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Fattening our Worldmakings: A Critical Fat-Posthumanist Assemblage of Care

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In theorizing fat oppression and experiences, fat studies maps out the ways in which the fat body has always been positioned as the "excessive," not-quite or non-human in the logic of humanism. In conversation with critical femininities and critical disability studies, there is an exploration of how fat corporeality is often dehumanized, devalued, criminalized, and made disposable through the image of the excessive Other. In North America, both the "obesity epidemic" and COVID-19 pandemic have used the concept and language of excess to expose marginalized bodies to the violence of white supremacy, ableism, sanism, heterosexism, and anti-fatness, along with other systems of oppression (Garland-Thomson 1997; Maynard and Simpson 2022; Strings 2019). The proximity to death and loss due to these larger systems has always been present; however during the COVID-19 pandemic it amplified for fat people across the intersections as the politics of life and death put their bodies on a course of slow and/or accelerated death (Bahra 2023). In this article, I expand the discussion on how the uncaring-assemblages of these crises make fat, racialized, disabled people extremely vulnerable and disposable due to this supposed state of abject they occupy. The latter half presents a posthumanist turn within fat studies using the notion of worldmaking to reframe excess as resistance and possibilities within a fat-posthumanist assemblage of care. In fattening posthumanism and its critical interventions of the personal registry, this is an offering for a new vision of fat as difference, fat as life, and fat as an activator of "alternative ways of producing knowledge" (Braidotti 2019, 12). Excessive *as an embodied and affective knowledge practice in this critical fat-posthumanist praxis enables relational intimacies with other fat and marginalized communities to form counternarratives to humanism and its carceral systems, while also building caring-worldmakings that nourish excessive communities and their affective becomings.*

Introduction

Let Us Begin with a Story of Anti-Fatness: The Knowers

In my very Panjabi immigrant household, a media player ran day and night filling the affective shimmers, vibrations, and sensations throughout the house. A radio station that frequently played on 88.9FM was *RedFM* (*Reflecting Ethnic Diversity*), a South Asian-centered station centering the diverse voices of the diaspora across Canada in Hindi, Panjabi, Urdu, and English. The radio station consisted of a variety of music shows and talk shows, ranging from "Red Morning," "Great Debate," "Dil Diyan Gallan" (translated as "Stories of the Heart"), and "Humara Pakistan" (translated as "Our Pakistan"). These talk shows, over the years, have discussed various topics over the course of time, such as cultural artifacts (i.e., music, film) and social issues (i.e., domestic violence, international students facing deportation, etc.) and the

radio station is hosted in different cities across Canada. In early 2023, I was able to catch the 8:00 pm "Dil Diyan Gallan" talk show airing from Toronto. The show had my ears glued to the words of the radio host, Radio Jockey X (RJ X), as he narrated a story. His story was a verbal op-ed that opened the floodgates of anti-fatness, healthism, and "the knowers." Now, let me share how the radio jockey weaved his position of "the knower" with his audience.

As the story goes, RJ X found himself on an old college friend's Instagram page to discover she is now a plus-size model who promotes a brand centered around body positivity and fat acceptance. He spoke of a post she shared with her followers on what the body positivity movement has done for her journey of self-love, and yet while reading the post RJ X found himself "triggered." Yes, he used that exact word to describe how he felt about seeing these posts rather than being supportive of his friend's journey of embodiment. He went on to share how it made no sense that she presented herself in such a manner, because *he knew* how bad her eating habits were and that she never exercised, so body positivity here seems like a *pardaa* (translation: veil — such as to hide a situation or activity behind a veil). RJ X proceeded with the statement: "…I'm not saying everyone is like this as it may help folks, but it's looking like a scam to me. The body positivity movement can come across as a change of perspective so that folks aren't using terms like *motta* [translation: fatty] anymore" (RedFM 2023). He continued to then state that on the other end of the spectrum, the body positivity framework can also be taken up as a way of "appropriating," meaning that fat people find excuses for "their *allas* [translation: laziness] or veil lifestyle habits that are not good for" them within the body positivity framework (RedFM 2023). RJ X followed this story with the question: "Is the body positive movement actually revolutionary or is it simply a scam?" This question made my ears perk up and my cheeks flush red with, not a sense of fat-shame, but with complete femme rage at the wording of his question and the impact it can have.

Although the question comes across as open-ended, I could tell he simply wanted folks to agree with his opinion in this debate on fat life. And you better believe, the "circulation of fat hatred" (Rice et al. 2020) remained apparent across the multiple languages spoken in the overtones of the radio host and the multiple men calling and texting him across Canada with their responses. The anti-fat sentiments remained afloat in the vibrations of my kitchen as I heard throughout the live show that fat people are "unhealthy" or have a "bad lifestyle," which consists of overeating and little to no exercise whatsoever, and that fatness is only associated with illness and pain (RedFM 2023). With the circulation of words, such as "pardaa," "allas," or "motta," excess as spectacle was mapped onto fat bodies (RedFM). For RJ X and the multitude of callers, the use of the hashtag "body positive" or "self-love" enabled fat people to mask their insecurities and use it as a form of justification of their "unhealthy" practices (RedFM 2023). The radio show left me even more frustrated as a "weight-management" doctor tuned in and shared his own perspective—that if a fat person loses weight, they will no longer experience mental health issues, body pain, or other health issues, that they will feel stronger and more alive (RedFM 2023). Of course, this doctor was greeted with elation by our dear host because his level of expertise legitimated the anti-fat and healthist narrative RJ X aimed to share with his audience. Together, these two men presented themselves as the true "knowers" that pushed the claim that fat people are excessive, gluttonous, immoral "phobogenic objects" (Fanon 1952, 133).

