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THE BODY / LE CORPS / DER KÖRPER / TELO

THE BODY/LE CORPS/DER KÖRPER

This special issue of FILOZOFSKI VESTNIK/ACTA PHILOSOPHICA entitled THE BODY/LE CORPS/DER KÖRPER leads the reader through a philosophical and interdisciplinary (art, cultural and political) re-consideration of the paradigm of the body. The development of various forms of observation in space in connection with very special forms of human perception has effaced the duality of body and mind, science and technology. With the aid of the new media technologies (from electronic to multimedia), the viewer may enter his/her own body. Technology allows the turning of the body into various spectacles and views by means of prosthetic extensions. In the past, microscopes and telescopes extended human perception away from the body, towards the infinite and infinitesimal, while in the 21st century, one's own body has become the object of research, a place for bio-genetic manipulations, the base for prosthetic connections and a field of intensive research on subjectivity, agency and consciousness.

The perspective from which the writers were asked for their generous contributions to this special issue of FILOZOFSKI VESTNIK is not that of a range of opinions, but a radicalisation of the notion of the body, a political reading of it, a political perspective of the body in relation to processes of globalisation, subjectivity and agency, in the fields of philosophy, theory, art, culture, science and history. Processes of the technologization of the world and of the human that are transforming the co-ordinates of political reality today are brought into tight focus. This process involves a tension between the international nature of the electronic and digital gaze and corporeal realities, memory, history, genetics, machine intelligence and the bio-technical recombination of human and non-human DNA.

This is also a call for a radical re-articulation of the technological, mediated and digitised within political philosophy and theory. In an ecstatic exaggeration of Merleau Ponty's phenomenological model, world and body comprise a continual feedback loop, producing a terminal identity without the

terminal. On the other hand, contemporaneity is fostering the disembodiment of the subject within new media technologies, opening crucial questions regarding the politics of representation and the semiotics of the articulation of different bodies in different spaces. Last but not least, we have to further push the implication concerning specific representational strategies that focus on the human body, which means that we have to develop and analyses systems and paradigms, structures and matrices of representations of historically, gender and class-determined bodies.

The relationship between the body and the machine opens an array of epistemological questions from cyborg identity to cyberfeminist agency, through a body seen as nothingness, or an angel or a piece of shit. Different embodiments are a contested territory for post-colonial research on the body and the visual within and against the Capitalist machine, (post)feminist contestation of agency/imaginary and a psychoanalytic re-articulation of parts of the body (gaze, breast, voice) as a threshold between reality/virtuality/the real.

I would like to thank all the contributors for their excellent papers and collaboration.

Marina Gržinić Mauhler, Issue Editor

Ljubljana, April 2002

BETWEEN THE NO LONGER AND THE NOT YET: ON BIOS/ZOE-ETHICS

ROSI BRAIDOTTI

I. *THE BODY IN POSTMODERNITY*

Even the most convinced social constructivists today agree that the performances of bodies cannot be ascribed exclusively to the social codes or to symbolic and imaginary orders – nor can they be read back into the Holy Scriptures of the DNA Scrolls. Both “nature” and “the body” are slippery categories – that tend to slide towards essentialism; get caught into positivist reductions – or in their opposite: new-age holistic celebrations of one-ness. In the age of the politics of bio-diversity, the inter-dependence of the natural and the social, needs to be explored outside classical, dualistic habits of thought. I prefer a deeply embedded vision of the embodied subject. In the light of contemporary genetics and molecular biology, it is feasible to speak of the body as a complex system of self-sustaining forces. The DNA and the cells communicate effectively with each other, transferring vital information. In terms of bio-diversity, we humans are actively and destructively involved in manipulating our environment. Neuro-sciences have increased our understanding of memory and the extent to which the storage and retrieval of information is essential to the progress of the self. This is evidence which can no longer be ignored by critical, Left-leaning intellectuals. Nor need it be left to the delusions of grandeur of professional scientists and their industrial, financial backers.

The body has come back in late postmodernity and with a vengeance in social practices and discourses as well as in science and bio-technology; in contemporary evolutionary theory and under the impact of information technologies. The body is a bundle of contradictions: it is a zoological entity; a genetic data-bank, while it also remains a bio-social entity, that is to say a slab of codified, personalized memories. It is part animal, part machine but the dualistic opposition of the two, which our culture has adopted since the 18th century as the dominant model, is inadequate today. Contemporary science

and technology in fact have reached right into the most intimate layers of the living organism and the structures of the self, dissolving boundaries that had been established by centuries of humanistic thinking. This means that we can now think of the body as an entity that inhabits different time-zones simultaneously, and is animated by different speeds and a variety of internal and external clocks which do not necessarily coincide.

At both the macro and the micro levels the body is caught in a network of power effects mostly induced by technology. This is the driving force of the globalization system and the Trans-national economy which engender continuous constitutive contradictions at the “g-local” level. Whether we take biotechnologies, or the new information and communication technologies, the evidence is overwhelming. Capital-flow undeterred by topological or territorial constraints has achieved a double goal. It has simultaneously “dematerialised” and re-solidified power differentials. Think for instance of media-events such what happened on September 11, or Princess Diana’s burial, or the Serbs’ ethnic cleansing of Kosovo – which are experienced in the relative quiet of one’s living room television set as virtual happenings. But they are not of course. The “virtual” reality of the migrants, asylum seekers or refugees is not high tech, but rather comes close to a very low-tech brand of social invisibility. Power these days means high-definition visibility, as opposed to the over-exposed anonymity of the excluded, the losers. Accordingly the virtual reality of cyber-space is also a highly contested social space, or rather – a set of social relations mediated by technological flow of information.

An implication of this process is that cyberspace and the “cyborg” subjectivity it offers are no longer the stuff fiction is made of. On the contrary, the blurring of the boundaries between humans and machines is socially enacted at all levels: from medicine, to Tele-/communication, finance and modern warfare, cyber-relations define our social framework. The cyborg: an embodied human subject that is structurally inter-connected to technological elements or *apparati*, is however, not a unitary subject position. It is rather a multi-layered, complex and internally differentiated subject. Cyborgs today would include for me as much the under-paid, exploitative labour of women and children on off-shore production plants, as the sleek and highly trained physiques of jet-fighters war-pilots, who interface with computer technologies at post-human levels of speed and simultaneity. Both the highly groomed body of Princess Diana and the highly disposable bodies of women in war-torn, ethnic-cleansing lands. Both the triumphant muscularity of Schwarzenegger’s *Terminator* and the frail bodies of those workers whose bodily juices – mostly sweat and blood – fuel the technological revolution. One does not stir without the other.

Contemporary culture tends to react to the cyber-world according to a double-pull: on the one hand the hype and on the other hand the nostalgia, I would plea for a more “passionately distant” approach. I think that a form of neo-materialist appreciation of the body would be helpful here, to think through the kind of techno-monstrous universe we are inhabiting. Rethinking the embodied structure of human subjectivity at such a point in history requires an ethics of lucidity, as well as powers of innovation and creativity. I wish to avoid references to biological, psychic or genetic essentialism, while taking fully into account the fact that bodies have indeed become technological constructs immersed in networks of complex, simultaneous and potentially conflicting power-relations. I do not want to fall, however, into either moral relativism or the suspension of ethical judgement.

In late postmodernity, advanced capitalism functions as the great nomad, the organizer of the mobility of commodified products. “Free circulation” pertains almost exclusively to the domain of goods and commodities. People do not circulate nearly as freely. It is therefore crucial to expose the logic of economic exploitation that equates nomadic flux with profit-minded circulation of commodities. Moreover, knowing that hardly 20% of households in the world have electricity, let alone telephone-lines and modems, will may one wonder about the “democratic,” let alone the “revolutionary” potential of the new electronic frontier. Thus, access and participation to the new high-tech world is unevenly distributed world-wide, with gender, age and ethnicity acting as major axes of negative differentiation.

On a more philosophical level, in relation to the embodied subject, the new technologies make for prosthetic extensions of our bodily functions: answering machines, pagers and portable phones multiply our aural and memory capacities; microwave ovens and freezers offer timeless food-supply; sex can be performed over telephone or modem lines in the fast-growing area of “teledildonics;” electrical tooth-brushes and frozen embryos enlarge other bodily functions: video and cam-corders, Internet networks and a plethora of simulated images open up a field that challenges the Platonic notion of “representation” that has been sedimented by centuries of practice. The technologies have affected the social space of postmodernity by bringing about a dislocation of the space-time continuum. Technologies induce a dislocation of the subject, allowing not only for deferred or virtual social and personal relations, but also for a pervasive social imaginary of ubiquity and timelessness.

In such a hyped-up context it is only inevitable that the body of the “others” will strike back. On an everyday sociological level, the body is striking back, with a vengeance. And as usual, the female body is the avant-garde. As

Camilla Friggers (1997) argues, an estimated 2 million American women have silicon breast implants – most of which leak, bounce off during bumpy airplane flights, or cause undesirable side-effects. Millions of women throughout the advanced world are on Prozac or other mood-enhancement drugs. The hidden epidemic of anorexia-boulimia continues to strike 1/3 of the females in the opulent world. Killer-diseases today don't include only the great exterminators, like cancer and AIDS, but also the return of traditional diseases which we thought we had conquered, like malaria and T.B. Our immunity system has re-adjusted to the anti-biotics and we're vulnerable again. There is no question that what we still go on calling – somewhat nostalgically – “our bodies, ourselves” are abstract technological constructs fully immersed in advanced psycho-pharmacology, the chemical industry, bio-science and the electronic media. What is equally clear for me is that we need to be vigilant. The techno-hype is over and we need to assess more lucidly the price that we are paying for being so “high tech.” We got our prosthetic promises of perfectibility – now, let's hand over our pound of flesh, shall we?

II. *BODIES-IN-TIME*

A body is, spatially speaking, a slice of forces that have specific qualities, relations, speed and rates of change. Their common denominator is that they are intelligent matter, i.e.: are endowed with the capacity to affect and be affected, to inter-relate. Temporally speaking, a body is a portion of living memory that endures, that lasts, that goes on – for a while – by undergoing constant internal modifications following the encounter with other bodies and forces. The key point is the embodied subject's capacity for encounters and inter-relation. As such, desire and yearning for inter-connections with others lies at the heart of subjectivity.

This idea of the primacy of desire, however, expresses also as a critique of the psychoanalytic reduction of desire to (hetero) sexuality and of both to preferably reproductive genital activity. I want to “nomadise” desire so as to free it from the normative cage within which it was enclosed. Affectivity (*conatus*) is indeed the heart of the subject, but this desire is not internalized, but external. It happens in the encounter between different embodied and embedded subjects not all of them human, who are joined in the sameness of the forces that propel them. Intensive, affective, external resonances make desire into a force that propels forward, but also always remains in front of us, as a dynamic, shifting horizon of multiple other encounters, of territorial and border-crossings of all kind.

Being-in-time means essentially being or subject of/in memories. Remembering is about repetition and the retrieval of information. In the human subject, such information is stored throughout the physical experiential structure of the embodied self and not only in the “black box” of the psyche. It’s the whole body that functions as a slab of enfleshed genealogy.

Re-mem-bering is about composition, selection and dosage. Like a choreography of flows or intensities that require adequate framing in order to compose into a form of their own, memories coalesce through empathy and cohesion between their constitutive elements. Memories materialize like a quest for temporary moments when an affective balance can be sustained, before the forces dissolve again and move on. And on it goes, never equal to itself, but faithful enough to itself to endure, and to pass on.

Memory is fluid and flowing, it opens up unexpected or virtual possibilities and it is transgressive in that it works against the programmes of the dominant memory-system. This continuous memory is however not necessarily or inevitably linked to “real” experience. I contest the authority of “experience” and the extent to which it both confirms and perpetuates the belief in steady and unitary identity, I would rather link memory to the imagination.

The imaginative, affective force of remembrance – that which returns and is re-mem-bered/re-peated – is the propelling force. When your re-mem-ber in the intensive or minoritarian-mode, in fact, you open up spaces of movement – of de-territorialisation – that actualise virtual possibilities which had been frozen in the image of the past.

Bio-centered Egalitarianism

Being-in-time also refers to the biological clock that is in-built into the embodied organism. It is very difficult to find a 21st century word to describe adequately, that is to say: lucidly, secularly, fairly and with a sense of social justice what is commonly referred to as “life.”

Life is half animal: Zoe (Zoology, zoophilic, zoo), and half discursive: bios (bio-logy). Zoe, of course, is the poor half of a couple that foregrounds bios defined as intelligent life. Centuries of Christian indoctrination have left a deep mark here. The relationship to animal life: to zoe, rather than bios constitutes one of those qualitative distinctions upon which Western reason erected its empire. Bios is holy, Zoe quite gritty. That they intersect in the human body turns the physical self into a contested space, i.e.: a political arena. The mind-body dualism has historically functioned as a shortcut through the complexities of this in-between contested zone. I believe that

one of the most persistent and unhelpful fictions that is being told about human “life” is its alleged self-evidence, its implicit worth. Zoe is always second best and the idea of life carrying on independently of, even regardless of rational control – is the dubious privilege attributed to the non-humans. These covers all of the animal kingdoms as well as the classical “others” of metaphysically based visions of the subject, namely the sexual other (woman) the ethnic other (the native). In the old regime, this used to be called “Nature.”

The point here is that, traditionally, the self-reflexive control over life is reserved for the humans, whereas the mere unfolding of biological sequences is for the non-humans. Given that this concept of “the human” was colonized by phallogocentrism, it has come to be identified with male, white, heterosexual, Christian, property owning, standard language speaking citizens. The rest, especially since Darwin and evolutionary theory, however, the non-human, Zoe has grown to encompass increasingly large and central zones. Contemporary scientific practices have forced us to touch the bottom of some inhumanity that connects to the human precisely in the immanence of its bodily materialism. With the collapse of the qualitative divide between the human and His (the gender is no coincidence) others, the deep vitality of the embodied self has re-surfaced from under the crust of the old metaphysical vision of the subject. A meta-morphosis, which is no metaphor – but something closer to a metabolic mutation. Give fleas a chance. This is the bottom line. This obscenity, this life in me, which is intrinsic to my being and yet so much “itself,” that it is independent of the will, the demands and expectations of the sovereign consciousness. This Zoe makes me tick and yet escapes the control of the supervision of the Self. Zoe carries on relentlessly and gets cast out of the holy precinct of the “me” that demands control and fails to obtain it. It thus ends up being experienced as an alien other, the monstrous other. This potency (potentia) of Life is experienced as “other” by a mind that cannot do anything else but fold upon itself in narcissism and paranoia, the two pillars on which the West was won. And go on patrolling its own constitutive borders as if it were in charge of them. Life is experienced as inhuman, but only because it is all too human; obscene, because it lives mindlessly on off-limits. This scandal, this wonder, this zoe, that is to say an idea of Life that is more than bios and supremely indifferent to logos, this piece of flesh called my “body,” this aching meat called my “self” expresses the abject/divine potency of a Life which consciousness lives in fear of. Nomadic subjectivity is, by contrast, in love with Zoe. It’s about the post-human as becoming animal/becoming other/becoming insect/becoming imperceptible – trespassing all metaphysically-grounded boundaries. Ultimately, becoming-imperceptible and fading, death being just another time sequence.

The significant thing about posthuman bodies is not so much that they occupy the spaces in between what is between the human the animal and the machines, that is to say a dense materiality. Posthuman bodies are also surprisingly generative, in that they stubbornly and relentlessly reproduce themselves. The terms of their reproduction are slightly off-beat by good old human standards in that they involve animal, insect, and inorganic models. In fact they represent a whole array of possible alternative morphologies and “other” sexual and reproductive systems. The paradigm of cancerous proliferation of cells is an example of this mindless self-duplicating capacity of generative/life.

This marks a shift in terms of a new paradigm: we are at the end of the post-nuclear model of embodied subjectivity and we have entered the “viral” or “parasitic” mode. This is a graphic way of explaining the extent to which today’s body is immersed in a set of technologically mediated practices of prosthetic extension. It expresses in fact the co-extensivity of the body with its environment or territory. A body is a portion of forces life-bound and death-bound to the environment that feeds it. All organisms are collective and inter-dependent. Parasites and viruses are hetero-directed: they need other organisms. Admittedly, they relate to them as incubators or hosts, releasing their genetically encoded message with evident glee. This expresses a selfish cruelty that horror movies capture perfectly, but it is a mere detail in a much broader picture. The virus/parasite constitutes a model of a symbiotic relationship that defeat binary oppositions. It is a simulacrum that duplicates itself to infinity without any representational pretensions. As such it is an inspiring model for a nomadic Eco-philosophy of subjectivity.

This points to an ancestral continuity between the human and its previous incarnations at different stages of its evolution. A kind of genetic legacy, a trans-species proximity, which bio-technologies bring out and exploit cleverly. Exit Heidegger and enter instead the private horror museum depicted in *Alien IV*, where the heroine is able to see the earlier versions of herself, dutifully conserved in a bio-technological laboratory which traces her evolutionary history as a perfect clone of herself. A genetic family album. I cannot think of a better image for the posthuman predicament than this set of duplicates or simulacra, which have fed upon the original organism, consuming it like parasites. Horrific, unholy technologically-mediated monstrous births of copies from copies, cells multiplying from cells in a DNA-driven display of life as a multiplicity of force that encompass both zoe and bios. But zoe is the driver’s seat.

This model of the body is symbiotic inter-dependence. It points to the co-presence of different elements, from different stages of evolution: like inhab-

iting different time-zones simultaneously. The human organism is neither wholly human, nor just an organism. It's an abstract machine, which captures, transforms and produces inter-connections. The power of such an organism, is certainly neither contained nor confined to consciousness.

What if consciousness were, in fact, a secondary mode of relating to one's own environment and to others? What if consciousness were no cognitively or morally different from the pathetic howling of wolves in the full moonlight? What if, by comparison with the know-how of animals, conscious self-representation were blighted by narcissistic delusions and consequently blinded by its own aspirations to self-transparency? What if consciousness were ultimately incapable of finding a remedy to its obscure disease, this life, this zoe, an impersonal force that moves me without asking for my permission to do so?

For The Love Of Zoe

What attracts me to zoe is the part of me that has long become disenchanted with and disengaged from the anthropocentrism that is built into humanistic thought. That in me which no longer identifies under the dominant categories of subjectivity, and which is not yet completely out of the cage of identity- that rebellious and impatient part, runs with Zoe.

This rebellious components of my subject-position, which is dis-identified from phallogocentric premises – are directly related to my being embodied as female. Being female, I am a she-wolf, a breeder, an incubator, a carrier of vital and lethal viruses. My gender historically never quite made it into full humanity, so my allegiance to that category is negotiable and not to be taken for granted. In the political economy of phallogocentrism and of its anthropocentric humanism, which predicates the sovereignty of Sameness, my sex fell on the side of Otherness, understood as pejorative difference, or as being worth- less- than.

I make such a statement not as an essentialist position, but rather as the acknowledgement of a location, i.e. a starting position of dissymmetrical power differentials. This location is not only geo-political but also genealogical and time-bound. It makes a sedimented layering of meanings and representations which are tattooed on my female sexed body and position me in the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of reality as a socio-symbolic entity vulgarly known as “woman.”

In other words, I argue for a bond of empathy or affinity with my fellow “others,” the animal, the native, the alien, the infantile, the insane, the other. Sarah Lefanu (1988), in her analysis of science fiction texts written by women,

remarks how many women writers show explicitly this bond between women and various brands of monstrous or alien others. Allied in the struggle against a common colonizer. Far closer to *zoe* than to *bios* in the materiality of bodies that are mortal and imperfect- feminist-minded women have struck an alliance that goes quite far into subverting the sovereignty of the Same. I want to re-claim my zoe-philic location and turn it into my advantage, by enlisting it in support of the process of undoing anthropocentrism and its natural spin-off of andro-centrism. I want to unfasten their joint reliance on the phallic signifier, i.e. the political economy of Sameness and of its specular, binary and constitutive “others.”

I want to run with wolves against the gravitational pull of the humanization of all that lives. And celebrate instead the generative power, the immense intelligence and the affective intensity of the non-human, the organic and inorganic “others” and of the specific vitality which they express. Give me zoe and give me death.

III. *THE ETHICS OF SUSTAINABILITY*

This bio-philosophy is an ethics, defined with Spinoza as a topology of affects, based on the selection of these passions or forces. This process of unfolding affectivity is central to the composition of immanent bodies. The selection of the forces is regulated by an ethics of joy and affirmation which functions through the transformation of negative into positive passions. These imply the repetition of pleasure and the avoidance of sadness and of the relations that express sadness. The selection of the composite positive passions opens up spaces of becoming or corporeal affects. This is essentially a matter of affinity: being able to enter a relation with another entity whose elements appeal to one is what produces a joyful encounter. They express one’s *potentia* and increase the subject’s capacity to enter into further relations, to grow and expand. This expansion is time-bound: the nomadic subject by expressing and increasing its positive passions empowers itself to last, to endure, to continue through and in time. This makes possible future perspectives it writes the pre-history of a future. Entering into relations, or virtual nomadic becomings engenders the world by making possible a web of sustainable inter-connections.

I want to think sustainable subjects. The concept of sustainability is no easy matter. I am of the generation that lost so many of its specimen to dead-end experimentations of the narcotic, political, sexual or technological kind. Although it is true that we lost as many if not more of our members to the

stultifying inertia of the *status quo* – a sort of generalized “Stepford wives” syndrome – it is nonetheless the case that I have developed an acute awareness of how painful, dangerous and difficult changes are. They need to be dosed and timed carefully, according to one’s threshold of sustainability. The process of becoming is this trip across different fields of perception, different spatio-temporal coordinates. It is simultaneously a slowing-down of the rhythm of daily frenzy and an acceleration of awareness, self-knowledge and the senses. When dosed correctly it can lead to shifts in one’s sense and orientation in the world – nothing as grandiose as Huxley’s drugs-induced hope of throwing open the doors of perception. Rather something more humble, like a quickening of one’s perception, a being-there with and for other entities, forces, beings, so as to be transported fully into the magnificent chaos of life.

What is, then, this sustainable subject?

It is a slice of living, sensible matter activated by a fundamental drive to life: a potentia (rather than potestas) – neither by the will of God, nor the secret encryption of the genetic code – and yet this subject is embedded in the corporeal materiality of the self. The enfolded intensive or nomadic subject is an in-between: a folding – in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding – outwards of affects. A mobile entity – in space and time – an enfolded kind of memory – this subject is in-process, but is also capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining extra – ordinarily faithful to itself.

This “faithfulness to oneself” is not to be understood in the mode of the psychological or sentimental attachment to an “identity” that often is little more than a social security number and a set of photo albums. Nor is it the mark of authenticity of a self; it is rather the faithfulness of duration, the expression of one’s continuing attachment to certain dynamic spatio-temporal co-ordinates. In a philosophy of temporally-inscribed radical immanence, subjects differ. But they differ along materially embedded co-ordinates: they come in different mileage, temperatures and beats. One can and does change gears and move across these co-ordinates, but cannot claim all of them, all of the time. There are limits and their threshold is sustainability.

This sense of limits is extremely important to prevent nihilistic self-destruction. To be active, intensive-nomadic, does not mean that one is limitless. That would be indeed the kind of delirious expression of megalomania that you find a lot in the cyber-freaks of today, ready and willing to: “dissolve the bodily self into the matrix.” I want to argue instead that to make sense of this intensive, materially embedded vision of the subject, we need a sustainability threshold. The dosage of the threshold of intensity is both crucial and inherent to the process of becoming.

What is this threshold of sustainability and how does it get fixed?

The subject lies at the intersections with external, relational forces. It's about assemblages. Encountering them, is almost a matter for geography: it's a question of orientations, points of entry and exit, a constant un-folding. In this field of transformative forces, sustainability is a very concrete practice – not the abstract ideal that some of our development and social-planning specialist often reduce it to: it is a basic concept about the embodied and embedded nature of the subject. The sensibility to and availability for changes or transformation are directly proportional to the subject's ability to sustain the shifts without cracking. The border, the framing or containing practices are crucial to the whole operation – one which aims at affirmative and not dissipative processes of becoming – joyful-becoming – potentia – as a radical force of empowerment.

A radically immanent intensive nomadic body is an assemblage of forces, or flows, intensities and passions that solidify – in space – and consolidate – in time – within the singular configuration commonly known as an “individual” self. This intensive and dynamic entity – it's worth stressing it again – is not an inner rationalist essence, nor is it merely the unfolding of genetic information. It is rather a portion of forces that is stable enough – spatio-temporally speaking – to sustain them and to undergo constant, though, non-destructive, fluxes of transformation. Mutation, yes – but not into the nihilism of some of the narco-philosophers of today, who celebrate “altered states” for their own sake. It is a field of transformative affects whose availability for changes of intensity depends firstly on its ability to sustain, the encounter with and the impact of other forces or affects.

So how does one know if one has reached the threshold of sustainability? – the body tells you by opposing resistance, falling ill, feeling nauseous. Others will warn you – here the film *Trainspotting* or the famous heart-shot in the overdose scene of *Pulp Fiction* offer graphic representations of being over the top. Your own potentia or joyful, affirmative energy will suffer. The room for affirmative expression shrinks and negative passions fold in upon the subject, diminishing him/her. These are all powerful indications of the limit. This is sort of an ecology of the self. The rhythm, speed and sequencing of the affects as well as the selection of the forces are crucial to the process.

The concept of a sustainable self aims at endurance. Endurance has a temporal dimension: it has to do with lasting in time – hence duration and self-perpetuation. But it also has a spatial side to do with the space of the body. It means putting up with, tolerating hardship and physical pain. Ultimately, as Irigaray put, it requires a generous belief in the potentialities of a virtual future, also known as: “I had a dream.” Isn't it paradoxical that one's

deepest longing for change, social justice, empowerment for women and a better world – all forward-looking activities, get expressed in the mode of the past. “I had a dream” translates for me into: “I will have wanted to make a difference to the world.” The past is only the prelude to future perfect, if not to perfect futures.

Sustainability has to do also with whatever gets you through the day

The transformation of negative into positive passion is crucial to a non-normative concept of limit. Affectivity in fact is that which activates an embodied subject, empowering him/her to interact with others. This acceleration of one’s existential speed, or increase of one’s affective temperature, is the dynamic process of becoming.

What bodies are capable of doing (or not) is biologically, physically, psychically, historically, sexually and emotionally specific, i.e.: partial. Ultimately, the thresholds of sustainable becoming also mark their limits. In this respect: “I can’t take it anymore” spoken in pain as in pleasure is an ethical statement, not the assertion of defeat – it sets the boundary of a subject-in-process who is shot through with waves of intensity. To recognize thresholds or limits is thus crucial to the process of becoming nomadic.

The question of the limit can also be discussed in terms of mathematical approximation, as that which can hardly ever be reached. It can also be rendered, however, in terms of addiction. For instance reminiscing on his own early alcoholism, Deleuze notes that the limit, or frame for the kind of alterations that are induced by alcohol is to be set with reference not so much to the last glass; because that is the glass that is going to kill you. What matters instead is the “second-last” glass – the one that is going to allow you to survive, to last, to endure – and consequently also to go on drinking again. A true addict always stops at the second-last glass, at the one – removed – from the fatal sip, or shot. A death-bound entity, however, usually shoots straight for the last one. This is no expression of a desire to start again tomorrow – or to repeat that “last shot.” In fact, there is no sense of a possible tomorrow: time folds in upon itself and excavates a black hole into which the subject dissolves.

I would speak out clearly against the unsustainable flows of transformation induced by drug-consumption. Though I’m not against “mind-expansion” and “mood-enhancement” drugs. What I am against is that which tips over the threshold of tolerance of the organism. Addiction is not an opening up, but a narrowing-down of the field of possible becomings. It locks the subject up in a black

hole of inner fragmentation without encounters with others. The black hole is the point beyond which the subject implodes and disintegrates.

I am saying this because I want to attempt to strike an ethical position that would contest standard morality and coincide neither with the “laissez-faire” ideology, nor with repression and moralism. In stressing the notion of sustainability, I want to re-focus the debate around the need for embodied and embedded perspectives – i.e.: not the fantasy of boundlessness. I also want to re-iterate the importance and positivity of transformative experimentations, which construct differences without going too far. Vitality and transgression, but without self-destruction.

I also argue against the Christian-based belief in the alleged self-evidence and implicit worth of “life.” This belief system has confined into the container-category of “sin,” or “nihilism” phenomena which are of daily significance to my culture and society: dis-affection of all kinds; addictions of the legal (coffee; cigarettes; alcohol; over-work; achievement) and of the illegal kind; suicide, especially youth-suicide; birth-control, abortion, and the choice of sexual practices and sexual identities; the agony of long-term diseases; life-supporting systems in hospitals and outside; depression and burn-out syndromes. In contrast with the mixture of apathy and hypocrisy that marks the habits of thought that sacralize “life,” I would like to cross-refer to a somewhat more “darker,” but more lucid tradition of thought that does not start from the assumption of the inherent, self-evident and intrinsic worth of “life.”

I think that one has to “jump-start” into life each and every day; the electromagnetic charge needs to be renewed constantly: there is nothing natural or given about it. As a consequence, I find that the non-evidence of “getting on with it” generates another relevant ethical question that is: “what is the point?” I do not mean this in the plaintive or narcissistic mode, but rather as the necessary moment of stasis that precedes action. It is the question mark that both prefaces and frames the possibility of ethical agency. When Primo Levi, who asked that question all his life, and struggled to answer it all his life – actually failed to find the motivation for raising the question once more, suicide followed. That gesture, however, was not the sign of moral defeat, or a lowering of one’s standards. On the contrary, it expresses one’s determination not to accept life at an impoverished or diminished level of intensity.

Commenting on Primo Levi’s and Virginia Woolf’s suicides Deleuze – who will choose himself this way to terminate his own existence – put it very clearly: you can suppress your own life, in its specific and radically immanent form and still affirm the potency of life, especially in cases where deteriorating health or social conditions may seriously hinder your power to affirm and to joyfully endure. This is no Christian affirmation of Life, nor transcenden-

tal delegation of the meaning and value system to categories higher than the embodied self. Quite on the contrary, it is the intelligence of radically immanent flesh that states with every single breath that the life in you is not marked by any signifier and it most certainly does not bear your name. Death is just another interval. A long one.

Because of this ethics of affirmation and positivity, “whatever gets you through the day,” whatever life-support, mood-enhancement system one is dependent on, is not to be the object of moral indictment, but rather a neutral term of reference: a prop along the way.

Whatever facilitates the release of adrenaline, including high levels of physical exercise; work-alcoholism or the standard assemblage: “writing/books/the friendly purr of the PC/e-mails/music/concentration/think think.” We all have the patterns of dependency that we deserve. Most mood-enhancement systems are minor and quite legal. Even the standard line of assemblage described above, however, can take hell-bent deviations, towards excessive snacks (anorexia/bulimia variable); or drinks (alcoholism variable) or any other “fix” (the narcotics variable). The boundaries between these and the other, “normalised” life-support systems, however, is merely one of degrees, not of kind. If life is not a self-evident category, in fact; if “what’s the point?” is an ethically viable question, then whatever gets you through the day is an equally viable option.

The subject-in-becoming is the one for whom “what’s the point?” is an all-important question. A high-intensity subject is also animated by unparalleled levels of vulnerability. With nomadic patterns comes also a fundamental fragility. You are just as human as the others, only slightly more mortal. Processes without foundations need to be handled with care; potentia requires great levels of containment in the mode of sustainable framing. Sustainability assumes the idea of continuity – it does assume faith in a future, and also a sense of responsibility for “passing on” to future generations a world that is liveable and worth living in. A present that endures is a sustainable model of the future.

You play you win you play you lose, you play.

Hence the importance of stopping at the second last drink/smoke/shot. “Enough,” or “not going too far” expresses the necessity of framing, not the common-sense morality of the mainstream cultural orthodoxy. “Enough” designs a cartography of sustainability. “Whatever gets you through the day” need not be the manifesto for self-destruction that is often made to be. It can merely help us frame a threshold of sustainable patterns of transformative changes, of becomings as modes and moods of empowerment.

I would like to develop this notion of sustainability into an ethics of dif-

ferential sustainable subjects. I would like to propose a public discussion on these issues right across some of the problematic social issues of today: drugs; addictions of all kind; youth suicide; AIDS prevention and sex education; euthanasia; anorexia/boulimia; abortion; the burn-out and stress related to post-industrial life-styles. I would like this agenda to be taken seriously. As important at this stage is for me to challenge any chain by any conceptual, theoretical or philosophical school to the monopoly over issues of ethics and moral values. Whether in the neo-liberal brand of cosmopolitanism defended by Nussbaum, or in the neo-Kantian mode that is so prevalent in feminist theory today, and is best exemplified by Benhabib, or the classical ethics of sexual difference. Such claims to moral superiority or rectitude are simply untenable, as well as internally contradictory.

I want to plead instead for a less moralistic and conceptually more rigorous agenda that combines a broader approach with a serious commitment to think alongside contemporary culture and not against its grain. “Whatever gets you through the day” as the melancholy refrain of “fin-de siècle” covers the depression of suburban opulence, as much as the despair of homeless life in the streets. Both the centre and the periphery are shot through by profoundly de-stabilizing, perverse power-relations which engender equally sombre social relations. It seems to me that a critical agenda for the next millennium, both in feminist theory and in the mainstream, cannot fail to address these issues. We need to talk about the simultaneity of opposite social and cultural effects, and to address them in a non-moralistic manner. What is at stake, ultimately, is an acceleration that would allow us to jump over the high fence of the ruins of metaphysics. Not in a utopian mode, but in a very embodied and embedded way, actualized in the here and now. We need a process by which “Being” gets dislodged from its fundamentalist pedestal, starts whirling off its logocentric base – and gets a beat. Losing its dogmatic authority, “Being” can expose at last the multiple “differences within” – exposing also its function as the great pretender, stitching together the different moments it enacts and which it does not encompass into a unity that “Being” allegedly supervises.

As in Gertrude Stein’s operatic prose, a swift exhilaration emanates from texts which are clearly indexed on the potentia empowerment of life. Something that puts wings on our feet and infuses joyfulness.

If it doesn’t have the right beat, it will not work – but if it blasts off our minds with excessive intensity, it will not be much good either. Let us just choose for the staggering intelligence of “just a life.” Just a life in its radical immanence, in affirmation and sets of discontinuous but sustainable becomings. It may be a way of returning the subject to the specific complexity

of one's singularity – and returning the activity of “thinking” to a lightness of touch, a speed which many of us passionately aspire to. The rest, of course, is silence.

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HOSPITALITY – CHORA – MATRIX – CYBERSPACE

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“Telo” (BODY) –

- 1) External physical forms of human and in general, any live organisms
- 2) Corpse
- 3) Something material, substantial, sensible, tactile, and visible, that occupies enclosed space
- 4) Separate object (subject) in space. ... Noteworthy: the multiplicity of meanings the word “telo” had in ancient Russian and old Slavic languages, taken from pre-Slavonic: “substance,” “material being as opposed to spiritual,” “image,” “outlook,” “representation,” “idol,” “doll,” “human body.” If the meaning “something substantial, material, and thus enclosed spatially, limited by certain edges and having form” is oldest, then we can relate it to another nest of roots, based on Slavic affiliation: “tĕlo” as “soil,” “ground.” Compare with Latin tellus: “hard ground,” “soil”... Some connect “telo” (body) with “ten (shade)” (body gives shade!), though the etymology of shade is no clearer. In a new vein, but not convincingly, Makhek explains this word, by approximating “telo” with the Greek τελος: “end,” “target,” “limit,” “duration.”

“Choromy” – “spacious (with many rooms) and wealthy house/home” ... Semantically compare δομος – “house,” “temple,” and δεμω – “building.” ... Etymology – unclear.

“Choronit” – “to conduct a ritual of burial.” ... Came from choroniti – “to keep away,” “to conceal.” Etymology – unclear. (Historico-Etymological Dictionary of Modern Russian Language. Volume 2. Chernykh, P. Ya. 1999)

“A house has some similarity with a tool, but, rather than a sort of thing or instrument or implement, it is the condition for all human action and reference. As a place where I can withdraw and recollect myself, it is characterized by intimacy. ... The intimacy and familiarity proper to a home presuppose that it is already human, although – in this stage of our description – it is not yet necessary to introduce the metaphysical relation of one human to the absolute Other. It demands a certain ‘femininity’.” (Adriaan Peperzak, 1993)

“The urge to virtual realities of any kind relies on a constant domestic space,

whether proximal or distant. The space of domesticity, configured as 'real' space, is still, already ready, the spatial envelope of the cyberventuring subject who explores the public space of the net or the virtual space of simulation. With his body, that hunk of pulsing meat, in his comfortable, safe, warm, uninterrupted, timeless space, he can project himself anywhere, into anything." (Jennifer Bloomer, 1997)

Hospitality of the idea of Home and its Foundation

What is the relationship between matrix and chora, between body within body, between body and space? This relation is through home, home as a space of hospitality, a space that unconditionally welcomes – at least, in the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida points out that etymologically the term “hospitality” is related to the notion of “hostility” since the root of the former, *hospes* is allied to an earlier root of the latter, *hostis*, which interestingly meant both “stranger” and “enemy.” Thus hospitality, as in *hostilis*, stranger/enemy + *potes*, “(of having) power,” came eventually to mean the power the host had over the stranger/enemy. John Caputo, in an interesting commentary on Derrida’s notion of hospitality notes that “the ‘host’ is someone who takes on or receives strangers, who gives to the stranger even while remaining in control.” (Caputo, 1997, p. 111) It is clear that the “host” is in a necessary position of power insofar as he (she?) circumscribes the parameters within which the needs and comforts of the stranger/enemy is attended to. In addition to this circumscription, the host’s “power over” the stranger, Derrida suggests, results from his (her?) ownership of the premises that is thus offered up. Given the fact that hospitality is dependent on ownership before it is offered hospitably to the other, Derrida argues, an essential tension is built into its structure. This is because it is difficult to give over to the other when you continue to own. The aporia for the giver is the tension of wanting to give but also having to have what is given away, for it is having that makes possible the giving. Derrida says that this aporia, which could well paralyze any efforts at hosting the other, is exactly what needs to be worked through rather than be denied. In fact, hospitality is only possible when one resists this paralysis by moving towards what Derrida calls a “hospitality beyond hospitality,” wherein the very impossibility of a hospitality based on ownership as limit-condition is pushed to/at the limits. In having erected its possibilities on their very impossibility, Derrida claims, hospitality, like deconstruction, is a *to come* (*avenir*). The aporia of hospitality *to come* is constituted by one’s inability to know entirely or surely its specific qualities and as such, it is to be struggled with *performatively*.

However, this idea of receiving, unconditional receptivity of receptacle is fundamentally different (politically and ontologically) when applied to chora and to the femininity of the home. It can be struggled with *performatively* only in the case of the host (a member of the community). However, when we deal with hostess, with sexual difference, the situation changes dramatically, as the notion of performativity is anthropomorphic, as least for Derrida and Levinas. What has to be left behind in their analysis is the question of the “awareness” and “consciousness” of those who perform hospitality. It is assumed. Unless one is raising the issue of Femininity, Divinity or Animality, the situation of performativity and responsibility is assumed to belong to a human subject.

Femininity, before human, gives itself up to receive a human, to welcome “all human action and reference,” without ... being, being in the house, or outside it, or anywhere else except inside the human himself. What (outside the anthropomorphism of *the who*) can be without being? What can welcome without owning? What can receive without asking or letting someone else to give? Woman, and – animal. Two ultimate alterities, which that give meaning to any Other sense of otherness, closely related to each other, and both serving as a passage and a vehicle into which every other has to be reduced to become the other, and through which every man has to pass in order to come to his God(s).

According to Derrida, hospitality, as it is conceived by Levinas, is *primarily* and essentially tied to sexual difference, and its very possibility depends on it. Furthermore, the (concept/metaphor of) Woman undermines any claim on safe ownership since she serves as a pre-condition for the hospitality and welcoming of the home for its potential or actual owner. In this case, fundamentally, the master of the property is always already in a situation of *being received* at his own home by so-called feminine alterity, understood as a feminine welcoming being. Here Derrida and Levinas, and another interpreter of Levinas, Peperzak, are all quick to stress that this “feminine being,” or “feminine alterity,” has nothing to do with empirical women. That is, the actual presence of a woman in a given house does not determine or undermine the feminine essence of hospitality.

Thus, for Levinas, hospitality is necessarily associated with the question of Woman, *essentially*, but without reference to *empirical women themselves*. Before embarking on a critique of Levinas’s notion of hospitality, it would be useful to outline some important constitutive elements of hospitality for both Levinas and Derrida.

First of all, hospitality is about *welcoming*. It can be a word of welcome, a welcoming smile, a welcome understood in its utmost openness and passivity – openness to the other, a smile at the threshold of the house, unconditional acceptance of the other. Second, hospitality is about *receptivity*, an ability of

reason to receive, to be “more passive than any given passivity.” The owner is being received in his own house; he is being welcomed there prior to any language proper, prior to linguistic communication. Third, hospitality demands *discretion*. It is manifestation and withdrawal of the face; indirect communication; at the same time it is a silent discrete presence without transgression of the interiority to exteriority. Furthermore, hospitality is more than discrete, it is also *intimate*. Hospitality is about comfort, it is about serenity of being “at home” with oneself. Thus it is absolute “defenselessness,” a conscious and enjoyable vulnerability of feeling in a total refuge at home with oneself. This feeling of being at home with oneself refers necessarily to memory, though here without any psychoanalytic gesture, but understood as *recollection*: the recollection as a relation to the language of the host, a recollection of meaning. And of course, following from all previous formulations, Hospitality is posed through *Habitation*. This relation to habitation, to home, to the interiority of the house, is a reminder of the self’s relation to its own corporeality, in some sense, since “there is not yet the ‘you’ of the face, but the ‘thou’ of familiarity.” (Levinas)

What is of special interest for us here is how the split between communal and domestic is maintained by Levinas’s discussion of hospitality, and Derrida does not seem to question the separation either. If the other of the community is also feminine, “woman as other *par excellence*,” she does not have any place in the sphere of community. She silently prepares a ground for it, only to (pretend to) disappear. That is why it does not come as a surprise when the point of entrance of “Woman” into this discourse on hospitality occurs: with the word *discretion*: “the other whose presence is discreetly an absence, with which is accomplished the *hospitable welcome par excellence* which describes the field of intimacy, which is the Woman. The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation.” (Levinas, cited in Derrida, 1999, p.36)

The building up of the first “communal gesture,” “communal embryo,” starts at this point, for the figure of “the Woman,” in Derrida’s terms, allows for the next term to come in, that of, “*rapport* or relation,” as the I-Thou of “a silent language,” of “an understanding without words,” of “an expression in secret.” This is not yet the community proper; it is a rehearsal of community, it is a kind of preparation, a building of a flesh on which community will be able to stand and to flourish. This relation/*rapport* between feminine alterity or home, and the owner/masculine subject, does not yet have a dimension of height that is so important for Levinas. It lacks height since Woman does not have a face in this house. She is too discrete and silent to possess such qualities. Actually, this is her role – to lack height, “height of the face.”

Derrida reminds us that Levinas called “feminine alterity” as fundamentally one of the modalities of welcoming, and she provides a silent refuge and asylum. In Derrida’s words: “If the at home with oneself of the dwelling is an ‘at home with oneself as in a land of asylum and refuge,’ this would mean that the inhabitant also dwells there as a refugee or an exile, a guest and not a proprietor. That is the humanism of this ‘feminine alterity,’ the humanism of the other woman, of the other (as) woman. If woman, in the silence of her ‘feminine being,’ is not a man, she remains human.” (Derrida, 1999, p. 37)

As was discussed, the terms of ownership create a contradiction, an impossibility of hospitality: how can one give away what one owns, if one wants to continue to be hospitable. We see now that Derrida seems to resolve this problem of ownership with help, with a hospitable hint, from a position of a “feminine being,” who does not own the place, but provides hospitality to hospitality so that it may exist. Thus hospitality was beyond hospitality; it was impossible since it contradicted the terms of ownership. It was impossible until its resolution, or its birth, through/by/in “feminine alterity,” that, as Derrida and Levinas maintain, is ephemeral and omnipotent, passive and fundamental, silent and human, metaphorical and energy-producing, all at the same time. This non-empirical feminine, haunted by maternal imaginary, brings us, *naturally*, to the questions of the community, legal, ethical, and general transcendental dimension of height, that is, of God: “Hospitality thus precedes property, and this will not be without consequence, as we will see, for the taking-place of the gift of the law, for the extremely enigmatic relationship between refuge and the Torah, the city of refuge, the land of asylum, Jerusalem, and the Sinai.” (Derrida, 1999, p. 45)

As we shall see in a moment, this kind of understanding of sexual difference, when femininity or Woman is disembodied and ontologically emptied to perform a particular function, being a “symptom” of a man’s project/ion, is developed by Hegel in his conclusive discussion of community.

The Hegelian notion of community, especially through his use of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, has established the dialectic between the divine law (family, home, the law of female gender/ womankind) and the human law (city, community, state, the law of male gender/mankind). Hegel’s general argument is well known and cannot be rehearsed here in detail. What is required, however, is to outline the grip of the Hegelian system on sexual difference, for as many claim, it is still in full force in Western thought and culture.

Woman plays a crucial role when she follows her family duties and defends its divine law; she presents herself as a challenge to human law, to community and the state of men who aspire to transgress the family and its laws. Her challenge, in effect, produces the conditions for (human) man’s law to

exercise and reproduce itself. Human law, in the moment of its birth, negates the Family and its laws, in order to establish itself. Thus, on the next stage, it produces it to repress it, to negate it as its worse enemy.

In Hegel's words: "Since the community gets its subsistence only by breaking it upon family happiness and dissolving self-consciousness into the universal, it creates itself on what it represses [*erzeugt es sich an dem, was es unterdrückt*] and what is at the same time essential to it – womankind in general, its inner enemy. Womankind – the eternal irony of the community – alters by intrigue the universal purpose of government into a private end." (Hegel G.W.F., cited in Žižek, 1995, p. 148)

Kelly Oliver in her recent book *Family Values* provides a detailed account of Hegel's position on femininity. According to her, "Hegel calls womankind the everlasting irony of the community because the feminine threat is necessary to sustain the community. ... Within Hegel's scenario, the community is possible only by virtue of the sacrifice and repression of the feminine." (Oliver, 1997, p. 48)

However, while challenging the State, woman does not properly comprehend her act, since for herself, she is *simply and naturally* performing her family duty. In a fashion somewhat resembling that of Levinas' argumentation regarding the hospitality of *feminine being*, Hegel denies woman the level of highest ethical agency – conscious ethical action, since the realm of the Family is the realm of the unconscious, irrational desires and duties based on blood relations. Woman, especially sister (Antigone), is propelled to act by blood ties, not out of ethical consciousness, and this is a crucial point for Hegel: "The feminine, in the form of the sister, has the highest *intuitive* awareness of what is ethical. She does not attain to *consciousness* of it, or to the objective existence of it, because the law of the Family is an implicit, inner essence which is not exposed to the daylight of consciousness, but remains an inner feeling and the divine element that is exempt from an existence in the real world." (Hegel, cited in Oliver, 1997, pp. 46-48)

Paraphrasing Kelly Oliver, one might suggest that it is because woman is (somewhat blindly) bound to home that man can escape home and enter community. (See Oliver, p. 46) Slavoj Žižek transforms Hegel's position into almost "heroic feminism:" "It may seem that Hegel simply ascribes to woman the narrowness of a private point of view: woman is the community's 'inner enemy' in so far as she misapprehends the true weight of the universal purposes of public life, and is capable of conceiving of them only as a means of realizing private ends. This, however, is far from being the entire picture: it is this same position of society's 'inner enemy' that renders possible the sublime ethical act of exposing the inherent limitation of the standpoint of social totality itself (Antigone)." (Žižek, 1995, p.148)

Again – woman is assigned a high destiny, – to expose something about the social community, to make it possible. Woman has to feel proud, no matter at what cost to herself. In fact, it is not even her *conscious* decision, as Hegel points out, then again (as in the case with hospitality as femininity *par excellence*) – how to take credit for it, if it seems to be the matter of an “unconscious witness,” whose fate and destiny is to serve a higher order. Which she is unaware of.

Kelly Oliver used a few texts by Luce Irigaray, who had extensively written on the Hegelian dialectic of sexual difference and its operations within the community to suggest a sustained critique of the Hegelian system. Her main point is that there are not two genders in Hegelian dialectic, but only one is playing different roles in the desire to give birth to himself, appropriating maternal and feminine when and how he finds it necessary. This leaves him with a feeling of eternal guilt, binding men together in their drive to forget and exclude women from the community, from fraternity (see Derrida’s *The Politics of Friendship*).

In her fundamental volume *Speculum, Of the Other Woman*, Irigaray suggested that Hegelian system of sexual difference weaves itself into a tautological web, in its consumption and assimilation of the feminine: “*What an amazing vicious circle in a single syllogistic system. Whereby the unconscious, while remaining unconscious, is yet supposed to know the laws of the consciousness – which is permitted to remain ignorant of it – and will become even more repressed as a result of failing to respect those laws.*” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 223)

Thus feminine is nothing more than *the other of the same*, that is, the negation of the masculine, produced by him to attain a higher order of community and ethical relation to god. And the constant reminder of her only fuels his obsession to negate her once and again. In the essay “The Female Gender” (See Irigaray, 1993) from the collection *Sexes and Genealogies*, Irigaray evaluates the action of Antigone as an anti-woman gesture, since in fulfilling her family duty, protecting “the home,” Antigone no longer serves her *female gender*, but “is working in the service of men and their *pathos*. ... She already serves the state in that she tries to wipe away the blood shed by the state. The female has been taken along, taken in by the passage out of divine law, out of the law of nature, of life, into male human law. Antigone is already the desexualized representative of *the other of the same*. Faithful to her task of respecting and loving the home, careful not to pollute the hearth flame, she now performs only the dark side of that task, the side needed to establish the male order as it moves toward absolute affirmation.” (Irigaray, 1993, pp. 110-111)

This “dark side” of woman as function sustains and allows man’s ethical

consciousness. Irigaray and Oliver would probably agree with Žižek, that we do not have the *two*, but only the *one* in our culture's claim of sexual difference¹ – at least, in a Hegelian, Lacanian or even Levinas's universe; two modalities of the same voice (Žižek, 1995), “*two functions, two tasks, not two genders.*” (Irigaray, 1993, p. 120)

Thus man seems to live off woman, however insisting on her non-living, on her communal absence, state of ethical unconsciousness and ontological nothingness. “There is no woman,” only mothers, wives, sisters, or whores. (See Žižek, 1995) This violent insistence/erasure in turn leads to the “eternal anxiety of the community,” which is transferred back onto its Others, that is, still onto itself. One could even argue it is this generic crime that makes the community of men possible at all, that unites men into community, that is, through “solidarity-in-guilt.” If woman is Other *par excellence*, then every Other is to be (secretly *and* openly at the same time) killed, every Other does not exist, if the community of men is still to be held together.

It has been suggested, following Derrida, that the notion of hospitality can serve as an intervention that could allow us to sustain and nourish heterogeneous elements within community without eliminating them. However, Derrida's notion of hospitality, following Levinas, seems to exclude feminine otherness as embodied and living difference, thus once again denying that the living and breathing feminine Other is a heterogeneous member of the community of men *and* women, women *and* men. We have analyzed the Hegelian notion of community and its implications for the feminine Other that are largely in tune with those of the hospitality of Levinas and Derrida. The next question that arises would be of *how* we can inject back a living feminine Other into community, if we want it to be welcoming to the living and embodied Others, allowing it to practice heterogeneity? And what especially interests us: do net-communities have more potential than flesh communities in relation to a re-formulated notion of hospitality, or not?

Injecting hospitality into this generic community would not alter its homogenizing logic, if woman (once again) is not welcomed there as woman, but only as a “feminine dimension always already at home.” Femininity modeled for men and by men, to carry out a smooth passage into a heterogeneous community of men, would not wash off “solidarity-in-guilt” for this femininity of home is invited on one condition: to be a femininity of an imagined woman. But if “empirical women” are not needed (wanted?) to form a part of such

¹ “If it were possible to symbolize sexual difference, we would have not two sexes but one. ‘Male’ and ‘female’ are not two complementary parts of the Whole, they are two (failed) attempts to symbolize this Whole.” (Žižek, 1995, p. 160). This Whole is “the whole of Man,” “the full identity of Man.” (Žižek, 1995, p. 159)

new heterogeneous community, then what kind of heterogeneity are we talking about? Especially since sexual difference is supposed as the founding precondition for any community and of any home.

Matrixial Economies

“The Matrix is everywhere, it’s all around us, here, even in this room. You can see it out of your window, or on your television. You feel it when you go to work, or go to church or pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth, ... that you like everyone else was born into bondage ... kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste or touch. A prison for your mind. A Matrix.” (From the movie “The Matrix”)

“Imagine men to be living in an underground cave-like dwelling place, which has a way up to the light along its whole width, but the entrance is a long way up. The men have been there from childhood, with their neck and legs in fetters, so that they remain in the same place and can only see ahead of them, as their bonds prevent them from turning their heads.” (Plato, *Republic*, 514 a, b)

“What is Matrix? Simply ... the ‘big Other,’ the virtual symbolic order, the network that structures reality for us.” (Žižek)

The matrix has been etymologically framed in Indo-European cultures as that from which everything else comes into being, often in endless progression, and this meaning has been variously developed and expressed in its relationship to the terms mother, maternal, material, womb, and pregnant animal. However, definitions from the movie *Matrix* and Žižek’s article with the same name are seemingly empty of any references to the mother and the maternal body, following Platonic tradition. In its most recent usage the matrix has been identified with cyberspace and anything that escapes linearity (like in mathematics).

Michelle Boulous Walker, in her impressive book *Philosophy and the Maternal Body* names it “The philosophical fantasy of self-generation, ... which is a specifically masculine imaginary structured by a desire to displace the maternal in order to speak both in and from the mother’s place.” (Walker, 2000, p. 28) Derrida would agree with her absolutely, as this passage refers to the notion of “chora,” and here distinction between matrix and chora is blurred though it has to be remembered. Derrida does not make this apparent, as matrix/uterus is absent from his discussion on Chora. He treats Plato’s refer-

² “The Mother and receptacle of all created and visible and in any a way sensible things is not to be termed earth, or air, or fire, or water, or any of their compounds, or any of the

ence to the Mother and receptacle as metaphoric, without bringing it so far as to take them literally.²

The cave in Plato *stands for* womb/matrix (interestingly enough, matrix here is translated as womb), and the fact that Plato uses a different metaphor for maternal “invisibility” cannot be ignored. Irigaray, who has written extensively on both Plato’s discussion of the Cave in the *Republic* and his discussion of Chora in *Timaeus*, writes on this passage of the Cave: “Already the prisoner was no longer in a womb but in a cave – an attempt to provide a figure, a system of metaphor for the uterine cavity. He was held in a place that was, that meant to express, that had the sense of being like a womb. We must suppose that the womb is reproduced, reproducible, and reproductive by means of projections.” (Irigaray, 1985, p. 279)

The idea of visual perception as a privilege over the darkness of the womb (and what is darkness if there is warmth?) has received a great deal of criticism as the *ocularcentrism* of Western thought. Less attention has been devoted to the fact that it does not only relate to “truth” but fundamentally to the movement “out” to light rather than movement “into” darkness. In order to bring things “out,” pregnancy is detached from the embodied space, becoming “more visible and usable” as an illuminating metaphor. However, we have to be careful, of course, not to collapse the ethical into ontological. Derrida and Levinas both try to avoid such collapse. The question arises when they insist that it is necessary to ban (empirical) *women* from the horizon of thought and their discourse while positioning sexual difference of home and chora as fundamental to the third genre. Furthermore, it is feminine but different from the split between “chaos and cosmos,” “myth and logos.” Here both Derrida and Levinas come dangerously close to Freud and Lacan (“unconscious”), and hence, exit their search for the ethical dimension, as the formulated “dream” of home/feminine places, it is outside of the question of the *ethics* of sexual difference.

Shuli Barzilai in her recent book *Lacan and the Matter of Origins* writes that pregnancy in Lacan’s later works becomes associated exclusively with visual perception, with *imaginary* identifications. From Gestalt theories Lacan assumes a definition of pregnancy that was eloquently formed by Piaget: “Good forms are pregnant because they are simple, regular, symmetrical.” It also designates the force and stability of a privileged field or structure, which for Lacan ultimately is defined as a reflected image. (See Barzilai, 1999, p. 5)

As Shuli Barzilai points out, pregnancy becomes associated with visual

elements from which these are derived, but is an invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible.” (Plato, *Timaeus*, in Walker, 2000, p. 13).

perception not only on the level of metaphoric analogy, but also on “literal (physiological) and figurative (psychological) levels.” ... Here in particular Lacan draws on “Leonard Harrison Matthew’s research on ‘Visual Stimulation and Ovulation in Pigeons.’” (Barzilai, p. 133) His research shows how the act of one pigeon seeing another pigeon or a mirror image can stimulate ovulation. Barzilai stresses that for Lacan this process is not modeled on the acts of mating or maternity. He presents it as some kind of Immaculate Conception through which a female pigeon can lay eggs from seeing her “lover” in the mirror.

The notion of matrix is used in association with the term pregnancy, with years becoming more and more elevated to the realm of Symbolic, though Lacan continues to exploit it as an engendering and foundational metaphor. Lacanian usage of Matrix is linked to the general desire to self-production, to engendering oneself by oneself alone, giving a “true” birth out of life in the Platonic cave. Barzilai concludes that in this process “matrix disappears from the world of mothers and enters into that of mirrors and signifiers.”

In recent years the notion of the Matrix has become dominant in figurations of cyberspace. It seems as if it is the most desirable, the most contemporary and fitting equation. I would argue that the challenge today is to reintroduce the maternal as an embodied encounter with difference, and not a metaphorical one. We imagine cyberspace as a collection of home-sites, matrices, shelters that are protected by the keys – passwords.

There are at least three associations that currently operate between notions of cyberspace and the matrix that makes the last so appropriate for representations of the former:

Both are seen as infinite and ever expanding, where expansion is itself their function (as in mathematics, where the initial matrix forms the basis for serial and cumulative development, or in contemporary cybertheory and cyberpunk literature where cyberspace is often assumed to be limitless and fully imaginary, to be filled with any desirable content).

They are supposed (and wanted?) as empty spaces, passively waiting to be filled and occupied – a fact that also lends to its being conceptualized as *virtual* vis-à-vis real. It is simply “out there,” without having its own place, though providing a place for everything. As Doug Mann and Heidi Hochenedel define it, after Baudrillard, “it is a desert of the real in which hyper real simulacra saturate and dominate human consciousness,” it is “a map without territory.” Being appropriated by phallogocentric imaginary, matrix has become an empty space to be filled with any content, psychological, scientific, artistic, or philosophical theorizations. It no longer belongs to a body marked by sexual difference; it rather serves self-productions between (spiritual) fathers and sons.

Ultimately, both have been disembodied. Cyberspace has been invented as being nowhere and everywhere, as something which has no corporeal reference or geographical location. It is a place of ultimate escape, where we can explore our desires, anxieties and fears to become more stable, normal and healthier. Of course, the body haunts it, for it feeds on the body, which must be forgotten or silenced, or overcome.

These characteristics imply that the matrixial therefore is indifferent to difference, that its infinite openness does not impose barriers on/to entry and participation. And also participation is understood to be free and on equal terms. The matrix provides a sense of limits and spherical closure to the limitless borderless imaginary of cyberspace; it almost serves as a saviour to the notion that would otherwise be in danger of falling into nothingness. Thus my other disagreement with Sadie Plant and others who celebrate a subversive strategy of mimicry and simulation on the part of the female genre and computers: it is not the Matrix that simulates cyberspace as some place that invades a man – it is cyberspace that is injected with the notion of the Matrix as a grounds for its self-reproduction. The conception of cyberspace is gendered, for it simulates the Matrix without mothers, once again partaking from the maternal while imagining and fixing it as a mere original to make copies from.

There is tension between the generative (as abstract) vs. maternal (as embodied) in definitions and representations of the matrix in cyberspace. The appropriation of the corporeal matrix and its relation to maternal body and subjectivity through scientific, philosophical and aesthetic reductions and abstractions in Western culture has been instrumental in producing cyberspace, fantasizing it as “self-reproducing” matrix-perfect Mega-computer or Mega-ideology. In fact, these domestications of the notion of the matrix, to disarticulate it from its relationship to embodied sexual difference, are the matrixial as matricidal economies of cyberspace.

The hospitality of the matrix as space, as “first” home, is never really analyzed or raised. It especially handicaps our future encounters with “artificial” matrices that chemically, technologically and even psychologically all try to mimic and reproduce maternal space. What is “maternal space?” Spaces of femininity? Home? Matrix? Domesticity, intimacy, warmth? What is the relation between woman’s body as space and spaces that she inhabits? This is a fundamental question for any conception of space and place, even as matricidal and somatophobic as our philosophical tradition, *more so* in our philosophical tradition.

Unconditional Receptivity of Chora

One major quality that is shared by home and chora is not their belonging to the realm of the feminine, as some might expect. For the femininity of both home and chora is not a quality but a necessity, or necessary consequence. This bond between the home and chora is *unconditional receptivity*. Hospitality is a part of both so essentially that in some philosophical elaborations on chora and home we can interchange them without disrupting the drive of the argument (another interchange would be with “matrix,” though usually a hidden one). Certainly, this no-where condition of chora and home (through its singular uniqueness) is particularly beneficial when applied to the WWW. Information (and the technologies that facilitate its flows) has been visualized/imagined/described and even implemented in the temporal-spatial terminology of a big bang, a collapse into a dot: as technological time was supposed to lapse into an instant, a moment, a point; a technological space in its own turn was supposed to shrink, geography lose its significance. Instead of making time-space disappear, this movement of thought and effort has magnified techno-time to eternity and immortality through liberating it from linearity and a collection of “virtually indestructible” records, while space has never been imagined to be so expanding as in its technological incarnation. Macro (cosmos) and micro (atom) are peacefully welcomed together in the house of information, represented by the World Wide Web. The Web that is as Wide as the entire World. A sphere of matter crossed over by threads of information. Depending on how we position the World in WWW, where the World is – inside our imagination or transforming into the entire Universe.

However, this unconditional receptivity of *chora* is two-fold and can never be simply assumed: chora has a spatial dimension, and hence the sense of a home, a maternal touch, a body, creative interiority without limits, inverted inside-out of itself at any moment. Just like in hospitality, unconditional welcome goes hand in hand with the law, the responsibility, the system. Their interplay and constant tension makes ethics possible. Ethics is somewhere, a by-product of the tension between “unconditional hospitality and, on the other hand, the rights and duties that are the conditions of hospitality.” (Derrida, 2000, p. 147) Hospitality and the receptivity of the *chora* seem to be in line with discussions on interactivity, especially in relation to user-centered products. In an interactive artwork or a commercial product, as many have noted, responsibility is pushed onto the user/buyer/visitor, and it grows with the degrees of freedom and number of choices. It is a fake, on the one hand, and not at all, on the other.

As Derrida suggests, “*Chora* receives” all the interpretations of her without receiving them, and without receiving anything for herself. She does not possess anything as her own. She “is” nothing other than the sum or the process of what has just been inscribed “on” her, on the subject of her, on her subject, right up against her subject, but she is not the *subject* or the *present support* of all these interpretations, even though, nevertheless, she is not reducible to them. *Chora* is not that chaos or Gaia from which everything comes to light. She should not be reduced to “the anthropomorphic form” (that is, of a woman, mother, nurse). “And yet, to follow this other figure, although it no longer has the place of the nurse but that of the mother, *khōra* does not couple with the father, in other words, with the paradigmatic model. She is a third gender/genus; she does not belong to an oppositional couple, for example, to that which the intelligible paradigm forms with the sensible becoming and that looks rather like a father/son couple.” According to Derrida: “The ‘mother’ is supposedly apart. And since it’s only a figure, a schema, therefore one of these determinations which *khōra* receives, *khōra* is no more of a mother than a nurse, is no more than a woman. This *triton genos* is not a *genos*, first of all because it is a unique individual. She does not belong to the ‘race of women’ (*genos gynaikōn*). *Khōra* marks a place apart.” As she is left out of law, she does not belong to the realm of ethics, she is privileged to be left out of law, but it also gives her no place and we cannot, it means, have a relationship with her, especially daughters. She is space, *khōra*, always virtual, always that profound philosophical and scientific zero, nothingness. So, *Khōra* marks a space apart, the spacing which keeps a dissymmetrical relation to all that which, “in herself,” beside or in addition to herself, seems to make a couple with her. “In the couple outside of the couple, this strange mother who gives place without engendering can no longer be considered as an origin. She/it eludes all anthropo-theological schemes, all history, all revelation, and all truth. Preoriginary, *before* and outside of all generation, she no longer even has the meaning of a past, of a present that is past. *Before* signifies no temporal anteriority. The relation of independence, the nonrelation, looks more like the relation of the interval or the spacing to what is lodged in it to be received in it.” (See Derrida, 1995)

Visualized Receptivity: Nothingness – 0 – Interval

Chora marks space apart. She is as an interval, as a spacing in-between, an X that can take any form it receives. This is the integral part of leaving marks, of writing, and of language as a whole – empty spaces and silences, that can add

millions to one single number or open up a space to listen. A few have insisted that “Woman Conceals Nothing” – that was the main secret. She (chora) does not exist although she gives a place for everything existing. What does it mean – to be no thing, to non-be; are Being and thing so distantly-closely related?

Ironically, our relation to nothing is not one of “X” or a sum – $n+n+n\dots$ – how Derrida writes of chora, that she is an “X” that can take any form, any letter. But nothing has been positioned as zero – “0.” And I propose to think of CHORA not as X, but as “0,” following our historical relation to the nothingness. In *The Book of Nothing* John Barrow traces how only 4 cultures in the histories of civilizations known to us, have had a concept of “0,” – Egypt, Babylon, Mayan and Indian civilizations. Their representations of “0” varied, though all of them conceived of “zero” to signify a space left in-between other numbers, space out – just like in Derrida’s interpretations of *chora*. They have developed different images of zero, remarkably all resembling a shell, or a circle, or a half circle. As if the empty space that signifies multiplication has to contain a space inside itself to represent the space/interval it substituted.

Greeks and Romans did not have zero, that’s why Roman numbers do not have it. Later Western culture adopted the Arabic numerical system that was borrowed from India. Indian civilizations did not only see zero as a space to signify a numerical system, but developed a complex relation to it as a notion of Nothing, both philosophical and theological. Zero, sunya, meant “atmosphere, ether, immensity of space, a point, a sky, complete and a hole,” among other meanings. Barrow writes that Indians had a conception of nothing as a generative space, and not only as a disappearance (as in the Greek tradition). However, in Western tradition nothingness and emptiness continued to be treated with suspicion and fear, even though zero was adopted for calculations in the early Middle Age. It would be important, however, as Derrida warned us, not to collapse chora into Greek conceptions of Gaia or chaos (“another” feminine).

For Kristeva, chora belongs to the semiotic and maternal, pre-symbolic. We do not have space here to elaborate on it further, though I would like to stress that her analysis of chora is similar to that of Derrida as she also insists that it does not relate to “real women.” Mother’s body in Kristeva’s work serves the purpose of disrupting paternal logos, and disappears into metaphorical workings of symbolic and semiotic. M. B. Walker claims, “There is a slide between the maternal and the mother that is largely absent from Kristeva’s work on chora.” (Walker, 2000, p.145)

Irigaray discusses the issue of chora both in Plato and Aristotle. While in *Speculum, Of the Other Woman* she relates *chora* to the issues of visible, sensible

and intelligible, and to its “virginity” (following Plato and later Hegel, Heidegger and Derrida), she explicitly takes the notion of Interval in relation to *chora* in her essay “Place, Interval, A Reading of Aristotle.” (Irigaray, 1993). First of all, Aristotle connects *chora* to matter (this was criticized by many as a deviation from Plato’s notion that is not matter or any ontology). Irigaray writes: “if the matrix is extendable, it can figure as the place of place.” Of course being aware that *chora* has been named as the place of place too, Irigaray brings back the relationship between embodiment, place and matrix. Man cannot separate the first and the last place, and that leads the philosophical tradition to downshift both in its relation to the unique mother and the unique God. As such, this split still has to be resolved. As for “woman,” writes Irigaray, she is place, and therefore, without place – like *chora*. She is receiving without being received, without interval for herself, which would allow herself to be received in a place. As a consequence, we have infinity the without possibility of arresting the fall. (Irigaray, 1993, p. 38) This is a highly political question, especially for discussions of cyberspace and sexual difference. Infinity without the possibility of arresting the fall – for a woman only. Woman remains the container for the world, since she is nothingness. However, being a container for the world and for the child (son), she does not become a container for herself, endlessly falling into metaphors of *chora*, matrix, abyss, multiplication, etc. “The womb, for its part, would figure rather as place. Though of course what unfolds in the womb unfolds in the function of an interval, a cord, that is never done away with. Hence perhaps, the infinite nostalgia for that first home? The interval cannot be done away with.” (Irigaray, 1993, p. 38)

The discourse of *chora* thus plays for philosophy a role analogous to that which *chora* “herself” plays for that which philosophy speaks of, namely, the cosmos formed or given form according to the paradigm. “It is out of this cosmos that will be drawn figures for describing *chora*: receptacle, imprint-bearer, mother or nurse. ... Philosophy cannot speak directly about that which they approach, in the mode of vigilance or of truth... The dream is between the two, neither one nor the other. Philosophy cannot speak philosophically of that which looks like its ‘mother,’ its ‘nurse,’ its ‘receptacle,’ or its ‘imprint-bearer.’ As such, it speaks only of the father and the son, as if the father engendered it all on his own.” (Derrida, 1997, p. 30) Hence: Nostalgia that finds its ultimate embodiment in the virtual reality. Why? “Because this apparent nostalgia-free zone is, in fact, nothing if not nostalgic, a repression of ‘home-sickness’ so extreme that something is not quite being covered up.” (Bloomer, 1996, p. 164)

Universe, maternal body and cyberspace are conceived as closed vessels,

the receptacle of all elements. There is still no escape in our notions of (cyber)space from this nostalgia, this longing for the first (Woman) and last (God) home, while being left speechless. This would be possible, however, if interpretations and figurations of chora included the ethics of the matrix as the first home/space of welcoming. Philosophical tradition has to welcome what it does not know yet; welcome first and wait, in order to sustain an interval without reducing *chora* to cosmology or the ontology of “0.”

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STRETCHING BEFORE AND AFTER

CAROLINE BASSETT

“Narrative relations, which see the desire for narration encounter its tale, can themselves be political actions.” (Kottman, 2000, p. xxiii)

Preface

I find an identity because I am a narratable. I find an identity because I recognize myself in a tale told by another. As Adriana Cavarero has suggested narration reveals my shape. It reveals a pattern traced out by my actions, a pattern I made but one I could not discover fully on my own (Cavarero, 1997). This is my life story, my narrative identity. It is continuous – in that I am held in a narrative thread – but it is also in flux; the story develops and the shape changes. This is my own story, but it is opened by narration into the horizons of a particular culture, at a particular moment in that culture’s history, and it is socially symbolic of that culture. I am at once myself and I am of my time. Today, the shape traced out through narration might reveal a self that is a cyborg. Increasingly, I contain technologies. I extend into a landscape itself as artificial as it is natural. Indeed, it is hard to say where I end and where the world beyond myself begins. Certainly the boundary is not formed only at my skin. Perhaps it is formed by my experience, by my life story, or by the narration of that life story – which might itself be a narration undertaken partly by a machine. If I remain myself, I have to ask myself what *kind* of self am I, in these conditions? And what choices, what actions are open to me, what kind of a political creature can I become?

Introduction

Exploring information technology and subjectivity through narrative can help think through some issues in cyber-feminism; what it is, and what it needs

to do. Currently, cyber-feminism is often a celebratory discourse – often a discourse understood to be shared between cyborgized women and the feminised machine environments which contain these women, and from which they are indistinguishable (see Plant, 1996). Other forms of techno-feminist analysis, understanding information technology as a productive site for a feminist politics of re-signification share this general optimism, and also find within information technology the grounds for a technologically derived alteration in the conditions within which women operate (see Stone, 1995). In contrast stands an approach to the subject and/in information technology that allows for the restitution of cyber-feminism as a political critique and as a project for transformation, to be undertaken by active agents. This restitution is important because, in my view at least, *feminism* itself remains a project with work to do. Accepting that the rise of information technology has entailed a certain measure of feminisation, but has not materially changed gender inequality, it has *new* kinds of work to do. Cyber-feminism makes sense to me – as a political project – only if it is concerned centrally with transformation.

In what follows cyber-feminism is explored from three directions. First, the relationship between information society theory and dominant forms of contemporary cyber-feminist is considered. I suggest that information society theory has formed the grounds of much contemporary cyber-feminist thinking (although it does this in ways that are complex, and that relate not only to essentialist forms of cyber-feminism). I would like to disturb these grounds, partly to suggest that they may be the *wrong* grounds from which to begin to develop a political approach to cyber-feminism, partly to underscore my claim that they are not the *inevitable* grounds upon which to base cyber-feminist analysis of information – as they often appear to be today.

Through this analysis I hope to move cyber-feminism to a new space, one which allows some different approaches to the conceptualisation of the subject and/in information to be considered. Disturbing the connection between cyber-feminism and information society theory can make it evident that cyber-feminism's priorities need to be re-drawn – and re-drawn within horizons that are differently understood. The world *is* changed through the advent of information, but without the link to the information revolution thesis it is no longer necessary to assume that this change adds up to a radical break – to the ascension of information as the new prime mover. And without the incessant chorus proclaiming that information is progress (and the only progress possible) that the information society thesis produces, it is possible to strip away the comforting illusion that this change is both inevitable and necessarily for the better.

The second part of the paper does something different – and something

rather more tentative. The focus remains in part on critique, but this time not of cyber-feminism in its most essentialist moment. Rather, I look at the problems emerging when post-structural critical theory, particularly that of Butler, is deployed to consider gendered subjectivity in on-line spaces. Parallels can be drawn between the problematic of differentiation (between the subject and the discourse that writes the subject) that emerges here, and the questions I see as being raised by cyber-feminism's conscious confusion of the figure of the cyborg with the body of the informational web, or the Matrix. In both cases the question of agency becomes important.

The final part of the paper develops an alternative approach. Drawing on Adriana Cavarero and Paul Ricoeur I contrast an understanding of identity as narratable with performative accounts of subjectivity looking at attempts (including my own) to read Butler's account of subjectivity into the virtual. I conclude that a conception of cyber-subjectivity deriving from narrativity can be used to articulate and argue for a form of cyber-feminism that stresses the continued necessity for politics, rather than demanding the celebration of new forms of life. This way of thinking about identity might suggest that an urgent project for (cyber)feminism is the development of forms of *opposition* to the particular kinds of "feminisation" that are characteristic of informed capital and that are promoted by it. In particular I would like to argue for a form of cyber-feminism that operates "within and against" as much as with "the grain of" an environment feminised through the extension of information technology into all areas of life.

Information Revolution

"[W]hat some refer to as the post-modern condition, others refer to as information society." (Braman, 2000, p.308)

It is articulated as the network society or the age of information. It is invoked to explain the waning of narrative, or the rise of post-Fordist working patterns, or to account for a general increase in the speed of our lives. It seems to be and do many things. At root, however, the information society/information revolution thesis is based in the single assertion. This is the assertion that information has produced what Schiller has called a "massive discontinuity." The information society, that is, is not "a projection or an extrapolation of existing trends in Western Society...[but it is] a new *principle* of social-technical organization and ways of life" (Schiller, 1997, p. 116). Information revolution theorists believe that information technology overwhelms previous forms and relations of production, re-organizes communication, and

supersedes old forms of social life and social organization. This re-organization also produces new social subjects – and they are in a very real sense the subjects of technology, not of the social totality.

The specific information technologies said to be involved in producing such a revolution and such a change in subjectivation are rather more difficult to describe, not least because the information revolution has been proclaimed many times over. Daniel Bell, who announced the information society at the end of the 1960s suggested it would emerge due to the new work-patterns ushered in by computerization (see Webster, 1995). Manuel Castells' 1970s analysis of the network society, in which the ascendancy of the morphology of the network over the social logic is asserted, shifted the focus towards information networks (Castells, 1996). Today, the focus is again moving; it is biopower that is regarded as key to the constitution of the multitude and the Empire in Hardt and Negri's recent writing, for example (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Clearly, it is the *principle* of the ascendancy of information to the role of prime mover within the social totality that links the different declarations over the years. Indeed, there are ways in which information society theory, taken as a whole, is fundamentally indifferent to the specific qualities of the information technology upon which its assertion of rupture rests. A corollary of this has been that information society theory is also largely indifferent to the ways in which such information technologies might be gendered. That is, the question is not central to the basic analysis even though it may (does) become important in contemporary elaborations of that analysis.

Hardly surprisingly, the same indifference to the gender of information technology is not found amongst feminists exploring information – arguably indeed, cyber-feminism finds its roots in Donna Haraway's 1984 *Cyborg Manifesto*, which is a techno-feminist¹ exploration of precisely this issue. Despite this, much cyber-feminist writing since Haraway has tended to cleave to the basic assertions of the information society/information revolution thesis, and in a more absolute way than Haraway, even while it has taken gender and technology as its project. Certainly this is true for a well-documented current within cyber-feminism based on forms of gender and technological essentialism. Sadie Plant is the obvious example here (see Plant, 1996; Squires, 1996). This is also the case when influential approaches to cyber-subjectivity based around feminist post-structural critical theory and queer theory (see Turkle, 1995, for instance) are considered. Here, however the connection is more

¹ I have called Haraway techno-feminist since the Manifesto at least pre-dates both the popularisation of the internet and the emergence of cyber-feminism which essentially developed in response to the latter.

roundabout and to trace it out requires that attention is paid to the connection between theories of the information society/information revolution and theories of the post-modern. A starting point here is to note that the belief that there is a more or less direct correspondence between the advent of post-modernity and the advent of the information society/information revolution is widely held (see Braman 2000, above). Information is understood as at once a cause of, and as an instantiation of, the fragmented cultural forms of post-modern life (see Lyotard, 1984). These forms might include modes of living (spatial and temporal organization) forms of subjectivity, and cultural productions of all kinds. To point out that a version of the information society/information revolution thesis underpins much feminist writing on technology and gender, is therefore to link together not two terms (feminism with information revolution), but three (feminism with information revolution and post-modernity).

It seems increasingly necessary to question this three way connection. First because techno-feminism's old method of operating as a force distinct from, but still within the grounds of, information society frameworks is now increasingly problematic. The force of feminist writing on information technology originally derived from its ability to find a distinctive point of view from within this tripartite framework. But this is becoming harder to do. In the time since the 1980s, when Haraway wrote the *Manifesto*, there has been a process of increasingly absolute convergence between mainstream and feminist understandings of contemporary information technology; a convergence based around a shared sense of the feminization of this technology. A consequence of this is that cyber-feminism or techno-feminism no longer functions to critique the information society – even from within. Let alone from without. It is simply another articulation of the same analysis. The result, I suggest, is that the distinctiveness of the cyber-feminist position, and the kinds of critical and political distance cyber-feminist analysis can produce, is diminished. To substantiate this proposition I want now to briefly compare the contemporary landscape with that laid out in the *Manifesto*. The point here is to ask how the cyborg has lost its bite.

How the cyborg lost its bite

“The hybridization of human and machine is no longer a process that takes place only at the margins of society rather it is a fundamental episode at the center of the constitution of the multitude and its power.” (Hardt and Negri, 2000)

In the fiction of William Gibson cyberspace was widely celebrated as an escape from the “meat.” It was an escape out of (feminine) nature into (masculine) culture. Gibson’s fictional viewpoint connected with real-world analyses of the impact of the diffusion of information technology. On the one hand the development of new forms of information technology promised to automate everyday life processes, on the other the development of new information spaces entirely devoid of “noise” promised to deliver the dream of perfect communication (see Moravec, 1988; Kittler, 1997). Haraway’s *Manifesto* challenged this dominant understanding of the probable impact of the widespread diffusion of information into society and culture. Avoiding the “abstract concept” (Feenberg, 1999, p.15) of information technology as pure code (“the one code that translates all meaning perfectly”), Haraway looked instead at how the forms of computer technology developing in the early 1980s might interface with humans. She concluded that the logic of information technology could be located not in transcendence but rather in connection. The allure of the virtual would not be found in disembodied code, nor in fleshless connection or subsumption (the “bodiless exaltation of cyberspace” as Gibson put it). Instead she argued – against the mainstream at the time – that information technologies would produce new forms of connection between bodies and machines.

