

Jasper Verlinden

**Strategic Authenticity:  
Male Pregnancy and the Renaturalization of the Transgender Body**

On April 3, 2008, Thomas Beatie, a transgender man from Oregon who was six months pregnant at the time, appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* as the so-called “first pregnant man.” This appearance caused a crucial shift in mainstream thinking about male pregnancy, from the biological male whose pregnancy is enabled by revolutionary scientific developments (as can be found in fictional accounts) to the pregnant man as a transgendered subject.

In this project, I will analyze examples of male pregnancy from utopian and dystopian science fiction narratives to photographic (self-)representations of the pregnant transgender body. In order to examine the potential of the figure of the pregnant man in (re)negotiating questions of gender difference, technology and biology, body and identity, I will take a closer look at the rhetorical and visual strategies used in these examples in relation to the shifting discursive frameworks of science, law, feminism, gender studies, transgender studies, and queer theory.

Given the time constraints of the workshop, I would present only a very limited amount of material and center my readings around the theoretical trope of the cyborg. In Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1985) the cyborg is an anti-essentialist union of machine and organism. Yet in the application of this figure, it is the machine, the unnatural technological part that has taken center stage. It is quasi impossible to imagine the apparent bio/logical impossibility of the pregnant man outside the realm of science and technology. However, bringing the organism back into the cyborg equation through the figure of the pregnant man might offer insight into how the body—however discursively constituted—continues to resist the regulatory effect of the discursive frames it finds itself in, as well as our individual attempts at corporeal mastery.

**Jasper Verlinden** is a Magister student in English Philology and North American Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. His current research interests include emotion and belonging, transgender studies, and fan fiction. He is currently teaching a student-led seminar on queer theory.