When thinking about fatness as excess, Frantz Fanon's concept of phobogenic object is useful to understand the visceral feel of this anti-fat discourse that positions fat bodies outside of normative time, space, and body. As the outliers of this box of normalcy, the fat body is the phobogenic object—the object of *fear*—and thus, in a state of being that is described as in

proximity to sickness, loss of health, and death. The temporal nature of such a description suggests that fat life is unaligned with normalcy, liveliness, or happiness (Bahra 2018, 2023). RJ X and the doctor's stance of neutrality and objective truth on the "obesity epidemic" framed fat people as objects of excessive peril and lacking both health and a future. Between the shared agreement of RJ X and the medical authoritative voice, the discourse of anti-fatness and healthism took an even deeper hold as their voices floated in the vibrations of the station and my home.

The false claims did not stop there. On the same show, RJ X decided to share the genealogies of both the body positivity and feminist movement. He shared his thoughts on the individual and collective similarities between the two movements, saying that they present a dialogue on how gendered and fat bodies have been positioned as the Other in the bifurcation of bodies. RJ X and callers who agreed with him suggested that both social movements began on a "good foot" to discuss gender and social issues, however, RJ X shared the sentiment that both the feminist and body-positivity movement have departed from the initial call for social change (RedFM 2023). He insinuated that the movements have enabled gluttonous and overzealous behaviour without any consideration of the cultural mores of South Asia or the neoliberal model of health, gender, sexuality, and its "lifestyle programming" (Bahra 2023; Puar 2017). Overall, like his fat feminist friend, fat people are simply framed as doing too much and being uncaring towards themselves.

As his segment neared the end, RJ X made his last statement, one that sent a current of pain and resistance down my rolls. He ignored the intersectional fat experience by proclaiming that the body positivity movement is nothing like the social justice movements that fight for gender or racial equality. For him, "trying to find equality in the aspect of weight is unreasonable" (RedFM 2023). His statement invalidated the fat liberation and body positivity movements and those that use these spaces as forms of destabilizing the personal registry—the ideal, thin, and/or muscular body—and mode of resistance. This heteropatriarchal perspective ignores younger South Asian cisgender women and queer people who are breaking the chains from a system that has for so long reinforced sizeist, shapeist, and colourist systems that controlled the discourse of their bodies (Crenshaw 1990). He ended his session by repeating the very question that engulfed my evening and my fat body in anger: "audience, please let me know if you think the body positive movement is revolutionary or a scam?" (RedFM 2023). Of course, the latter is all he wanted to hear, because he is the "knower" in this situation. After sitting through that awful segment, I was baffled by the audacity these South Asian men had to continue imprinting interlocking systems of oppression upon marginalized bodies as the so-called knowers of knowledge(s). With his sign off from *RedFM* Toronto, I signed off with my own external scream, regardless if RJ X could hear me: FAT(NESS) IS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE, motherfucker!

Our Stories, Our Knowledge: Fat Embodied Knowing

I began with this story because, as fat scholars, we know the difficulty that comes with sharing our stories of fat oppression and presenting narratives and research centering fat liberation. This goes further than the body positivity movement, which has been co-opted to maintain the exclusionary politics that govern the body. We—fat scholars—advocate for fat bodies because, besides the fat hatred circulating in various spaces, we experience discrimination across various sectors of life, such as healthcare, employment, education, law and justice, dating pools, and more. In addition, the conflation of fatness with death has limited our access to life in general, as oftentimes our fat bodies are a form of *zoë* rather than *bios* in this "politics of life" (Agamben

1998; Foucault 1990). In the polarity of this politics of life, *bios* stands in as the fully privileged state of being: here, we see the thin subject labelled as normal and as the ideal version of narrow understandings of health. On the contrary, *zoë* is equated to animal life, devoid of any qualification of human vitality, let alone politics, becoming what Giorgio Agamben (1998) conceptualizes as bare life. Bare life in this politics of life concludes in the dehumanization, disenchantment, and encampment of vulnerable bodies by social institutions. Consequently, fat bodies as phobogenic objects are seen as completely lacking the criteria of life and are thus contained and rehabilitated to fit the social narratives of compulsory thinness and health.