Situated on the cusp of Marxism and post-structuralism, second wave feminism and post-structural critical theory, Haraway used this insight to develop a technophile politics that set out to explore the disruptive possibilities information technology raised for conventional assumptions about gender. She produced the cyborg as an “ironic political myth,” a technophile entity that resisted assimilation into the information machine but gloried in its connections with it.

Others also adopted the cyborg – but in less radical and less ambiguous ways. The focus on increasingly intimate and tight forms of human computer interaction found in Haraway’s writing parallels real developments in computing (for instance the rise of personal computing and of graphical interfaces). As it turned out Haraway’s *Manifesto* was better at conceptualizing the reality of information technology as it embedded itself into everyday life than accounts of information stressing escape and dis-embodiment. Haraway’s cyborg, reflecting the prioritizing of the human machine relation that occurs with the growth of user-friendly interactive systems was a figure that fitted the times. As a consequence the *Manifesto* was immensely influential. Indeed, arguably it is “foundational” (Kennedy, 2001, p. 285) not only within feminism, but within many forms of thinking about the interactions between humans and machines. This perhaps is why the ironic cyborg, raised to be an oppositional

figure, has now become the approved figure for the new work, the new consumer, the new digital citizen. The hybridization of human and machine is now accepted as a standard feature of the contemporary world, it is “no longer a process that takes place only at the margins of society ... [but] rather a fundamental episode” (Hardt and Negri, 2000). In sum, the cyborg is everywhere – but it no longer retains its political force as a figure that stands *against* orthodox readings of the information revolution. The partial evisceration of the power of the cyborg as feminist myth – as something operating as a powerful political fiction (Braidotti, 1996) – was achieved partly by virtue of its popularity.

Today the cyborg also remains a figure within cyber-feminism, but the focus has shifted away from it. In the work of Plant and others attention is given less to the cyborg individual and more to the new information networks into which cyborg individuals are subsumed. In the place of the “original” cyborg, a figure famously beyond gender, cyber-feminism places the feminized networks that contain women; this is cyber-feminism’s matrix. In focusing on feminized information networks cyber-feminism sets aside the question of agency altogether. Indeed agency is no longer required since new forms of cyber-feminist writing are not operating around a perceived *necessity* for change. For them the need is to *explore* or indeed *celebrate* this new terrain that both *contains* women and *contains* the feminine principle.

The distinctions that functioned to distinguish Haraway’s analysis from the mainstream analysis of the information society have collapsed almost entirely in this form of cyber-feminism. First, the shift from transcendence to connection – a certain kind of feminization – is now accepted. It is around interactivity between humans and machines/flesh and non-flesh/natural and artificial that information society/information revolution theorists make their claims. Second, cyber-feminism can no longer set itself up as a critical strand, operating within but also in opposition to the general understanding of the information society/information revolution thesis, or even as holding a specific position on the forms and types of connection desired. The cyborg/matrix coupling desired and developed by cyber-feminism points to why this might be so since this coupling, cyber-feminism’s ideal, is indistinguishable from the ideal form of the new social subject required by and envisaged by informational capitalism. That process whereby (mostly female) humans might be plugged into sympathetic (feminized) information networks, to produce “ideal” (ideally efficient) forms of human computer interaction in newly configured workplaces is precisely a process of cyborgisation. This is the intimacy between women and machine that is, for example, entailed in the flexible, surveillant, working life of the call centre operator, the figure paradigmatic of the developing information economy.

This connection indeed, might make it evident why the celebratory mode of cyber-feminism is problematic. The “triumph” of the cyborg project, if this is re-configured as the “achieving” of a particular form of feminization of the everyday environment, rings very hollow when material conditions of the informational capitalism are properly considered. Why should women celebrate the “feminization” of work, the move towards an undifferentiated intimacy between women and machine entailed in call centre work, for instance – or in most other information society posts? In these contexts the cyborg has become problematic as an icon for contemporary cyber-feminism. Indeed, the lingering possibility/promise of disruption it still inspires might now operate less to open up new forms of thinking, and more to obscure the disciplining effects that an intimacy with information technologies (feminized or not) all too often brings.

So setting aside the cyborg, what would it mean to reconstitute to cyber-feminism that sense of making demands that was explicit in Haraway’s *Manifesto* – that made her cyborg a *demanding* figure? What forms might cyber-feminism take if its priorities are reset from “celebration” to “change”? First, this kind of cyber-feminism could be defined as operating within and against the feminized grounds information technology produces, within and against an increasingly feminized culture. This might require the repudiation of particular modes of the feminine – something not developed further here. Second, this kind of cyber-feminism requires a conception of the subject as someone who can act within such grounds – someone indeed who can act *against* them at times. Without such subjects, I would like to suggest, we might have (we do have) cyber-feminisms (as theoretical discourses) but we can’t actually have *cyber-feminists*. In search of such a subject I consider below the possibilities that open up if the subject and/in the machine is understood as someone constituted through narrative.

Stretching before and after

“The genealogy of narration, after having turned the everyday practice of storytelling into a refined art, thus leads – through a progressive slide into the autonomy of the work – to the omnipotence of the book. At the end of the succession, instead of being ‘narratable’ the existent becomes paradoxically a ‘narrated,’ which from time to time is under the illusion that it has an existence. [But] in spite of everything, the existent exists and re-exists... ‘At a certain point, surely, we must accept that material reality exists, that it continually knocks up against us, *that texts are not the only thing...*’” (Cavarero, 1997, p. 127, *my italics*)

As the stock of information rises, the stock of narrative has tended to fall. This sense of narrative collapse is widespread in writing on techno-culture (see Darley, 2000). It finds Virilio's apocalyptic reading of information as that which collapses space and duration into absolute speed, thereby stripping away the grounds within which narratives might be made, or within which stories might be "walked" (Virilio, 1995). It is also evident in cyber-feminist writings since these too often stress *affect* and *intensity*, concentrating on what is instantaneous, what is *felt* at the moment of use, or what is *produced* at the moment of use – the subject herself being included in this instantaneous and fleeting production process.

Less often considered within cyber-cultural writing and cyber-feminist writing cleaving to the information revolution approach with all that this entails, is how forms of user interaction with ICTs might be examined as they persist and as they are continuous over time, even as they cross and re-cross heterogeneous spaces. Instead of focussing on the discrete moment of interaction with technology as a moment producing (or dissolving) the subject as a technological subject, what needs to be explored here is how the subject persists over time. One way to do this is to ask how s/he might be held together in a narrative thread. Such a subject could exist and re-exist through and across information networks, and beyond them. Further, s/he would be a subject whose material configuration is not confined to the body.

In thinking about narrative and identity I have been informed by the writings of Paul Ricoeur, Hannah Arendt, and Adriana Cavarero, all of whom have considered identity in relation to narrative. All share a conviction that "life" exceeds the text, standing both before and after it and all conceive of narrative as a form that can bind this life together in meaningful ways – it is thus narrative that provides the individual existent with her identity.

Paul Ricoeur's account of narrative identity, and of the *maintenance* of identity over time is to be read as an extension of the narrative arc he has developed in his writing on fiction and history – and particularly in the first volume of *Time and Narrative* (1984). For Ricoeur narrative is produced through a series of distinct moments of emplotment (*mimesis*) and together these produce narrative as an arc. This arc spans the initial pre-configuration of an experience or event, draws up to itself the central moment of the configuration of the tale (the moment of *poesis*), and also includes as an integral moment, the re-opening of this tale into the horizon of the reader or narrator. In his later writing Ricoeur explores ways in which identity can be understood within these narrative frameworks (Ricoeur, 1991). Here identity itself is understood as another narrative arc, another narrative *practice*. Within this narrative economy the life story, a pre-configuration of the tale, stands in ad-

vance of the narration of the tale. In this sense the narration of an identity is an act that is at once faithful to a life story (reaching back towards it) but which also breaks with it since it is also a *fictional* resolution; the resolution in *poesis* of a life. For Ricoeur the existent is thus understood not as a subjectivated individual produced through an act in language, but nor indeed as an individual *destined* by an act in narrative. For Ricoeur, (as for Cavarero), the individual *is someone that already lives*.

The narrative arc conceived of here however stretches after as well as before. It is only the act of narration that produces the tale in its fullest extent since it is this that involves the lived life coming to fruition “in the living receiver of the story being told” (Ricoeur, 1991). In this way narrative identity, which is the significance of a life story or its *resolution*, is inter-subjective – and indeed interactive. It “wells up from the *intersection* of the world of the text and the world of the reader” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 430, *my italics*).

Cavarero’s account of identity draws on Arendt’s in that it stresses connections and relations between “....[a] human being, their life story, and the narrator of this story” (Arendt, cited in Cavarero, 2000, p. 40). Cavarero’s sense of the narratable self can be read across Ricoeur’s account of narrative identity – usefully opening up some questions about the narrator of the tale, and the place of its narration. The distinction Cavarero draws between the actions that make up a life and the narratability of the tale of that life is made partly through the distinction drawn between the *what* of a life and its *who*. This is a distinction that usefully raises the question of self-identity over time and through material transformations. Cavarero argues that it is precisely the knowledge that one has a continuing life story, a story which could be told back to one and which could be *recognized* as one’s own, that confirms the individual in her everyday, and in her *on-going*, sense of self. For Cavarero, identity and in particular the *maintenance* of identity over time thus *depends* not on repetition, but on the knowledge that there is something to be narrated about oneself. Bringing the desire for this narration together with our inability to narrate ourselves Cavarero produces the paradox of the narratable self. This is the self who is always seeking the unity narration might provide, but who cannot fully satisfy her own desire to be narrated – to know herself. It is because the self is involved in the continuous, open, and inter-subjective production of her-self that she is able to act.

In *Relating Narratives*, Cavarero aligns post structuralist theories of the subject with a particular mode of cultural production. She suggests that a consequence of book culture (read here as synonymous with the linguistic turn) is that individuals are increasingly thought to exist only in language. Becoming *narrated* rather than *narratable* selves (Cavarero, 1997, p. 127), their

capacity for action is closed down. This alignment might be problematic. On the other hand, it is clear that digital culture *has* tended to reinforce an understanding of the self as narrated rather than narratable – that is, as textually or cyber-technologically produced, and/or as discursively performed, rather than existing before or after the text or technology.

Certainly this is a popular theorization of the subject within cyber-theoretical writing (see Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995; Farquhar 2000, for instance) which has often found in cyberspace and in the identity confusion it produces “living” evidence of the kinds of apparently flexible subjectivities postmodernism heralded in theory (see Hayles, 1993). The postmodern subject is easily understood to be eminently suited to a life on-line. Understood as partial, and as fragmented, and as somebody discursively produced, she is often already understood to operate in many worlds at once. It is therefore no surprise that for some cyber-theoretical writers the *virtual* subject is apparently capable of “performing as,” *as a discrete entity*, in various virtual spheres and in real life – and sometimes indeed simultaneously. If discourse writes the body it can perhaps write an identity which has *many* bodies at once. Thus, for Stone, identity on-line is a performance and/in technology, of a subject that is *fundamentally* multiple. The subject puts on cyberspace and in doing so can put on an identity more or less at will (Stone, 1995, p. 90). Sherry Turkle develops a similar argument – and in *Life on The Screen* quotes more or less approvingly an informant, who claimed that real life was “just another window,” one world amongst many in which he might choose to operate (Turkle 1995).

Turkle’s consideration of cyber-identity draws on Butler’s theorization of the performative production of the self. Turkle, along with other cyber-theoretical writers, has also suggested that cyberspace opens the way for the productive queering of gender, sexual, and other norms, and for productive identity experimentation of all kinds (Bruckman 1993; Schmeiser, 1995; We, 1994; Stone, 1995). Cyberspace might therefore be used to offer a vindication of the politics of re-signification Butler offers (Butler, 1993). My sense however, is that it reveals these politics as problematical.

For Butler, the subject is discursively produced through repeated acts in language, citations from normative discourses that produce the subject as a raced, sexed, gendered subject. Butler began with gender but extended her account to bodies, understood not as essentially produced but rather as morphologized through performative acts in language (Butler, 1993). Following Derrida, these performative acts in language are viewed as *iterative* acts, being based on repetition and alterity, rather than on simple repetition. As a consequence they can fail to repeat exactly, leaving space for forms of re-signification or *queering* – a form of citation that subverts. Cyberspace has

seemed to some to be ideal grounds for the practice of a radical politics based around such processes of re-signification. This is because setting about *exploiting* the possibility that the performative act constituting the subject might fail to repeat exactly, has seemed to be a fairly simple – even an instant – proposition in cyberspace. This proposition relies on the malleability of cyberbodies on the one hand, and the convenient way in which corporeal bodies can be regarded as literally out of the frame on the other.

A problem with these (optimistic) claims is that they have been substantially under-mined by the empirical evidence of users and of use practices which tend to suggest that cyberspaces often operate within the same normative values that operate everywhere else. (See Bassett, 1997) Remaining within the register of performative conceptions of identity, the conclusions that might be drawn from this observation are non-propitious. On the one hand the evidence suggests that the performative production of the self within a virtual world *remains* constrained by the discourses that define certain bodies as desirable or intelligible. This being the case even when this production is not constrained for the individual by an already existing body. In a sense this simply amounts to saying normative discourse will out as usual – despite a technologically achieved alteration in the (bodily) constitution of the subject. Here then, the specificity of the body in cyberspace is shown to be irrelevant to the process of subjectivation. At which point, the cyber-body's famous malleability becomes somewhat *beside* the point – and discourse is revealed as indifferent to the material specifics of what it conforms.

There is however, a yet more pessimistic way to read the situation through Butler since the logic of her argument also suggests that the possibilities for a politics of re-signification around identity are *narrower* in cyberspace than elsewhere. Butler claims that iteration means there is always a certain distance between discourse and the subject (this despite the fact the subject is discursively produced). However, in cyberspace, in a universe in which bodies are already discursive, Butler's claim that "[d]iscourse is not life, its time is not yours" (cited in Kottman, 2000, p. xi), and her conclusion that re-signification is possible within the terms of the iterating act, which can always fail to repeat as expected, and which always fails in part because of the *distance* between discourse and the subject, rings rather hollow.

Without living bodies operating in *excess* of discourse – bodies that might fail to approximate to the norm – the constraining discourses operating to conform the subject, operate in a more total way. In this way it could be claimed that discourses conforming the subject are more *absolute* in virtual conditions than in "normal" ones.

Seen in this way, virtual conditions, and virtual identities, at one point

considered to offer exciting new grounds for operating a politics of re-signification, have to be understood to do something rather different. The question of virtual life and virtual identity actually turns out to under-score the *difficulties* of thinking about a meaningful politics of re-signification, as it is attached to performative conceptions of the subject. Indeed it can be used to problematize the whole notion of agency as it pertains to performative accounts of subjectivation.

This is the same impasse as that produced by cyber-feminism's dissolution of the subject into the expansive – and feminized – body of the machine, discussed above. Here, again, but this time working through a theory of performativity, what has been produced is an absolute identification or absolute subjectivation to the machine – whether machine and/or subject are considered as discourse or as technology. In this sense feminist post-structural critical theory and cyber-feminist essentialism produce the same kind of “wallpaper” cyborg. In neither case can the gendered subject, stand out against, or move independently in relation to, or indeed be distinguished from, the networks that produce her; her background, of which she is now also a part.

A sense of narrative identity, as I have sketched it out above, might produce a different conception of the subject, since the existent here can be understood as s/he who stands before and after both language and technology, but who cannot be reduced to either. Within this framework the cyber-textual production of the self is only ever one moment in an extended narrative economy of the self; the narrative arc precedes and follows the cyber-text, or the cyberspace moment.

To develop this, it seems useful to return to Cavarero and pursue the distinction between the latter's approach and Butler's, comparing Cavarero's sense of the narratable self with Butler's account of subjectivation. Kottman, also in pursuit of this difference, distinguishes between Butler's sense of the performatively produced subject, in which the possibility for re-signification (and therefore politics) is understood to exist in the space *between* the discourse and the life (hence Butler's claim that “[d]iscourse is not life, its time is not yours”, cited above), and Cavarero's sense of an identity politics as they cohere around narrative identity, when narration is always entrusted to another. As Kottman points out, in part, this distinction turns on the question of the *nature* of this other. That is, there is difference between what Cavarero understands as the “necessary other” in narration and Butler's sense of the constitutive outside, the *exclusionary* matrix that produces the subject (Butler, 1993). Kottman understands this in terms of a contrast between Butler's abject other, who is never more than a third person *perspective*, and Cavarero's insistence on “an other who is really an other” (Kottman, 2000, pp. xii- xiv).

My own sense is that the “reality” of this other might be used here to underscore the degree to which a conception of identity as narrative can allow the subject to be composed of different materialities. Working within the narrative frameworks outlined above the “real other” is to be viewed as a component in the narrative arc that finally produces the existent, that gives them their identity. This other is thus exterior to the self – in that s/he is not an internally generated perspective. However, even as a real other, s/he is also on the inside, in that s/he is part of that narrative economy – that arc – that produces the self. Another way to put this is to say that the desire for narration by a real other extends the operations that produce identity, thereby precluding the existent from complete identification with her moment to moment iteration – her iteration within information networks for instance. The narratable self who emerges operating within technological networks or elsewhere, is thus not pinned down by her identification with her narrated self – since this self is narrated by a real other. In this way she escapes the tyranny of the performative and/or the technologically perfected performative. In summary, it is feasible to explore the role of technological mediations in the production of an identity (or a life story), beginning not with an account of social existence “predicated on interpellation” (see Kottman, 2000), but rather by presuming that identity concerns material existence as well as discourse. This opens the way to understand identity as a continuous thread maintained across both sides of the screen and maintained over time.

Conclusion: the body of narrative

I begin this paper by arguing that cyber-feminism, understood as a political project which can realistically think about itself as agential is at an impasse. I argued that this impasse has come about because cyber-feminist writing has accepted too uncritically as a starting point, that tangle of wires and thoughts that goes under the name “information revolution.” I have suggested that this approach tends to produce conceptions of the subject that are both absolutely fragmented and absolutely derived from information. This kind of thinking produces humans not as subjects but as objects of the network. Against this, I have used narrative to begin to develop a form of thinking about contemporary subjectivity as it is inflected by technology. This approach is focussed not on narrative geometries. Rather I have considered narrative as a mode of interpretation; as a way of making sense of lived experience in time.

As a final move, here I would like to sum up some ways in which this approach does open new doors to thinking about technologically produced

transformations in subjectivity and in particular in gendered subjectivity. Two important issues that have threaded through this article concern the uncertainties information technology produces, firstly about the boundaries of the self (an anxiety about the body) and secondly about the coherence of the self; about its persistence as a self, over time. For some forms of cyber-feminism, neither of these uncertainties are problematic. For essentialist cyber-feminism the dissolution of the subject into the matrix provides a final answer to the question of boundaries between human and machine, since these are simply removed. For other feminists adopting the Butler approach, the point is to explore the fragmentation of the self, and the possibilities this produces for re-signification. To me however, it does seem important to find a way conceive of the self (as a continuous material self), but one which doesn't oblige us to return to the sexed biological body. This body, so often understood as the essential shape of *who* I am, where I am, and how I remain who I am over time, clearly cannot be the ultimate reference point if we need to include within our sense of self activities that reach out beyond this body. I include here those activities that take place in a different mode from the one the body finds itself in (in the informational mode, for instance). Neither however can this body simply be absorbed into the new feminized body of information (a giant body) since while this does allow a technological reconstitution of the material self, it dissolves the subject as a meaningful category.

I hope I have shown that the kind of approach I develop here, one centred on narrative rather than on the body, and one that understands experience as exceeding the text rather than being constituted within discourse alone, is useful in finding a way around these issues. The conception of a material self, both continuous and continuously transforming, held together by narrative experience, narrative emplotment, and the possibility of narration, rather than by recourse to the biological body – and therefore not exploded into fragments in the non-biological spaces of information, has potential. Why? Because a narrative approach allows identity to be considered as a material process – since material objects “natural” and “artificial,” human and technological, bodily and discursive can all become elements of that narrative arc that produces the self. At the same time it provides a means by which to think about identity as continuous and to think about the subject as someone with agency. In this way a conception of identity based on narration does take us behind and beyond those existing conceptions of identity and/in machines that inform cyber-feminism. That is, it can offer a different approach both to analyses marked by re-formulated essentialism discussed above in relation to “feminization” and those marked by more discursive post structural accounts of “life on the screen” that stress the performative production of the self.

The final point I want to make concerns narrative – a category that might be understood to introduce a whole new series of problems with which to replace the old. Here I would simply insist that narrative itself, as I read it here, is formed within historical rather than universal horizons;² it is perhaps anthropological rather than ontological. Narrative is not only useful as a category through which to explore identity and technology because it can contain multitudes and materials operating at different speeds with different densities, and because it can be used to organize them into something meaningful – even into something called a life or a self. Narrative is also a useful category because it is itself continually formed and re-formed within new historical contexts. In this way it is socially symbolic. Roland Barthes once said that narrative is simply there “like life itself” (Barthes, 1997). These days, we might use this comparison to stress contingency and transformation. Like life itself narrative is something that is under-going a process of transformation.

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² Here I would break with Ricoeur’s narrative hermeneutics.

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THE LIMITS OF DISCOURSE: A LECTURE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “THEORY,” “ART” AND “BODY” IN THE XX CENTURY

MIŠKO ŠUVAKOVIĆ

*A writer without a story*¹

I am going to try, in front of you and on my own **body**,² to mirror, index, describe and interpret the uncertain but *essential* relationship between “art” (literature, music, painting, theatre, opera, film) and “theory” here-and-now.

In fact, as “theory,”³ I am going to name different semantically aimed

¹ Jean Louis Schefer: “I’m a writer without a story – someone who chronicles, bit by bit, his own intellectual adventure, which is articulated across a collection of multifarious objects. It’s in the capriciousness of my own choices and preferences that I’ve found my universe, my procedures, my way of being – my happiness.” from “Preface,” in: Paul Smith (ed.), *The Enigmatic Body. Essays on the Arts by Jean Louis Schefer*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. xvii.

² I have to “admit” that chemicals, cells, tissue (*la chair*), physiological organisms, anatomical body, behavioral body, individuuum, figures and my social appearances are not some firm consistent “entirety.” Last autumn, while lying in the hospital, I was constantly testing, from one second to another, THAT my brain, my legs or my stomach are living separate lives – that there, in the whiteness of the hospital bed, different subjects were appearing: that of the patient, of the weak, of the reading, of the rational, of one who is stuffed with medications, of one who is indulging in fantasy, of the scared, of the resentful, of the humane, of the selfish, of the sick, of the one who survived ... The notion “subject” is not the term denoting entirety in which the multiple “parts” are bound together. “The subject” is the assembly of hypothesis or texts which constitute, contextualize and represent this phenomenal and recognizable “I” in behavior, speech, writing or different arts. That is why in this discourse I am speaking about the “relationship” between art, theory and body, and not about the triangle “art,” “theory” and “subject.” What is being discussed is the subject understood, certainly, not as the speaking individual who pronounced or wrote some text by being “above” the text, but the subject/author as the “principle of grouping discourses, as the unity and source of his meaning, as the focus of his coherency” (according to Michel Foucault).

³ David Carroll (ed.), *The States of Theory: History, Art, and Critical Discourse*, Stanford, Cal., Stanford University Press, 1994. Tom Cohen, Barbara Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, Andrzej

effects and appearances of the procedures of creating (making, manufacturing, producing) art, of delaying the effects of the work of art in speech (*parole*) and writing (*écriture*); as theory I will name the processes of constructing the jargon inside artworlds, the interpolation of voices of criticism into sensually anticipated figures of art, the bordering identities of different “speeches” within the social sciences and humanities, the exceptionalities and autonomies of the functions of theory and art and the general interpretative possibilities of the philosophy of art.

I am going to name the dramatically contradictory “return to the **body**”⁴ within classical and outside of contemporary aesthetics, as well. It is indeed a question how to identify this “big” and “difficult” problem, a *polysemantic* problem which is concerned with the relationship between: (a) “texts” about different material formulations (sound musical texts, pictorial painterly texts, audio-visual movie texts, total corporal-behavioural theatre and *performance art* texts, and texts situated within writing [*écriture*]), and (b) delaying and transferring texts on thinking, talking and writing about art. By this approach I intend to persevere in the “*diadisciplinarity*,” in the crossed out or exceeded disciplinarity, which does not allow the objectification of the relationship between “art,” “theory” and “body” into a firm method, but, instead, keeps that method in a **state of crisis** of heterogeneous events or incidents.⁵ The relationship between theory and art “through” **my body** is the “event” or “incident” of the located representation or presentation. What is at stake here is the “representation” or “presentation,” not the literal portrayal of “theory” and “art” through **body**; the *constructs or figures* are instrumentalized or used to provoke procedures, forms and functions of theory and art. In fact, “theory” and “art” are related through the **body** which becomes “I” (body-individuum-subject) in these different, blurred, oblique and flickering momentary relationships. “Credible” images (reflections, iconic signs) of the theory “of” art or/and the art “of” theory are not created here and then; this something that is mirrored is the lack, deficit, delay, in fact, it is the “separateness” (*differAnce*) between theory and art “through” the **body** which is the “subject” only thanks to this *polysemantic* and contradictory relationship between art, theory and the body (*the body-mind relationship*).

That is why as a starting thesis of this discourse I have to point to this

Warminski (eds.), *Material Events – Paul De Man and Afterlife of Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000.

⁴ Marina Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, Edition selene & Springerin, Vienna, 2000.

⁵ Kate Linker, “Representation and Sexuality,” in: Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism. Rethinking Representation*, New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986, pp. 391-415.

"lack" (to this not entire, inappropriate, overlapping, releasing). This "lack" is created between theory and art "through" **my body** and *it* is amiable, that means, constitutive and indexical (*indexing*⁶) for locating and understanding the uncertain histories⁷ of the relationships between **theories and arts of the XX century**.⁸ This lack, this delay or differentiation is not something that should be neglected or approximated within the "idealised" scientific models of "theory, art, and body," but on the contrary, this is precisely what should be posited as the problem of description, explanation, interpretation and discussion, which should be recognised as the constitutive and bordering discourse of each approach, in the first place, to art. The relationship between "theory," "art" and "body" is identified as the "discourse" and as the "discursive practice" which is established around the "lack" and the possibility of the non-coincidence of "theory" and "art" with respect to **my body**, which becomes the "subject" (the section of hypothesis⁹).

The discursive practice is, in the most generalised semiotic sense, "the act" which posits meaning in the temporal-spatial situation in which somebody for someone is producing meaning. The "temporal-spatial situation" is not the ideal, within the aesthetic contemplation constructed "context" (*ideal judgement*) for the relationship between "theory," "art" and "body," but the concrete historically and geographically located "world" of material¹⁰ institutions and social struggles.¹¹ The discourse or the discursive product determines that which, within the given configuration of relationship between "theory," "art" and "body," has to be said and which could be said, that is, that which can not be said, can not be heard or read. According to Michel Foucault, the discourse is the way in which knowledge is articulated in the con-

⁶ Charles Harrison, "Mapping and Filling" and Terry Atkinson/Michael Baldwin, "The Index," in: Anne Seymour (ed.), *The New Art*, London, Hayward Gallery, 1972, pp. 14-16, 16-19; Rosalind E. Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1&2," in: *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge Mass., The MIT Press, 1985, pp. 196-209, 210-219.

⁷ H. Aram Vesser (ed.), *The New Historicism Reader*, Routledge, New York, 1994; Michel Foucault, "On the Ways of Writing History" and "Return to History," in: James Faubion (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, method and epistemology (vol. 2)*, Penguin Books, 1994, pp. 279-295, 419-432.

⁸ Charles Harrison, *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1993.

⁹ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in: *Image Music Text*, Nooday Press, 1978, pp. 142-148.

¹⁰ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, London, London, Verso, 1995, pp. 100-140.

¹¹ "Editorial," from magazine *Razprave/Problemi* no. 3-5, Ljubljana, 1975, pp. 1-10.

crete "section" of the historic society and in the institutions of establishing, regulating, submitting and understanding "power." If the above is accepted, then it can be stated that the histories of relationships between **theory, art, and body** in the XX century, within the limits of Western culture or its hegemonic domains of influences,¹² are the discursive formations which can be and must be identified, differentiated and anticipated in a discourse which is at the same time "of," "from" and "about" theory, art, and body. That discourse, thus, is the "sample" by which is anticipated the uncertain "limited" or "limiting" **territory and interval** of individual and specific resolution of the relationship between "theory," "art" and "my body." It is not a question of some general relationship which is, "through" the universal "voice," given by a schematic (mapped, limited) ideal, whole and foreclosed all-valuable "big and undefined story." What is being discussed here are separate, often schismatic¹³ (*differend*) solutions, incomparable discursive practices. The incomparable attracts me.

What has to be taken into account, from the very beginning, is that the notion of "discourse" is not determined by its characteristic metaphysical opposition or adversativity to the unknowable, unpronounceable or unspeakable.¹⁴ The notion of discourse is derived from the "speakeable" or "demonstrable" or "representable" relationship between theory and art "through" body within very specific material conditions and circumstances (institutions, apparatuses or, more abstractly, contexts) of centring or decentering some public or private "power" or "sociability." In other words, "unknowable," "unpronounceable" or "unspeakable" are not the effects of some "pre-human chaos" or "all-human, purely natural existence." These are material discursive products in the specific historic and geographic conditions and circumstances of social struggle, these are the ways of regulating or deregulating the relationships between "theory," "art" and "body." Therefore, for the philosophy and aesthetics of art, and especially of literature, the fundamental question is not *that* of the "nature" or "non-nature" of the unknowable, unpronounceable, and unspeakable, but the question of under which conditions and circumstances and, of course, by what right, is *that* proclaimed as unknowable, unpronounceable and unspeakable. Foucault is not anticipating the "discourse" only as "*that* meaning" of the speech, but as the material regulation,

¹² Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetics. Cinema and Space in the World System*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995; Griselda Pollock (ed.), *Generations & Geographies in the Visual Arts. Feminist Readings*. London, Routledge, 1996.

¹³ Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Differend*, Paris, Minuit, 1983, p. 5.

¹⁴ Manfred Frank, *Das Sagbare und das Unsagbare – Studien zur deutsche-französischen Hermeneutik und Texttheorie*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1990.

prohibition, resistance or classification within the society: *here is the hypothesis which I would like to present tonight in order to determine the battlefield – or perhaps the very temporary stage – of the work I am performing: I suppose that the production of discourses in every society is controlled, sanctioned, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to disparage its powers and dangers, to govern its incidental events, to avoid its anxious deterrent materiality.*

Discourse, as psychoanalysis has shown us, is not only that which uncovers or covers desire, it is also the object of desire: *for discourse – as history constantly teaches us – is not only that which expresses struggles and systems of reign, but precisely that which represents the reason and means by which the struggle is fought, and the power worth seizing.* In our case, it is the struggle between "theory," "art" and "body" within the concrete historical and geographical society, it is the struggle to determine who is going to reign over the "relationship" between art, theory and body. And this struggle is taking place not only in the domain of the "verbalised," but rather in that material and essential dimension of the discourse, namely, in the dimension of the event and the incident. Thus, a thesis can be advanced, that the "unspeakable," "unpronounceable" or the "unknowable" are not those which "are" outside of or in front of a discourse (discursive products, acts or institutions), but that they *are* only "through" the *performing* of the discourse. Vladimir Jankelevitch has perfectly obviously shown that to us, performing "through" the discourse the situation of the unpronounceable (*ineffable*) in music as something above, under, around or before music. More exactly, this is demonstrated to us by John Cage in his pro-Wittgensteinian and pro-Zen effort to put the "act" (*performance / behaviourality*) in the centre of attention when he says: "I have nothing to say and I am saying that."¹⁵ "Unspeakable," "unpronounceable" or "unknowable" are as such only in the field of a discourse which enables the indexing of the "absent."

Discursive practices "as" the relationship between theory, art, and body

If one pays attention to the formulations regarding the discursive relationships between theory, art, and body in the XX century, one can notice that four typical ways of indicating, describing and interpreting exist, owing to which the "truth"¹⁶ of art is accumulated in the first place:

¹⁵ John Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," in: *Silence*, Middletown Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1973, p. 109.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *La Verite en peinture*, Paris, Flammarion Press, 1978.

- (i) a work of art precedes theory, which is mediated by the corporal response to it,
- (ii) theory constitutes the constitutive scope (*context, frames, vignettes*) of the work of art, in fact, theory is the constituent of the work of art through which the status of the “subject” for the body (creation, reception) is established,
- (iii) the relationship between theory, art and body is established postponably through “writing” (*écriture*), and
- (iv) theory is the object, “through” an unstable relationship between theory, art and body.

A work of art precedes theory

Intuitively lead artistic creation, “through” the body (of the creator, manufacturer, producer), leads towards possibilities of establishing the theory of the work of art which is present here for the other body (all other recipients and consumers of the work /values/). A work of art is a “form,” it is that something which is **present**, like some stable or defined material order, which **appears** in front of the body (thanks to the specialised sense, the complex sensual body or the behavioural social and psychologically “receptive” body). The relationship between art and theory (in the first place, criticism) can be conceived of as the relationship between the production and the consumer’s response to that production, and that means to its products (of work) by which the production is determined as the sensible (meaningful) production. Theory of art work is “constituted” and called “formalism” if the theoretical response is anticipated in relation to the **presence** of a work as a form (of a material order). The theory of the work of art is “constituted” and named “phenomenological,” if the theoretical response takes place (happens) in relation to the phenomenality of the work in front of the senses, and, in addition, in relation to the anticipation of that sensual “event” in the consciousness of the beholder (auditor, reader, active participant in the event of reception). The theory of the work of art is “constituted” and called “structuralism” if the theoretical response to the work of art has been proposed to the constructed model inside some “system” (or practice) within which something that we can call “existence” or “appearance” of the work of art has been interpreted. With structuralism we are faced with the fundamental “limit” and the “becoming suspicion” in the primacy or originality of the work of art.

Formalistic, phenomenal or structuralistic approaches to the relationship between art, body and theory are explicitly modernist “voices.” In other words, we can consider as “normal,” “usual” or “dominant” the centring of

the discourse on (*the voice about*) the relationship of the autonomous presence/appearances of art, body and theory in the modernist culture, which, in order to be connected, must be introduced into some philosophical and representative relationship of aesthetics as the philosophy of art, the philosophy of the body and meta-philosophy as a discussion of the identity of theory. Precisely upon this threefold nature: (i) the primacy or originality of the work of art in relation to theory, (ii) the autonomy of the artistic in relation to the corporal or theoretical, and (iii) based upon the representative function by which philosophy and its aesthetics secure the meta-legitimacy of the relationship between "art," "body" and "theory," the formalistic-phenomenological "platform" of modernism in literature, painting, film and music is realised.

The second voice: theory is the context of art

*The second voice*¹⁷ manifests itself as the voice which the "first" (the supremacy of the intuitive, that is, the fact that art precedes theory being only the response to the work) identifies and explains as the given and imposed "voice" in the dominant modernist culture.¹⁸ In other words, the starting point is the "thesis" that the relationship between art, theory and body is not the consequence of the "special or autonomous nature of art itself" (its "unspeakable" metaphysical, formal, phenomenological or existentialist centring as being), but that the "concept of art" is a historical and geographical consequence or effect of the uncertain organising of the society, culture and worlds of art;¹⁹ therefore one can speak of some discursive environment or atmosphere which precedes and prepares the possibilities of relationships between art, theory and body. This approach can be considered as "critical" centring of the discourse on the relationship between art, body and theory in the history of art, culture and society. Art is anticipated as a historical or contextual function of culture and society, and this means that the "creative" and "critical" are not regarded as opposed, but that the "creation" (whatever that may mean) anticipates itself as acting from "interest" or critical acting (thinking,

¹⁷ Charles Harrison, "Modernism in Two Voices," in: *Essays on Art & Language*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1991, pp. 2-6.

¹⁸ Clement Greenberg, "Complaints of an Art Critic," in: Charles Harrison, Fred Orton (eds.), *Modernism, Criticism, Realism*, London, Harper and Row, 1984, pp. 4-8.

¹⁹ In Anglo-Saxon tradition: Arthur Danto, "The Artworld" (1964), in: Joseph Margolis (ed.), *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (third edition), Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1987, pp. 155-167. In German tradition: Heinz Paetzold, *Neomarxistische Aesthetik I-II: Bloch, Benjamin, Adorno, Marcuse*, Dusseldorf, Padagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1974. In French tradition: Julia Kristeva, *La Revolution du langage poetique*, Paris, Seuil, 1974.

behaving, producing, anticipating) within society, culture and the world of art. The fact that art, very often, covers up its theoretical “positions,” does not mean that it does not have them, and that it is not, in a fundamental way, projected “through” it. Imagined in such a way, the staging of the relationship between “theory,” “art” and “body” manifests itself historically, mediated by completely different discursive formations, ranging from historical avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes, to critical theory and the heterogeneous post-structuralist presentations of bordering discursive relationships between art and culture.

The function of writing (écriture)

One can advance a thesis that the relationship between theory, art, and body is “possible” and that it is given only as postponed and a relationship set apart “through” writing (*écriture*), which is the tireless weaving of differences, provoking a shift and a postponement (*differance*), unlimited compensation, misplacement and supplementation of meaning. In other words, the subject of the discourse on the relationship between theory, art, and body does not exist, if by this we understand some sovereign loneliness or over-ordering of the writer (philosopher, theoretician) with respect to this relationship. The subject of this relationship between theory, art, and body is the *system* (or the practice) of relationships between the strata: “wonderful notebooks of that psychic, society, world.” The trace is the erasure of the self, of one’s own presence, and it is constructed with the help of anxiety or pleasure taken in the inevitability of disappearance. The trace appears because of the disappearance of its disappearance: the disappearance of the theory in art, of the art in the body, of the body in theory, of the art in theory. It is about the heterogeneous “map” of possible conceptions of “writing” (*écriture*), from its early²⁰ or late²¹ Barthesian displacement between “history” and “pleasure.” It is the transformation of the Bakhtinian dialectical into Julia Kristeva intertextuality,²² that is, the Derridian establishment of the “deconstruction,”²³ or the heterogeneous relativisations of modernist relationships between the centre and the margins, developed by the “new criticism” in the discussions of *The Yale School*; the latter is the turnover of the theoretical in literature which displays

²⁰ Roland Barthes, *Le degré Zero de L'écriture*, Paris, Seuil, 1953.

²¹ Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte*, Paris, Seuil, 1973.

²² Julija Kristeva, *Lingvistični tekstovi – razprave*, Koper, Edicija Hyperion, 2001.

²³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

the "seducing" or "enjoying" the totally "material" and, often, figurative skeleton of theory in the narratology or the new historicism, etc... In this wide and uncertain "frame," the question is raised why the relationship between theory, art, and body so fascinatingly, so bewitchingly, so pliantly appears in literature? For, literature is writing (*écriture*) and not only exceptional and privileged writing, but in fact – as repeatedly pointed out by Jacques Derrida – it is the "threshold" which makes itself evident between "art," "theory" and "body."

The question is about the *threshold* of writing; about the creation of a new notion of writing which other "sciences" of society, man, culture or arts "through" literature have to go through in order to reach the writing inside their own medium – the medium of theory. This notion is called "gram" or "*differance*" – and according to Derrida whether it is a question of the order of the spoken or written speech, none of the elements can function as the sign without referring to some other element which, by itself, is not simply present. Because of this chaining, each "element" – phoneme or grapheme – is constructed after the trace of other elements in the chain or system within it. This chaining, this tissue, is the *text* which is produced only within the transformations of some other text(s). Nothing within the elements nor in the system, nowhere and never is simply present or absent. Everywhere there are only differences and traces of traces. In this way the new theory of "writing" after structuralism was established, and, with Jacques Derrida, it was derived from philosophical metaphysics, only to be conveyed in different ways of discourses on literature, painting, film, music, theatre, opera ...²⁴

Theory of theory

The theory of literature, but any other theory (of painting, music, opera, theatre, performance art, film) as well, could become a legitimate preoccupation of philosophy, and it has not been assimilated into it, not even theoretically. It contains a pragmatic and performative instant which weakens it as theory in the sense of consistency, but for that reason it gives it the character of unpredictability in the productions of the relationship between "theory," "art" and "body." On the other hand, precisely this unpredictability represents the reason why the "theory" begins to observe, identify, describe, ex-

²⁴ Peter Brunette, David Wills, *Screen /Play. Derrida and Film Theory*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1989; Peter Brunette, David Wills (ed.), *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts. Art, Media, Architecture*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; David J. Levin (ed.), *Opera Through Other Eyes*, Stanford Cal., Stanford University Press, 1994.

plain, interpret and discuss, first of all, the “theory itself” with the help of “speech” (*parole*) “from” or “about” or “through” the relationships between theory, art and body. These are the situations in which theory appears in the double function of “observing” and “reflecting.” This can be regarded as the “auto-theoretical” launching of the discourse about “theory,” mediated by different, unstable and altering relationships between art, body and theory within a hypothetical or real moment of history or geographical place, “through” the practice (situation, event) of “reading.” Therefore, totally different examples of expressed interest in theory in the triadic relationship between “art,” “body” and “theory,” have been noticed :

(i) it is some sort of developed hermeneutic question about interpretation around which theory through body (*body – mind*) with respect to art has been constituted, but, in order to ask the question about “theory” itself (its theoreticallity in the pragmatic literary-theoretical, non-post-or-ante-philosophical, and philosophical sense);

(ii) it is indeed the establishment of a Wittgensteinian position, according to which theory has to be subjected to “therapy” analysis and that, in this way, aesthetics is not seen as “discourse” on art and body, but as the “meta” analysis and criticism of any “possible” speech and writing on art, in fact, as the meta-criticism;

(iii) it is the confrontation of limits of discourse on science and theory which happened with the “fissure” within structuralism in the process of “walking” towards theories after structuralism (theories of intertextuality, narratology, Lacanian theoretical psychoanalysis, deconstruction, schizo-analysis of Deleuze and Guattari, Baudrillard’s theory of simulacrum, theory of culture/*cultural studies*/ – it is about the gesture or attempt to locate, identify, describe, explain and interpret the limits of science or, more dramatically, its **inversion (reverse, lining) in theory** as the pragmatic and material production of meaning and sense;

(iv) it is the establishment of the concept of “anti-theoretical” as the theoretical problem within the transformation (mirrored multiplication, mutations or metastasis) of the theoretical writing, as the literary writing which manifests its horizon of functional-narrative intergenre productions, and the shift of any discourse towards the figural sight of narrations set in motion,²⁵ and

(v) it is the confrontation with the out-of-textual, which leads to the body itself (bio-political, behavioural-social or figural) that enters the “game” (*game or play*) of the performative performing of the theoretical on the “stage;” of

²⁵ Kathy Acker, *Bodies of Work – Essays*, Serpent’s Tail, London, 1997.

theatricalization as the "second stage" with respect to the sciences of literature, during their long history from Aristotle to Derrida.²⁶

Conclusion

Respected ladies and gentleman, indeed, I could not miss this opportunity, I could not miss the possibility to, here-and-now, in front of you, on my own **body**, mirror, index, describe and interpret the uncertain but essential relationships between "art" (literature, music, painting, theatre, opera, film) and "theory" (of speech, writing, science, discourse) of the XX century. I could not resist that fascinating challenge, that almost insurmountable, lascivious and irresistible *love triangle* of "art," "theory" and "body." This is my confrontation with the discourse, since, really, the "*dis-course*," is, originally, the act, the here-and-there wondering, the comings and goings, the "fulfilment," the "intrigues." In this *love triangle* of "theory," "body" and "art," the *lover* really never stops wondering in his mind, trying new declarations, and constructing plots against himself.²⁷ In the field of "ideology," in the field of the transmittance and flow of notions and ideas whose *strength* is precisely in that they are not perfectly addressed and that they are not clearly and harmoniously situated in some, even hypothetical centre.

²⁶ Gregory Ulmer, "The Objects of Post-Criticism," in: Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture*, London, Pluto Press, 1983.

²⁷ Roland Barthes, *Lover's Discourse/Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, New York, Hill & Wang, 1979.

THE BODY AS PASSWORD: BIOMETRICS AND CORPOREAL DISPOSSESSION¹

NINA CZEGLÉDY AND ANDRÉ P. CZEGLÉDY

“Information has become a technoscientific concept and conceptualized as distinct from the physical markers that embody it.” (Katherine Hayles quoted in Schoder & Crandell 2001, pp. 16-17)

Introduction

Since the 11th of September, 2001 and its series of terrorist attacks in the United States, forms of corporeal recognition and identification have gained renewed acceptance within state, corporate, and even civilian structures and populations. This is the realm of Biometrics, systems of automatic identity recognition and authentication based upon unique physiological characteristics such as facial features, fingerprint designs, hand configurations and voice patterns. The current “war on terrorism” has bolstered the production of established biometric technologies, accelerated related research, and advanced the widespread use of its devices. It has also considerably legitimated the further development of similarly intrusive technologies that extend their reach into the once private realms of bodily authority and corporeal identity.

In addition to current geopolitical security concerns, the substantial expansion of the biometrics industry has been nourished by several other key factors. Firstly, the rapid growth of information and interaction technologies over the last decade has stimulated the tendency to shift away from directly physical forms of communication to increasingly disembodied states separate from physiological presence. Simultaneously, everyday life has increasingly become subject to organised scrutiny, both as a feature of new technological capabilities and as a matter of changed public policies at every level of opera-

¹ Note: Electronic articles and other texts are incorporated into the footnotes rather than listed in the bibliography.

tion. The development of increasingly sophisticated and remotely operated sensors – combined with a growing need for data protection – have contributed greatly to a flourishing surveillance culture whose installation in the public psyche has been as sure as it has been surreptitious. Not least, this combination of circumstances has encouraged the technological separation of corporeal identity from personal bases of knowledge and control in much the same way that biomedical technologies have re(produced) bodily selves through various forms of digital visualisation (Czeglédy & Czeglédy 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001).

Additionally, affordable computer capabilities and technical enhancement possibilities have allowed for the means to collect and sort, store and circulate, retrieve and market, data with a formerly unimaginable precision and on a previously undreamed of scale. In the process of establishing giant information databases, the private corporeal body has become a key source and site for collecting and distributing information. At the same time, its various readings have become an issue of publicly traded, commercial property that disrupts – if not overturns – the traditional bases of self-knowledge.

The increased availability and use of biometric devices revives the classic man/machine dichotomy that has revolved around all considerations of technology over time. How does the redefined Digital Persona affect individual identity? How can the appropriate utilisation of biometric devices be evaluated? Are the fervently promoted appliances always used for the protection of society? Could the resultant “profiles” be misappropriated and potentially lead to the criminalisation of harmless individuals? These and similar questions all have relevance for understanding the rapidly changing interplays between technology, bodily identity, and structures of power in society. In the intricate loop between man and machine, is encoding (and its resultant process of disembodiment) only the first link in a longer chain, a prelude to further events, or is it a new stage in societal evolution that will free us from the limitations of time, space, and even our own bodies? The primary goal of this text is to investigate the displacement of the human body through information technology-mediated surveillance techniques, and to present artistic interpretations of the man/machine interface. Special attention will be paid to the ideas of N. Katherine Hayles and Eugene Thacker, both of whom have closely addressed many of the salient issues related to biometrics. In addition, we will consider some of the aesthetic commentaries of contemporary artists such as Steve Mann, Seiko Mikami and Eduardo Kac, who have each directly engaged with, and challenged, the changing relationship between human beings and their technology.

The Posthuman Condition

In our freshly computerised (Western) universe, everything from genetics through physics to astronomy becomes abstract information in the interests of scientific rationalisation: a code.

A code without a body, shifted from the physical to the immaterial in the depths of cyberspace – a digital representation of the “real substance” of life. In the process of encoding (and decoding) the body, previous corporeal associations have changed, and a loss of individual identity has occurred with the development of new cyborgian potentials. In a recent interview with Albert Borgmann, Katherine Hayles noted that “both artificial and human intelligences are being reconceptualized in ways that facilitate their interactions with one another.”² Her statement underlines the various ways in which over the last fifty years the cyborg has emerged as an increasingly real technological and cultural construct, a vision of the near future far closer to realistic fruition than many would like to think. In a manner of thinking, it is nothing less than what might be better understood as the “posthuman condition” (Hayles 1999), a dissolution of boundaries that was once only the stuff of science fiction dramas.

While the consideration of cyborgian issues is inevitable when exploring the computerised universe, for our current purposes we will focus on the coding and decoding process of the digitised body and its further social/cultural ramifications. In order to evaluate this process and its impacts, some of the biometric devices (and the industry producing them) need first to be reviewed in brief.

The Biometrics Industry

Aspects of the “communication revolution” have been heralded as triumphal elements in the emancipating conquest of technology over the drudgery of physical labour. This near messianic perspective has encouraged its adherents to relish the prospects of instant, trouble-free, sophisticated (and incorporeal) forms of interaction that are far removed from the traditional norms of physical simultaneity. While this so-called victory remains highly debatable from the point of view of access at the very least (and misuse at the worst), the benign version of its image has found quick acceptance in an astonishing diversity of public fora of late.

² <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/borghayi.html>

Under the auspices of technically aided improvements to wider societal functioning, the successful promotion of such ideas has provided ancillary sectors of commerce (such as biometrics equipment development and manufacturing) a fertile terrain for both public research, and private venture capital, funding. In addition, the biometrics industry has adroitly utilised the heightened concerns for private and public safety in order to promote its products to security conscious international organizations, law enforcement agencies, and corporate as well as individual clients. Is everyone a potential customer? In our increasingly institutionalised existence, will we have a choice?

The contemporary attraction of biometrics technologies has a much broader market potential than one might sceptically assume given the quickly changing, and essentially transient, nature of geopolitical concerns ballooned by a variety of electoral imperatives. A pair of continuing issues for any new such technological arena remains the expansion of market scope and the development of multiple levels of customer accessibility. In this regard, the prices of various biometric devices have substantially decreased in recent years due to technological advances in their manufacturing. This condition has led to substantially lower customer entry levels while changing wider notions of affordability. Along with the development of improved operating efficiency values (as biometric technologies are continually refined), it promises new points of affordable product access for a growing pool of prospective customers. Even prior to the autumn of 2001, the expected growth rate of the biometrics industry was estimated to lie between 30 and 40% per annum (Millman 2000). Now, with the added pressure of political imperatives, such predictions seem conservative.

The private sector is, however, only one side of a far wider biometrics industry. A level of co-ordination between private interests and public sector research, development and application has existed in the United States for at least the last decade, ever since the establishment of the Biometric Consortium in 1992.³ The Consortium's participants include federal security and law enforcement agencies, national research laboratories, federally-funded technology corporations, university research institutes, the military services and a wide variety of other parties. Its main function is to encourage the research, development, testing and evaluation of identification/verification technologies.

The events of September 2001 have further encouraged increased involvement by the government in the biometrics industry, partly in the supposed interests of national security, and partly in the more conventional in-

³ The US Federal Government in 1995 formally approved the Biometric Consortium.

terests of scientific regulation and commercial control. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Chairman of the House Science Committee recently announced his expectation to receive “greater attention” for government research initiatives connected with identification technologies (Leopold 2001). Such attention is increasingly likely to pool in a limited number of science/technology sectors, with the field of biometrics being substantially represented through the previously established Biometrics Research Programme (BRP) and its mission “devoted to understanding physiological correlates of cognition in individuals with and without psychopathology.”⁴

The BRP involves a wide spectrum of activities ranging from the testing of standardised databases to facilitating conferences and publications, and providing access to information on the Internet. Irrespective of the outcomes of the BRP, it is already clear that specific biometrics technologies – each with its own proprietary device(s) – are leading the way in establishing new forms of identity recognition. Key applications already developed by American and international agencies, institutes and companies often focus on either authentication or access to computer systems containing sensitive information or physical access control to secure spaces. Nevertheless, spin-off scenarios just as readily call for military applications: some of the most sophisticated surveillance and reconnaissance innovations currently used include unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in Afghanistan, for example. UAVs such as General Atomic Corporation’s *Predator* and Grumman Aerospace’s *Global Hawk*, have been used in a variety of ways to support C4ISR missions gathering enemy information, designating targets for air strikes and collecting information for battle damage assessment (Keeter 2001). It is, however, in the more mainstream application of civilian life that biometric devices will soon demonstrate their greatest impact.

Biometric Devices

Currently used biometric devices measure and calibrate specific physiological attributes of the human body. They tend to focus on specific parts of the body and, in a form of double reinforcement, specific features of its corporeal structure. As a direct consequence, we now encounter an increasing variety of biometric technologies that produce a corresponding plurality of bodily images or profiles depending upon their accuracy and/or the nature of their visualisation procedures. In a very real sense, these images/profiles

⁴ <http://www.wpic.pitt.edu/research/biometrics/default.html>

are composed of bodily readings that are always partial, fragmented and detached from the physical entireties to which they belong – and which they are increasingly taken to represent the individual in a universalistic sense of identity.

Fingerprinting is perhaps the most widely known, and likely the most extensively used, identification device. It is also one of the earliest technologies for identity recording and recognition; ever since its pioneering use in the American West of the late 19th century by Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, the technology has also been indelibly connected to criminal investigation in the popular imagination. Originally conducted only on a manual basis, contemporary fingerprinting procedures are today facilitated by the use of fingerprint scanner systems that are, in their turn, aided by computer processing programmes and linked to data archives. Fingerprint scanners read and automatically evaluate distinct characteristics such as the skin contours (ridges and valleys) of the human hand, and the scanned fingerprint image is then converted to mathematical vectors called minutiae. Certain sensor devices are capable of reading any finger on either hand, at varying positions and pressures. In this sense, the long history of fingerprinting as both technology and technique lends itself to a surety that other, sometimes more sophisticated, biometric technologies do not yet possess. In addition, fingerprinting remains comfortably familiar as a technology; it is also cost-effective and arguably the least intrusive method of bodily identification. "You are your fingerprint (U.are.U fingerprint scanner)," runs an advertisement for Digital Persona, a company which has specialised over the last 25 years in the production of biometric devices with a focus on fingerprint recognition. According to Favio Righi, owner of Digital Persona, "Objectively speaking, fingerprint patterns are as likely to be repeated as snowflakes" (Keener 2000).

Remote controlled and operated cameras, employed in central public spaces are the next most widely used of biometric devices. Municipal councils ranging from Cambridge, England to Johannesburg, South Africa have recently turned to the installation of city centre surveillance systems as a way of responding to public concerns regarding both personal and property crime. The argument generally given in favour of these surveillance systems is that not only that are they a cost-effective way of policing the inner city (day and night) by remote means, but they also increase police response times and provide a record of activity which may then be used as evidence in a court of law. Such reasoning has its obvious extensions on both technological and public policy grounds; the recent combination of the two has encouraged the idea of "preventive" surveillance. Such surveillance incorporates technologies that seek to anticipate criminal and/or anti-social activity by targeting

specific categories of socially suspect individual: lately, remote-controlled cameras have become available for installation with face recognition software attached to their visual processing systems. Clearly, the multiple linking of such visual and data systems is but a step away from more intensive networking scenarios that would extend the use of databases into every (literal) walk of life. 1984 has arrived late, but well equipped.

A more recent technology that focuses attention on the combination of human physiology with individual attributes of physiological activity is that of voice recognition. Currently, acoustic microphones with voice authentication software are more easily obtainable than ever before. An ever-increasing range of biometric devices can be used on Microsoft Windows and other commercially available software; since the summer of 2000, some manufacturers have been shipping their laptop computers to retailers – already equipped with biometric devices. Such devices exist to meet any degree of security and suspicion (such as computer passwording) but can also be utilised in a further range of applications when connected to employee, or even customer, surveillance systems. The current sophistication of voice recognition technology is such that, when coupled with quite basic recording programmes, it is now possible to monitor verbal communication on a virtually continuous basis (depending upon equipment sensitivity and/or device density proximate to the targeted subjects)– with the added dimension of selectivity. The latter dimension is incorporated by way of recording conversations that feature specific words and/or phrases as trigger points. In conjunction with voice recognition abilities, this technology can now pick out specific people as well as specific conversations, thereby reigning in the reach of surveillance possibilities to within economic limits of analysis.

Biometrics technologies have also been applied to a range of contexts where security concerns may dominate the built environment: military installations, sensitive documentation centres and government buildings, for example. Of more interest is, perhaps, their increasing application within the private sector, where commercial laboratories for proprietary products as well as high-level corporate offices are being fitted with security systems that incorporate biometrics technologies. On the one hand, such changes to the working architecture of the commercial environment speak of the extension of previously rarefied technologies into the public realm. On the other, they highlight the ways in which so much of the content of contemporary communication is becoming simultaneously privileged and guarded in the modern world of information as commodity.

When it comes to security concerns, three biometrics technologies have received particular attention lately: retinal scanning, iris scanning, and hand

geometry analysis. Retinal scan devices read the pattern of the blood vessels inside the eye; they are also now available to those individuals and institutions willing to pay top dollar for such sophisticated technology. Iris scanners read the unique pattern formed by tissues at the front of the eye. Because these patterns are far more differentiated than fingerprints, they are also more accurate in terms of recognition precision. Iris scanners are thereby tougher to defeat than their fingerprint counterparts and may yet supersede them as a form of common identity verification. Yet, while highly accurate, iris scanning can also be physically uncomfortable for the average person – who must get physically close to the scanner in order for a proper reading to be accomplished. In contrast, a less intrusive technology remains hand geometry, which measures the height of the fingers, the distance between the joints and the shape of the knuckles – but is considered somewhat less accurate than other approaches, and therefore less frequently employed.

Once a part of the paranoid fiction of Hollywood movies featuring one secretive government agency after another, each of these technologies is now an accepted part of many ultra-secure access facilities in the present day – a part of the ordinary working lives of thousands of scientists, civil servants and military personnel. This circumstance would have little bearing on its own, except that it is a reality which is but part of the widening presence of biometrics in all walks of life. Do we now await a further synthesis of biometrics technology with the human body? Are we ready for a postbiological body?

Biometric Extension of the Body

“A liar’s blush may expose terrorists...” noted Roger Highfield in the *Irish Independent* of 7 January, 2002. His statement underlined the way in which high definition thermal imaging technologies (recently developed at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Michigan) might be applied to a variety of security contexts. Such application could soon mean that “... terrorists who attempt to conceal their real identity while trying to board a plane or enter a government building could be identified by the way they blush.” While this scenario may exist as one of the most current examples of identification and encoding technologies leading to a concrete material result (i.e. apprehension and incarceration of a suspected criminal), the debate over bodily encoding and its eventual consequences is of far longer standing.

In the twentieth century, the efficiency considerations of machine/human combinations became popular in military circles when technological advances extended human capabilities on the battlefield and, in some cases,

even replaced them (as in the case of aerial reconnaissance drones, cruise missiles, etc.). Discussing the disguised uses of Cybernetics Theory as applied to virtual and artificial life for military applications, Katherine Hayles once noted:

“Here the idea of emergence is foremost – the thought that complex systems, when recursively restructured, can spontaneously evolve in directions their creators did not anticipate” (Hayles 2001, pp. 16-17).

In line with the above statement, she considers the aspiration to “conceptualize human being and human cognition in terms that allow to be articulated seamlessly with intelligent machines” (Hayles 2001, p. 18) as an important impulse of contemporary life. She further argues that various ideas – such as Hans Moravec’s prediction of the impending downloading of human consciousness into a computer – contribute to the erosion of the significance of embodiment and its primacy of corporeality. This is a line of thinking that fundamentally engages Western culture’s attitude towards how the body is simultaneously understood: both as subject and object. Not least, it is a notion critically encountered in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968a, 1968b), who vehemently argued against unlimited abstraction by considering the ways in which the human body is both sentient and sensuous, a doubling that cannot be reduced to mechanistic representations of the self.

Nevertheless, the march of technological endeavour seems to remain uninterrupted: in August of 1998, Prof. Kevin Warick, made news by having himself injected with an encapsulated microchip. The capsule held an electromagnetic coil and a silicon chip, the implant allowing him to turn on lights and open doors that were linked to computers which could electronically sense his presence. Warick, Head of the Cybernetics Department at the University of Reading, was experimenting with the technical possibilities of communicating and interacting with computers. While he was prepared for the relatively innocuous physical changes as a result of the medical procedure, the mental affects – which he described as “feeling strange” – seemed to find him considerably less prepared on a psychological level. “I feel mentally different. When I am in the building I feel much more closely connected with the computer. I am not a separate thing. I am a scientist, so that is strange for me, but that’s how I feel. It changed what I feel like mentally which I hadn’t expected and which is very strange and a bit scary,”⁵ is how he described his altered state.

Does Warick’s experiment herald a new stage arrived in the man/machine interface, a postbiological body that crystallises cyborgian reality?

⁵ <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/cyborgman.html>

Postbiological Bodies and bioMEMs?

The post-biological condition of the human body has long been popularised in science fiction literature. Prominent descriptions in this genre range from the fully sentient cyborgs of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) – later to be filmed by Ridley Scott as *Blade Runner* (1982) – to the “intelligent biochips” found in Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985) and a human consciousness transferred onto computer memory in William Gibson's more recent “The Winter Market” (1995). These creations may seem at first glance to be firmly embedded in the realm of literary creativity, but like many past such imaginings, are just as likely to be harbingers of the future in a Vernean vein.

In the second half of the last century, the general issue of blurred boundaries between man and machine received increasing interest from scholars and artists alike. In the new millennium, such interest has hardly abated – along with issues of changing identity that remain deeply embedded in the surrounding public discourse. One important commentator of late has been Eugene Thacker. While Thacker's academic background is in critical and literary theory, for several years now his interests have centred on the intersection of art and science, the latter with respect to biotechnologies, in particular. In an interview (on 30 March, 2001) with Josephine Bosma, Thacker revealed that texts investigating how the body is reconfigured by various technologies, such as the theories of George Bataille and science fiction writers like J. G. Ballard and Michael Blumlein, inspired his own art work and published texts. One of his recent art projects focusing on the Visible Human Project⁶ by the National Library of Medicine directly refers to the notion of digital anatomy, and was exhibited at Ars Electronica in 1999. Thacker said that while looking at the Visible Human Project on the Internet, he was struck by the objectification and information transfer of this physically sliced and digitally encoded corpse, and drew inspiration from it for his piece on what he terms “databasing the body.”⁷

In his lecture at the recent “Fashioning the Future” conference (Society for the Social Studies of Science, 1-4 November, 2001) held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Eugene Thacker presented his views regarding “Wet Data: Biomedica & BioMEMS.”⁸ He noted that as far back as 1959, the Nobel Prize physicist Richard Feynman (while outlining his vision of future technologies) predicted the development of miniature devices with control abilities at mo-

⁶ http://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible_human.html

⁷ <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-I-0103/msg00175.html>

⁸ <http://www.nettime.org> 07 Nov 2001

lecular and atomic levels. Feynman also pointed out that while the networked power of cellular structures has already been recognised by molecular biologists, the same phenomenon also provides an excellent model for use in information technologies.⁹ In ensuing decades, his vision greatly influenced scholarly research spanning a wide range of bioscientific disciplines such as nanotechnology and molecular biotechnology. Today, bio-micro-electro-mechanical systems (bioMEMs) are widely used in specific areas of diagnostic medicine.

Between the 1960s and the turn of the century, the pragmatic results of Feynman's predictions become evident well beyond the field of biotechnology, both in communication and information research and development. Inevitably, this progress has also created new dichotomies: on the one hand, the rapid development of biotechnologies led to improved clinical diagnosis, simultaneously, the related technological advances foregrounded philosophical considerations regarding the relationship between the biological body and machine/technology, including the future use of micro devices. Yet whether the microchips are used for medical diagnostics or identification, the ethical questions of redefining the shifting man/machine paradigm have remained cogent due to a similar set of circumstances. Indeed, "Are bioMEMs simply tools, or are they in some way viable, living systems," as Thacker has questioned. We might add the question that in view of these developments, how do we define the boundaries between the source (biological body) and the encoded, in-organic data, especially as these technologies are capable of drawing together biological and non-biological materials in an often seamless flow, thereby creating a hybrid cybernetic system in the process?

Transcoding the Body

As Eugene Thacker has noted, certain tools "such as microarrays have as their main function the transmission of data types across media, and such devices act as a kind of fulcrum transmitting data from one platform to another."¹⁰ The media theorist Lev Manovich (2000) has labelled the transmission of encapsulated information across hybrid media "transcoding." The process of transcoding, Manovich suggests, goes far beyond routine technical procedures, and involves the transference of concepts and categories of thought from one medium to another. Thus, the computer logic of bioMEMs

⁹ see Feynman, Richard "There is plenty of room at the bottom" <http://www.zyvex.com/nanotech/feynman.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.nettime.org> 07 Nov 2001

and/or identification data, stored and distributed has far reaching, transforming consequences influencing our cultural views and everyday life behaviours.

Perhaps the best known example of transcoding is, of course, genomic profiling, including the extensive data collection known as the Human Genome Project. International contributors to this initiative – as much as it has been publicised – have mapped and assembled structural human genetic information since 1990. The major goals of the project were to (1) identify all of the approximately 30,000 genes in human DNA, (2) determine the sequences of the 3 billion chemical base pairs that make up this DNA, (3) store this information in databases, (4) improve technological tools for data analysis, (5) transfer related technologies to the private sector, and (6) address the ethical, legal, and social issues (ELSI) that may arise from the project itself.¹¹ A working draft of the entire human genome sequence was announced in June 2000, with analyses published in February 2001. Notably, the announcement indicated that the mapping of the human genome had been completed ahead of the specified target dates with the assistance of interested corporations such as Celera and DoubleTwist.

While corporate involvement provided invaluable assistance to the Project, it goes without saying that this involvement was also aimed at the successful pharmaceutical development of genetic medicine and bioinformatics (the computerisation of biotechnology). Bioinformatics forms a bridge between the source (human body) and encoded inorganic information. The available computer resources of the sponsoring corporations contributed to a smooth informatics process of encoding and decoding. “So, what we are facing, philosophically, technically, and politically, with an event such as DoubleTwist’s annotated genome, is not the incorporation of the body into technology, and it is not a process of disembodiment – despite the far-reaching tendency towards informatics. Instead, we are seeing steps in a long, complex process of the creation of the conditions for an informatics-based approach to the body, where data not only encodes the molecular body, but it also precedes and constitutes the body.”¹² This process is, too often, an unreflective one (in so much as it is primarily profit-driven in the commercial context). While such reflection has surfaced in the media as a result of increasing public concerns regarding the exponential nature of technological advances, it is in the artistic community where one may often find unhindered commentary on issues related to biometrics, bioinformatics and other bodily technologies.

¹¹ <http://www.ornl.gov/hgmis/>

¹² See Thacker’s article *The Post-Genomic Era Has Already Happened* (Originally posted at *The Thing Reviews* <http://bbs.thing.net>)

Body, Technology and Art

Cyborgean, posthuman, postbiological theories have been debated in a wide variety of often controversial publications such as those of Dana Haraway (1985) and N. Katherine Hayles (1999). In this respect, Eugene Thacker often refers to “wet data” and “moist technology,” concepts that have been extensively explored and presented by Roy Ascott. “Between the dry world of virtuality and the wet world of biology lies a moist domain, a new interspace of potentiality and promise” writes Ascott (2000, p. 2) in an introductory essay entitled “Edge-Life: technoethic structures and moist media.” He proposes that so-called “moist media,” including atoms, neurons and genes, will be a significant, transformative agent in the art of this coming century. His prediction rests not on rash assumptions but on the recognition of an established trajectory of artistic endeavour over the last half decade.

Body centred art – especially expressed through early video works by Valie Export, Carolee Schneemann and Marina Abramović – became increasingly visible in the 1960s. Valie Export’s innovative body performances in the late sixties involved the strapping of various visual devices to her body. Her *Touch Cinema* (1968) and *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969) performances were forerunners of future wearable, digital works such as those of Steve Mann.¹³ Mann is the inventor of the “WearCam,” a wearable computer with visual display capabilities. Although beginning as a simply recording device, later versions of this personal imaging system were incorporated into eyeglasses that inverted conventional surveillance situations, thereby giving Mann the ability to reverse the gaze of technology in a manner which highlighted the uncomfortable power of institutional forces in contemporary society (see Mann 1998). Not surprisingly, his (undetected) use of the Wearcam, which involved recording the surveillance devices and operators (i.e. in department stores) whose original role was encode his image into their surveillance system received quick attention in both the artistic and mainstream communities.

Building on the work of the 1960s pioneers, an escalating number of artists over the past decade have experimented with intimate investigations of their own bodies. These artistic (and often performance oriented) “experiments” have frequently included relatively radical surgical interventions and/or the bodily incorporation of robotic, prosthetic extensions. The works of Stelarc, Orlan and Mona Hatoum are among the best recognised in this arena of artistic enquiry. Stelarc’s work is focused on the “obsolescence” of the body, and in his performances he has experimented with various robotic prosthe-

¹³ <http://wearcam.org/index.html>

ses to “update” his biological body. Since 1990, Orlan has undergone a series of plastic surgical operations in order to transform herself into a new visage, a new being. In one of her best known works: *Corps étranger* (1994), Hatoum inserted a camera into her body cavities, thereby providing unusual, uncomfortable yet intimate interior body-views for her audiences.

Seiko Mikami uses less provocative, but equally intriguing means to present interactive installations such as *Molecular Informatics – morphogenic substance via eye tracking*, which incorporates “eye tracking input” technology. Structures of molecules are generated in real-time according to the movements of the viewer’s eyes during their “interaction” with the installation technology. The viewer wears a pair of virtual reality (VR) glasses equipped with an eye-tracking sensor and observes – and creates – the VR space. The physical movements of the viewer is transcoded into data recording the individual’s location within the 3-Dimensional space and, as a result, the viewer find him/herself in a world of molecules and molecular formations. Over the years, Mikami has built several versions of this project, the latest (Version 4) of which includes a sound recognition program in order to add an acoustic dimension to the performance of interaction. In his own words: “You can hear another person’s eye movements in space via sound.”¹⁴

In another installation project titled “World Membrane and the Dismembered Body,” Mikami changes physiological tack and utilises the audience’s heart and lung sounds in order to generate the substance of interaction. The participating viewer’s internal body sounds are amplified and digitised by a computer. The digital signals then act as mathematical parameters to form what he calls “a continuously transforming 3-D polygon mesh expressing sounds and images in the room.” These sounds and images are then complicated and enhanced as the exhibition visitor’s ear – serving as a continuing interface to the audible noises that his/her own body emits – creates feedback for the system. Such feedback not only emphasises the technological circuit embedded in the performative installation, it also highlights the ways in which the use of various technologies is already an integral part of our daily lives in an unobtrusive, but influential manner.

The Art of Biometric Intrusion

“More than anticipate profound changes in perception, in our conception of the world, and in the reorganization of our socio-political systems,

¹⁴ http://bionet_org.tripod.com/eye3.html

these pioneers foresee fundamental transformations in our species,” noted Arlindo Machado¹⁵ in his analysis of Eduardo Kac’s *Time Capsule* (1997) project, the very project which best illustrates the general theme of this discussion.

Time Capsule is part performance, part lived reality; it represents a willing cyborg connection within the body of the artist, one that speaks of genealogical (and thus human) time as much as its technological products. The project, which focused on the implantation of an identification microchip into the ankle of Kac, took place at the Sao Paulo cultural centre Casa das Rosas on the 17th of November, 1997. The nine-digit microchip was registered via Internet with a database in the United States. Beyond the surgical procedure (carried out under sterile conditions with clinical assistance), the audience also witnessed several sepia photographs lining the walls of the centre. Symbolically linking memory and identity, and emphasising both the temporal and ephemeral features of this artwork, these photographs were family portraits of the artist’s family members in Poland who had been exterminated during the Second World War. Nearly immediately following the surgical intervention, scanned images of the artist’s body, including a x-ray showing the microchip insertion procedure became publicly observable on the Internet. The event was extremely well publicised on national television and in the printed press, thereby reaching both a general public in Brazil and a global audience via the Internet. Kac would later comment on the project by noting:

“The emergence of biometrics, with its conversion of irrepeatable personal traits – such as iris patterns and fingerprint contours – into digital data, is a clear sign that the closer technology gets to the body the more it tends to permeate it. Experimental medical research towards the creation of artificial retinas using microchips imbedded in the eye in order to enable the blind to see, for example, forces us to accept the liberating effects of intrabody microchips. At the same time, the legal seizing and patenting of DNA samples from indigenous cultures by biotech companies, and their subsequent sale through the Internet, shows that not even the most personal of all biological traits is immune to greed and to technology’s omnipresence.”¹⁶

Kac’s commentary foregrounds the difficult and uneasy, socio-political and ethical issues that are present with the commercial availability of biometric devices. His *Time Capsule* is shown to act as not only a personal initiative of artistic creativity but also a direct challenge to the socially constructed nature of ideas of bodily intrusion. In this general regard, Machado has observed that:

¹⁵ Machado, Arlindo 1998 “A microchip inside the body” nettime 22 February

¹⁶ <http://www.ekac.org/timec.html>

“As the placement of a foreign body (Duchamp’s urinal) in the sacred space of the museum had unpredictable consequences for subsequent art, the implantation of a microchip inside the body of an artist will intensify the debate on the paths that both art and the human species will travel in the next millennium” (Machado 1998).

Disappearance and Dispossession

According to Machado, one can easily interpret Kac’s bodily intervention as a warning signal of the impending use of technologies in a surveillance society of the foreseeable future. A microchip, such as the one now implanted in Kac, could be similarly implanted in anyone at birth, and then used as a significant tool for the purposes of lifelong identification and monitoring. Yet another interpretation suggested by Machado identifies a possible biological mutation utilising implanted digital memories in order to supplement or replace one’s own memories. This eventuality might have easily been the artist’s intention all along; by displaying the photographs of deceased family members along with the numerically encoded data of his own body, *Time Capsule* presents us with a series of personal, social and technological juxtapositions. These juxtapositions may be taken to act as a reminder of the scope of historical changes pertaining to wider power relations within society – and distinct views on the place of the individual as body (and body as legitimate individual) vis-à-vis the state. The main question here is obviously one of control, a control that surfaces, and resurfaces, each time the individual must confront the sort of institutional forces that create, control, or seek to control, both the technologies we see, and those we too frequently overlook.

Lately, the identity theft of biometric data has become a serious concern for those individuals (as well as institutions) that are aware of the intrinsic fragility of electronic information. Large databases of information are always liable to a variety of both cataloguing and processing errors. These errors may be minor at times, but their impacts in an increasingly networked world may have very real (that is, drastic) consequences for an individual – all individuals – who by bureaucratic necessity exist as a series of legal, commercial, and social categories in one and many files. This circumstance is but a relatively benign predicament, however, for in addition, there is the very real risk that the information in a given database may be used for unanticipated, unintended, and possibly illegal, purposes. Such misuse immediately brings to mind the possibilities of electronic terrorism side by side with the violent versions with which we began our discussion. After all, just as the production of

encoded information becomes readily available through biometric technologies, so too do the opportunities for the counterfeiting of biometric information, whether it is in terms of pictures, fingerprints or retinal scans. As David Lyon has noted recently: “The rise of surveillance societies has everything to do with disappearing bodies” (2001, p.15).

This sense of disappearance lies at the very heart of biometric technologies in as much as they not only enhance institutional controls on the body in ways which Foucault (1977) never anticipated, but in how they contribute to what may be understood as a *dispossession* of the body. Such dispossession is achieved by virtue of the body’s transformation into something neither fully corporeal nor completely mechanical. This dispossession of the body is conducted through the capture of the body’s image, in the first instance. Retinal scanning, iris scanning, hand geometry analysis and their sister technologies do not merely represent the body; in the sense of their fundamental malleability as encoded information they transform its very physical veracity. In the second instance, dispossession is achieved by way of a heuristic slight-of-hand wherein the primacy of technological means overshadows any other forms of knowledge regarding our bodies, regarding us. Where once our identity was our bodies, it can now take the form of a computer file. Will the resultant dispossession leave us with an imagined authenticity far removed from the corporeal nature of our birth? Will this be by choice?

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POSTCOLONIAL SUFFERANCE

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Instantiating a postcolonial rupture within the discourse of colonialism as a civilizing mission, Salud Algabre, a leading light of a social movement against the Americans in the 1930s, apprehends – or, better still, beholds – the colonial church and the dominion within its pale as a “culture of terror and space of death:” It is an old town – a very old town. In fact, there is a golden bell...During summer, when the water was clear, you could see down through the depths, down to where it lies. The reason they disposed of it was because mothers – early in their pregnancy – would give birth prematurely upon hearing it toll.

One of the reasons my ancestors rebelled was to protest against the church that possessed that bell. When the Spaniards came they forced the people to build their church. Many were killed by the Spaniards – flogged to death, there on the shore where the church was built. (Flores, 1998)

If we are to consider the category of aesthetics as the encounter between the body and the world along with the social engagement of the senses, Algabre’s memory revises not only the imagination of colonialism, but the very condition of its possibility to make worlds appear; to make colonial worlds materialized in specific embodiments of sight (“golden bell”), sound (“toll”), action (“forced,” “killed,” “flogged to death”), and feeling (“rebelled”). This same memory may also “dispose of” colonialism in this flash recollection made in a summer of epiphany “when the water was clear (and) you could see down through the depths.” Nicholas Dirks states that “if colonialism is a cultural formation, then also culture is a colonial formation.” (Dirks, 1992) Algabre’s narratives can speak only at once of the re-presentation of the colonial discourse and of its instantiation as a rupture that *aborts* (“give birth prematurely”). The colonized body prefigures termination and *postness*; the “colonial” is always placed *retroactively* (Foster, 1996) and *preposterously* (Bal, 1999), under duress to renew itself at the moment of “death” on the “shore where the church was built.”

In discerning the postcolonial inflection in Philippine contemporary art, we read Algabre as a passage of suffering. In Algabre's fiction, colonialism is suffered; suffering proves to be a salient sentiment in postcolonial subject making. To dramatize the performance of suffering, art criticism and history converse with the discipline of anthropology in order to re-transact the problematic of aesthetics with a specific consciousness of "art" which reproaches issues on premises of distinction and discrimination.

