodies in the gym. With *COLLECTIVE BODY POSSUM* [Jess Arndt](#) contemplates, craves a body “that I can live in,” that is everything, simultaneously within the norm and far beyond it. [Clémentine Bedos](#)’ *UV Texture Map 4. Jpg* is a digital body as well as a possibility to transform said body, e.g. apply different digital texture, skin, and questions the reception and representation of the non-cis-male-body in history and contemporary discourse. With *Office of Lost and Found Labia*, [Andrea Éva Györi](#) captures the pleasures of the flesh, the physical body in delicately ethereal drawings. In the interview *Fashion and the Body* [Bernhard Willhelm](#) reflects on the conditions and restrictions under which bodies exist in a social and fashionable framework. Similarly, in R.I.P. [Germain](#)’s collage *Flesh Of My Flesh, Blood Of My Blood*, human bodies exist under restrictions, experience tension and portray different ways in which different bodies struggle.

Nail biting is a common coping mechanism, a compulsive strategy to ease a strenuous situation or relieve physical tension in an uncomfortable environment. [Johannes Kuczera](#) allows intimate insights into personal moments of uncertainty, tension, or discomfort where nail biting was used as a bodily relief. The photographs are taken from the perspective of the open mouth, as the spectators are physically involved in the process, sitting uncomfortably on the periphery of someone else’s body. From the bodily experience of an existence in a changing, metamorphosing environment, [Daisy Hildyard](#) broadens this perspective, linking the personal with the political and the human body with a wider idea of environment. It is not only the human body that is changing but also the sphere that these bodies inhabit that is constantly evolving. Kuczera’s open mouth shows the body as a porous entity that is anything but separate from its surroundings while Hildyard’s text *War on the Air—Ecologies of Disaster* points to the body as one amongst many, entangled in ecological as well as social connections.

[Barak Zemer](#) questions the very human sense of belonging and of gravity with the simple but effective image of floating cucumbers and potatoes in a car seemingly suspended in midair. [Maja Smrekar](#) and [Manuel Vason](#) evoke a similar feeling of uncanniness in which a dog is gently nursed by a human. Through this simple gesture, humans become mammals and this multispecies encounter becomes species-defying commentary on overarching care.

Finally [Constance DeJong](#) tells a tale of *Jewelry* and the emotions and sometimes stories that are attached to these ornaments. Jewelry, like clothes or tattoos, are all tools of transformation, of metamorphosis; they symbolize the potential to take control over one’s own body, they are expressions of an inner self worn visibly on the outer layer of the body. Both the physical existence of the body and the human experience of being a body in a social construct are hinted at in this issue. And both the body and the social conditions in which those bodies live have the potential to metamorphose, to change and transform, to be fluid and malleable while being firm and standing for how they want to be perceived. The only constant state is one of transformation.