Following the radio show, I stood in my kitchen frustrated and began a dialogue on this entire segment with my superfat mum. Together we reflected on the debate, which positioned our bodies as unworthy of the subject position of *bios*. The post-reflection conversation reminded me of Dr. Cat Pausé's questions framing fat epistemology in her blog *A Friend of Marilyn*: "When it comes to fatness and fat bodies, who gets to be a knower? … Who gets to produce knowledge?" And "[W]ho gets to know?" (Pausé 2012, n.p.). Scholars like Pausé have been pushing the field of fat studies to curate a fat epistemology with the aim of centering fat people as both the knower and producer of fat-situated knowledges to expand our own understanding of fat embodiment at both the institutional and interpersonal level. Additionally, fat studies holds the intention to build a foundation of collective assemblages that prioritize relationality and care for our fat kin.

This article hopes to continue the expansion of fat epistemologies that speak to how spaces like media (i.e., *RedFM*), medicine, social support services, or public policies maintain the very violent systems that hold fat people responsible for their debilitated state, rather than acknowledging how anti-fat discourses are entangled with ableist, sexist, and white supremacist discourses that make fat people vulnerable and disposable in crises due to the supposed state of excess they occupy. The latter half of this piece will work towards applying the posthuman turn to the realm of fat studies to reframe fat as excessive in a more affirmative lens, where fatness is an *expression of life* that activates "alternative ways of producing knowledge[s]" (Braidotti 2019, 12).

Methodology and Positionality

I began this piece with the story of listening to *RedFM* as a pedagogical practice that issues a sense of critique, creativity, and sensation as we think and feel through our world (Braidotti 2019; Chen 2012). In presenting this form of affective worldmaking through the act of storytelling, I follow in the steps of feminist scholars and activists who present stories of untold sufferings and resurgence in the hopes that their "constellations of co-resistance" (Maynard and Simpson 2022, 7) will open doors to an array of discussions on the embodiment of difference (Crenshaw 1990; Hickey-Moody and Page 2015; Kondo 2018). In using the notion of affective worldmaking I intend to demonstrate the ways in which weaving stories of fat embodiments is a "personal, social, cultural, and political practice" (Schultermandl et al. 2022, 13). Seeing that "we are made of stories," I hope to offer an analysis of how my lived experience as a fat, Panjabi (second-generation), femme is "mediated, negotiated, and demarcated through language and narrative storytelling" (14). My story emerges as a form of affective configuration of the visceral, somatic, affective, and enmeshing of my fat, brown, femme, leaky body and those around me. As an interdisciplinary scholar seeking to divulge the affective capacities of the body, I understand fat studies as itself a worldmaking project; my work is a glimmer in that larger

shimmering project on the relational properties of the fat body as a process and series of connections (Seigworth and Gregg 2010). Overall, storytelling is a tool used to centre fat brown bodies while also generating a sense of fat kinship without holding onto any achievement politics.

The Uncaring-Assemblages: Fat Bodies as Vulnerable and Disposable

In thinking of this larger theme of living as and being fat, fat studies scholars have discussed the multiple ways in which the fat body is built and positioned within the paradox of humanity and its exclusionary practices of categories, charts of comparison, and tools of governing bodies into life and deathworlds (Bahra 2018, 2023; Mbembe 2017, 2019). The knowledges associated with the medical model and the constant framing of the "obesity epidemic" or COVID-19 deathworld are all based on the question of subjectivity and the body, wherein the medical model and its associated disciplines "underlay strong ideologies of social control and techniques of medical, educational, and industrial management" (Haraway 2013, 16). Many scholars have illustrated that the politics of life is always operating through the mutually constitutive systems of racism, ableism, heterosexism, sizeism, and shapeism[1] and the ways in which life is never attached nor afforded to fat racialized people (Bahra 2023; Goodley 2014; Mbembe 2017; Puar 2017; Weheliye 2014). Developing biopolitical theory, Achille Mbembe (2017, 2019) conceptualizes "necropolitics" to speak of the ways in which the attribution of "liveliness and deadliness" to bodies sustains the binary of bios and zoë. Under necropolitics, marginalized communities are attributed to a state of deadliness and sequestered to a "process of confinement, removal and exhaustion" (Haritaworn et al. 2014, 4). I find myself using the theory of necropolitics to ask: how has being the pathological and excessive Other framed understandings of our fat bodies, access to health, and life in general? How are fat bodies made disposable under this notion of the excessive nonhuman?

The Biopolitical Affect Fantasy and Economy

Affect studies, like the interdisciplinary fields of fat studies, disability studies, and postcolonial studies, is concerned with the question of what it means to be human, as well as the constitution of social reality and our embodied experiences of differences (Chen 2002; Schultermandl et al. 2022). Our understanding of what constitutes "being human" is significantly shaped by a reactive sociopolitical process of worldmaking that inscribes the "personal registry" onto bodies through the concept of proximity to a perceived norm (Bahra and Overboe 2019; Overboe 2009, 2012). James Overboe (2009, 2012) argues that this personal registry operates within the grid of humanness, which establishes normative frameworks of value and recognizability predicated on sameness. This grid centers the full-human around an individualized, able-bodied and civilized notion of being, an ideal that implicitly extends to the white, heterosexual, thin/fit/muscular, elite cisgender man. The notion of the "genres of Man" is upheld by multiple, interdependent binaries that function simultaneously, both implicitly and explicitly, to valorize certain bodies while dehumanizing others as the excessive Other based on their perceived proximity to this privileged norm (Bahra 2018, 2023; Bahra and Overboe 2019; Overboe 2009, 2012; Weheliye 2014).