Theoretical Interests

Constance Classen in the essay "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses" peels off layer after layer of impediments to the *rapprochement* between anthropology and aesthetics: the notion that senses are precultural; the primacy of sight as access to the world of senses and the acme of the human faculties; and, the conceptual frameworks based on speech and aurality, orality and literacy or verbal skills taken as governing operations of meaning. Classen's critique inevitably uncovers the moral economy of aesthetics as it was contemplated by its founding fathers and its long line of heirs; she quotes Friedrich Schiller: "as long as man is still a savage he enjoys by means of tactile senses." (Classen 1997, p. 405) More telling is Edward Long's observation that Africans' "faculties of smell are truly bestial, nor less is their commerce with the other sex; in these acts they are as libidinous and shameless as monkeys." (Classen 1997, p. 405) Surely, aesthetics as a category of experience is not simply related to the senses, or to a construction of culture or society; it is also, as W.J.T. Mitchell argued, when it relates to a gaze at "a foundational moment in the construction of the social." (Mitchell 1995, p. 293)

At the heart of these reconsiderations is the category of suffering as a conjunctive emotion that coordinates the structure of pain and is at the same time the structuring and structured conditions wherein pain bathes itself. Social anthropology has modified the terms of the debate predicating suffering as an agency in everyday life, rather than seeing it as an essentialist estimation of will. Veena Das points out that Leibniz in 1517 was the first scholar to systematize explanations of suffering based on the knowledge of theodicy, picking up the thread via Weber, who had thought of suffering as a God rationalization, connecting it with explanations of the unjust distribution of suffering in the world. Such mindset finds its most predictable solution in an eschatology or salvation after life, which means in death. Clifford Geertz sees suffering as "the experiential challenge in whose face the mean-

ingfulness of a particular pattern of life threatens to dissolve" (Das 1997, p. 564); as a contention therefore that seeks adjudication not in the evasion from suffering, but in its sustentation in religion. Its indispensability derives from "systems of meaning and patterns of sociality" (Das 1997, p. 564) offering itself to those who must suffer to make their lives meaningful or culturally intelligible. From these studies, Das argues, suffering comes into play, in a climate of tension, between, on one hand, its structuring power to organize people around moral communities in search of salvation and spiritual refinement, and, on the other, with the indictment of this power; the indictments inflict pain through bureaucratic remedies, which in the last instance only supplement the lack of justice and law and therefore perform the repetition of its inversion. With a sensitive approach to the "political economy of injury and compassion" to which the lives of the amputees on the Thai-Cambodia border are subjected, Lindsay French comments on how theodical knowledge collapsed in the face of "scarce resources and overwhelming political priorities," so that "suffering often seemed only to bring more suffering, in a downward spiral. Karma...seemed to close in on amputees with a sense of immutable destiny." (French 1994, p. 92)

We venture into this territory to resettle the discussion of aesthetic production and its semiotic habitat with its performative arena of experience. Das defines suffering as the "assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social forces inflict on human experience." (Das 1997, p. 571) Arthur Kleinman regards suffering as the dialectical twist to resistance (Kleinman 1995, p. 126); the resistance to the practice of experience of life's flow. This disruption of well-being comes in the form of "contingent misfortunes, routinized forms of suffering, and suffering resulting from extreme conditions, such as survivorship of the Holocaust or the atom bomb or the Cambodian genocide or China's Cultural Revolution." (Kleinman 1995, p. 1010) Coming from such definition, Das posits that suffering is socially inscribed, executed through writing, law, and the body. Inasmuch as suffering implicates both the self and the world, Das is willing to steer through the gap between private pain and collective good and action. In other words, while we are in favor of this idea, hoping that suffering may coordinate collective struggle against manifold forms of oppression, we must remain at the same time skeptical about how the state, religion, the market, and media can re-functionalised this collectivity and transcode it in a common sacrifice for the so-called "common good." Das gives us a cogent example:

"In the case of bio-medical technologies, new and experimental technologies are often tested on such populations as terminally ill patients, prison

populations, prostitutes – in other words on those who are defined as social waste – in the hope that the technologies would increase the well-being of people in the future ... lesser harm can be inflicted for future greater good. In giving precise definitions to harm and good, however, science and state may end up making an alliance in which the suffering of those defined as social waste is appropriated for projects of a good society in the future.” (Das 1997, p. 570)

Still, such a predicament will not deter us from exploring the possibility of commiseration, a contentional and contested solidarity premised on “shared” pain. Das remarks: “In the end one can only say that while the ownership of one’s pain rests always with oneself – so that no one speaking on behalf of the person in pain has a right to appropriate it for some other use (e.g. for knowledge, for justice, for creating a better society of the future) – there is a way, however, in which I may lend my body to register the pain of the other.” (Das 1997, p. 572)

Suffering, according to Das, posits pedagogy. It is a disciplinary practice that deconstructs the constitution of the social mandate through acts of legitimation and illegitimation in the production of labor; it is a mode of action and practice that compels the suffering agent to prepare itself for a possible dissemination. This is the *cause* of suffering. Das buttresses this reflection by citing Pierre Clastres, who frames suffering sustained in torture as a ritual of initiation: a mark of belongingness, membership, and investiture. Durkheim asserts that the body is a site not only of subjection, but of its very subjectivity, not only of a realization of the violence, but the very stuff that convulses as it is “transformed violently in initiation ritual.” (Das 1997, p. 565) Marx insisted that the “body is placed within the political economy determining the conditions under which suffering is produced and distributed.” (Das 1997, p. 566). The already quoted Durkheim, points out further that suffering as an inscription in and of the subject does not flesh itself out to “represent an object, but to bear witness to the fact that a certain number of individuals participate in the same moral life.” (Das 1997, p. 565)

In this overview of recent theory on suffering, it is worth paying heed to Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s adamant position that suffering makes sense only within a cultural economy. Her study of mothers who do not weep for their dead children in Alto de Cruzeiro in Brazil alters our most cherished assumptions of “maternity,” “woman ethos,” and filial “bonding.” She cautions us that the negations of these assumptions should not be seen as “unnatural, inhuman, or unwomanly, but rather as reasonable responses to unreasonable constraints and contingencies.” (Scheper-Hughes 1992, p. 400) Proceeding from an unequivocally materialist perspective, Scheper-Hughes deals with how

this aspect of Brazilian culture gives importance to the conception of having many children that is rooted in the expectation that only few will survive, with investment in those with the best chance to make it. She contends that raising children in the eyes of Brazilian mothers is not governed by free-market mechanisms which array investments in this or that child in balance sheets. Raising children is always seen as an act balanced against the potential for loss and survival, which comes to terms with the ever-present possibility of death, as a destiny in the ubiquity of everyday life. Crucial in her study are tropes of suffering and the aesthetic of confronting it, in an active negotiation of grief. She points out, for instance, that the dead child is transformed into an angel and that a belief persists that weeping delays the flight of the child from earth to heaven. We have to be reminded here of Fenella Cannell's probe of the "language of bereavement" in a Bicolano community in the Philippines, which posits that pity expressed in weeping, ritualistic or as individual grief, constitutes danger for those who perform such an act and for those who receive it. The repression of weeping forms an absence of grief, while the inability to weep engenders illness. But, on the other hand, if grief is given full play, it likewise induces illness in the form of soul-loss: the person seized by grief becomes like the dead person. Pity, therefore, is the root of danger: "The dead pull the living towards them, and the living must resist." (Cannell 1991, p. 271) The possibility of loss, reiterated by pity and practiced in memory, is resisted by a form of bereavement that aims to "forget the dead, avoid their intentions, and to separate from them except in occasional encounters." (Cannell 1991, p. 266) These encounters do not lead to a teleology of the afterlife as a final abode, but to the practice of dis-membering through loss, and re-membering through leaving: death is "not clearly focused on the afterlife," but rather on "relations between the dead and the living, between the permeability of barriers between the two, and the problem of achieving a correct separation." (Cannell 1991, p. 269) How can grieving people effect such a separation in the context of an encounter? Cannell suggests that pity can be converted through redemption and gleaned in the cult of the Dead Christ, which, because he "has overcome the grave" (Cannell 1991, p. 305) has resisted the pull of the dead and is able to negate such a danger. The Dead Christ, therefore, lives as a public image and transforms pity from an agency of danger to an agency of transformation: "It is not only a process of a devotional contract...in which the sharing of suffering produces the return gift of healing; it is also a process of *mangarog*, of becoming like Christ, Mary and the other figures, taking on their clothes, gestures and words, and so transforms oneself." (Cannell 1991, p. 306)

Kleinman strikes the vital vein of this survey of anthropological literature

on suffering with the politics of experience, which is the “felt flow” of the “intersubjective medium of social transactions in local moral words.” (Kleinman 1995, p. 97) Kleinman, in his reflection on the intersubjectivity of experience and local moral worlds, which pertain to a universe of certain claims to human dignity, has even extended the reframing of culture as a logic of experience to the germane issue of practice and ideological intervention. Defining suffering as “the result of the processes of resistance (routinized or catastrophic) to the lived flow of experience,” (Kleinman 1994, p. 174) Kleinman reconsiders the term resistance as a “weapon of the weak” and opens it to the charge of multiple energies. Swinging from the register of passive resignation ordained by theodical knowledge to the partisan acknowledgement of bearing pain as packing the power to disconfirm prescribed “cures” of different forms, allows Kleinman to argue that suffering as “resistance,” along with its intersubjective experience, can be “so various, so multileveled, so open to original inventions that interpreting it solely as an existential quest for meaning, or as disguised popular critique of dominant ideology, notwithstanding all the moral resonance of those foci, is inadequate.” (Kleinman 1994, p. 190)

In Philippine scholarship, a modest contribution is foregrounded by Reynaldo Ileto’s resourceful interpretations of the culture of Christ’s passion and how it is reread as a narrative of revolution, as a “grammar of dissent.” From his watershed work *Pasyon and Revolution* to more recent reflections on the martyrdom of Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, the husband of former President Corazon Aquino, who put an end to the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos, Ileto talks about the politics of pity and commiseration (*damay*) as it acquires local accountability in a specific struggle. Ileto’s exploration of the term *damay* qualifies suffering as a post-colonial idiom that stirs the people or community in, quoting a metrical romance or *awit*, “pathetic weeping, tears, sighs, and dying of the country.” (Ileto 1977, p. 129). Such grief or *dusa* mobilizes feeling to take action, to act on, “in a rushing manner,” the condition that makes grief possible. *Damay*, therefore, becomes “a social experience, a Katipunan (collective) experience. Since *damay* is a manifestation of whole and controlled *loob* (inner sense), the Katipunan’s *loob* radiates heat and flame, just as Christ and other individuals of exemplary *loob* radiate *liwanag* (light).” (Ileto 1977, p. 136) The reappropriation of Christ as a suffering agent constructs the practice of the sufferant or Christ’s co-sufferer; in this case the struggling post-colonial subject of the Katipunan participates in suffering, remaking the *pasyon*, or Passion of the *bayan* (nation).

In this brief review of the literature, we have sought to demonstrate the polyphonic conversation between suffering and an aspiration to address certain obligations of kinship with an aesthetically produced agency like an other,

a god, or a nation. In the domain of art, such a network of signals creates access toward the reconception of pain or *onus* that is shared in the private/public sphere as a matter of the collective ritual of restitution. The work of Das on how women in India interpose institutional claims by performing their pain in public by way of mourning is very helpful:

“In the genre of lamentation, women have control both through their bodies and through their language – grief is articulated through the body, for instance, by infliction of grievous hurt on oneself, ‘objectifying’ and making present the inner state, and is finally given home in language. Thus the transactions between body and language lead to an articulation of the world in which the strangeness of the world revealed by death, by its non-inhabitability, can be transformed into a world in which one can dwell again, in full awareness of a life that has to be lived in loss. This is one path towards healing – women call such healing simply the power to endure.” (Das 1996, p. 69)

Annie E. Coombes, meditating on the aesthetic of incarceration and detention in contemporary art making, suggests that one way of achieving well-being is by overcoming trauma, which is re-expressed in the material form of “art.” Quoting research on trauma (Felman and Dori Laub), she posits: “As a way of ‘mastering’ trauma the survivor needs to objectify it and that this can only occur ‘when one can articulate and transmit the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside.’ Thus we may be unwittingly become a step on the road to translating traumatic memory into narrative memory through our uncomfortable viewing of this collection of objects-becoming-exhibits and the unbearably poignant testimony to which we necessarily give witness.” (Coombes 2000, p. 52)

Based on this research, I will chart our investigations on Philippine contemporary art as a *body* of work, a corpus of feelings, an ecology of agencies and reciprocities, following as well what Salud Alagabre called a *disposition*.

Devotion to Nation

The Philippines commemorated its national centenary from 1996 to 1998, celebrating the revolution against Spain and against the American imperialist interlude of half a century thereafter, as well as exposing the continuing struggle against varied forms of hegemonic presence in the country. Such attempt at reckoning the revolution in light of sustained nation-building projects in the time of globalization refers to the colonial discourse and its attendant historiography as a way of controlling imagination. Ileta, describing his unsettling feeling as he witnessed the massive throng that flocked to

the centennial spectacle on Independence Day in June 1998, captures this post-colonial nostalgia for Hispanic history: “Milling through the crowds that threatened to block the passage of the floats up Roxas Boulevard, I felt there was something familiar about the event. Could it be the national version of the many religious processions I had seen in Manila – the procession of the Black Nazarene immediately came to mind – and in the provinces particularly during holy week? Just as the story of Christ unfolds in Good Friday processions, the grand parade reiterated the dominant narrative of the Filipino nation.” (Ileto 1998, pp. 239-240) This calvaric aesthetic that choreographs processions in Philippine life is best caught in the centennial mural of Antipas Delotavo, which stages a march of struggle through history, leaving in its wake death and setback, but ever advancing toward an unfinished revolution. We thus stage at the outset the encounter between the modernity of nation, on the one hand, and the postcolonial critique that makes it possible, on the other.

This parade to which Ileto refers – who has studied the local narration of Christ’s passion and reads into it a revolutionary, due to salvational/salvific reasons, utopia – took place after the election of Joseph Estrada, a movie star who became the country’s centennial and millennium President. Estrada was deposed in the year 2001 through an uprising supported by the military establishment. The central place of the revolt was a Catholic monument called the EDSA Shrine, which was built in memory of the 1986 upheaval that toppled almost two decades of the infamous Marcos regime. The symbols of the anti-Estrada protest were decidedly Catholic; the stage, which was the site of fiery speeches – prayers and masses led by priests and nuns, and the oath-taking of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo – denouncing the massive corruption and amorality of Estrada, was set against a gargantuan sculpture of the Virgin Mary. Months later on the evening of Estrada’s arrest, millions stormed the same shrine but in support of a fallen leader; the Catholic church felt that the presence of Estrada loyalists from the poor urban regions desecrated the holy ground. The seemingly absent Catholic representatives from this “other” largely mass-based mobilization was very telling, but is a story that properly belongs to another essay. What is significant to note in these two cases of “people power,” as this is termed in the Philippines, is the denial of the Catholic, evocatively colonial sign system, to legitimize or delegitimize initiatives of social movements.

In the context of the agenda of rendering these particular events aesthetically possible, *tropes*, or figurative devices, articulated in an expressive discipline and through a technology of meaning making, mark the colonial moment and pursue its specters. This paper also discusses the production of these tropes in contemporary Philippine art.

Amid the frenzy of staging the centenary, the Generalitat Valenciana of Spain organized a travelling exhibition of contemporary visual arts seeking to reflect on the fallout of the Spanish Empire when it lost the colonies of Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico in 1898. The project was specifically significant for the Philippines as its current culture was placed against various streams of criss-crossing interactions with the Hispanic Empire in the Americas, the Caribbean colonial ideology, and the Southeast Asian indigenous and modern histories.

The guiding line of the curatorial endeavor of the exhibition, entitled *Cien Años Despues* (*One Hundred Years After*), was the interpretation of the “loss” of the “colonies” in the particularly vital contexts of an emergent U.S. imperialism, along with present-day socialist societies and within a climate that preserves colonial tradition, sustained by a wide range of forces from religion to a globalist mass media. All these proceed, however, along with a determinate and discernible postcolonial imagination that grapples with both, the retention of coloniality, as a material condition, and the rupture of resistance against it, seen as a transformative aspiration. Surely, the “post” in the term postcolonial prefigures a terminal as well as a contingent continuity, as the term *post* may mean something “rear” or “later.”

The colonial thus posits a limit that may come in discrepant forms as an anti/post colony, protectorate, or nation; the different political experiences and artistic expressions of artists from the three former Spanish colonies track precisely these traces of colonial destiny; the “empire” contracts along with a lack or an incompleteness that is condensed in the act of the “mother country” leaving *her* children who had been reared for a long time on progress and civilizational missions; contemporary Spanish art, which was the part of the exhibition, had to wrestle with this demon of “loss and leaving,” and this is probably why there was melancholia in this sort of ambivalent dispossession, as well as rightful indignation against inequity and struggle for freedom.

From the art projects of the Filipino artists in the exhibition – Santiago Bose, Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Alfredo Esquillo, Jr., and Manuel Ocampo – we can sketch out the content and contour of the contemporary colonial aesthetic as embodied in the work of other Philippine artists. This coloniality is shaped by various



Manuel Ocampo, *Abstract Painting* (1996)

discourses: the Hispanic conquest of the Philippines for about 400 years and the subsequent American occupation until 1945; the Southeast Asian culture that negotiated the conquests; the folk articulation of that negotiation; and the contemporary inscriptions of colonial culture in Philippine society. It is hoped that the thematic clusters proposed here can help round out the aesthetic of a contested coloniality in contemporary Philippine art. I define the colonial as an instantiation of the domination of a power over an entitlement and the resistance against it. An “imperialist” project, which characterizes American rule in the Philippines, may fall under “colonial,” but this idea needs elaboration that this paper can not perform. The inherent contradiction of coloniality as, to amend the reference of Walter Benjamin, a document of culture and a document of barbarism, inscribes within culture its intrinsic limit and ineluctable postness.

Memory as Archive

The concept of memory as an active, or even activist, nostalgia for the past is rooted in history and historiographic retrospection. Official history, in documents and other literature, can be challenged within Philippine contemporary art that rethinks the terms with which colonialism is made effective as an aesthetic culture.

Santiago Bose puts up collages juxtaposing historical pictures, blown up through photocopying technology, betraying the seams of Third World “imitation” and “repetition” with drawings of talismanic icons. In “Colonizing

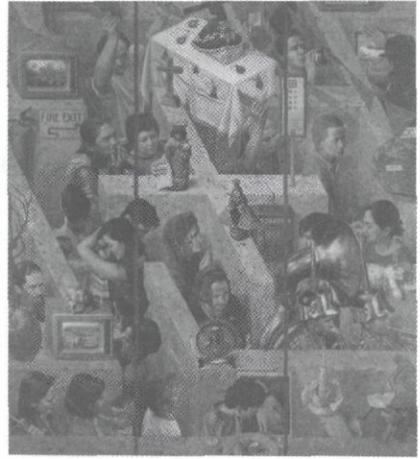


Santiago Bose, *Contemplating Infinito Dios and Vermeer* (1997)

Taste” (1998), the pictorial coherence of a tableau of Filipino Mickey Mouse bubble gum agents proudly posing in their American suits in front of the neoclassical Executive House, is disrupted by written incantations of millenarian prayers and with the almost wraith-like intimation of a potent figure appearing as omen. Here, and in his other works, the colonial intersects with the imperialist moment and with the global capitalist extensions. (Hobson; Lenin; Shumpeter) Bose’s oeuvre harnesses the Filipinos *bricoleur* mindset which refunctors tools and doctrines of domination into carnivals of hybrid meanings. The artist practically ransacks the propaganda of history, catechism, and even of art, to render it vulnerable to the

hauntings of animism, globalization, and political struggle in the present. Bose's art reminds us of the works of Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi, who likewise violates the pictorial coherence of established images to ferret out of the woodwork personages and movements lurking in the cracks of the so-called parchment curtain. Tequi appropriates Renaissance paintings and repossesses them in order to yield political tableaux of topical resonance, in the same way as Roberto Feleo reinvents colonial iconography as a source of popular culture.

A specific aesthetic recasts the characters of the tarot card and by retelling the narrative of fortune, marks the achievement of Brenda Fajardo as both chronicler and seer of history. Perhaps taking to heart the idea that the future is not a ship that arrives, but rather is prophesied as a material condition to be claimed as a rightful legacy, the artist plays the role of a visionary who takes certain risks to shape the present in the image of the "impossible:" that which is yet to come because it is "not yet possible," but already heralded. In her fourteen panels on Philippine history titled "Baraha ng Buhay Pilipino" ("Cards of Philippine Life," 1998), she surrounds historical scenes with the energies of localized tarot cards presented in a folk form to resignify a critically inherited past, a possible unfolding, an emergence of a historical wish adumbrated in its possibility in art. For instance, the magician in the tarot becomes Uncle Sam, who is the agent of U.S. imperialism's sorcery.



Alfredo Esquillo, jr., *Daang Ligid Krus (Maze)* (1996)

Remastery of the Code

The master narrative of colonialism is reread and decoded in a new semiotic scheme of possible meanings and practices of meaning making. A different grammar is spoken through the parodic doublespeak of postcolonial language. The latter ambivalently plays out within the context of colonial rules, and is relearned in the instance of its pragmatic utterance.

Imelda Cajipe-Endaya reinvents the tradition of Maria devotion by investing the woman figure, which is in Philippine art usually portrayed with the traditionally dolorous and passive rendering of the Mother and the Vir-

gin, with contemporary significance and ideological rounder. In “Not Paper Maché,” the paper mache dolls (*taka*), made by Filipino women in the Southern Tagalog town of Paete, suggest the traffic of female labor across the globe; and in “Inay, Ineng, Kalayaan ay Inyo Rin” (“Mother, Daughter, Freedom is For You”), *sawali* (woven splits of bamboo used as walls for huts and shacks) frames women who must struggle against the indignity of being homeless and the threats to their maternal role as keepers of hearth. Cajipe-Endaya’s representation of the maternal persona revises the discrepant roles of the Filipino woman. From the Maria imaginary, she becomes a symbol of the nation cast in paper maché techniques. As craft, “she” is exported abroad, her labor, as is the labor of the women who fashion her, is commodified. As a migrant commodity, she is a mother who leaves her children at home, to elsewhere take care of other children, and/or a young woman who becomes a mail-order bride. She grieves the loss of the family and the absence from her kin, but is declared a “heroine” by the nation-state for the dollar remittances she dutifully sends, keeping in such a way the economy afloat.

In one of his projects, Mark Justiniani creatively reuses parts of the *jeepney*, the country’s mass transport which was resoldered from World War II vehicles left by U.S. soldiers, to comment on the follies of the Filipino character and on the situations that give rise to these. The artist’s mixed-media work ingeniously integrates the critique of colonial values with the patriarchal and paternalist codes of popular culture.

Manuel Ocampo, who is currently based in Berkeley in Southern California, has blasphemed institutional religion in very fierce ways. Ocampo tampers with, revamps, mocks, cuts up, and tears asunder the pressure points at which coloniality begins, ends, and is extended. The fragmentation of bodies, for instance, leaves a trail of relationships among floating forms, details, motifs, and iconographies. Striking in this imagined scape of meaning is the media through which culture is made popular in multiple ways, from state-sponsored propaganda through religious mass production and to global capitalist fetishization. The artist builds his critique and reconstruction of colonial culture around the themes of excess and defacement as part of the broader project of repositioning the politics of the baroque, migration, and the very idiom of painting. In a heady and hectic *mélange* of allusions to disease, cannibalism, decapitation, fascism and faith, dismemberment, profanity, mutilation, and excrement, Ocampo’s hysterical painting violates the modernist sterility of the canvas, examining in such a way the entrails of purity and property within an aesthetic of filth and abjection. As one critic puts it: “From the *postcolonial pathology* (the abject status of the colonized body)...we arrive at this *e/sc(h)atological painting* which includes the sediment both of the megaloma-

nia...and of the impotence of a painting that *makes a homeland*... Something stinks of rot yet, paradoxically, it stands before our eyes and *is only paint*." (Castro Flores 1996, 29)

Another Filipino expatriate artist in the United States is Paul Pfeiffer, who ponders the design of sexuality in the architecture of the religious edifice. In his investigation of the archaeology of the body as a temple of the familiar through which a polytropic Man is transformed, he deconstructs the treasured humanist credo that Man is the measure of all things. In his art the body becomes a colony that mediates its subjection to a vernacular practice, that is, a subversion of the colonial rule. Pfeiffer argues: "To attempt a racialized, sexualized vernacular out of a heroic, patriarchal geometry is an illegitimate production that speaks of resistance." In one work, Pfeiffer collects images of pornography and ethnographic photographs from the computer and re-encodes them as floorplans of canonical church architecture like St. Peter's Basilica and S. Giorgio Maggiore.

Defensible Survival

The everyday history of contemporary Filipinos is a narrative of personal and political survival. But this survival is not just a subsistence, it is a struggle that is waged against versatile modes of coloniality in the local moral worlds, where getting by does not only mean eking out a living, but pursuing a defensible personhood, taking the risk it bruisingly entails.

Alfredo Esquillo, Jr. gives the colonial argument a new turn by discussing contemporary Philippine society in terms of a labyrinth in which an icon standing at every turn and religious tableaux, mocked by violence and neurotic adulation, lines the route. This can only give us a sense of surplus, of bulimic idolatry in a season of deprivation and hopelessness. The artist's "Daang Ligid Krus" (Maze) is an allegory of Philippine Catholic life that transforms a particular event, the Feast of Souls and Saints, into a sustained discourse on the Filipino Way of the Cross. The stations in this social itinerary are marked by religious statuary, a crucifix, and the Black Nazarene borne on a stand studded with talismans. Winding their way through a stone maze, women in veils, a brass band, lovers, and bystanders are trapped in an iterative scheme. In this social still life, seen from the wall of the cemetery, a vantage point that affords the witness a multi-planar lay of the land, the grids, delineated by panels, stand out, stressing the presence of alarming images. The fascination with faith in the gods of prosperity inspires irreverence; the cross is carried as both burden and luxury. This can be viewed in the cabinets, boxes, and cases

of Norberto Roldan which harbor goods and market-day merchandise of folk Catholic devotion, from luminous crucifixes and rosaries through amulets and candle effigies to devices of local healing. This colonial repertory of propitiations usually intersects with images of the mass media and social turbulence that are foregrounded in the works of Nunelucio Alvarado, Elmer Borlongan, Emmanuel Garibay, and Alwin Reamillo. Their art summons the spirits of the colonial pantheon but reconfigures their presence within discourses of peasant revolution, class attrition, urban hemorrhage, radical theology, and struggle against capital in whatever guise it dwells.

Sanggawa was an art collective that used to do murals for towns and churches, as well as for galleries and museums. The work entitled "Second Coming" is part of a series of editorial artworks documenting in a satirical mode the key events and dramatic personae which defined the news in Manila in 1994 and in early 1995, including the visit of the Pope, that proclaimed the Philippines as the only "Christian nation in Asia." Sanggawa portrayed these events under a carnival tent and with the trappings of the circus. The group identified religion and entertainment as the win pivots to which the events of that times had turned.

Devotion as a colonial gesture initiates suppression and supplication. Asked about his vision as artist, Jose Legaspi unburdens himself and calls his art confessional, a personal disclosure of unconscious misgivings and leave takings within a proscriptive Catholic culture. The artist regards his images as autobiographical half-truths flowing through a stream and arising from secret bedmates. A recurring trope is the constricted space: a bed in a room, an alley, a void dappled with stars. The work "The Flood," consisting of 1,200 pastel drawings on bond paper, is similar to the point of tearing down the surface of "walls" and "overwriting" them with a proper visual diary of a history-in-progress. He confesses that as a young boy, he defiled the family altar, crowning the Madonna with the devil's horns to express his anger toward his mother; the Mother and the Madonna would later become one. The artist relates that he begins the toil of evoking the past with the images of the "killing of the child" and of the "birth at the urinal," which he imagines as the site of his own expiration before death. With these scenes of terror, he rummages through a trope of traumas to "make sense," leading him to intuit his pre-symbolic world of what could have been, a reckoning of a prospective and retrospective past that is born in regret (what should not have been) and not in hope (what could have been possible). From here, Legaspi sets sail into an inclement journey from birth to childhood to old age and finally to a prefiguration of a suicide as he testifies to his seething sexuality.

Critical Inheritance

With these artistic agencies and works in mind, we can say that the contemporary colonial figuration through its main tendencies in Philippine art – memory as archive, remastery of the code, and defensible survival – permeates much of the aesthetic and moral culture today in the Philippines. These representations of the colonial are not mere vessels that contain content, but are modes of materializing form and feeling in order to constitute an aesthetic practice that creates political possibility. Pierre Macherey, through Derrida, leads us to the phrase “critical inheritance” which he explains thus: “In fact, one does not inherit only from the past of the past, and it must even be said that, from that which is dead once and for all and cannot return, there can be no inheritance. Rather, one inherits from that which, in the past, remains yet to come, by taking part in a present which is not only present in the fleeting sense of actuality but which undertakes to reestablish a dynamic connection between past and future.” (Macherey 1999, p.19)

I re-motivate “critical inheritance” in this paper to stress the chances of reconverting the colonial aesthetic into a redemptive transfiguration of a postcolonial future for the Philippines.

Such “critical inheritance” finally renovates suffering into sufferance. Lexically, sufferance may mean the “act or a state of suffering,” or the “patience or endurance under suffering.” We stand by the term as a means to explore the possibility of reclaiming the affect of sufferance as an emotional economy of struggle that engages the suffering agent, or, more appropriately, the sufferant, to exceed “the power by which it is enabled.” (Butler 1997, p. 15) The generative impulse of subjectivity emerges from subjection, rendering agents not solely compliant to or complicit with power, but rather co-operators in the process of its generation. The politics of resistance can be made only if it is carrying multiple loads of commitments within discrepant social fields of practice, and when resistance as a condition of sufferance is made accountable to a moral economy or to a local moral world in which life is justified by criterions of a defensible humanity and native dignity. (Kerkvliet 1991)

There is political interest in deploying the term sufferance in relation to suffering, which has attracted considerable interest in established medical, psychological and anthropological writings, but which may also be construed as reactionary and passive and, in fact, prone to the manipulation of fascist persuasions. In this respect, suffering as a pervasive aesthetic in popular culture and in Philippine social representations may also be linked to the discourse of melodrama and its attendant excess and oftentimes hysterical ex-

pressiveness that is rerun in movies, literature, radio, television, and related media. To deal with the banality of sufferance as a contemporary colonial and mediatizing trope, therefore, is to engage in the politics of redeeming it. In this project, sufferance, owing perhaps to the wordplay insinuated by the suffix *ance* and to its possible Derridean circulation, recuperates this perceived state of inertia and reenergizes its transformative potential. This is a necessary ideological act that need not be seen as a teleological turn, but rather as an aspiration to situate theory in social practice and within the processual constitution of human agency. Sufferance as some kind of a political vector is fraught with tension and moves along a contested passage in a nuanced spectrum of possibilities, from grief to melancholia to indignation to struggle, and, back and forth, in the continual testing of limits and extensity at the edge of a fully catholic salvation.

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THE INVISIBLE MALE BODY

HIROSHI YOSHIOKA

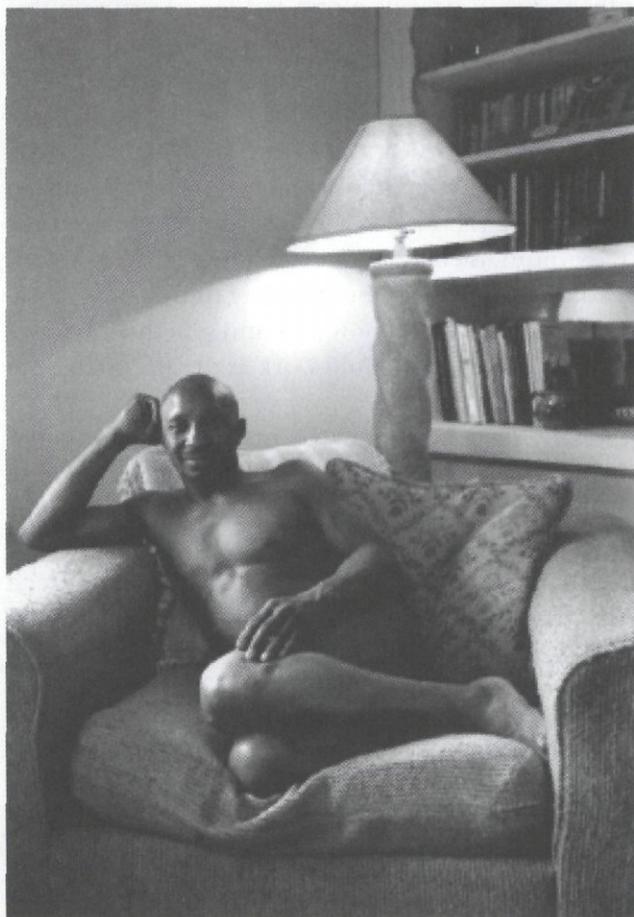
Two conversations I recently had with friends motivated me to write on this subject. One was about the leaflets I always find in my mailbox at my apartment in Kyoto. They are all the same size, as small as a page of a pocket paperback, showing naked young female bodies, with their stereotypically innocent-looking faces, unsuited to their provocative poses. These are advertisements for a “sex delivery service,” which is quite common in Japan’s urban areas today. Girls are delivered like pizza, and the customer is charged for every twenty minutes (the maximum use is 120 minutes). Once when I showed a magazine to my friend she found an advertisement in it recruiting new “workers” for this job; the advertisement explained how easy and safe the job was. I even found an advertisement for males who could work as drivers taking the girls to the customers.

“Here, you see,” said the friend, “you can buy sex on one side, and sell it on the other. This kind of business used to be dominated by yakuza (Japanese gangsters), and perhaps still is, but you can no longer detect any danger or crime in this advertisement. Prostitution has become a part of industry in this country. Sex is just consumption, neat, safe and systematic. Girls are not forced to do it from poverty. They just want to make quick money for their own pleasure. So, what’s wrong?” I replied that sex is always represented through female bodies, and they are therefore too visible in the society. This overexposure blinds us, and makes *our* own bodies invisible. On the other hand, male bodies are invisible behind the profusion of female. Perhaps male bodies are inseparable from industry itself. They are submerged in the system.

The other conversation was about the photo exhibition of Laurie Toby Edison, an American photographer, which took place in September 2001 at The National Museum of Art in Osaka.¹ The show included works from two of

¹ *Recent Works of Laurie Toby Edison: Meditations on the body*, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan, August 2, – September 2, 2001.

her series of work: *Women En Large*, *Familiar Men* and *Japanese Women*, a new series she was working on. I have been interested in Edison's approach to photography because she challenges the representation of human bodies that is deeply influenced by mass media. In mass media you can never encounter fat female bodies unless they are supposed to illustrate something negative (the body before dieting).² In the same way, men's naked bodies are not shown as such, never seen as something "familiar." They are always represented as signs of sexual (bodies of actors, rock musicians, etc.) or physical strength (those of athletes, football players, etc.). Edison's photography breaks this unspoken code, and makes us notice how invisible human bodies are in fact in our society.



Laurie Toby Edison,
from *Meditations on the
Body* (2001)

² *Women En Large: Images of Fat Nudes*, Photographs by Laurie Toby Edison. Text by Debbie Notkin, Books in Focus, San Francisco 1994; website: <http://www.candydarling.com/lte/gallery.html>

I have known the curator of this exhibition, Ms. Akiko Kasuya, for many years. When the exhibition was over I asked her what kind of response she had got from visitors. "It's amazing," she said. "First I thought it would be the nudes of fat women that might be provocative to some of the audience. I was wrong. It was the male bodies in the *Familiar Men* series which turned out to be more embarrassing." "Embarrassing to whom?" I asked. "To some middle-aged male viewers, those who work in the administrative office of the museum, for example. They found the series almost disgusting. They told me that they just couldn't stand looking at that part of Edison work." I asked: "Is this because they think male bodies are not something you can appreciate in the artwork?" Kasuya answered: "Perhaps, because those are the bodies of ordinary men, in normal, everyday situations."

I thought she was right. If the male body were shown as something exceptional, like those of macho athletes, film stars or even gays, these images would be accepted much more easily. Finding the body marked as something extraordinary, the viewer would have a feeling of safety, a feeling that would reassure him that *he* doesn't belong to what is represented here. But what we can see in Edison's photos are just ordinary males. They are naked, but without any appeal to their physical strength, nor can we see here any sign of sexual seduction.

So, why should usual and ordinary male bodies be seen with embarrassment, while unusual and extraordinary ones are seen as a commonplace?

These conversations reminded me of a passage in a newly published book I am reading, whose title could be literally translated as *What It Means to Make Love with a Man*.³ The book is the record of a long talk by three female writers based on their experiences with men. The main topic of their conversation is how men are framed with a limited image of sex and sexuality in our contemporary society. Among the three is Tomoko Minami, a writer and sex worker who declares that she has seen more than thirty thousand penises(!) She has observed that many men seem to hate looking at their own naked body in the mirror. "Many men feel that the male body is ugly. They say their desire is spoiled by seeing their own body in the mirror. It's perhaps because they are not accustomed to being looked at. They don't understand how women look at them, either in a sexual or non-sexual way."

The sex industry exploits fantasy. It casts sexual fantasy into a certain mold, which is based on the dichotomy of the overexposed female body and the invisible male body. What interests me here is that, in industrialized soci-

³ *Otoko wo Daku to Iukoto*, by Ayako Saito, Tomoko Minami and Xanae Kameyama, Asuka-shinsha publishers, 2001.

eties, to be a man one is required to hide the individual body under one's social function. Being a man means being able to identify oneself with what one is supposed to be in society, instead of what one really is. And I suppose this can be seen in Japan in an especially obvious form, as here modernization in this aspect has gone very far, even farther than in Western countries.

Modernization has taken the form of standardization and uniformity. Uniform might be the key to thinking about the structure of desire in this culture. People love being uniformed, because they are brought up in such a way. The uniform put on the body produces "uniformed sexual fantasy." Uniforms for female students and workers are very often associated with men's sexual fantasies. Miwa Yanagi, a contemporary Japanese artist, critically represented this shared male view in her early works.⁴ On the other hand, uniforms for men show how they function in the system. By wearing uniforms, women have to suggest, and men have to deny, the existence of their body.

Here I am not only referring to uniforms like those of policemen, but to everything people put on the body to show how they should be treated. Uniform culture in this sense can be seen in two very popular male stereotypes in modern Japan: "Salary-man" and "Otaku." "Salary-man" is a Japanized English word for an office worker, but the important thing is that it implies that someone is decent, normal, average and safe. Their actual uniform is a suit and a tie in a rather sober color. "Salary-man" represents the sociable side of the Japanese male identity. "Otaku" is the other extreme. They can be recognized by their untidy clothes, disheveled hair, stubble and so on. They restrict their world to a particular field (such as animation, computer manipulation, etc.) and they typically lack skills in sociability and communication. They are sometimes even infamous for their "loli-con," the sexual fantasy about prepubescent females (the word is derived from "Lolita complex").

These two types – Salary-man and Otaku – may seem to be the opposites of each other, but they have the same desire in common, to deny their individual existence as a man. They share the hatred of looking at their own body, and try to hide behind the uniform appearance. It is important to understand that these two characters stand for two basic functions in Japanese society which enabled the quick development of the country: Salary-man represents the spirit of cooperation, while Otaku is an expert in technology. What we can see behind the diffusion of these two popular male stereotypes is how important the process of industrialization is in transforming the individual male body into an invisible one; it was made, transformed into an anonymous part of the system in order to maximize the efficiency of the state machine.

⁴ <http://www.yanagimiwa.net/>

To make the male body invisible means, however, to set it up in the mythical dimension. The Japanese body has become a sanctuary, like the emperor's body used to be before World War II. The body is not just invisible, but something that shouldn't be mentioned in secular words. Sheer racism can result from this when people have to face the body issue. In 1994 some "onsen" (hot spring) bathhouses in the small town in Hokkaido put up signs "Japanese only," because they had been disturbed by drunken Russian sailors. They tried to exclude *all* foreigners, but actually the nationality was not the point, the distinction was made between Japanese and "foreign" bodies. A person who had already become a naturalized citizen of Japan was also denied entry into the bathhouse because he had a Western body⁵.

In this context, I have been very interested in works of art which attempt to resist this invisibility and mystification of the male body, and to recover the possibility of its representation.

Miyako Ishiuchi has taken photographs of human bodies, both male and female, but they are not normal nude photos. Like Edison, she is interested in the aspect of the body that has been excluded in the mass media. She has been attracted, for example, to "scars" on the body, the skin of old people, rough nails of middle-aged women and so on. In the interview I had with her for the critical journal *Diatx.*,⁶ I asked about the interest she has in "scars" and the skin of elderly people. "For me, the photograph is a device for visualizing the flow of time, rather than fixing a moment," she replied. "Time is invisible, but you can see it on the human body." In the course of conversa-



Tadasu Takamine,
Kimura-san, performance (2000/2001)

⁵ For further information on this incident. visit: <http://www.debito.org/otarulawsuit.html>

⁶ *Diatxt.* volume on "Future Memory," ed. Hiroshi Yoshioka, Kyoto Art Center, 2000. For further information on this journal, visit http://www.diatxt.com/index_e.html

tion she mentioned the “quietness” of the body in her works. Though her works include criticism of the mass media which brainwash us everyday with perfect young bodies, Ishiuchi’s works are an alternative way of looking at the body, rather than an attack on the dominant way of body representation.

It is also important to mention Miyako Ishiuchi’s selection of works entitled *Sawaru: Chromosome XY*,⁷ which shows close-up images of male bodies together with their normal portraits. Their bodies are all so close that we feel as if we are touching, rather than watching them (The first part of the title “Sawaru” simply means “touch” in Japanese). Closeness creates a feeling of intimacy, but it doesn’t lead to the eroticism we see in commercial photos. Here again, the crucial thing is that they are all ordinary men, young and old, Japanese and non-Japanese. Under each portrait you read their name (in English) and their year of birth, without any implication of their job or any social role. Still, most men in the portrait seem to try to show their social status (you can read this from their expression). By presenting this interesting contrast between the ID-like portrait and the unusually close sight of the body, Ishiuchi seems to suggest a new way of looking at male bodies. In other words, she is trying to demystify the male body, to ease its tension, and to rescue it from the suppressive invisibility in our modern society.

While Ishiuchi’s work suggests the possibility of representing the male body by giving it a gentle look, Tadasu Takamine’s approach shows a harsh and violent approach toward the issue. In his multi-media performance entitled *Kimura-san*, he obviously addressed the subject of “disability,”⁸ but I think the work connotes the issue of the male body too, or, maybe the male body as something systematically “disabled.”

“Kimura-san” is the name of a man who was a victim of the Morinaga arsenic milk poisoning incident in 1955 in Japan. In spite of the disability affecting a large part of his body, he has lived alone in Kyoto for fifteen years. Takamine had worked for five years as one of the voluntary aid staff visiting his house once or twice every month. One day, he happened to “discover” that Kimura-san had a sexual drive like any other man, and this dramatically changed his views of the bodies of disabled people. He masturbated the man who was obviously unable to have a relationship with a woman in a normal situation. The artist videotaped the scene, at that time without any intention

⁷ *Sawaru: Chromosome XY*, by Miyako Ishiuchi, Shinchosha publishers, 1995.

⁸ In relation to the more general theme of this work, i.e., to the issue of the sexuality of handicapped people, I would like to note that there is a book and website by a writer who is in a wheelchair himself, about freedom of sex for people with handicaps. *Tatta Gosenchi no Hadoru or Sex for the handicapped, which has never been spoken of*, by Yoshihiko Nojo, Wani Books, 2001. <http://www.netlaputa.ne.jp/~k-nojo/CHIKA/>

to make it public. But he finally decided to use the tape in his performance, partly because Kimura-san himself wanted the tape to be publicly presented.

In the performance Takamine wears a kind of framed headgear (like that of an ice hockey player), with two small video cameras attached inside of it which take close-up pictures of his eyes. He sits in front of a table with plates of glass on it, and behind him there is a huge screen showing the scene of Kimura-san's body. In the course of the narration (which is in English and read by his own recorded voice), he abruptly smashes the glass by hitting it with his head, and the moment he does this the screen suddenly changes into the image of his irises. He does this again and again.

"The world awakes by laughter," when Kimura-san's face shows the moment of ecstasy on the screen. "This is based on something, but not on sexual desire. His behavior – just the opposite of masculine – is a rare sphere in which no one will lose their reality." By "opposite of masculine," the artist refers to Kimura-san's disability, not only in the sense of his physical handicap, but in the sense of "the disability to refuse." In order to survive, the man has no choice but to accept others. ... "his body does not have privacy in the first place."⁹ This very "disability" leads to the laughter that awakes the world, affirming the visibility and existence of the body.

The body is not a matter of fact. On the contrary, it is still an unknown dimension which we should explore very carefully, through artistic expression and philosophical thinking as well as normal scientific investigation. And I believe that various attempts to recover the visibility of the male body could radically change our view of many problems in our society, many of which are caused by the stiffness of masculinity.

⁹ The full text of the narration (both English and Japanese) is published in *Diatxt.*, vol. 3., "Vita Sexualis," 2001, including other works by Tadasu Takamine.

DOLLY'S BODY: GENDER, GENETICS AND THE NEW GENETIC CAPITAL

SARAH FRANKLIN

The birth of Dolly, the now-famous cloned Scottish sheep, was first reported on February 23rd, 1997 in the British Sunday paper *The Observer* by its science editor, Robin McKie. Later that week the means of her creation were officially documented in the British science journal *Nature*, in an article by Ian Wilmut and his colleagues entitled "Viable offspring derived from fetal and adult mammalian cells."¹ Like that other famous British birth, of the world's first test-tube baby, Louise Brown, in June of 1978, Dolly's viability instantly became the subject of world-wide media attention and public debate. Her birth was seen to alter the landscape of future reproductive possibility, and once again to raise questions about the ethics of man-made life.

In the first full-length account of the making of Dolly the sheep, *Clone: the road to Dolly and the path ahead*, *New York Times* science journalist, Gina Kolata describes the cloning of Dolly from an adult cell as one of the most important scientific accomplishments for which the previous century will come to be known, comparable to the splitting of the atom, the discovery of the double-helix, and the elimination of smallpox (Kolata, 1997). According to the most comprehensive account of Dolly's birth, written by the Roslin scientists who created her, Dolly inaugurates a new era, "the age of biological control" (Campbell, Wilmut and Tudge, 2001). Prominent ethicists, philosophers, and scientists have spoken out about cloning, testified before Congress, and published their views in editorials and anthologies. Numerous advisory and legislative bodies world-wide have provided reports and recommendations.² Controversy continues to surround the question of whether or not humans should

¹ In fact, Dolly was already more than six months old at the time of her birth announcement: she had come into the world in a shed in a small Scottish village on the fifth of June 1996.

² A list of several of these reports and anthologies about cloning is provided in the references to this paper, which is part of a larger project on kinship and cloning supported by a fellowship from the Leverhulme Foundation.

be cloned, and has now been extended to include wide-ranging debates about cloning human tissue via stem cells and the emergent science of what has become known as tissue engineering. A different set of questions about the cloning of Dolly arises from the perspective of anthropology and feminist theory in relation to kinship, gender and biology. In this article I explore the notion of “viable offspring” from the perspective of the relationships between kinship, genealogy, and property which shape ours and Dolly’s futures in the “Age of Biological Control.” Using Dolly as a kind of shepherd, I want to follow the implications of her creation in terms of how scientific knowledge comes to be **embodied**, how biology is seen to be authored, and how in turn such acts of creation are protected as forms of property. Dolly’s coming into being disrupts the traditional template of genealogy: she was born from a new kind of cellular assemblage, in which donor cytoplasm effectively “reprogrammed” her nuclear DNA to “go back in time” and become newly embryonic. Dolly’s biology is as cultural as her ontology is historical, and she is part of a number of new animal kinds, or breeds, which instantiate larger changes in what Foucault denominated “the order of things” connecting life, labour and language. If Dolly were a sentence, we would need a new syntax to parse her, because her counterfactual existence troubles existing grammars of species, breed, property, and sex.

These troubles are not new – indeed many of them are quite ancient: like other animal forms of live-stock, Dolly embodies a commercial purpose written into her flesh. With Dolly, however, genealogy is reconstituted as a unique and unprecedented conduit for the production of biowealth, and she thus requires some altered templates of theoretical explanation to address the significance of her making, her marking, and her marketing as a successful product.³ Like older breeds, Dolly was created to explore new possibilities of making animal reproduction more efficient. In the process, she has altered the landscape of animal reproduction far more than anyone imagined possible.

“Viable” is an important word to describe Dolly in several senses. She is viable in the biological sense of being capable of life outside the womb, as in a viable new-born. She is also viable in the wider sense of being capable of success, or continuing effectiveness: she is viable in the corporate sense of a viable plan or strategy. Her existence confirms the viability of a particular

³ Although Dolly clearly continues a long tradition of animal breeding for human purposes, and thus is hardly unique for embodying human technical and discursive markers, this paper is less focussed on such continuities, instead seeking to articulate the ways in which cloning comprises a distinctive moment in animal manufacture. Another chapter could be written in which this distinctiveness is not the central focus, and a reverse set of claims about Dolly’s links to historical traditions of animal breeding are emphasised

scientific technique, the technique of cloning by nuclear transfer using fully differentiated adult cells, which was not believed to be biologically possible until she was born. As a viable offspring, Dolly confirms the viability of a merger between corporate sponsorship and research science. It is the successful merging of all of these meanings of "viable" that Dolly both embodies and symbolises: she represents the viability of a scientific technique, and of a corporate strategy, through her existence as a viable offspring. Her ability to survive, to function normally, and to reproduce naturally guarantees other kinds of viability: the viability of man-made life, for example, and the viability of the stock options of her parent company, PPL therapeutics, who financed her creation. Dolly is live-stock in a very overdetermined sense: she is not only viable as a single animal, but as a *kind* of animal, a new commodity species of what might be described as breedwealth.⁴ Above all, she is a newly-viable form of genetic capital, in sheep's clothing.⁵

In an era defined by the emergence of biowealth as the ultimate futures market, Dolly's birth is yet further confirmation of the means by which biological reproduction can become an engine of wealth generation and capital accumulation. Cloning and cell fusion have become increasingly significant means of reproduction in an era of polymerise chain reaction, immortal cell line banking, and genomic libraries. Dolly is owned as an individual animal, much as any farmer owns livestock. But she is much more valuable as an animal model for a technique that is owned as intellectual property, by means of a patent which covers the technique of nuclear transfer.⁶ In addition, ownership of Dolly involves the production of what might be thought of as new forms of biological enclosure, that is by the refinement of specific biotechno-

⁴ The ability to control animal breeding is one of the main definitions of domestication as applied to livestock such as sheep, cattle, goats and pigs. Human control over animals, often expressed as dominion, has been linked to wealth generation since the emergence of what are now called breeds, or breadlines. Breedwealth is a term which emphasises both the commercial motivations of "the breeder's hand," and the intensification of commercial interest in cellular and molecular biology applied to animal reproduction.

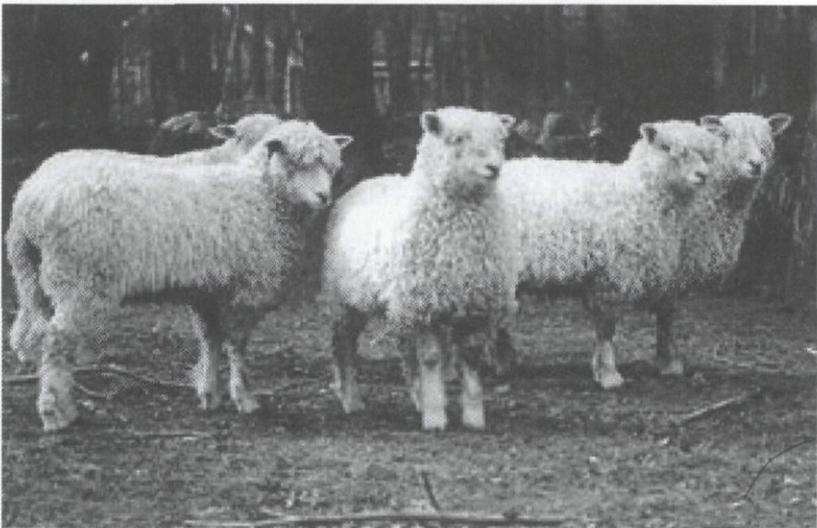
⁵ Part of Dolly's parent company was purchased in 1999 by the company Geron, who specialise in medical applications of cloning and have developed techniques for stem-cell amplification aimed to provide replacement organ tissue. This application of cloning by nuclear transfer, and its potential use as a form of assisted conception, are the most likely means by which "human cloning" will be inaugurated.

⁶ Dolly's creation is covered by two patent applications filed by Roslin Institute, PCT/GB96/02099, entitled "Quiescent cell populations for nuclear transfer" and PCT/GB96/02098 entitled "Unactivated oocytes as cytoplasm recipients for nuclear transfer." These applications are filed in most countries in the world and cover all animal species, including humans. Roslin Institute's policy is to license its patents by field of use.

logical pathways which reliably deliver certain kinds of functionality. For example the means of reactivating the recombined cells out of which Dolly was made involved identifying the significance of particular stages in the cell cycle, and learning how to manipulate these stages using electricity. The ability to “enclose” distinct components of the emergent biotechnological toolkit as private property thus involves a combination of skill, ingenuity, secrecy, and legal instruments such as patents, in order to create new forms of biowealth. Anthropologically, such alterations in the fungibility of animal genealogy pose questions not only about the production of new forms of genetic capital, but about the very basis for distinguishing among animal kinds – a question that in turn leads back into familiar questions about the connections between so-called “biological differences” the formal categorisations based on sex, gender, kinship and descent.

Genetic Capital

In the past, as today, the profitable reproduction of animals as live-stock has depended upon specific technological innovations and market refinements. Writing of the eighteenth-century livestock breeder Robert Bakewell, historian Harriet Ritvo describes an important shift through which this “master breeder” altered the ways in which prized animals came to be valued as individual repositories of genetic capital. It was the development of careful pedigree recording by Bakewell which enabled him to transform the livestock



Cotswold
sheep

market, so that he could effectively rent out his animals for stud duty. To bring about this shift in how animal reproductive capacity could be bought and sold, Ritvo argues Bakewell needed to transform the entire conceptual basis of livestock breeding. She claims that Bakewell accomplished this transformation through a shift in the definition of the genetic capital from the breed as a whole to the reproductive power of a single animal. She writes that,

Bakewell claimed that when he sold one of his carefully bred animals, or, as in the case of stud fees, when he sold the procreative powers of these animals, he was selling something more specific, more predictable, and more efficacious than mere reproduction. In effect, he was selling a template for the continued production of animals of a special type: that is, the distinction of his rams consisted not only in their constellation of personal virtues, but in their ability to pass this constellation down their family tree (1995, p. 416).

The shift here involves a part being enabled to stand for a larger whole. It could be described as metonymic in the sense that the individual comes to be so closely associated with the breed as a whole it can stand in its stead. More specifically, the shift is synecdochic, in the sense that *the substance from which it is made* can stand for an object itself, as in steel for sword. The accomplishment of this change in kind described by Ritvo, whereby a single animal could become a template for an entire type or breed, was accomplished through careful written records – that is, through the establishment of the studbook as a marketing device. The maintenance of such records enabled a differentiation to be drawn between male animals that were “good sires” and those who were not. In turn this differentiation enabled a reduction, of the male animal to a template of his kind. It also depended upon the redefinition of the breed, or breeding group, as a lineage. And it was these *conceptual* changes that enabled an exchange – of the stud fee for generations of careful breed selection.⁷

The point of all of this was its profitability. The successful enterprising-up of new property values in animals, and the establishment of a market in which to sell them, enabled Bakewell to increase by four-hundredfold within thirty years the value of his breeding livestock. It is no exaggeration to claim, as Ritvo does, that his approach changed forever how livestock breeding is both practised and conceptualised: “So complete was the conceptual transformation wrought by this redefinition of an animal’s worth, that at a remove of two centuries it may be difficult to recover its novelty” (1995, p. 417). It is also not irrelevant that these eighteenth-century breeding innovations estab-

⁷ By definition this is a very brief summary of Ritvo’s argument, whose work is of great importance in understanding not only the emergence of animal pedigrees, but of the importance of many domesticated species to Darwin’s models of evolution.

lished Britain as “the stud stock farm of the world,”⁸ a legacy still manifest in animals such as Dolly.⁹

As Ritvo observes, it is entirely commonsensical today that breeds are the result of careful selection, in-and-in breeding to improve the “line”, and the application of breeding principles to the improvement of stock by their owners. It is equally taken for granted that some animals are better breeders than others, and that this is a component of their monetary value. What her analysis reveals most compellingly is how much conceptual apparatus must exist in relation to the animal for its biology to emerge as “obvious” in this way, or indeed for the biology of a prized ram to emerge at all. A breed is thus a biotechnological assemblage, its very constitution a discursive formation, its genome a manifestation of the breeder’s art.

Dolly extends the uses of breeding in some important new directions. The definitive technology through which Dolly emerges as yet another kind of template for the breadline as a whole is the technique of nuclear transfer in the form of cell fusion through which Dolly was cloned.¹⁰ Dolly’s viability as an offspring has now authenticated this technique, and its profitability, much as the performance of Bakewell’s Dishley rams secured the viability of an earlier form of breedwealth in livestock husbandry, and Louise Brown’s viability confirmed the success of IVF (In-Vitro-Fecundation). Like the studbook, nuclear transfer also effects a reduction, of the animal to its DNA. But this time, there are several important differences. First, it is the female animal, and not the male, whose DNA serves as a template. And second, it is not the animal herself, but a laboratory technique which provides the means of reproduction. Let us pause to consider what these shifts entail in more detail, for they are, like those described by Ritvo, both technological and conceptual. In the industrial version of breedwealth established by Bakewell, the individual animal provided *both* the template *and* the means of reproduction: its genes *and* its own generative power were the package being sold. In the case of Dolly, *neither* her own genes *nor* her own generative capacity are valu-

⁸ As Cooper claims in his mid-century evaluation of Bakewell, “there are in fact only two breeds today not of British origin, namely Friesian cattle and Merino sheep, which have a truly international status” (1957, p. 90).

⁹ The Roslin Institute in Scotland, is itself heir to this same lineage, as a direct descendent of the Imperial Bureau of Animal Breeding and Genetics, created in 1929.

¹⁰ Dolly is not properly described as a clone, and the term “clone” does not appear anywhere in the *Nature* article by Wilmut, et al, announcing her birth. She is the result of a merger between the cells of two animals, not a “clone” in the strict botanical sense of an entity grown from a single cell of its progenitor (“cloning” comes from Greek for “twig” and is perhaps most accurately used to describe the way a gardener grows a new hydrangea from a single twig of a parent plant).

able. The *only* value she embodies is as an animal model for a patent application, providing living (and extensively DNA tested) proof that Ian Wilmut's technique can be successful. It is the viability of the means of reproduction used to make her, nuclear transfer technology, which is the source of new genetic capital – which is why it is nuclear transfer technology, and not Dolly herself, for which intellectual property rights were sought. In this sense, cloning by nuclear transfer enables genetic capital *to be removed from the animal herself* – and doubly so. This has significant consequences for how both reproduction and genealogy can be owned, marketed and sold, and also for what they mean, and how they are (dis)embodied.

These shifts have implications for both genealogy and gender. Very much in contrast to Bakewell's Dishley rams, Dolly is at a remove from the source of her reproductive value, which has, in a sense, been seconded to do service for (to establish the viability of) a technique of reproductive biology. Her own ability to reproduce is not an important conduit for the production of other animals, and in fact Dolly's own ability to produce lambs is merely a subordinated sign of her individual viability as a natural-technical product of corporate bioscience. Dolly was a successful trial run.

In sum, she is the cookie, not the cutter. PPL therapeutics is the world leader in transposing human genes into animals, in order to harvest peptides from their milk, in order to make new drugs. The aim of producing Dolly was to demonstrate the viability of a technique that *bypasses* her own reproductive capacity, which is too inexact. Cloning by nuclear transfer is useful because, unlike conventional breeding, it enables exact reproduction of an animal's complete nuclear genetic blueprint. In a sense, nuclear transfer decontaminates mammalian reproduction: we might say it eliminates nuclear waste. This innovation is valuable because it enables a new form of pure reproduction in higher mammals, removed from the genetic "noise" of the rut. The problem with conventional breeding, of course, is that it is very unreliable, inefficient, and thus costly. Every time a breeder mates a prized animal, the recombination of genes that is an unavoidable component of sexual reproduction introduces the equivalent of a genetic lottery: you never know what kind of match, or mismatch, is going to result.

Nuclear transfer removes this genetic gamble: it eliminates the genetic risk of sex, producing an exact replica of the desired genetic traits.¹¹ Through

¹¹ The exact genetic traits sought by PPL therapeutics are transgenic. The first cloned transgenic sheep was announced in July 1997, named Polly. Polly was created by "a version" of the technique used to create Dolly, namely the technique used to produce Megan and Morag, the sheep born at Roslin in 1996, using fetal rather than adult cells. The important point about Polly is not only that she carries the targeted human gene, but the

this means, it is argued by the Roslin team who produced Dolly, the precise genetic composition of prized individual animals be both preserved in perpetuity, and more efficiently reproduced in other animals. The possibilities opened up by nuclear transfer are indeed for any animal, male or female, wild or domesticated, or even extinct, to become a perpetual germline repository, a pure gene bank, because it is no longer only the gametes, the eggs and the sperm, which are necessary for reproduction to be viable. A single animal can be cloned to produce an entire herd of identical animals, which would otherwise take years to establish. These animals can also be improved with the addition of precise genetic traits, including those from other species. In sum, the value of nuclear transfer is so obvious it had to be invented. While compressing genealogical time, it also offers total nuclear genetic purity, in perpetuity, and under patent.¹²

Nuclear transfer technology thus offers a specific redefinition of breedwealth, or live-stock, by introducing new recombinant models of genealogy, species and reproduction. The principle of nuclear transfer is the exact reverse of Bakewell's contribution, and inverts what we might describe as the modern industrial model of breedwealth into its fragmented, post-modern successor project. If the studbook was a way to transform an animal's genealogy into a source of individual value, nuclear transfer is a way to depart from conventional genealogical spatiality and temporality altogether. Dolly's pedigree is removed from natural time, or the time of genealogical descent. Her mother is genetically her sister, as are her offspring.¹³ She was produced from the nucleus of a mammary cell, amplified from a frozen tissue sample taken from a pregnant Finn Dorset ewe who had been dead for six years. This nucleus was inserted into an enucleated "donor" egg cell from a Scottish Blackface sheep. The resulting embryo was gestated by two more sheep, the

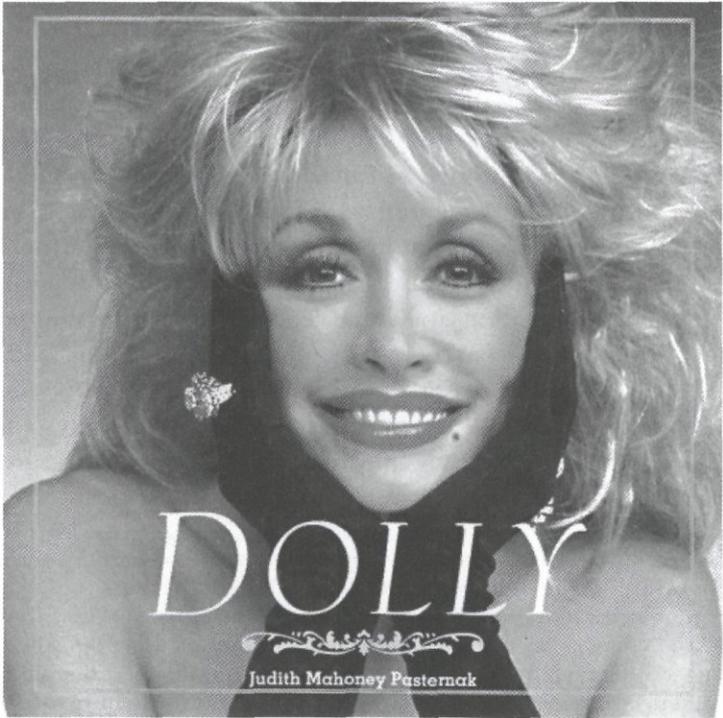
marker for it. The Roslin web pages explain that "earlier techniques have been hit-or-miss for mixing animal DNA but cloning should make that process more precise." Clearly there is little efficiency gain until cloning by nuclear transfer is significantly improved.

¹² I exaggerate deliberately, only to make the point that the promise of nuclear transfer corresponds with a commercial logic that is, by definition, hyperbolic. It is important to qualify many of the claims made about cloning and stem cells not only in terms of their low success rates and worryingly high levels of pathology, but also because it is likely to take many decades before any widely available therapeutic benefits are derived from this highly publicised area of scientific research.

¹³ Although it is tempting to use traditional kinship categories to play with Dolly's family tree, it is misleading insofar as these terms assume certain kinds of genetic relationality, at the same time they often depart from them entirely (such is the admirable flexibility of kinship categories in general). Dolly has both "her own" DNA, and is a genetically-distinct individual, at the same time that the "blueprint" from her genome was inherited from only one "parent."

second of which gave birth to Dolly. Dolly instantiates a new form of commodifying genealogy, *because she establishes a new form of genealogy altogether.*

So what are the implications of this enterprised-up genealogy for other naturalised categories, such as gender, sex, or species – all of which have depended upon the orderly brachiations of the unilinear, bilateral, and unified genealogical descent system Darwin envisaged as the real tree of life's? If Dolly is the product of a fertile union among several females – if she is the offspring of a kind of same-sex tissue merger – does this mean biological sex difference has become obsolete in terms of reproduction? Have we seen the transcendence of not only sexual difference, but reproductive difference as well? One reading of the Dolly episode might lead to the suggestion that maternity has triumphed over paternity, in a kind of recapitulation of the ancient matriarchy theories so influential in early feminism.¹⁴ And how appropriate that sheep



Dolly View

¹⁴ Philip Kitcher (1998), for example, supports cloning-for-families on behalf of stable lesbian couples who would like to have a child, and who could, if one partner donates the egg and the other the nucleus, more closely emulate the heterosexual ideal of conjugal and procreative unity (arguably not the most widely shared aspiration among lesbian couples). This example is only one of many in which we see how readily a technique often described as bringing about “the end of sex” is perfectly easily resituated within very normative family values.

are a very matrilineal species, each flock with its wise and woolly head ewe – just like in the film “Babe.” But the triumph-of-the-genetrix reading of cloning, which might be celebrated as the ultimate female-defined reproduction, is in tension with another possibility: that paternity has not so much been displaced as dispersed, into acts of scientific creation and principles of legal ownership. It may be the stud has vanished, but there are other father figures.

Dolly’s conception raises paradoxical implications for the meanings of maternity, gender and sex. For although the nuclear transfer technique is designed to produce female sheep from other female sheep, this occurs under the sign of familiar forms of paternity. The best transgenic ewes can be used to create the equivalent of studlines for entire flocks. Because all, or many, of their adult cells can be used for reproduction, they surpass even the much-celebrated heights of male sperm production, with every cell in their body potentially a new ewe. But these ewes are not analogous to super-studs *because their embodiment of a unique genetic template has been separated from their ability to pass it on*. The whole point of a studline derives from the idea of the unique genetic capital of a prized individual combined with that animal’s capacity to pass these traits on down the family tree.¹⁵ This was Bakewell’s contribution, as outlined by Ritvo, whereby the reproductive power of a specific animal could be sold as a template. Nuclear transfer technology anachronises this connection in the same stroke with which it eliminates conventional genealogical time, order, and verticality altogether.¹⁶

Such observations inevitably lead to questions about paternity and property, to Dolly’s “parent” company, and to her “scientific” father. Nuclear transfer is a device for seeding a corporate plan for the production of biowealth in the form of what Roslin describes as “bioreactors.” These bioreactors are the sheep that will function as living pharmaceutical producers, by producing valuable proteins in their milk. Dolly’s own now-proven reproductive capac-

¹⁵ As Ritvo explains, Bakewell used progeny tests to chart the performance of his studs to discover their “hidden” qualities. In addition to seeking purity of descent (preserved through in-and-in breeding), he sought what is technically known as “prepotency,” which Ritvo defines as “a heritage sufficiently concentrated and powerful to dominate the heritage of potential mates” (1995, p. 419). This is only one example of some of the many rather curious ideas about inheritance which continue to influence the breeder’s art. For example, even though Bakewell’s celebrated Dishley sheep did not prove to have much staying power as a breed, their best-known descendants, the Blue-faced Leicesters, are still primarily used to produce “tups,” young rams which are sold to be used for cross-breeding with other sheep.

¹⁶ It is tempting to note that the transgenic possibilities opened up through sheep-human combinations create a new kind of ewe-man genome initiative, but to suggest such a merger is to overlook the technical complexities that continue to beset this field of endeavour.

ity, in the form of her own viable offspring, becomes a kind of publicity stunt for the more important viable offspring known as nuclear transfer. Dolly's lambs provide further "proof" that cloning is a perfectly natural, sound and healthy means of reproduction (and what an attractive advertisement they are, timed perfectly to arrive each year at Easter). Ironically, Dolly's lambs do service for the scientific paternity of her own creation, which lies with Wilmut and his colleagues, who designed the blueprint of the technique that made her a viable offspring to begin with. Dolly's own maternity is as inconsequential in itself as are her healthy eating habits: just one more sign she is a perfectly sound animal. It might be said her maternity is a paradoxical stamp of approval for her thoroughly man-made viability.¹⁷

The meaning of paternity in the context of Dolly's creation is also evident in relation to the patent application that covers specific uses of nuclear transfer technology. The patent, after all, is a form of intellectual property protection which derives from the institution of copyright, first established by the Statute of Anne in 1710 in England, not far from Bakewell's farm either geographically or historically. As Mark Rose (1993) has suggestively chronicled, the establishment of copyright was explicitly argued by analogy to paternity. An author's original works were an inviolable possession of their creator, just as his children belonged to him because he was their procreator. Offspring of the brain and of the loins, argued prominent literary figures such as Daniel Defoe, derive from individual acts of creation, and must be protected as such. "Plagiarism" derives from the Latin word for kidnapping.

The invisibility of the maternal in such an argument directly anticipates the situation with Dolly. Defoe's argument that authors are essentially the fathers of their texts comprises a fantasy of male-birthing from which the maternal is excluded. It is an exclusion that recalls a phrase in Zora Neale Hurston's ethnography, *Tell My Horse*. Hurston describes the use of the expression "the rooster's egg" to describe children of white fathers and black mothers who were defined as "white" by virtue of their paternity.¹⁸ The subordination of maternity in the attempt to secure racial privilege is mocked by the figure of "the rooster's egg", marking this denial of maternity as an absurdity, a fantasy, and a lie. The invisible, or subordinated, maternal in the context of copyright was directly paralleled on Bakewell's farm, where the female animal was irrelevant, and only the male line "counted" for stud fees. Dolly's

¹⁷ Dolly is herself better known for stamps of disapproval, the standard threat gesture of the ewe. From the beginning treated with special care, Dolly is reported to be well aware of her stature, and to respond with an irritated stamp of the hoof to transgressions such as inadequate dinner.

¹⁸ This is also the title of a collection of essays by Patricia Williams (1995).

subordinated maternity thus repeats this longstanding pattern of maternal erasure, only in her case compounded by the explicit display of her recuperated maternity to confirm the skill of her creator. It is this original creator's skill, as an innovator, which is protected under the patent for nuclear transfer that Dolly authenticates as the viable offspring of pater Wilmut, also her genitor by technological proxy. To be patentable, an invention must be original, of utility, and non-obvious – and nuclear transfer is all of these, although, like much contemporary patented biowealth, it relies closely on designs that are “found in nature,” most notably the cell cycle. This form of ownership does not explicitly accrue to Dolly herself, who is but its means of realisation, or its proof. Dolly is herself owned under much more conventional arrangements, as personal property, in the manner that any farmer owns his or her sheep. The difference the patent protection secures in Dolly's case, however, is that the capacity for her maternity to be distributed has been enhanced. Her reproduction becomes partible: she is newly profitable because she is multiply divisible, and it is her divisibility which makes her newly fungible. In the same sense Hortense Spillers famously described the distributed maternity of female slaves, whose reproductive capacities their nineteenth-century masters could either sell or use themselves. The production of Dolly similarly conjoins commercial and biological enclosure, by isolating particular reproductive pathways, and creating a market in access to them. What is required in both cases is the separation of reproduction from genealogy – a feat particularly evident in cloned animals that are transgenics .

The popular association of cloning with slavery shares this recognition of the shame and disempowerment that occasions the loss of reproductive power.¹⁹ It might be argued that animals have long been owned in this way, their reproductive power part and parcel of their value. But, as Ritvo shows, this is not quite so simply and self-evidently the case. The capacity to own, to market, and to sell the reproductive powers of animals has changed quite dramatically over time, and has done so in close association with redefinitions of other forms of property, such as intellectual property. Moreover, the reconceptualisation of property is itself technologically-assisted, through inventions such as studbooks, pedigrees, and patents. Today, frozen cell lines, molecular biology and nuclear transfer are part of a wider set of conceptual

¹⁹ Interestingly, the use of the term “clone” to denote loss of reproductive propriety is also evident in the marketplace, where a clone is used to denote an illegitimately copied product, as in a “Gucci clone,” or the risk of illegitimate product use to markets, as in mobile phone fraud. Genetic markers are used by companies such as Monsanto to prevent “cloning” of their agricultural products in both the scientific and commercial sense as a means of protecting their reproductive rights.

and technological transformations in the capacity to own, to manipulate, and to profit from the reproductive power of animals, plants and micro-organisms. There is no other way to describe this than as an intensification of the politics of reproduction, and an enterprising-up of genealogy. And in the same way that capital is changing, so the new biology does not guarantee the same syntax it used to for other domains as well: what does it mean when genealogy can be remade as technique? What happens when the means of reproduction themselves can be owned under a patent? What is Dolly's proper gender, or sex, if instead of being born she was made?

Using the patented transgenic oncomouse as one of her guides, or figures, in *Modest Witness at Second Millennium*, Donna Haraway describes what she calls a "shift from kind to brand" (1997, pp. 65-6). Borrowing from, and mutating, Marilyn Strathern's work on kinship in *After Nature*, Haraway describes kinship as "a technology for producing the material and semiotic effect of natural relationship, of shared kind" (1997, p. 53). She describes kinship "in short" as "the question of taxonomy, category and the natural status of artificial entities" adding that "establishing identities is kinship work in action" (1997, p. 67). In the context of such denaturalised animate entities as oncomouse, Haraway argues that "type has become brand," and that the brand has become a kind of gender. The brand becomes for Haraway a kind of hyper-mark establishing kind and type in an *semantics of propriety* that is explicitly post-natural.

Haraway's shift from kind to brand thus describes the way in which the production of a certain type of animal, such as oncomouse, occurs out from under the sign of natural history and instead beneath its brand name. This interpretation thus literalizes the brand slogan of Dupont, "where better things for better living come to life," which Haraway first brought to her reader's attention in 1992, in the article "When Man™ is on the Menu" in which she claimed that the new cyborg animals of corporate biotechnology "will be literate in quite a different grammar of gender" (1992, p. 42).

Haraway's 1992 article appeared in the same *Zone* anthology, entitled *Incorporations*, in which Paul Rabinow argued that the new genetics represent the apotheosis of modern rationality, in that "the object to be known – the human genome – will be known in such a way that it can be changed." It was also in this article that Rabinow made the often-quoted prediction that,

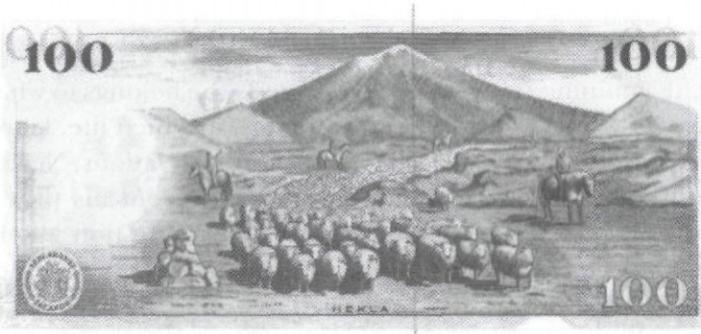
In the future, the new genetics will cease to be a biological metaphor for modern society and will become instead a circulation network of identity terms and restriction loci, around which and through which a truly new type of autoproduction will emerge, which I call "biosociality." In biosociality, nature will be remodelled on culture understood as practice. Nature will be

known and remade through technique and will finally become artificial just as culture becomes natural. (1992, pp. 241-2)

For Rabinow, the nature-culture split will disappear in a penultimate collapse of the very distinction out of which modernity emerged as a discursive condition in the first place.²⁰ For Haraway, nature is not so much displaced as reanimated, acquiring a new capacity to mark a different set of relations in the context of corporate technoscience, in which unnatural relations such as transgenics reappear as naturalised kinds through brands. There is no doubt Dolly is the founder animal for a new species of product, in which family resemblance is at a premium. She is not branded as such, but she secures a patent application through what might as well be her brand slogans: "Made in Scotland, Designed by Roslin, and Brought to You by PPL therapeutics." As the technology for making cloned transgenics improves, so will emerge successor generations of products in a commodity lineage of designer sheep. Global marketing strategies, such as those used by Intel, Nokia and BMW, borrow from familiar kinship idioms to provide analogies for the ways in which products are "related," but what is more revealing is how these analogies *can also travel back*. In other words, the brands and trademarks connecting products to their "parent company" stand in for shared substance, forming the basis of kin-relatedness as a familiar form of propriety-by-descent. These commodity descent lines are therefore instantiations of a different kind of substantial connection, which is established through trademark or brand as its mark. What is interesting is that, as Strathern argues, such analogies can be reversed: the traffic can make a U-turn. Hence, whereas genitorship has historically been the model for the naturalised propriety of copyright, we might argue that commercial propriety can now engender and naturalise paternity. Possession itself can figure technoscientific fatherhood.

What this suggests is that it is not only nature, but paternity which is "known and remade as technique," to redirect Rabinow's apt phrasing. Haraway's "shift from kind to brand" also points to this collapse, of the commercial and the paternal. Only now, as distinct from earlier episodes, it is *the means of reproduction itself*, and not merely its offspring, which paternity defines as its own. This made-in-the lab paternity may in fact perfectly instantiate what Rabinow describes as "the truly new form of autoproduct" which is "the apotheosis of modern rationality." Like maternity, nature does not so much disappear as become a kind of trope in the context of late-twentieth century biotechnology (see further in Franklin, Lury and Stacey 2000). The

²⁰ In contrast, Latour argues this division was only an enabling fiction for modernity to begin with, hence his title claim that *We Have Never Been Modern*.



Sheep Money

same can be said for kinship and gender, which become much more like brand in their capacity to signify difference – through relations of enterprise and propriety rather than through relations such as genealogical descent. Now that animals such as Dolly are both born and made, they not only embody “nature remade as technique” but also “the shift from kind to brand” in their corporately owned and redesigned corporeality. In sum, I have argued here that the gender of the new genetic capital is very familiarly paternal, but that this repeat of an ancient tradition has taken a few new turns. For one, the means of reproduction have been removed from the animal, and placed under the sign of patent. For another, Dolly’s own maternity does service to the value of nuclear transfer as a means of both producing and protecting genetic capital. And all of this is possible, I suggest, because reproduction has been removed from genealogical time and space, becoming no longer either vertical or bilateral through new technologies. Life after Dolly is, in sum, both differently viable and newly profitable. I also suggest that Dolly shows us some important dimensions of what happens to gender when it is made not born. She helps us to ask what happens to what Monique Wittig calls “the mark of gender” when that marking occurs through branding, as a proprietary relation. In asking how brands are naturalised as what Haraway calls “genders,” there are important questions to be asked about how nature comes to signify in a post-natural culture. Does this model of gender simply give us more of them? If gender becomes a commercial equation is it easier to buy out altogether? Is cloning a form of gender trouble?

In terms of genealogy, the technique of nuclear transfer effects a 90-degree turn, whereby “descent” is no longer the equivalent of genealogical gravity. Instead, enterprised-up genealogy is newly flexible, so that it is more subject to redesign, and freed from the narrow trammels of species-specific reproductive isolation to become newly promiscuous: a mix ‘n’ match recombination, wistfully like alchemy.

Conclusion

Examining Dolly in this way suggests she belongs to what Foucault might have described as a new order of things, in which life, labour and language have been transformed in their constitutive relations. Never concerned with nature and culture per se, Foucault took from his predecessor Georges Canguilhem a historical and philosophical question about the relation of knowledge production to life forms, and indeed of epistemology to life itself. Always attentive to the constitutive power of knowledge in its many forms (disciplinarity, governmentality, classification, surveillance), and its myriad corresponding objects (prisons, clinics, museums, bodies, sexualities), a main theme of Foucault's writing concerned the transformation of consanguinity into population, and sovereignty into regimes of public health. Dolly perfectly instantiates this same constellation, *and simultaneously inaugurates its transformation*: she is, after all, part of a corporate plan to put human genes into animals in order to be able to derive pharmaceutical products from her milk, for profit. Her coming into being is as a new life form belonging to the future of medical treatment, wired to the human genome on the internet, in which the genetic specificity of the individual will replace the formerly generic model of the human used to develop new drugs in the past. Known and remade as technique, Dolly embodies changes in both knowledge production and governmentality. She is the viable offspring of the epistemological coordinates of the new biology in which it is less important to know what she *is* than what she *does*. Though it is now proven feasible, cloning by nuclear transfer is still poorly understood scientifically. The effects of imprinting in particular remain dimly recognised, despite being of utmost importance to genetic expression. An enormous discrepancy separates the Lego-like logic of molecular biology, its daunting technical language full of noun-verb hybrids for components that allow pieces to be put together and pulled apart, from the self-evident complexity of the relationalities out of which "genetic expression" emerges. The very term "genetic information" is a fiction, like "numeric value": it makes sense only if you take for granted everything needed to explain it.

What holds Dolly together is consequently not Foucault's order of things connected to the "life itself" he claims is the foundational concept of modern biology, but Lifeitself™, as in the Dupont slogan "where better things for living come to life."²¹ The new order of things instantiated through biotech-

²¹ I am borrowing back and remutating the term life itself from Haraway's description of it as "a thing-in-itself where no trope can be admitted," or as "a congeries of entities that are themselves self-referential and autotelic," like Dawkins' selfish gene, in sum, a kind of fetish (1997, pp. 134-5). I would like to argue it is not only the fetishism of life

nology has been vastly enabled by a loosening of patent law, which, from the early 1980s onwards have increasingly liberally allowed life forms to be patented not only when they are non-obvious inventions, but, increasingly in the age of genomics, simply when they are useful techniques. This mechanism of the nation-state to promote industry, the patent and its officers, and to connect labour and life into a productive force, is precisely aimed to fuel market speculation and encourage venture capital in a market dominated by multinational pharmaceutical giants, to create a situation one journalist has compared to the sixteenth century competition between France, England and Spain to claim the New World.²²

To say such changes have cultural implications seems a self-evident observation. The density and power of the capital resource, Lifeitself™, asks that it be understood as part of a historical transformation of a very distinctive kind. The splicing together of human genes with those of other species into a new *ars recombinatoria* of life forms which no longer belong to natural history or genealogy as we have known it means that none of the naturalised categories hold still in relation to what used to be seen as their given attributes. Is cloning by nuclear transfer sexual reproduction or not? How many parents does Dolly have? Kinship and gender, those serviceable anthropological digging tools, offer one way of thinking about what happens to these categories as kinds of kinds, or as the grammatical categories of a sociality understood to be glued together in some way by relationships established through reproduction and sex. In seeking to understand the recalibration of life itself in the context of biotechnology, the question has to be asked what happens when we understand genes as themselves the vehicle for cultural expression?

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itself as a commodity which is in evidence, but specifically its removal from genealogy, which has consequences for what propriety, enterprise, or commerce can connect.

²² Writing in *Wired*, journalist Michael Gruber suggests that: "The 21st century will be more like the 16th than the 20th, with biology standing in for the New World. The pharmas and the big chemical companies are the great expeditionaries D Cortés, Pizarro, de Soto, Raleigh, and so on. Government regulatory agencies are D what else? D the European imperial powers. The pharmas are after treasure, of course. The regulators want to keep control, which they express as an overarching social good D back then it was Defence of the Realm and Propagation of the Faith: today it's Public Health" (1997, p. 198).

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RUPTURE

MARINA GRŽINIĆ MAUHLER

In the following paper I would like to discuss some processes of difference and the axis of influence between body and subjectivity, on one hand, and the logic of real/virtual presence and incarnations, identity and identification with connections to flexible accumulation strategies of capitalism and the re- or de-territorialization of capital, on the other.

I. *I am a replicant*

In order to explore local and global struggles for meanings and embodiments, emphasis will be placed on virtualisation, as it is fostering the condition of a completely "regulated" reality, where the notion of the body can be perceived very precisely.

To appropriately grasp some of the radical changes in the models, perceptions and structures of body and subjectivity, it might be useful to delve into virtual reality. Allow me, first of all, to schematically and narratively, explain "virtual reality." "A helmet apparatus feeds the subject visual and auditory information about a virtual environment. Sensors in the helmet respond to head, and even eye, movement. The computer literally knows where your head's at. ...Cables are connected to sensors, providing a computer with information regarding the subject's bodily orientation. The helmet apparatus, or the data glove (the so-called interface) has thus become the crucial site of virtual reality: a significantly ambiguous boundary between human being and technology. The more invisible the interface, the more perfect the fiction of a total imbrication within the force fields of a new reality."¹ According to Francine Dagenais,² virtual reality technology provides the participant with

¹ Cf. Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 1993, pp. 186-192.

² Cf. Francine Dagenais, "Perfect Bodies," in: Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf (eds.), *Bioapparatus*, The Banff Centre, Banff 1991, p. 43.

the illusion of moving through space without a body. The body is isolated, the senses – cut off from their reality – find an alternate environment. A dissociation results between the head as privileged sensory receptor, and the body as substituted by the hand/index. Thus we may speak of Deleuze/Guattari's *corps sans organe*: the headless body is contrasted with the traditional conception of the organic body governed by a central nervous system and brain. Decapitated by the virtual reality experience, the body loses its definition. The body is caught in the ambiguity of wholeness/loneliness, and is forced to eliminate the distinctions of within and without. The medium is the body.

Catherine Richards³ describes the situation of capturing one's imaginary body as "losing the self-definition of the body." She writes: "I put on the virtual environment technology. I see my imaginary body right before me. I move my finger, the image moves. If the spectral image lags behind my living hand, it misses me. If it catches up, it crosses a body threshold racing to capture my imaginary body within its image. Now, when I move, I inhabit the virtual materialised image of my imaginary body. I move within the semblance of my living body, a simulation of my physical and imaginary experience that is travelling back and forth across my thresholds, taking me away. What am I here? My body is mediated experientially, my imaginary body is materialised into a phantom image. One is intertwined with the other, each one reading the other, simulating the living cohabitation of my body and the imaginary."⁴

To be installed into such a virtual apparatus is to exist on two planes at once. Scott Bukatman has formulated this idea as follows: While one's objective body would remain in the real world, one's phenomenal body would be projected into terminal reality. Virtual reality has become, according to Bukatman, the very embodiment of post-modern disembodiment. Sherry Turkle characterises this aspect of computer interaction with the body as producing the quasi-personality complex that she calls the second self. It derives from the complex inter-relationships between human and computer, thus partially from within the human; and it exists partially.⁵ Derrick de Kerckhove⁶ highlights this aspect, arguing that perhaps the most challenging aspect of the "bio-apparatuses" (which is only one of the optional denominations for the relationship between the body and the machine) concerns its epistemological consequences. The thinning of boundaries between the viewer and the viewed (including the more critical separations between the private/public self and the private/col-

³ Cf. Catherine Richards, "The Bioapparatus Membrane," in: *Bioapparatus*, p. 58.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cit. in Allucquère Roseanne Stone, "Virtual Systems," in: Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds.), *Incorporations*, Zone 6, 1992, p. 619.

⁶ Cf. Derrick de Kerckhove, "Bioapparatus-talk," in: *Bioapparatus*, p. 100.

lective consciousness) addresses the possibility that new forms of consciousness are being developed – not merely private or collective, not merely computer assisted nor independent – but intermediate, self-organising and cybernetic.

I have tried to show that virtual reality cannot be reduced to a mere technological or discursive object. It is a complex social amalgam, in which its existence as a textual figure is inseparable from its mechanic use. Pierre Lévy⁷ has pointed out in exactly the same manner that up until now we have mainly envisaged virtual realities as simulating physical spaces. Alternatively, we now need to speak of the production of symbolic spaces in the form of virtual worlds as expressive of significations, and of knowledge characteristic of a collectivity. These virtual worlds, as Lévy declares, express acts of collective communication in real time, with the direct involvement of, and the tactile component suggested by, words. The deepened split between the physical realities, including the dangers of urban life and the fantasmatic world of “on-line” sociality, is both encouraging and depressing.

The cyberscopic vision of electronic para-space (while “the helmet apparatus feeds the subject visual and auditory information about the virtual environment”) is based upon the ultimate lesson of “virtual reality.” The virtualisation of the most “true” reality: by the mirage of “virtual reality,” the “true” reality itself is posited as a semblance of itself – according to Slavoj Žižek,⁸ a pure symbolic edifice. Has our “true” reality itself become virtualised, and conceived of as an artefact itself? This paradox could also be formulated by way of the ambiguous ontological status of “virtuality” itself, which, in its capacity of a “mere possibility,” as opposed to actuality, possesses an actuality of its own. Slavoj Žižek has stated that computer-generated virtual reality provides an exemplary case of reality conceived through the detour of its virtualisation (i.e. , of a reality wholly generated from its conditions of potentiality. Potentiality designates, according to Žižek, something that is “possible” in the sense of being able to actualise itself, as well as something that is “merely possible,” as opposed to being actual. Potentiality already possesses a certain actuality in its very capacity for possibility. This is a surplus of what is in the case of potentiality more than a mere possibility, and which is lost in its actualisation of the real as impossible.

The classical virtual reality situation, according to Margaret Morse,⁹ involves the field of view in the virtual world as constantly being reconstituted in real time by a computer from a digital memory through devices which track the position of somebody’s head and hand. That is, in a virtual world,

⁷ Cf. Pierre Lévy, “Toward Super-language,” in: *ISEA 94 Catalogue*, Helsinki 1994.

⁸ Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, Duke University Press, Durham 1993.

⁹ Cf. Margaret Morse, “Enthralling Spaces. The Aesthetics of Virtual Environments,” in: *ISEA 94 Catalogue*, p. 83.

the space itself is interactive. Friedrich Kittler suggests that the virtual environment can appear to be something alive that we cannot acknowledge as subject, nor persona in the traditional sense. Which nonetheless constantly demonstrates that it sees us without revealing itself.

Then how can we finally define the actual/virtual position of the subject in this virtual context? I have made reference to several writers who highlight a specific situation that can be designated as the deprivation of self-identity in virtual reality. This is crucial for understanding the changing position of the self and identity, and the body, in virtual reality. Integrated into the field of intersubjectivity, s/he builds her/himself a new identity. What is at stake in virtual reality is the temporal loss of the subject's symbolic identity. S/he is forced to assume that s/he is not what s/he thought her/himself to be, but somebody-something else.

The virtual environment occurs cinematically, as a kind of reversal of face-to-face intersubjectivity, relating the subject to her/his shadowy double which emerges from behind her/him as a kind of sublime protuberance.¹⁰ In virtual reality, what we are seeing is the concentration of the field and counter-field within the same frame.

What we have here in the relation of the subject with her/his imaginary body is a paradoxical kind of communication. Not a "direct" communication of the subject with the fellow creature in front of her/him, but a communication with the excrescence behind her/him, mediated by a third gaze – the gaze of the virtual machine, as if the counter-field were to be mirrored back into the field itself.¹¹ This confers upon the scene its hypnotic dimensions: the subject is enthralled by the gaze which sees what is in (her/him)self more than (her/him)self.

What am I in virtual reality? My body is mediated by my imaginary body that is materialised into a phantom image. One is intertwined with the other, each one reading the other, simulating the living cohabitation of my body and the imaginary. To grasp the implications of the radical shift at work in virtual reality, one has to reach, as Žižek has suggested, the Cartesian-Kantian problematic of the subject as pure, and as substanceless.

Kant fully articulates, according to Žižek,¹² the inherent paradoxes of self-consciousness. What Kant's term "transcendental turn" renders manifest is the impossibility of locating the subject in the "great chain of being" (i. e.,

¹⁰ Cf. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 107-8.

¹¹ "I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture." In: Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Penguin, London, 1994, p. 106.

¹² Cf. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 12-44.

the whole of the universe). The subject, in the most radical sense, is out of joint. It constitutively lacks its own place. In Descartes this out of joint state is still concealed. Kant, however, brings to light a kind of vanishing mediator that is, in short, the Lacanian Real. The paradox of self-consciousness is that it is possible only against the background of its own impossibility – and this is also at the core of virtual reality.

To put it another way, where is the *cogito*? Where is the place of my self-consciousness, when everything that I actually am is an artefact – not only my body, my eyes, but even my most intimate memories and fantasies? Everything that I positively am, every enunciated content I can point at and say: that is me but at the same time is not I; I am only the void that remains, the empty distance which approaches all content. Or it is only when, at the level of the enunciated content, I assume my replicant status that, at the level of enunciation, I become a truly human subject.¹³

“I am a replicant” is the statement of the subject at its purest. If we return to virtual reality, the capture of the imaginary body does not offer the “direct” communication of the subject with her/his fellow creature in front of her/him, but rather, communication with the excrescence behind her/him.

In short, the implicit thesis of being in virtual reality is that of the replicants. Replicants are pure subjects precisely insofar as they testify to the possibility of positive, substantial content, inclusive of the most intimate fantasies – not as “their own,” but as already implanted. If we try to answer the question: what is it that the third gaze sees? What is in the subject more than her/himself? – our answer must be: nothing – a hole – a void. The very notion of self-consciousness implies the subject’s self-decentring, which is far more radical than the opposition between subject and object.¹⁴

I would like to make an additional clarification that will allow me to point out the radicality of my approach, and to draw a line of separation between the “decentred subject” in the virtual environment or cyberspace of my theory, from similar at first sight deconstructionist decentred approaches. When deconstructionist cyberspace ideologists try to present cyberspace, they usually focus on how cyberspace “decentres” the subject. The two most well-known approaches are those presented in Sherry Turkle’s *Life on the Screen. Identity in the Age of the Internet*¹⁵ and Allucquère Roseanne Stone’s *The War of Desire and Technology*.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid. , p. 41.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen. Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1995.

¹⁶ Allucquère Roseanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1995.

When Stone and Turkle compare how the subject is decentred in cyberspace, they refer to two basic decentring modalities. For Stone, the subject in cyberspace is decentred through a multiple externalising subjectivity process, realised through Multiple User Domains (MUD). When I play anonymously in MUD, I can present myself as a promiscuous person and engage in activities which, were I to indulge in them in real life, would bring about the disintegration of my “real” personal identity. For Turkle, the decentring of the subject in cyberspace is similar to the dysfunction known as Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). Multiple Personality Disorder defines the so-called multiple personalities (who proliferated in dramatic numbers in the 1970’s and 1980’s), and indicates individuals who show signs of failing to process and integrate different viewpoints of identity, memory and consciousness. For these people, it is typical that a number of very different personalities inhabit one person’s body. This illness was termed Dissociative Identity Disorder in 1994.

Cyberspace phenomena, like MUD, endorse the dissemination of the unique “Self” into a multiplicity of competing agents, a plurality of self-images, without a global coordinating centre. Playing in virtual spaces enables one to discover new aspects of oneself through a wealth of shifting identities – masks without a “real” person behind them – and thus, to experience the ideological mechanism of the production of “Self,” the imminent violence and arbitrariness of this production/obstruction. The screen persona I create for myself can be “more myself” than my “real-life” person, insofar as it renders visible aspects of myself I would never dare to admit in real life.

MUD describes the situation of the decentred personality in cyberspace when we have several personalities from one body. I can act out my “real life” difficulties in virtual reality (MUD). Through cyberspace or virtual environments, I become aware of the inconsistency and multiplicity of the components of my subjective identities (MPD syndrome) and work through them.

The decentred subject that I try to conceptualise in cyberspace or in the virtual environment, is neither the MUD nor the MPD type. Furthermore, this decentred subject is not the type which can take place in-between these two deconstructionist options. This decentred subject is the Lacanian type. “When deconstructionist cyberspace ideologists try to present cyberspace as providing a ‘real life’ ‘empirical’ realisation of deconstructionist theories, they usually focus on how cyberspace ‘decentres’ the subject. However, the ‘multiple selves’ externalised on the screen are ‘what I want to be,’ the way I would like to see myself, the figurations of my ideal ego; as such, they are like the layers of an onion: there is nothing in their centre, and the subject is this ‘nothing’ itself. It is therefore crucial to introduce here the distinction be-

tween 'Self' ('person') and subject: the Lacanian 'decentred subject' is not simply a multiplicity of good old 'Selves,' i. e. , partial centres; the divided subject does not mean there are simply more Egos/Selves in the same individual, as in MUD. The 'decentring' is the decentring of the \$ (the void of the subject) with regard to its content ('Self,' the bundle of imaginary and/or symbolic identifications); the splitting is the splitting between \$ and the fantasmatic 'persona' as the 'stuff of the I.' The subject is thus split even if it possesses only one 'unified' Self, since this split is the very split between \$ and Self. In more topological terms: the subject's division is not the division between one and another Self – between two contents – but the division between something and nothing, between the feature of identification and the void. 'Decentring' thus first designates the ambiguity, the oscillation between symbolic and imaginary identification: the indecisiveness as to where my true point lies – in my 'real' self or in my external mask – with the possible implication that my symbolic mask can be 'more true' than what it conceals: the 'true face' behind it. On a more radical level, it points towards the fact that the very sliding from one identification to another, or among 'multiple selves,' presupposes the gap between identification as such and the void of \$ (the barred subject) which identifies itself, i.e. , which serves as the empty medium of identification. In other words, the very process of shifting among multiple identifications presupposes a kind of empty band, which renders possible the leap from one to another identity, and this empty band is the subject itself."¹⁷ It is important therefore, in this time of oblique transparency, when discussing how the relation of cyberspace and the electronic media affects specific subjects, to dismantle the very process – not of production, but of post-production: of the editing, pasting, copying and clearing of these relations into the social mode of production.

Both spaces, the real and the virtual, are wiping out, albeit from different perspectives but simultaneously, the paradigm of identity, precisely by conversing deceptive and hypocritical old identities, of the socially positive and fully realised individuals, etc., of the Post-Socialist and Post-Capitalist subjects. Instead, today we are faced with leaving a historically defined position which imitates the natural world of our senses. With new media and technology, we have the possibility of an artificial interface, which is dominated by non-identity, or difference. Instead of producing a new identity, something more radical has to be proposed: the total loss of identity. The subject is forced

¹⁷ Cf. Slavoj Žižek, "Cyberspace, or, the Unbearable Closure of Being," 1996 (manuscript). When the body is mediatized (caught in the network of electronic media), the subject is potentially reduced to the pure barred subject \$, since even his personal experience can be stolen, manipulated and regulated by the mechanical Other.

to assume that s/he is not what s/he thought her/himself to be, but somebody-something else. The moment when familiar models of identity are lost is perhaps the moment when a (Post-Socialist) subject is constructed.

II. *De-realisation, overidentification, incarnation(s)*

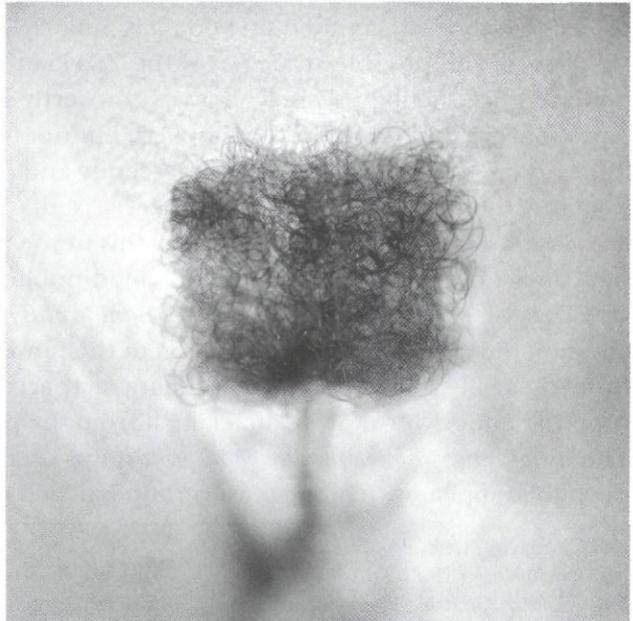
The true horror today are not horrifyingly violent projects in the arts, as they function, paradoxically, as a protective shield that is fantasised as such, protecting us from the true horror – the horror of the abstract positioning of East and West, North and South, art and economy, state terrorism and activism. The psychotic generating experience in itself is that this abstract collaboration functions as a protective shield (that protects in the end only the obscenely visible art institutions and the power art structures in themselves) and erases all traces of difference, activism, positioning, etc. The art institution defence against the true threat is actually to stage a bloody, aggressive, destructive threat in order to protect the abstract, sanitised situation. This is the sign demonstrating the absolute inconsistency of the fantasmatic support and not only the inconsistency of reality in itself. Instead of the multiple reality talk, as who else but Žižek would say, one should thus insist on a different aspect – on the fact that the fantasmatic support of reality, of the art structures and their mechanisms, is in itself multiple and inconsistent.

One possible way of understanding this new situation is that the effect of de-realisation is an effect of juxtaposing reality and its fantasmatic supplement face to face: to parallel one near the other. The idea is to put together the aseptic, quotidian social reality, life itself, and parallel it with its fantasmatic supplement. Several projects can be listed that use in a very specific way this key concept of de-realisation and de-psychologization of reality and of art (although we should be aware that abstract positioning insists on the psychological moment and on the psychology of the individual artist). A similar strategy was displayed by the Russian Ilya Kabakov, in one of his projects in 2000. He displayed in the exhibition space a reconstruction of a kitchen that was common to the proletariat in socialist times, when Russia was known as the Soviet Union, and moreover through the window of this reconstructed kitchen, it was possible to watch delirious film sequences from the golden soviet time; films that were produced to give totally splendid communist future visions, with smiling faces, and people eager to work and to fight. It does not matter if real life in itself was an absolutely horrific vacuum, that the kitchen was shared by multiple families with many fewer potatoes for the soup, what was more important was this fantasmatic supplement of life that was parallel to the in-

consistent and miserable reality. And it was precisely this moment that was shared and presented in the exhibition space: Kabakov displayed the simple and poor soviet kitchen with its fantasmatic counterpart, through films and visual ideology. With such a procedure that allows us to externalise our innermost fantasies in all their inconsistency, the artistic practice stages a unique possibility to act out the fantasmatic support of our existence.

A photograph was taken with the title *Tanja Ostojić: Black Square on White /square/,* on which the black pubic hairs of the Belgrade artist and performer Tanja Ostojić, are styled in the form of a “Malevich” square, and organised in a composition with her /white skin/ Mound of Venus. The Malevich modelled *suprematist pubic entrance*, i.e., the “black square on white square,” was seen during the Venice Bienalle **only** by Harald Szeemann, the director of the 49th Venice Biennale, in order to declare that this hidden Malevich, “in-between her legs” was one of the many official art works of the Biennale in 2001. Meanwhile during the opening days of the Bienalle, Ostojić elegantly dressed behaved as an Angel/Escort (both terms were used by her) of Mr. Szeemann, publicly exhibiting herself near him, while the artwork, the pubic Malevich stayed discretely hidden, and from a first hand witness, I can state, absolutely not disturbed.

The feminists were furious that she exposed her beautifully shaped body as an object, as they thought, perhaps, that she could escape in the near future being an object of transaction within the corrupted art market, the art



Tanja Ostojić, *Black Square on White /square/* (2001). Photo: Saša Gajin

institutions and the tyrannical vampire figures that run the ART edifice. Contrary to such a legitimate, but “traditional” way of understanding an Ostojić happening, the photo and the whole story, as a perverted self-instrumentalization that relates to some repressed trauma(s) between visibility and invisibility and object-subject relations, I want to develop two approaches to grasp as precisely as possible this exceptionally powerful work.

The first one is *the authentic act of traversing the fantasy*, the other is *incarnations*, both come from the psychoanalytic heritage, and last but not least, as always, from my re-appropriation of Žižekian thought.¹⁸ The black *pubic square* has nevertheless an additional, powerful connection to another square, precisely to *Hitler’s moustache*, implying a certain fascisation process in post-modern art life and the body of the artist in present times.

Power reproduces itself only through some form of self distance, by relying on the obscene disavowed fantasy rules and practices that are in conflict with its publicly visible installed norms. The obscene edifice of the Institution of Art is emphatically and pathologically conditioned by the disavowed subject libidinal investments; the subjects are held by power through forms of fantasmatic eroticization over them. The simply critical avant-garde assertion of the truth of the obscene art power edifice, that is, together with all its gallery and museum institutions, definitely vulgar, cold, manipulative and almost deprived of any aura, is not enough. Or to stage the critic against the art edifice in the manner of a bloody, aggressive, destructive event is not enough either. The art power edifice is today already staging by itself such bloody events in order to protect the abstract, sanitised situation it is publicly empowering!

One of the possible strategies is the Žižekian *overidentification* with the power edifice. Acting precisely in a way to overtly stage the fantasmatic scenario that are discussed, incited, implied, but not made public. That means, if the art power edifice is relying on obscenity and promiscuity, and, if this is what the whole story about art and its power is, than the proposed process of *overidentification* will exactly over-display this in the public realm. Even more, such an act of overidentification performed publicly is, according to Lacan via Žižek, *an act of traversing the fundamental fantasy*, that radically put under question our most inherent submission to the power art edifice. Ostojić performed exactly such an act. An authentic act, according to Žižek, that disrupts the underlying fantasy, attacking it from the point of a social symptom. The *act of traversing the fundamental fantasy* was used as a bravado strategy in the public appearance of the music group Laibach in the 80’s in Ljubljana as

¹⁸ Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London and New York: Verso 1999, and Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch’s Lost Highway*, Seattle: The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000.

well. Insisting on the literal repetition of the totalitarian ritual, the group succeeded in overtly staging the hidden fantasmatic scenario of the socialist totalitarian ritual.

It is important to distinguish precisely between an authentic act of traversing the fundamental fantasy from an inauthentic one, that even more obfuscates the invisible traces of emptiness, of the void around which all things gravitate. One palpable political consequence of this notion of the authentic act, insists Žižek, is that in each concrete constellation there is one touchy nodal point of contention which decides where one truly stands. In Laibach, from my point of view, this is undoubtedly the deep relation and rooted position of Laibach's music within the industrial music movement of the 80's, the most radical and avant-garde rock'n'roll invention; this is the contention point of absolute Laibach radicality and not, as it would be possible to wrongly understand, a relation, beyond the repetition of the totalitarian populist ritual, with any popular-populist music movement – which would have result in an absolute double obfuscation of the traces of the void around which the socialist totalitarian system rotated.

In Tanja Ostojić it is precisely the pubic Malevich under the stylish gowns, the black square so to speak embodied on the topological place, and not some kind of "wallpaper, poster Malevich." In between her legs the real/impossible kernel of the art power machine received the only possible appearance in flesh and blood. The so called touchy nodal point of contention in art today, is the cannibalistic attitude of the art capitalist power edifice that displaced and **abstracted** everything and everybody only for the sake of its proper survival. Malevich stands at the begin-



IRWIN, *Name Pickers* (1998). In collaboration with Marina Abramović.

Photo: Bojan Brecej

ning of an art history edifice that completely evacuated its conditions of (im)possibility. And if we are to re-articulate the way how this real/impossible kernel is to emerge today in the field of representation, then it is possible only, as per Žižek, *as a topological, and I will add, topological incarnation(s)*. What else is Ostojčić's *Black Square on White* than a topological incarnation on a topological place! A fleshy (*in -carne*) embodiment of the total evacuation of the condition of the (im)possibility of the capitalistic edifice of modern art.

Finally, was it not something similar that took place in New York on September 11, 2001? We witnessed precisely this radical de-realisation and de-psychologization of the American reality that shocked not only the USA, but most of the world that could watch what was going on in New York, in real time so to speak, due to the television video signal. In the explosion of the WTC towers, New York citizens could clearly see the aseptic, quotidian social reality, life itself, in direct parallel with its fantasmatic supplement – Hollywood film scenarios – performed this time in reality. And although all were performed in real time, as was most CNN programming that day, nevertheless it seemed that the tremendous fear, shock and desperation were all covered within an almost virtual dimension. What happened in that moment was that we found ourselves in an almost virtual position. How can we define this situation as virtual? The virtual environment occurs cinematically, as a kind of reversal of face-to-face intersubjectivity; the subject in virtual reality sees her/his shadowy double, which emerges from behind her/him as a kind of sublime protuberance. In the virtual environment, what we are seeing is the concentration of the field and counter-field within the same frame. And this is exactly what occurred in that very moment of radical de-realisation and de-psychologization of the American reality, that put face-to-face (in a direct parallel) the aseptic, quotidian social reality with its fantasmatic supplement. It was as if the counter-field (Hollywood) was mirrored back into the reality field itself. The result is not solely a desperate loss of innocent human beings, but what will have even more tragic consequences: the absolute deprivation of the Americans of self-identity. What is at stake in virtual reality is the temporal loss of the subject's symbolic identity. S/he is forced to assume that s/he is not what s/he thought her/himself to be, but somebody-something else.

And this is also why the mass media, especially CNN, are now producing the war against the Muslim world and all the others, who are not "the civilised First World," as what is at stake here is the process of trying to cover this absolute "blow up" of the US self-identity that was until now grounded in absolute power and control.

III. *Identity*

It should be obvious that my view of location and identity through theory, which is supposedly general, is actually rooted in a very situated, or rather, located theory. I will put situated theory parallel to situated knowledge, a term paradigmatically coined by Donna Haraway.¹⁹ It is not about knowledge produced in different locations or by different agents, which in the time of globalisation somehow works on the line of fairly equal positions of dissemination of their theoretical and critical work, a kind of *bona fide* relativism. Quite the contrary: to think about located/situated theory is to think about theory that is open to critical investment and, moreover, is never an innocent practice.

Located, according to Katie King,²⁰ is not equivalent to local, though it can be appropriately partial, as global does not always mean general or universal. What I want to say is that with local/located/location we can produce a very locally based activity that can be a politically powerful point of a universal action. I can, for example, state that the local Ljubljana subculture or underground movement of the 80's is intrinsically connected with a much wider formation, a global activist formation; or on a more "universal" level I could argue that the local transsexual St. Petersburg's movement can be seen through a multi-layered global/intersexuality formation.²¹ Located means, above all, distributed and layered, and it is quintessential for theoretical (philosophical, feminist and cultural studies) investigations of identity.

In our times identity is intrinsically connected with the most inherent processes of capital. It is important to identify that contemporary global capitalism with its inherent de- or re-territorialization processes, creates conditions for the proliferation of new multiple identities. This production of fluid hybrid identities results in an inherent internal mark that is the failure of

¹⁹ Cf. Donna J. Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second Millenium. Feminism and Technoscience*. Routledge, New York & London, 1997, pp. 15 and 314.

²⁰ Cf. Katie King, *Theory in Its Feminist Travels: Conversations in U. S. Women's Movements*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994.

²¹ For Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki the intersexual body "is a paradigm for an alternative concept of the sexed human, a paradigm which allows people to reconsider rigid ideas about the masculine and the feminine and what has been traditionally theorized as 'sexual difference.' Actually an intersexual body does not possess both sexes, but is in-between sexes. What we can learn from the intersexual body is the possibility to assume a mobile and unfixed gender position. We propose the intersexual body as a virtual sexual identity." Cf. Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, "Intersexuality and Intermedia. A manifesto," in: *The Body Caught in the Intestines of The Computer & Beyond. Women Strategies and/or Strategies by Women in Media, Art and Theory*, (eds.) Marina Gržinić in collaboration with Adele Eisenstein, MKC, Maribor and Maska, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2000.

identity, identity perceived in its absolute incompleteness. In fact, no social movement can nowadays subsume to be an open-ended, democratic political project without taking into consideration, without operationalizing the failure of identity, and the negativity, directly at the heart of identity.²²

In which way is the process of de- or re-territorialization of capitalism connected with the politics of identity? What is one of the basic laws of capital? To acquire new territories, over and over again. The purpose of capital is to achieve the absolute limit or to exceed the very idea of limits, always transforming into, or rather behaving as a cannibal, devouring, internalising all that was before. Capitalism has always been a system of internal, correlative, contingent limits, of limits that constantly move and reproduce themselves on a broader scale. It is possible to see the scenario of postmodernism breaking with modernism in the line of capitalism that inverts all perimeters and limits to internal limits. Western national modernism and third world "modernism" both became the central part of capitalist territory, not as its bastard products, but as an inherently internal bastion project that was transformed, swallowed and spat out as a territory for future art capitalisation. The Western world achieves its goal by creating new movements and styles, simultaneously reproducing and widening the limits of the market. Postmodernism is the aesthetics of the colonisation of previous styles, the occupation with its own history transforming it in internal, correlative, contingent limits. Frederic Jameson's periodization, which defined postmodernism as the cultural dominant of multinational or consumer capitalism (modernism as a cultural logic of monopolistic or imperialistic capitalism, and realism as the cultural logic of classic capitalism), is also an index of a progressive internal cannibalisation, establishing a process of constant de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

The history of capitalism is not limited to one original accumulation. When capital started reaching the limits of accumulation within the nation state, where there was suddenly hardly anyone left to be expropriated any more, the process of original accumulation started again at the beginning.²³ Capital was forced to reproduce itself again and again, and this process of constant repetition and reproduction moved the notion of territory activating new sectors of production, distribution and exchange. De-territorialization is not a process of erasing territories, but first and foremost it is a process of re-territorialization: constant cannibalisation of old and constant re-inven-

²² Cf. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Verso, London and New York, 2000, pp. 2-4.

²³ Cf. Hito Steyerl, "EXPO 2000: A Bourgeois Utopia," in: Marina Gržinić (ed.), *Gallery (Dante) Marino Cettina. Future Perspectives*, Gallery Marino Cettina, Umag, Croatia, 2001, pp. 136-143.

tion of new ones. David Harvey elaborated the theory of the flexible accumulation of global capitalism, becoming "the one" after the original accumulation, to describe the emergence of new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological and organisational innovation.²⁴ Biotechnology and genetic engineering are the trademarks in such a framework, whereas Internet provides re-territorialization its new address. "Sold out," "broke down," but always look for us at <http://www...> is the new re-direction of desires, facts and bodies in the global world.

The Internet is the purest sign of this process of flexible accumulation. It started as a territory without borders, without restriction; but today formal legislative and economic regulations transform the Internet into a new territory with old mechanisms of control, distribution of power and ways of accessing it, colonising, controlling it daily, by computer corporations, multinational banking systems and investigative federal agencies. One can say that what was secretly capitalised in the still very near past is made visible with such processes in the Internet now. During the first phase of capitalism, the time of its realistic doctrine of colonial and imperialist ventures with the goal of exploiting and expropriating space, the physical space, meaning land and geography, was at stake. But today it is not about territories in the classical geographical sense any more. Everything and everybody can be transformed into a new territory, can be a territory and part of the re-territorialization process.

If we are ready to take an even more profound look at the paradigm proposed by the new historical formation, as M. Hardt and T. Negri perceive the *Empire*,²⁵ we are in the situation that instead of dealing with the triadic form of the national state- imperialism-modernity (where imperialism was an extension of the sovereign power of the nation states in Europe, beyond their borders), we have to take into consideration the duality between the Empire and postmodernity. This new historical formation, with reference to Foucault (taking his ideas on the passage of the society of punishment to the society of control) and especially to Deleuze and Guattari (taking their view of biopolitics as the production of social beings), insist Hardt and Negri, shows a high level of effective mobility of its power techniques and paradoxical coherency of its procedures of social control. In short, the Empire is not perceived only through economical moments, but even more through institutional and organisational paradigms. The logic that moves this new formation of power is, according to

²⁴ Cf. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 147.

²⁵ Cf. Micheal Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 2000.

Hardt and Negri, functional much more than mathematical, more rhizomatic than being simply inductive or deductive. This flexibility allows the “imperial machine” to function for certain in a horizontal way as a systematic structure, and as well as hierarchically, as a regime of “the production of identity and the difference of homogenisation” and of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Accordingly, capital moves from the physical space to a virtual and “spiritual” one. Everything and everybody can fit the need to be a new territory. The transference, the transposition, the colonisation is very precise. In establishing new territories, the borders are moved up and down and enlarged. It all depends how big the need for fresh blood, genuine identities, hybrid states of mind and virtual fluids is.

A paradigmatically fabricated case in the town is the newly produced film from the Hollywood entertainment machine: *Lara Croft – Tomb Raider*. It is worth discussing this film, as it introduces new elements in the process of reterritorialization. It presents the newly capitalised sector of physical and spiritual data transformed in a territory of flexible capital. The plot of this feature appears very simple to someone who will not go to the movie or make an effort to see the film elsewhere. A fleshy upper class woman – named Lara Croft – mixes the roles of James Bond, Spielberg’s Harrison Ford adventure man, The Mummy’s best girlfriend and so on, fighting and killing in order to save the world (you expected something else²⁶), so as not to end up with eternal evil.

Each border is over-passed, Trans-passed, eradicated or cannibalised. As it was stated by Hardt and Negri,²⁶ the new formation is a product of the radical transformation that reveals the immediate relation between power and subjectivity, which allows the new emperor a scale of domination that enters the deepest strata of the biopolitical world. It is a process of installing controlling devices, organisational mood, intellectual models and a perception habitat that attacks the deepest strata of consciousness, the bodies of the population and it is at the same time extended through the inequality of social relations. According to Hardt and Negri, this process is intrinsically connected with the judicial institutional order,²⁷ which is perceived as the process of a possible instantaneous validity of the constitution of the state acts, organisation and mobility performances as a permanent exception: from civil war to a police operation.

Lara Croft is precisely such an intersection, where hypercapitalistic market entertainment apparatuses meet the flexible accumulation strategies promis-

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cf. Marina Gržinić, “Hysteria: Physical Presence, Juridical Absence, and Aids: Physical Absence, Juridical Presence,” in: Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, edition selene and Springerin, Vienna, 2001.

ing an eternal reproductive freedom. I am interested in creatures like Alien,²⁸ Lara Croft and monsters,²⁹ as all of them display identity reproduction, genetic engineering and technoscience so painfully naturally. Lara Croft is almost like an old, strategically well re-designed colonial weapon for identity politics, which will transform, exploit and expropriate the whole system of female yearnings and the power structure of science fiction images. Lara Croft is the newly established little engine in the process of re-territorialization, showing exactly what kinds of bodies and what forms of alliances called identity relationships are appropriate at the start of the new millennium and at whose cost, and to whose benefit.³⁰ That she is a white, upper class lady is equally important. But beware! The new domination does not consist of the establishment of a hierarchy simply based on cultural differences, but of the evacuation of histories of domination and resistance through technological reproduction.

From now on, women in blockbuster cinematic adventures will be subjected to the paternal male capital rules. This is the new millennium deal, newly invested and capitalised. The rules are clear: killing, beating and fighting like our male pals. This is the way women can join the club. The only thing to do is to make their brains invisible. That thick worm-like structure, namely the brain, which was engaged critically in some other productions, is gone. It is not necessary to think any more, just to act. In order to join the club of constant re-territorialization it is important to repeat the same rules. Lara Croft reproduces the capitalist mode of an entertainment machine using the same violent methods of massacre as her male pals, in the same way they used to expropriate and to conquer all the others in the past, including women. The result is uniform, without any change, simply the reproduction of the pattern of dominance and the recurring ideological stories of the good and the bad guys, no, sorry, women.

The story of the woman cloned to be as good as her male partner or even better is a recreation in neo-imperialist and colonialist ventures in the moving image territory and in the representation and colonisation of bodies. The white woman in such a context, coming from the USA or the West is a tool for capital to produce clones of itself and its ritualistic imaginary pattern, in such a way becoming re-born (it does not matter if it is with a fault) over and over again. And not to mention re-territorialization, which is going on only in

²⁸ Cf. Marina Gržinić, "Who are the Mothers of the Monsters?" essay re-published in the new reading room of the Old Boys Network: <http://www.obn.org/generator>

²⁹ Several of my papers deal with this topic. For example in *Springerin* Vienna, Number March-June 1999 on *Translocation*.

³⁰ Cf. Donna J. Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second Millenium. Feminism and Technoscience*, p. 292.

places where it has not been before, and cloning itself in places where it is not, underlined Steyerl in the already quoted essay.³¹ Furthermore, she claimed: the bourgeois Utopia is literally created by the destruction and devastation of localities and of their transformations into non-sites, by all kinds of weapons, engines and bodily modifications. Similar is the story of Hardt and Negri about the Empire: it is in and out, and at the same time it seems centralized, although it is without a centre; the Empire is “everywhere and no-where,” it is centralized and at the same time “u-topic,” which means it is a non-space! Hardt and Negri propose a transformation of the productive processes into “cognitive turn.” That means that dominant processes of production give a primacy to communication, and co-operation, whereas biopolitical production replaced production activity. The focus is on the production and reproduction of life in itself. The production of the surplus by workers in industry and fabric, is today replaced by an increasing immaterial intellectual power labour, based on communication, which gives exploitation an immediate social dimension while introducing labour-work within all social elements. Human contacts and interactions and intellectual work – the “accumulation of conscience, technology and skills” not only turn out to be a fundamental productive force, but are one of the most influential industries of the production of theory, interpretations and fields of intellectual power.

The question is not if women are intelligent enough to kill, but if it is necessary for them (us) to be localised as a non-site (Hardt’s and Negri’s “non-space”) in order to obtain physical and epistemological visibility, without identity, history, context. In the past they were invisible, but with a hysterical identity.³² In short, identity is a relationship, not a preformed category of being or a possession that one can have. The effect of a missing analysis is to treat identity as a preformed category, just being present at or absent from the scene of action. On the contrary, identity is always constituted within several practices and technologies. As Karen Barad³³ argued, identity is always formed in intra-action, in a close system of stratified relationships, the part of reconfigurations of knowledge and practices that constitute contemporary philosophy, art, cultural activism and theoretical analysis.

³¹ Cf. Hito Steyerl, “EXPO 2000: A Bourgeois Utopia,” p. 142.

³² Cf. Marina Gržinić, “Hysteria: Physical Presence, Juridical Absence, and Aids: Physical Absence, Juridical Presence,” op. cit.

³³ Cf. Karen Barad in: Haraway, op. cit.

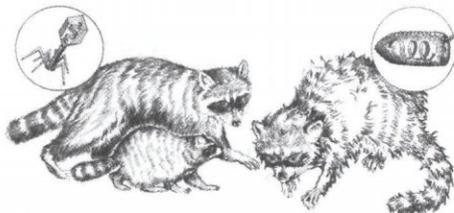
VIRAL STRUCTURES OF CYBERFEMINISM

ANDREA SICK

Today “virus” has become an inflationary, hybrid if not trivial term that is effective in the media and is metaphorically applied not only in a biological and information technological context but is also employed in a concretely political and artistic one as well. Both positive and negative connotations are attached to the word virus. Viral infections mark the outbreak of something uncontrollable. By constructing a *C<>F-Virus* (= Cyber<>Feminism-Virus¹) there is no intention to follow this inflationary movement, but to design different models of viral representation and consider a number of different strategic viruses as well as present and question the technique of cyberfeministic intervention. The potentiality a virus model promises affects the mode of a feminist practice.

The **C** of the *C<>F-Virus* stands for the digital media including the computer virus and its potential to intervene in computer networks. The **F** would therefore have to answer for the biological virus and the potential of intervening in the body that, due to digital media in particular and changing perception generally, is currently subject to radical transformation.

Here, two assumptions are made: The *C<>F-Virus* broadens the potential of a structure, and the *C<>F-Virus* destroys structures. This ambiguity becomes quite vivid in the following image – without constituting the ambivalence that may be read into such a concept – but by presenting the opposition of two viral concepts:



¹ Cf. with the conference title: “technics of cyber<>feminism <mode=message>,” December 2001, conceived by Claudia Reiche, Frauen.Kultur.Labor thealit, Bremen. (www.thealit.de); Cf. Claudia Reiche, Andrea Sick (eds.), technics of cyber<>feminism <mode=message>, Bremen (thealit), June 2002.

This reproduction of Richard Dawkin shows a “benevolent” virus entering into a life-sustaining relationship with the host and a “malign” virus killing its host. However, which model is the “good” and which the “bad” in terms of the *C<>F-Virus* and its intervention? To this question, too, I’m looking here for an answer. My paper constitutes an experimental system that enables the possibility of a thesis relating to the *C<>F-Virus* to be developed.

Transitional Models

With the invention of a *C<>F-Virus* we have a transitional viral model at our disposal, a model bearing two meanings: If Cyberfeminism is a viral Cyberfeminism, it will first have to be scrutinised as a programme that is activated by and spread via data streams; secondly, Cyberfeminism would have to be investigated as a collection of many different molecules or particles. Such molecules, visible only after being magnified 300,000 times, would be understood as intruders that, equipped with DNA and RNA, rewrite the DNA structure of a host cell as a transforming force. Both, the biologically labelled and the information technology model reveal functions that turn the virus into a kind of foil that might develop the potential of Cyberfeminism on the borderline between biological and information technology. Starting from here one might see the possibility of counteracting the prevalent fusion of genetic technology and virology on the one hand and the digital media and its visualisation and reproduction techniques on the other hand, apparently binding a dual thinking of inside and outside, original and copy.

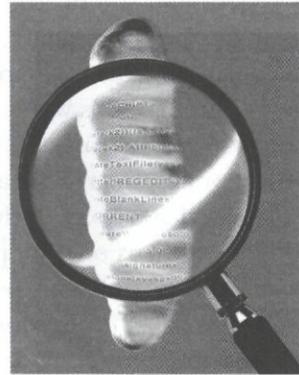
Popular Examples of the Viral Transfer of Meaning

1. The model of the virus, itself always a representation, is illustrated through pictures that are made with completely incongruent methods of production. These figurative representations are then applied in different contexts. The title page of the German computer magazine *c't* on computer viruses and the so-called “info-war,” for example, illustrates this with pictures of an anthrax-like bacterium or virus. What becomes clear here, is that the adoption of the image of a biological virus or bacterium magnified by an electron microscope and then coloured in, serves as a representation of a computer virus (instead of a sequence of bytes or programming language). An analogy between the biological and computer virus is established.



2. Another example of such a transfer is the following: in the middle of October 2001 a computer virus appeared – an Anthrax worm to be precise – spread through an e-mail attachment called Anthrax-Info. The programme, however, was faulty and it was therefore not classified as dangerous to the world of information. A similar case was an AIDS hoax, circulating as early as 1999, also spread via e-mail, but according to the McAfees Virus Library it was not applicable.²

3. In an article on biological terror published in the German news magazine *Focus* (October, 2001) the words, “cyber-war,” “terror-war” and “bio-terror” are printed in big letters, floating an at equal height as captions for a nebulous scenario of war – as synonyms for one and the same phenomenon.



Viral scene of war

All three examples of a viral transfer of meaning here refer to a threat and indicate an attack. A pattern clearly emerges: The intrusion or intervention of a so-called foreign body into an existing system, into an organism in so far as a computer network or an organic cell are understood in these terms. Currently the situation regarding medially produced transfers of meaning of a viral attack has shifted: Before September 11, 2001 the media had focused their attention on effectively disseminating information about computer vi-

² There is also talk of the Bin Laden-virus, feared as a meta-virus. It is considered highly unlikely that Bin Laden actually uses the aid of a computer in his campaign. (Comp.: www.vmyths-com, last access: 28.10.01)

ruses, “*I love you*” or last summer’s “*Code Red*” were popular, while at the same time paying little attention to the topic of biological weapons and the threat they might pose, or any conventions called upon to ban their use. The situation has changed dramatically since then. Today the biological model is so virulently effective, that panic, fear and hysteria have become indistinguishable from one another as reactions to the threat of biological weapons.

The result is a printed conglomerate of the rhetoric of war and specialist terminology. Of course this is not the first time that the rhetoric of war has not hesitated to use microbiologically coined language and, vice versa, neither does the rhetoric of virology shy away from metaphors of war.³ However, today, in the context of the so-called “biological-terror” through anthrax letters, the immune system of the body is becoming more than ever the scene of a war in the media. In this way the anthrax attacks become interpretable as a kind of subcutaneous spreading, communicating just such hysterical epidemics, paranoia and death.⁴ Bio-terrorism has infected the media so deeply that even people not infected start to feel an itch at the mere thought and doctors seriously warn us of the psychoneurotic effects of the anthrax fever sustained by the media. This works so well because the configuration of such a scene of war is made not through the actual use of a virus, but through the mere warning about them. The amalgam of biological and information technology presents itself as a hoax: as the fake copy of a computer virus, then again as a fake biological virus or bacterium, anthrax by mail for example. The letter filled with dextrose or baking powder sent from imitators or opponents of war launch anti-terror machinery and reveal the limits of health and surveillance systems similar to computer hoaxes that activate anti-virus programmes in order to increase sales. Letters filled with anthrax-spores or letters pretending to contain them have, with respect to their dissemination, much in common with computer virus. In both cases the latency of the viruses, that is, their attribute of being present without being noticed, is a central notion.

If the biological virus is understood as a carrier of information, we can speak – in the language of the secret services – with respect to both biological and media viruses, of “sleepers” who rest in the host’s organism without doing any harm until the time comes when they are activated.⁵ The examples

³ Frequently used words in the discourse of immunology are: defence strategy, extermination and virus attack. The body is conceived of as a war zone. “Man or microbe: who will be victorious...? Will the immune system be able to assert itself in this battle?” in: Avrión Mitchison, “Mensch oder Mikrobe: Wer gewinnt?” in: *Das Immunsystem*, Spektrum der Wissenschaft, Spezial, 3rd edition, 2/ 2001, Heidelberg, 88.

⁴ Goedert Palm, “Do Not Touch, Do Not Inhale, Do Not Taste,” in: Onlinemagazin *telepolis*, www.heise.de, 21.10.01

⁵ Cf. Walther Zimmerli, “Information und ‘kleiner Unterschied’: Viren jenseits von

are meant to illustrate the shifting analogies between biological and information viruses. Not only the transition from information to biological-technology but also from scientific research in biology to war-technology – always a fundamental starting point for scientific research in computer science – is difficult to determine. The conclusion: currently the biological-virus is adapting structures of the information-virus. What, however, happens at the borderline? The angle bracket of the **C<>F** virus marks as an operator a space to be filled. The ideological image of dissolved borders as a strategy of feminist politics, as suggested by Donna Haraway for example, would prevent the possibility of action along the lines of this border, which makes the space to be substituted available.⁶

Experimental System: the Bio- and the Info-Model

The perception that the supposition of a **C<>F-Virus** is thus based on operational models of viral infection constitutes the experimental system posited here. The system wants to investigate the transfers (T) of these models. This is why the setting is called Experimental System T, or abbreviated *EST*. As *productive EST* it also operates on the indistinct borderline between the trivial and the complex. One could describe *EST* as a machine for the reduction of complexity. For it always works with models. The models supply the measurements necessary for navigating within the *EST*, here following the etymological sense of model (modulus lat.), measure or standard or form. From the perspective of the respective system – here, that of “cyberfeminism” – complexity fulfils the function of an epistemic horizon. The individual attempts at reduction can therefore run in all kinds of directions and there is

Gut und Böse,” in: *Virusexpress*, Matthias Michel, Isabelle Köpfler, Meret Ernst (eds.), Edition Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Basel/Frankfurt am Main (Stroemfeld/Roter Stern) 1997, 37.

⁶ The following procedure underlines this displacement: Scientists at the National University of Canberra in Australia were trying to produce a mouse contraceptive vaccine for pest control. The virus normally triggers off mousepox but was genetically modified and weakened so that it would render the rodents infertile. But the operation created a killer. A great number of rodents died. More than half the rodents vaccinated against the disease they were exposed to were also killed by this new pathogen, once it had destroyed the immune system at great speed. As such the scientific report gives instructions how to turn a harmless microbe into a monster. Transferred to the context of “bio-terror” this means: Researching possible defences against biological weapons may generate new types of biological weapons. For every procedure to recognise substances used in biological warfare, or their vaccines, presupposes the cultivation of the pathogens in the laboratory. Compare Philip Bethge, “Baukasten für Gruselkeime,” in: *Spiegel*, 43/2001, 236-238.

no golden rule to either avoid dead ends or find silver bullets.⁷ The viral models of *EST* demonstrate a fundamental structure: they all distinguish between virus and host, inside and outside etc.. This structure however foils itself, because the virus enters its host, links up with the foreign code and thus inscribes itself there. Is it really that simple to distinguish between host and intruder? Can the strange be put in concrete form or is it produced by the respective experimental situation?

In the fields of immunology or virology these questions are met with the following answers: If anti-genes (that is, viral proteins or peptides) are to be recognised as such by the responsible receptors, they must make it clear that they are able to distinguish between the “self,” that is their own cells, and the anti-genes or super-anti-genes; thus they must be able to probe the difference between self and foreign; the cells of the immune system must differentiate between an uncountable number of intruding organisms without hurting their own body. The immune system is not equipped with all the information necessary to detect its host; in fact it only learns during its development what the “self” is, i.e. the antibodies can only develop after a specific infection has already taken place.⁸ Viral-genetic research has produced the following image of the virus: it is able to constantly change its surface structure. Consequently, for example, it has been impossible to find a life-long vaccine against influenza, the destructive flu from the years of 1918/19. The constantly changing virus can no longer be detected by the immune system. A transformation occurs, for example, when the genom of two viral subtypes merge, that is, both simultaneously invade the body of a host and the viral particles then unite. Regarding the influenza pandemic, one assumes a co-infection of human and animal viruses.⁹ An infection without an outbreak of the disease is also possible. The distinction between host and intruder, foreign and self, virus a and virus b – fundamental to exploration in *EST* – proves to be in a state of constant dissolution. In order to label the setting of *EST* more precisely, the models used in *EST* need to be specified and reduced first.

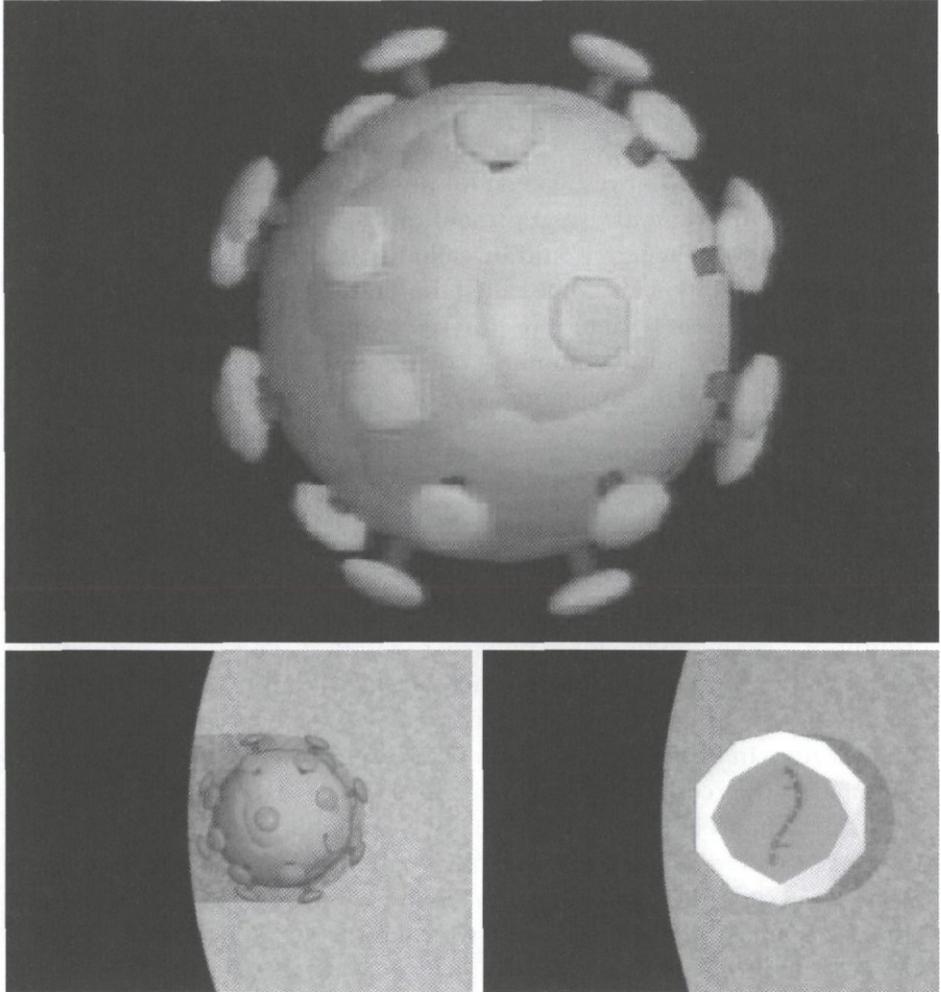
The Bio-Model: A virus largely consists of nucleic acids and for the virus these encodings provide access to the virus with access to the central functions of an organism: bacteria and cells. Their genom contains only a limited amount of genetic information and can only multiply in the cells of the host. The replication may be described by the following steps: It attaches the tail

⁷ Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Experimentalsysteme und epistemische Dinge, Eine Geschichte der Proteinsynthese im Reagenzglas*, Göttingen (Wallstein) 2001, 247.

⁸ Philippa Marrack, John W. Kappler, “Mechanismen der Selbsttoleranz,” in: *Das Immunsystem*, Spektrum der Wissenschaft, Spezial, 3rd edition 2/2001, 34-42.

⁹ Michael Krauthammer, “Kleine Virologie für Quereinsteiger,” in: *Virusexpress*, p. 26.

fibres to the cell membrane, enters the cell and releases the viral genom, then transcribes the viral genes and translates the messenger RNA for the production of virus-compatible proteins and finally replicates the viral genom and assembles new virus particles in the host cell. A release of the now finished virus becomes possible.



The Info-Model: Generally speaking, a virus consists of a small programme that is tucked away in some inconspicuous file format so that it is not detected and removed by an anti-virus-programme. This programme is, should it remain undetected, activated by particular sections of the operating system or applications. A classic example is the forwarding of a computer virus via the internet, with the virus becoming active only after an infected mail attach-

ment has been opened.¹⁰ In contrast to biological viruses, computer viruses are described as self-replicating programmes.

Both models reduce and split up complex facts in order to make them more operable and transferable. By working with these models in this paper I am imitating the principles of research in molecular biology on homologous model substances – synthetically matching substances – because I define here a synthetic model substance, the *C<>F-Virus*. This also means that in the *EST* the virus shows itself as an epistemic thing, as an object of discourse, as Hans-Jörg Rheinberger has put it in relation to the synthesis of proteins for example.¹¹ Here the parameters of representation create ambivalence. The following representations, investigated and published as visualisations, may be compared: in vitro-, and in vivo- representations, or representing the virus as data. In Vitro in this system would be called synthetic, in vivo – the organic and data representation would be called the simulated. The research in virology as well as the models themselves can serve to demonstrate how these representations – vitro, vivo, computer – cross and displace one another. The virus is constituted in the oscillation of representation.

Indexical Structures of the Virus

Following Peirce's theory of signs, the meanings of viral representation – vivo vitro and computer related, as featured by *EST* here, can range from substitution over embodiment to physical realisation. This description of the process of representation distinguishes between symbol, icon and index; meaning that we are confronted with an analogy or a hypothetical construct (thus a symbol in Peirce's sense) in the first case, in the second with a model or simulation (Peirce's icons), and in the third with an experimentally realised fact) to be compared with an index in Peirce's semiotic system, i.e. a trace. "If the sign, in its individual existence (physically), is linked to an individual object, then I call the sign an index," writes Peirce in his fragmentary semiotic writings.¹² Smoke indicating a fire is a typical index for Peirce for example.

¹⁰ This is not always the case, if we take the following story, familiar to all internet users, into account: one receives an e-mail with a warning against the good-friend-virus as a header: If you receive a good-friend-mail you should not open it because it contains the virus. Simultaneously the recipient is requested to send this mail to all the addresses in their address list. A few days later the all-clear arrives: the message did not contain the virus, it was the virus itself. Cf. Ch. Walther Zimmerli, "Information und 'kleiner Unterschied': Viren jenseits von Gut und Böse," in: *Virusexpress*, p. 35.

¹¹ Cf. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Experimentalsystem und epistemische Dinge*, Göttingen 2001.

¹² Charles Sanders Peirce, *Semiotische Schriften 3* (1913), edited and translated by Helmut

In the viral *EST* a green or blue colouring of a substance acquired from the body or a synthetically produced substance or a shadow on the x-ray of a lung or also symptoms such as fever or coughing, indicate the presence of a virus etc. The indexical constitution stands at the centre of a realised experimental system. The virus is in its realisation an index and this index can only be investigated within the *EST*. The virus shows itself only in representation. Were it the real part of the virus, it would be an attribute of the representation. For viruses, as the smallest particles, are marked by their invisibility: To visualise them, the visible light on which conventional microscopes rely proves to be too gross and too low in frequency for a proper representation. Only with the invention of the electron microscope at the beginning of the 1930s (in the last century) did the visualisation of the virus become possible. Or to put it in other words, the virus has had a decisive impact on the development of the electron microscope. Electrons contain limited energy to penetrate objects, and only very thin structures can be x-rayed and depicted, and these structures are roughly the size of virus. What can we see though? The viral infection itself, that is, the transition of the particles represented in the electron microscope to their active state, goes hand in hand with their structural dissolution. Viruses lose their complex structure – the very one the electron microscope is meant to capture – in the course of intrusion. This means: The process of replication is generally invisible. The infectious and morbid activity of a virus cannot be made visible only when simulated.¹³ The symptom is a sign of its realisation. In the context of such a symptomatic *EST*, as I assume here, the virus can be said to denote an index in the sense outlined in the semiotic theory of Peirce. The *C<>F-Virus* would show particular signs of being an index, could be understood as a realised model, precisely because it reveals itself – as any virus would in principle – in the symptom.

On the Question of Virus Detection

On the premise that the virus reveals itself through its symptoms, it becomes recognisable through the signs of the disease it produces. The disease becomes readable through the symptoms. Related to the symptoms, the virus

Pape and Christiane Koesel, Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1993, 135. Also Cf. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "Von der Zelle zum Gen," in: *Räume des Wissens, Repräsentation, Codierung, Spur*, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Michael Hagner, Bettina Wahrig-Schmidt (eds.), Berlin (Akademie-Verlag) 1997, 266.

¹³ Thomas Bächli, "Visualisierung von Viren? 'Seeing is believing'," in: *Virusprozess*, pp. 30-32.

is only then recognisable if it is active and symptoms are consequently produced. In this respect the virus can be interpreted as a symptom-machine. The virus-replications are functions of such a machine.

In relation to Freud's theory of wish-fulfilment, symptoms and dreams can be read in a similar way, for both need to be deciphered: The dream, in the system of consciousness, preconsciousness, unconsciousness is thought of as a representation of an unconscious, but realised wish, i.e. the object the psychoanalytic therapy intends to decipher. The symptom in this theoretical conception, primarily hysterical as a realised unconscious wish and thus as wish-fulfilment, where – here in contrast to the dream – a wish from the preconscious is added.¹⁴ If one supposes a similar structure of dream and hysterical symptom, the following claim can be made: If dream and hysterical symptoms have the same structure, and cyberfeminism is conceptually thought of as *C<>F-Virus*, then cyberfeminism is a machine that produces and circumscribes the wishes of a feminism as such, that never existed nor will ever exist. Feminism would present itself with its symptoms.

Then cyberfeminism could reveal itself as a platform that disguises, displaces and represents the wishes of feminism, in whatever varied shapes it might present itself. The masquerade of a masquerade would be born. And in the viral model the cyberfeminism could infect such a masquerade.¹⁵ Feminism, as the potential in the viral programming-code enters the host – an already existing system – is unpacked, combined, replicated and released again. But this model is a paradoxical material penetrating and producing short circuits of logic. In this respect it is the potential and procedure of the virus, the symptoms of which it interlinks. Every virus has its own programme, every *C<>F-Virus* as well, it shows itself in infinite mutations, the respective codes of which are being replicated. The mutants form a network.

With the *C<>F-Virus* we get a technology that conceptualises the mode of a feminist practise and that is at the same time a hybrid term counteracting the concretisation of such a strategy. *C<>F-Virus* is a “cyborg,” presupposing that “cyborg” is understood as a concept, that seeks to represent the radical transformation of body and senses at the borderline. The virus functions as a transmitter of bio-technology and the science of information – of cybernetics and organism. In case Cyberfeminism is a virus, then it will be a borderliner

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Traumdeutung*, (1900), *Zur Psychologie der Traumvorgänge*, Studienausgabe Bd. 2, Frankfurt am Main 1972, 542. Compare: *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by James Strachey, *The Pelican Freud Library, Volume 4*, Pelican Books, Penguin Books, 1976.

¹⁵ Also compare Andrea Sick, “DreamMachine: Cyberfeminism,” in: *Next Protocols*, Claudia Reiche, Verena Kuni (eds.), New York (autonomedmedia) 2002. (in print)

and a border-engineer, pertaining to whose representation and realisation different theses can apply – in this respect it always is as it was realised. And the dream of every *C<>F-Virus* would be its infinite replication, so it may continue to exist. Its effect would be to disturb the smooth running of a system and generate resistance.

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WHAT A WONDERFUL FASCISM: CLAIMING *THE REAL* IN LARS VON TRIER AND DOGMA 95

NATAŠA GOVEDIĆ

*Given the dominance of **the victim** as the realist documentary subject, this is cause for some concern, for it does not mean that the ethical difficulties faced by the realist filmmaker go away – only that they can be ignored.*

Brian Winston¹

I.

In many respects, the DOGMA 95 film movement was intended and presented as their founders' (Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg) plea to turn from the traditional or fictional film narrative towards the framings of documentary film narrative within traditional cinema: towards *the real*. What was perceived as *unreal* was genre film, technologically advanced film editing, Hollywood's ideological, economical and esthetical system of representation. In more utopian terms, DOGMA 95 initially wanted to escape the boundaries of *commercial film history* and the logic of *art as rhetorical sign*. Instead of worn-out signs, film art should have been the area of uncanny, direct, terrible, *authentic* experience; the event of the Real,² preferably causing "fear and trembling," a total Dionysiac change of Apollonian lifestyle led by Rilke's archaic statue (as described in the poem *Apollo's Archaic Torso*), and with the final goal of escaping *the little death* of decoding, signification, conventional interpretation.

As usual, whenever an artist claims *The Real*, s/he also expresses the will to exit from an – implicitly accepted! – interpretative legacy where art is treated as "only" artificial unreality; an everlasting Platonic realm of "mere" shadows.

¹ Winston, Brian (1999 [1995]): *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Revisited*, London: British Film Institute, p. 230.

² Badiou, Alain, (1993): *L'Éthique: Essai sur la conscience du Mal*, Paris: Hatier.

The neon light of The Real is therefore traditionally linked with discourses that are perceived as far as possible from linguistic control: discourses of the body, subconscious, dream, politics of desire, pain, illness or death. In Žižek's words "the Real of death and sexuality" and "the Real of human finitude."³ The paradox of entering the Real, the Real as Lacanian "encounter with the Impossible," remains connected with both physical and metaphysical experiences of *painful*, and at the same time *desirable*, loss (or sometimes even an orgiastic explosion) of control. Let me say that this definition of the real as an encounter with the Impossible also has many religious connotations, of which Lacan was also well aware (he admitted dealing with "mystical experience" of psychoanalytical hermeneutics⁴). As a formal description, the "encounter with the Impossible" is, in fact, constructed as the powerful rhetorical figure called oxymoron; a rhetorical figure, according to Kenneth Burke,⁵ classically connected with all the religious persuasions, because the sublime object of faith gets to be described as something *so absolute* that it can be imagined only as "impossible encounter." The Real in religion is therefore a paradox of meeting the impossible or absolute NonPresence (or God), just as the Lacanian Real is meeting with the impossible Other Side of Rational Control. Irrational and instinct, as instances of the Real, here stand hand in hand. They are not the Real; they are both representations of the Real, as much as human love for St. Paul turns out to be representation of future meeting with the Real or encountering God "face to face." Yet for Lacan, "there is nothing behind representation."⁶ In his own words: "Beyond appearance there is nothing in itself, there is the gaze."⁷ Therefore the encounter with both divine or Lacanian Real preserves the notion of semantic transfer or the rhetorical procedure, no matter how much the artist claims s/he is entirely autobiographic or fully documentary or subversively outside any known or given sign system. Here on Earth, the Real stubbornly encounters us only as representation. Žižek: *The very word SIGN, in opposition to the arbitrary mark, pertains to the <answer of the real>: the <sign> is given by the thing itself, it includes that at least at a certain point, the abyss separating the real from the symbolic network has been crossed, i.e. that the real itself complied with the signifier's appeal.*⁸

³ Žižek, Slavoj (2001): *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, London: Verso; pp. 84-85.

⁴ Lacan, Jacques (1998 [1973]): *The Four Fundamental Principles of Psycho-Analysis*, London: Vintage, p. 4-8.

⁵ Burke, Kenneth (1961): *The Rhetoric of Religion, Studies in Logology*, Berkley: California University Press.

⁶ Copjec, Joan (1995): *Read My Desire*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, p. 35.

⁷ Lacan, Jacques (1998 [1973]): *The Four Fundamental Principles of Psycho-Analysis*, London: Vintage, p. 103.

⁸ Žižek, Slavoj (2000 [1991]): *Looking Awry*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, p. 32.

II.

In contact with the representation of the trauma or raw instincts, of subconscious or the religiously miraculous experience (experience of the absolute), one is supposed to transform. Intense pain and pleasure, however, turn out to be translated into ideologies of victimhood and sainthood, at least for mass producers of the Real. The formula for the Real, let us not forget, is first and foremost a rhetorical mixture: there is nothing “absolute” nor deterministically “real” about *that kind* of Real. There are other signification systems besides psychoanalysis and religious representations; not to mention art as an area of extremely complex reality effects that can also change us profoundly. I am certain that psychoanalytical myths, no matter how entertaining, are not at all the universal key to the Real. These myths deal with interconnection between Eros, Thanatos and the notion of never-ending Past, or, as Malcolm Bowie says: *An entire dimension of Freud’s work redramatizes the myth of the Furies: the past is visited upon the individual in a series of violent intrusions, and his future, if he has one, can be envisaged only as a prolongation of these and a continuing help-less desire to lift their curse.*⁹

I would suggest that the Real, as radical insight or cathartic refiguration or the (ethical) Event cannot use predictable semantic routes. For instance, in Aki Kaurismäki’s film *Crime and Punishment* the Real is perceived as an (impossible) desire *to forgive*, not the sexual desire or death drive. On the other side of the spectrum, in Hollywood cinematography, sex and death are so overdosed and over-used that there is absolutely nothing “impossible” or shocking about them. They are the stuff that Hollywood is made of. Post-modern American directors like Quentin Tarantino and Coen brothers are not even taking them seriously. What they fiercely *mock* is precisely the seriousness of Hitchcock’s era and its psychoanalytical dream-work, in the same way that Renaissance authors used to mock the standard of performing the Real of public executions. In both instances, “the Real” can obviously go out of date.

It is, however, still very much possible to talk about psychoanalysis as mythopoetic praxis of retelling and eternally tracing the Real of death and desire, but cathartic potential of Eros and Thanatos Corporation, in my view, grows more and more limited. Where they *do* hold power are very common therapeutic sermons about ethics of pain. Discussing Kant and particularly the ethics of pain, Alenka Zupančič rightfully concludes: “From this perspective, we might define with great precision the limit at which ethics is transformed into either terror, or the obscure desire for catastrophe. [...] [S]ince

⁹ Bowie, Malcolm (1991), *Lacan*, London: Fontana, p. 182.

suffering and pain become the mark of ethics, the rarity of 'good' becomes the 'omnipresence of evil;' the incompatibility of ethics and pleasure leads to methodical masochism [...]."¹⁰

And does it also lead to perceiving the world as *fascist* (as "omnipresence of evil")? This is the question I wish to explore through the material of DOGMA 95 and Lars Von Trier's films. But first let us visit documentary film genre during the period of historically recognized fascist era.

III.

The most famous example of documentary style used as a mask for completely different (fictional, mythical, highly ideological) purposes can be found in the works of Leni Riefenstahl, where the "real life event" is *framed* as documentary narrative, but is just as much propaganda material for Hitler's Nazi party. In *The Triumph of the Will* (1934-35), Riefenstahl employs several purely fictional strategies to create *the document* of the time. The question about *how real* the documentary film is immediately answers itself: it simulates the workings of real event. What do I mean by that? First of all, Riefenstahl insists on producing sentimental visual identification with the "mind-numbing repetitiveness"¹¹ of united party images: pattern after pattern of obsessive, collective symmetries. This is one of the oldest rhetorical strategies. Secondly, she uses people as props; as the triumph of the *director's* free will only. Which means that there is nothing random or contingent about her choices. Thirdly, she records Hitler's *mythically* framed descent to the German nation. Finally, she pretends to ignore the political aspect of the very occasion she covers. *The Triumph of the Will* (with the opening credit: "Produced by Order of the Führer. Directed by Leni Riefensahl"¹²) is specially designed and staged as a rally, paying symbolic respect to the SA Nazi wing (the brownshirt, common, street-fighting, more populist and proletarian stream of the Nazi party), whose uniform Hitler himself wears in the documentary, even whilst he was coldly ordering "purges" (mass killings) in the ranks of these very same, cinematically "honored" SA forces, not only on the eve of the rally, but also while it was taking place. Riefenstahl afterwards predictably claimed fantastic things like: *I told Hitler I don't know what is SA and what is SS.*¹³ The most morbid detail in

¹⁰ Zupančič, Alenka (2000): *Ethics of the Real*, London: Verso; p. 236.

¹¹ Winston, Brian (1999 [1995]): *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited*, London: British Film Institute, p. 75.

¹² Barnouw, Erik (1993): *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 103.

¹³ Infield, Glenn (1976): *Leni Riefenstahl: The Fallen Film Goddess*, NY: Crowell, p. 74.

this particular story concerns the “real” SA deaths, unrecognized by another, more visible “real event” of the filmed occasion. But this is also the case of pure propaganda or the most invisible ideological manipulation. As Goebbels said: *People who are influenced by propaganda must not notice it.*¹⁴

In case of Lars Von Trier’s usage of documentary film techniques, he *does* want us to notice the shaky camera and its falling out of focus as vivid “proofs” of directors special access to illogical Subconscious or the Higher Truths of representation, while, I argue, this recurrent quasidocumentary technique is no less “staged,” digitally edited, narratively constructed, stylistically calculated, pre-rehearsed and scripted than Riefenstahl’s “documents.” Furthermore, quasidocumentary technique is employed to mask Trier’s “invisible” propaganda model. In this model, quasidocumentarism is cast as the representation of our collective Subconscious.

IV.

The subconsciously “real” of bourgeois society is systematically ridiculed and glamorized in Trier’s first DOGMA movie: *The Idiots* (1998). The victims of social alienation in this film decide to leave the oppressive system and form a separate community (in an empty villa, belonging to the group leader’s rich uncle). They live on “borrowed” (perhaps stolen) corporate credit cards and enjoy the freedom of finding their “inner idiots.” Handheld camera and “on-location” shots, deliberately filmed to make objects and characters out-of-focus, are here to create the grand illusion of *cinema vérité*, although the “documentary style” remains present as a sophisticated and complex director’s mocking game with perceptive conventions of the audience. The audience knows that Trier works with professional *actors* (some of them are famous and we immediately recognize them), with his own professional (fictional) *script*, with classic takes and re-takes, selection of shots, process of editing. Why is it then that he needs *the documentarist* rhetoric in the first place? Is it because art is not “real” enough for him? Does he need to legalise his work by the criteria of art-despising “realists”? Or is it because he needs a royal, that is, an oneiric road to our subconscious? In any case, Trier is only *faking* documentarism and falsely obeying DOGMA’s “Vow of Chastity.” If anything, his works show all the characteristics of *auteur* cinema; again criticized in DOGMA’s original layout. On top of it all, the final version of *The Idiots* was digitally reworked by

¹⁴ Quoted in documentary film *Hitler’s Henchman: Goebbels – the Firebrand*, ZDF: 2000; dir. by Peter Hartl.

the producers, because the original version was overexposed to light and literally impossible to use for further film copying and (massive!) distribution. In a funny ironical twist, Trier's exclusive "document of the Real" was rewritten in order to become more commercial and more profitable; in the Hollywood sense of the words.

The Idiots furthermore show a naivete of understanding the Real as the characters' nudity, sexual promiscuity, cheating to avoid paying restaurant bills and expletive-ridden outbursts at bureaucratic officials. Trier seems to expose, again ironically, the three greatest myths of the Sixties: communality, sexual freedom and the religion of necessary abnormality (modelled by the teachings of R.D. Laing and his antipsychiatry movement). While staged isolation in communalism and hymns to non-inhibited sexual behavior work only for a *short* while, the notion of turning back to "idiotic" or most creative freedom outside the histrionic ghetto does *not* work for any member of the histrionic group. But behind their collective escape into "Primal Drives" of Sacred Idiocy (Trier calls it spastic behavior), there is also a story about Karen, played of course by the professional actress. To Karen belongs the role of the "real victim" of society and therefore of a stranger to the community of *histrionic idiots*. In the subplot about Karen, *the real* is connected with Karen's serious pain; i.e., Karen's suppressed grief over the death of her baby and possible parental abuse. Yet, the pleasure principle is also important for Karen's character: while visiting the "idiotic community" of fakes, Karen is the only one to say: *I have never been happier. I love you all so much*. Being the only mentally challenged person in the group, in the end Karen turns out to be the only one for whom the group therapy really worked.

Fascism is explicitly named and condemned in *The Idiots*, through Stoffer's (he is the authoritarian boss of his community) outraged cries. The world *out there*, outside the boundaries of Stoffer's community, we learn, is described as "fucking fascism." But the world *in there*, within the community, is no less discriminatory: Stoffer makes all kinds of repressive hierarchies, he makes decisions about everybody else, he even leads the male members of the group into one "joking" attempt to rape a female member of the group. The freedom of Stoffer's community, its range of representational masks, is extremely limited. In fact, all of the members know only the simplest hypocrisy games: allowing their "inner idiots" to be heard in private and safe ghetto, but silencing them in public. Belonging neither to the outside world nor to the hypocritical regime of Stoffer's theater, Karin appears to be a double outcast. In the "documentary" sequences while interviewing the actors, Trier has talk to them about her character with interest, but without understanding or compassion. She gets even less kindness from her family. There are therefore

three circles of hopeless isolation and despair: larger society (attacked by Stoffer as <fascistic>), small community membership that repeats the aggression from the outside world, and the smallest unit of infinitely “misplaced” Karin. That is why I suggest that Trier’s nihilism might, in fact, *promote* the very discriminatory politics it describes. The same goes for his stylistic devices, based on the belief that “the real” evil has to be fought by a faked documentary style of directing, otherwise no one will take you seriously enough. Art in itself, art without the documentarist framing of events, art as *representation*, art that does not perform under the myth of live TV and “real presences” of true historical document, is seen as totally corrupted, useless, pointless. This is, of course, rather naive “artophoby.”

In Trier’s earlier expressionist movie, *Zentropa* (1991), made before the DOGMA years, Trier tells the story about an American who visits Germany, only to discover that we are even now living in the middle of everlasting Nazi Europe values and commerce. Nazi factories and Nazi corporations are still in power and we are not able to see the real dimension of the remaining, ongoing, German and pan-European fascism. The chief character in *Zentropa* discovers the Real of silent, overwhelming, suppressed fascism – passed to him through *a woman* and through the working of sexual drives. The sexual dimension therefore remains the guilt-ridden area in all of Trier’s movies. In his early films, like *Medea* (1986), it is society that is traitorous and rotten to the bone. Hence the society *projects itself* onto the hero and *infects* the chief protagonist with its own poison. In Trier’s later films, like *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), death and desire as principles of the Real are accompanied by the workings of the Absolute: the heroine is safe from fascistic misjustices in another world. The sacrifice and resurrection therefore became the only possible direction towards the Real.

V.

DOGMA 95 also has its more secular face. In Thomas Vinterberg’s *Celebration/Festen* (1998), the group of actors participates in shooting on location from handheld cameras according to DOGMA rules. Yet, contrary to Trier’s *Idiots*, these people maintain the coherence of the *therapeutic* group. Once again, the discovery of pain is narratively linked with the *pleasure* (even in the film’s title: the party or the celebration) of orgiastic breaking of society norms, and the film ends at the moment when the family *painfully* acknowledges, and for the first time socially ostracizes (punishes), their incestuous father; indirectly guilty for the death of the daughter he sexually abused. Again

and again, the Real is staged around the political and personal role of the victim. Vinterberg tightly links family *violence*, *contemporary racism* and *false sentimentality* of contemporary Europe, seen as no less fascist than in Trier's *Zentropa* (the film was originally called *Europa*). The main difference between the two DOGMA directors is Trier's much stronger est/ethical cynicism. Nevertheless, the concept of the Real as religious absolute is not entirely cut out from Vinterberg's films neither. *The Celebration* is a story about the incestuous history and suicidal sacrifice of the oldest daughter in the family, so the Real is again and again introduced through the victim.

VI.

Now I wish to concentrate on the link between glorification of the victimhood and ideology of fascism in Trier's most successful and acclaimed films: *Breaking the Waves* (1996) and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). In both of them Trier further explores the role of the FEMALE victim; the leading female roles are presented as emotionally disturbed personalities with a publicly verified private mythology of self-destruction. With Bess from *Breaking the Waves* and Selma from *Dancer in the Dark*, we enter into the Wagnerian forests of BEAUTIFUL fascism; fascism that openly joins forces with the Catholic Sublime. Here, the Woman (the archetypal one) becomes the painful/pleasurable Real, and at the same time, the "purging" vehicle of masculine society. Selma and Bess are presented as heroines WITHOUT true choice; mythically doomed to sacrifice their life for the sake of the *greater good*. Both are (sardonically, in my opinion) awarded with eternal salvation in Heaven. Speaking the language of pure ideology, they present exemplary propaganda models of *social masochism* and *political conservatism*. In the case of Bess, her obsessive behavior, i. e. blind following of what she perceives as direct *orders* from two male protagonists in the film – God and her husband Jan, and her high emotional interest *only* in Jan, her history of formal emotional breakdowns etc., – are constructed as the exact *repetition* of her native community obsessively strict values; values that she endorsed before Jan's arrival. *Complete lack of freedom* in her religious community (which could also stand as definition of fascism!) is repeated by her blind, slavish devotion to Jan. Despite one episode of shouting at Jan's promiscuous plans for her and the event of vomiting after she has been "raped," following Jan's instructions, she does not have a "will" or "self" of her own; she just follows orders. In other words, she desperately shows the desire to be – in her own words: "a good girl." A good girl is in fact only the obedient girl, and she constantly feels guilty because she does

not consider herself to be obedient enough. The explosions of her huge guilt complex are directly connected with her sexual behavior (and pleasure principle). At the end of the movie, she wears the double mask of *sexual masochism* joined with the role of *the social victim*. Contrary to Girard (1986) opinion, her sacrifice does not “purify” the community who watches it. On the contrary: the film confirms the reality of “absolute” violence.