The marking, categorizing, and objectifying practices of the personal registry have initiated a reactive and uncaring worldmaking that leaves the raced and disabled body to be affixed to the state of the phobogenic object that evokes anxiety and warrants surveillance in the

eyes of celebrated normative corporeality (Ahmed 2004; Fanon 1952; Sithole 2016). The phobogenic object, as described by Fanon (1952) and analyzed in relation to affect by Sara Ahmed (2004), refers to both the perception of a body as eliciting irrational fear, repulsion, and anxiety in a normative audience, and the resulting state of perceived excessiveness. While illuminating the emotional and affective dimensions of lived experience, this concept also provides an entry point for examining how social oppression operates through the dehumanization and objectification of bodies within racist, ableist, and sizeist societies. For instance, in Black Skin, White Masks (1952), Fanon details various historical and social constructions wherein the Black person is positioned as a figure of fear, anxiety, and danger under the white gaze. His analysis of colonial and racist society reveals how the phobogenic object—in this case, the racialized and/or disabled person—is stripped of their humanity and imbued with negative connotations (i.e., immorality, shame, threat) (Fanon 1952, 155–156). This relationship between the excessive Other, the normative audience, and the social system illustrates how perceived danger often far exceeds any actual threat, a disparity informed by racist ideologies that perpetuate the fragmentation of bodies (Sithole 2016). Expanding this analysis through a fat affective lens, under sizeism and healthism, the fat body is always positioned as a phobogenic object as it fails to align with the neoliberal, thin, nondisabled, white nationalist fantasy. Across various social spaces, encounters with a fat body often conclude in the pathologization and stigmatization of fatness as "unhealthy," a site of insecurity and threat to life itself (Ahmed 2004; Bahra 2023). As a fat, brown, femme person, the external perception of my body as a phobogenic object has consistently been intertwined with an intense feeling of dread, repulsion, and Otherness. This visceral reaction from the normative gaze stems from the perceived threat my embodied existence poses—not only to myself, through dominant narratives of health and morality, but also to my kin and even the ideological foundations of the state, which often relies on narrow definitions of ideal citizenship and belonging (Bahra 2023; Rinaldi et al 2020). The particular fixation on my fatness is especially salient. Despite conscious efforts to care for my mother's and my body, we are perpetually framed within a discourse of ill health and "life-in-death" (Bahra 2023). Such framings underscore how the phobogenic object operates to pathologize and dehumanize, irrespective of individual practices or lived realities. The anxiety projected onto our fat bodies reveals a deeper societal fear outside the personal registry, where fatness becomes a hypervisible marker of transgression against idealized notions of health, productivity, and even national identity (Bahra 2023; Bahra and Overboe 2019; Strings 2019).

The carceral geographies of the prison industrial complex, medical industrial complex, and diet industrial complex have continuously characterized fat racialized bodies as the antithesis to the celebrated corporeality of the personal registry. In their analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the #nobodyisdisposable movement, Tracey Tidgwell and Fady Shanouda remind us that fat, disabled, and/or ill people are understood to be disparaged and disposable (2023, 265). They further contend that "[f]at bodies are understood as being closer to death, and Black fat bodies are perhaps already dead. Fat, disabled, and Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) have always known that these systems claiming to protect us are the same ones threatening to kill us" (Tidgwell and Shanouda 2023, 266). Thus, the day-to-day violence endured by fat racialized people through the positioning of their bodies as nonhuman in the social world order places them always in the process of dying (Bahra 2023; Bahra and Overboe 2019; Harrison 2021). Basically, the leaky containers of fat bodies across the intersections are signified solely as illness and death, meaning fat people are never considered healthy enough.

The biopolitical affect economy of the thin, nondisabled, white nationalist fantasy carried by the state utilizes the genres of the personal registry to not only justify the discourses imbued upon our fat bodies, but also the violence and its methods of erasure. As Walter D. Mignolo reminds us in his decolonial investigation of the epistemic foundations of racism, the colonial matrix of power exerts its worldmaking capacity through multiple industrial institutions that allocate a capitalist agenda to bodies, a process consistently reliant on domination and dehumanization (2021, 127). These industrial machines (i.e., the medical, diet, and well-being industrial complex) further manage and discipline bodies by naturalizing the personal registry and framing fat bodies as zoë, an unprotected form of life-in-death, easily disposed of under the rationale of their perceived failure to invest in normative lifestyles and aesthetic eugenics (Bahra 2023; Mignolo 2021; Nayar 2014; Weheliye 2014).