What we are invited to ignore or forget here is that Bess, not some higher power, is *responsible* for her *choices of obedience*. The ethics of responsibility has entered even the contemporary psychiatric treatments. We are also invited to consider her as symbol of *goodness* (that is the characteristic we hear about her most often), although Bess lacks in elementary compassion for anything outside her obsessive small universe (a memorable event of her coldness is the scene in the beginning of the film, when she has fun watching coldly the funeral of her village neighbour). In her obsessive mind, she is interested only in completing the violent transaction: to sacrifice her own body for the survival of Jan. The director and scriptwriter (in the same person of Lars Von Tier) “approves” it. We see that her Biblical sacrifice *works*: previously handicapped Jan is miraculously back on his feet. What a wonderful fascism! After Bess was completely abandoned by her *evil* community, expelled from the Church, denounced by her mother, betrayed by her best friend Dodo, deserted by her psychiatrist and even stoned by the local children (as “whore”), she fulfils her own obsessive desire: at least in the viewers and in Jan’s eyes she is finally metamorphosed from the live sexual object to the dead Saint (we see the shot in which godly bells from somewhere Beyond tolls for Bess resurrection). The Real of sex, death and religious Absolute is on its climax. To use Žižek’s Lacanian vocabulary, woman is here only a helpless symptom of cruel male society, and if it looks like as if she has been “favored” by the film, it is only because the audience follows the story of her magnificent *destruction*. In the general system of obedience, she internalizes the most horrible group order: denounce your own integrity – and freedom – for the power of Higher Good. As Canetti underlines, describing totalitarianism and its system of open or secret orders: *It is well known that men who are acting under orders are capable of the most appalling deeds.*¹⁵ Acting *under orders* does another important thing: releases Bess, like any other divine or secular soldier, from any responsibility. She is a sacred object exchanged between god and her husband and back to god again. And the power of this ideologization is terrifying when observing *female* reactions to Trier’s film: many of them have internalised the propaganda of victimhood so much, that they feel as if Trier has grasped “the Real”

¹⁵ Canetti, Elias (1992 [1960]), *Crowds and Power*, London: Penguin, p. 385.

content of their subconscious and described “a true love.” Looking awry at that agenda, we could say that Trier teaches women how to admire their own torture and how to accept suicide as way to stellar sainthood.

The same divinisation of suicidal behaviour happens with Selma in Trier’s movie *Dancer in the Dark*. Selma is robbed of her savings and forced to kill her attacker in self-defence, but she does not defend herself at the court (when accused for murder) because she has already accomplished her own obsessive mission: she regained the money for her son’s eye operation. Yet it seems that Selma *wants to die* from the very start of the narrative: she is so tired of oppression, eye sickness and poverty that in the beginning of the film she almost injures herself badly, before a factory friend “saves” her. On another occasion, she ignores a distinct feeling that she is being watched at the moment of opening her secret savings box, and this incident in fact leads to theft and all further crimes. Selma *refuses to see* in the most elementary sense. If Bess is obsessive about seeing only Jan, Selma is obsessive about being blind to anything that goes beyond her daily routine. Death seems like the most radical escape, fulfilling all the levels of anticipating the Real: pain and pleasure of Absolute Otherness. This is again the most beautiful fascism: teaching us the beauty of death. While Selma’s fictional flights into Hollywood-like musical melodrama (scenes shot in rich digital photography and with collective choreography) proves the beauty of death, the rapid worsening of her sight and her final decision not to defend herself properly at the trial shows her desire to sacrifice the grim reality of her existence as soon as possible. The film is not concentrated on her son, nor does it elaborate on their mutual relationship (we see her nagging and shouting at the boy once; that’s all). Selma shows affection *only for musicals and death*. The son’s operation is her “terrible” *duty*; not her loving choice. Selma’s world also follows the triadic structure of fascism: the broadest reality is the reality of the cruel factory exploitation, the second level is her obsessive savings for her son, and the third is the intimate level of her obsessive intoxication with deceitful Hollywood spectacle. The blind obsession also marks the main difference between Antigone and Trier’s heroines; Antigone is choosing her death against all social odds, she is *protesting*, while Selma and Bess end up killed by silent, obedient, internalised and self-destructive social programming. In paying (unnecessarily) for her son’s operation by “currency” of *her own death*, Selma repeats and endorses the blindness of the whole social system. She accepts to be guilty for it.

What Trier is presenting again and again is the omnipresence of evil; the symbolic universe full of suicidal desires. Is this perspective politically realistic? We can certainly factually prove that inequalities between people, be-

tween classes, races, ages and sexes in today's world are not getting any smaller. The deep gap between non-white poverty and white propaganda could be called fascism; it could be even called "capitalistic, corporate fascism." Yet Rastko Močnik, author of the book *How Much Fascism?* and persistent critic of right-wing fascistisation in the postcolonial, post-Yugoslavian states, is careful enough to warn us against using the term too easily: fascism is an extreme and therefore politically almost empty term.¹⁶ I would rather suggest then of talking about *fascistic tendencies* in otherwise complex cultures of oppression.

One could perhaps say that Trier works with elements of "gothic" genre. As Mark Edmundson¹⁷ describes the gothic, Trier indeed plays with all its characteristics: maiden in distress, maiden trapped in horrible claustrophobic situation, punishment for expressed sexual desire by death, general infatuation with death. But gothic is also a genre that is decisively sceptical, if not critical of any social authorities.¹⁸ In itself, the chief gothic hero, the Vampire, functions as a radical parody of any rational or state control. Trier therefore never produces vampiric rebels or romantic outcasts with fangs. He produces suicidal saints; he belongs to the Christian tradition. But should we really understand Christ's sacrifice as a call for all of us to kill ourselves? *Divinisation by death*, on the other hand, is the strategy of psychotic patients and religious cult members. The trauma of encountering the Real or the Absolute is not at all singularly or exclusively ethical event; it can be used for various, including fascistic or even comic purposes. Consider the terribly shallow but popular melodrama *Life Less Ordinary*, directed by Danny Boyle, where the audience is invited to have "fun" and laughter during the scene where the hero, sobbing with distress, gun pointed at his head, is forced to dig his own grave somewhere in deserted woods. But the audience knows it is really an Angel in disguise, molesting the hero "to teach him a lesson;" so there is nothing to worry about. Hollywood knows all about public executions in concentration camps, with its scenery of prisoners who are digging their own graves before dying, and yet the film industry will use it as a *comic relief* sequence. This is the point where commercial cinematography distastefully ironizes the documentary film as tradition that exploits The Real of victimhood and the Real of death and desire. Documentary films are not shy about quoting and accepting fictional strategies either: many of them, since John Grierson's times, include completely staged minidramas.

Finally, the question of the Real seems persistently connected with the

¹⁶ Močnik, Rastko (1998): *Koliko fašizma?*, Zagreb: Arkzin, p. 147.

¹⁷ Edmundson, Mark (1997): *Nightmare on Main Street: Angles, Sodomasochism and the Culture of Ghotic*, Cambridge MA: Harvard UP.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

representation of the trauma, but any representation of trauma also indicates openness to nasty political manipulations. Nationalism, for instance, works with “trauma” of the past; religion operates with threat and guilt of desire for the Absolute. The role of the victim should therefore be studied with utmost precision. In case of Lars Von Trier and *DOGMA 95*, I am convinced that female victims and their obsessive sacrifices perpetuate *the culture of death*. Even if we decide not to call it “fascism,” I choose to criticise it as ideological falsity and cognitive trap of advertising ultimate helplessness. Between *wonderful fascism* and *ugly freedom* I am rather inclined to mess with imperfections of the second option: the Real minus victimhood, in both fictional and documentary narrative.

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TACTICS OF PERSEUS: TACKLING THE INVISIBLE OTHER

KIKUKO TOYAMA

As is thoroughly articulated in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), the gaze of the other self/subject has the quality of being unseen, for "'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the truth of 'seeing-the-Other.'"¹ The moment the Other enters my universe, I feel de-centered and paralyzed, experiencing myself as an object to be seen. Yet, if such an effect reveals a certain vulnerability in our vision, the question arises as to how it ever becomes possible to see the Other, or, to see Medusa, a figure standing for the Other's petrifying look. This paper will refer to some representations of this monstrous Other and suggest that as possible devices to bypass the terror, various media of spectacle and of representation might be designed, notably painting, at times regarded as an "art of memory," rather than an art of direct perception.

The invisible Other: "mirror" and the "void"

Sartre distinguishes the eye as the object of a look from the look itself, putting emphasis on the nonreciprocity between the object and subject of the look: "my apprehension of a look turned toward me appears on the ground of the destruction of the eyes which 'look at me.' If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes," so that "The Other's look hides his eyes; he seems to go in front of them" (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 258). In this schema the Other's eyes become principally invisible, no longer given as a simple object to be seen, observed and remarked on, and the Other's look works as "a pure reference to myself." I recognize that I am seen, as "a body which can be hurt," as an object to be defined and judged at the Other's mercy. Here I no

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London, 1986, p. 257. In this paper the book will be abbreviated as *Being and Nothingness* with the page number reference added.

longer act unselfconsciously, as a pure, unreflective consciousness, but become an inert matter “transfixed” in its complete passivity.

This of course covers only a part of the full range of the experience of being “looked at” by the Other. The Other’s gaze doesn’t necessarily petrify me/make me either an object or a vulnerable, defenseless being. The Sartrean Other, however, keeps a certain psychological distance, not allowing any dream of mutuality, co-existence, or of any personal relations at all.² The look of the Other here seems to operate impersonally, comparable to the effect of anonymous surveillance cameras, the Omniscient, a binding sense of one’s conscience/internalized laws/taboo.

As pointed out by Martin Jay, the origin of this effect might be found in the “constituent power” that adults exert upon an infant in his/her personal formation.³ The following passage of Sartre’s reminiscences clearly shows how the gaze of surrounding adults oriented his self-understanding as a child, casting a long shadow over his behavior and character. “My truth, my character, and my name were in the hands of adults. I had learned to see myself through their eyes.... When they were not present, they left their gaze behind, and it mingled with the light. I would run and jump across that gaze, which preserved my nature as a model grandson.”⁴ In *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, a similar story is told to describe the crucial biographical moment of Jean Genet: when the ten-year-old boy reaches into a drawer unself-consciously, “Someone has entered and is watching him. Beneath this gaze the child comes to himself. He who is not yet anyone suddenly becomes Jean Genet.... A voice declares publicly: ‘You’re a thief.’... The gaze of the adults is a constituent power which has transformed him into a constituted nature.”⁵ The Other

² For a compact summary clarifying where to place Sartre’s expanded suspicion of “the Cartesian perspectivalist gaze” in the history of the French anti-ocularcentric discourses, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley & London, 1993), pp. 264-282. My reading of *Being and Nothingness* is greatly indebted to Jay’s text. Jay also points out that Sartre’s treatment of “the look” is deeply affected by his “ocularphobia,” “obsessive hostility to vision,” which certainly invites accounts in biographical or psychoanalytical terms (Jay, pp. 276-277).

³ According to Jay, François George sees in Sartre’s work “le regard absolu,” the transcendent, nonreciprocal look of “an omniscient God,” which also could be associated with Sartre’s dead father or with his maternal grandfather (Charles Schweitzer), cf. Jay, pp. 277-279.

⁴ Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, 1964), p.158, quoted in Jay, p. 279.

⁵ Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, 1963), p. 17, quoted in Jay, p. 295. Also in *The Reprieve*, Sartre has the homosexual character Daniel articulate his agonizing experience of being petrified by the look of some unspecified others. “They see me – no, not even that: it sees me. He was the object of looking.... I am seen. Transparent, transparent, transfixed. But by whom?” Cf. Sartre, *The Reprieve*, trans. Eric Sutton, New York, 1947, p. 135, quoted in Jay, p. 293.

who makes me see myself as an object is thus related to me as the third person, so to speak, designated particularly in the third person plural (“they”), or equated even with the impersonal “it.” Certainly the Other appears each time in the form of a specific individual, yet simultaneously plays the role of an anonymous, unspecific being, the role of the Judge or whoever represents the imaginary community called the “world” or “society.”

As a result of internalizing the Other’s judgement, real or imagined, I come to believe I’m such and such (a handsome boy, an ideal grandson, a thief, etc.). If so, the Other’s gaze is, as it were, a mirror that teaches how I appear to them, what attributes I’m given by them, while the mirror seems simultaneously to intensify and standardize the effect of self-reification. Both the mirror and the Other’s gaze bring into relief a discrepancy between the “I” as a pre-reflective, unself-conscious subject of looking and the “I” belonging to the visible world, as an object for the Other to perceive. They both reveal the fact that I need to be mediated by and dependent upon the Other in order to be who I am/what I am.⁶

When this “mirror” function of the Other’s gaze is activated, I am “petrified,” too occupied with the image of myself in imagination to look at the Other in actual perception. If I manage to return the gaze, then the Other disappears, no longer reflecting my image in the “mirror.” The incommensurability between perception and imagination, as formulated elsewhere by Sartre, reappears here, except that imagination is identified this time with “the paralyzing internalization of the Other’s gaze.”⁷

The mirroring gaze of the Other also creates a “void,” opening up a “hole” in my visual field and destabilizing it. It is a process of the radical decentering of the subject, something Norman Bryson epitomizes as follows; once the Other enters into the world, “the center of the watcher’s lived horizon” suddenly loses effect; “the watcher self is now a tangent, not a center, a vanishing point, not a viewing point, an opacity on the other’s distant horizon. Everything reconverges on this intrusive center where the watcher self is not: the intruder becomes a kind of drain which sucks in all of the former plenitude, a black hole pulling the scene away from the watcher self into an engulfing void.”⁸ Transforming the watcher self into the watched, a spectacle for

⁶ As Jay points out, there seems an undeniable parallel with the Lacanian ego of the mirror stage, for in both cases the ego is considered “as an illusory representation, as a source and focus of alienation,” although Lacan criticized Sartre “for positing an irreducible core of subjective autonomy, a ‘self-sufficiency of consciousness’ prior to the intersubjective dialectic of desire” (Jay, pp. 346-347).

⁷ See *Being and Nothingness*, p. 258 and Jay, p. 288.

⁸ Norman Bryson, “The Gaze in the Expanded Field,” in: *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York, 1988), p. 89.

another's sight, the look of the Other is here comparable to a "drain," a "black hole," through which the universe as my visual field, concentrically unfolding before me, runs away at a gulp.

For the same process, Jacques Lacan introduces the concept of "scotomization:" "As the locus of the relation between me, the annihilating subject, and that which surrounds me, the gaze seems to possess such a privilege that it goes so far as to have me scotomized, I who look, the eye of him who sees me as object. In so far as I am under the gaze, Sartre writes, I no longer see the eye that looks at me and, if I see the eye, the gaze disappears."⁹ According to Jay, the term "scotomization" was first borrowed from ophthalmology by Jean-Martin Charcot, in order to describe hysterical vision, and later revived to designate a mode of psychotic unawareness, "a process of psychic depreciation, by means of which the individual attempts to deny everything which conflicts with his ego."¹⁰ In his re-working of the theme of vision from the well-known mirror stage theory, Lacan reintroduces the concept to suggest that "an actual blind-spot occurs when something is too threatening to be seen."¹¹

The emergence of the Other thus generates an excessive threat to our vision. Although the strength of this "drain" – whether the entire world of visibility fades away or only a tiny part gets stained – might fluctuate, the subject loses the former integrity of its visual world. The Other appears, as it were, so disturbing, so blinding as to burn into the retina. His/her eyes, the face, at least part of it, or even the entire body, at least its front part, turn more or less invisible – and oscillate between visibility and invisibility.¹²

As far as the Other is identified with the subject of the look, which as "the mirror" makes me see myself and as "the void" deprives me of the plenitude of visual perception, the Other remains, by definition, invisible. Looking straight at the Other is forbidden, in a way, as one would be petrified, even blinded like a hysteric. The Other is therefore a locus where our vision proves impotent – a malfunction paradoxically rooted in the age-old alliance be-

⁹ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York & London, 1981), p. 84.

¹⁰ René Laforgue, "Scotomization in Schizophrenia," in: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 8 (1927), p. 473, quoted in Jay, p. 354.

¹¹ Jay, p. 356.

¹² The effect of the Other's gaze might be comparable to that of the sun as a source of potentially maddening, excessive stimuli for the naked eyes; without sunlight we cannot see, and yet if we look directly into it, we are blinded. See Jonathan Crary, "Modernizing Vision," in: *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York, 1988), p. 34, for his study on the early 19th century's "new centrality of the body in vision," manifest especially in some scientists' curious passion for "the experience of staring directly into the sun, of sunlight searing itself onto the body."

tween seeing and knowing. "In short, the Other can exist for us in two forms; if I experience him with evidence, I fail to know him; if I know him, if I act upon him, I only reach his being-as-object and his probable existence in the midst of the world. No synthesis of these two forms is possible" (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 302).

Slaying Medusa, or how to make the Other harmless

The paralyzing effect of the Other's gaze finds its classical representation in the figure of Medusa/the Gorgon. In Freudian symbolism and its application to iconography, Medusa conveys many-sided, layered meanings, yet it is basically associated with "the castration anxiety that comes from having looked at something."¹³ Here we could possibly discern another stratum of the visual (or anti-visual?) experience of the Other – a stratum in which traumatic signifiers are buried and expected to resurface.

It is on the theme of castration that Yve-Alain Bois plays variations in his provocative article "On Matisse: The Blinding" (1994).¹⁴ Comparing *Le bonheur de vivre* (1905-6) with Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), Bois turns to Leo Steinberg's preceding study and points out, "The essential difference between the two canvases lies in their mode of addressing the spectator." In *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* "all the figures relate 'singly, directly, to the spectator; they stare at us," and "it was in order to place the unity of his picture 'in the startled consciousness of a viewer who sees himself seen' that Picasso used everything in his power to prevent us from viewing it as a scene." These women are thus depicted as a cause of the sense of stupefaction, namely, "the cardinal symptom of castration anxiety."¹⁵

The psychoanalytical interpretation of the "Gazing Monster" Medusa is also adopted in Masayuki Tanaka's latest study on Man Ray.¹⁶ Fully aware of the possibility of decoding sexist traits in the Surrealist circle, Tanaka seemingly allows such an interpretation of Man Ray's work, in which women go through objectification and fragmentation in order to serve the desiring male

¹³ Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), in: *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, and "Medusa's Head" (1922), in: *Standard Edition*, vol. 18. See Jay, pp. 275-279.

¹⁴ Yve-Alain Bois, "On Matisse: The Blinding," in: *October*, 68 (Spring, 1994).

¹⁵ Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel" (1972), reprinted in: *October*, 44 (Spring 1988), pp. 7-74. See Bois, pp. 103-104. Bois amplifies this point, combining it with another variation of "the theme of castration anxiety," that is, the blinding effect of the sun (pp. 79, 118-120).

¹⁶ Masayuki Tanaka, "Man Ray's Representation of Woman's Eye and the Uncanny," in: *Bigaku [Aesthetics]*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Winter, 1999), pp. 25-36.

gaze.¹⁷ And yet, he contends, Man Ray's representation of woman cannot be reduced to a feminist schema of this kind. Rather, deeply connected with Medusa and her fate of decapitation, it should be read as a visualization of the castration anxiety. Ultimately, through "<the return of the repressed> which is a threat to the rational subject," the artist realized the Surrealist ideal, an emancipation of the unconscious.¹⁸

However these two readings – the "objectification of the female subject" and the symbolic representation of castration anxiety – seem closely related to each other. As Tanaka himself articulates, violent manipulations of the female body – the eye, the face, or the head cut off or erased altogether – could be counted as variations of the Medusa theme. Opposite in appearance, one causing terror (a woman with evil eyes) and the other provoking desire (a woman without eyes, or faceless, headless), perhaps they only refer to different sides of the essentially similar reaction that the male subject entertains, confronted with the female Other. It might also be possible to see the original myth of Medusa and Perseus as in a way tinged with this same ambiguity. The Monster is evoked, only to be killed; the object of fear and the process of overcoming coexist there, just as the Freudian Medusa simultaneously represents the cause of castration anxiety, the image of castration, and its denial.¹⁹

According to Carol Duncan, "very often images of women in modern art speak of male fears," the story of man fighting and eventually transcending the monstrous woman/mother.²⁰ De Kooning's *Woman I* (1952) is a prominent example, one of those "distorted or dangerous-looking creatures, potentially overpowering, devouring, or castrating." Duncan points to a "striking resemblance" between this image and the Gorgon of ancient Greek art. Indicative of her origin as a fertility or mother goddess, the Gorgon often appears flanked by animals and adopting a characteristically self-exposing gesture, and yet de Kooning's figure "appears especially intended to conjure up infantile feelings of powerlessness before the mother and the dread of castration: in the open jaw can be read the vagina dentate – the idea of a dangerous, devouring vagina, too horrible to depict, and hence transposed to the toothy mouth."²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹ See Bois, p. 104.

²⁰ Carol Duncan, "The MoMa's Hot Mamas" (1989) in: *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 189-207. Also see pp. 81-120 ("Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting" and "The Esthetics of Power in Modern Erotic Art") for her analysis of the development of representations of women in modern art, from the fin de siècle "femme fatale" to either a far more aggressive "praying mantis" or "an obedient animal/passive, available flesh" in the early 20th century.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

However, the painting doesn't simple-mindedly visualize "the dread of castration." Besides the image of the archaic goddess/monster, it also incorporates contemporary representations of woman in the mass media, by showing off her vulgarity or her "girlie" side. The woman here is, therefore, "simultaneously frightening and ludicrous," as de Kooning himself once described her. The monster that the male subject has to overcome, transcend, is already halfway made harmless. "The ambiguity of the image thus gives the artist (and the viewer) both the experience of danger and a feeling of overcoming it."²²

Given that iconic, frontal images of woman with staring eyes frequent the history of modern art, the next question is whether they really have the "uncanny" effect of awakening the unconscious, or repressed castration anxiety, that is, whether Medusa's petrifying power is kept intact even in those mediated images. "Castration" itself is in fact a dubious term and its phallogocentric origin remains to be excavated,²³ but the issue has to be limited here to clarifying how the Other can be captured within visibility – within representation.

On the one hand, images which relate directly to the spectator somehow do simulate the effect of the Other's presence. As semi-subjects, or simulacra of the Other, they repeat the alternation between the Other-as-subject and the Other-as-object in what Richard Brilliant calls "the oscillation between art object and human subject."²⁴ However, while some of those images may well visualize monstrous, forbidden objects and touch the layer of the unconscious along with trauma buried in it, that visualization of terror is often accompanied by protection against itself, as the monster is shown in a lowered form, either deprived of her gaze or made ludicrous. In a way the protection is already there, or the attempt to translocate the monster into the world of the flat plane, of representation, in which she as an image never completely negates visibility.

Medusa and Perseus – this mythological pair – is in this sense suggestive

²² Ibid., pp. 198-199.

²³ For the issue as to how persistently "the privileged status of male viewers" has been preserved within the frame of modern art, as in the case of *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, see Duncan, pp. 200-201.

²⁴ See Bois, p. 104, and Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 7. Brilliant here points to "the double nature of portraiture," which straddles both life and art:

"...the oscillation between art object and human subject, represented so personally, is what gives portraits their extraordinary grasp on our imagination." Images in successful portraits achieve the effect of presence via that of likeness, since they "pretend not to be signs or tokens invented by artists, but rather aim to represent the manner in which their subjects would appear to the viewer in life" (p. 20). Particularly a frontal, full-face portrait, compared to a profile, directly addresses the viewer in the first person and so functions like the "I-You" relation (pp. 27, 43-45).

of how to represent and thereby “slay” the Other, the function of which (as a mirror and as the void) would otherwise become intolerable. According to Thomas Hess, de Kooning’s Women grasp an elusive, dangerous truth “by the throat:” “And truth can be touched only by complications, ambiguities and paradox, so, like the hero who looked for Medusa in the mirroring shield, he must study her flat, reflected image every inch of the way.”²⁵

Immediate vision vs. mediate vision

While the body of the Other resists being seen, hiding itself behind the blinding gaze, in many cases the body is on display for us to devour and the human form is said to be “a magnet for the eye.” We should move on now to ask how and on which conditions it becomes less problematic to see the Other.

In Sartre’s schema, whether one remains a subject or degenerates into an object depends on the struggle for “the right to see without being seen.” I need to see without being seen in order to concentrate on seeing – if so, some devices or tricks have to be contrived to produce a solipsistic illusion of pure subjectivity, to cross out the fact that I am the body, a visible object for the Other.

With devices of this sort, surely our visual world changes. It seems possible, accordingly, to distinguish two types of vision, provisionally called <immediate vision> and <mediate vision>. When a subject faces another subject, they are both kept in each other’s <immediate vision>, each struggling for the right to remain the subject and never fully achieving it. The subject-state and the object-state alter, “for each has its own instability and collapses in order for the other to rise from its ruins” (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 297). Yet, it also seems part of our daily practice to switch from this <immediate vision> to <mediate vision> so as to make the Other a harmless object. Just as Perseus, in beheading Medusa, looks at the monster only in reflection in his shiny shield, so we capture the Other, not in the flesh /presence, but in representation, keeping the Other distanced ontologically and thus sealing up the power of the gaze. One exemplary case is the theatre, where the stage forms a world clearly distinguished from the auditorium. A spotlight is directed on the performers, while the spectators sink into the darkness. The same structure is followed by other media of spectacle, drastically expanding the language of technology for “seeing without being seen.”²⁶ And even without those spe-

²⁵ Thomas B. Hess, *Willem de Kooning* (New York, 1959), p. 7, quoted in Duncan, p. 198.

²⁶ Of course, not all the media for spectacle, for the mediate vision, have been designed entirely “to contain the Other within his objectivity” (*Being and Nothingness*, p.

cific, large scale settings, a temporary capturing of “the Other as an object” happens everywhere. When you stand in front of someone with a camera in your hand, its “Medusa effect” determines almost instantaneously who is looking/who is being looked at. Or when you lie down on the operating table, your body thoroughly becomes an object, as the gaze of medicine is authorized to examine it.²⁷ A similar asymmetric relation of “seeing without being seen” (and vice versa) could be observed in the structure of a panopticon, as well as in that of a peep show – although such relations seem easily destabilized, as in the case of Duchamp’s posthumous work *Étant Donnés* (1946-66), where the viewer’s body, supposedly invisible, becomes an object to be displayed.²⁸ Whether clothed or naked may also determine to some extent which one takes the role of the viewer, if as Sartre writes, “To put on clothes is to hide one’s object-state: it is to claim the right of seeing without being seen; that is, to be pure subject” (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 289).

In <immediate vision>, I see myself always exposed to the Other’s look and my vision easily hurt by its blinding effect. In <mediate vision>, as if enjoying seeing the world without belonging to it, the notion of “the disembodied eye,” “a view on the world, rather than in it” resurfaces. Naturally my eyes, constantly changing direction and refocusing, never leave my body, which itself is embedded in the world. However, there are moments I’m absorbed in and at the same time distanced from what I see in <mediate vision>, so that my object-state as a body sinks into oblivion. <Immediate vision> and <mediate vision> alternate and both constitute the landscape of our daily life.²⁹

By the same token, we may naturally imagine that a painter (male, nor-

297). In the midst of our daily life, which is endlessly overloaded with visual “noise,” raw, chaotic, non-oriented, and in flux, those visual media provide materials already selected, edited and restructured, less burdening on our vision – a rather comfortable “armchair” in which our eyes can relax and slow down the process of perception, ending up not seeing unless oriented to see. Such a way of functioning certainly reflects how our vision works, selectively and actively, shutting out and thus defending itself from excessive stimuli.

²⁷ The uncanniness of “my experience of my own body” is discussed by Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London & New York, 1996), pp. 34-35.

²⁸ For the ironical situation in *Étant Donnés* where “the viewer becomes the uneasy object of a gaze from behind – that of those waiting to stare at the peep show,” see Jay, pp. 169-170. Also for the role of a scopophilic viewer which affects the appearance of an object, see Brilliant, pp. 152-153.

²⁹ For this to be discussed further, Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the Cartesian geometer’s eye, which stays outside and above the scene it surveys, certainly needs to be reexamined, along with Bryson’s opposition between Gaze and Glance, or Walter Benjamin’s between *Sammulung* and *Zerstreuung*. See Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 87-131, Walter Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (Dritte Fassung), in: *Walter Benjamin Gessammelte Schriften I/2*, (Frankfurt an Main, 1991), p. 504.

mally) and his model (female, often naked) should be another conspicuous pair where <mediate vision> materializes itself against the field of <immediate vision>. And yet, portrait painters often prefer working with photos (or representations of other kinds), or from memory, rather than face to face with their models. In some extreme cases, a painter even blindfolds himself after working from a model. As reported by Bois, Matisse favored this fashion, since he believed, “if I close my eyes, I see objects better than with my eyes open.”³⁰

This paradox reminds us of a long tradition in which painting has been regarded not as an art of sight but as an art primarily based on memory. Placed in this tradition, the painter somehow comes closer to the poet/writer, as if painting and drawing were nothing but subdivisions of writing. Then, if “You only really see when you don’t look,” you give up your sight in the present tense – stop catching an object in its immediate sensation and turn to its shadow, its substitute, its image preserved in memory. In this shifting the original is replaced by the copy. A substitute as it is, the copy surpasses the original here, coming through a process of crystallization in memory <mediate vision>, while the original, that is, an experience of the Other <immediate vision>, always has some part blurred (or even “scotomized”). The copy supplements and modulates stimuli of the original, too intense to taste, too vague to articulate, too traumatic to live fully.

We may recall Jacques Derrida’s reinterpretation of an ancient anecdote which later became associated with the “origin of painting/drawing.” The story was initially taken from Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* (Book XXXV) in which Butades, a potter of Sicyon at Corinth, was introduced with his daughter, “who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by a lamp.”³¹ Referring to some exemplary representations in painting, Derrida brings it to our notice that this Corinthian girl wasn’t looking at her lover when she drew. “As if looking is prohibited when one is drawing, or one makes a drawing only on condition that one doesn’t look. As if drawing is a confession of love, destined to or organized for the invisibility of the Other.”³² Thus in the heart of drawing and painting, for which “replacing perception with memory” is essential, there lies “the absence, the invisibility, of one’s model,” “the invisibility of the Other” – if we follow Derrida’s own phrasing.

³⁰ Bois, pp. 77-78.

³¹ And “Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposure to fire with the rest of his pottery.” Pliny, *Natural History* (Volume IX, Book XXXIII-XXXV), trans. H. Rackham (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), pp. 371-373.

³² Jacques Derrida, *Moires d’aveugle – L’autoportrait et autres ruines* (Paris, 1990), trans. to Japanese by Satoshi Ukai (Tokyo, 1998), p. 63. (Translation into English is by the author of the paper).

For the shifting from perception to memory, however, or from the original to the copy, at least two distinct sources should be considered, for painting either “from memory” or “from nature” is not an issue solely for portraiture but relates to painting/drawing in general. At one level, the shift is certainly necessitated by the presence of the Other; the Other doesn’t fully become visible in <immediate vision>, which proves deficient under the blinding gaze. And yet, a clear, detailed, and faultless picture – the product of a perfectly normal vision – could overflow and paralyze us so that directly perceived images must be replaced by images imprinted in memory. Already edited and reworked through a mental process of the subject, they are kept in store in a “powerfully selective,”³³ compressed form, ready to be unpacked at any time.

In making a portrait of someone – in capturing the Other via a medium of representation – you are thus doubly motivated to make a Perseusian detour, to switch from the immediate sensation of an object to its represented/reworked image.

This paper intended to argue that the Other can be a source of excessive stimuli, a burden much too heavy on our vision, so that various media or devices for “seeing the Other” have been invented. With them, the Other is removed to another world which is not ours, securing our position of “seeing without being seen.” The Other’s body thus generates one conspicuous locus, which manifests more than anything how our vision needs to be protected and assisted – how it needs to be mediated.

The petrifying, blinding effect is, needless to say, only one aspect of the Other’s look. And yet, within a cultural climate in which the human body is no longer a classical body but is represented dominantly as a grotesque body, it might perhaps obtain a new meaning to recognize rather dreadful aspects of experiencing the Other.³⁴ Moreover, we will hopefully contextualize better an alternative path taken by the descendents of Perseus, who choose a copy

³³ Thomas Crow, “Saturday Disaster: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol,” in: *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London, UK, 1990), p. 316.

³⁴ And we may also understand better today’s anti-ocularcentric discourse flourishing over the vulnerability of vision, as this “alternative way” might somehow lead to a middle ground between the “pure opticality,” the “disembodied eye” of the viewer of modernist painting or of pop art and the overemphasized physicality of minimal and post-minimal art. See Kikuko Toyama, “Carnality recovered and painting doomed: minimalism as a site of the redefinition of the aesthetic subject,” in: *The Ural International Journal of Philosophy*, No.1(2), 2000, pp.155-166, and “The Bodies after the ‘End of Painting,’” in: *Bigaku [Aesthetics]*, Vol. 51, No. 2, Autumn 2000, pp. 1-12. Cf. Rosalind Krauss, “Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop,” in: *Dia Art Foundation: Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, No. 1, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, 1987), pp. 59-64.

on a shield <mediate vision> in order to kill, let go, the original <immediate vision> – as if one could be reunited with the Other only in such an action of mourning in advance. “Only the dead can perpetually be objects without ever becoming subjects” (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 297).

EUROPE AFTER 1989: ETHNIC WARS, THE FASCISATION OF SOCIAL LIFE AND BODY POLITICS IN SERBIA

ŽARANA PAPIĆ

This paper deals with the specific area of representational practices in which the media production/appropriation of reality in Serbia played the decisive role in the process of the fascisation of social life and every day practices in Serbia – before and during the wars in former Yugoslavia.

It concerns how the *chosen discourses of appropriation* of social memory, collective trauma and the re-creation of the Enemy-Otherness in image and event can become an integral, “self-participatory” agent in the pro-Fascist construction of the social reality – through the very image/concept of the “reality” itself, which then becomes the lived experience of people exposed to the constant working of the image/concept.

The *power of the over-representation* of the social reality can therefore be seen as the strongest discursive instrument of a political order. Its power lies in the position of the selective legitimisation/delegitimisation of social memory and social “presence”: through narration/negation of social trauma, shiftable presence/absence of violence, the constitution/virtuality of the public sphere, and the formation of the “collective consciousness.” The legitimising power of this dominant discourse lies in the construction of the collective consensus as the cultural/political code of language.

The process of the social and political transformations in Eastern and Central Europe since the Fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, labelled rather euphemistically as a “transition,” brought with it the phenomenon of violence as an acute social and political problem, although in its milder forms both forms of violence – gender and ethnic – were present in all other countries of the Eastern block as well. Their over-all persistence in post-communist regimes reveals their structural dependency, which allows them to be defined as societies of highly charged ethnic/racial, and sexual politics (Enloe, 1993).

One could even say that in the times of crisis and basic social transformations, the deconstruction of the previous gendered order is one of the most fundamental factors of change, and an effective instrument of the global restructuring of power. Furthermore, since the most influential concept in post-communist state-building processes was the patriarchal nation-state concept, the ideology of state and ethnic nationalism (based on patriarchal principles) inevitably became the most dominant building force. Various forms of hegemonistic nationalisms, national separatisms, chauvinist and racist exclusion or marginalisation of (old and new) minority groups are, as a rule, closely connected with patriarchal, discriminatory and violent politics against women and their civil and social rights previously “guaranteed” under the old communist order (Papić, 1994a).

The absence of women from politics in post-communist transitions reveals the damaging effects of the communist patriarchal legacy – which gave women legal rights (to work, equal pay, education, divorce, abortion), but strategically prevented them from becoming active political subjects of their own destiny. The disappearance of a communist “equality paradigm” and the old-new conservative ideology of State, Nation or Religion in each post-communist country was crucially based on the strategies of the *retraditionalisation*, *instrumentalisation* and *naturalisation* of women’s identities, their social roles, and symbolic representations.

The structural connection between ethnic and gender violence is most clearly seen in the case of former Yugoslavia. The genocidal brutality of the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia shows how ethnic hatreds have been provoked/produced in order to construct the *new* frontiers of Enemy-Otherness through the fluid and mixed lines of religion, culture, ethnicity and gender, thus reflecting the contemporary redefinition of racial hostility (Eisenstein, 1996). Furthermore, ethnic nationalism, or more precisely, *ethno-fascist nationalism*, is based on a specific gender identity/difference politics in which women are simultaneously mythologized as the Nation’s deepest “essence,” and instrumentalised in their “natural” difference – as the Nation’s life/birth saver/producer. This allows one to conclude that the wars in the former Yugoslavia could not be interpreted as the result of the tribal and “eternal” barbarian mentality of its peoples, but as a contemporary phenomenon of violent, post-communist strategies for the redistribution of ethnic/gender power by defining new ethnic and sub-ethnic borders *between men*, and their respective (often militarised) elite-structures (Papić, 1994b)

Also, the nationalist abuse of women (Muel-Dreyfuss, 1996) shed light on the phenomenon of totalitarian ethnic nationhood as a naturalised fraternal order, in which women are doubly subjugated: as *insiders* they are colonised

and instrumentalised in their “natural” function as the Nation’s sacred “essence” and “birth-machines;” as *outsiders* they are reified into the target of destruction, as a mediated instrument of violence against other men’s Nation and cultural identity.

The abuse of women and their bodies in the “pure” nation-building processes results in two inter-dependent forms of violence against women: highly restricted identity “demands” (no abortion) for women-insiders, and extreme violence (consistent, as in cases of rape) against women-outsiders. The external destruction of one social/cultural identity system in war is the most brutal form of deconstruction, but life under the processes of malign-ed/ant internal mutations is, perhaps, equally disastrous because it systematically diminishes and humiliates the basic human values of decency, honesty, tolerance, individual morality, or even more basic assumptions, such as the concept of time (past, present and future), personal identity, or the simple ten commandments (love thy neighbour, thou shall not kill). In Serbia one could see these values all disappear, only to be replaced with alien substitutes – and taken for the “real” thing.

Briefly, in ex-Yugoslavia four basic identity levels were in extreme turmoil, under violent and (only seemingly) chaotic deconstruction/construction: Self-identity, Gender identity, Civic/Urban identity, and the identity of the Other. In all these four dimensions of public/private identity the following “forces” are circularly and claustrophobically intertwined: Nation, Tradition and Patriarchy – acted out through the following instruments or “channels:” closure, fear, exclusion, conflict, violence, revenge, extinction, displacement, disempowerment, brutality, insecurity, unpredictability, poverty.

Speaking of Serbia, one could say that all four of these identity levels were in turmoil not due to any outside, but only due to internal forces of nationalist and patriarchal “aggression.” Although (on the surface) Milošević’s regime still maintained a strange mixture of nationalist and “socialist” ideas and values, the decisive process is one of a peculiar retraditionalisation – a tightly combined dynamic of fundamental civic disempowerment and state/nationalist/patriarchal authoritarianism which bases its power on the revival/survival of the rural/feudal/collective identity that delegates/transfers enormous power to the Leader, which (accidentally or not) in the ancient Serbian language actually has a triple meaning: the Duke/Master/Leader.

The feminist slogan “the personal is the political,” in a deeply ironic sense, became part of the official, state-nationalist policy in Serbia. First of all, it translates as “the personal *belongs* to the State politics,” but, since (years before the war) politics in Serbia had been identified with the National/ist Cause, Destiny and Glory, its precise translation is “the personal *is* national/ist.” In

every nationalism, and particularly in its aggressive/ethno-Fascist form, men are those who make/create/form the “soul” and the “engine” of the vision/interpretation of the exclusionary, war-oriented “essence” of the Nation, and women are systematically made invisible, unless they become the much publicised victims of the Enemy-Nation. This invisibility may appear advantageous since they are at least not under constant pressure from nationalist slogans, recipes and advice on how to become “real” Serbian women. But, in fact, this position of women’s “non-presence” in the public sphere is itself the sign of a strong Serbian patriarchal culture and politics (Papić, 1994). They are not even to be talked about publicly – except in the “natural” context of nationhood.

The nationalist revival of the patriarchal tradition invoked, strengthened and (combined with the communist patriarchal legacy) formed the “new” Serbian nationalist patriarchy, very much marked by the features of Milošević’s rule. One could even say that Serbian nationalist patriarchy is, to some extent, its own contradiction, since he despotically subjugated *all* members of the “female” Nation. More precisely, from the beginning he consistently politically disempowered all political institutions and therefore all men (except himself) in order to exclude any possible competition of “equals.”

On the other hand, the unstable social circumstances and the extremely difficult living conditions in Serbia (Bolčić, 1995) have activated enormous reserves of women’s energy in their over-mobilisation for survival (Milić, 1995), the hyper-intensified form of their subjugated empowerment in this vital adaptation to a time of crisis, war, and violence. By activating their “natural” survival potential, women actually carried Serbia’s heaviest burden of the social and economic crises during the period of UN sanctions, and therefore, willingly or not, actually played the part of Milošević’s most faithful “ally.” The fact that his despotic charisma has been associated with certain types of women faithfully “adoring” him from the beginning, might be read as follows: the majority of women in Serbia have been, in fact, seduced by One Man as despotic patriarch and they therefore have complied with the expected, “monumental” epic Serbian women’s destiny of being self-sacrificing mothers, dutiful daughters, unselfish mothers-in-law, open-hearted aunts, hard-working cousins, reliable neighbours, friends and supporters.

The overall civic void which was consistently filled with the disempowering hegemony of the nationalist collective homogenisation, the constant life-in-crisis conditions, the near-war situation, the economic, political and legal destruction of society in Serbia, the autocratic power structure of one man which disempowered every other political institution and force, the mythologized total investment in Great History and Great Sacrifice – in Serbia re-

sulted in a specific gender dynamics which cannot be seen as the one-dimensional oppression of women by men but as something more complex. It is contradictory and significantly different on a public and a private level in terms of its practices and discourses. On the public level, both in practice and in the dominant nationalist discourse, women are legally, economically and institutionally almost totally disempowered. But, in contradiction to what they would think and declare, men are not empowered on both public levels. Only on the level of manifest ideological nationalist discourse are they the dominant, ruling, militant and heroic actor-gender, because Milošević's despotic destruction and dissolution of the social/civic institutional/political fabric on the level of public practice made them almost as disempowered as women. They have invested, delegated, and transferred all aspects of their own public power to the mysterious, unpredictable and uncontrolled power of One Man.

This structural emasculation of men's power on the public level makes the gender power-dynamics on the private level even less one-dimensional. The men's public disempowerment makes them privately powerless more than ever before. The distribution of power on the private-everyday level – has lost its traditional dichotomic character because men's power structure in everyday life has deteriorated and almost all means of their private power over women has dissolved except for the dominant ideological discourse. However, the increased incidence of men being violent to women is, of course, an alarming sign of how men are coping, or failing to cope, with this sudden and obviously unwanted gender egalitarianism. This gender egalitarian solidarity is, in fact, the result of one other equality – the equality of living under despotic powerlessness.

So, if we are to compare the same women's "escape into privacy," a phenomenon visible in all other previous communist countries, I would not say that in the case of Serbia their "escape" was an escape at all, or nostalgia for simple private rewards after the socialist public overburdening. The case for women in Serbia is different. In the period of extreme existential insecurity they were offered only one choice: the traditional *women's strengthening strategy by complying* with the deepest, most "natural" patriarchal expectations of women – their self-identification with a re-traditionalised, basic patriarchal power structure. As so many times before, women took what was pathetically offered to them – to "save the nation" by making their "own" family survive. The private empowerment of women in this process is, in itself, an extremely costly achievement, and what is more – it actually helped the despotic nationalist political system that caused and provoked the very crisis they tried to struggle with, to survive.

Media Production of Reality in Serbia and The Chosen Discourses of Appropriation: The Integrating Power of Fascism

Terror and repression in Serbia have been carefully planned, but they have never been systematically applied except to the media; this has left social areas in which one has simply not been noticed as a serious opponent of the regime. The wars in former Yugoslavia were being planned long before the first TV pictures were first broadcast in June 1991. Those pictures showed the realisation of a hegemonistic Serb policy articulated in the mid-eighties; it was obvious that the “Yugoslav People’s Army” would take the side of Milošević’s genocidal ideology. War had been presented to the people of Serbia as “the only option” already in 1989, when Milošević went off to Gazimestan and there renewed the *Kosovo myth* and announced “possible war” before a million Serb men and women. Like Hitler at a rally of SS units, Milošević *descended from the heavens* (sceptics would say landed in a helicopter) onto the *holy ground* of Gazimestan, in order to inform us that the time had come for new heroic battles – i.e., war.

That was a period of popular fascination with Milošević, he became a mega-phenomenon, his pictures everywhere, people familiarised his image with the new Serb Icon. The people – the inhabitants, not necessarily Serbs – of Serbia indeed went through a phase of absolute fascination with the Leader “Slobo,” and made possible the Fascist homogenisation of the collective. Everyone submitted to it: men and women, old and young, educated and uneducated. Women would repeat; “he is so beautiful.” Why did the majority of Serbian women side with Milošević? It is because they too embraced a schizophrenic role, an absolute separation of their private and public identities. They wished to be “mothers of great warriors,” they wished to sacrifice themselves. In patriarchal societies they cannot imagine themselves outside this role of being a victim. Also, many prominent “democratic” personas from the opposition, have indeed gradually internalised some of the elements of fascism: the “Serb holy nature” of certain territories, the heroic Kosovo past, the holy objects of the Church, or the attitude of surprise regarding “why NATO is suddenly bombing us for *no reason at all*.” In other words, during the past few years also the independent circles have lapsed into the Serbo-centric *narcissistic rhetoric* they have learnt from the “infallible” regime.

The re-invention of Serb patriarchal society was, therefore, developed at epic, political, literary, scientific, sentimental, Christian and pagan levels – people really believed that “with Slobo” they would finally reach a Serbian mythic all-embracing unity. What united the people was not so much a mythical vision of the future Serb Heaven, but a substitute for more reasonable

instruments to help people confront the great issue of *fear* that began after 1989. That was almost perfect political instrumentalisation with basic Fears: of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Yugoslavia's break-up and the "void" heralded by the collapse of the hegemonistic Yugoslav nation. Milošević exploited this to the full. He sent a message to the men that they were to fight "heroically" for the preservation of Yugoslavia, while to the women the message was to shut up.

Fascisation of Social Memory, Collective Trauma and The Exclusion of Otherness

As an instrument of constructing pre-war eruptive emotions that would finally lead to the psychological fascisation of people's minds, much effort was expended to evoke and revive the Serbian World War II trauma of 1941-45. Much was also done also to revive the Orthodox faith among the population of Serbia, but the symbolic identification with World War II was probably the most effective method of homogenisation: by providing a continuous visual presentation on TV every day – for instance of the exhumation of mass graves in Herzegovina. The intention was to use the media so that people would once *again internalise* the traumas of Ustasha crimes. The exhumation of the bones was in reality a way of preparing the ground for the new mass graves that were dug after 1991. Propaganda was created proclaiming that "the Serbs are the biggest victims," who therefore have the "right" of revenge and the "right" to wage new wars and commit crimes. Karadžić, for example, stated that "Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina have the right to preventive defence." In other words, he amnestied *in advance* the crimes that were to come, by exploiting the traumas associated with the unearthed bones from 1941.

So there was a particular *peregrination of the trauma* (Papić, 2000) just as there was a shift in time of national identity – back into the past – and a shift of responsibility for war crimes exclusively to the Croat Ustasha side, while Serb Chetnik crimes were methodically set aside. Reality was divided schizophrenically into a virtual reality of the media and the ordinary reality of the war, with the media reality for many people becoming far stronger than anything they saw with their own eyes. This is all part of a *re-invention of the chosen trauma* at the level of *the public* political phenomenon and through the state media: a carefully planned revision of the historical balance sheet. The media did a great job of preparing people to accept war as a "natural," "historic," etc. series of events. The media did consistently forge the Serbs' *indifference* towards the Other(s), the trauma became so internalised that Croatian and Bosnian victims could never reach the sacred status of the allegedly "primeval," "greatest," Serbian, victims of 1941-42.

One could perhaps describe this even as a *fictionalisation of the chosen trauma*. Moreover, it was not only a fictionalisation of trauma, but also, at the same time, a *displacement of the trauma – in time and in space*. This was a very sophisticated transfer of the local Bosnian-Herzegovinian drama way back from 1941-42 to *across* the river Drina, to the population in Serbia which *had never experienced* that trauma, and who were supposed to go through “reliving” it, in 1991.

Layers of Responsibility: Bones and Relics

Another aspect, the common post-1989 revival of Orthodox Christianity, is also closely connected with these processes. The Serbian Orthodox Church once again started to teach people how to become “good” Serb men or women, for example with long Orthodox ritual processions around Serbia carrying the holy relics of Tsar Lazar, who died in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. For months these relics travelled across and all over Serbia, they were ceremonially carried from – and thus clearly fusing – the year 1389 to the year 1989. So, here we do not have only fictionalisation and displacement of trauma, but a much greater political tool: *the compression/decompression of time – time fusion and confusion*. The relics “confirmed” that to be a Serb is in fact a vocation, an invitation to become a victim, since Serbs are in fact a “heavenly people.” What was repeatedly written in the print media or shown on TV referred to a narrative model of a “lack of understanding for the injustices committed against the Serbs;” hence, in parallel, to the “Serb right” to refuse to live in peace with other nations who “for centuries” have behaved in an evil way towards them.

So, to conclude briefly, all these years we went through a whole set of preparations for war: verbal and visual, emotional and cognitive, mental (or even mystical) and public, horizontal and vertical, time and timelessness, spatial and a-spatial – all these aspects were actively included in the overall *fascisation of public and private life* in Serbia. The war actually arrived late: the indifference to and “tolerance” of future genocide in people’s minds were psychologically ready for activation as early as 1989. It was already accepted that even some “less good Serbs” would also be sacrificed: those who do not *fully* belong to Greater Serbia. Those were the days and years of a specific phenomenon in Serbia, seemingly naive or rational, which I am freely labelling as *Turbo-Fascism*.

It is, of course, known that Fascism is a historical term; that the history of Nazi Germany is not the same as that of Milošević’s Serbia. However, in post-modernist and feminist theory we speak of “shifting concepts,” when a new

epoch inherits with some additions concepts belonging to an earlier one, like, for instance the feminist notion of *shifting patriarchy*. In my view we should not fear the use of “big terms” if they *accurately* describe certain political realities. Serbian Fascism had its own concentration camps, its own systematic representation of violence against Others, its own cult of the family and cult of the leader, an explicitly patriarchal structure, a culture of indifference towards the exclusion of the Other, a closure of society upon itself and upon its own past; it had a taboo on empathy and a taboo on multiculturalism; it had powerful media acting as proponents of genocide; it had a nationalist ideology; it had an epic mentality of *listening* to the word and *obeying* authority.

The prefix “turbo” refers to the specific mixture of politics, culture, “mental powers” and the pauperisation of life in Serbia: the mixture of rural and urban, pre-modern and post-modern, pop culture and heroines, real and virtual, mystical and “normal,” etc. In this term, despite its naive or innocent appearances, there is still fascism in its proper sense. Like all fascisms, Turbo-Fascism includes and celebrates a pejorative renaming, alienation, and finally removal, of the Other: Croats, Bosnians, and Albanians. Turbo-fascism in fact demands and basically relies on this *culture of the normality of fascism* that had been structurally constituted well before all the killings in the wars started.

Here is an example: Serbia introduced an economic ban on Slovene goods, i.e., – on all objects symbolising the Slovene as the Other with whom Serbs had had contact! The integrative force of fascism is here evident: the order from above and through “populist sentiments” in the media, people were not to consume Slovene milk, any more. This strategy discouraged people from buying an *object* because it would mean they “love” a *subject* – Slovenes. In this way the strategy was very successful: Slovenes were transferred from *co-citizens* or a compatriot position to a symbolic position of the “milk” which must not be *touched*. This process of objectifying and excluding the Other *via an object* that symbolises the whole ethnic group, quickly becomes part of the “common values,” under the Law of Common Sense. That is how people in Serbia (long before June 1991, when the war started) were taught to hate the “Slovene Body.” Without that politically constructed *aversion* towards the body of the Other, until the Body of the Other becomes an *Abject Body* – the massacres and murders of so many Croatians, Bosnians and Albanian bodies would not have been possible.

On the other hand this *spatial transfer* of trauma played a significant part. Briefly put, the Drina River, which divides Serbia from all other western parts of ex-Yugoslavia, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, played an enormous symbolic role in dividing the two realities: war and destruction stopped just at the west side of the Drina River. That reality never entered Serbia in its full mon-

strosity, and so the Drina River became a symbolic border beyond which empathy no longer existed. The Serbs of Serbia had no feeling of responsibility for anything that occurred on the far, west side of the Drina, since the people over there symbolically were no longer human beings – they were abjected-objectivised enemies. That makes the Serb crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina the last result of a destroyed reason, a destruction of all reason: it is not just a repetition but a *reinforcement*, and continuation of the Fascist crimes of the past Second World War. It is, in my view, a very malignant *continuation* of the “reawakening of old ghosts,” who are now no longer ghosts, but new victims, live people suffering, and it will go into the following generations.

Paradoxically or not, from the late eighties this *normality of evil* against the Other belonged to *the normal everyday life* in Serbia. The above mentioned processes and changes were necessary in order for it to become so. This was the result of a sophisticated policy of collective amnesia that made individual consciences feel “free” to be suspended by a collective Super-Ego. In these processes of issuing, “licenses to kill” were systematically issued by the state TV, private and commercial TV programs, it was the dominant form of political discourse, and an open message from the “holy messages of the Serbian Orthodox Church.” These Serbian institutions and individuals did construct during eighties some kind of *super-conscience* that permitted oblivion and the suspension of empathy, memory and tolerance toward the Other. We are still far away from any understanding that there exists a whole range of *layers of responsibility* for the crimes committed: for example, responsibility for remaining silent, for forgetting, for hatred and for media propaganda. The responsibility for remaining silent is the most complicated, since silence includes agreement, but also *awareness of repression* – and even a shadow of doubt.

Male And Female Bodies And Their Representation In Serbia During The 1990s

First of all, the male body underwent a deconstruction of the peaceable and relatively urbanised identity that it had achieved under socialism. Secondly, the male under Tito’s regime always inhabited the border between rural and urban: he lived in the village and worked in the factory. He was a sufficiently hybrid creature to retain many epic and pagan elements that would later be transformed into the masculine ideal of the warrior under Milošević’s regime. Milošević very carefully constructed the “Serb hero” and all *male fantasies* – he permitted the highest heroism *in words*, particularly in *his own words* – in fact, the Milošević as the greatest national Leader did not necessarily have to do much *in reality*. His powerful image and existence were sufficient.

Also Dobrica Ćosić, writer and “Father of the Nation,” did a serious job of articulating the “Serbian Soul;” he had only “given the word” and through his words the genocidal fantasies of the collective were fulfilled. Once again, schizophrenically, the “heroes” were *civilians* who only delivered messages of war – they did not cut throats or murder, but gave the orders for those things to be done. All males in Serbia were subject to a media brainwashing in the course of which they had to identify with the Leader: i.e., the male population was gripped even more strongly by fascination with the Leader than was the female.

Milošević’s war regime was designed for patriarchal males, for whom, as in every patriarchal society, only males are subjects: women are objects (ornaments or trophies). Vera Erlich’s fundamental anthropological study of the pre-Second World War patriarchal family system in the Balkans – of the Dinarić patriarchal *zadruga* society – in which, for example, the eldest female has the *ritual duty* to kiss and wash the feet of the youngest male. Moreover, there are obscure signs of the homoerotic sides of Milošević’s regime. I recall the image conveyed on television at the start of the 1990s, when the Leader went to visit Kosovo. In the first village he visited we saw this ritual: the oldest villager stepped forward from a line of ceremoniously assembled most important men – i.e., the symbolic *wise man* who traditionally embodies the (male) authority of the whole community – in order to kiss Milošević’s hand. This is not only homoerotic but also infantile, since the whole community is submitting symbolically to “paternal authority.” We are dealing here once again with the avoidance of all individual responsibility: the “father of the nation” is responsible; we “little children” did not know what we were doing, we just obeyed “Daddy.” Male identification with the Great Leader also opens a space for molesting women: what matters is what the males from the local tavern think; women are *not* important all. But there is a paradox: the Serb warriors are so humbly obedient to Big Father Milošević, that they in fact accept the *female* role as defined by classic patriarchal societies: they are passive, they have no right to speak, they fear the Father’s anger, they submit to his desires. The warriors-volunteers *de facto* played the role of the frustrated patriarchal *wives* of their ideological leaders.

The Body of the Warrior

We are talking here mainly about the poorer strata, lumpen-proletariat or rural poor, which gave birth to Bokan and Arkan as well as many members of *The (Serbian) Eagles*. These were the only ones who really did set off over the Drina to “defend Serbdom,” while the great majority, which will never be

accused of the crimes committed, sat at home and enjoyed *Arkan's Travels* and the "Balkan Cinema." A special layer of sadists went off to terrorise, loot and murder, but only at weekends – as a kind of "short break." Others joined various paramilitary units and so became part of the "great body of the Army." The body that killed, therefore, was *that which fully merged into the collectivity*; that which fully gave up its individuality. Its "reward" was that the violence it wreaked led to *local public affirmation*. One should not forget the role of the mystifying Orthodoxy and Russophilia that provided the warriors with "missions" – which, in other words, *sanctified* the body that killed. In contrast to the government that did not dare to *legalise* the "heroism" of its killers, the Church rewarded them with symbolic capital.

The only "heroes" the state legitimised were politicians or intellectuals in their political service. Arkan's men and other such death-squad volunteers until recently received no money or privileges from the state: in legal terms they were "outsiders," invisible as a social group. Yet, through another schizophrenic splitting, they were the centre of the Greater-Serbia phantasm – the story telling! That is why many people in Serbia could invent justifications in the form of "We did not" take part in the war: not only because there has been no *official* recognition of the "services" of the ethnic cleansers, but also the warriors, local heroes and killers were few in number compared to the majority of Serbs, who watched and supported the war from their armchairs.

The Female Body under the Ruins of Milošević Nationalist Reign

The journey into the past did not avoid the female body either. It had to suffer the return to tradition and the deeper patriarchal glorification of the Serb warrior "mentality" and the male body. Women remained silent and censored themselves so that they would not be subjected to violence. Silence became a universal norm: sons and fathers remained silent before their daughters, brothers before their sisters, women before other women. The sediment of the socialist emancipation of women *once again* worked in Milošević's favour: his wife Mira Marković – at least in the beginning – exploited her image as a sociologist and emancipated woman. The rights of women in Serbia were thus suspended without their noticing. In any case, they were far too concerned with inflation and elementary survival. When all other social institutions in the system fell apart, when there were no more child benefits, when men lost their jobs en masse or were mobilised, the whole burden fell on the family and on the women. Women queued, secured food (kinfolk from the village played a crucial role here), cooked, looked after children and the eld-

erly, and may have also worked in the grey economy. Within the family, but only in that *private zone*, women became stronger than ever – i.e., they took on the Big Mother role.

What has happened with sexuality?

Sexuality existed only in Serb “neo-folk” music, where it was/is greatly magnified. Examples of the allegedly “Happy” Serbian Woman’s Body, a plump body acting out permanent submission and joy over its sexual accessibility, are furnished by a whole series of so-called “turbo-folk queens” (singers). They play a mixture of Serb and oriental melodies, at first in oriental and rural settings, with belly-dancer movements (later on they would travel and be *displaced* exclusively into urban settings (but not having left behind the belly dancer’s aura). This mixture of traditional folk music, oriental influences and female singers “giving themselves willingly” did not have the objective to just arouse tavern emotions and relax the clientele, but precisely to inflame and re-affirm pro-Fascist emotions – sending a clear *sexual message* that, in fact, life is beautiful, like the music that these Serbian women sang. Moreover, that “our women” are undoubtedly the most beautiful women in the whole world and that sex is great and functioning despite these difficult times in Serbia.

The singers were, in a way, the *Representation of the Chosen Over-Sexualized Serbian Women* (exclusively Serbs, or they would hide their different ethnic origin), who alone have the right to invite and excite Serbian Men through *music* – to the Fantasy of Sexuality. They are there to “comfort” men in a difficult time, even the rapists, in the sense of showing them they are *still potent*. Violence is wreaked solely upon the bodies of women of *other* ethnicities. Serb women were not raped “systematically.” In the national propaganda they are presented as Mothers and Sisters – so they are raped only sporadically, secretly and at home.

There is a hierarchy in Serb violence against women. The greatest is violence against Albanian women, which is not even recorded, since they have no rights whatsoever – they are “things” (the whole of Serb war fascism was trained in the apartheid system that Milošević’s Serbs introduced against the Albanian ethnos during the 1980s). Violence against Croat and Muslim women is a matter of a warrior’s “prestige” and “positive” self-affirmation. Violence against Serb women is usually presented as an “excess” or otherwise hidden. Concerning the over-sexualization of the female pop-singers’ bodies, I should state that the very fact of the empty space left on the Serbian folk scene by the disappearance of non-Serb singers also represented a kind of free licence for

violence against the bodies of those who were “not there,” those eliminated Others.

It is important to point out that the greatest symbolic and material politics of the destruction of the Body of the Other was carried out *much earlier* – at the end of the 1980s in the south of the former Yugoslavia, with the suspension of Kosovo’s autonomous’ rights; while the real war violence began at the start of the 1990s in the north, in Slovenia. As in all schizophrenias, reality took time to reach the centre of its virtual obsession: chronologically speaking, Kosovo was the last to be engulfed by war and Greater-Serbian occupation, which precisely bases itself upon the Kosovo *myth*.

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BODIES, POWER AND DIFFERENCE: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE EAST-WEST DIVIDE IN THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDIAN AESTHETICS

PARUL DAVE-MUKHERJI

This paper attempts to raise certain methodological issues concerning the study of Indian aesthetics. It seeks to draw attention to the need for conceptual rigour in the usage of related terms derived from western aesthetics through a critique of the comparative method in the study of Indian aesthetics. In particular, this method, predicated upon a certain binarism (east/west; culture/nature; practice/theory), offers a disciplinary coherence to comparative aesthetics even as it renders it open to criticism. In the process, the body as represented in art emerges as the site of contestation through which cultural difference is negotiated within a larger politics of visual representation.

I.

The Disciplinary Formation of Aesthetics and Colonialism

Aesthetics, as a concept applicable to art, emerged in the west by the eighteenth century.¹ It was only later that it consolidated itself as a discipline allied to that of art history.² Along with other disciplines, it too was deeply related to colonialism and it was through the process of colonisation that it entered the academic curricula of the Indian universities.³ Foregrounding the systematic complicity between the disciplinary formations of domains of knowledge and the political structure of imperialism, Edward Said's *Orientalism*⁴ has crucial implications for the discipline of aesthetics as well. The latter, as a

¹ Michael Kelly, "Origins of Aesthetics: Historical and Conceptual Overview," *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, Vol. III. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, pp. 417-427.

² Eugene Kleinbauer, *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History*, University of California, Los Angeles 1971, p. 2.

³ Chatterjee, Partha (ed.), *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, Samya Calcutta 1996, p. 26.

part of western academic knowledge, can no longer maintain its impartial status and has been shown to be complicit in the history of European colonialism. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the first International Congress of Aesthetics (ICA) was held in Berlin. Such International Congresses seemed to work from the assumption that aesthetics has universal applicability and value. The Berlin conference and the subsequent formation of the discipline followed the logic of a possible universal aesthetics.⁵ The effect of such a logic was an inevitable homogenisation of cultural difference. Now it is possible to see how the cultural dominance of the west was precariously maintained through its prescription of a set of aesthetic values derived from the west.⁶ These values became “normal” in judging the art of different cultures. This cultural hegemony carried over even after the colonised nations gained their political sovereignty.

It is only from a post-colonial perspective that one can see the various stakes involved in the erasure of the cultural difference. Even while one recognises the necessity for engagement with the question of universalism, it is important to take note of the way difference has been theorised within the framework of comparative aesthetics. It is not as if the question of difference has not been raised under the rubric of the universalism of comparative aesthetics. Scholars of Indian art and comparative philosophy such as A. K. Coomaraswamy and P. Masson-Oursel have raised the question of difference only to foreclose it through cultural essentialisation. At this juncture it is necessary to raise once again the question of difference, which takes into account the consequences of universalism on one hand and essentialism on the other.⁷

The historical fact of colonisation has been foregrounded not for indulging in the politics of blame but for historicising the emergence of the discipline in the west and the circumstances of its entry into India. As a concept and a discipline which organically evolved at a specific historical juncture, underpinned by certain culturally specific imperatives within the west,⁸ what does it offer to the study of Indian art and culture? How productive is it as a set of conceptual categories to interrogate the tradition from a postcolonial present?

⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York 1978, p. 27.

⁵ Archie Bahm, “Is a Universal Science of Aesthetics Possible?,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XXXI (1972), pp. 3-7. Bahm addresses this issue in form of a question and answers in the affirmative.

⁶ Tony Bennett, “Really Useless ‘Knowledge’: A Political Critique of Aesthetics,” in: H Blocker & Jennifer M Jeffers (eds.), *Conceptualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard*. Wadsworth California 1999, pp. 294-301.

⁷ Leela Gandhi, “Thinking Otherwise,” in: *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1999, p.27.

⁸ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetics*, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1990.

This question seems to pose two sets of methodological alternatives:

1. To claim that the concept of aesthetics is too culturally specific to be useful in the study of non-western culture. Aesthetics, in this sense, has no meaning outside the European context and hence, is to be abandoned. Such an approach would juxtapose the west and the east as polar opposites and yet at the same time, constitute the very ground of “the comparative method.”

2. Aesthetics is that which defines the human essence and has universal applicability and so it can be a useful category in the study of any culture. Every culture has the potential to add a unique dimension to this overarching concept. Such an understanding would lead to and inform attempts which set out to study the diverse formulation and cultural variations of the concept of aesthetics. A corollary to this approach would be a feverish search, as for example, for Indian equivalents for every aesthetic concept such as “imitation,” “catharsis,” “imagination,” “beauty” and so forth in traditional Indian texts. It is the latter approach which has found wide acceptability in the works of some Indian scholars.⁹

To illustrate and examine these two approaches, I will specifically focus on the works of two very influential ideologues and scholars, P. Masson-Oursel and K. C. Pandey, who advocated “the comparative method” in the disciplines of Philosophy¹⁰ and Aesthetics respectively. For analysing their positions, I have selected an article by Masson-Oursel entitled *A Connection Between Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy*¹¹ and K. C. Pandey’s book *Comparative Aesthetics*¹² as representative of the methods that demonstrate either a radical difference or an overlap between Indian and Western Aesthetics. As a point of entry into the critique of the comparative method, I shall take up the problem of the translation of terms, which bears upon the field of comparative aesthetics. I shall then narrow down my focus to one of the key terms from Indian aesthetics – *pramana* and one such term from western aesthetics – “imitation” and critique their translation/ interpretation by Masson-Oursel and K. C. Pandey respectively.

⁹ P. J. Chaudhury, “Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Supplement to the Oriental issue XXIV No. 1, Part 1 (Fall:1965), pp.151-163. Ramendra Kumar Sen, “Imagination in Coleridge and Abhinavagupta: A Critical Analysis of Christian and Saiva Standpoints,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Special issue, Oriental Aesthetics*, XXIV No. 1, Part 1 (Fall:1965), pp. 97-107.

¹⁰ P. Masson-Oursel, *Comparative Philosophy*, Paris, 1926 as cited in *India and Europe*, 1988, p. 420.

¹¹ P. Masson-Oursel, “A Comparison Between Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy,” Trans. A.K.Coomaraswamy (from *Review Des Arts Asiatique*), *Rupam* 27/28 (1925), pp. 91-94.

¹² K. C. Pandey, *Comparative Aesthetics, Indian Aesthetics & Western Aesthetics*. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras 1956, p. 3.

II.

P. Masson-Oursel and Comparative Philosophy

Though primarily a French Indologist and a scholar of Philosophy, P. Masson-Oursel (1882-1956) made a significant contribution with his writings on Indian aesthetics, which played a key role in the nationalist defense of traditional Indian art. The other is an Indian scholar of aesthetics, K. C. Pandey, whose work on comparative aesthetics was regarded as a seminal work in the field in the 50's and 60's of the 20th century.

Masson-Oursel was regarded in his dual role as Indologist and "positivistic" philosopher as, an official spokesman for India and the Orient within the French historiography of philosophy.¹³ K. C. Pandey, on the other hand, used "the comparative method" within the field of aesthetics and was familiar with Indian as well as western theories of aesthetics.¹⁴ In terms of theoretical assumptions, Masson-Oursel and K. C. Pandey can be said to have important differences and commonalities.

Masson-Oursel was deeply committed to the view that the Indian and the Greek philosophies and art traditions were so fundamentally different that any form of comparison could only demonstrate the unbridgeable difference. However, both Masson-Oursel and K. C. Pandey appear to subscribe to "the totality of the human phenomenon" by analyzing and comparing its different manifestations in various cultural traditions. They were both committed to a search for recurrent isomorphic features, common structures (which Masson-Oursel termed as "proportions") in mutually independent traditions. Masson-Oursel's "claim to be a totally open-minded cartographer of the human mind with a true universality, no longer bound by the restrictions of being part of one particular tradition"¹⁵ seems to echo in the introduction of K. C. Pandey's *Comparative Aesthetics*.

A careful study of the aesthetic theories of the Western thinkers from Sophist Gorgias (about 470 BC) and Socrates (469-399 BC) to Croce (1866-1952) produces an impression on the mind of one who is familiar with Indian Aesthetics that the East and the West have thought on the problem of the beautiful in ways which have a marked similarity and, therefore, there is ample

¹³ Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1988, p.142.

¹⁴ K. C. Pandey, *Comparative Aesthetics, Indian Aesthetics & Western Aesthetics*. 2 vols. Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series IV, 1956, p. 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

scope for a comparative approach to the problem of aesthetics. Such an impression has been responsible for my thesis "Comparative Aesthetics."¹⁶

Aesthetics, according to this problematic, is a unitary phenomenon and every culture partakes of it equally.¹⁷ Halbfass's comments on Masson-Oursel's project also hold true for that of K. C. Pandey's: His thought seems to represent an objectifying, detached meta-philosophy [*meta-aesthetics in the case of Comparative Aesthetics*] which no longer engages in any actual problems and subject matters of the various philosophical traditions, but treats them all equally as objects of comparative anthropological enquiry.¹⁸

As an advocate of comparative philosophy, Masson-Oursel used "the comparative method" not only to juxtapose Indian with western culture but within the different facets of Indian culture.¹⁹ In his article, Indian aesthetics and philosophy are compared via a terminological analysis of *pramana*, a term common to both the spheres of Indian culture. It is taken to be an important project to *dispel prejudices* and is addressed primarily to the *western* audience – both the critics and admirers of Indian art. This seminal essay belongs to the mid 20's of the twentieth century when there was a divided opinion among the English public about the relative worth of traditional Indian art. To counter the colonial denigration of Indian art, the Orientalists and the nationalists in India articulated a powerful and rhetorical counter-posture extolling Indian art, for example, in the writings by E. B. Havell and A. K. Coomaraswamy.²⁰ Whether traditional Indian art was "naturalistic" was the main rallying point and an issue of confrontation between the two camps. It is the corporeal body which is invoked around which claims of authenticity in terms of beauty or truth are staged. (Plate I.)

To every western art critic who discusses the Indian conception of beauty, those who blame the Hindus for their supposed anatomical errors, as well as those who attribute to them a transcendental idealism, we can only recommend a study of the *Citralaksana*.²¹ It will open their eyes and dispel their prejudices;²²

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

¹⁷ See Van Meter Ames, "Aesthetic values in the East and West," in: *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* XIX, No.1, (1960) pp. 3-16, for similar assumptions in *Comparative Aesthetics*.

¹⁸ Wilhelm Halbfass, p. 142.

¹⁹ A student of Levy-Bruhl and S. Levi, Masson-Oursel propagated the "comparative method" as the culmination of the "positive method;" see Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe*, p. 142.

²⁰ Tapati Guha Thakurta, *The Making of a New Indian Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, 1850-1920*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 159-167.

²¹ An ancient treatise on art in Sanskrit of approximately 3rd-4th century AD.

²² Masson-Oursel, "A Comparison Between Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy," Trans. From *Review Des Arts Asiatique*, A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Rupam* 27/28 (1925), p. 92.

Apart from the ancient art treatise, Masson-Oursel draws attention to what he considered a key connection between Indian aesthetics and Indian philosophy via a term common to both. This he takes to be "*pramana*:"²³ The idea of "*pramana*" plays a role of primary importance equally in the aesthetic and the philosophy of India from the third century of the Christian era onwards; it has to a large degree determined the scholastic character of Asiatic



PLATE 1. Emperor Mandhata surrounded by personified attributes/possessions of a king, such as the queen, the army, minister, etc., Jaggayapeta, Satavahana Period, 2nd C. BCE., Government Museum, Madras, India.



PLATE 2. Yakshi or semi-divine goddess, Sandstone, Kushana Period, Mathura Museum, 2nd C. BCE, Mathura, India.

²³ The Sanskrit term *pramana*, commonly found in technical treatises on art, is open to a variety of interpretation ranging from systems of body measurement, modular or otherwise to a sense of proportion in the representation of bodies of all kinds, human, animal or vegetable.

culture?²⁴And, Indianists have too long ignored the aesthetic sense of the term “*pramana*,” they have considered only its philosophical meaning and for this reason, have misunderstood the meaning. Their usual renderings are: source, faculty of knowing or even criterion of truth.²⁵

For Masson-Oursel, it is aesthetic “*pramana*,” which is to be privileged over the philosophical one and which contains the key to the “real” or “authentic” meaning. *Pramana*, as one of the six “limbs” of painting, means “the science of proportion, in relation to perspective and anatomical structure” or as in the *Citralaksana*, “the science of measure.” (Plate 2.)

The science of plastic representation (*citra*) consists in knowing the characteristic measurements of the different parts of the bodies of innumerable beings which the artist may wish to represent: a god, a *cakravartin*, a king, a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, a monk or demon, etc.²⁶

It seems to me that via the aesthetic *pramana*, which Masson-Oursel interprets as timeless stereotypes (Plate 3.) which are repeated by the traditional artists mindlessly, he conveniently applies the same paradigm to Indian philosophy. In other words, the conclusion that Masson-Oursel wants us reach is that just as the Indian artist merely reproduced the “characteristic measurements” by which the representation of the different kinds of bodies are once and for all fixed, the Indian philosopher continued to philosophise in a formulaic mode. His position vis-à-vis this controversy over the existence of “naturalism” in Indian art is summed up thus: ...Indian art is aiming at something quite different than the copying of nature.²⁷

This difference rejects and at the same time enables comparison between the art of the eastern and the western cultures. Polarising these two art traditions in terms of presence and absence of “naturalism,” Masson-Oursel firmly holds the view that unlike the western artist, the Indian artist attached no importance to the observation or reproduction of nature but only reproduced the conventional types as handed down by the tradition. And herein lay the eternal scholastic nature of Indian art: What we assume, quite superficially, to be the inspiration of an art for art’s sake, really proceeds from a religious scholasticism that implies a traditional classification of types established by convention.

Any presence of “naturalism” in Indian art can only be understood as unintentional or accidental: If here or there a relief or a painting exhibits some features drawn from life, it is only accidentally that the artist has, in

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

spite of himself, transcribed something from actual nature; and this is certainly not, from the indigenous point of view, the most meritorious part of his work.²⁸

This claim to have attained *the indigenous point of view* by Masson-Oursel is enabled by the very problematic of “the comparative method:” The best way to enter at all into the genius of any great historic culture seems to be to approach it simultaneously from several points of view;²⁹

The contradiction involved in this methodology of the awareness of one’s location within one’s specific culture and the claim to view other cultures from a transcendental vantage point from which they are visible did not go unacknowledged by this French Indologist as he continued: Even though the observations to which one thus commits oneself be fragmentary and somewhat arbitrary.³⁰ What is accomplished by the detour to the *pramana* in “Indian Aesthetics” is the emptying out of any sense of “naturalism” or “empiri-



PLATE 3. Lakshmi, Goddess of Abundance, Kushana Period, 1st C. AD., National Museum, New Delhi, India.



PLATE 4. Bodhisattva or Future Buddha, Ajanta Wall Painting, Cave No. 1, Vakataka Period, Late 5th C. AD., Maharashtra, India.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

³⁰ Ibid.

cism" implied by the *pramana* of Indian Philosophy. (Plate 4.) The "pramana" of the philosophers cannot any longer pass for the apprehension of reality. That is what we call real knowledge, but that does not by any means denote knowledge deduced from facts.³¹

The western and the Indian cultures from this point of view are divided along the lines of "nature" and "culture." "Naturalism" and "abstraction" are chalked out as the mutually exclusive domains of the art/philosophy of the west and the non-west. It is the "natural body" which became accessible to the post-Romanesque western artist, whereas throughout history the eastern artist was locked up in the prison-house of the "cultural body" in which tradition is seen purely in negative terms. And is it not surreptitiously rather than openly that our own "imagers" inserted into cathedral decoration details *extraneous* to the traditional scenes composed of abstract figures?³² Or, It follows from this comparison of the *accepted* aesthetic and philosophical meanings of the word "pramana" that Indian artists and metaphysicians were in agreement that it was not material objects, but more or less *a priori* abstract types, whether types of being or types of knowledge, that were worthy of attention.³³

The typical image of the Indian or oriental artist that emerges is someone who neither engages in the world empirically nor one, as the nationalist would have it, who elevates himself above the visible and contemplates art within a mental sphere. Just like the metaphysical philosopher, the Indian artist merely duplicates the received traditional types like an automaton. Abstraction then becomes symptomatic of this permanent mentality of reproducing "types of beings." All types of bodies whether of the kings or demons are represented through "characteristic measurements," where measure exists only to give fixity to the types.

If nature/culture acted as one set of coordinates to articulate the "gulf [that] fundamentally separates Indian and Greek minds,"³⁴ it was mapped onto that of theory/practice:

Platonic types are "ideas," though external to souls, because Hellenic wisdom is a contemplation, *theoria*. Hindu types are acts; ...They may be everlasting but they cannot be eternal; they may be correct, but they cannot be perfect.³⁵

It was only during Middle Ages that the west came closest to the east. While in the next phase, that of the Renaissance, the west freed itself from the

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³² *Ibid.* [my italics]

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 93. [my italics]

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

prison house of conventions and opened its eyes to the world, the east remained relegated to “its native and permanent mentality” of venerating plastic types in her arts and types of thought, purely practice-oriented in her philosophy. Nothing is more unusual than for man [for the Indian philosophers and artists] to open his eyes upon the world. The West, in general, up to the Renaissance, venerated concepts. The East, though often voluptuous, has until now despised nature.³⁶

III.

K. C. Pandey and Comparative Aesthetics

While “the comparative method” used by Masson-Oursel serves to set apart the east and the west as diametrically opposite, K. C. Pandey deploys it to heighten affinities, similarities and homologies by assuming that both aesthetics and philosophy formed a part of a common, universal heritage. This assumption underscores K. C. Pandey’s interpretation of “imitation” and its translation into the Sanskrit term – “*anukrti*.” ...the first principle that was followed by the artists in their production in the hoary past, both in the West and the East, was imitation. It consisted of the production of a copy of what was directly perceptible in some medium such as clay or stone. It is interesting to note that the word “mimesis,” the Greek equivalent of “imitation,” continued to be used by successive writers on aesthetics, though each of them considerably altered or modified the original meaning of it, exactly as the Sanskrit word “*anukrti*,” used at first by Bharata,³⁷ the earliest available authority on Aesthetics, was retained by the subsequent writers, though each put his own meaning upon it.³⁸

What is “mimesis” in Greek equals “imitation” in English and which in turn equals “*anukrti*” in Sanskrit. Such a translation and a terminological equation is accomplished by unproblematically assuming that they are of equal semantic weight and form a unitary concept which cuts across cultural boundaries and historical exigencies.

For me, translating “imitation” or “mimesis” into *anukrti* or vice versa poses a major theoretical problem, i.e. a problem of the theory of translation. This problem of the translatability of these terms is itself of theoretical interest and methodological relevance. Every translator works within a theory of

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³⁷ An ancient author of a treatise on Dramaturgy, *Natyasastra* of the 1st century AD.

³⁸ K. C. Pandey, *Comparative Aesthetics: Western Aesthetics* vol. II, Varanasi, 1956, p. 7.

translation whether acknowledged or not. Let us examine the theory operating in K. C. Pandey's translation.

Translation is essentially a matter of matching written sentences or word-units in two languages, as for example, Sanskrit (*anukrti*) and English/Greek (imitation/mimesis), such that the second set of sentences or word-units becomes the "real meaning" of the first. This theory of translation can be traced back to a certain discursive space and disciplinary formation within the western academic tradition and most prevalent in traditional anthropology.³⁹ It seems ironic that an Indian scholar interpreting texts belonging to his "native" tradition would have anything in common with an anthropologist who translates/interprets the tradition of the Other. However, it is more a question of what discursive space a scholar occupies and of the theoretical assumptions that are internalised at a specific historical juncture of that particular discipline, i.e. of comparative aesthetics.

For me, both these approaches of "the comparative method" are fraught with serious theoretical problems. While Masson-Oursel's methodology ends up polarising the west and the east as mutually exclusive domains and assumes that both possess a unique essence, the second approach as advocated by K. C. Pandey collapses all cultural differences and remains caught in the search for equivalents of those concepts in the Indian texts which have a very specific sense within western aesthetics. Rather than subscribing to any one of them, it would be more productive to first historicise the discipline of aesthetics in its culturally specific setting in the west and employ it as a heuristic device for exploring and theorising the *difference* that the Indian context poses.

IV.

Polemics of "Naturalism" and Comparative Aesthetics

Critically examining the problematic term/concept "naturalism," which Masson-Oursel viewed as a phenomenon or institution central to western self-understanding, is there not a way out of this binary? Is the alternative to this possible only in negating this position by insisting that there is also an Indian naturalism just as there is an Indian theory of imitation or mimesis equally valid and adequate as its western counterpart?

The theoretical problems involved entail of a great deal of complexity

³⁹ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1993, p. 188.

and are certainly not raised here for the first time. Around 1966, Archie J. Bahm gestured towards this vexed site of comparative aesthetics astutely while reviewing Thomas Munro's *Oriental Aesthetics*.⁴⁰

Although entitled *Oriental Aesthetics*, this work is really a study in comparative (i.e. East-West) aesthetics. ... [it] attempts a critical evaluation of *Oriental Aesthetics* from a Western point of view. Such an attempt is fraught with dangers, no matter who makes it. In addition to possibilities for misinterpreting any of the multifarious details, three general mistakes are possible for any one who faces this problem: Those pertaining to generalisations about Oriental cultures, those about Western culture and those having to do with comparisons.⁴¹

It is around the lack of "naturalism" that Munro's oriental aesthetics acquires a definition and the dichotomous framework underlying the comparison between the eastern and western aesthetics which falls under Bahm's critical scrutiny. Does Munro's naturalism adequately represent Western naturalism? Munro is fully aware that "the term 'naturalism' is highly ambiguous."...Nevertheless I accept Munro's naturalism as a typical Western naturalism. He makes no attempt to provide a definition of naturalism in *Oriental Aesthetics*, but we can guess what he means from scattered negative statements. That it is anti-spiritualistic, anti-supernaturalistic, and anti-subjectivistic is already clear.⁴²

The relationship between the west and east structured and mapped onto the self/Other distinction is apparent. That *Oriental Aesthetics* is the site of an articulation of naturalism defined as central to the identity of the west is instructive; the former is assumed to fall outside the domain of the naturalism characterised as western and yet becomes the centre (a negativity) around which western naturalism acquires an identity. While Bahm rightly objects to the essentialisation implicit in the polarised framework informing Munro's *Oriental Aesthetics* and points to the complicitous nature of the relationship between these polarities, the "third alternative" proposed by Bahm in the form of a synthesis becomes problematic. Munro's analysis is so fully preoccupied with seeing differences in terms of spiritualism and supernaturalism versus naturalism, subjectivism versus empiricism and rationalism...that he never countenances a third alternative...and to organising a synthesis in which the polarly opposite characteristics, such as unity and plurality, distinctness and

⁴⁰ Thomas Munro, *Oriental Aesthetics*, Western Reserve University, Cleveland 1965.

⁴¹ Archie Bahm, "Munro's 'Oriental Aesthetics': A Review," in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. XXIV No. 4 (1966), pp. 585-586.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 592.

indistinctness, subjectivity and objectivity, function as interdependent aspects rather than as contradictory kinds, of reality...⁴³

Synthesis implies selecting the best out of different traditions and a simple coexistence of the differences, which is contradicted by the recognition of the interdependence between the “contradictory kinds of reality.” It is this underlying assumption that renders “the comparative method” itself deeply problematic whether deployed in Comparative Aesthetics, Comparative Philosophy or Comparative Religion, i.e. mainly because “of its claims of neutrality and openness which their advocates postulate.”⁴⁴

From the perspective of a postcolonial or post-modern present, when “naturalism” as a concept has been radically challenged as it had been accepted within western art history, it is important to re-engage in this debate via a rigorous critique of the terms in usage both in western as well as eastern aesthetics. Norman Bryson via post-structuralist art history has powerfully dismantled deeply entrenched notions of “imitation” and “naturalism” by subsuming them as culturally specific sign systems and arguing against a direct, unmediated access to reality.⁴⁵

V.

Comparative Aesthetics and the Constructions of “Sameness”

Just to demonstrate the absurdities and reductive conclusions that this method led its practitioners to, busy in search of homologies and affinities, let us consider the following comparison⁴⁶ by K. C. Pandey between Vitruvius’s treatise on architecture and an early Indian text on architecture – *Manasara*:

1. The *Manasara* opens with a prayer to the creator, Brahma. Vitruvius begins his work with a prayer to Caesar.

2. According to Vitruvius, an architect should be ingenious and apt in the acquisition of knowledge...a good writer, a skillful draughtsman, versed in geometry and optics, an expert at figures, acquainted with history...In the *Manasara* artists are divided into four classes. Together they form a guild of architects, each an expert in his own department but possessing a general

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 592-593.

⁴⁴ Wilhelm Halbfass, p. 99.

⁴⁵ Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1983, pp. 37-65.

⁴⁶ A 12th century treatise in architecture in Sanskrit dealing with iconometry and architecture.

knowledge of the science of architecture as a whole. They consist of the chief architect (*Sihapati*), the draughtsman or the designer (*sutragrahin*), the painter (*Vardhaki*) and the joiner (*Sutradhara*).⁴⁷

In his search for similarities, K. C. Pandey glosses over a fundamental non-equivalence or asymmetry between the two contexts. Whereas in the Roman case the proper name of the author of the treatise is available, in the latter case, the treatise is referred to by the name of the Sanskrit text.

VI.

Beyond the Logic of Binarism & Synthesis

I am certainly not suggesting that finding differences between the two cultures is more heroic than looking for homologies and hence Masson-Oursel's method is to be valourised over K.C.Pandey's. On the contrary, collapsing differences located within the cultural specificities of any two given traditions in the name of grand universals such as Beauty, Aesthetics and so on or erecting insuperable boundaries of differences between the two are equally problematic. It seems to be more productive to question and move beyond these two alternatives. There is neither a simple transcendence possible, if that is even desirable, itself being a fraught concept, nor a synthesis.

The very fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between terms like naturalism, imitation or mimesis and the Sanskrit terms, is itself an important conceptual pointer. Of course, the absence of a word does not imply that the concept does not exist. But it offers a significant clue to a rich problematic that needs to be articulated and developed.

It would be too reductive to simply level a charge of ethnocentrism against Masson-Oursel for his denial of naturalism or conscious imitation of the visible world in Indian art but it has to be seen as an attempt of one culture to theorise another at a time when India was still a British colony. In other words, what were the conditions of the production of the knowledge that constitutes Masson-Oursel's representation of the east-west divide? How does his colonial gaze operate on the objectified and mute bodies of Indian art? The power of this gaze almost freezes them in time and makes their historical frame invisible. Or for that matter, K. C. Pandey's unproblematic acceptance of the terms of western aesthetics has to be seen against the history of aesthetics around the middle of 20th century when comparative aesthetics constituted a powerful genre of

⁴⁷ K. C. Pandey, *Comparative Aesthetics*. Vol. II, p. 540.

this discipline. Rather than questioning the polarized framework deployed by the colonizers, Pandey reinstated it with an anxious search for the Indian equivalents to naturalism and imitation in the Sanskrit texts.

However, in the contemporary, postcolonial present, one cannot subscribe to the obsolete methods or assumptions structuring “the comparative method.” An alternative cannot be sought in postulating the east as a separate entity and searching for lost past and indigenous criteria, untouched by western contact, for evaluating its art traditions. That would amount to substituting the nationalist with the nativist discourse and result in methodological insularity and ahistoricity.

The only way to break out of the double binds of the east/west polarisation is to: a) critically historicise first the discipline of aesthetics as it emerged in the west and the terms central to western aesthetics, rather than taking it as Aesthetics, a given and ahistorical, universal concept; b) in a double gesture, to not only problematise their application in a non-western context by foregrounding cultural differences and the rich, complicated terrain of translatability but even to anticipate repercussions that this problematisation could have within western aesthetics. Lastly, the double-bind of the natural body-cultural body mapped onto the western and Indian art traditions has to be dismantled on grounds that both the bodies necessarily intersect in the culturally specific matrices of representation. Privileging one above the other is rarely innocent but complicit in the inequality of the power relationship of class, race and gender. And the issue of who represents whom at what historical juncture is ultimately a question of agency in the politics of representation. When this agent exercises his subjectivity by gazing at the art of the other, the bodies of the latter thus objectified confront semiotic violence.

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THE BODY BYTES BACK

MARIE-LUISE ANGERER

Discourses about endings are still very much present. After the spectre of the end of the subject, the end of the human being as such has been raised through genetic engineering and new political decisions concerning research and medical interventions. The end of democracy and art has also been prophesied; not to mention the implosion of the public realm and the undermining of its apparent opposition – the private. Especially the end of the body has been intoned in various scenarios. A closer look, however, makes it evident that it's not so much the body which has come to an end, but the understanding of it, the perception of it, the images of the body which have changed over the years and: the more we talked about the end the more the body commenced to occupy the centerstage of our personal and public life.

Partly, of course, it's true to say that the body has lost its importance if we, for instance, consider the decrease in manual work where the strength of the body and its apparatus had been a major presupposition. But at the same time, and if we look back over the last 30 years, there has been an incredible resurgence of interest in the body, in its shaping and modification – piercing, tattooing, dieting, fasting, sport, dance, losing or gaining bulk, fat or musculature. Strategies by the fashion industry, nutrition, and socialisation rules have put the body in a remarkable, spectacular place – the body has become the most attractive spectacle in our society.

But what do we mean when we talk about the BODY – is it the surface, the skin of the body, its appearance, or is it the body with a soul, an inner space? Is it the sign of gender which marks the body? Is it the moving body or the medical model of the body? Are we talking of the genetic model of the body as the carrier of all informational data? To hear, to smell, to grasp, to talk – the mouth, the eyes, the arms, the nose, the lips, the skin – do these parts of the body and all of them together form the BODY or do they have, quite to the contrary, a life of their own – redefining the body's materiality, its borders, and its structure again and again?

Various tendencies have worked together to create a new perception and new images, representations, new strategies of visualising the body – influencing discourses, academic disciplines, terrains, and locations. One has to look at art, theory, and societal developments together to see how these forces have constructed the body as a site of contestation – a contestation which circles around the question of the <nature of the subject>.

The body as book

With the arrival of the book – as one of the most decisive media – the body gained the status of a book: the skin was compared to the cover, the back of the book with the human back, the front-page with the human front, the body of the book with the human body. From then on this body book was understood as keeping its own secrets, following its own rules and laws, and telling its own stories in different languages. Particularly in the second half of the 18th century the body came under the control of two different sets of knowledge producing systems. On the one hand there was science, such as medicine and biology, and on the other, the new born humanities – pedagogy, linguistics and economy. The first one (anatomical research) opened – literally – the body to reveal its secrets and to produce the model of ideal bodies. The humanities produced their own interests – economics, history, language building the mainframe to analyse man's being. In the course of the 19th century seeing, speaking, and controlling became recognised as scientific strategies. According to Michel Foucault, it was the time of the docile body, a body shaped and formed by different discourses and institutions such as the family, school, police, the hospital, etc. For Foucault, it was absolutely clear that it was particularly the invention of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud – the famous talking cure, by which the body and its phantasmatic dimension – sexuality & desire – had lost their former innocence. This means that body and sexuality – which before Freud were understood as the <site of nature>, had changed sides – and thus commenced to occupy the terrain of culture. Of course, this is not quite right – the body has never occupied the side of nature, but for the first time with Freud one might say that human sexuality was clearly separated from animal procreation.

From nature to culture – from body to ego and back again

In *The Ego and Id* (1982 [1923]), Freud defined the *ego* as a boundary surface. From the description of the conscious as interface, Freud proceeds to the shell and the core, the *ego*, is regarded as a psychical cover, as a point of contact or relay point between the outside world and the psyche. The skin is the “real body.” As Freud describes it, the body, and especially its surface, is a site of both external and internal perceptions at the same time. It is seen as a separate object, yet the sense of touch provides it with two types of sensation, one of which seems to be a sense of internal perception, seemingly inside the body (Cf. Freud 1982 [1923]). For Freud, it is not the projection that makes the *ego*, as <body-ego>, superficial, but rather it is the body itself that functions as superficies.¹ According to Jacques Lacan, however, the *ego* does not recognise its own superficial character and thus insists on a (fictional) substantiality (Cf. Weber, 1978).

While Foucault defined sexuality as the name of a historical dispositive that is based upon no reality, I would rather suggest – insisting on a psychoanalytic basis – to see it as an a-historical moment, thus to understand sexuality as the <sexual>, as something quasi-universal opposed to various forms of genders and sexual practices. It is well known that Freud paid particular attention in his work to the drive, which he sharply differentiated from instinct. This drive might be understood as a transition, as a link between sexual and gender identities, as, so to speak, the place where the original cleavage² inscribes itself, and which does “business” under the name of sexual difference. From the very beginning, Freud had always defined the drive as a threshold concept, as something that marks the border between the somatic and the psychic – but which is not the border itself! The drive as used by Freud embodies a mental representation. And Lacan assigns to this mental representation a separate name – the famous <objet petit a>. This small object designates precisely that moment at which sexuality begins to function as a retrospective in and through the symbolic order. Lacan provides a long list including the voice, the gaze, the phoneme, as nothing else but possibilities of the

¹ Freud later added an explanatory note: “The ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensation, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus.” (Freud 1982, p. 294, footnote 2)

² “Différance” as the original deferral which forms the essence of life: “It is far more so: since deferment (différance) is not an essence, because it is nothing, it is not life, if being is defined as *ousia*, presence, beingness/reality, substance or subject. Life must be considered a trace, before being is defined as presence.” (Derrida 1976 [1967], p. 311)

objet petit a. This means that the drive attains satisfaction in and through this object; desire, however, is endless. And both constitute that which unfolds as human sexuality in its diverse manifestations.

The body – a contested zone

Throughout the same period – over the last three decades – the body has not only attracted more and more attention, but it has also been separated from its gender. The famous formula “sex & gender” has been regarded as having made tremendous progress, as having become a bulwark against a biologicistic point of view with regard to gender identity. But a remnant of uneasiness has remained, since “sex & gender” (sex = the body, and gender = the social-cultural roles of gender) cannot really be separated. In the early 90s, this uneasiness was formulated by Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens and many others. The body can only manifest itself, this is the tenor of these authors, as one marked by gender, which means that there is no body outside of the symbolic order. Rather, this order produces different bodies, female and male bodies.

In response to criticisms of *Gender Trouble* (1990), where Butler had introduced the body as radical construction, she restated in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) her understanding of the concept of a discursive performativity as a “materialisation of sex.” “Performativity is always a reiteration of a set of norms,” (Butler 1993, p. 12) which produces its references, its materiality as boundaries, fixations and surfaces. These may change through the course of history, and they are shaped by so-called “regulatory schemas”³ into respectively intelligible bodies. In this way, Butler has attempted not only to dynamically comprehend the materiality of the body, but also to reunite sex and gender as inseparable categories. This means that the body must always already be sexually marked, in other words, always already in the position of gender, in order to be read as culturally intelligible.

Right on the heels of Butler’s work came Elizabeth Grosz’ critique of gender. Unlike Butler, gender represents for Grosz a redundant category, since it is only defined as a “performance of sex” (Grosz 1995, p. 212). Grosz defines the body – following Deleuze and Guattari – as a “sexed body” sub-

³ Butler characterises regulatory schemas as those historical, mental, social formations which direct, define and change the imaginary morphology of the body. (Cf. Butler 1993, 13f.)

jected to a constant “becoming-other”⁴ which materialises itself in this process of “becoming.” As Grosz emphasises, body and sexuality prove to be profoundly unstable categories. This instability goes deeper than the variability of gender identities, for the body must ultimately be grasped as something which could do much more than culture permits it to do. Here we have a body with extremely liquid boundaries and osmotic contours, a body with a remarkable power to incorporate and expel inside and outside in a continuous process, “to open itself up to prosthetic synthesis, to transform or rewrite its environment, to continually augment its power and capacities through the incorporation and into the body’s own spaces and modalities” (Grosz 1994, pp. 187-88). Both bodies *become* in the repetition of doing. A becoming which is essentially accompanied/born by its sexual ascription, while it is also always and already crossed/disturbed by it.

However, as Elizabeth Grosz claims, drawing upon Derrida, it is precisely that original void, linked to the metaphors of sexual difference as trace, which smoothes the way. According to Derrida’s view, sexual difference is a sexuality preceded by an exclusive assignation – male and female; it is a kind of “raw material,” from which the sexes emerge – depending on the specific historical-psychical situation. Against this background Grosz defines sexual difference as “the horizon that cannot appear in its own terms but is implied in the very possibility of an entity, an identity, a subject, an other and their relations” (Grosz 1994, p. 209).

Now this is exactly what I mean with the name sexual, as the prerequisite for male and female. Sexual difference is thus that first cleavage, which indeed does not emerge as such but, as original negativity, determines the positivity of genders. In *The Ticklish Subject* Slavoj Žižek has turned Butler’s *Gender trouble* on its head and made body trouble out of it, since sexual difference – according to Žižek, “indicates the enigmatic domain which lies in between, no longer biology and not yet the space of socio-symbolic construction.” And he continues by arguing that the point one has to emphasise here is “how this in-between is the very cut which sustains the gap between the Real and the contingent multitude of the modes of symbolisation” (Žižek, 1999, p. 275). Thus sexual difference is a failure of/in the symbolic order.

⁴ Deleuze/Guattari define becoming-other as “an encounter between bodies, which releases something from each and, in the process, makes real a virtuality, a series of enabling and transforming possibilities.” (Grosz 1994, 134)

The time of informatics – the body bytes back

“I want,” as Donna Haraway once wrote, “a feminist writing of the body that metaphorically emphasises vision again, because we need to reclaim that sense to find our way through all the knowledge and ways of seeing. But not just any partial perspective will do; we must be hostile to easy relativism and holism built out of summing and subsuming parts. *Passionate detachment* (Anette Kuhn) requires more than acknowledged and self-critical partiality. We are also bound to seek perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance, which promise something quite extraordinary, that is, knowledge potent for constructing worlds less organised by axes of domination. In such a viewpoint, the unmarked category would *really* disappear – quite a difference from simply repeating a disappearing act. The imaginary and the rational – the visionary and objective vision – hover close together” (Haraway 1990, p. 192).

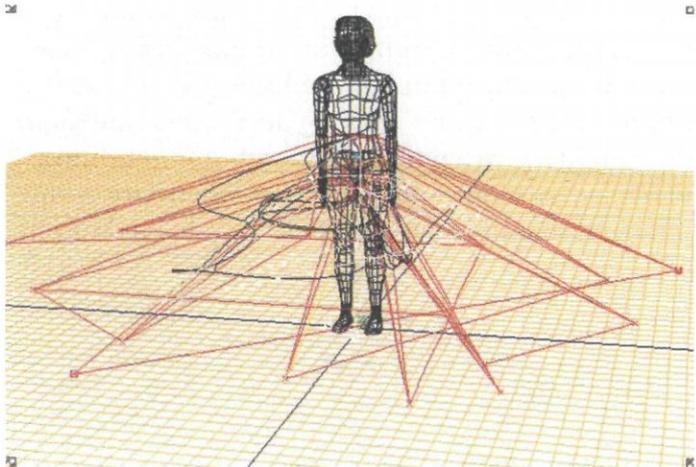
So Donna Haraway in the mid 80s – affecting not only feminist discourse on “body & gender,” but the discussion of knowledge, science, technology, truth, objectivity, politics in general, many years before Butler and others, commenced to deconstruct body, sex and gender. Haraway asked: where does the body end, what counts as part of the body, what makes a body human or non-human? All of these are questions defining the borders of the body, and renders the body back, as a question of definition. And this question has quite obviously come – not only in the field of information and reproduction technologies – under new pressure. Where do we draw the line? Not so much as an answer to this question, but more as a mean of imagining a situation still unthinkable, invisible and yet not makeable, Haraway introduced the figure of the cyborg. This cyborg illustrates a new hybrid form of being, half electronic, half biological, but also historically constituted. According to Haraway the cyborg arises at historical moments of social transition; times of radical uncertainty when borders are broken or under threat, and traditional strategies of drawing boundaries no longer function: moments such as the present when the distinction between man and cybernetic organisms are breaking down. (Cf. Haraway, 1990) In this context Haraway draws particular attention to the porosity of bodily boundaries, in particular the skin. As we have already heard according to Freud, the skin is a key element in the construction of the Ego as such. It follows that the bodily interface is from a psychoanalytic perspective, the question of the subject itself.

This means further, that Haraway’s question, “why should our bodies end at the skin?” (Haraway 1990, p. 178), should not be understood only in this sense of a new merging of machines and human bodies, but also from an

epistemological perspective, which means that these (body) boundaries are virtual in the sense of their powerful implementation and their possible actualisation. This can be seen as her reference both to Michel Foucault's concept of power – the docile body, which I have mentioned earlier, and to Deleuze & Guattari's desiring machines, the body without organs, etc. Like Deleuze & Guattari, Haraway conceives the subject and object not as opposing entities, but rather as affinities, as things that affect and are affected, that assume and reject. In this sense, her cyborg may be read as something unfinished, as something that must constantly redefine its boundaries and whose identity is a nomadic one. What Haraway wanted with her figure of the cyborg is to present a radical attempt at re-thinking the relationship nature/culture/technology and along with it the relationship human – non-human, although, here there are, of course, many questions she leaves unanswered. Even more, many attempts of artists and filmmakers to use the concept of the cyborg – to create new visions of the human being, often lead to traditional, familiar, stereotypical and old images of male and female bodies.

The Loss of Depth

In her *Manifesto for Cyborg* (1990[1984]) Haraway turned Michel Foucault's *Birth of the clinic* (*Naissance de la clinique* 1972) on its head and she wrote: It's time to describe rather its death, since the hospital, the school and other institutions analysed by Foucault wouldn't be the normative forces interpellating the individuals as subjects (in the sense of Louis Althusser) any longer. She agrees with Foucault that psychoanalysis might be seen as a culmination



Tina LaPorta,
Cyberfemme (1993)

in the process of normalisation. At the same time Deleuze/Guattari reproached Freud's psychoanalysis for the same reason – as being the cure for something which has been introduced or stimulated by its own introduction. Thus Haraway tried in her own approach to ignore or overcome Freud and everything connected and influenced with/by the unconscious. Her cyborg has only surface, skin is no longer the border between an inner and an outer space, but rather the interface between the other and me, or the interface between the machine and the human. In this sense Haraway might be seen as a protagonist for feminist thinkers and others to focus on surfaces, connections, interactions, hybrid species, etc. Haraway saw herself much more related to Deleuze and Guattari and their <becoming-woman> or <becoming-animal>. But her refusal of an unconscious (inner, deep) space as the kernel of the subject (as something from the outside which seems to occupy the very inner place) has not only been a relief (in the sense of an antihumanist stance) but it has also produced new problematic formations of identities and identity politics. Haraway's definition of a new feminist policy, embracing race, class and gender differences, is grounded implicitly on a subject who intentionally acts and negotiates, who knows about him – and herself and the others. There is no space left which goes beyond this kind of agency. Now, one could argue that we are facing the same problem with Deleuze's & Guattari's <plane of immanence> (actually Spinoza's). Deleuze/Guattari don't accept any transcendence or unconscious in a Freudian sense either. But the two philosophers "instantiated-know" something which goes beyond the individual, i.e., there is a space and a time beyond the individual's time and space. It is at the same time crossed by two opposite movements: towards the rock (the rock of the ego) and away from it. The famous <lines of flight> and the territorial and reterritorial forces subjectifying the individual to a state, a nation, a family, a name, a sex, class and race, mother or father, etc. Whereas "subjectification" means that "one is always a subject in, or a subject to, either the State or Capitalism, and its aim is to produce more surplus value," subjectivation describes "lines of flight within the subject." But these lines of flight have less or nothing to do with the individual. They rather point towards an "individuation operating by intensities, within individual fields not within persons or identities" (Deleuze, cited in Murphy 1996, p. 98).

The Body – Nothing too Much

Detlef Linke, a German neurologist and author of many books on the brain and the human being, stated recently⁵ that the antihumanist deconstruction, starting with Heidegger, did not really push the project of mankind towards any relief. The farewell of the subject has not been followed by any ethical (as in the case of Kant) thoughts or imperatives. If there isn't a master there won't be any order, so far Linke. Thus the figure of the angel is a remarkable one, since angels have no body, they are pure words, their or-



Klonaris/Thomadaki ©, from the *Angel Cycle*



Klonaris/Thomadaki ©, from the *Angel Cycle*

⁵ Paper presented at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, On V. Flusser, lecture, January 15th, 2002.

dering is one of words, a symbolic order which is not disturbed by any decay of the flesh. There are many examples in which angels play a powerful role – especially with regard to cyberspace and virtual reality. Angel-like subjects are flying across the data space and their bodies are like shadows eternally light. Why the angel? Why here? The Greek artists, Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki,⁶ have been working for many years on their *Angel Cycle* (1985–2001, *Le Cycle de l'Ange*), paralleled by other projects such as *Sublime Disasters* (*Désastres sublimes*) in which the figure of the twin plays the central role. Again a figure which is neither human nor machine, neither male nor female, neither flesh nor image, similar to the one of the angel. This is exactly the moment where I would like to reintroduce the body – neither-nor, but too much!

In my last paragraph I will confront three different bodies: the cyborg, the angel and the anorexic. Each of them underlines in a specific way the double constitution of the human being: a being of need and of desire.

In a remarkable note about anorexia nervosa Jacques Lacan stated: “It is the child one feeds with most love who refuses food and plays with his refusal as with a desire (anorexia nervosa)” (Lacan cited in Shepherdson 1998, p. 30). And he continued: “It’s a failure of the gift of love.” The example of the anorexic – in a society of fullness – if we focus at least on the industrialised countries – points powerfully to the nothing and too much of the human being and its specific materiality – the body. It is the difference and the doubled constitution of the human being. “As far as the oral drive is concerned, (...), it is obvious that it is not a question of food, nor of the memory of food, nor the echo of food, nor the mother’s care, but of something that is called the breast. (...) To this breast in its function as object, objet a cause of desire. (...) we must give a function that will explain its place in the satisfaction of the drive” (Lacan cited in Shepherdson 1998, p. 47). Thus in eating the Nothing the drive finds its satisfaction and the anorectic her peace with the uncontrollable body. The cyborg doesn’t have a drive nor a desire, his/her body is under the control of various power stations, but s/he has no future, no vision, no desire. The angel by contrast can’t find a place – neither here nor there. Whereas the anorexic body is sentenced to death, the cyborg’s fate is just to be. The angel by contrast is meandering from one side to the other and back again – introducing the order of desire combined with a body which can’t be framed. I am very aware of the potential misunderstanding one might produce in installing the figure of the angel as the ideal or best visualisation of the double status of the human being. The trope of the angel is much too overburdened with a huge variety of cultural interpretations! But neverthe-

⁶ The two artists have been based in Paris for more than 25 years.

less the transparent body of the angel indicates powerfully the relationship of the drive and desire in a convincing visual way.

Nothing – too much: an endless movement of becoming – between full and empty – symbol and sign – signified and signifier – between without-organs and organisation.

All these dichotomies are telling examples of a bodily dimension which itself is not part of the body. There is always already another degree of materiality or a different layer involved. Something which Lacan tried to articulate with his distinction of need – demand – desire.

To conclude: The ongoing debate about whether we are already living in a post-human epoch or if we are only on the way to becoming cyborgs (as Haraway put it) is missing a decisive moment. The question is not so much whether the body can be genetically improved, its organs exchanged and substituted with animal and artificial organs. The question is rather: *whose body?* There is never a body, there is always a body and a subject, even though one can't separate the two dimensions in a strict sense. But the dimension of desire is that of the subject and therefore of the unconscious – which like an envelope – covers the material base of the body. Even if one changes the genetic code – as the real – a symbolic and an imaginary order have to be evoked to grasp this occurrence as a human event.

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L'INVENTION DE L'HOMME TRANSGÉNIQUE ET TRANSGENRE DANS L'ART DE LA FIN DU XXE SIÈCLE

BERNARD LAFARGUE

“Et tous, ils changent le monde.”

Harald Szeemann, Biennale de Lyon, 1993.

L'art, tout comme la philosophie, ne vaudrait pas une heure de peine s'il ne servait à changer la vie. Non pas changer pour changer, mais pour embellir. Non pas embellir pour décorer, comme un tableau peut en effet réchauffer un salon tristounet, ou un philosophe télégénique animer un plateau-télé ennuyeux. Embellir pour rendre la vie plus belle, c'est-à-dire plus libre. Non, l'art et la philosophie ne vaudraient pas une heure de peine s'ils ne poursuivaient la mission libératrice qui émane de leur essence. Comme l'art est philosophique, la philosophie est artistique. Bien sûr, il y a des degrés dans la hiérarchie. Il y a des œuvres d'art plus ou moins philosophiques et des philosophes plus ou moins artistes. Mais, dans les deux cas, on reconnaît les chefs-d'œuvre à leur double excellence: éminemment philosophiques parce que éminemment artistiques et vice versa. Si la philosophie s'est tellement fâchée des prétentions de l'art, c'est que, le texte platonicien le dit sans cesse malgré lui, l'art et la philosophie sont sœurs jumelles. *Ut ars philosophia* donc; en précisant toutefois que l'art est la sœur aînée, prométhéenne, et la philosophie la sœur cadette, épiméthéenne, la chouette de Minerve.

Dans cette perspective, l'histoire de l'art apparaît comme celle d'une prodigieuse “forgerie” de formes symboliques qui “artialisent” l'histoire, infinie, de la liberté humaine. Si une religion peut rendre ses fidèles intégristes et iconoclastes, il n'est d'art que d'une liberté s'adressant à une autre liberté pour étendre sa liberté. Nous invitant à des voyages métaphysiques multiples et, à chaque fois différents, les œuvres d'art nous dépaysent, nous “transculturalisent” et rendent nos vies plus intéressantes que l'art lui-même. Après avoir établi comment le propre de l'art est de rendre l'homme toujours plus libre et donc toujours plus humain, je m'attacherai ici à montrer comment certaines œuvres-phares du XXe siècle artisalisent un devenir transgé-

nique et transgenre du monde, un nouveau "plateau humain" pour parler comme Harald Szeemann.

De la liberté de l'art à l'art de la liberté

La faille de la censure est de mettre en évidence ce qu'elle veut faire disparaître. De Platon qui, en philosophe roi, bannit de sa cité juste l'art illusionniste d'Homère ou de Parrhasios à Hitler qui, en Führer de l'état allemand, brûle l'art dégénéré des expressionnistes, cubistes et surréalistes, le censeur montre malgré lui que l'art met en oeuvre ce que, d'après *Mille Plateaux*, j'appellerai *Le Devenir-Libre* des individus. De Platon à Hitler, en effet, la raison de la censure est toujours la même: l'art est dangereux car il est "érotique et subversif." Érotique, car le premier but de l'oeuvre d'art est de plaire en émouvant. Pour plaire en émouvant, l'oeuvre met en branle ce que Platon nomme: "le mauvais élément" de l'homme, l'*épitumia*, qui se trouve dans la partie inférieure du corps: le ventre. Nos désirs *alogistikoi*, *épitumétikoi*, *tumoeidoi*, les plus irrationnels, les plus illégaux, les plus immoraux, les plus bestiaux, se réalisent dans le plaisir esthétique. Comment? L'expérience esthétique est une expérience érotique particulière, dans laquelle nous mimons, par tout notre être psycho-somatique le plus idiosyncrasique, les affects évoqués par l'oeuvre d'art. C'est une mimésis seconde, une feinte passion, un érotisme pervers en somme, nous permettant d'éprouver des *pathoi* extrêmes qui dans la vie nous seraient insupportables. Subversif car le second but de l'oeuvre d'art est d'enseigner. Non pas comme un maître d'école ou un prêtre un savoir, mais subtilement, insidieusement même, un art de vivre, en nous faisant pénétrer dans un monde ni tout à fait le même, ni tout à fait un autre que celui dans lequel nous vivons et à partir duquel désormais nous jugeons notre existence. L'amateur d'art en vient ainsi à considérer que sa vie est une forme de vie parmi d'autres, qu'elle lui convient plus ou moins bien, qu'il peut la changer, choisir un autre rôle, le jouer autrement, bref qu'il est libre de choisir sa destinée. Comment le philosophe-roi, qui fondait la pérennité de sa cité juste sur le fait que chacun reste à sa place pour accomplir la tâche qui correspond à sa classe, de fer, d'or ou d'argent, aurait-il pu favoriser un tel art? Toutefois, si Platon est le premier à percevoir l'érotisme subversif de l'art, le misonéisme, qu'il partage avec tous les philosophes de l'antiquité, l'empêche d'approfondir son analyse de l'essence libératrice de l'art.

Il faudra attendre Hegel pour que le temps ne soit plus considéré comme un élément de corruption qui nous éloigne du Vrai, du Beau et du Bien, mais comme ce en quoi et par quoi l'Esprit, Dieu, l'Absolu ou La Raison se réalise.



Fra Angelico,
*Annonciation du
Prado* (1430-32)

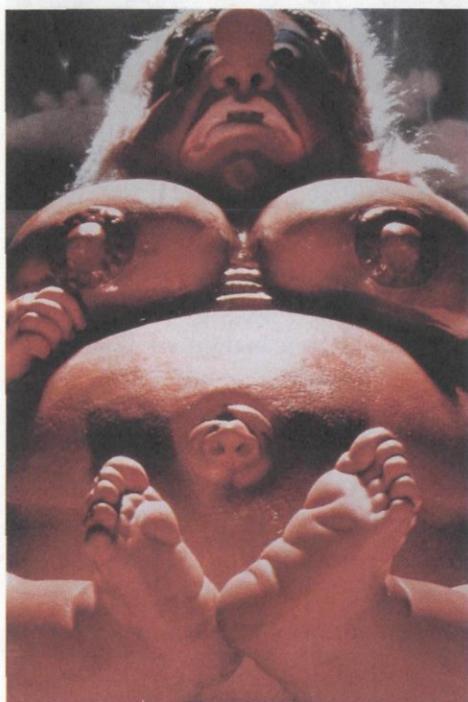
Dans cette perspective, l'histoire de l'art apparaît comme une invention continue de formes symboliques qui expriment les progrès, qualitatifs et quantitatifs, de l'Esprit prenant conscience de lui-même comme liberté. Ainsi, de la pyramide-tombeau égyptienne dont le sommet unique dit que seul le pharaon est libre, au temple grec dont les colonnes soutiennent l'architrave comme les citoyens libres la cité démocratique, les changements architecturaux témoignent de cette évolution. On peut observer la même loi dans tous les autres arts, des *Colosses Memnon*, pétrifiés dans leur éternité, *aux Esclaves* si libres de Michel-Ange, des fresques sacrées de la chambre du Pharaon à la Joconde inconnue de Léonard, de l'épopée homérique aux romans libertins du début du 18e siècle. De plus, ajoute Hegel, le mode d'expression artistique devance le religieux et le philosophique. Nous ne suivons pas plus loin le philosophe de l'Esprit Absolu qui voit dans cette antériorité la raison de la limitation et de la mort de l'art. Au contraire, nous y décelons le signe de sa préséance prométhéenne. Avec la tradition romantique, reprise tant par l'école de Francfort que par Francastel et Panofsky, nous pensons que le propre de la création artistique est justement de devancer le politique, le culturel et le philosophique. Kandinsky est celui qui a formulé le plus clairement cette loi en utilisant la parabole du triangle. Au sommet, le créateur, sorte de phare et albatros baudelairien, crée une oeuvre-idiolecte. Si celle-ci est géniale, c'est-à-dire, si elle exprime, tel un sismographe, les appétitions de L'Esprit du temps, pour parler comme un Leibniz relu par Hegel, elle génère un style qui peu à peu devient la langue de tout le triangle, tandis qu'un nouvel artiste réalise une nouvelle oeuvre-idiolecte, toujours plus libre, qui deviendra un nouveau style, etc... Ainsi, de déconfigurations en reconfigurations, progresse le trian-

gle de l'art artialisant "le plateau de l'humanité" vers toujours plus de liberté. Ou, pour le dire avec les mots si forts d'Harald Szeemann: "À eux tous, ils changent le monde" (Biennale de Lyon, 1993).

J'illustrerai cette thèse en montrant comment certaines œuvres-phares de ces dernières décennies figurent un homme transgénique et transgenre.

L'invention de l'homme transgénique et transgenre du IIIe millénaire dans l'art de la fin du XXe siècle

La fin pornographique des mères



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled 187* (1989)

Bien des œuvres d'artistes du vingtième siècle, je pense ici plus particulièrement à *L'Étude documentaire: la tête de Méduse* (Musée Sammlung Ludwig, Aix La Chapelle, 1978) d'Orlan, à la série des *Sex Pictures* (1992) de Cindy Sherman, où à *Grzech Pierworodny – Le péché originel* (installation-vidéo-performance, Galerie Zderzak, Cracovie, Mars 1994) d'Alicia Zébrowska,¹ signent la mort pornographique des mères. La grossesse, loin d'être un état euphorique, soit selon saint Luc (Luc, I.6-38) relu par Michel Tournier (*Le roi des Aulnes*), "christophorique," devient un handicap. Quant à l'accouchement, ce n'est plus un heureux événement, mais, ainsi que l'avait décrit Huxley dans *Le meilleur des mondes*, une barbarie scatologique et pornographique reléguée dans les cabinets de curiosités des temps anciens. L'*ave* du Gabriel enjôleur n'est plus une bénédiction, mais une malédiction. La jolie Marie dans sa crèche devient une cruche qu'il faut déniaiser. En mon(s)trant leur con dégoulinant de sang (Orlan), couvert de pustules et accouchant d'une poupée barbie (Alicia Zebrowska)

¹ Pour une analyse plus précise de ces œuvres, cf. mon livre : *Quatre fameux cons*, Eurédit, 2000.



Alicia Zebrowska, *Grzech Pierworodny* (1994)

ou d'étrons noirâtres (*Untitled 126*, Cindy Sherman), ces trois artistes annoncent que les femmes ne veulent plus être les poupées de Dieu, son glorieux vase d'élection ni son cordon ombilical, dussent-elles y perdre nombre de prérogatives. Ces trois œuvres d'Orlan, Zebrowska et Sherman sont esthétiquement dégueulasses car elles closent la légende dorée des mères immaculées et des saintes familles de l'Annonciation selon saint Luc. "Dégueulasse" est la catégorie "esthétique" qui exprime le mieux la spécificité de la nausée existentielle produite par la vision de nos racines sexuelles ainsi pornographiées en vieux baigneurs tronqués, dispersés et obsolètes.

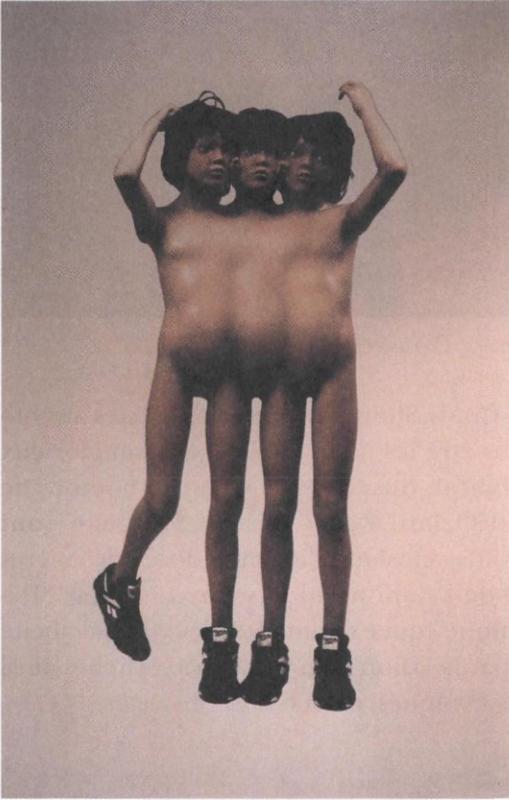
L'homme défait par l'hainamoration des mères

Même dans *Le meilleur des mondes* ou *Blade Runner*, le remplacement des mères par des incubateurs artificiels ne va pas de soi. L'homme descend d'un sexe divin et d'une matrice immaculée depuis si longtemps qu'il a peur que le ciel des mères "hainamorées"² en erinyes ne lui tombe sur la tête s'il fait les enfants de manière plus rationnelle. Beaucoup d'œuvres manifestement monstrueuses de ces dernières années témoignent de l'angoisse provoquée par ces nouveaux Foster qui créent des êtres vivants par clonage, hybridation et transgénisme, et nourrie il est vrai, par trop de Tchernobyl nucléaires, alimentaires, pharmaceutiques et autres trafics d'organes.

² Selon le bon mot de Lacan dans le séminaire *Encore* qu'il consacre à la jouissance féminine.

J'en repèrerai ici quatre types paradigmatiques:

a. *Les monstres siamois des frères Chapman: entre monstres dégénératifs, mutants et réservoirs d'organes*



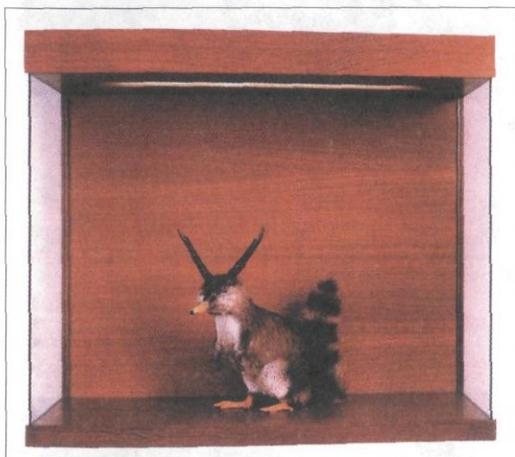
Dinos et Jake Chapman, *Mutant* (1997)

Comme Paul McCarty et Cindy Sherman, Dinos et Jake Chapman ont une prédilection pour les mannequins en résine ou fibre de verre peint, kitsch et monstrueux; plus particulièrement les groupes de jeunes siamois. Liés en diverses parties du corps, ils se présentent comme de jeunes lurons espiègles, dépourvus d'organes sexuels dans les zones habituelles, mais en revanche outillés de nez en forme de pénis en érection ou de bouches en forme d'anus ou de vagins grands ouverts, qui bati-follent dans des jardins peuplés de plantes transgéniques. S'agit-il d'enfants ayant subi de monstrueuses déformations provoquées par la pollution, la nourriture ou les médicaments? De monstres échappés du laboratoire d'un savant fou? D'extraterrestres? De mutants en quête de nouvelles formes de sexualité? De groupes d'androïdes inférieurs créés comme réservoirs d'organes pour mettre fin aux scandaleuses ventes d'organes et de sang où sont contraints aujourd'hui bien des pauvres des pays en voie de développement? Même si Les jeunes sculpteurs anglais s'inspirent souvent très manifestement des horreurs de la guerre selon Goya, ils laissent délibérément la porte ouverte à toutes ces interprétations... comme pour nous inviter à choisir une mutation de toute façon inéluctable.³

³ Il en est de même de la plupart des œuvres des jeunes artistes anglais de la collection Charles Saatchi présentées à La Royal Academy of arts, London lors de l'exposition *Sensation* (18 Septembre-28 Décembre 1997). Cf. Le catalogue: *Sensation, Young British Artists from Saatchi Collection*, British Library, 1998.

b. *Les chimères de Thomas Grünfeld, Paul Finnegan ou Marc Quinn*

Les chimères ne sont plus ces grylles fantastiques que les héros grecs passaient leur temps à combattre, ni ces extraterrestres hybrides qui peuplent les romans et films de science-fiction, ce sont aujourd'hui des êtres transgéniques bien réels, mi-caille mi poulet, mi-singe mi-méduse, mi-homme...etc... que les biologistes fabriquent dans leur laboratoire dans des buts dits "humanitaires." Ce sont ces chimères que Thomas Grünfeld nous présente comme des hybrides empaillés, mélancoliques et merveilleux, dans leur cage de verre de cabinets de curiosités sous le nom de *Misfit* que je traduirai par "manqués," comme ces "actes manqués" quant au but conscient, mais parfaitement réussis dans leur masque même quant au but inconscient, si bien décryptés par Freud. Il en est de même des monstres anthropomorphes narquois *mixed media* en chaussures de Paul Finnegan qui semblent échappés d'une planète transgénique de *La Guerre des étoiles*. Quant au bel autoportrait en huit larmes de verre argenté de Marc Quinn, c'est plutôt du Terminator-Protée en métal liquide T 1000 réalisé par Robert Muren dans le film de James Cameron qu'il s'inspire. Toutefois, on ne sait s'il est en passe de se refaire, de se défaire, ou de se métamorphoser.

Thomas Grünfeld, *Misfit IV* (1989-90)c. *Les doux visages imparfaits d'Aziz § Cucher*

Comme les chimères-misfit de Thomas Grünfeld, les portraits d'Aziz § Cucher sont des visages imparfaits. Imparfait au sens où, selon la célèbre définition qu'Aristote donne de la perfection grecque *-to ti en einai-*, ils ne réalisent pas la forme *-eidos-* à laquelle ils étaient destinés. Pour les Grecs en effet, un visage peut-être imparfait de deux manières: soit il n'est pas parvenu à sa maturité, c'est le cas de l'éphèbe dont les traits sont encore indéterminés, soit il l'a dépassée, c'est le cas du vieillard dont les traits se défont. Dans les portraits numérisés d'Aziz § Cucher, nous sommes confrontés à des visages imparfaits de nature, irrémédiablement arrêtés dans leur *télos*. Ces visages, sans yeux ni bouche, qui paraissent hériter d'un défaut des quatre causes aristoté-



Aziz & Cucher, *Dystopia* (1994)

liciennes, se présentent comme des victimes innocentes, douces et impuissantes, offertes en sacrifice aussi bien aux expériences d'un Pygmalion de laboratoire qu'à une croyance absurde, la croyance que les Voies de La Nature font bien les choses, divinement...

d. *Les trop beaux formolariums de Damien Hirst*

Les plus célèbres œuvres de Damien Hirst sont de beaux aquariums sertis d'un pvc blanc éclatant et remplis de formol bleu, vert ou orangé, dans lequel flottent des animaux morts, parfois entiers, parfois en morceaux, parfois en séries. Venus des cages de verre des biologistes, mais aussi des châsses de saintes reliques, des cabinets de curiosités, des coffrets de solitaires, ou bien encore de ces sarcophages de verre où on exhibe aussi bien les corps embaumés des héros du Peuple⁴ que ceux cryogénisés de riches américains en manque d'ancêtres, et re-



Damien Hirst, *Away from the Flock* (1994)

⁴ À vrai dire, aujourd'hui, le Grand Timonier est le dernier Grand Héros à être exposé dans un sarcophage de verre, dans le mausolée de la place Tien An Men; et chaque jour, des milliers de personnes viennent le couvrir de fleurs, comme une relique, une idole.

vus à travers les aquariums kitsch de Jeff Koons où flottent, dans un parfait équilibre, des ballons de basket, les formolariums de l'instigateur de *Freeze*⁵ suscitent un faisceau de fantômes ambivalents dont l'ombilic me paraît être l'image de la mort que nous donnons si naturellement à nos frères animaux non seulement pour nous nourrir mais aussi pour nous guérir de ce que Heidegger désigne comme "l'avoir-à-mourir du *dasein*." Exposés les uns à côtés des autres, les trop beaux formolarium de poissons, vache, veau, porcs mécaniques, requin tigre, ou mouton blanc aux museau et pattes noirs, apparaissent comme de précieuses reliques de saints cobayes offerts à la vénération ou à la réflexion du spectateur comme autant de stations d'un nouveau chemin de croix menant à la vie éternelle ou à la mort de l'homme transgénique.

Le corps refait de l'homme transgénique et transgenre

À côté de ces artistes en proie à l'hainamoration des mères, beaucoup d'autres créent des œuvres qui, prenant acte de la mort de l'homme annoncée par Nietzsche et Foucault, dessinent le nouveau visage de l'homme, non pas posthumain, comme le disent beaucoup trop de critiques encore trop pieux, mais post-chrétien. Je repèrerai ici quatre figures de cet homme post-chrétien, transgénique et transgenre.

Les mutants transgéniques de Xiao Yu, Zhang han Zi, Gin Ga, Peng Yu, Zhu Yu et Sun Yuan

Dans *Le meilleur des mondes* (1932), les prédestinateurs, garnisseurs, immatriculateurs et conditionneurs du Centre d'Incubation et de Conditionnement de Londres-Central, pratiquent, sous le commandement d'Henri Foster, la fécondation in vitro. Grâce à la "bokanovskification"⁶ ils peuvent arrêter à tel ou tel stade le développement des œufs et produire, selon les besoins de la cité, des travailleurs epsilon qu'ils répliquent en séries de soixante-

On peut imaginer que dans quelques années, on le remplacera par un aquarium d'Hirst ou de Koons, comme sur La Place rouge.

⁵ C'est le titre de la fameuse exposition organisée par Damien Hirst dans les docks de Londres en 1988.

⁶ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, (1932), traf fr. *Le Meilleur des mondes*. Foster explique à ses étudiants qui visitent le centre d'Incubation et de conditionnement: "Plus la caste est basse, moins on donne d'oxygène. Le premier organe affecté, c'est le cerveau. Ensuite le squelette. A soixante-dix pour cent d'oxygène normal, on obtient des nains. A moins de soixante-dix pour cent, des monstres sans yeux."

douze jumeaux parfaitement identiques. “*Les utopies apparaissent comme bien plus réalisables qu’on ne le croyait autrefois... La vie marche vers les utopies.*”⁷ Ian Wilmut, en effet, va plus loin que Foster. Il supprime le père, la mère et le zygote. Le 23 février 1997, le directeur du *Roslin Institute* (Écosse) annonce que son équipe a réussi le clonage d’une brebis à partir d’une cellule somatique adulte. Née le 1996, Dolly est la petite jumelle de sa mère génétique, elle n’a pas de père et elle s’en porte très bien. La Bourse⁸ aussi, qui voit les actions *PPLL Therapeutics* grimper de plus de cinquante-six pour cent le lendemain du faire-part de naissance. Dolly vaut de l’or pour l’industrie du *pharming* –moléculture– qui traite les animaux transgéniques humanisés comme des usines chimiques vivantes⁹ et surtout – ce qui se dit beaucoup moins – pour tous les Fosters du monde. Le fait polémique est, en effet, de taille: Dolly est le premier mammifère qui ne descend plus du sexe. C’est un clone. Il est né de la fusion électriquement provoquée entre une cellule somatique, prise sur la glande mammaire d’une brebis blanche Finn Dorset âgée de six ans, puis dé-différenciée et rendue à nouveau totipotente et un ovocyte, non fécondé et énuclé, prélevé sur une brebis Scottish Blackface. Le clone humain est pour bientôt. Peut-être a-t’il déjà été réalisé!¹⁰ Les conséquences médicales sont aussi merveilleuses que les implications éthiques, politiques et métaphysiques impensables. Rendant les possibilités d’auto-greffe infinies, nos “clones-réservoirs d’organes” nous promettent l’immortalité. Même s’il a été habitué à se considérer comme maître et possesseur de la nature, le philosophe humaniste occidental est aujourd’hui stupéfait de considérer que la grande majorité des scientifiques se prononce, sans ambages, pour le clonage humain. Depuis que William Shockley, prix nobel de physique 1956, se déclarait

⁷ Nicolas Berdiaeff, cité en français, en exergerue du roman d’Huxley.

⁸ La Bourse et les biotechnologies font très bon ménage, surtout aux Etats-Unis où 294 PME sont cotées. Les investisseurs sont sûrs que ce sera le marché le plus porteur du XXIe siècle. Rien qu’en 1996, ils ont investi 8 milliard de dollars sur ces PME spécialisées en biotechnologies. Ces cinq dernières années, la valeur des entreprises cotées à Wall Street a doublé. C’est peu de dire que la biospéculation bat son plein.

⁹ Comme leurs vieilles cousines, les plantes transgéniques, aujourd’hui cultivées sur plus de 18000 hectares aux Etats-Unis, le patrimoine génétique des animaux transgéniques a été modifié à des fins thérapeutiques. La société PPL Therapeutics qui cofinance les recherches du Roslin Institut récupère dans le lait de ses moutons transgéniques de l’alpha-1-antitrypsine, protéine utilisée pour combattre l’emphysème pulmonaire et la mucoviscidose, la société Pharming fait produire à ses vaches Holstein du lait contenant de la lactoferrine humaine, Genzyme élève des chèvres qui donnent dans leur lait de l’antithrombine III, etc...

¹⁰ Les recherches des laboratoires américains, qui faisaient des tentatives de clonage humain, ont été arrêtées, il ya deux ans. Mais, certains se sont installés en Asie du Sud Est sans préciser leur adresse.

partisan de la création d'une banque de sperme de Nobels, Joshua Lederberg¹¹ et MacFarlane Burnet,¹² tous deux prix Nobel de Médecine, ont sérieusement défendu l'idée très fosterienne que la société aurait intérêt à produire des clones infra-humains spécialisés pour réaliser certaines tâches¹³ et celle, eugéniste, de cloner les individus les plus doués. On imagine sans peine l'intérêt que des "Nobels Militaires" trouveraient à bâtir une armée de clones transgéniques. Dans une perspective plus médicale, Simon Fishel, Ruth Deech, Georges Seidel, Philip Wyatt, Leonard Fleck, David Doukas et même Harold Varmus, directeur général de la recherche biologique et médicale financée sur fonds publics aux Etats-Unis, affirment clairement que le clonage d'humains et animaux transgéniques permettrait de guérir la plupart des maladies incurables.¹⁴ Les nouveaux Foster n'auront plus qu'à remplacer l'hystérique mère porteuse par des couveuses artificielles pour produire et cloner des cybercorps transgéniques plus fiables.

Comme beaucoup d'artistes mutants occidentaux, beaucoup d'artistes chinois prennent appui sur l'art de la vidéo-performance et troquent l'atelier pour le bloc opératoire afin de mettre en abyme cette nouvelle donne eugéniste et transgénique. Mais, peut-être en raison d'un étrange héritage : la tradition bouddhiste de la réincarnation de l'âme dans toutes sortes d'êtres vivants mêlée à celle des camps de réformation par le travail, la prison ou la torture, ils réalisent des œuvres beaucoup plus crues, presque insoutenables. Ainsi, à la Biennale de Lyon : *Partages d'exotismes*, réalisée par Jean-Hubert Martin l'été 2000, Qin Ga présente une vidéo où on le voit découper des morceaux d'animaux, de plantes et d'êtres humains, pour en prélever des cellules, les recycler, les mélanger, et créer un homme crocodile hybridé de loutre et de pieuvre qui se lève d'un grand lit blanc, non sans un certain humour. De même, dans la vidéo de Xiao Yu et Zhang Han Zi, toutes sortes d'êtres transgéniques, comme des renards-poissons ailés humains, ou des souris à têtes d'oiseaux et à mains humaines sortent avec malice des caissons de verre de laboratoire, pour faire des choses auxquelles ils ne semblaient pas programmés. Quant à Zhu Yu et Peng Yu, c'est à une mise en question de l'image que nous nous faisons du corps humain et animal qu'ils nous invitent, le premier en exposant quatre-vingt bocaux de cervelle humaine, le

¹¹ J. Lederberg, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, 23. 4. 1966.

¹² Macfarlane Burnet, *Endurance of Life. The implications of Genetics for human life*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

¹³ On sait que les vols spatiaux en apesanteur provoquent chez les cosmonautes de graves maladies osseuses. Les ingénieurs de la Nasa n'hésitent plus à avouer qu'un "homme-pieuvre" serait beaucoup mieux adapté à ce type d'exercices.

¹⁴ Sur ce sujet, cf. l'excellent dossier de *La Recherche*, n°297, avril 1997, p. 50-64.

second en mêlant des êtres anthropomorphes aux animaux vivants qui sont vendus sur les petits marchés chinois.

Les hybrides bioniques de Stelarc: l'artiste en cyborg



Stelarc, *The Third Hand* (1981)

Dans ses nombreux manifestes "bionistes," Stelarc affirme clairement son projet: "Il faut prendre conscience de l'obsolescence du corps pour organiser des stratégies post-évolutionnistes... Il n'est plus question maintenant de perpétuer l'espèce par la reproduction, mais de renforcer l'individu en le remodelant. Il faut aujourd'hui implanter la technologie miniaturisée et bio-compatible dans le corps."¹⁵ Pour Stelarc, le corps humain n'est plus du tout adapté au nouveau milieu créé par la prodigieuse évolution des techniques depuis le début du vingtième siècle. Toute son œuvre d'artiste-performer, depuis les *Suspensions* des années 70, a pour but d'inventer, dans une perspective néodarwinienne, un mutant capable de vivre en harmonie avec ce nouveau milieu et de réaliser de nouvelles formes d'existence.

En 1977 il demande à participer aux vols des navettes de la Nasa pour tester les possibilités du corps humain de vivre en apesanteur. Les ingénieurs de la Nasa déclinent son offre; d'autres, australiens et japonais, oseront l'accompagner dans sa mutation. C'est dans cette perspective qu'il part au Japon pour réaliser *Third Hand* (1979-1981). Après de longues séances d'entraînement, Stelarc présente sa performance en 1981 à Tokyo (Yokohama, Nagoya). Fixée à l'avant-bras droit, la main artificielle (1,5 kg d'acier inoxydable mélangé à de l'aluminium, du duralium et de la résine) est actionnée par les

¹⁵ "Pratiques artistiques et sciences cognitives," in *Actes du Colloque Art Cognition*, ed. Ecole d'art d'Aix en Provence, 1992.

muscles du ventre et des jambes de l'artiste auxquels elle est reliée par des capteurs électromagnétiques. Les trois mains sont ainsi totalement indépendantes. Ainsi commence la métamorphose de l'artiste en cyborg. Stelarc poursuit sa mutation avec la complicité des ingénieurs informaticiens du *Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology* et s'hybride d'un *Virtual Arm*. Sur l'écran tactile d'un ordinateur, le bras virtuel s'anime selon les gestes de l'artiste dont le corps est couplé à la machine par un simulateur multi-musculaire. La série des Performances avec robot, commencée en 1986 et toujours *in progress* pousse toujours plus loin l'hybridation de l'artiste et de la machine. Ainsi, dans *Psycho/Cyber* (Melbourne, 1994), le corps de Stelarc est couplé à un immense robot métallique par un réseau de capteurs électromagnétiques d'orientation et de déplacement que l'on pourrait comparer à ceux que possèdent les oiseaux. La vidéo-performance est hallucinante. Harnaché de câbles, l'artiste cyborg semble d'abord se protéger des violentes attaques du Terminator qu'il commande lui-même. Puis, peu à peu, ses pas d'esquive deviennent des pas de danse. "Prothésé" de lentilles-lazer qui battent au rythme de son cœur et scannent l'espace tandis que des senseurs couplés aux fibres optiques installées sur ses bras lui permettent de contrôler les lumières de la salle et que d'autres capteurs électromagnétiques indiquent la résistance de son corps en produisant des sons d'intensité variable, il réussit avec son *colossos* métallique un extraordinaire ballet mécanique.

Lors de la dernière biennale de Melbourne, Stelarc parfait encore sa mue; il se métamorphose en sculpture virtuelle phosphorescente. Gilbert and George se doraiement le visage pour se transformer en sculptures vivantes, dansantes et chantantes; Stelarc, lui, déglutit un petit robot cylindrique en forme de fleur métallique qui s'ouvre et se rétracte, émet sons et lumières selon les mouvements de son estomac. Reclus dans un coin d'une salle, le corps "obsolète" de l'artiste devient une sculpture endoscopique qui n'existe et ne vibre que dans les configurations bleues, roses ou jaunes des beaux moniteurs accrochés au mur. Et, comme l'ordinateur, auquel son corps est relié par des capteurs électromagnétiques, est connecté à l'immense toile du Web, tout cybernaute peut, à son gré, réaliser de nouvelles chorégraphies son et lumière avec les organes de l'artiste qui, avatar virtuel, enlumine le cyberspace du village global.

Couplé à l'ordinateur, l'artiste cyborg fait de son corps une pure interface avec l'univers, accomplit la symbiose du biologique et du technologique et éprouve les plus folles nanotechnologies imaginées par son ami du MIT de Boston, Marvin Minsky: "*En 2035, l'équivalent électronique du cerveau humain sera, grâce à la nanotechnologie, plus petit que le bout du doigt. Nous pourrions alors implanter à l'intérieur du crâne plusieurs systèmes et mémoires additionnels qui nous*

*offriront de nouveaux types de perception, de nouveaux modes de raisonnement, de nouvelles façons de penser et d'imaginer... De telle sorte que notre corps deviendra le pur et simple interface entre notre cerveau et l'univers.*¹⁶

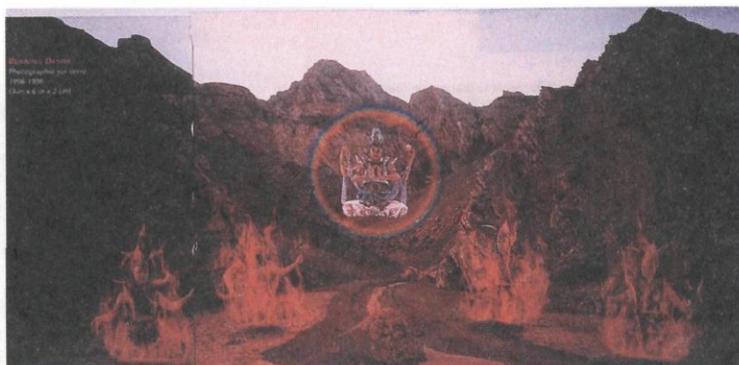
On ne peut distinguer l'enjeu "esthétique" de l'oeuvre de Stelarc qu'en l'inscrivant dans deux traditions culturelles dominantes de la deuxième moitié du vingtième siècle: celle des films de science-fiction et celle de l'art corporel. Ses performances de satire technologique rivalisent avec celles, paradigmatiques, de *Terminator II*, "généreux" robot mécanique vêtu de peau humaine et programmé pour détruire le fabuleux robot-Protée en métal liquide T 1000 réalisé par Robert Muren dans les films de James Cameron. En effet, dans la plupart des films de science-fiction, qui héritent de l'esprit de malédiction frappant les créateurs de Golem ou autres Frankenstein, le cyborg est finalement détruit. Ainsi, dans *Independance Day*, le dernier film à succès¹⁷ de Roland Emmerich, on ne peut qu'espérer la victoire des hommes sur les robots maléfiques. Le "bon" Terminator fait mieux encore. Après avoir tué le mauvais T 1000, il se suicide. Mais, en même temps, ces supermen hybrides fascinent les foules de cette fin de vingtième siècle car ce sont les seuls à pouvoir vaincre les Robocop envahisseurs. Il faut donc agir comme les robots prédateurs, prendre leur apparence, voire devenir cyborg pour parvenir à les exterminer. *Terminator II*, *Planète hurlante*, *Le cinquième élément*, *Matrix*, *X-Men*, etc...sont à cet égard exemplaires. A côté de la leçon humaniste évidente des films de science fiction, il y en a donc toujours une autre, qui montre que le corps humain est obsolète et que la victoire du vieil homme occidental sera de courte durée. C'est aussi celle du mutant cyborg bionique, Stelarc qui relève la tradition émancipatrice et libératrice des performances *body art* dans une perspective post-évolutionniste en instaurant un hybride homme-machine transgénique.

Les poupées cybernautiques de Mariko Mori

En dix ans, la jeune artiste japonaise Mariko Mori a conquis le monde de l'art par quelques vidéos en 3d et des photographies numérisées où elle s'autoportraiture en une cyber pop star. Actualisant la leçon warholienne se-

¹⁶ Marvin Minsky, *La société de l'esprit*, trad. fr. Interéditions, 1990, p.142-145.

¹⁷ Les intellectuels ont tort de sous-estimer l'influence de ces films grand public. A chaque époque sa mythologie et son type d'exposition du monstrueux. Comme les magnifiques Nus érotico-pornographiques de Courbet et Manet étaient "travaillés" par les obscènes nus photographiques d'Auguste Belloc, l'hybride bionique de Stelarc met en abyme les Cyborgs-Protée si intelligents des *Terminator*.



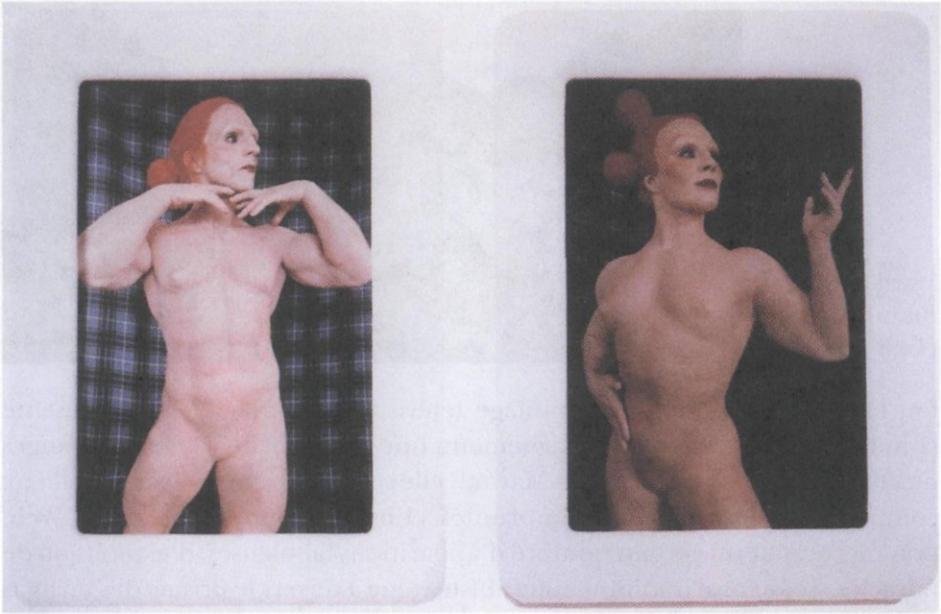
Mariko Mori,
Burning Desire
(1996)

lon laquelle l'homme est une image télévisuelle, Mariko Mori se présente comme un être virtuel. Plus exactement, une fée virtuelle. Comme les anges de saint Thomas relus par Louis Marin,¹⁸ elle se fictionne un corps merveilleux composé d'images et de sons empruntés à l'hyperphonophototexte du Web, pour accomplir un certain nombre d'apparitions fabuleuses, d'exploits ou de miracles. Selon une tradition bouddhiste relue à travers le prisme des mangas ou des films de science fiction japonais mêlant tradition et fantastique, Mariko Mori se métamorphose en techno-laura-star (*Birth of a star*, 1995), en sirène bleue prenant un bain de soleil sur une plage psychédélique (*Empty Dream*, 1995), en cyber-shaman aux yeux, cheveux et robe d'argent manipulant la boule de cristal du monde tout en chantant un mantra lancinant (vidéo *Miko no inori* 1996), en Lucie Sky Walker du cyberspace (*Last Departure*, Cybacrome, 1996), en bouddha lévitant, heureux sur un lotus ouvert au terme pur du cycle de ses réincarnations (*Pure land*, 1996-98), etc...

Des mutants transgenres (Matthew Barney, Orlan)

De l'athlète de *Transsexualis* (1991) au "Candidate Loughon," danseur au museau de mouton et au crâne percé de trous de *Cremaster IV* (1994-95) en passant par Jim Otto (1992), le célèbre arrière d'Oakland Raiders qui joua pendant quinze ans avec des genoux en plastique, l'illusionniste hongrois Houdini (1992-93) et les trois satyres de *Drawing Restraint* (1993), Matthew Barney propose de nouvelles figures au transsexualisme ouvert par Duchamp/Rose Sélavy. J'analyserai ici son devenir transgenre en m'appuyant sur ses deux installations-vidéo-performances les plus exemplaires: *Drawing Restraint* et *Cremaster IV*.

¹⁸ Louis Marin, *Traverses* n° 44-45, "L'ange du virtuel," 1988, p. 155.



Matthew Barney, *Cremaster IV* (1994-95)



Matthew Barney, *Cremaster IV* (1994-95)

Drawing Restraint met en regard trois moniteurs vidéo et, comme le titre le laisse entendre, des “dessins/dessins contraints” encadrés de silicone. On peut toutefois repérer une “histoire principale,” qui se déroule à l’intérieur d’une belle limousine “in-conduite” par un jeune satyre tandis qu’à l’arrière deux satyres, mûrs ou vieux selon les moments et les prises de vue, se livrent une cruelle bataille, et deux histoires complémentaires où l’on voit deux satyres éducateurs inventer de nouvelles chorégraphies pour favoriser la mue du jeune satyre.

À l’avant de la limousine lancée à vive allure, un jeune satyre imberbe à la peau grumeleuse, trouée et boursoufflée par des forces internes de métamorphose, passe et repasse avec difficulté et ténacité sous les sièges bleu céruléen comme pour attraper sa queue. La critique voit dans ce chevreau, ayant

des boutons cartilagineux à la place des cornes, un être impubère, sexuellement indifférencié, qui n'a pas encore subi la castration symbolique ni trouvé son sexe, en l'occurrence sa queue. Elle lui oppose le modèle des satyres accomplis qui, eux, se battent comme des hommes à l'arrière de la voiture. Oubliant les encouragements des satyres Chiron, elle en conclut que la fable de Barney, exquis dandy décadent néo-warholien, n'a ni queue ni tête, ou bien qu'elle célèbre les saines vertus de l'onanisme et de la chasteté. Cette légende dorée par les médias patentés repose sur un contre-sens radical.

En effet, c'est le jeune satyre, incarné par Barney, qui conduit la limousine. Et celle-ci, même "in-conduite," traverse sans encombre les ponts et tunnels qui conduisent à Manhattan. "L'in-conduite" du chevreau n'est donc pas si mauvaise... Sa "mauvaise conduite" se révèle même particulièrement ingénieuse. Elle opère une heureuse traversée. Il faut s'arrêter sur cette symbolique de la "tra-versée" que redoubleront les side-cars et le Candidate Loughton de *Cremaster IV* traversant de part en part l'île de Manannan. Métonymie de la voiture masculféminine, le jeune satyre conduit bien sa métamorphose au coeur du *melting pot* de Manhattan. Il ne faut donc pas dire que le satyre-conducteur est encore indifférencié sexuellement. Au contraire, "l'enfant-satyre" ne veut plus de la différenciation des sexes. Comme "l'enfant" des "Trois métamorphoses" d'*Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra* accomplit les états précédents du chameau et du lion, il "tra-verse" la barre de la différence des sexes pour tenter de mettre en oeuvre une autre version de la sexualité, transgenre, transsexuelle.

Il n'est donc pas non plus "hors sexe" ou "asexué" comme le répète la critique américaine qui veut voir dans l'art de Barney une apologie de l'abstinence purificatrice au temps du sida et des nationalismes racistes exacerbés. Ces interprétations, qui ont largement contribué au brillant succès du bel éphèbe décadent dans le monde de l'art, occultent résolument la symbolique du satyre. Le satyre relève fondamentalement de l'*ubris*. Cette "in-finie" démesure lui octroie une extraordinaire puissance (*dunamis*) qui lui permet d'outrepasser les limites de la nature et de rivaliser, comme Marsyas, avec le dieu de l'harmonie et de la belle apparence: Apollon. Hybride, le satyre, grylle d'homme et de chevreau, refuse avec superbe le modèle de ces dieux qui passent leur temps à se battre et à se métamorphoser sans risque. Mais, à la différence de Marsyas, il n'éprouve plus le besoin de les défier; il les "é-conduit." Son insolence est indifférence. Et cette arme, qui ne veut point en être, s'avère bien plus redoutable que la lutte. Le jeune satyre est donc plus proche du dieu/satyre Pan; il est en quête d'un éros cosmique.

Plus subtil est le contre-sens de Neville Wakefield, qui a préfacé le catalogue de la première grande exposition rétrospective et itinérante des oeuvres

de Barney (1990-1995) au Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Kunsthalle, Bern et Capc, Bordeaux (1995-96). Il traduit “*ubris*” par vanité. Or la vanité est un sentiment “humain, trop humain” dans lequel ne peuvent se fourvoyer que des satyres apprivoisés, trop mesurés. Le jeune satyre, lui, ne saurait être vaniteux. Il ne se mesure ni aux vieux satyres, ni aux dieux; il ne guette aucune reconnaissance, ne se bat contre personne. Il est indifférent à toute forme de reconnaissance. *Ubristikos*, dé-mesuré, par-delà le bien et le mal, inhumainement humain.

Le dessein de “l’enfant satyre” est de dépasser les “dessins trop contraints” des deux vieux satyres différenciés. C’est pour cela que ceux-ci prennent la forme de riches passagers infantiles et immatures qui se battent pour un malheureux talon d’Achille¹⁹ à l’arrière de la limousine. Uniquement préoccupés de petites luttes de préséance, ils ont perdu leur *ubris* et sont devenus des bourgeois vaniteux. Or, on se rappelle que la lutte était le principal mode d’être des boules originelles indifférenciées d’Aristophane dans *le Banquet*. Ici, c’est le contraire. Ce sont les satyres différenciés qui se battent indéfiniment car ils ont subi les ciseaux d’Héphaïstos et vivent sous la loi du manque de l’universel phallus. *Drawing Restraint* renverserait donc la problématique occidentale de l’Oedipe fondateur pour nous montrer que c’est la castration qui produit un état de mélancolie fondamentale s’énervant en de vindicatives luttes de reconnaissance.

Reste donc à inventer de nouvelles formes de vie. “L’enfant satyre” ne peut y parvenir. Il sait seulement qu’il ne veut plus du modèle de ses pères. Chauffeur, il “é-conduit” ses maîtres payeurs. Mais, à la différence de l’esclave de la dialectique hégélienne, il n’aspire pas à prendre leur place ni à reproduire l’histoire du cercle sans fin de la reconnaissance. Indifférent à la rivalité des deux satyres qu’il transporte, il semble tourner en rond autour de sa queue qui, à y regarder de plus près, ressemble plutôt à un cordon ombilical. C’est de cette triste filiation qu’il veut sortir en traversant ponts et tunnels et en esquissant des dessins plus libres, encouragé par les satyres éducateurs qui dansent au son de la flûte de Pan dans les deux histoires complémentaires que diffuse l’autre vidéo. L’enfant satyre “s’essaie” en jeune Pan. Il mute, en quête d’une pansexualité qui ne serait plus régie par la légende du manque de l’universel phallus.

En passant de l’île de Manhattan à l’île de Manannan, le dieu celtique de la mer, le candidat Loughthon, personnage principal de *Cremaster IV*, poursuit la quête du jeune satyre de *Drawing Restraint*. Cette fois-ci, l’impétrant est un satyre-dandy, incarné par Barney. “Humain, trop inhumain,” Loughthon le

¹⁹ C’est là en effet que se fait la blessure décisive.

magnifique arbore un superbe costume blanc rehaussé d'une lavallière à perle et d'une pochette en bruyère de Man qui fait ressortir son museau fripé et ses immenses oreilles porcines. Ses cheveux roux sont répartis de chaque côté d'une raie centrale et forment deux petites boucles en forme de cornes qui tombent de chaque côté du front. Encouragé par trois fées androgynes au corps d'athlète, parfois nues, parfois élégamment vêtues d'un plaid aux couleurs de Man et coiffées d'un chignon composé de trois "boules" rouge vif, le candidat fait des claquettes avec ses beaux richelieus en cuir marron et blanc jusqu'à ce que le sol s'ouvre. Il tombe au fond de la mer et atterrit, on ne sait trop comment, dans une alvéole humide, emplie de perles qui se métamorphosent peu à peu en une substance visqueuse.

Commence alors la troisième épreuve initiatique. Toujours aidé par les fées qui le guident en agitant une clochette, le candidat s'efforce de remonter à la surface. Il escalade un étroit boyau tellurique obstrué par des aspérités poisseuses aux formes mammaires et phalliques qu'il utilise comme des pitons. La caméra filme le héros en plein effort. Il glisse sur les parois visqueuses et s'agrippe aux moindres excroissances pour, inlassablement, remonter. Sur son crâne, on peut alors découvrir deux trous où pointent, par moments, deux petites cornes turgescents. A ces images d'escalade douloureuse et sensuelle se mêlent parfois des images d'exploration d'un corps par endoscopie qui nous font pénétrer au plus près de la vie chaude, humide et palpitante d'organes roses, bleus ou jaunes. Le candidat est donc un candidat à la naissance. Plus précisément, c'est un mutant qui accomplit, au sein de ce tunnel tellurique "fémâlic," une métamorphose ordonnée par le bélier Loughthon qui l'attend, entouré par les trois fées, au bout de l'orifice.

Avec sa toison rousse et sa double paire de cornes ascendantes et descendantes ornées de banderolles aux couleurs de l'île de Man, le bélier est le symbole dominant de *Cremaster IV*. C'est vers lui que grimpe le candidat et que convergent les deux équipes de side-car, également bleu et jaune, dont la course autour de l'île constitue la seconde "tra-versée" et métamorphose du film. Point focal des deux tra-versées, il donne son nom à la vidéo car ses très particulières paires de cornes féminimascuines symbolisent le double mouvement de descente et rétraction des testicules opéré par les muscles "cremasters." Or, en permettant cette double translation de descente dans les bourses ou de rétraction dans l'aine, les *cremasters* soumettent les testicules à une forte variation de température. Si, lors de la maturation du fœtus, pour telle ou telle raison, les *cremasters* ne se détendent pas suffisamment, les testicules demeurent dans la trop grande chaleur de l'aine, ce qui provoquera, dans la plupart des cas, une azoospermie par ectopie. Depuis ses premières oeuvres, Matthew Barney décline les figures de cet état d'hésitation du corps

entre le masculin et le féminin, la descente testiculaire et la remontée ovarienne. Insistons. Cette vicariance n'est pas un état d'indifférenciation impubère qui précéderait la castration symbolique et la différenciation "orthopédique." Comme le jeune satyre en mue de *Drawing Restraint*, le Candidat Loughthon est en quête d'une autre forme de sexualité qui ne serait plus ni masculine, ni féminine, mais labile, hybride, cosmique, transgenre, transsexuelle. Sa mutation, protégée par les trois fées féminimasculines et aimantée par la figure emblématique du bélier éponyme, est "tra-versée" par des forces pansexuelles qui, selon les occurrences, produisent des versions que, faute de mieux, on peut qualifier de féminines ou masculines. Ainsi, lors de sa renaissance, deux petites cornes, hésitant entre pénis et clitoris, trouvent son crâne. Ce double trou, qui "relève" le double "O" du maillot d'Otto métamorphosé en cornemuse, traverse toute l'oeuvre de Barney. Le double O n'est pas le symbole homosexuel d'un double anus, comme le répète une certaine critique à la triste verve; il témoigne des virtualités poreuses, pénétrable et féminines du corps masculin comme l'athlétique musculature des fées exprime les potentialités viriles de la femme. Non plus le masculin contre le féminin, non plus le manque de l'universel phallus, mais une sexualité de satyre, hybride, qui passe par des intensités différentes et variables.

Comme le jeune satyre de *Drawing Restraint*, le candidat Loughthon ne se bat contre personne. De même, les deux équipes de side-car ne font pas la course, elles évoluent en sens inverse. A l'inverse justement des pilotes de moto qui, chaque année, concourent sur l'île de Man pour la *Tourist Trophy*. A la mue du candidat danseur-descendeur-escaladeur répond celle des deux paires de pilotes qui conduisent des bolides montant ou descendant (*ascending and descending hacks*), vêtus de combinaisons trouées de poches d'où émergent, par moments, des membranes visqueuses d'escargots, ces animaux également féminimasculins. Eux-aussi traversent l'île de part en part pour se rejoindre devant leur emblème: le Bélier Loughthon. L'animal à la double paire de cornes ascendantes et descendantes est "le moteur immobile" vers lequel gravitent tous les acteurs de *Cremaster IV*, le modèle qu'ils imitent et l'effigie de l'île dont le blason est fait de trois jambes cuirassées qui tournent autour d'un trou. Ce même blason distingue les side-car montant ou descendant qui, à la fin du film, reposent sur une structure métallique en forme de paire de testicules ou d'ovaires. On retrouvera la même forme ovoïde et donc la même symbolique dans la paire de dirigeables *Good Year* où se situe l'action principale de *Cremaster I*.