In debility politics, this life-in-death experience is very much prevalent as fat bodies continue to be imbued with animalistic qualities, framed as too big: split between the binary of rationality (read as bios) and the body (read as zoë) as an unvalued entity slipping between the object and abject. With the conflation of the discourse of healthism with thinness, the wellness industry (along with the diet industrial machine and the larger medical industrial complex linked to other modalities of body politics) aims to construct fat bodies as sites of active entrepreneurship invested in the temporal fantasy of the "healthy," thin, nondisabled, white nation. To meet the demands of the personal registry, fat subjects are expected to undertake techniques of self-surveillance focused on weight loss and rehabilitation (Bahra 2023; Puar 2017). The racist-ableist-sizeist gaze of RJX, initially, and later the doctor and audience, underpins the thin, nondisabled, white nation fantasy by projecting anti-fat discourses into social and cultural spaces like the RedFM radio segment. Simultaneously, this gaze attaches notions of capacity and productivity to normative bodies, establishing a false opposition between the pretense of working out and body positivity. Thus, anti-fat practices become a necessary tool for the continuation of the state's anti-fat agenda, which deems different bodies unworthy of living or being saved unless they demonstrate a promise of acquiring the status of full-human (Bahra 2023; Mbembe 2017, 2019; Sithole 2016, 32). Together, these anti-fat practices evoke the broader and literal policing of bodies deemed excessive and as the phobogenic object needing control, no matter what.

Uncaring-Assemblages and Worldmakings

The "careless worlds" and the "uncaring" institutions described by the Care Collective (Chatzidakis et al. 2020, 10) increasingly expose fat people to state-sanctioned violence, in both overt and covert forms, often leading to debilitated states. We are reminded by the works of fat Black scholars like Da'shaun Harrison that "anti-fat is coercive… it teaches people to believe that the bodies of fat Black folks are only supposed to endure pain, never pleasure; that their very existence is always defined by Death, never life; that their value, if any is assigned at all, wrapped up in their ability to perform" (2021, 30–31). In the deathworlds of the past and present-day, Robyn Maynard and Leanne B. Simpson assert that under white supremacy's matrix of power, "Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples are always the first to die, and that any state solutions will be made first to save white people's lives and livelihoods" (2022, 33). Such instances illustrate the uncaring worldmakings experienced by marginalized communities and how their disposability results from the maintenance of controlling images of the fat spectacle as excessive, the domains of power evident in the lack of access to health/care or social support, and the differential care often afforded to privileged bodies who are white, nondisabled, and thin.

The Deleuzeguattarian school of affect helps us to think through the ways in which careless worlds have always been a collective experience that move within and through the body (Clough and Halley 2007; Deleuze and Guattari 1977; Manning 2016; Massumi 2015; Seigworth and Gregg 2010). In this realm of affect, the body is an intensive, fragmented, and dynamic process comprised of relations and capable of affecting and being affected (Bahra and Overboe 2019; Fritsch 2010; Manning 2016; Massumi 2015). If the body has an affective capacity, I then question, how do we see the white-thin-ableist-assemblage articulate a version of uncaring-worldmaking that enacts the discourse of fat bodies as excessive and, thus, not worthy of *life* or care? We see how care-less communities focus on investing in policing and surveillance rather than community-building. Hospitals, doctors, and pharmaceutical companies are the top three businesses in the health sector in which the Canadian government invests its money (Tam 2021, 67). These investments are in fact a divestment from the enhancement of ways to access "health" and community-building, as these business spaces come to inflict uncaring-assemblages of surveillance upon fat people across the intersections. Considering that fat, racialized bodies are positioned as the spectacle of excess that fails to fit into the box of thinness, acceptable curviness, whiteness, health, and normalcy, the medical industrial complex and society overall perpetuate an individualized version of care that always puts the onus of rehabilitation on the excess of the Other. As a result, this individualized notion of care limits the understanding of what fat bodies can do, as they are always framed in opposition to health and in proximity to only a life-in-death (Fox 2012, 163).

The body of knowledge rooted in fatphobia marks how professionals and patients should behave, often organizing care through the imposition of "control and discipline over its members' and clients' activities and practice" (Fox 2012, 163). As a fat caregiver to my superfat mother in her journey of Long COVID, I note that our fat, brown flesh is often taken up as a spectacle of excess needing to be managed due to the biopedagogical practices associated with the personal registry. In our caregiving, we find ourselves stepping foot in institutional spaces of uncaring which continue to position our bodies as the phobogenic object. We are marked and dehumanized while we are neglected or refused adequate care when seeking access to medical support.

The theme of capacity and productivity has been prominent in the majority of the scenarios of accessing care for my mother, whether it be emergency triage or Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) appointed medical practitioners. What has consumed the physical and virtual walls of our medical visits is the medical lingo of "obesity" and "weight management," and the practices of sizeism and shapeism that surface through the medical mandated modalities of rehabilitation. The physiotherapy and occupational therapists we have seen have mostly worked towards containing my mother's fatness, concentrating on weight-loss rather than providing a form of therapy to counter the deconditioning experienced in my mother's time on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Such medical practices (along with the list of weight-loss measures) are transferred from the hospital to both our home and her rehabilitative programs, sustaining the biopedagogical practices that teach fat patients, such as my mother and I, as her caregiver, how to govern our fatness to fit within the progressive model of healthcare, and to take charge of our fat lives to reach the paradoxical state of the human. The fatphobic uncaring-assemblage here maps fat bodies such as ours as non-human and therefore undeserving of care whatsoever. In this uncaring-worldmaking that holds its temporal flag of compulsory sizeism, fat people are only linked to one thing: death, in our present and future. Life is far from ever attached to our bodies (Bahra 2023; Fox 2012;

Harrison 2021). The careless-assemblage's regimes of necropolitics consequently leave fat bodies feeling and sensing the attribution of deadliness in our notion of what the fat body can do. We come to *feel* the worry and the pain of our excess in these institutions of uncaring, inequitable care that is supposed to provide a nurturing space but instead contributes to making fat people feel the embodying nature of loneliness, disposability, and death.