Sous l'apparence d'un dandy hybridé du satyre Phynnodderree, le Candidat Loughthon reprend le rôle du "soigneur de gravité" duchampien pour franchir la barre de la différence des sexes, récuser la triste légende d'Œdipe

et réaliser un éros transsexuel qui déploie le champ ouvert par les nombreux épigones de Duchamp-Rose Sélavy et s'incarne en de nouvelles figures de moules "femâlics" mous et durs, humides et secs, en vaseline, tapioca, polyester et silicone.

Comme Matthew Barney, Orlan²⁰ met en œuvre depuis plusieurs années un transsexualisme, plus exactement un transsexualisme femme-femme. Après une série de neuf opérations, où elle s'est fait faire le visage aux deux bosses qu'elle avait préalablement dessiné, elle poursuit aujourd'hui sa mue en recomposant son avatar virtuel, c'est-à-dire son clone cyberspatial. Ainsi, comme Mariko Mori se métamorphose en bouddha cyber-pop, se métamorphose-t-elle, en une figure cybergénique métissée,



Orlan, *Self Hybridation* (2000)

selon, de faces maya, astèque, inca, africaine, occidentale, asiatique, etc...

Si l'art est, pour parler comme Mauss, un "fait social total," il s'inscrit aussi dans sa propre histoire. Cette histoire est celle d'une invention infinie de "formes symboliques" qui expriment l'histoire de l'infinie liberté humaine. Cette liberté est d'autant plus absolue qu'elle est relative, c'est à dire intempesive, contre son temps parce que dans son temps, contre son contexte parce que dans son contexte, contre son histoire parce que dans son histoire. Quand les femmes, à l'instigation artialisante d'Orlan, Alicia Zebrowska ou Cindy Sherman, refuseront d'être les poupées-cruches de Dieu, cela en sera fini de siècles d'humanisme chrétien. Le ventre de la femme enceinte est l'ultime tabernacle de Dieu. Les artistes-mutants, dont nous avons ici analysé

²⁰Sur les métamorphoses d'Orlan, cf. Bernard Lafargue "Les réincarnations de sainte Orlan," *Arts de chair*, La lettre volée, Bruxelles, 1998, p. 41-49, et "De Marie-Madeleine à Pygmalion-Galatée," *Une œuvre d'Orlan*, ed. Muntaner, Marseille, 1998, p. 35-48.

quelques œuvres topiques, inventent, non pas une ère posthumaine, comme on le répète malencontreusement ici ou là, mais un humanisme postchrétien. Un eugénisme humaniste, transgénique et transgenre, qui, tout en renvoyant dans l'obsène barbarie du passé la légende dorée des femmes enceintes, se garde de toute volonté de fabriquer des sous-hommes ou des sur-hommes comme de simples moyens destinés à certaines tâches...

CORPS DISSIDENTS A L'ERE NUMERIQUE

MARIA KLONARIS – KATERINA THOMADAKI

En guise de préambule, une remarque sur la théorie: le projet d'écriture théorique accompagne depuis longtemps la réalisation de nos œuvres plastiques. Mais les textes viennent toujours *après* les œuvres. Ils viennent étendre et situer les idées qui sous-tendent les œuvres, et que celles-ci ne laissent apparaître que de manière elliptique: nous donnons toujours la primauté à l'image ou à l'image/son, à l'image/espace, à l'image/temps. Le texte qui suit a donc été écrit après la réalisation des œuvres auxquelles il se réfère. C'est dire que nos films, nos photographies, nos installations ne sont en aucun cas la démonstration d'une théorie. Au contraire, la théorie tente d'éclairer quelque chose de leur substrat conceptuel, sans réduire leur mystère constitutif. Est-ce que nos textes théoriques sont une condition préalable pour la vision des œuvres? Non. L'œuvre détient sa propre parole iconique et poétique: elle éveille des mécanismes de participation, de réflexion et de communication qui sont très différents de ceux mobilisés par la lecture d'un texte théorique. Pourquoi alors accompagner nos créations plastiques ou cinématographiques de textes théoriques? D'abord parce que nous travaillons sur des terrains qui sont en rupture avec les terrains classiques de l'art: cinéma expérimental, photographie "plasticienne," performances de "cinéma élargi" ou installations "multi-médias." D'où la nécessité d'une médiation accentuée. Mais aussi parce que nous aimons les espaces discursifs et que notre pensée visuelle participe d'une vie des idées que nous avons besoin de partager par ce véhicule qu'est le texte. Un double registre donc: images et textes, parallèles et autonomes, mais en dialogue.

Dissidences

"Corps dissidents à l'ère numérique." Dans ce titre il y a deux volets, deux plans, deux points de référence: le corps et le dénominateur technologique.

Il y a aussi un positionnement politique: *dissident* signifie hétérodoxe, non-conformiste, opposé, rebelle, révolté. En général la dissidence désigne une différence d'opinion. En transposant la notion de dissidence du domaine des convictions au domaine corporel, nous postulons une opinion du corps, une pensée propre au corps ou en tout cas une *parole* du corps: une parole opposée ou rebelle.

Un corps *dissident* est un corps insoumis à une norme. La norme implique une idéologie socio-culturelle qui génère de multiples effets: manipulation, coercition, soumission ou encore persécution, exclusion, marginalisation. Pour reprendre une formulation de Michel Foucault, "la norme est porteuse d'une prétention de pouvoir (...); c'est un élément à partir duquel un certain exercice du pouvoir se trouve fondé et légitimé."¹ La construction de normes comme processus du pouvoir exercé sur l'individu ou sur un groupe, est bien ancienne. Cependant, actuellement elle prend de nouvelles proportions, et des proportions démesurées avec la complicité des nouveaux outils technoscientifiques de domination des corps et des mécanismes biologiques du vivant. De nouveaux corps normés apparaissent, virtuels ou fictionnels, dictés par les pouvoirs économiques. Et cette fois-ci les processus de normalisation sont dotés de telles armes, qu'ils installent et étendent leur emprise de l'étoffe charnelle du corps à l'étoffe psychosociale de l'imaginaire, et ceci sur le plan planétaire. Autrement dit, les nouvelles normes corporelles telles qu'elles sont traduites par les icônes culturelles propagées par les médias ou par la culture technoscientifique, sont en train de devenir plus que puissantes, inéchappables. Il semblerait que toute pensée cherchant à se situer en dehors de ces normes court le risque d'être tenue pour *utopique*.

La tyrannie de la normalité est d'abord exercée par le regard. Le corps normé implique un regard normé. Le regard socialisé est entraîné à rechercher les normes – toutes sortes de normes – et à décoder les sujets en fonction de leur conformité à celles-ci. Le regard subi, le regard objectivant, celui qui transforme l'Autre en objet décodable, celui que Merleau-Ponty dénonçait comme "inhumain,"² fait désormais partie des modalités de la "communication." La non-conformité à l'apparence ou à la morphologie corporelle imposée par les marchés du corps et de l'image génère le rejet: rejet du corps d'autrui, mais aussi rejet de son propre corps. Comme on sait, ce rejet est très courant chez les femmes, piégées dans l'économie libidinale scopique du patriarcat. Une large partie de la population féminine des pays occidentaux

¹ Michel Foucault, *Les Anormaux, Cours au Collège de France, 1974-1975*, Paris, Hautes Etudes-Gallimard-Le Seuil, 1999, p. 46.

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, 1949, 9e éd., p. 414.

est à tel point colonisée par les normes de la beauté, qu'elle semble atteinte d'une dysmorphophobie généralisée. C'est le motif même de la surconsommation de toutes sortes de produits de beauté, y compris les opérations chirurgicales "réparatrices." Dans ces conditions, la vieillesse devient une sorte de *déviance* impardonnable, si ce n'est un signifiant de classe. Mais il y a d'autres déviances *en-corps*, liées par exemple aux normes de l'identité sexuelle ou aux normes de l'anatomie qui s'avèrent bien plus cruellement éprouvantes pour les individus non conformes. Et c'est justement à travers cette souffrance que les corps dissidents peuvent forger une parole publique.

Des corps et des sujets contre-normes sont au centre de notre univers. La question de la différence active et de la résistance au processus de normalisation traverse l'ensemble de notre création. La tension entre norme et "déviance" est éclairée, électrifiée. Nous avons élaboré trois figures majeures de la dissidence. La première, c'est le corps féminin, le corps de celle que nous avons appelée "femme sujet," par opposition à la "femme objet." La deuxième est celle de l'intersexuel, comme sexe virtuel et alternatif.³ Et la troisième ce sont les jumeaux siamois, les jumeaux conjoints comme corps hors la loi. Donc des corps dissidents qui touchent aux séréotypes du regard ou qui attaquent les normes de la biologie et de l'anatomie.

Notre pratique visuelle est fondamentalement concernée par le regard. Travaillant constamment sur le corps, nous interpellons constamment le regard. Nous questionnons le regard et son pouvoir d'inclusion/exclusion. Consciemment ou inconsciemment, nous ne cessons d'élaborer des stratégies pour libérer le regard du poids des normes – qu'il s'agisse de normes sexuelles, anatomiques ou encore visuelles et cinématographiques. D'où notre adhésion au champ du cinéma expérimental et indépendant. Autrement dit, nous déployons dans une même ondulation des préoccupations imbriquées: la question du corps et du regard se répercute dans la question du langage.

Le corps comme support

Bien avant l'art biologique les artistes corporels se sont penchés sur la question du corps comme *support* pour l'acte "artistique." Mais chez eux ce qui est mis à l'épreuve, c'est le corps de l'artiste même. D'autre part, l'altération par exemple de la matière cutanée par la blessure, telle qu'elle a été

³ Voir notre article "Intersexuality and Intermedia, a Manifesto," *The Body Caught in the Intestines of the Computer & beyond. Womens' Strategies in Media*, edited by Marina Gržinić in collaboration with Adele Eisenstein, MKC, Maribor and Maska, Ljubljana, 2000.

pratiquée par les artistes corporels français Gina Pane et Michel Journiac, se référerait constamment à la relation de l'individu au social. Le "maquillage sanglant" de Gina Pane ou le triangle gravé par brûlure sur la peau de Michel Journiac, réactivaient des traumatismes collectifs psychosociaux. Ces gestes cruels répercutaient des cruautés subies par la collectivité: le maquillage en tant que gage de soumission des femmes ou le marquage des corps et le triangle signalant les homosexuels dans les camps de concentration nazis. Ces gestes avaient la texture d'un cri. D'un cri parfois comparable en force à celui d'Antonin Artaud, lorsqu'il incorporait la déchirure sociale, tel un *suicidé de la société*.⁴

Nous appartenons à la génération venue juste après les artistes corporels, nous avons grandi avec ces mêmes points de référence. Nous avons appelé notre cinéma "corporel" pour faire le lien entre l'art corporel et le cinéma expérimental.⁵ Et nous considérons notre pratique dans son ensemble comme un *méta-art corporel*, en ce sens qu'elle s'inscrit dans un moment historique où le technologique apparaît et s'imbrique avec le corps. Cela n'était pas encore le cas pour les actionnistes viennois ou les artistes corporels français, à moins de considérer la présence des supports technologiques comme la photographie, le film ou la vidéo comme des prémices. Chez eux le technologique reste encore loin du corps. Loin non seulement parce qu'ils ont utilisé les technologies imagistes uniquement pour produire des "constats" de leurs actions, une sorte de trace qui survivrait à l'éphémère de la performance, mais aussi parce qu'au centre de l'art corporel se trouve la matière même du corps, cette "viande socialisée" dont aimait parler le théoricien du mouvement, François Pluchart. L'art corporel implique une centralité du corps réel dans le processus langagier.

Nous faisons partie de cette mouvance d'artistes qui commencent à utiliser les technologies pour mettre en place de nouveaux procédés de figurabilité, de perception et d'appréhension du corps. Il ne s'agit plus de produire des "constats" d'actions, mais de forger des langages avec et dans les outils technologiques. Les confronter au corps. Avec les artistes corporels nous partageons la conscience du marquage social, augmentée chez nous d'une autre conscience, venue avec la donnée technologique, la conscience d'une expropriation du corps à une échelle bien supérieure, planétaire, induite par les nouveaux systèmes de communication et de domination technoscientifique.

⁴ Nous faisons ici allusion au titre du texte d'Antonin Artaud à propos de Van Gogh: "le suicidé de la société."

⁵ Voir Jacques Donguy, "Un Méta-Art Corporel. Entretien avec Maria Konaris et Katerina Thomadaki," <http://mkangel.cjb.net> (page "Textes").

Une domination plus insidieuse celle-ci, car le corps éprouvé, le corps résistant, le corps *humain* passe d'emblée pour obsolète.

Les expérimentations science/art ont créé de nouvelles synergies qui deviennent aujourd'hui très visibles sous les hospices des biotechnologies. L'art biologique en est l'exemple le plus évident. Ces pratiques passent par une évacuation du discours social. Elles partent du présupposé d'un pouvoir illimité sur la donnée naturelle, tel qu'il anime les nouvelles mythologies technoscientifiques. Pour notre part, nous ne sommes pas intéressées par l'exercice ou par la démonstration d'un tel pouvoir. Ce qui nous intéresse c'est la dimension psycho-sociale du corps éprouvé, vécu, du corps subissant des pressions sociales et capable de faire face. Le corps dissident est un corps qui porterait en lui une exigence, encore vivante, de liberté.

Le déplacement actuel du débat autour du corps vers les relations entre acteurs "humains" et "non humains" efface la primauté de l'humain. L'hypothèse que l'humain est au centre du monde naturel, comme les cosmologies anciennes l'avaient imaginé, a été démentie par les sciences modernes. Mais la conscience d'un univers a-centrique, dé-centré, polysémique⁶ n'avait que des conséquences idéologiques positives, puisque la dé-centralisation ou la dé-hiérarchisation sont des paradigmes constructifs et en tous les cas n'impliquent pas la dés-humanisation. Au contraire, ce qui pose problème aujourd'hui c'est le fait que l'humain tend à s'effacer derrière les machines intelligentes, dans un monde de plus en plus technologisé selon l'idéologie pantechno-capitaliste contemporaine. Le foisonnement futurologique, la confusion entre le présent et le futur, entre le réel et le virtuel conduisent à une généralisation de spéculations et d'utopies qui évacuent trop souvent la conscience socio-politique. Un nouvel imaginaire prolifère, obsédé par la science fiction, la science et la fiction, la fiction de la science et les images stéréotypées des médias. "Science Friction" aurait rétorqué Stan Vanderbeek, qui satirisait le pouvoir scientifique et ses synergies militaristes déjà à l'époque de la Guerre froide.⁷ Cet imaginaire, propulsé par les instances de pouvoir occidentales, tend à coloniser de plus en plus la planète. Virtualisation, dématérialisation, désocialisation, dépolitisation, déshumanisation, le projet apparaît global. Dans une sorte d'hyperdégor hollywoodien, la *sciencefictionnalisation* du monde élabore de nouvelles exclusions, de nouveaux exils.

La question de l'ailleurs, d'un ailleurs possible, surgit alors avec urgence. En dépit des forces colonisatrices envahissantes, pouvons nous préserver des matrices iconiques autres que celles offertes quotidiennement par les médias? Pouvons-nous garder actifs les réservoirs iconiques provenant de civilisations

⁶ Edgar Morin, *La Méthode 1 La nature de la nature*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1977, p. 16.

⁷ Stan Vanderbeek, *Science Friction*, film 16mm, 10min, 1959.

anciennes ou présentes mais non occidentales, non dominantes? Pouvons-nous garder éveillée une conscience transculturelle et diachronique? Inventer des procédés figuratifs non soumis à la chaîne historique légitimée par le marché de l'art et les discours officiels de l'art contemporain globalisé? Activer des sources d'énergie et des registres de communication oblitérés par le consensus communicationnel actuel? Créer un champ libéré des normes cinématographiques telles qu'elles sont imposées par le marché du cinéma et de la télévision? Réactiver les forces psychomenteles du spectateur et son corps sentant et sensible? Ce sont les questions que soulève et auxquelles répond notre projet artistique.

Un Cinéma corporel

Notre *cinéma corporel*⁸ est critique de la conception du cinéma en tant qu'institution et industrie. Il se pose comme cinéma contre-industriel et revendique une proximité poétique avec les arts plastiques. Notre approche féministe et sa théorisation prennent donc vie hors du cadre du cinéma narratif, qui constitue par ailleurs l'objet presque exclusif de la Feminist Film Theory.

Notre premier film *Double Labyrinthe* (1975-76) coïncide chronologiquement avec l'article de Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" publié en Angleterre en 1975.⁹ Nous n'étions donc pas au courant de la proposition analytique de Mulvey au moment où nous avons réalisé le film. Notre proposition a surgi de notre réflexion et expérience propre et se situait sur un autre terrain, celui du cinéma non narratif.

Mulvey met au centre de son analyse la question du regard, postulant que le sujet du désir en cinéma est toujours un sujet masculin. Le regard est aussi au centre du dispositif de *Double Labyrinthe*. Quel est ce dispositif? Un dispositif en chiasme. Le film est composé de deux parties. Dans la première

⁸ A propos du cinéma corporel voir Maria Klonaris – Katerina Thomadaki: "Traversée du corps, traversée des médias. Mises au point pour un regard rétrospectif," *Jeune, dure et pure! Une histoire du cinéma d'avant garde et expérimental en France*, sous la direction de Nicole Brenez et Christian Lebrat, Paris, Cinémathèque Française/Mazotta; "Cinema of the Body : A Meta-Body Art," in *The Last Futurist Show*, edited by Marina Gržinić, Ljubljana, Maska, 2001; "The Feminine, the Hermaphrodite, the Angel: Gender Mutations and Dream Cosmogonies. On a multimedia projection and installation practice (1976-1994)," *Leonardo*, Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology, MIT Press, Cambridge, Volume 29, Number 4, 1996.

⁹ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, London, Autumn 1975, Volume 16, N°3.

partie Katerina fait six actions avec des matières. Elle est filmée par Maria. Dans la deuxième partie, Maria fait six actions avec des objets. Elle est filmée par Katerina. Donc structure symétrique.

Le film se constitue à partir d'un double regard, d'un regard échangé, d'un regard en chiasme. Les deux sujets du regard sont féminins. C'est une femme qui regarde une autre femme, et qui ne la regarde pas en tant que *même*, mais en tant qu'*Autre*. Le sujet du désir est féminin.

Notre *cinéma corporel* articule la question du corps féminin comme *sujet* à celle du regard, au delà de toute préoccupation diégétique. Il est en premier lieu un dispositif relationnel. Les questions auxquelles il répond sont: comment la relation à l'Autre peut conduire à l'invention d'un langage, notamment cinématographique? Comment filmer une femme sans l'objectiver? Comment construire des images de femmes mues par des nécessités internes, par une volonté de rendre visible ce que les icônes sociales de la féminité refoulent? Comment l'image intérieure, constitutive de la subjectivité, peut briser les conventions du réel? Comment un langage surgissant, en devenir, peut constester la charge idéologique des langages audiovisuels normés? Il nous était clair dès le départ que cette quête ne pouvait se mener qu'en dehors du circuit du cinéma narratif industriel.

L'importance de la question de l'Autre dans notre cinéma génère des dialogues corporels. Dialogue entre le corps de celle qui filme et celle qui est filmée. Ou encore, entre le corps de celle qui projette et celle dont l'image est projetée. Le corps filmé inscrit son énergie dans le flux filmique. Le corps filmant inscrit la trace de ses mouvements dans l'image. Le regard devient toucher.

Le cinéma narratif dominant adopte, en règle générale, l'idéal spéculatif de la neutralité. Le sujet du regard est supposé être non seulement "neutre," mais aussi "désincarné." Il se situe dans un non lieu à partir duquel il observe les événements narrés, dont la vraisemblance dépend justement de sa prétendue neutralité. Mais cette neutralité est fictive. Derrière elle se dissimule non seulement le sujet masculin mais aussi une machine pour le regard construite à grand renfort de codes cinématographiques. Notre cinéma ne participe pas de ce système de codes. La relation active entre corps (féminin) *filmant* et corps (féminin) *filmé* perturbe ce statu quo. La matière organique de notre vision transforme le film en un espace intercorporel.

Notre pratique cinématographique pourrait être lue comme une entreprise de désancrage, de déracinement du cinéma d'un sol qui le nourrit presque depuis sa naissance: l'économie scopique et libidinale fondée sur une domination masculine. Car le cinéma "classique" reflète la subordination socio-sexuelle du "féminin," sur lequel il porte un regard discriminatoire organisé,

orchestré et mythifiant. La radicalité de notre démarche vient justement de l'abandon massif de ce dispositif idéologique et de ses traces, de son inscription dans le corps entier du film – sa grammaire, sa syntaxe, ses configurations imaginaires. Notre cinéma pousse d'un autre bord. Comme dit Luce Irigaray "… il s'agit d'une autre économie, qui dérouté la linéarité d'un projet, mine l'objet-but d'un désir, fait exploser la polarisation sur une seule jouissance..."¹⁰

La "dissidence" du corps et du regard féminin, du corps de femme-sujet dans notre cinéma corporel concerne le statut sociomental du féminin. Avec *Le Cycle des Hermaphrodites* (1982-90) et le *Cycle de l'Ange* (1985-) nous introduisons la question de la dissidence de l'identité sexuelle sur le plan non seulement mental, mais aussi physiologique. Le corps intersexuel transgresse *physiquement* la frontière des sexes. Et les jumeaux siamois de *Désastres sublimes* aggravent la transgression: leurs corps met en question l'anatomie humaine.

Figures/miroirs

Il nous paraît urgent de questionner aujourd'hui le devenir des corps *biologiquement* dissidents. Il semblerait que le destin qui se profile pour eux à l'ère numérique, c'est qu'ils seront évités d'emblée, génétiquement exclus, effacés des possibles, grâce aux pouvoirs de prévision et de manipulation des sciences biomédicales, pour servir ainsi jusqu'au bout l'incapacité de nos sociétés d'assumer le contre-norme. "Formatage" et "normalisation" de l'embryon, diagnostics génétiques préimplantatoires, recherches sur la "réparation" génétique: les préoccupations des chercheurs financés par les grands laboratoires pharmaceutiques semblent déborder la prévention de maladies génétiques dégénératives pour atteindre un projet d'un autre ordre: la création d'un humain "parfait." Une nouvelle forme d'eugénisme s'installe, sans la violence "négative" de l'eugénisme nazi, mais avec la violence "positive" du capitalisme avancé. C'est-à-dire que l'élimination au nom d'une race parfaite ne se pratique plus sur des populations humaines, mais sur des humains virtuels et "invisibles," sur cette nouvelle matière première pour l'industrie médicale: les embryons. Et elle ne se pratique pas par une instance de pouvoir extérieure, mais par le consommateur lui-même de nouveaux produits médicaux, ayant déjà assimilé et intériorisé les fantasmes normatifs. Il semblerait que les corps dissidents seraient ainsi expulsés définitivement du réel, pour ne réapparaître que dans les marges autorisées de l'imaginaire et de l'art. En tant que corps réels, ils risquent l'extinction.

¹⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, Paris, Minuit, 1977.

L'une de nos spécificités est que nous travaillons sur des corps différents qui sont bien réels. Nous ne créons pas des corps numériques fictifs. En ce sens notre travail s'oppose à cette tendance, qui se généralise pendant les dernières années, de fictions numériques sensationnelles autour du corps humain. Chez nous il s'agit de corps réels, déjà extraordinaires, par nature, si l'on peut dire. Des corps contre-naturels, au sens où ils défient l'idée que nous nous faisons de la nature. Des corps qui ont *vécu*. Des corps qui ont *subi* les effets de leur différence. Les outils numériques interviennent dans notre création pour nous permettre de reformuler l'image de ces corps en la projetant dans un univers poétique. Nous utilisons le potentiel transformateur des technologies imagistes non pas pour détruire, pour désagréger les corps dissidents, mais au contraire pour en augmenter l'impact mental, autrement dit leur puissance.

Les *figures/miroirs* sur lesquelles nous travaillons impliquent toujours une rencontre, une révélation. Ce sont des personnes que nous avons rencontrées à travers des documents d'archives médicales, photographies ou cires anatomiques, des personnes qui se sont imposées à notre regard et à notre création par la force de leur présence, de leur silence ou de leur souffrance. Ce sont des sujets emblématiques, qui bousculent la biologie et les limites du corps reconnu. Ce sont des miroirs de déchirures et d'effondrements qui traversent le monde actuel. Nous leur donnons un statut de corps visionnaires.

L'Ange intersexuel

En 1985 nous avons commencé à travailler sur un document médical: une photographie d'hermaphrodite que Maria Klonaris a trouvée dans les archives de son père, gynécologue chirurgien. Le document, de photographie anonyme et non daté, représente un sujet de sexe féminin avec un corps d'homme. Personnage mystérieux, aux yeux bandés, dont le sexe intermédiaire, autant que la stature, nous a amenées à l'associer à l'Ange.¹¹

Anghelos, messager selon l'étymologie grecque, l'ange dans les gnosés néoplatonicienne et zoroastrienne ainsi que dans les théologies chrétienne, judaïque et islamique, revêt une fonction théophanique. Il représente le lien entre le monde sensoriel empirique et le *mundus intellectualis*. Il est considéré comme une entité médiane qui surgit de l'abstraction du monde imaginal¹²

¹¹ Voir catalogue de l'exposition au mois de la photo à Paris, *Klonaris / Thomadaki, Archangel Matrix*, Paris, A.S.T.A.R.T.I., 1996.

¹² Dans son *Traité philosophique I*, Sohrevardî (XII^e siècle) parle de trois univers: "Selon les philosophes, les univers sont au nombre de trois : le monde des Intelligences (*Angeli*

pour s'intégrer au cadre anthropomorphique de notre monde : une non-image qui se convertit en image.

Nous commençons alors à explorer cet *inconnu* : le concept de l'Ange par la médiation d'un sujet intersexuel. Nous sommes guidées par une photographie médicale. Une photographie médicale, mais une photographie exceptionnelle, où le corps différent ne se laisse pas réduire à un simple objet d'observation clinique, à un simple lieu offert à la domination du regard sous couvert d'objectivité scientifique. Une photographie, une *scène* photographique où se produit un étrange retournement: le sujet photographié semble transcender le contexte médical pour interroger les limites de la condition humaine sexuée.

En plus, une photographie volée, extraite des archives paternelles, enlevée au milieu scientifique, transposée dans le territoire de l'art, libérée des contraintes de la normalité et de la thérapeutique des déviances. Pour nous ce corps intersexuel incarne la contestation contemporaine de la frontière étanche entre les sexes. Il inscrit dans l'histoire humaine un rêve privé et public de la fin du XXe siècle, rêve d'une identité sexuelle repensée – double, multiple, ou transitoire.

Au fond, ce corps brise la frontière non seulement entre le féminin et le masculin, mais aussi entre l'abstrait et le concret, le mythologique et l'incarné, l'imaginaire et le palpable, le concept et la forme.

La photographie médicale est l'événement premier. La découverte de cette photographie est l'instant électrique. Tout ce qui en découle appartient à un méta-temps de la photographie, ou plutôt, à un temps *méta-photographique*. Un temps ultérieur, longtemps après l'événement de la capture de l'image du sujet. Un temps après sa vie, ou un temps après sa mort. Une vie après la mort ou une vie après le temps, une *méta-vie* incrustée dans une autre vie: la vie du sujet jadis photographié, incrustée dans la vie des artistes méta-photographes.

Ce temps méta-photographique implique des processus de projection, de génération et de mutation. La photographie médicale devient *matrice*. Elle génère non seulement d'inépuisables variations, mais aussi un au-delà du dispositif photographique classique.

intellectualis), c'est le monde du Jabarût; le monde des Ames (*Angeli cœlestes*), et c'est le monde du Malakût; le monde du Molk, et c'est le "domaine" des corps matériels (ou encore le monde visible, le monde des phénomènes sensibles)." Henri Corbin commente: "Autrement dit, les trois mondes sont le monde intelligible, le monde imaginal et le monde sensible[...] Dans sa doctrine philosophique de la perception, Sohrawardî établit une véritable gnoséologie ou théorie de la connaissance visionnaire. Le *mundus imaginalis*, monde de l'Imagination active... est un monde réel, où se forme la connaissance visionnaire ou prophétique." Sohrawardî, *L'Archange Empourpré, Quinze traités et récits mystiques*, traduits du persan et de l'arabe par Henri Corbin, Paris, Fayard, 1976. pp. 22, 29, 35.

La réalisation de la série *Angélophanies* (1987-88), du *Cycle de l'Ange*, composée d'environ deux cents tirages uniques, variations de la même image, est due à une technique phototypographique de notre conception, un procédé de tirage par contact à plusieurs couches, produisant parfois des effets proches du paraglyphe.¹³ La découverte du potentiel multistraté de l'image photographique a fait basculer notre approche de l'espace et du temps: l'espace de la projection se condense dans le rectangle du papier photographique devenu surface illusoire ouverte à une profondeur abyssale. Des transformations du corps incrustées en écho les unes dans les autres entraînent la temporalité obligée du double et du multiple.

Comme un photogramme cinématographique agrandi, l'image photographique glisse dans le temps. Même si ses doubles restent immobiles, l'image du sujet ne s'immobilise jamais. Dotée du pouvoir multiplicateur des cristaux, la photographie matrice de "L'Ange" génère un temps qui lui est propre, un temps *miroirique*, de même qu'elle génère son propre espace stellaire.

Opérant avec la lumière nous incrustons l'espace stellaire dans l'espace de ce corps humain. La matière corporelle est corrodée par la matière sidérale. Des corps astronomiques, étoiles, galaxies, nébuleuses, sont projetés sur l'écran de ce corps. Ils marquent la peau, l'illuminent, la gonflent, la calcinent. Une hybridation impossible s'opère entre corps humain et macrocosme, une imbrication de deux mondes sur la *scène* d'un corps intersexuel. L'Ange, messenger d'autres mondes, corps des étoiles, devient un ailleurs corporalisé. Il ouvre un espace postcybernétique – le réseau ici présent ne relie plus des distances terrestres, mais un corps humain avec des corps galactiques. Le premier entrelacement incarné par ce corps, celui des sexes, génère un deuxième, celui des mondes, microcosme/macrocosme.

Dans nos installations nous mettons en espace les variations photographiques d'*Angélophanies*. Le spectre de la projection habite nos environnements photographiques. Nous cherchons à surmonter l'opacité de la photographie en lui attribuant un statut intermédiaire, entre la matérialité du papier photographique et l'immatérialité de la projection. Eclairées par des lumières "noires," les photographies grand format deviennent des écrans silencieux immergés dans une nuit ultra-violette.

¹³ Les paraglyphes, découverts par Béla Alexander (1852-1916) sont des effets de simili-relief ou de bas-relief obtenus en superposant un négatif et un positif d'un même sujet.

Désastres sublimes. Les jumeaux.

Empruntée à nouveau à l'imagerie médicale, ici l'image de départ est une cire de jumeaux "siamois" de la collection anatomique du Musée Spitzner.¹⁴ Nous associons cette image d'un corps "monstrueux" avec des organismes marins, des photographies de coquillages, ainsi que des planches extraites de l'ouvrage *Formes artistiques de la nature* (1899) du biologiste allemand Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). Nous intégrons ainsi des champs d'exploration scientifique comme la biologie et la génétique dans notre recherche plastique.¹⁵

Les enfants représentés par la cire anatomique sont Giacomo et Giovanni Tocci nés en 1877 en Sardaigne et classés à leur naissance dans la catégorie des xiphodymes par les professeurs Fabini et Moss de l'Académie Royale de Médecine à Turin. Selon la nomenclature instituée par Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire en 1832, ils seraient des dérodymes de la famille des sysoliens de la catégorie des monstres doubles autosites de la classe des monstres composés. C'est l'époque où triomphent la classification et la typologie. La science se construit alors sur l'idée d'une homogénéité naturelle, mais aussi d'une supériorité naturelle du type idéal. Elle invente ses règles à partir de phénomènes statistiquement majoritaires dans une périphérie géographique limitée – le monde occidental – et repousse dans les marges les phénomènes rares, exceptionnels, ainsi que toute forme d'étrangeté.

"De tout temps, le corps étrangement formé représente l'absolue Altérité" dit Leslie Fiedler.¹⁶ Il est *l'étranger archétypique*, l'Autre le plus extrême. Figure de la complexité et de l'insaisissable, le "monstre" est aussi un agent perturbateur radical, qui ébranle toute notion d'ordre. Michel Foucault insiste sur la dimension "juridique" du monstre: "juridique, dit-il, au sens large

¹⁴ Pierre Spitzner a ouvert en 1856 à Paris le "Grand Musée Anatomique et Ethnologique" situé dans le Pavillon de la Ruche, Place du Château d'Eau. A la suite d'un incendie qui, en 1885 détruisit le Pavillon de la Ruche, Spitzner décide de se faire forain et de transporter de ville en ville ce qui devient "Le Grand Musée d'Anatomie et d'Hygiène." Le Musée Spitzner disparaît à la fin des années 1940. La cire des Frères Tocci était la pièce n° 86 de la collection Spitzner, présentée comme "phénomène double à tronc unique dit 'Derodyne.'"

¹⁵ Voir Klonaris/Thomadaki, *Désastres sublimes, photographies numériques*, Paris, A.S.T.A.R.T.I., 2000.

¹⁶ Voir Leslie A. Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1978. A propos des corps "monstrueux" voir aussi Rosemarie Garland Thomson editor, *Freakery. Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, New York, New York University Press, 1996 et Nina Lykke & Rosi Braidotti editors, *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs. Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*, London, Zed Books, 1996.

du terme, puisque ce qui définit le monstre est le fait qu'il est, dans son existence même et dans sa forme, non seulement violation des lois de la société, mais violation des lois de la nature. (...) Il est l'infraction et l'infraction portée à son point maximum. (...) Le monstre est une infraction qui se met automatiquement hors la loi."¹⁷

Au XIXe siècle, les corps hors la loi acquièrent une visibilité maximale au sein de ces musées primitifs que furent les *freak shows*. Ils donnent lieu à une forme spéciale de voyeurisme, celle que Robert Bogdan appelle *the pornography of disability*.

Depuis leur plus tendre enfance, Giacomo et Giovanni Tocci étaient exhibés par leur père en tant que "phénomènes." Après avoir parcouru les villages de leur Sardaigne natale, dans leur adolescence ils deviennent des professionnels se produisant dans de grands établissements comme le Panopticum de Berlin. Ils parlaient couramment l'italien, le français et l'allemand. Partis aux Etats-Unis en 1892, ils sont reconnus par l'American Scientific Academy comme "les plus remarquables monstres doubles qui aient jamais approché la maturité."¹⁸ Cela leur vaut une carrière de stars dans les *freak shows* américains. Ils font fortune. Avant la fin du siècle, en 1897, à l'âge de 20 ans, ils décident de quitter les Etats-Unis et le monde du spectacle. Ils retournent en Italie et font construire une villa entourée de hauts murs aux environs de Venise. Ils épousent deux sœurs. C'est en leur compagnie qu'ils vivront désormais séquestrés dans leur villa, sans plus jamais se montrer en public. Ils meurent en 1940 à l'âge de 63 ans. Leur vie dément le mythe de la survie impossible des monstres. Mais aussi, elle semble symptomatique du retournement historique du statut du monstre. Du XIXe au XXe siècle, ils passent de la visibilité à l'invisibilité, de la spectacularisation à l'(auto)séquestration.

En 1881 les frères Tocci sont présentés à la Société Anthropologique de Berlin. C'est l'époque où les monstres exhibés au Panopticum de Berlin sont systématiquement "expertisés" par les scientifiques allemands. Les curiosités humaines recrutées par les impresarii alimentent la recherche scientifique. La théorie darwinienne a déjà acquis une grande popularité en Allemagne, largement grâce au biologiste Ernst Haeckel. Dans le prolongement de la pensée darwinienne, Haeckel formule sa théorie de la récapitulation, notamment sa "loi bioénergétique" (1866) qui postule que l'ontogenèse est une récapitulation de la phylogénèse.

Nous ignorons si Ernst Haeckel avait pris connaissance du cas Tocci, mais leurs trajectoires semblent se croiser en cette Allemagne fin de siècle. En

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, op. cit. p. 52.

¹⁸ Voir M. Monestier, *Les Monstres*, Paris, Tchou, 1978.

1899 Haeckel publie la première partie de sa recherche à la fois scientifique et plastique sur les *Formes artistiques de la nature*. Il dessine des micro-organismes marins découverts au cours de ses voyages dans diverses mers – la Méditerranée, la mer Rouge, l’océan Pacifique – et observés au microscope.

L’intérêt de Haeckel pour les protozoaires marins, dont il a découvert près de quatre mille nouvelles espèces, est lié à sa théorie du jaillissement spontané de la vie par les océans. Les méduses, les radiolaires, les siphonophores, les éponges calcaires et les ammonites, leur parenté formelle intrinsèque, les variantes de leurs géométries, démontrent la continuité entre l’organique et l’inorganique défendue par Haeckel. Dans l’espace de ses planches, les micro-organismes acquièrent une dimension cosmologique. On dirait des organes de l’univers, des astres sous-marins, qui partagent avec les astres célestes la symétrie rayonnée. Haeckel nous livre un firmament océanique. Et ce miroir qu’il avait imaginé entre ontogenèse et phylogenèse resurgit entre microcosme et macrocosme, entre révélations microscopiques et télescopiques. Les dessins détiennent la densité philosophique d’un théorème sur l’origine du monde.

Des assemblages de photographies et d’objets ont été la première étape de notre travail sur les jumeaux conjoints. Dans un deuxième temps nous avons retravaillé la photographie initiale sur copieur numérique en surimpression avec des photographies de coquillages. Les tirages grand format de l’exposition *Désastres sublimes* font partie de cette étape. Dans un troisième temps nous avons intégré l’image des enfants dans certaines planches extraites des *Formes artistiques de la nature*. Les imbrications et les transformations ont été obtenues par des traitements numériques.

L’image initiale sert de matrice. Elle génère d’infinies variations – palimpsestes numériques.

Puis quelque chose arrive, qui cristallise le transfert sous-jacent : nous sautons dans l’image. Nous incorporons le corps des jumeaux en substituant aux visages de Giacomo et Giovanni nos propres visages d’enfants. Un saut périlleux. Et non seulement pour l’effet de greffe, ou pour la transsexuation que cela suppose. Notre double autoportrait en jumelles siamoises est une signature grave. Dans le miroir du corps siamois, le double auteur assume sa “monstruosité” bicéphale, transgressive.

Dans l’espace de l’exposition nous avons utilisé des miroirs. Des miroirs verticaux sont intégrés dans les diptyques ou triptyques photographiques semblant à la fois séparer et réunir les images. Le spectateur qui regarde les photographies se trouve brutalement confronté à son propre reflet, cadré par le corps des jumeaux conjoints. Etant donné que les miroirs sont légèrement déformants et que les photographies, par leur taille et par leur emplacement,

maîtrisent l'espace, une sorte de renversement se produit. La "normalité" du corps du spectateur est déstabilisée, tandis que le corps extraordinaire des jumeaux, lui, est célébré et sublimé par une ritualisation visuelle. Voici qu'il quitte les marges du regard pour occuper le centre. En même temps, le corps du spectateur devient trouble, indéfini, comme si aucune position fixe, privilégiée quant à sa constitution anatomique, n'était plus pensable. Le rapport de forces est ébranlé.

Dans *Désastres sublimes*. *Les jumeaux* sont réunis des corps qui appartiennent à d'autres dimensions du réel, à d'autres niveaux du visible. De l'échelle humaine à l'échelle microscopique, des liens se tissent, des miroirs surgissent. Car l'ensemble de notre œuvre est traversé par l'idée que la réalité ne peut pas se restreindre à la convention qui l'identifie au monde extérieur. Elle la déborde à la fois en termes de dimension – humaine, microscopique, subatomique, macrocosmique... – et en termes de visibilité – perceptions du monde extérieur, rêves, visions, hallucinations... C'est sur ce réel-là, sur ce réel multidimensionnel que nous travaillons. D'où notre attirance pour les projections, les doubles et les nouvelles dimensions ouvertes par les doubles et les nouvelles dimensions ouvertes par les technologies imagistes. D'où notre passion pour les corps visionnaires.

FIGURES DE L'ALTÉRITÉ ET DE L'ÉCART DANS L'ŒUVRE DE MARIA KLONARIS ET KATERINA THOMADAKI

MARIE-JOSÉ MONDZAIN

Actuellement, l'image est au cœur du souci que nous avons de la sauvegarde de notre liberté et de notre pensée. L'envahissement de la planète par un impérialisme visuel et audiovisuel réduit toute réflexion critique et toute prise de parole à un état de servile hébétude et de fascination acéphale. Il nous faut plutôt comprendre les éléments d'une généalogie dont l'ultime progéniture est porteuse du meilleur comme du pire. Peut-être ne se prépare-t-il aucun désastre hormis celui, toujours menaçant, de la démission de la pensée. Mais l'image n'en est pas responsable, elle attend qu'on la pense à la lumière de son histoire ainsi qu'au cœur de sa présente et écrasante vitalité. C'est à cette tâche que se consacrent Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki.

Leur relation aux médias visuels passe d'abord par le cinéma expérimental, ce cinéma qui refuse de s'intégrer à la commercialité dans sa forme et sa diffusion. Depuis le milieu des années 80, elles se mettent à travailler de plus en plus sur la photographie, c'est à dire l'image fixe. Contrairement au passage de la photographie à l'image animée, que l'histoire nous a fait connaître, elles passent du cinéma à la photographie. Mais elles ne quittent pas le cinéma. En fait, elles fondent leur œuvre sur les relations entre images fixes et images temporelles. Dans leur parcours pluridirectionnel elles abordent aussi la vidéo et l'image numérique, travaillent en trois dimensions et réalisent des installations. Leur expérience de l'image est couplée d'une expérience de l'écriture. C'est une expérience militante, au vu de tous les combats qu'elles ont pu défendre, mais aussi internationale et interculturelle, déjà par leurs origines, puisque Maria vient de la diaspora grecque d'Égypte et Katerina d'Athènes.

J'ai découvert leur travail il y a vingt-cinq ans et depuis je l'ai toujours suivi en constatant à quel point il avançait, se déployait, se précisait, multipliait la maîtrise technique et maintenait sa force. C'est fascinant. La question de l'image et de l'image du corps, est au centre de leurs préoccupations.

Nous nous sommes d'abord reconnues autour de la question du fémi-

nin. Dans leurs films elles soulèvent la question de la féminité de l'image et de la femme dans l'image, une question majeure, lorsque l'on considère le rôle des femmes dans l'histoire des images ou dans l'histoire de la peinture. Ceci dit, pour elles, il ne s'agit pas de construire une féminité arc-boutée contre une virilité ou une masculinité, mais de découvrir la simple altérité au cœur même du féminin. Partant même de thèmes considérés féministes, elles aboutissent à une thématique plus large, qui est strictement et radicalement politique et qui est la question de l'Autre.

Un des thèmes qui les a beaucoup préoccupées est l'ambivalence sexuelle, la bipolarité sexuelle. Cela traduit une découverte qui est au cœur de mes propres préoccupations, à savoir que, en dehors des combats civils, civiques et politiques que pose le rapport des hommes et des femmes, il y a la question de la division interne au sujet créateur: *l'Autre en moi*. Et j'ai l'impression que tout leur travail est la quête de ce qui dans un sujet se maintient comme tension, comme altérité interne dans son articulation au désir.

Plus récemment nous nous sommes retrouvées autour de la question de l'ange, parce qu'elles étaient elles mêmes très sensibles à tout ce qui me tourmentait du côté grec byzantin et du côté grec classique, du passage de la grande mythologie grecque et du grand paganisme de l'image du corps à la philosophie byzantine chrétienne de l'image invisible.¹ Elles posaient alors, sur leur propre terrain, la question qui me travaillait: qu'est-ce que l'image? Qu'est-ce que l'image en tant qu'objet critique? Quelle est l'image qui met le regard en crise?

I. *Requiem pour le XXe siècle*

Concrètement, ma rencontre avec Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki eu lieu en 1977 lors d'un colloque que j'avais organisé sur le visage à la galerie Annick Lemoine à Paris. Elles travaillaient à l'époque sur et avec leurs corps de femmes, leurs visages de femmes se regardant de façon non spéculaire.² Elles posaient la question de l'Autre à l'intérieur d'une relation de femme à femme, usant de toutes les techniques de figuration, de prise de vue, d'aventure chromatique, photographique, cinématographique. Elles se servaient aussi des mythes.

¹ Voir Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, icône, économie*, Paris, Seuil, L'ordre philosophique, 1996.

² Voir Klonaris/Thomadaki, *La Tétralogie corporelle* (1976-1979), quatre films et performances de projection: *Double Labyrinthe*, *L'Enfant qui a pissé des paillettes*, *Soma*, *Arteria Magna in dolore laterali*.

Quand l'hermaphrodite est arrivé dans leur travail avec l'installation autour de la statue hellénistique du Louvre,³ ce qui m'a frappée c'est que loin de lui donner un statut fantasmatique (fantasme de complétude et de totalité), d'unité retrouvée, elles ont mis en œuvre une double figure de l'incomplétude en elle-même. Leur figure de l'hermaphrodite n'est pas habitée par l'idée d'une sexualité totalitaire, totalisante, où le féminin et le masculin, enfin à l'ombre des grands mythes fondateurs, permettraient de restaurer une unité perdue de type paradisiaque, mais au contraire, de redoubler l'incomplétude. Ce redoublement du manque, dans toute leur œuvre me semble maintenu et prend sa dimension politique dans la mesure où il reste figure du désir de l'Autre.

L'hermaphrodite du Louvre est précisément un hermaphrodite endormi parce que son unité n'est qu'un songe. Non seulement l'hermaphrodite est endormi, mais l'hermaphrodite est notre rêve. C'est à dire qu'il y a là une mise en abyme de son caractère totalement onirique et halluciné. Avec *Le Cycle de l'Ange*⁴

Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki ont opéré le passage du sommeil aux yeux bandés. Elles ont lentement déplacé l'axe du sommeil à celui que j'appelle "de la vigilance les yeux bandés." Maria Klonaris a découvert dans les archives de son propre père, gynécologue en Alexandrie, une image, la photographie d'un(e) hermaphrodite, aux yeux bandés, ainsi qu'il est d'usage dans l'imagerie médicale. Les deux artistes se sont approprié cette image qui a pris la place de la saga sur leur propre visage et qui est venue occuper tout l'espace de leur interface. Elle est devenue la figure de l'Ange, *anghelos*, messager, et du martyr, témoin, *martyras* en grec voulant dire aussi témoin. Dans leur œuvre vidéographique *Requiem pour le XXe siècle*,⁵ l'hermaphrodite, mis en rapport avec des actualités de la seconde guerre mondiale, a cessé d'être une simple figure mythologique pour se dresser comme un authentique manifeste de la vigilance et de la mélancolie propres au siècle.

L'ange hermaphrodite de Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki a les yeux bandés. Son bandeau concerne violemment la question du regard. Il y a derrière ce bandeau un regard qui suspend la vision pour mieux voir. La vision est ici opposée au regard. Et si l'ange est capable de la puissance suffisante pour se couper du visible, c'est qu'il a accès au regard et nous, spectateurs, sommes mis face à face à cet ange qui ne nous voit pas. Contrairement

³ *Mystère I : Hermaphrodite endormi/e*, installation / environnement de projection, Musée d'Art Moderne, Biennale de Paris, 1982.

⁴ *Le Cycle de l'Ange* (1985-2002), photographies, installations, vidéos, textes, œuvres radiophoniques.

⁵ *Requiem pour le XXe siècle*, vidéo, 14min, 1994. Musique original: Spiros Faros.

aux icônes qui mettent en scène l'imaginaire, la fiction, ou le fantasme d'un objet qui nous regarde, là il y aurait la mise en scène de quelque chose qui ne nous regarde pas. Un regard qui nous renvoie sur un intérieur, un regard derrière le voile, ou en tous les cas une figure de l'aveuglement, où il n'y a plus d'échange de regards. Il y a quelque chose qui relève d'un ventre ou d'un lieu où les yeux sont fermés, ou bien au contraire, d'une image qui ne nous regarde pas et qui nous renvoie à notre propre aveuglement ou qui nous tourne le dos. J'ai été très sensible au face à face de ce *Requiem* pour le face-à-face. Tout d'un coup les yeux bandés sont devenus beaucoup plus importants pour moi que le thème de l'hermaphrodite; il s'agit d'un monde auquel on ne peut plus faire face.

L'Ange apporte aussi le thème apocalyptique du feu et de la brûlure. Les artistes ont travaillé, tour à tour, sur la tâche, sur la macula, sur la combustion, sur la lumière, sur les images stellaires, sur ce corps de feu, sur cet ange qui, les yeux bandés, ne regarde pas ce siècle mais lui rend témoignage. Dans *Requiem pour le XXe siècle* il est dans une situation de maintien, "main-tenant." Et cette main qui tient le *maintenant*, c'est à dire notre présence au monde, est une main tenant précisément l'image du siècle. L'Ange se tient debout, face au présent, sans fuir, témoin de la catastrophe. Ce maintien résonne dans la double sonorité de la présence et du courage de qui ne défaille pas. Ainsi les deux artistes, deux femmes qui ont combattu pour la dignité de leur sexe, ont porté la question bien au delà du sexuel pour affronter le siècle, pour dire leur violence. Leurs images mettent le visible à feu et à sang, mais elles le font du côté de l'ange, sans répandre la mort, car l'art est toujours don de liberté donc don de vie.

II. *Angélophanies*

La photographie, étymologiquement *écriture de lumière*, produit une étrange éclipse de la conscience. L'impression lumineuse devient une inscription de l'ombre. Les tirages photographiques qui composent *Angélophanies*⁶ sont très émouvants parce qu'ils sont célestes. Le fait de vivre ou d'aborder le corps dans le vocabulaire plastique de la constellation, lui donne une sorte d'affinité astronomique, de tissu fait de matière divinatoire, de visibilité nocturne. J'ai toujours été troublée par le fait qu'on ne voit pas les étoiles briller le jour, alors qu'elles sont là. Ici ce sont aussi des étoiles négatives, lumière et

⁶ *Angélophanies*, séquences de photographies noir et blanc, 200 tirages originaux 24 X 33cm, 1987-88.

ténèbres brillent ensemble tout le temps. La photographie est mise au service de l'irreprésentable, pour devenir le révélateur de l'invisible. Il y aurait un lien à faire avec l'icône, car lorsqu'on parle d'*angélophanie*, le vocabulaire grec fait immédiatement penser au vocabulaire théophanique, à celui de la manifestation, de l'apparition et de la transfiguration. Donc, dans une apparition, ce qui se manifeste est de l'ordre de la pure lumière, c'est-à-dire de l'invisibilité, de l'aveuglement. Je pense être très sensible à cette série là, parce qu'elle a aussi alimenté le *Requiem pour le XXe siècle*. Le requiem est assumé par une image "angélique," l'image d'un messager, d'un annonceur aveugle, sorte d'hermaphrodite-Cassandre qui brille dans la catastrophe, comme un brasier du malheur. C'est aussi un brasier d'espoir, parce qu'une œuvre d'art par sa seule présence, transforme le brasier du malheur en brasier d'espoir. Tant que les artistes produisent des œuvres comme celle-là, la catastrophe recule.

Dans leur travail, Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki partent toujours de quelque chose qui a existé. Elles ne partent pas d'une fiction, mais elles haussent l'expérience la plus sensible, la plus sensuelle, la plus immédiate, et la tirent vers le haut pour lui donner une sorte de sens universel, cosmique, qui enlève tout effet d'anecdote, tout voyeurisme. Ce n'est pas parce que l'œuvre se nomme *Angélophanies* qu'elle tire sa noblesse de son titre, elle la tire plutôt du traitement formel lui-même, de l'absence du regard qui rapproche cette image à la fois de l'ange de la Synagogue mais aussi du bandeau que l'on met sur les yeux des condamnés. Quelque chose d'angélique et de condamné a lieu en rapport à la loi. Et par cette "tenue" debout qui brille, il y a une stature, une architecture du corps, il y a une noblesse. On est en présence d'une figure emblématique. D'un autre côté, la tentation serait d'en faire une allégorie. J'utilise le mot allégorie dans le sens de la rhétorique. On peut, par des images, mettre en place un discours, comment on fait dire un "ailleurs" à des choses ou à des corps, on les fait parler pour autre chose, personnifier autre chose. Dans ces photographies, il y a une telle dignité dans la stature, que la tentation allégorisante est là. Mais elle se défait aussitôt par le travail sur la matière, sur le corps, le grain, les tirages, l'envahissement du corps par des trames, des constellations, des éléments hétérogènes à ce corps. Et peu à peu (c'est pour cela que le caractère sériel de cette œuvre photographique est important), la tentation de faire de ce corps l'emblème de tout un discours disparaît et le travail s'oriente vers la pulsation, même s'il s'agit d'images fixes. Je ressens ce travail formel comme *temps de la pensée*. Les artistes interviennent sur le plan formel, elles coupent, elles cadrent et recadrent, elles laissent dévorer le corps par les acides, par les gris, les noirs, les blancs. Toutes ces stratégies empêchent le spectateur de donner une unité triomphante et solennelle à ce corps qui malgré tout pourrait souffrir. Elles empê-

chent de l'ériger en Archange de la Révélation. Les artistes déjouent la tentation archangélique. Elles optent au contraire pour une labilité, une fugacité, une instabilité totale de l'image qui est dûe au temps des constellations elles-mêmes. Là encore Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki retrouvent l'émergence du temporel dans l'image fixe.

Les *Angélophanies* sont infiniment proches dans la genèse de ce qui va donner plus tard *Pulsar*, alors que la gémellité de *Désastres sublimes* creuse un autre sillon.

III. *Désastres sublimes*

Par ce travail sur la gémellité siamoise,⁷ nous entrons beaucoup plus dans la question du double et de la moitié. Très souvent dans les réflexions sur le miroir c'est à dire, le double et la spéularité, nous nous intéressons spontanément à ce qui fait deux et à l'unité du deux, à l'identité des deux, aux effets de répétition, de duplication, de mimétisme. Or une des façons de réfléchir au miroir c'est de réfléchir à l'asymétrie – au fait que la duplication est loin d'être symétrique. En effet: quel est le statut de la moitié dans la question du double? Car nous nous interrogeons beaucoup plus souvent sur l'identité du double et sur la duplication, sur la complémentarité. En somme nous nous posons beaucoup plus la question du un, du rapport du deux à l'un, que de celui du un sur deux, c'est-à-dire du demi.

Sachant l'intérêt que Maria Klonaris Katerina Thomadaki ont eu pour le miroir, le spéculaire, la question du reflet, nous pourrions être tenté de dire que le travail sur les siamois rejoint par une apparente symétrie la question du miroir. Un plan vertical et séquent à l'image qu'elles présentent, permettrait, en l'absence d'une partie, de savoir de quoi l'autre est composée. C'est à dire que l'on pourrait substituer un miroir à l'autre partie pour savoir ce qui se passe de l'autre côté.

Or il n'en est rien. Cette image là et la façon dont les artistes ont traité la question du deux ne cesse de faire basculer, de déranger, de déliter le caractère mimétique. Les images de la nature provenant de Haeckel⁸ jouent elles-mêmes très souvent sur les effets de symétrie: chaque organisme se laisse voir dans la régularité du dispositif, mais les planches, au contraire, ne sont jamais symétriques. Elles déploient un certain nombre d'exemplaires tous différents les uns des autres, d'une partie sur l'autre. Les artistes utilisent les planches à

⁷ *Désastres sublimes. Les Jumeaux*, 43 photographies numériques, installation in situ, Galerie Donguy, Paris, 2000.

⁸ Ernst Haeckel, *Formes artistiques de la nature*, 1899.

la fois comme fond et dans la cohabitation avec le corps siamois. La coalescence donc des microorganismes marins avec ces deux corps, qui devait spontanément poser la question de l'unité du deux, tout d'un coup, pose au contraire la non viabilité de la moitié.

Qu'est-ce qu'une moitié ?

Cela me paraît beaucoup plus intéressant de savoir ce qu'est la moitié de ces corps ou de ces images, qui font que l'unité est impossible. En effet, ce n'est pas par le lieu d'une jointure où ils ne font plus qu'un qu'il y a une unité. Au contraire, là où il y a une unité, il n'y a aucune vie et aucune fonctionnalité. J'invoquerais presque à titre de symptôme, le fait qu'en réalité, ces siamois n'ont jamais pu marcher. Même s'ils disposaient de deux jambes, ils n'arrivaient pas à coordonner leurs mouvements dans un pas. Après tout, qu'est-ce que l'unité de deux jambes, si elles sont incapables de mettre l'un pied devant l'autre ? C'est donc que ces deux jambes ne constituent pas du tout une unité, qu'elles sont elles-mêmes dans la séparation, qu'elles sont incapables d'avoir un geste commun.

Par conséquent de part en part, ces corps pourtant organiquement réunis à la taille, et séparés par le haut, sont étrangement et fondamentalement dissymétriques et séparés. Il y a donc altérité. Nous ne sommes pas du tout dans un phénomène spéculaire de duplication, de mise en miroir, mais devant une énigme, un mystère apparemment tératologique. Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki ont d'ailleurs donné à cet événement "monstrueux" qui est le fait d'être siamois, une sorte de statut métaphysique, à savoir que dans la nature, l'idéal spéculaire n'existe pas. Nous sommes au cœur même de ce qui apparaît le plus surprenant, le plus naturel du monstre, devant quelque chose qui est d'être comme l'ensemble du règne naturel: disparate, disjoint, différent et non confondu.

Cela est présenté comme un rébus dans lequel la non répétition dans la nature va de ce qu'il y a de plus naturel, des organismes vivants les plus élémentaires aux organismes les plus compliqués, à la monstruosité ou l'anomalie des corps. L'identique n'est donc pas dans la nature.

Plus encore, à partir du moment où les artistes ont fait intervenir leurs propres images, intégrées au corps des siamois, elles envoient un signal au spectateur. Ce signal dit que face à un couple de femmes on pourrait croire qu'entre deux personnes, la fascination est celle de *l'homoios*, du même pour le même, mais il n'en est rien. La fascination, l'intérêt ou le désir n'existent que pour l'Autre, donc ici c'est de l'Autre qu'il est question.

Evidemment, au delà du jeu qu'implique la conjonction d'un corps étrange avec des organismes naturels, quelque chose de grave se dit sur la nature. Il est rare que les artistes aujourd'hui assument, je ne dirais pas une

vision *naturaliste*, avec tout ce que le terme implique sur le plan esthétique, surtout que ces artistes se sont toujours opposées au “réalisme” et au “naturalisme” en tant que systèmes de figuration, mais une pensée naturaliste, au sens d’une véritable pensée de la nature. La nature ne les intéresse qu’en tant qu’elles en font un produit de l’art, un objet du désir, donc un horizon imaginaire et non une donnée biologique ou un héritage culturel. Elles participent à la construction d’un monde. J’ai l’impression que dans leur travail, Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki l’ont toujours fait, parce que pour elles la nature n’est pas un fantasme ni un thème idéologique, elle est comme un “éprouvé” de leur solidarité avec le monde.

Je trouve qu’il est rare qu’un travail aussi élaboré, un artefact aussi complexe, qu’il s’agisse des planches de Haeckel ou de leur propre travail numérique (cette rencontre de surimpositions, de raffinements et de sophistications), mette en scène quelque chose qui a à voir avec l’ordre naturel jusqu’au cœur de son désordre.

Le désordre est nature. C’est-à-dire que le désordre est dans la nature. Parce que si la notion d’ordre était dans la nature on pourrait croire que tout ce qui est de l’ordre de la raison, de la symétrie, de la répétition et de la rationalité ferait partie de la nature telle que nous en avons hérité à partir du siècle des Lumières. Alors qu’ici, les artistes inscrivent leur propre idée de la nature dans ce siècle de ténèbres qui est le nôtre, pour dire que quelque chose du désordre a à voir avec la vérité de la nature.

Il est vrai que les siamois constituent un désordre dans le déroulement habituel de la reproduction des humains. Pourquoi appelons nous cela un désordre? Parce que c’est une complication difficilement viable sans aides particulières. C’est une perte totale d’autonomie. Ce n’est pas un désordre parce que ce n’est pas la norme, mais parce que cela menace la vie et la liberté – il suffisait de peu de chose pour que ces deux êtres n’aient pas pu survivre. La chance a fait que les organes vitaux leur ont permis de survivre. C’est de l’ordre du hasard. Donc, c’est un désordre parce que la vie est menacée à tout instant. C’est aussi un désordre parce que la liberté est entamée. Ce sont deux organismes qui ont dû lutter pour vivre en inscrivant leur propre liberté subjective, en la construisant, sur un mode qui n’a plus rien à voir avec l’autonomie des corps et avec la séparation. Nous pensons toujours la liberté dans un écart. Nous pensons l’autonomie dans un écart, dans une distance, jamais dans la fusion. La fusion est ce qu’il y a de plus mortifère et de plus menaçant pour la liberté. Là, une figure lumineuse, au seuil de la fusion, a dû constituer pour vivre son écart, c’est-à-dire son rapport à la vie donc à l’altérité.

A voir la façon dont les artistes ont intégré les images de Haeckel pour

dire à la fois l'ordre et le désordre de la nature et l'intimité de ces corps avec les beautés de la nature, nous sommes tentés d'y reconnaître la vie comme celle d'un étrange coquillage, comme celle d'une plante à deux branches, comme celle d'une tige avec deux fleurs. Il y a une sorte d'étrangeté botanique dans la situation corporelle qui est la leur, arborescence à partir d'un tronc commun, comme les arbres font des feuilles et des fleurs qui ne sont pas substituables et qu'on ne peut jamais confondre.

Dans cette mise en scène très extrême d'organismes microscopiques, quelque chose éblouit car nous n'aurons jamais l'occasion de les contempler à l'œil nu. Jamais je ne pourrais savoir, sauf au microscope et dans des conditions particulières, de quoi sont faits le corps et la transparence d'une méduse, d'un radiolaire. Il y a dans tous ces organismes des effets de splendeur, de symétrie et d'asymétrie, d'ordre et de désordre qui font apparaître quelque chose d'une liberté dans la nature, c'est à dire des écarts. La nature n'arrête pas de s'écarter de la nature et de fabriquer de l'altérité.

Dans le cheminement même militant de Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki, et dans leur position de femmes, le fait de reprendre depuis cette arborescence humaine jusqu'à ces radiolaires somptueux, a à voir avec le constat des écarts. Elles assument, elles décrètent et elles posent que quelque chose dans le monde de la nature, du cosmos, de la matière et de la vie, ne fait que fabriquer des écarts. L'ordre de la liberté est intimement lié à ce que nous appellerions le désordre de la nature.

Je ressens au sein de leur travail un lien politique dans l'interrogation sur la nature et sur le corps. Il y a une emprise ou un enjeu politique dans ce que j'appellerai, entre guillemets "un naturalisme" (une réflexion sur l'ordre du monde), dans la mesure où elles y inscrivent une liberté dès le protozoaire, et y préservent une liberté, une altérité jusque dans les formes les plus inattendues que l'on peut considérer comme le non viable ou le fusionnel.

Il se trouve que cette figure n'est pas une fiction. Cette arborescence humaine a existé, elle a vécu, dans l'étrangeté de ses choix, dans cette vitalité singulière qui devient pour les artistes une figure de la liberté. C'est d'autant plus étonnant, qu'il n'y a pas plus entravé que ces deux êtres. En même temps, la pire entrave est là où il n'y a plus qu'un. Ce qui les a rendus viables, c'est leur écart. C'est ce qui leur a permis d'avoir aussi une mort singulière.

Il reste évidemment l'organisation esthétique de cette présentation. Ce que l'on retrouve dans le travail proprement plastique, dans la sophistication et la célébration des figures, dans les variations numériques de la lumière, de l'usage des positifs, des négatifs, des changements de couleur... On ne peut pas en faire simplement le déploiement d'une théorie, d'une pensée ou d'une spéculation sur ce qu'est la moitié du monde. Il est très virtuose de nous faire

découvrir tout d'un coup chez Haeckel ce qui peut donner à ce travail contemporain à la fois son poids politique, son poids spéculatif ou son poids biographique, mais en même temps sa splendeur.

Dans le dispositif d'exposition de *Désastres sublimes*, les miroirs que les artistes intègrent entre les photographies visent à inclure le spectateur. C'est le reflet du spectateur, soit dans les vitres, soit dans les miroirs qui sont entre les images, qui font qu'un nouvel écart posant la question du semblable et du dissemblable met en scène tout l'espace de l'exposition. Celui qui passe peut lui-même se sentir problématique en tant que plante humaine à deux têtes. Nous sommes tous des plantes à deux têtes. De surcroît les miroirs utilisés sont déformants. Cela fait rentrer, non pas le monde dans un effet de reflet, mais plutôt le miroir comme élément de désordre supplémentaire, comme un élément de perturbation supplémentaire dans ce qui pourrait être la pure fascination pour des objets dédoublés. Ce qui fait que le spectateur participe de l'espace d'exposition. Je suis alors moi-même partie prise et prenante dans le système. Quelque chose m'interroge sur la moitié pour toujours manquante de moi en moi.

Quant aux visions contemporaines de la nature qui considèrent l'hybridation de la nature avec les systèmes technologiques, je crois que quel que soit le régime technologique qui agit sur ce que l'on appelle des organismes naturels, des organismes vivants, nous ne pouvons toujours pas passer de l'inanimé à l'animé. Car la vie n'est pas une invention récente. Je ne fais pas de l'avancée technologique une sorte d'utopie qui participerait d'une nouvelle idée du progrès. Il est vrai qu'on pensait qu'il n'y avait que la nature qui pouvait faire de la vie avec de la vie. Maintenant, on sait que nous aussi, la vie étant donnée, nous pouvons faire de la vie avec cette vie. Mais la vie nous est donnée. Etant donnée la vie, on fait avec ce que l'on peut et le maximum que l'on peut, le meilleur et le pire. Donc, le pouvoir est de plus en plus grand sur la vie, sur la mort. Nous savons tuer, nous l'avons toujours su. Mais donner la vie reste toujours quelque chose de totalement singulier, car on est obligé de partir du vivant pour faire du vivant.

La robotique c'est de l'animé, de l'inanimé animé et le clonage part de cellules souches qui ne sont plus sexuées. On ne part plus d'un spermatozoïde et d'un ovule mais d'un organisme cellulaire qui est doué d'un certain nombre de mouvements et de capacités de reproduction et de spécialisation. Mais l'ordre de la nature ne se réduit pas à la maîtrise de plus en plus grande que nous avons de ce qui se passe entre un spermatozoïde et un ovule, entre une cellule souche et un clone. L'ordre de la nature, c'est, comme le montre Haeckel, la façon dont les coquillages se mettent en place, ou c'est, comme Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki l'évoquent, la façon dont les étoiles

renvoient aux cellules humaines ou encore la façon dont les cristaux s'organisent, dont les volcans explosent, dont la planète évolue et les continents se séparent. L'avenir du monde est loin d'être dans les seules mains des technologues. Ce qui est en train de se développer, c'est un discours de maîtrise, un discours de pouvoir, articulé à un pouvoir économique et financier sur la planète, qui se résume à la façon dont on peut tirer profit de cette maîtrise et non pas mieux comprendre le monde, faire un monde à partir de la planète.

IV. *Pulsar*

J'ai été saisie lorsque j'ai vu *Pulsar*.⁹ Je ne l'attendais pas et ce qui m'a frappée dans ces images c'est le temps. Peut-être parce qu'en ce moment je réfléchis beaucoup à la question du temps dans les images et de ce qui se passe *entre* les images.

J'ai été saisie dans mon temps physique, dans ma temporalité propre, non pas par un arrêt de ma respiration, qui aurait été une sorte d'apnée, de suspens, mais comme si j'avais été entraînée massivement et dès les premières secondes dans une temporalité autre. Autre que n'importe laquelle de celles qui me sont coutumières, dans le réel aussi bien que dans mes rêves. Ce n'était pas une temporalité onirique, non, c'était une temporalité autre.

Je pense que cela tient au statut de la lumière: le fait que les artistes ont mis en scène, en image, quelque chose comme un absolu théologique, celui de l'équivalence de l'ombre et de la lumière. Le blanc, le noir et le bleu... J'ai du mal à dire "le blanc, le noir et le bleu," car je semblerais colorer ce qui est montré. Or il y a manifestement une lumière sans spectre, une lumière dans laquelle il y a une équivalence de l'être de la lumière et du néant de la lumière.

J'ai pensé à Pseudo-Denys, à la théologie apophatique, lorsque Denys au Ve siècle s'interroge sur l'impuissance du discours à parler de Dieu. Il propose donc une théologie négative qui dit l'Être en tant qu'il n'est pas. Dire que Dieu *est*, est totalement équivalent et ne vaut pas davantage, que de dire que Dieu *n'est pas*. Cette absolue équivalence de l'affirmation et de la négation, dans *Pulsar* je l'ai ressentie dans la présence violente de la lumière et des ténèbres. Cela est visible dans le dispositif figuratif lui-même, à savoir celui de l'explosion étincelante et nocturne à la fois, de la présence malgré tout d'un visage humain qui se tend vers moi, qui à la fois m'appelle et me repousse.

⁹ *Pulsar*, vidéo, 14 min. Performance : Maria Klonaris. Musique originale: Spiros Faros.

Pulsar c'est en même temps pulsion, répulsion et impulsion. Il y a une dynamique très puissante du corps et du visage de Maria Klonaris à l'égard du spectateur qui se trouve sans arrêt au plus loin et au plus près, pris dans une sorte de battement, dans une circulation pulsatile et lumineuse.

Cela produit le renversement étonnant d'un autre dispositif : celui de la création peinte par Michel-Ange. Nous voyons dans la rhétorique de l'époque, tout le génie de Michel-Ange, qui situe un homme, un créateur, dans la puissance musculaire de son geste et tenant au bout de son doigt quelque chose comme une vanité, à la fois dans l'éloignement et la proximité.¹⁰ Dans *Pulsar* une toute autre rhétorique déplace l'ordre classique, admis, religieusement et esthétiquement reconnu. Tout d'un coup là, se met en place une nouvelle scène de la genèse où un corps de ténèbres et de lumière, quelque chose d'une présence biologique, à laquelle j'ai été sensible d'emblée, me repousse, me fait naître, m'attire et me tient sous sa puissance m'offrant une infinie similitude dans une dissemblance absolue; cette présence cosmogonique est féminine.

Il y a là quelque chose qui porte et qui renverse la mémoire d'une scène primitive, celle des récits communément admis en Occident et en Orient chrétien, sur la naissance de la vie, de l'humanité, sur la naissance de chacun de nous. Ainsi, nous nous trouvons pris tout d'un coup dans le vocabulaire de la théogonie et en même temps dans son basculement.

Cela m'a remplie de stupeur, d'effroi et de plaisir parce que la vie se donne, se retire, se redonne et se retire sans arrêt. Nous sommes dans une temporalité mythique, celle d'un premier souffle, et nous avons l'impression de quelque chose qui pourrait accompagner une biographie: accueillir une vie et l'accompagner. Un don de la vie et de la mort s'y jouerait dans les gestes de Maria.

Un autre champ de sensibilités et de mots peut venir : il concerne la danse, la transe, la liturgie. Il s'agirait d'une sorte de vision chamanique qui, quittant l'inversion du scénario biblique que j'évoquais plus haut, retrouve des situations chamaniques dans lesquelles la bande son est la forme d'un contact avec les morts, avec les dieux. La bande son prend alors un caractère oraculaire.

Pulsar m'a rappelé des images de trances chamaniques de femmes sibériennes qui m'ont beaucoup impressionnée. Récemment j'ai vu des films d'ethnologie sur la Sibérie, qui n'avaient pas de qualités cinématographiques particulières, mais qui rendaient compte de la façon dont une "medicine woman" entrait en contact avec les dieux et les morts pour guérir les vivants.

¹⁰ Voir Marie-José Mondzain, *La Chapelle Sixtine*, Paris, ed. Mazenod, Citadelles, 1990, 2 volumes.

Elle entonnait, tournait, tournoyait et tout d'un coup modifiait totalement son corps et la situation de tous les corps autour d'elle pour créer un contact et un lien autres. La chevelure de Maria, la chevelure d'étoiles, me fait justement penser à celle des chamanes quand elles tournent, quand elles dansent ou au mouvement des algues. Il y a là quelque chose d'un monde sous marin et solaire à la fois; le subaquatique et le sublunaire se rejoignent. Et tout d'un coup, mon existence terrestre y est prise sans pouvoir résister car il s'agit des deux sources de notre paléohistoire.

Il est clair pour moi que ces dispositifs, ces liturgies ou ces trances, mettent en scène une puissance du féminin tout à fait singulière. En effet, le corps des femmes devient le pont entre les vivants et les morts. Il devient cet arc dans lequel il faut passer pour que les vivants obtiennent la faveur des morts. C'est pour cela que j'ai évoqué ce paganisme chamanique qui fait partie du renversement des dispositifs classiques de scénographie de la création de l'homme. Il y a ici une adresse forte. C'est ce que j'appelle le risque pris par l'image elle-même face au spectateur.

Dans un cas comme celui-ci, nous ne sommes pas dans du spéculaire. Je n'ai pas senti ici la Méduse, car la Méduse évoque tout de suite un pouvoir du miroir. Dans *Pulsar* il n'y a pas de spéculaire, il y a de l'altérité vivante.

Chez Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki, qu'il s'agisse de la gémeleté ou de l'ange, le spéculaire est le chantier où se constitue l'altérité. Cependant ici, le chantier est celui de la mémoire et du temps.

Au début du film il y a le visage et l'œil. Il y a œil, paupière, iris et regard mais aussi lunettes noires, lunettes blanches. Je sens que je vais basculer dans cet œil. Dans l'histoire du cinéma, qu'il s'agisse du *Chien andalou*, de Bunuel où de *L'Homme à la caméra* de Dziga Vertov, il y a une façon de faire de l'œil l'organe qui va lier la totalité du corps à l'histoire de son image. Ici, iris et pupille, paupières et lunettes font basculer de l'éblouissement aux ténèbres de la genèse.

C'est l'œil du cinéaste. Mais aussi de celle qui va agir car Maria est dans les deux places et va en donner une au spectateur. C'est cela qui m'intéresse: la place que nous pouvons avoir, celle où l'artiste me met face à elle et face à moi : nous entrons en relation. C'est pour cela que je pensais à la façon dont Dziga Vertov filme son corps derrière la caméra. Il faut demander : qu'allons nous voir ensemble? Y en a-t-il l'une d'un côté et l'autre de l'autre? Que va-t-il se passer? Pour moi c'est l'énigme.

Ensuite, vient la façon de composer et d'utiliser le feu d'artifice (les lumières, les explosions), quelque chose qui renvoie à une sorte d'iridologie du monde, une cosmologie du regard.

Le temps passant, ce qui arrive devant moi, ce sont les séquences de frag-

mentations numériques et de tremblements de l'image. Par rapport à la toute puissance des évocations de départ, théogoniques ou chamaniques, le corps qui se montre et la main qui agit déploient une puissance, et en même temps ne prennent pas le pouvoir, parce que viennent s'articuler ces autres images auxquelles j'ai été aussi suspendue, celles où ce corps se met lui-même en danger, se laisse lui-même implorer, exploser, fragmenter, déplacer, couper en morceaux, perdre son unité, son centre, sa figurabilité, sa figure, sa frontalité.

A ce moment-là c'est comme si en rapport à un dispositif de toute puissance, développé au départ dans son apparition oraculaire, et maîtresse de la vie et de la mort, le spectateur devenait à son tour partie prenante d'une recomposition. C'est donc comme si l'image avait besoin de moi pour retrouver son unité, que je n'étais pas seulement le sujet assujéti à ce pouvoir mystérieux, mais que j'étais aussi dans ma propre vie douée d'une puissance de donner à cette image sa composition, son unité, son sens, enfin, qu'elle avait besoin de moi aussi.

Ainsi, il se noue avec le spectateur quelque chose qui n'est pas que spectaculaire, mais aussi liturgique, au sens d'une profusion de forces contrôlées ou incontrôlables, qui viennent le submerger. Lorsque *Pulsar* s'est arrêté, je n'étais pas défaite et me sentais partie prenante de cette donation. J'étais donc moi aussi dans cette histoire de corps de lumière et d'ombre, de corps de femmes qui sont peut-être les seuls dans lesquels l'ombre et la lumière sont égalisés. Et les seuls dans lesquels, quelque chose de l'ordre de la donation de la vie, de la composition, de la décomposition se joue dans une liturgie qui peut emprunter ses figures et ses citations, ses allusions à plusieurs cultures à la fois, mais qui est en même temps *toi* et *moi*.

Maria dans *Pulsar* me fait ainsi découvrir quelque chose d'un mode interne de la temporalité du corps, dans lequel la puissance de mon visage, celle de mes mains et les risques que l'on prend de perdre son unité, sont là. C'est une belle chose...

Il est vrai que les artistes ont appelé ce film *Pulsar* en s'inspirant d'un certain état des étoiles, d'une question d'énergie et d'une dissémination de cette énergie dans l'événement d'un effondrement et d'une disparition. Je trouve cela très émouvant parce qu'il coïncide avec ce que j'appelle le risque pris par la mise scène de l'image, et par la femme qui se met là dans l'image : celui de répondre jusqu'au bout de son geste de transe, jusqu'à l'effondrement.

Y a-t-il là de l'orgiasque, de l'orgasmique? Je reconnais les articulations sexuelles ou les significations en tous les cas libidinales du dispositif. Ce qui ne signifie pas nécessairement qu'il y ait de la jouissance, la question n'est pas là, car la jouissance est inassignable. Elle est entre ce que je vois et moi, elle

n'est ni en moi ni dans ce que je vois. Elle est dans la production du temps. La question est donc de savoir ce qui se joue de la jouissance dans la relation que Maria entretient avec le spectateur. Je crois que ce qu'elle touche là avec ces images, plus qu'une figuration orgasmique ou orgiaque des signifiants, c'est une mise en scène de quelque chose de l'ordre du temps de la jouissance. Il s'agit de cette étrange situation du sujet dans le temps de sa jouissance où, précisément, l'effondrement, l'éblouissement, l'être et le non être sont dans cette sorte d'égalité.

C'est exactement comme la mystique qui a à voir avec la jouissance que l'on tire de Dieu, du fait de ne jamais pouvoir le connaître. J'entends par mystique l'expérience interne du désir de Dieu, brûlante au cœur de sa frustration. Ni possessive ni dogmatique, la mystique s'oppose à la théologie. Elle est une expérience du corps qui confie à la lettre la sonorité vivante de son manque. Les poèmes de Saint Jean de La Croix ou Sainte Thérèse d'Avila, nous disent que je meurs du désir, et je meurs de jouir dans la relation à l'aimé qui à la fois me saisit et que je ne saisirai jamais. Il y a là dans la tradition mystique toute une façon d'essayer de dire ce que les images ne pourront jamais dire parce que la mystique est une façon de parler et jamais de montrer. Donc Maria ne montre pas de la jouissance. Mais au niveau de la bande son et de la création d'une temporalité, quelque chose touche, effectivement, à la temporalité sonore de ce que le poème mystique peut essayer de transmettre. Ce n'est ainsi pas *dans* les images mais *entre* les images. Ce n'est pas visible mais éprouvé et c'est aussi audible parce que l'image a donné et imposé à la bande sonore son tempo, ses pulsations.

Pulsar, c'est sans doute un état du ciel, mais le mot est temporel. C'est un mot du temps et non de l'espace.

Je pense qu'aujourd'hui, malgré la profusion visuelle, il n'y a pas beaucoup d'images, car une image n'est pas ce qu'on donne à voir, c'est ce que l'on donne à désirer. Images puissantes et figures du désir sont celles que créent Maria Klonaris et Katerina Thomadaki en s'inscrivant à contre-courant de l'asthénie contemporaine de l'image. Leur œuvre est présente, elle est forte, elle est belle, dans sa vivante violence.

Remerciements à Elsa Ayache.

“LEBENDE” ANATOMIEN 1900/2000:
KINEMATOGRAPHISCHE SERIENSCHNITTANIMATION
UND VOXELBASIERTE VOLUMEN VISUALISIERUNG

CLAUDIA REICHE

Relais

In diesem Beitrag wird es darum gehen, ein Feld zwischen wissenschaftlichen Bildlichkeiten und Diskursen zu erzeugen, die die räumliche Darstellung des menschlichen Körpers betreffen. Die hierbei herangezogenen Bild- und Textquellen markieren an ihren äußersten Polen eine historische Spanne von fast 100 Jahren. Es entstammen die Materialkomplexe zwei verschiedenen medientechnischen Hervorbringungen und sollen den Unterschied, wie er zwischen analogen und dem digitalen Medium besteht, nach der Art eines Schaltgeräts kontaktgebend überspringen oder unterbrechen, indem Materialien aus der Anfangsphase der Kinematographie mit heutigen Datenvisualisierungen in eine bewegliche Relation gebracht werden.