The uncaring-assemblage of the personal registry is further solidified as these medical providers enact their authoritative medical gaze, suggesting, for example, that my mother's history of "obesity" is the overlying cause of the shortness of breath, nerve damage, and swelling she experienced. As the authoritative voice of medical experts monitored and disciplined her on the path to so-called health, each interaction with the therapist and weight-loss machine displaced the blame onto her excessive body rather than Long COVID. A moral responsibility is put on fat people to divest themselves from their fatness and to experience "health" rather than death, by losing the excess that makes them both hypervisible and yet invisible within these oppressive structures.

Overall, in this uncaring-assemblage, fat people receive little to no care. In this version of worldmaking that commits to a neoliberal agenda, institutions that were supposedly designed to care for members of society do the complete opposite: they leave fat people in a form of a "wake," grieving our fat life (Puar 2017; Sharpe 2016). The uncaring version of care is heavily present in my mother's narratives wherein medical professionals try to push her superfat brown flesh to become smaller and smaller, aligning with a thin, "healthy" progressive body that is ready to enter the lifeworld. However, instead, the shared fat-assemblages between my mum and I have turned towards advocation for fat racialized bodies to have access to care.

The Posthuman Convergence and Worldmakings of Fat Studies

This brings us to the posthuman convergence and the potential to continue building fat-situated knowledges that counter the uncaring-assemblages that have framed excess as pathology. Through a critical fat posthumanist praxis, we embark on an animated affective turn that rethinks fat corporeality as embedded, relational, and fleshy messiness without the achievement politics of the full-human (Bahra and Overboe 2019; Kondo 2018; Rice et al. 2021). In taking up feminist new materialism, I question: if thin-lifeworlds are an orientation which sets certain knowledges and bodies on the path of life and life-in-death, how can we utilize posthumanism to curate our fat-situated knowledges that centre embodiment and affinities (Haraway 2013; Maynard and Simpson 2022)? How can we deploy posthumanism to write our affective dimensions and enable the leaking and oozing of our fat bodies without the trap of humanism?

Critical Posthumanism

The project of critical posthumanism re-thinks the concept of subjectivity and the body as an assemblage, co-evolving with the embeddedness of different embodiments (Braidotti 2013, 2019). According to Rosi Braidotti, the posthumanist turn aims to create "alternative visions of 'the human' generated by people who were historically excluded from, or partially included into, that category. It means creating other possible worlds" (2022, 3). Our fat bodies have been associated with excess and animal qualities, and a temporal notion of proximity rooted in fear and anxiety, but the affective economy of the posthuman has the potential to change these sentiments. Posthumanism decentres the full-human as the order of things, and unfolds into

resilient, hopeful, and care-centered assemblages that go beyond our time and space. A posthumanist care-assemblage for Braidotti speaks to the non-unitary subject that is inherently embedded within a planetary whole, reminding us of the "we-who-are-not-one-and-the-same-but-are-in-this-together" (2022, 8). The posthuman convergence presents the idea that "we have several bodies," meaning that there is truly never a "'self to refer back to, only a proliferation of vectors of intensity that emerge through contact" as we fold into and out of the bodies in our vicinity and beyond (Roelvink and Zolkos 2015, 7). In taking on such an ontology, there is potential to consider one's lived experience as processual, entangled, and interdependent, as the mind-body-spirit is no longer a binary, but a difference-as-an-event that leaves our bodies as always shifting, in the process of becoming something new with the moment. Subsequently, the posthuman convergence points to "a multi-directional opening that allows for multiple possibilities and calls for experimental forms" of self-reflexivity, ethical accountability, and defamiliarization as we build our fat cartographies in this "zoë/geo/techno-assemblage" (Braidotti 2019, 9). Whereas once the human was constituted by a framework of excess, Otherness, and exclusion, the posthumanist notion of excess and *life* overall is porous, centered around "becomings" with one's differences, and "becoming-with other life forms" (Nayar 2014, 30).

The zoë/geo/techno-assemblage surpasses the boundaries of corporeality—whether it be the human or animal form—and the cyborg, to present a politics of ethical immanence that does not hold onto the cultural politics of the body. The posthuman turn has manifested within critical disability studies as a way of delinking the lived experience of disabled people from the compulsory ableist gaze. This is the key objective in practicing a more affirmative approach that centres disidentification to deprivilege the personal registry and the temporal nature of the capitalist, nondisabled, white nationalist fantasy. A non-linear temporality creates a move away from traditional social mores toward an embrace of interrelation that assures that all lives are worth living—not just the lives formed by the standardized human template (Fritsch 2015; Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014). Dan Goodley, Rebecca Lawthom, and Katherine Runswick-Cole (2014) state that the posthuman process of affirmation acknowledges the vitally interdependent connections between others, technologies (such as prosthetics), and non-humans (such as animals or objects). Here, posthuman disability studies helps think beyond the polarities of life/death, nature/culture, subject/object, bios/zoë, and instead rethink how deeply interconnected these positions between the split are.

The Posthuman Turn in Fat Studies: Emerging Caring-Assemblages and Worldmakings

Within fat studies, we too can use posthumanism to abolish uncaring-worldmakings and formulate an understanding of fat materiality that is affectively intimate in a bodily-becoming by first defamiliarizing ourselves with the personal registry. Posthuman fat studies deterritorializes and reterritorializes alternative fat epistemologies. Fat scholars and activists trouble, resist, and reject the sizeist and shapeist rhetorics that disseminate across social structures and interpersonal relations, through the distribution of fat epistemological standpoints that build an intersectional fat liberation project. Talking about fat bodies as "excessive" and disposable was my initial step toward disengaging with the personal registry. Through an analysis of fat embodiment as shaped by multiple discourses, we see how sizeism and shapeism have long situated fatness within institutions, networks, and technologies that actively cast fatness as excessive and requiring containment. The reformulation of fat embodiment following a critical posthumanist lens offers a recasting of fat *life* as in relation and co-evolving with its intersections, environment, and networks (Nayar 2014). With the

posthuman in fat studies there is the decoding, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization of fat-becomings as fat materiality engages with not just the "difference within itself," but also with the complex layers of the multiple differences and ecologies co-existing across time and space (Overboe 1999). In fat-becomings, a deep sense of compassion and care is activated as the posthuman deprivileges the normative body while engaging in an excessively fat worldmaking that is based on leaky bodies, boundaries, and shared breath (Chatzidakis et al. 2020; Shildrick 1997). As we step away from the biopedagogical practices that tend to fold us into the medical model, we step towards fat epistemes that highlight an affirmative ethics of immanence that speak to the relationality and vulnerability in our caring fat-becomings (Braidotti 2019; Haraway 2013).

In this unfolding of our fat bodies, we have the potential to create a posthumanist fat praxis that is transversal, non-hierarchical, and non-linear. We can make room for every element of our bodies in this difference-as-event. Whereas the difference-as-event under sizeism and shapeism previously framed fatness as the phobogenic object that concludes in a state of suffering and anxiety, the affective economy of the posthuman convergence instead invites difference-as-event as an unfolding of resilience, hope, and action (Braidotti 2022, 5). In following a posthumanist framework, how do we then approach the gift of care as we rethink bodies, embodiment, and assemblages that push forth a caring-assemblage? How do we enact a caring politics that centres Braidotti's "we-who-are-not-one-or-the-same-but-are-in-this-together" (2022, 8)? Lastly, in what ways does a posthuman agenda provide an entry point to intergenerational and transversal thinking as an exercise to help create the collective "we" "in-this-together"?

I return to my caregiver-assemblage, which holds the practice of care, vulnerability, and reflexivity close to my heart and fat rolls. The two individuals and the collective assemblage of my mother and I in the larger caregiver-assemblage share a version of the posthuman project. The cartography of our intergenerational thinking brings forth a version of fat epistemological self-reflexivity and the "affirmative relational ethics" of our individual and collective experience of zoë and the flows of our becomings (Braidotti 2013, 2022). In the dialogic relationality between my mother and I, I have witnessed the territorialization, deterritorialization, reterritorialization of our fat-brown care-assemblage as we have moved from the facets of intergenerational sizeism that had us constantly policing each other's fatness and brownness to exchanging dialogue on how problematic this behaviour was. The reterritorialization of our assemblage concluded in the destabilization of subjectivity, thinness, and healthism overall as we began to cultivate a form of caring that was rooted in a politics of interdependency, intrarelationships, and vulnerability. We remind ourselves that this fat care-assemblage centred around "being cared for," and rather than the "uncaring care" it is rooted in fat liberation and an open-endedness that "allows, for a moment at least, a thing to become multiple, to be something and another thing and another" (Fox 2012, 168). Both individual and collective fat liberationist projects move beyond the normative corporeality of thinness and its temporality.

Initially, compulsory thinness, whiteness, and ableism played their tricks on our embodied experiences, but as I took on fat politics, I found myself able to use my own position as the knower of fat episteme to speak on how fatness is a social justice issue in interactions with my mum. That was the first step to our caring-assemblage: I began to join in on her medical appointments as an advocate for fat people and their bodies. With time, the two of us found ourselves engaging in critical conversations that deconstructed the discourse of thinness, ableism, femmeness, and whiteness as we sought to move beyond the limits of the constructions

on what a fat body can do (Bahra and Overboe 2019). As we unfolded from the reactive worldmaking of these systems, we came to share that, in fact, there is so much our fat flesh and bodies can do! Thus, the posthuman here brings forth a more generative experience of our fat and brown differences where we collectively work towards promoting our fat and loud voices in spaces that typically deplete us and our expressions of life.

In the posthuman convergence of fat studies, being and living fat lives can be summarized as being in a constant process of "becomings" in complex heterogenous assemblages, and here we find that our collective affective imaginings become transversal (Braidotti 2022). These expressions of *a life* are no longer framed in a reactive manner; instead, we completely remove ourselves from this cycle of credit and debt and reconceptualize the multiplicity that comes with being fat and living very fat embodiments. We collaborate to build an ethics of feeling and express our vulnerability by acknowledging the pain that comes with the personal registry, but also the freedom of subverting anti-fat narratives with our own sense of liveliness and fat joy. Fat as excessive is exuberant and welcoming of our care-practices and fat liberation projects, as we come to encapsulate an ethical form of worldmaking that speaks to our relationality and vulnerabilities as marginalized people.

Our caregiver-assemblage does not simply consist of the slippages of my mother and I as fat people: in fact, it also incorporates our family dog, Astro. As folks visit our home to see my mother who deals with the effects of Long COVID and its treatment of induced comatose and ventilation, Astro, our 65-pound Goldendoodle, too, experiences anti-fat narratives and fat-shaming by these guests. They believe he is the fat zoë in our fat kinship structure that warrants such uncaring comments. But in our home-space which has created a foundation of fat knowledges and liberation, the two of us fat femmes feel Astro's own liberatory and relational practices infuse with ours. In affirmative relational ethics, taking up the position of zoë here, as two fat femmes and a doggo, exceeds the sizeist and shapeist systems. We find our bodies opening as a form of "inexhaustible generative forces" that collectively become sites of resistance and critical fat praxis as "just a life" in caring-worldmakings (Braidotti 2019, 177, 179). The capacity to affect and be affected here transcends any version of the bifurcation of bodies, whether it be our not-quite or non-human flesh, to share the sensations of our fat-becomings without any connotation of reference to full-humanity. Collectively, we curate a centre of care for all forms of life, practice deep sharing, and take on the responsibility to protect one another from the violence of systemic oppression while creating our collective-becomings, narratives of shared breath, space, and world.

The Oozing, Unfolding, Fattening of Posthuman Worldmakings

The interdisciplinary field of fat studies has been committed for so long to exposing the vulnerabilities that come with the uncaring assemblages that deem fat bodies disposable. The posthuman turn as the "non-binary, multi-layered way of assessing" becomes a point of departure from the margins that have excluded us for so long as excessive phobogenic objects (Braidotti 2019, 108). The posthuman becomes the storytellings of worldmakings from the perspective of those that have a history of marginalization (108). Critical fat praxis and worldmaking here moves beyond the container of the personal registry and hopes to give space to the leaky, oozing, rolling-out of our fatness, brownness, femmeness, and/or disabilities. Furthermore, the switch from uncaring to caring-assemblages and worldmakings, has cultivated a sense of community and hope for fat life. The posthuman convergence as a

navigational and conceptual toolbox comes to animate fat life, intimacies, and epistemes (Braidotti 2019, 2022). It also demands "solidarity with other humans but also an embrace of the non-humans" (Braidotti 2019, 38). Therefore, as the body unfolds without referring to compulsory thinness, ablebodiedness, or whiteness and the overall state of the full-human, fattening our worldmakings invites critique and creativity together in the quest for an ethics of affirmation that helps us produce new social imaginaries and relations (38). The fat posthuman body is denaturalizing the discourses that have for so long dictated the way we must perform such actions. Caring-assemblages for fat bodies is letting loose our bulges and rolls from the container of thinness in the literal sense, and instead refiguring this ontological zone metaphorically as a revisioning of fatness as an expression of life that is fluid, emergent, and always in the process of becoming something new.

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This manuscript, written in 2023, marked two years into my mother's ongoing journey with COVID. We have now reached her fourth near-death anniversary. I want to acknowledge the rare experience of a caring-worldmaking extended to her by her occupational therapist, a stark contrast to typical neoliberal structures. Our fat assemblage, alongside Astro's, has unfolded in numerous rhizomatic tangents, characterized by generative messiness and centered around a caring fat kinship practice. I honor their bodyminds~spirits, and thank you for yours.

Notes

1. In my forthcoming piece, I conceptualize "shapeism" as a discourse linked to sizeism and the body. Both sizeism and shapeism work together to privilege thin bodies and those with an hour-glass shape, thus pushing us to think of the ways in which the container that is the body is ideologically in dialogue with media (i.e., images of models, musical artists, and/or music videos), while also taking on a form of currency within interactions. In the system that is shapeism, there is a notion of achievement and a questioning of what kind of fatness is to be accepted—here the contained hour-glass fat is considered aesthetically pleasing. Overall, shapeism plays a perversive role in fatphobia as it presents the idealized female body as one that is thin, muscular, and/or curvy with a "bootylicious" body (Hobson 2015; Strings 2019).

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