Zum einen werden aus dem Bereich des Films “Serienschnittanimationen” herangezogen. So werden kurze Filmstücke bezeichnet, die durch Einzelbild-Aufnahmen von Schnitten durch anatomische Präparate zustande kommen. Allerdings lassen sich die hier referierten Filmstreifen nicht mehr im Original auffinden, sondern erscheinen anhand der Spuren, die sie in der zeitgenössischen Fachpresse von 1907 hinterlassen haben. Visuell und konzeptionell ergänzt wird dieser Pol durch technisch verwandtes Material serieller Animation in der Kunst, nämlich der Film-Avantgarde der 20er Jahre. Hier geht es um ein Verfahren Oskar Fischingers aus dem Kontext des “abstrakten oder – wie es programmatischer heißt – des ‘Absoluten Films.’” Zum anderen werden errechnete Bildanimationen aus der Mitte der 1990er Jahre dazu in ein Verhältnis gesetzt. Sie sind im Umfeld des “Visible Human Projects” gruppiert und arbeiten an vieldimensionalen Bild- und Navigationssysteme symbolisch-räumlicher Computermodelle der menschlichen Anatomie.

Stromfluß und Unterbrechung, die zwischen diesen beiden zueinandergerückten gegensätzlichen Polen arrangiert werden sollen, haben mit einer schlagenden Ähnlichkeit umzugehen, einer überspringenden Verbindung

dieser beiden historisch und medial differenten Materialgruppen. Solche Ähnlichkeitswahrnehmung entsteht zum einen in der konkreten Anschauung der filmischen und digitalen Animationen. Zusehen gegeben wird jeweils anhand von zweidimensionalen Schnittbildern das Innere eines Körpers. Die Bewegung eines Eindringens in dies Innere erzeugt eine spezifische Darstellung der Dreidimensionalität. Zum anderen entsteht eine Ähnlichkeit auch hinsichtlich der diskursiven Fassung, die sich jeweils als paradoxales, unmittelbar gesehenes "Leben" artikuliert.¹

Arzt/Trickfilmer

Zunächst seien die medizinischen Filmexperimente von Dr. Karl Reicher vorgestellt. Zum historischen Kontext und zur Person: Karl Reicher begann bereits 1906² in dem neurologischen Institut der Universität Wien mit Filmaufnahmen von Serienschnitten menschlicher Gewebe zu experimentieren. Die Resultate dieser Arbeit wurden erstmals 1907 in Deutschland veröffentlicht; zu dieser Zeit war er Assistenzarzt an der Berliner Charité.³ Seine Experimente, Vorträge und Publikationen widmen sich seitdem wiederholt der wissenschaftlichen Anwendung der Kinematographie in der Medizin.

Unbedingt als Pionierarbeiten haben diese sehr frühen Erforschungen und Anwendungen des filmischen Mediums zu gelten, da ein neues Konzept zur Erzeugung von Ansichten des menschlichen Körperinneren entwickelt wurde: Schnittserien eines Gehirnpräparats wurden jeweils in Einzelschaltung von einer Filmkamera auf Filmstreifen aufgezeichnet, wobei den aufeinanderfolgenden Schnitten die sukzessiven Filmkader entsprachen. Die Projektion zeigte insofern eine filmische Bewegungsdarstellung, wie sie z.B. ebenso aus den einzelnen Bildern eines gezeichneten Animationsfilm erreicht wird.

Das Prinzip dieser Anordnung kann darin angegeben werden, daß um den Preis des konkreten Zerschneidens von dreidimensionalen Gewebepreparaten, die filmische Apparatur wiederum eine visuelle Synthese erlaubt, die eine Bewegung durch das Präparat hindurch zu sehen gibt. Ebenso wie die Anatomie des menschlichen Körpers wurden die Prinzipien von Zerstückelung und Verschmelzung durch Einzelschuldaufnahmen der Kamera und anschließende Projektion erforscht. Es ist das neuartige Verhältnis von konkreten Schnitten in das anatomische Präparat und medientechnischen Ein-

¹ Vgl. Claudia Reiche, "Lebende Bilder' aus dem Computer," in: *Bildkörper. Verwandlungen des Menschen zwischen Medium und Medizin*, hrsg. Marianne Schuller, Claudia Reiche, Gunnar Schmidt, Hamburg 1998, S. 123 ff.

schnitten in die Zeit der Filmaufnahme, das die Serienschchnittanimationen an einen medien- wie körpertheoretisch entscheidenden Punkt transportiert.

Belegt sind von Karl Reicher aus dem Jahr 1907 zwei Filmstreifen, die Serienschritte durch das menschliche Gehirn zeigen: der erste mit 1060 Bildern, der zweite mit 1235 Bildern. Bei einer Bildfrequenz von 16 Bildern pro Sekunde sind das 66 und 77 Sekunden Spieldauer.⁴ Für diese “Winzigkeit” an Material (umgerechnet wären das Celluloid-Streifen von unter 2 m Länge) sind die Filmstücke in deutschsprachigen Periodika des Jahres 1907 recht breit dokumentiert und besprochen, sowohl im Feld der Medizin als auch des Films.

Um die Methode der Serienschchnittanimationen Reichers und die zeitgenössische Rezeption zu skizzieren, eignet sich gut folgende kurze Mitteilung aus dem “Kinematograph,” der ersten deutschsprachigen Fachzeitschrift für Kinematographie:

“Auf dem Kongress deutscher Nervenärzte zu Dresden am 15. und auf dem Kongress deutscher Naturforscher und Aerzte am 18. d. M. wurden von Dr. Karl Reicher aus Wien höchst interessante Kinematogramme vorgeführt. Der genannte Forscher hatte die originelle Idee, lückenlose Serien von Gehirnschnitten auf Filmbändern wiederzugeben; und man hat beim raschen Ablaufe dieser neuartigen lebenden Bilder den Eindruck, als ob die verschiedenen äußerst kompliziert angeordneten Leitungsbahnen und Systeme des Gehirns aktiv vor dem Auge des Betrachters vorüberziehen. Man gewinnt dadurch viel bessere räumliche Vorstellungen von den Bahnen und Zentren im Gehirn als nach den bisherigen Methoden. Neben diesem außerordentlich belehrendem Werte wird aber die Idee Dr. Reichers vielleicht auch eine ganz neue Forschungsmethode eröffnen. Auf dem erwähnten Kongress fanden die Vorführungen jedenfalls lebhaften Beifall.”⁵

Daß sich hier eine neue Lehr- und Forschungsmethode eröffnen würde, wird sich – nach relativ schnellem Vergessen des verfrühten Ansatzes – erst

² Angaben Karl Reichers, “Mikrokinematographische Aufnahmen bei Dunkelfeldbeleuchtung und Makrokinematographie,” *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift*, Nr. 11, 14. 3. 1910, S. 484. Ob von diesen Filmstreifen Kopien angefertigt worden sind, ist ungewiß.

³ Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte, 79. Versammlung zu Dresden, 15. – 21. September 1907, Leipzig 1908, S. 235 f. Als Mitarbeiter werden genannt: Obersteiner, Marburg, Alexander und Weidner.

⁴ Karl Reicher, “Mikrokinematographische Aufnahmen,” a.a.O., sowie derselbe, “Kinematographie in der Neurologie,” a.a.O. Anthony R. Michaelis in seinem enzyklopädischen Werk: *Research Films in Biology, Anthropology, and Medicine*, New York 1955, macht diesbezüglich eine andere Angabe. “Reicher was the first to realize such a project and to present, in 1907, a film composed of 2,000 sections of the brain [...]” heißt es auf Seite 92.

⁵ *Der Kinematograph*, Nr. 40, Düsseldorf, 2.10.1907, o.P.

im Computerzeitalter bestätigen, indem heute diverse Schichtbildverfahren in der Medizin breiteste Anwendung gefunden haben. Karl Reichers Verfahren war allerdings bereits 1907 in der Lage, entscheidende Topoi der Bildwahrnehmung herauszuarbeiten, die später auch für die Rezeption der Visible Human – Bildlichkeiten maßgeblich werden sollen. Daß “lückenlose” Serien von Gehirnschnitten in diesen neuartigen lebenden Bildern gesehen werden, sei hervorgehoben, ebenso, daß diese Bilder “aktiv” vorüberziehen, und so “räumliche Vorstellungen” hervorriefen.

Der Vortragstext Reichers zu den beiden Filmstücken ist unter dem Titel: “Kinematographie in der Neurologie” in den “Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte vom September 1907” nachzulesen. Grundsätzlich gingen Karl Reicher und seine Mitarbeiter zunächst nach der üblichen zeitgenössischen Präparationstechnik vor, das heißt der ausgewählte Teil des Gehirns wird in einen Celloidinblock eingeschlossen und anschließend mit einem Mikrotom in sehr dünne Schnitte zerlegt. Diese Schnitte wurden einzeln auf mikroskopische Objektträger aus Glas aufgebracht und gefärbt. Das Medium der präparatorischen Einbettung, das Celloidin, ist nun in treffender Übereinstimmung chemisch sehr mit dem Celluloid des damaligen Filmmaterials verwandt. Die chemisch nahe Verbindung der Trägersubstanzen bei der Umbettung der Reicherschen Gewebepräparate von Celloidin auf Celluloid markiert allerdings im Konzeptuellen die Überwindung mächtiger Schranken zwischen Medien und Disziplinen.

Was in technischer Hinsicht allerdings von der konventionellen Präparationstechnik bei Reichers Verfahren abweichen mußte, um Filmaufnahmen der Schnitte herstellen zu können, war die notwendige “Zentrierung” der einzelnen Schnitte, die immer möglichst exakt auf die gleiche Stelle des Objektträgers aufgebracht werden mußten, damit bei der anschließenden Filmaufnahme, die einzelnen Bilder nicht “gegenseitig verschoben wären,” wie Reicher selbst ausführt.⁶ Denn was geschähe entsprechend den Gegebenheiten der Filmprojektion? Wenn die einzelnen Bildmotive auf dem Filmstreifen nicht jeweils in gleicher Position im Kader plaziert sind, ist keine Betrachtung auch der klarsten, schärfsten Aufnahme eines Einzelpräparate möglich, sondern ein unscharfes Vibrieren, Zittern und Zappeln (bei groben Abweichungen) wären die Folgen. Solche Verschiebungen sind für die Kunst, die das Medium formal erforscht, von größtem Interesse, machten jedoch gründlich den wissenschaftlichen Nutzen für die Neurologie zunichte.

Das Präparat wurde zuerst auf einen Auffangschirm mit einem System farbiger Hilfslinien projiziert und unter Zuhilfenahme einer starken Lupe

⁶ Karl Reicher, “Die Kinematographie in der Neurologie,” a.a.O., S. 235.

genau zentriert. Schließlich trat an Stelle des Schirms die Filmkamera. Derselbe Vorgang wiederholt sich bei jedem Bild. Die Qualität der Filmstreifen war von der Handarbeit an jedem einzelnen Filmkader abhängig, denn es gab keine apparative Koppelung von Messer und Kamera. Wie mögen nun die Vorführungen dieser äußerst mühselig belichteten Filmstreifen Karl Reichers ausgesehen haben?

“Sie müssen daher das störende Zittern der Bilder, das ja mit jeder kinematographischen Vorführung an und für sich verbunden ist, entschuldigen, selbiges wird in den in Vorbereitung befindlichen kompletten Serien eines menschlichen Hirns fast vollständig fehlen.”⁷

Es mußte also etwas zum Gesehenen hinzugefügt werden, damit die Ankündigung erfüllt würde. Strenggenommen versprach Reicher hier im Wortsinne Unmögliches vorzubereiten: Eine “lückenlose” oder “komplette” Serie ist nie erreichbar, insofern zwischen Serienschnittpildern Lücken notwendig sind, sonst gäbe es kein Schnittbild und keine Serie. Die illusionäre Wahrnehmung einer Lückenlosigkeit erzeugt sich in der Filmprojektion wiederum durch die minimalen Differenzen –die “Lücken” –zwischen den einzelnen Filmkadern. Es verwundert kaum, daß das Versprechen auf die kompletten, fast zitterfreien Gehirnabbildungen – zudem als Grenzüberschreitung des Leistungsvermögens zitternder Hände und schmerzender Augen – wohl nicht gehalten werden konnte, denn Hinweise auf tatsächliche Anfertigung weiterer Serienschchnittanimationen durch Karl Reicher fehlen. In seinem Begleitvortrag fährt er fort:

“Die erste Serie entstammt dem Hirn eines Erwachsenen und umfaßt in ihren 1060 Schnitten den Hirnstamm von der Gegend der Pyramidenkreuzung im Beginn der Medulla oblongata bis zur Mitte des Pons. Man kann hier besonders deutlich die Formierung und Umlagerung einzelner Systeme verfolgen und hat den Eindruck aktiver Vorgänge. (Demonstration).”⁸

Statt auf die visuelle Demonstration können wir uns auf diese Behauptung konzentrieren. Ein entscheidender Begriff ist hier nochmals gefallen. Denn was heißt “aktive Vorgänge”? Eine Vermischung von Filmtechnik und Dargestelltem bezüglich der Frage nach dem Ursprung der gesehenen Bewegung macht sich geltend. Dies wäre vielleicht etwas weniger erstaunlich, wenn es sich um die Aufzeichnung von Bewegung gehandelt hätte. Doch das Gehirnstückchen zwischen verlängertem Mark und Brücke, war nun gewiß nicht in der Lage Bewegungen auszuführen. “Aktiv” wäre vielleicht die Technik der Filmaufnahme oder die Bewegung des Projektionsapparates. Denn mit der Rede vom “Eindruck aktiver Vorgänge” muß es um eine Beschrei-

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

bung des neuartigen, nicht lokalisierbaren Bewegungseindrucks gegangen sein – des Vordringens in das so bisher nie sichtbare Innere eines Körpers. Ein „aktiver Vorgang,“ das heißt hier notwendig Bewegung. Heißt das womöglich auch: Leben?

In Meyers Konversationslexikon aus der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts wird eine spezifische Verbindung dieser Termini vorgeschlagen, die z.B. die sonderbare Verwendung der Begriffe bezüglich der Reicherschen Filmexperimente ein wissenschaftshistorisches Licht werfen, und Aufschluß geben über ein einstiges Verhältnis von „Leben“ und (aktiver) „Bewegung.“ So heißt es zum Stichwort „Leben“:

„Das Leben ist Inbegriff gewisser Bewegungen des Organismus, und es sind diese Bewegungen von anderen zu unterscheiden, welche nicht zum Leben gehören. [...] Vielmehr hängt jede Bewegung des Organismus sowohl von inneren als auch von äußeren Bewegungen ab. In vielen Fällen ist es unzweifelhaft, ob es sich um eine Lebensbewegung handle oder nicht, aber es gibt auch zahlreiche Bewegungen, über welche die Wissenschaft selbst noch im Zweifel ist, ob sie dieselben den Lebenserscheinungen beizählen soll oder nicht.“⁹

Die hiermit formulierte Ungewißheit darüber, welche Bewegungen sogenannte „Lebensbewegungen“ seien und welche Bewegungen nicht, kann heute erstaunen. Gewißheit herrschte nur darüber: „Unbelebte Körper besitzen niemals eine willkürliche Bewegung.“¹⁰ Schwierig wird es jedoch, Leben eindeutig zu attribuieren, insofern „jede Bewegung des Organismus sowohl von inneren als auch von äußeren Bewegungen abhängt.“ Denn:

„Es wäre sicher unrichtig, zu sagen, daß Lebenserscheinungen solche seien, die nur von inneren, im Organismus selbst gegebenen Bedingungen abhängen, und daß Bewegungen des Organismus oder seiner Theile, die von äußeren Bedingungen abhängen, nicht zum Leben gehören.“¹¹

Problematisch ist also bezüglich solcher „Lebens“-definition, wenn sie über das grundlegende Merkmal Bewegung unternommen wird, – ganz wie beim Eindruck der Serienschchnittanimationen – den Ursprung diese Bewegung sicher zu bestimmen. Am Beispiel der physikalischen „äußeren“ Bedingung Schwerkraft, die auf den Blutkreislauf und dessen Bewegung einwirkt, wird diese Problematik erläutert. Die physikalischen Kräfte, die auf einen le-

⁹ Meyers Konversations-Lexikon, Eine Encyclopädie des allgemeinen Wissens, dritte Auflage, zehnter Band, Leipzig 1877, S. 650 f. Die Worte „Bewegung,“ „bewegen,“ „Lebensbewegung“ tauchen in dem etwas mehr als einspaltigen Artikel zum Eintrag „Leben“ insgesamt 20 Mal auf.

¹⁰ Ibid., S. 651.

¹¹ Ibid.

benden Organismus einwirken, so gesehen auf einen “passiven Körper,” können nicht sicher von dessen “eigenen,” “aktiven” Lebens-Bewegungen abgetrennt werden, die sich an ihm wiederum entsprechend seinem innewohnenden “Gesetz seiner Gestaltung”¹² vollziehen.

Die Wahrnehmung “aktiver Vorgänge” anhand der Reicherschen Vorführung der Gehirnschnittanimationen bietet in seiner schiefen Formulierung ebenso wie der Lexikonartikel eine durchaus produktive Ungewißheit an. Daß Reicher ausgerechnet Gehirnpräparate filmisch erforschen wollte, schafft eine weitere oszillierende Verschaltung seiner zitternden Bilder mit Fragen über die Funktionsweise der Nerven, über Kontakt und Unterbrechung, Fragen nach Kontinuität und Diskontinuität, die “unmittelbar” am sichtbaren Bewegungsablauf beantwortet werden sollten. Reicher will nämlich über das sonderbar “Aktive” der Filmvorführung möglicherweise bei einer großen Streitfrage in der Neurologie der Jahrhundertwende entscheidende Hinweise bieten. Gemeint ist die sogenannte Neuronenfrage, in deren Kontext die Frage nach Aktivität und Passivität von Nervengewebe gestellt und durch Schnitte erforscht wurde, die Nervenzellen kontrolliert zum Absterben brachten.¹³

Bezweifelt wurde damals, ob es sich bei der Zelle, das wir heute als Neuron kennen, nicht um ein ganz anders zu denkendes Gebilde handelte. Strittig war, ob nicht eine weitere Gliederung dieses Gebildes die richtige anatomische Darstellung bieten würde, ob nicht vielmehr beim Neuron mehrere getrennte Teile zusammenwirken. Insbesondere die Eigenständigkeit des langen Nervenfortsatzes wurde von Gegnern der Neuronentheorie behauptet. Die Annahmen von der Abhängigkeit oder Unabhängigkeit des Nervenfortsatzes wurde auch in Termen von Passivität und Aktivität gefaßt. Dies ging so weit, daß die Hypothese existierte: “nach welcher das periphere Neuron das eigentlich treibende oder bewegende Element sein soll.” Dagegen stand sie Meinung, “das periphere Neuron leistet für sich allein gar nichts, sondern steht sofort still, sobald die eigentliche Kraftquelle, das zentrale Neuron zerstört ist.”¹⁴

Wie Karl Reicher zu dieser großen Streitfrage beitragen wollte, deuten die folgenden Ausführungen an:

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Eine Darstellung bezüglich der Debatten zur Neuronenfrage in der “Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte,” dem Ort der Filmvorführungen Reichers bietet Udo Jerns, *Die neurologisch-psychiatrischen Vorträge in der Abteilung für Neurologie und Psychiatrie der Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte von 1886 bis 1913*, Berlin 1991, S. 41 ff.

¹⁴ Ibid., S. 42f.

“Gerade das Aktive daran prägt sich dem Lernenden besser ein und gibt auch bessere räumliche Vorstellungen von den Bahnen und Zentren.[...] es ist jedoch – und dabei ist an das Bild der Schleife zu denken – sehr wahrscheinlich, daß man bei langsamerem Ablauf der Bilder einzelne Fasergruppen wird leichter verfolgen können, selbst wenn diese nicht degeneriert sind, und damit wäre eine neue Möglichkeit gegeben, unsere Kenntnisse in dem noch immer nicht ganz erschlossenen Gebiet Leitungsbahnen zu vervollständigen.”¹⁵

Nach der hier angespielten Degenerations-Lehre degenerieren motorische Leitungsbahnen in absteigender, sensible in aufsteigender Richtung bei Leitungsunterbrechung, und das heißt konkret: bei Schnitten in das Rückenmark. Anhand der Ausfälle und Degenerationen am lebenden Körper, im Tierversuch oder bei Unfallopfern wurde geforscht. Was Karl Reicher andeutet, ist eine ungeheuerliche Forschungsmöglichkeit durch sein Verfahren der Serienschchnittanimation, wodurch die Nervenbahnen auf ganz andere Weise untersucht werden könnten. Dies könne geschehen, ohne daß eine Degeneration, eine Abtötung am lebenden Organismus herbeigeführt werden müßte. Eine Umlagerung der strittigen Frage nach Aktivität des Kerns oder des Fortsatzes der Nervenfasers auf die Darstellungsform wurde angeboten. Reicher macht den Vorschlag, doch die neuartige kinematographische Sichtbarkeit zu nutzen, die Frage nach Passivität oder Aktivität der Nervenfasers, als Frage nach Unterbrechung oder Kontinuität in der räumlichen Rekonstruktion des filmischen Ablaufs visuell zu überprüfen.¹⁶

Er stellt es in einer weiteren Übertragung zudem so dar, als könne man bei der Analyse seines Filmstreifens einen nicht degenerierten Nervenstrang untersuchen. Es sei nicht mehr nötig, das Absterben von Nerven experimentell herbeizuführen, sondern die unzerstörten Nerven könnten in seinem Film einer unmittelbaren Beobachtung zugänglich werden. Und das hieße, in dieser Logik, daß sein Gehirnpräparat in medizinischem Sinne bei der Projektion “lebt.” Wenn dann das kurze Filmstück noch zur Endlosschleife zusammengeklebt wird, wie vorgeschlagen, dann wäre ein nicht endendes “Leben,” eine künstliche Unsterblichkeit installiert. Diese mediale Übertragung weist – selbst wie eine Endlosschleife arbeitend – auf heutige Deutungen computerzeugter Bildlichkeit voraus.

So ist es nicht erstaunlich, daß in der Kinozeitschrift “Kinematograph” das neue “Leben” der Reicherschen Filmstreifen sprachlich präzise artikuliert wird:

“Der Forscher hatte die originelle Idee, einige Tausend mikroskopische Gehirnschnitte und zwar jeden einzelnen als totes Bild auf dem Kinofilm auf-

¹⁵ Karl Reicher, “Kinematographie in der Neurologie,” a.a.O., S. 236.

¹⁶ Vgl: Sigmund Freud, “Die Structur der Elemente des Nervensystems” (1884), in: *Sigmund Freud, Hirnforscher, Neurologe, Psychotherapeut*, Leipzig 1990, S. 91 ff.

zunehmen, dergestalt, daß die aufeinanderfolgenden Bilder die Reproduktion der aufeinanderfolgenden Gehirnschnitte darstellten. Bei Projizierung diese Kinofilms erhält man dadurch gewissermaßen ein lebendes Bild des Gehirns.”¹⁷

Dem Einwand, das einschränkende Wort “gewissermaßen” milderte, relativierte die Lebensbehauptung, sei entgegnet, daß gerade diese Einfügung belegt, daß hier die Frage nach dem Leben der Bilder wieder explizit reflektiert wurde, und eine ungeheuerliche Vermutung vorsichtig bejaht wurde. Denn nicht zu vergessen ist: der Terminus “lebendes Bild” bedeutete 1907– in längst verblaßter Metapher – schlicht “Film.” Wenn nun stattdessen “gewissermaßen ein lebendes Bild des Gehirns” erzeugt wurde, dann ist hier einmal nicht der triviale Sinn zu unterstellen, daß schlicht ein “Film” vom Gehirn erzeugt wurde, sondern daß dieses wissenschaftliche “lebende Bild” auf problematische, kühne Weise nur als “lebend” zu bezeichnen wäre.

Medientechnisch reanimierte Präparate, die die Grenze zwischen Bildern und sogenannter Wirklichkeit auf ungewohnte Weise durchkreuzen, stellte Karl Reicher nicht allein her. Denn als eine Reaktion auf seine Vorträge arbeitet der Physiologe Victor Widakowich¹⁸ noch im gleichen Jahr eine Methode der kinematographischen Serienschchnittanimation aus, die nicht nur technisch bei der Überwindung des Zentrierungsproblems überlegen ist, sondern auch hinsichtlich der kategorialen Verwirrung über “Leben” und “Bilder” noch einen Schritt weiter geht.¹⁹ Dessen Methode besteht darin, den Schritt photographischer Aufzeichnung ganz zu überspringen, das heißt die Präparate selbst werden projiziert. Wenn Reichers Film im “Kinematographen” als “gewissermaßen lebendes Bild des Gehirns” bezeichnet wurde, so wäre in dieser Logik Widakowichs Film “ein gewissermaßen lebendes Gehirn.” Denn eine Kamera ist für diese Art Serienschchnittanimationen nicht mehr nötig, da ein Verfahren angewandt wird, bei dem die Schnitte direkt auf einen Filmstreifen ohne photoempfindliche Schicht aufgebracht werden und nur noch mit einer Celloidinlösung darauf fixiert werden müssen. Widakowich beschreibt sein Verfahren an einem Rattenembryo:

“Ein 118 mm langer Rattenembryo wurde in Zelloidin eingebettet, die Seiten des Blockes wurden vollkommen symmetrisch zugeschnitten. Nach Zerlegung des Objektes in eine Schnittserie wurden die einzelnen Schnitte in der natürlichen Reihenfolge auf einem der lichtempfindlichen Schicht

¹⁷ Der Kinematograph, Nr. 44, 30.10.1907, “Die Kinematographie im Dienste der Naturwissenschaft.” o. P.

¹⁸ Anthony R. Michaelis, *Research Film*, a.a.O.

¹⁹ V. Widakowich, “Über kinematographische Vorführung von Serienschritten durch Embryonen,” in: *Zentralblatt für Physiologie, Organ der deutschen physiologischen Gesellschaft*, Bd. XXI, Nr. 23, Leipzig und Wien 8.2.1907, S. 784 f.

entbehrendem Kinematographenfilm montiert. Die Art der Konstruktion des kinematographischen Projektionsapparates bringt es mit sich, daß ein projiziertes Bild nur dann als Fortsetzung des Vorangegangenen erscheint, wenn die Bildhöhe einer jeden Aufnahme genau 19 mm beträgt. In unserem Falle handelte es sich also darum, die einzelnen Schnitte in den entsprechenden Abständen voneinander und möglichst gleichmäßig orientiert aufzulegen.²⁰

Das heißt im Klartext, daß der Embryo für den damaligen Industriestandard des Filmformats zugeschnitten werden mußte, da ohne Linsensysteme und bildliche Projektionsebene keine Verkleinerungen oder Vergrößerungen möglich sind. Die gläsernen Objektträger, die Reicher für die einzelnen Schnitte verwendete, sind durch den flexiblen, perforierten Filmstreifen ersetzt. Die Perforation bietet dabei die notwendige Maßeinheit zur Zentrierung der Schnitte. Nicht hätte hier nach Rudolf Arnheims Definition technischer Medien, "die Gegenstände der Wirklichkeit ihr Bild mechanisch auf die photographische Schicht"²¹ geprägt, sondern sogar würden sie materialiter zu Film verarbeitet. Sie wären aus ihrer Existenz dreidimensionaler geometrischer Körper herausgelöst: in konkreter Überführung einer Raumdimension in eine Zeitdimension.

Die "lebenden Bilder" Widakowichs eröffnen eine neue Sicht auf den mechanisch erzeugten und halluzinatorischen Abbildrealismus einer Filmaufnahme. Indem durchscheinende Gewebeschnitte – "Leichenteile" – wie Filmbilder projiziert werden, ist ein anatomisches Präparat in sonderbarer "unmittelbarer Medialität" Film geworden. Die Zuschauer einer solchen kinematographischen Vorführung Widakowichs dürften zu Recht davon ausgehen, zwar so etwas wie Bilder, jedoch gleichermaßen unmittelbar den zerschnittenen Tierkörper, ebenso wie die filmische Apparatur selbst gesehen zu haben. Sie hätten den Körper der kinematographischen Technik, das Medium selbst, ununterscheidbar vom Dargestellten als Eindringen in den Embryo gesehen hätten. Sie hätten auf diese Weise auch in der gleichen paradoxalen Unmittelbarkeit ihren eigenen Körper als die Basis der medialen Täuschung "sehen" können, insofern die Konstruktion des Projektors die Sehphysiologie zu simulieren hat.²² Filmhistorisch anzumerken ist noch, daß

²⁰ V. Widakowich, "Über kinematographische Vorführung von Serienschnitten durch Embryonen," a.a.O.

²¹ Rudolf Arnheim, "Systematik der frühen kinematographischen Erfindungen," in: *Kritiken und Aufsätze zum Film*, hrsg. Helmut H. Diederichs, München 1977, S. 27.

²² "Während Künste Ordnungen des Symbolischen oder Ordnungen der Dinge verarbeitet haben, sendet der Film seinen Zuschauern seinen eigenen Wahrnehmungsprozeß – und das in einer Präzision, die sonst nur dem Experiment zugänglich ist, also weder dem Bewußtsein noch der Sprache." Friedrich Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter*, Berlin 1986, S. 240.

wie den Filmen Reichers auch der Animation Widakowichs mehr als zweifelhaft abbildrealistische Qualitäten zuzuschreiben sind: “Projected, this film simulated movement pendicularly through the dense structure of the object with much the same effect as a camera moving through a foggy indeterminate space in which atmospheric particles scatter light diffusely across the field.”²³

Widakowich selbst fürchtet entsprechend wenig um die Gefährdung traditioneller Bildkonzepte, sondern fürchtet eher die Gefährdung des Präparats bei der Projektion. “Nachteilig muß allerdings der Umstand empfunden werden, daß eine kostbare Serie einem Film nicht wohl anvertraut werden kann.”²⁴ Er fürchtet, ganz Medienkünstler, bei einer heiklen Transformation im Materiellen wie Konzeptuellen, daß die Apparatur den empfindlichen, seltenen Körper des Filmstreifens verletzen könne, daß die materielle Seite des neuen paradoxalen Körpers zu zerbrechlich sei. Diese Betrachtungsweise führt direkt in das Feld des Experimentalfilms als technisch basierter Kunst, genauer zu Filmexperimenten, die im Medium weiterdenken, statt ein “Leben” der Bilder im täuschenden Abbildrealismus zu suchen.

Künstler/Ingenieur

Ein zusätzlicher Schalter ist hier in die Darstellung einzufügen, indem die wissenschaftlichen Filme von Reicher und Widakowich jetzt durch Experimente aus dem nichtgegenständlichen Animationsfilm nachträglich noch einmal anders in ihrer bildlogischen Bedeutung hervortreten können, so wie sie in der Kunst ausgearbeitet wurde. Eine derartige Grundlagenforschung an den Elementen des Films als Medium, oder des “Films als Film”²⁵ umfaßte auch – technisch gesprochen – Serienschnittanimationen eines Filmavantgardisten in den Jahren 1920-1927. Gemeint ist die Erfindung der “Wachschneidemaschine” und die folgenden filmischen “Wachsexperimente” durch Oskar Fischinger. Fischinger, dessen bedeutendes Werk, trotz relativ großer Bekanntheit seiner Filme in Deutschland der 30er Jahre bis zu seiner Ausreise in die USA, erst spät kunsthistorisch gewürdigt wurde,²⁶ hat insbesondere

²³ Lisa Cartwright in ihrem Grundlagenwerk: *Screening the Body, Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture*, Minneapolis 1995, S. 97.

²⁴ V. Widakowich, a.a.O., S. 785.

²⁵ Vgl. *Film als Film, 1910 bis heute*, hrsg. Birgit Hein und Wulf Herzogenrath, Stuttgart 1978.

²⁶ *Film als Film, 1910 bis heute*, S. 8. Einen umfassenden Überblick über Leben und Werk Oskar Fischingers bietet William Moritz in: *Optische Poesie, Oskar Fischinger Leben und Werk*, hrsg. Hilmar Hoffmann und Walter Schobert, Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Filmmuseums, Kinematograph Nr. 9, Frankfurt a. M. 1993.

die Entwicklung des “absoluten Films” maßgeblich beeinflusst, dem auch seine “Wachsexperimente” zuzuordnen sind. Der Terminus “Absoluter Film” wie er in den 20er Jahren zunächst für den ungegenständlichen Animationsfilm geprägt wurde, markiert die Arbeit an und mit den formalen Grundelementen des Mediums selbst – dem Filmstreifen (Filmmaterial), der Projektion mit intermittierendem Licht und dem projizierten Bild.²⁷ Die überlieferten Filmstücke der Wachsexperimente Fischingers stellen indessen keine durchkomponierten Filme dar, sondern sind Ergebnisse aus Versuchsreihen mit der Wachsschneidemaschine und wurden in späteren Werken an einigen Stellen eingebunden.²⁸ Sie erlauben insofern um so mehr eine Betrachtung

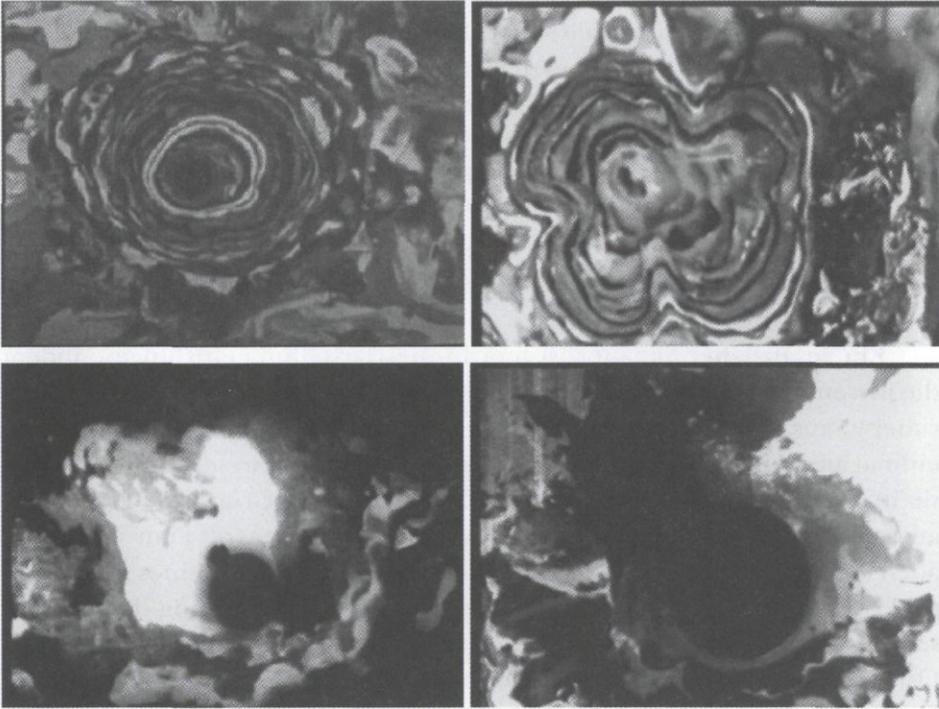


Abb. 1: Screenshots aus: Oscar Fischinger, “Wachs Experimente 1923-1927, Original Animation.”²⁹

²⁷ Siehe Birgit Hein: “Definition der Elemente des Films,” in: *Film als Film*, a.a.O., S. 31f.

²⁸ “Die Symbolik der Wachsbilder findet sich auch in Fischingers Silhouettenfilmen und seinen Aufführungen mit mehreren Projektoren in den späteren zwanziger Jahren wieder; er selbst hat wahrscheinlich ältere Filme auseinandergeschnitten, um das Material für spätere Arbeiten zu verwenden.” William Moritz, Oskar Fischinger, in: *Optische Poesie*, a.a.O. S. 11.

²⁹ Dank an William Moritz für die Zugänglichmachung der “Wachsexperimente 1923-1927” auf Video.

als eine technische und formale Reflexion der spezifischen Räumlichkeit und Zeitlichkeit einer Serienschchnittanimation.

Kaum auszuschließen, daß in einer gemeinsamen Vorführung ohne Kontextinformation und ohne anatomische Kenntnisse die Filmstreifen von Reicher oder Widakowich ähnlich erschienen wären, wie die “reinen” Formwandlungen und Bewegungen durch diese absichtsvoll gestalteten Blöcke Fischingers. Doch Achtung, das Durchquerung der Disziplinen, das Anschauen von Wissenschaftsbildern mit den erfahrenen Augen der Kunst, birgt Gefahren. So setzte der absolute Film im Absehen vom Gegenständlichen in “unmittelbarer” Verschaltung mit dem Medium auch sinnliche Potentiale frei, in schöner geschlechtlicher Asymmetrie. Eine Dissertation der 30er Jahre von Victor Schamoni zum absoluten Film weiß folgendes zu berichten:

“Von manchen Vorführungen dieser Filme wird berichtet, daß das Publikum soweit es nicht durch die Fremdheit der Dinge überrascht, teilnahmslos und aus Mißverständnis auch ablehnend oder hilflos lächelnd diesen Filmen gegenüberstand, eigenartig bewegt gewesen sei, daß vielfach die Zuschauer eine gewisse Ergriffenheit zeigten oder sogar tiefe Bewegtheit und merkwürdige Erregung. In einigen Kritiken wurde sogar behauptet, daß die Filme [...] starke Assoziationen erotischer Art veranlaßt und dem Publikum scheinbar eigenartige Lustgefühle verursacht hätten.” und: “Das Lichtspielhaus Uitkijk in Amsterdam erklärte, zahlreiche Zuschriften vor allem weiblicher Besucher erhalten zu haben, die dringend aus ähnlichen Gründen weitere solche Filme wünschen.”³⁰

So kann es gehen, wenn die Seele von Medientechniken trainiert wird.³¹ Medienpraktisch ist diese Erregung und Ergriffenheit wohl zugleich als ein aufgeklärtes und zugleich unmittelbares Verhalten dieses weiblichen Publikums zu bezeichnen, dem es nicht um abbildliches “Leben der Bilder,” sondern Erotik der kinematographischen Formen und Bedingungen geht. Durch die absoluten Filme soll programmgemäß die Wahrnehmung ebenso wie die spezifisch filmischen Elemente der Gestaltung, die “Anatomie” der kinematographischen Apparates erforscht und erfunden werden – so dicht an den Filmstreifen, wie die Mediziner an den Nervenbahnen. In beiden Fällen ist der unmögliche, ortlose Perspektivpunkt der einer gleichermaßen unmittelbarer Medialität der “Körper” – von “Mensch” und “Maschine.” Eine genauere Beschäftigung mit den Wachsexperimenten gibt diesbezüglich näheren Aufschluß.

Als Oskar Fischinger mit dem dreidimensional formbaren Wachs – und Kaolinmischungen zu experimentieren begann, war sein Ziel die Herstellung

³⁰ Victor Schamoni, *Das Lichtspiel, Möglichkeiten des absoluten Films*, Dissertation, München 1936, S. 59, Anmerkung S. 89.

eines abstrakten Films, der nicht gezeichnet oder gemalt wäre. Sein Plan ging hier einen Schritt weiter, fort von gestaltend beherrschten Bildern zu mechanisch erzeugten Bildserien mit unkalkulierbaren Zufallsmomenten, wie sie beim seriellen Abschneiden auftreten mußten. Eine Forschungshaltung hatte Vorrang vor dem auktorialen Künstlergestus. Die Wachsschneidemaschine war technisch deutlich dem zeitraubenden Verfahren von Reicher überlegen, denn die "Klinge einer guillotineartigen Schneidemaschine, mit der man normalerweise hauchdünne Schinken- oder Käsescheiben schneidet,"³² wurde mechanisch mit der Blende einer Filmkamera synchronisiert.

"Jedesmal, wenn die Maschine eine Scheibe geschnitten hatte, nahm die Kamera ein Einzelbild von der durch den Schnitt freigelegten Oberfläche auf. Der dabei entstehende Film zeigte zeitlupenartig den sich durch den Wachblock bewegenden Querschnitt, der entsprechend den jeweils hineinmodellierten Konfigurationen gegenständliche oder abstrakte Bewegungen darstellte."³³

In der Frankfurter Zeitung, wird 1926 die konzeptionelle Seite von Fischingers Verfahrens anschaulich beschrieben. "Nehmen Sie ein geschältes, hart gesottenes Ei und ein scharfes Messer, und schneiden Sie das Ei sehr schnell in möglichst dünne Scheiben. Wenn Sie es so schnell und fein aufschneiden könnten, daß aus der stets sich verändernden Schnittfläche gewissermaßen eine zusammenhängende Bewegung entstünde, so hätten sie wiederum die Auflösung eines Körpers in Bewegung erlebt: Der Querschnitt durch das Ei, der zuerst als kleiner Kreis erschienen wäre, hätte sich langsam vergrößert, es wäre darin der Dotter zum Vorschein gekommen, um gleichfalls zur Kreisfläche zu wachsen und wieder dahinzuschmelzen, und der äußere Umriß des Eies hätte sich schließlich bis zur auslaufenden Spitze verjüngt und wäre in einem stumpfen Punkt verschwunden."³⁴

Die hier verlangte Vorstellung einer handwerklich unmöglichen Schnelligkeit des Messers, die das Ei aufblättern animiert, konstruiert sich ein Daumenkino aus organischem Material. Wie kann es gelingen, das Innere des Eies als seine eigene illusionäre Bewegung zu sehen? Wessen Bewegung? Nicht des Eies, das ist in diesem Beispiel klar, denn kein Küken schlüpft mehr aus dem hart Gesottene, sondern hervor kommt die maschinelle zugleich

³¹ Hans Richter, *Die schlecht trainierte Seele* (1924), in: *Film als Film*, a.a.O., S. 50 ff. Der strikt kalkulierte Text schlägt als Programm des Absoluten Films eine "Nerven"-Forschung und -Bildung vor, denn "Empfinden ist ein ebenso präzise organisierter und mechanisch exakter Prozeß wie Denken," S. 50.

³² William Moritz, *Oskar Fischinger*, a.a.O., S. 9.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rudolf Schneider, "Formspiel durch Kino," *Frankfurter Zeitung* Nr. 512, 12.7.1926, S.1, in: *Film als Film* a.a.O., S. 28f.

mit der Wahrnehmungs-Bewegung, die aus dem Ei eine abstrakte Animation eines Kreises macht. Denn, was in solchem Ei wächst, ist ein Kreis.

Was wird der Wachsblock Fischingers, der von der Wachsschneidemaschine zerlegt wurde, enthalten haben? Der Block wird in sich die Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft einer Animationssequenz enthalten haben, jedoch in suspendierter Form. Was die Klinge mit jedem Schnitt freisetzt, ist die medientechnische Erzeugung dieser unterbrochenen, sequentiellen, dann in der Projektion wieder verschmolzenen, linearen Zeit – der filmischen Bewegung. In diesem Sinne wären Wachsböcke “Körper,” denen die Leerstelle für eine sonderbare Umstülpung in eine andere Dimension, die Zeit, hineingeknetet worden wäre. Inkorporiert im Modus von Nachträglichkeit, in einer verschobenen Sichtbarkeit wäre diesen Wachsböcken ihre auflösende Verflüssigung in Bewegung, die doch erst ihren medialen Körper ausmacht. Gewissermaßen wäre ihnen eine reine, differentielle, maschinell manipulierbar gewordene Zeit eingeschrieben: eine Zeit der Maschine, in zählbaren Einzelschritten wie die des Films (der in seinem Inneren einen Uhrenmechanismus trägt) oder auch wie die Zeit einer Rechenmaschine.

Sprung

Dahin ist es nicht mehr weit, doch statt nur eines Schnittes oder eines Schrittes zur nächsten diskreten Einheit eines Filmkaders heißt es hier einen Sprung zu bewerkstelligen. Nicht allein der Sprung ins Digitale, wo ein Übergang von einem Zeichen zu einem anderen definitionsgemäß “sprungartig” geschieht, ist denknotwendig, sondern es geht um einen komplizierter arrangierten Sprung in der implementierten Schaltalgebra der Rechner, um einen “bedingten Sprung.” In der Welt der Rechenmaschinen meint “Sprung” eine Anweisung, nach dessen Ausführung ein Programm die weitere Abarbeitung an einer durch das Sprungziel festgelegten Stelle fortsetzt. Man spricht von einem “bedingten Sprung,” wenn der Sprung nur dann ausgeführt wird, falls eine bestimmte Bedingung erfüllt ist. Hier kommt die maschinensprachliche Schaltung des Elements “if” ins Spiel. Die Formel des “bedingten Sprungs” aber, oder auch “bedingtem Befehls” lautet: “If x then a else b.”³⁵

Hier läge eine Rückführung auf die ersten Anlässe kybernetischer Berechnung nahe, denn schließlich war es Norbert Wiener, der im zweiten Weltkrieg die Flugbahnen in ihrer zukünftigen Entwicklung maschinell vorausberechnen ließ, um deutsche Jagdbomber an dem Ort zu treffen, an dem

³⁵ Duden, *Informatik*, Mannheim, Leipzig, Wien, Zürich 1993, S. 303.

sie gewesen sein werden, wenn keine Abwehrrakete sie dort trifft. "Demgemäß ist es außerordentlich wichtig, ein Geschöß nicht auf das Ziel abzuschießen, sondern so, daß Geschöß und Ziel zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt zusammen-treffen."³⁶ Wo treffen Geschöß und Ziel zusammen – etwa im "Wirklichen"? Brächte ein Treffer, Differenzen löschend, die Paradoxien des "Medialen," des "Körpers," des "Lebens" zurück an einen identifizierbaren Punkt und führte die Ortlosigkeit der technischen Medien heim? Kurzum: Bestätigt ein computerberechneter Treffer den Zusammenfall der statistischen Voraus-berechnung mit einem lebend getroffenen Körper? Nicht restlos – und ins-fern keineswegs. Es kann ein tödlicher Treffer gelingen, jedoch trifft dieser nicht jene "mediale Unmittelbarkeit," die bereits filmisch an den "aktiven Vor-gängen" und den "gewissermaßen lebenden Körpern" aus Wissenschaft und Kunst entwickelt worden ist. Nicht lokalisiert sich also in einem Punkt der zu-reichenden Fast-Übereinstimmung eines Modells mit dem Abgebildeten – in einem möglichen zerstörenden Treffen des Abgebildeten – der in diesem Text interessierende Sprung zwischen analogen und digitalem Medium.

Gewiß liegt eine Qualität der Simulation gegenüber der Fiktion in die-sen Treffern, in der Realisierbarkeit von tödlichen Identifikationen. Jedoch das unvordenklich Neue, das Skandalon, das das digitale Medium nach dem analogen Film auszeichnet, liegt nicht in einer weiteren Möglichkeit waffen-technischer Koppelungen, sondern darin, daß maschinelle Programmdurch-läufe unvorhersehbar werden. Denn Softwareprogrammierung heißt die ge-meinsame Speicherung von Daten und Instruktionen und: Instruktionen kön-nen im Verlauf der Berechnung geändert werden, zum Beispiel in Abhängig-keit des Resultats des vorhergehenden Rechenschritts. Instruktionen werden in andere Instruktionen überführt, und ab hier rückkoppelt die Architektur der Befehle und Schaltkreise die "Körper" – im Modus von Simulation.

Wenn auch ein sonderbarer Wachblock sich öffnende Blütenornamente produzieren oder dies bei weiblichen Zuschauern bewirken kann, indem die-ser Block – wie ein Gehirn – durch eine Schneidemaschine und einen Film-projektor paßt, so ist das doch ein anderes Verfahren, das dem Kybernetiker Norbert Wiener vorschwebte, als er die berühmt gewordene Formulierung prägte, daß ein Mensch durch eine Telegraphenleitung passe, sprich: gesen-det werden könne – als "Information." An Anatomie war hier allerdings weni-ger gedacht, sondern an den Unterschied zwischen Rauschen und Signal. "Folglich kann eine Maschine Information erzeugen, und die Information kann eine neue Maschine erzeugen. Hier haben wir einen Gedanken [...] –

³⁶ Norbert Wiener, *Kybernetik: Regelung und Nachrichtenübertragung im Lebewesen und in der Maschine*, Düsseldorf, Wien 1963, S. 28.

daß es begrifflich möglich ist, einen Menschen durch eine Telegraphenleitung zu senden.”³⁷

Wenn Informationen neue “Maschinen” erzeugen können, dann können das auch “Menschen” sein und allerdings “Menschen” wie “Maschinen” durch Datenleitungen gesendet werden. Ist dies seit 1964 auch anders als begrifflich möglich geworden? Die folgenden Bildserien, die auf seriellen Schnitten durch ein menschliches Präparat beruhen, wie die Serienschchnittanimationen vom Karl Reicher, sind unterdessen über Datenleitungen und in digitalem Format zugänglich, sind aus dem World Wide Web heruntergeladen, von den Seiten der University of Colorado aus dem Center for Human Simulation.

Feedback – The Visible Human Project™

Als Ikonen des digitalen Zeitalters gefeiert, haben diese und ähnliche Bilder des Visible Human Project eine steile Medienkarriere gemacht. Die ersten 1994 im World Wide Web veröffentlichten Bildanimationen, die entsprechend der ersten Zeile der Abbildung 2 eine transversale Schnittserie durch einen männlichen Körper vom Kopf bis zu den Füßen zeigten, entsprachen im filmischen Ablauf (z.B. als Quicktime-Movie) den bereits referierten filmischen Bildkonzeptionen. Angenommen, die Gehirnschnittanimationen Reichers seien noch greifbar und in ein digitales Format übertragen, so würde die motivische und bildlogische Entsprechung mit geeigneten Ausschnitten des “Visible Human” Datenmaterials ins Auge springen.

Ein medientechnischer “Sprung” ist konkret durch die zwei folgenden Zeilen der Abbildung vollzogen, die zeigen, daß ein einziges Präparat heute in drei verschiedenen Schnittrichtungen durchfahren werden kann, ohne daß anhand sichtbarer Merkmale entschieden werden kann, welche Schnitte durch den toten Körper geführt wurden und welche nachträglich am digital rekonstruierten Modell dieses Körpers simuliert worden sind. Einst hatte die Anfertigung von Schnittfolgen die Entscheidung für eine einzige Ansicht bedeutet, die allenfalls als Endlosschleife in Wiederholung gezeigt werden konnte. Programme und Programmierarbeit von Spezialisten anatomischer Bildverarbeitung machen es inzwischen möglich, die seriellen Bilder im Computer virtuell wieder zu einem dreidimensionalen Bildkörper in der Darstellung zu verrechnen. Aus den Bildserien eines zerschnittenen Körpers kann ein virtueller Körper unter Berücksichtigung aller vorhandenen räumlichen

³⁷ Norbert Wiener, *Gott & Golem Inc.*, Düsseldorf 1965, S. 57 f.

Daten, gleichsam in Umkehrung des Ablaufs wie ein Wachsblock Fischingers zusammengesetzt werden. Dieser Block besteht aus Voxeln, Volume Picture

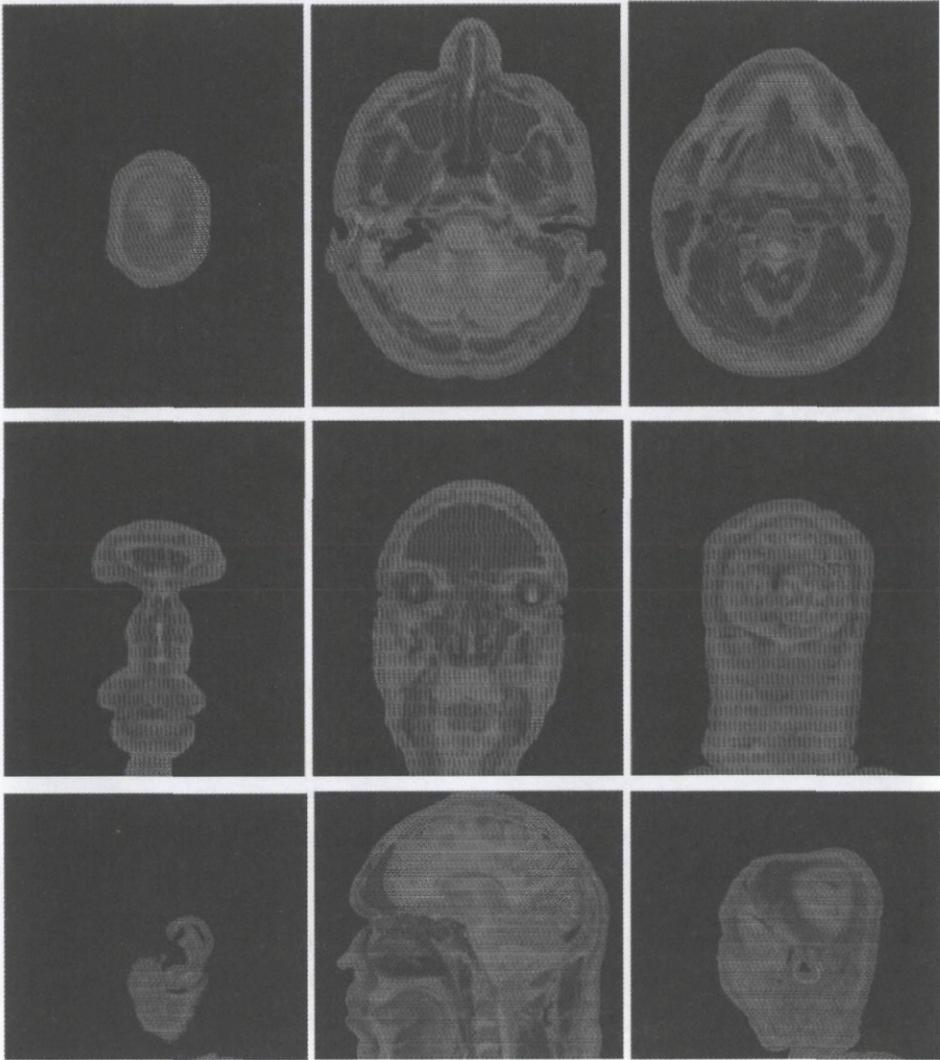


Abb. 2: Orthogonale Schnittebenen durch den Kopf des männlichen Visible Human. Die Serie der transversalen Schnitte wurden an der Leiche durchgeführt, die sagittalen und koronalen Schnittserien aus diesen transversalen Schnittbildern computererzeugt.³⁸

³⁸ University of Colorado School of Medicine, Center for Human Simulation http://www.uchsc.edu/sm/chs/gallery_gifs/MHeadCor.mpg, http://www.uchsc.edu/sm/chs/gallery_gifs/MHeadSag.mpg, http://www.uchsc.edu/sm/chs/gallery_gifs/MHeadTrn.mpg (aufgesucht 16.1.2001)

Elements, die anders als die Pixel durch eine dreidimensionale Lagebestimmung charakterisiert sind – im virtuellen Raum. Es wird ein dreidimensionaler Körper berechnet, der entsprechend den fortschreitenden Datenbearbeitungen und Programmierungen aus jeder Perspektive beliebig oft zu zerlegen, zu verschmelzen, zu öffnen, zu schließen und zu durchfahren ist.³⁹

Als umso auffälliger und bedeutsamer muß indes gelten, daß bereits unter dem Eindruck der ersten digitalen Animationen der Visible Human-Schnittbilder, die vom Prinzip her ebenso ein Filmprojektor hätte zeigen können, die Sichtbarkeit eines emphatisch Neuen und der Eintritt in ein neues Zeitalter deklariert wurden. Massenmedial galten die Darstellungen als ein “Noch nie Gesehenes,” nachdem in der Mitte der 90er Jahre diese ersten, weitgehend unbearbeiteten Bildserien auf wissenschaftlicher und populärer Ebene Verbreitung gefunden hatten. Versprochen wurde eine radikale Neuheit, die gleichermaßen als Blick in das Körperinnere eines Menschen, wie auch als Blick auf einen neuen Daten-Menschen dargestellt wurde. Versprochen wurde so ein mehrfach Unmögliches: ein neuartiger “lebender Datenmensch,” der zugleich “identisches Abbild” jener Leiche war, die zur Bildherstellung gedient hatte. – Wie in der Frühzeit des Kinos ging es wieder buchstäblich um das “Leben” dieser Bilder, nur diesmal aus dem Computer. Eine beispielhafte Formulierung bietet das populärwissenschaftliche Magazin P.M. zum “Visible Human Project” Dort gilt das Projekt als “Die phantastische Schöpfung des ersten (echten) digitalen Menschen.”⁴⁰ Mit einer wiederkehrenden, euphorischen Unentschiedenheit über Gegenstand oder Repräsentation, wurden im Namen eines “Neuen” wieder “Echtheit” und “Leben” in Bewegung versetzt. Geradezu als Verschmelzung von Mensch und Computer, als Vorstellung, der Körper “lebte” entmaterialisiert als Datenmenge im Computer weiter, wurden die ersten Bilder der digitalisierten Leichenschnitte in den Medien besprochen.⁴¹

Wie stellte demgegenüber die Institution, die das “Visible Human Project” initiierte, ihr Vorhaben dar? Bereits in der Planungsphase dieses Projekts der National Library of Medicine (U.S.) wurde dieser “sichtbare Mensch” in knappe Worte gefaßt, die das Projekt zu der “first digital description of an entire human being”⁴² erklärten. “Ein ganzer Mensch,” so lautet konkret der An-

³⁹ Vgl. Claudia Reiche, “The Visible Human Project.™ Einführung in einen obszönen Bildkörper,” in: *Von Buchstaben, Bildern und Bytes*, hrsg. Projekt Wahrnehmung, Basel, Frankfurt a. M. 2001 (in Vorbereitung)

⁴⁰ Maria Biel, “Die phantastische Schöpfung des ersten (echten) digitalen Menschen,” in: P.M., (2) 1996, 87.

⁴¹ Vgl. Claudia Reiche, “‘lebende Bilder’ aus dem Computer,” a.a.O.

⁴² National Library of Medicine (U.S.) Board of Regents, “Electronic Imaging, Report

spruch, wird erstmalig auf digitaler Basis zum "sichtbaren Menschen." Erinert sei an die einstigen entsprechend uneinlösbaren Behauptungen Karl Reichers, der "komplette Serien" von Gehirnschnitten versprach. So klingt der Anspruch heute: "...a digital image library of volumetric data representing a complete, normal adult male and female. This Visible Human Project will include digitized photographic images from cryosectioning, digital images derived from computerized tomography and digital magnetic resonance images of cadavers."⁴³

Für die digitale Beschreibung des "sichtbaren Menschen" sollen also zunächst Volumendaten jeweils eines "vollständigen, normalen männlichen und weiblichen Erwachsenen" erfaßt werden, und zwar im wesentlichen durch digitalisierte photographische Schnittbilder gefrorener Leichen, ergänzt durch eine Anzahl computertomographischer und Magnetresonanz-Bilder.

Die angeblich "komplette" Sichtbarkeit, die den digitalen "Adam" und die digitale "Eva" einmal mehr auszeichnen soll, macht übrigens einen decouvrierenden Unterschied zwischen den Geschlechtern, insofern die weibliche Leiche in dreimal dünnere Schichten als der zunächst bearbeitete "Adam" geschnitten wurde. Beide gelten jedoch weiterhin als "vollständige," "normale," oszillierende Seinsformen zwischen Bildern und Menschen. "Bilder," die so sonderbar vollständig wären, daß sie keine Bilder im herkömmlichen Sinne mehr sein könnten, sondern "absolute" Bilder oder neue "Menschen"? Als ein ebenfalls Erstaunliches kann nun – im Zeitalter von Computertomographie und ähnlichen Schichtbildverfahren – überhaupt die Verwendung von Messern, Leichen und der photographischen Aufnahme gelten. Denn dies geschieht ja, um erklärtermaßen in das digitale Zeitalter des Bildes einzutreten. Das ist insofern neu, – gerade weil die kinematographisch ausgerichteten Verfahren von Forschern wie Karl Reicher wiederholt, im Digitalen simuliert werden.

Denn wenn beim Visible Human Project photographiert wird, muß das Innere des Körpers wieder durch Messer, durch Aufschneiden, sichtbar gemacht werden; Schicht für Schicht muß der Körper von Kopf bis zu den Füßen in immer neue Schnittflächen abgehobelt werden, Photo für Photo weitere Gewebeschichten freigelegt werden, bis mit Beendigung der Bilderserie vom gefrorenen Block nur noch geschmolzene Hobelspäne im Submillimeterbereich übriggeblieben sein werden. Im World Wide Web finden sich Texte von Wissenschaftlern, die die Prozeduren des Aufschneidens und die photo-

of the Board of Regents," U.S. Department of Health and Human Sciences, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, 1990, NIH Publication 90-2197.

⁴³ National Library of Medicine (U.S.), http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/visible_human.html, aufgesucht 25. 3. 99.

realistische, hochaufgelöste Erscheinung der Bilddateien enthusiastisch als überwältigendes Erlebnis beschreiben, als einen Vorgang “revealing slice-by-slice the beauty and detail within.”⁴⁴ Verrät nicht auch diese Aussage, die die Begeisterung angesichts der visuellen Dichte und Klarheit der alten Serienschchnittanimationen wiederzugeben scheint, eine seltsame Ver-rückung, den Sprachgestus eines Als-Ob? Ein fetischistischer Blick, der sich einst wie heute untrennbar an den Oberflächendetails der medientechnischen Erscheinung wie dem jeweils abbildlichen “Körper” berauschte, trafe wohl auf die euphorische Leere und Konkretion des Medialen – zu. Lesbar würde an diesen verpaßten, fehlgehenden und schwankenden Zuschreibungen: Das “Leben” der Bilder springt ersatzweise in die Leerstelle einer ständigen Oszillation und Platzverschiebung ein.

Wenn in den vorliegenden Beispielen “Leben” mit der Vorstellung einer “restlosen” Übertragung eines “Menschen in das Medienformat” verbunden ist – beim Visible Human Project als Übertragung einer “überwältigend” großen Datenmenge “in den Computer” und bei den Serienschchnittanimationen in die “lückenlose” Serie der Filmkader – so erscheint ein unhaltbarer Ort des Subjekts als List in der Darstellung. Erscheint das Subjekt als die “-Losigkeit,” des Rests, der Lücken. Der in Science Fiction-Literatur und -Filmen längst kursierende Wunsch einer möglichen paradoxalen Rückkehr solch “vollständiger” Datensätze in die körperliche Form biologischer Existenz, spräche beredt von dem Wunsch durch das digitale Medium allererst die beschworene “Vollständigkeit” zu erlangen.

Die gewissermaßen offizielle Phantasie des “Informationszeitalters” nun, denkt einen “Menschen” als mit sich selbst identische “Information” auf verschiedenen materiellen Trägern – carbon- oder siliciumbasierten Speichermedien und wird insbesondere an Konzepten des menschlichen Genoms, in der Artificial Life-Forschung und auch anhand der Visible Human Daten entwickelt. Beruht diese Phantasie vom digitalen “Leben” nicht doch auf einer grundlegenden Wandlung im Medialen gegenüber dem Vorgängermedium Film? Wäre hier doch etwas qualitativ Unterschiedenes zu den “lebenden” Gehirnen in kinematographischer Projektion zu bestimmen?

Die eine Antwort lautet: Nein, bezüglich der reflexartigen Schließung des medial erfahrbaren symbolischen Selbstverlusts, wie sie die historisch wiederkehrende “Lebens”-Behauptung versucht. Die andere Antwort lautet: Ja,

⁴⁴ “A custom-designed cryogenic macrotome was then used to remove one millimeter (1mm) sections of the frozen cadaver, revealing slice-by-slice the beauty and detail within.” Scientific Computing Division der University of Colorado, (National Center for Atmospheric Research), <http://www.ncar.ucar.edu/METASCI/VHP.html>, aufgesucht 28.3.1999.

und dies auf zweifachem Weg. Zum ersten: Ja, das digital definierte "Leben" ist ein neues, anderes "Leben." Denn als eindeutig neu (in den Relationen des hier unternommenen Vergleichs) sind die weiteren Arbeiten der Programmierung am Datenmaterial des "Visible Human" zu erkennen. Weitere Verwendungen des Datenmaterials im Simulationsmodus von virtueller Realität differenzieren dieses neue Konzept als ein abstrakt räumliches aus, wie es Serienschchnittanimationen allenfalls begonnen hatten.

Wie wäre dieser neue Simulationsraum der dreidimensionalen virtuellen Körper des Visible Human zu beschreiben? Wesentliche Voraussetzungen sind das Anlegen bildexterner Koordinaten und das Rasterprinzip als technische Basis. Die Bildpunkte, sogenannten Picture Elements, eines aus Zeilendurchläufen in der Wahrnehmung entstehenden Bildeindrucks, operieren wie der Film mit der Grenze wahrnehmbarer Geschwindigkeiten – und der Grenze des optischen Auflösungsvermögens des Auges. Eine zeitliche Verschmelzung der seriellen Schnittbilder war ja bereits bei der kinemato-graphischen Bewegungstäuschung entscheidend, im virtuellen Raum müssen die Schnitte nicht nur zwischen den Bildern verborgen werden, sondern auch innerhalb jeden Bildes, das nicht einem fotografierten Schnittbild entspricht. Prinzip ist eine virtuelle "Stapelung" der Serienschchnittbilder zu einem dreidimensionalen Bilderstapel. Dessen Höhe wird anhand der Schnittstärken bestimmt. Der virtuell rekonstruierte dreidimensionale Bildkörper soll die mechanischen Schnitte nicht mehr anzeigen. Als regelmäßige Differenz zwischen Volumenelementen sind sie im neuen virtuellen, bildlichen "Gewebe" verschwunden. Vorstellungen einer "restlosen" Wiederherstellung, einer Heilung der toten, zerstückelten Spenderkörper des Visible Human Projects werden aufgerufen, von Inszenierungen etwa in der TV-Berichterstattung, die Assoziationen zum narbenlosen Verheilen einer Schnittwunde in einem lebenden Gewebe unterstützen.⁴⁵

Die Grenze solcher bildlichen "Wunderheilung" bildet allerdings immer noch der Blick. Angenommen die optische Auflösung eines Bildschirms beträgt maximal 72 dots per inch, so lägen bereits dem alltäglichen Blick auf das Display vertikale und horizontale Linien eines zweidimensionalen Gitters zugrunde, die allerdings in so kleinteiligem Abstand die Pixel definieren – $0,353 \text{ mm}^2$ –, daß sie nicht gesehen werden. Visuell verschmelzen können solche "Schnitte" des Pixelrasters nur, wenn ein bestimmter Abstand zwischen Auge und Ausgabemedium nicht unterschritten wird. Doch auch unter weniger konkreter Perspektive steht ein Raster in gewisser Diskrepanz zu der Wirklichkeitszumutung und zur euphorischen Aufnahme, die die eingetra-

⁴⁵ *Magazin Prisma*, N3, 27.2.1996.

genen Bildinformationen im virtuellen Raum als echter “Mensch” gefunden haben. Umgangen – besser: vertuscht – wird der Unterschied zwischen realen Schnitten und den Linien des dreidimensionalen Gitters, der Basis der Simulation. Denn die virtuelle “Stapelung” zur plastischen Rekonstruktion des Körpers kann nicht auf millimeterdicke “Scheiben” zurückgreifen, sondern auf die Serie photographierter Schnittflächen. Daß hier ein Unterschied besteht, ist evident, da eine Photographie nicht das materielle Substrat der darunter befindlichen Gewebestrukturen durchdringen kann. Es fehlt etwas zwischen den Schnittabständen: “not visible.”

Wenn der Visible Human demgegenüber die räumlich korrekte Anordnung digitaler Spuren eines zerschnittenen Objekts in einem dreidimensionalen Gitter meint, so ist die entscheidende Arbeit die einer lokalen Bestimmung und Zuordnung. Die virtuelle Rekonstruktion ersetzt nicht nur die Materialverluste, sondern übergeht auch Unterscheidungen zwischen Gegenstand und seiner informationellen Aufzeichnung, nämlich durch das vorrangige Konzept exakter Lokalisation. Konzeptionell in eine oszillierende Ambivalenz gebracht werden der menschliche Körper und seine räumliche Rekonstruktion, werden der mechanische Schnitt des Kryomakrotoms und das Gitter der dreidimensionalen Graphik, werden die medientechnische Materialität und das Fleisch der Leiche. Die dreidimensionale Bildlichkeit der virtuellen Realität erlaubt eine beliebige Positionierung des Blicks auf die dargestellten Objekte. Mit virtuellen “Kamera”-schwenks kann der jeweilige Voxel-Körper betrachtet werden.⁴⁶

Jedoch auch die Innenwände und Hohlräume des Körpers werden visuell zugänglich. Der Betrachter wird nicht mehr imaginär an einem Ort belassen, sondern wird in Bewegung versetzt, um wie ein ausdehnungsloser, doch “sehender” Punkt in die Hohlräume und Tunnel des im Größenmaßstab variablen Körperinneren einzudringen.⁴⁷ Der virtuelle Körper wird für den solcherart explorierenden Blick geradezu umgestülpt. Der User wird zu einem neuen Wirklichkeitseffekt und zugleich zur imaginären Entmaterialisierung eingeladen: “sich” als Element des virtuellen Raums zu begreifen – wie ein “Visible Human,” der in “sich” selbst, durch die Datenlandschaften seines eigenen anatomischen Strukturen sausen könnte. Denn das ist nicht nur metaphorisch, sondern in programmierbarer Übersetzung eine neue

⁴⁶ Diese Möglichkeiten bietet in besonderer technischer wie konzeptioneller Präzision das an der Hamburger Universität entwickelte Programm VOXEL-MAN an, ein virtuelles anatomisches Modell, das auch mit den Visible Human Daten arbeitet. <http://www.uke.uni-hamburg.de/institute/imdm.idv/VisibleHuman.html>, aufgesucht 16.1.2001.

⁴⁷ Entsprechen den Bildberechnungen im Video Professor Roentgen Meets the Virtual Body, IMDM Universität Hamburg 1995.

wichtige Eigenschaft der aus den Visible Human -Daten gewonnenen Voxelstrukturen. Durch räumlich bildliche Vermessung der eigenen Körperdaten kann ein "Visible Human" die Gestalt entsprechend dieser Daten annehmen. Data Matching.

Und weiter: Wie könnten durch Manipulationen digitaler Bildlichkeiten direkte Zugriffe auf das Referenzobjekt der Abbildung möglich sein, einen lebenden Körper? Auf dem Gebiet der telepräsentischen Chirurgie werden bereits Möglichkeiten geschaffen, mit visuellen und taktilen Aus- und Eingabegeräten einen chirurgischen Eingriff simulieren zu können. Chirurgen können komplizierte Eingriffe, z.B. in der Neurochirurgie, an dem individuellen Datenmaterial des Patienten trainieren und sogar bereits tatsächliche Eingriffe am Patienten vornehmen. Operiert wird so am Voxelkörper mit lebensentscheidenden Konsequenzen für die derart simulierten lebenden Körper. So kann ein Schnitt in das Als-Ob eines neuartigen Bildkörpers als ein Rechenvorgang und zugleich als ein Schnitt in einen lebenden Körper wirken. Im telepräsentischen chirurgischen Setting ist eine Ununterscheidbarkeit zwischen Körper und Repräsentation operativ gemacht. Ein Arzt kann in einem solchen Operationssimulator unter bestimmten Umständen nicht mehr sicher feststellen, ob er übt oder die Operation bereits am Patienten durchführt wird.

Auf anderem Weg erzeugt, lautet eine weitere Antwort auf die Frage, ob die wiederkehrende Rede vom "Leben" der jeweils medientechnisch neuesten Bildlichkeit nicht doch Anzeichen eines epistemologisch wirksamen Sprungs zwischen analogen und digitalem Medium sei – ebenfalls und widersprüchlich zum zweiten Mal: Ja. Dies tritt ein, wenn schlicht die Figur dieser Wiederkehr selbst bedacht wird. Denn ein oft übersehener Unterschied liegt allein in der Tatsache der historischen Wiederholung unter grundlegend anderen Bedingungen – mitsamt ihrer fingierten Vergeßlichkeit gegenüber der vorausgegangenen Epoche "lebender Bilder." Die aktuelle Behauptung vom "Leben" der Daten simuliert, – wie im Technischen so auch die vorangegangenen Mediendiskurse. Erinnert sei an dieser Stelle an die Struktur einer Serie.

Unentscheidbar anhand einer verschaltenden Rückkopplung dieser drei Antworten auf die Frage nach der medialen Zäsur des Digitalen bliebe, ob nun im Sprung von der filmischen Serienschnittanimation zur virtuellen Realität der Voxel-Modelle, der "Körper" und das "Leben" sich verändert hätten – und dies gerade indem sie unweigerlich und in einer nicht endlichen Zahl von Schritten nicht aufgehört haben werden "sich" zu verschieben. Anders gesagt: geht es hier um das "Halteproblem," in der Informatik eines der wichtigsten Entscheidungsprobleme, das die Maschine mit "unentscheidbar" beantwortet:

“Es gibt kein automatisches Verfahren, mit dem man für jedes Programm entscheiden kann, ob es eine Endlosschleife enthält oder nicht. Diese Tatsache ist für die Informatik sehr gravierend. Sie besagt gleichzeitig, daß man die Korrektheit eines Programms [...] nicht automatisch überprüfen kann.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Duden, *Informatik*, a.a.O. S. 291.

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ABSTRACTS • IZVLEČKI

MARIE-LUISE ANGERER

The Body Bytes Back

Key words: *post-human, psychoanalysis, unconscious, art*

The more the body has been declared obsolete, the more it has started to occupy the center-stage in public and private life. From the docile body (Foucault) via the talking body in Freud's psychoanalyses to Haraway's surface body, one can follow its history. With the arrival of the cyborg in the so called post-human epoch the body has been reduced to something which can be shaped, transformed and improved without affecting the subject. The subject has been thrown out of the bath through the uncanny marriage of anti-humanist thinking and a postmodern perception of the human being. But the human being cannot ignore its doubled constitution: as a being of need and of desire at the same time. Three figures – the cyborg, the anorexic and the angel – indicate in different ways the double bind of the human being.

MARIE-LUISE ANGERER

Telo udarja nazaj

Gljučne besede: *posthumano, psihoanaliza, nezavedno, umetnost*

Bolj ko so telo razglašali za zastarelo, pomembnejše mesto je zavzemalo v javnem in zasebnem življenju. Njegovi zgodovini lahko sledimo od pokornega telesa pri Foucaultu in govorečega telesa v Freudovi psihoanalizi do površinskega telesa pri Harawayevi. S prihodom kiborga v tako imenovani posthumani dobi je bilo telo omejeno na nekaj, kar je mogoče oblikovati, preobraziti in izpopolniti, ne da bi pri tem kakorkoli prizadeli subjekt. Skrivnostna poroka antihumanistične misli in postmodernega zaznavanja človeškega bitja je izvzela subjekt. Toda človek ne more ignorirati svoje dvojne konstitucije: kot bitja potrebe in kot bitja želje hkrati. Tri figure – kiborg, anoreksičar in angel – na različne načina nakazujejo dvojno vez človeškega bitja.



IRINA ARISTARKHOVA

Hospitality – Chora – Matrix – Cyberspace

Key words: *home, femininity, hospitality, alterity*

What is the relationship between matrix and chora, between body within body, between body and space? This relation is established in the paper through home, home as a space of hospitality, a space that unconditionally welcomes—at least, in the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida points out that etymologically the term "hospitality" is related to the notion of "hostility" since the root of the former, *hospes* is allied to an earlier root of the latter, *hostis*, which interestingly meant both "stranger" and "enemy." Thus hospitality, as in *hostilis*, stranger/enemy + *potes*, "(having) power," came eventually to mean the power the host had over the stranger/enemy.

IRINA ARISTARKHOVA

Gostoljubnost – Chora – Matrica – KiberprostorKljučne besede: *dom, ženskost, gostoljubje, drugačnost*

Kakšno je razmerje med matrico in *choro*, med telesom znotraj telesa, med telesom in prostorom? V razpravi se to razmerje vzpostavi skozi dom, dom kot prostor gostoljubja, prostor, ki brezpogojno sprejema – vsaj v zahodni filozofski tradiciji. Derrida pokaže, da je izraz "gostoljubje" ("hospitality") v angleškem jeziku etimološko povezan s pojmom "sovražnost" ("hostility"), kajti koren prve, *hospes*, je povezan z zgodnejšim korenem druge, *hostis*, ki, zanimivo, pomeni tako "tujec" kot "sovražnik." Tako je gostoljubje, tako kot pri *hostilis*, tujcu/sovražniku + *potes*, "(imeti) moč," sčasoma dobilo pomen moči, ki jo je imel gostitelj nad tujcem/sovražnikom.

CAROLINE BASSETT

Stretching Before and AfterKey words: *interactivity, subjectivity, digital media*

Narrative provides a means by which to explore information technology and subjectivity in ways that offer insights into the possibilities for new forms of cyberfeminism. The author sets out to argue for an approach to cyberfeminism that stresses critique and transformation. The call made is for the restitution of cyberfeminism as a political project carried out by subjects who are increasingly connected to networks, but who remain able to act. Consideration of the subject as a narratable self, as someone who stretches before and after the moments of her technological interpellation, but who is also changed by it, is useful in conceptualising this subject.

CAROLINE BASSETT

Raztezanje prej in poKljučne besede: *interaktivnost, subjektivnost, digitalni mediji*

Besedilo priskrbi načine, s katerimi je mogoče raziskovati informacijsko tehnologijo in subjektivnost na načine, ki ponujajo vpoglede v možnosti za nastanek novih oblik kiberfeminizma. Avtorica zagovarja pristop k kiberfeminizmu, ki namenja poudarek kritiki in preobrazbi. Zavzema se za vzpostavitev kiberfeminizma kot političnega projekta; izvajajo ga subjekti, ki so vse bolj povezani v omrežja, in vendar ohranjajo zmožnost delovanja. Pri snovanju tega subjekta je ključen razmislek o subjektu kot pripovedujočem jazu, kot o nekom, ki se razteza pred in po trenutkih svoje tehnološke interpelacije, ki ga je obenem tudi spremenila.

ROSI BRAIDOTTI

Between the no Longer and the not Yet: on Bios/Zoe-EthicsKey words: *bio-social, ethics, sustainability, postmodernity*

The body has come back in late postmodernity and with a vengeance in social practices and discourses as well as in science and bio-technology, in contemporary evolutionary theory and under the impact of information technologies. The body is a bundle of contradictions: it is a zoological entity; a genetic data-bank, while it also remains a bio-social entity, that is to say, a

slab of codified, personalised memories. It is part animal, part machine, but the dualistic opposition of the two, which our culture has adopted since the 18th century as the dominant model, is inadequate today. Contemporary science and technology in fact have reached right into the most intimate layers of the living organism and the structures of the self, dissolving boundaries that had been established by centuries of humanistic thinking.

ROSI BRAIDOTTI

Med nič več in ne še: o Bios/Zoe-etiki

Ključne besede: *biosocialno, etika, vzdržljivost, postmodernost*

V pozni postmoderni dobi se je telo maščevalno vrnilo v družbene prakse in diskurze, a tudi v znanost in biotehnologijo ter sodobno evlucijsko teorijo, obenem pa je pod vplivom informacijskih tehnologij. Telo je sveženj protislovij: zoološka entiteta, genetska podatkovna banka, obenem pa ostaja biosocialna entiteta, nekakšen blok kodiranih, personaliziranih spominov. Telo je deloma žival in deloma stroj, toda dandanes je dualistično nasprotje obeh, ki je v naši kulturi dominanten model vse od 18. stoletja, neustrezno. Sodobna znanost in tehnologija sta dejansko posegli naravnost v najintimnejše plasti živega organizma in struktur jaza ter razkrojili meje, ki so jih vzpostavila stoletja humanističnega razmišljanja.



NINA CZEGLÉDY AND ANDRÉ P. CZEGLÉDY

The Body as Password: Biometrics and Corporeal Dispossession

Key words: *technology, biometrics, media art*

The current "war on terrorism" has bolstered the production of established biometric technologies, accelerated related research, and advanced the widespread use of such devices. It has also considerably legitimated the further development of similarly intrusive technologies that extend their reach into the once private realms of bodily authority and corporeal identity. In the intricate loop between man and machine, is encoding (and its resultant process of disembodiment) only the first link in a longer chain, a prelude to further events, or is it a new stage in societal evolution that will free us from the limitations of time, space, and even our own bodies? This paper investigates the displacement of the human body through information technology-mediated authentication and surveillance techniques, and presents artistic interpretations of the man/machine interface.

NINA CZEGLÉDY IN ANDRÉ P. CZEGLÉDY

Telo kot geslo: biometrija in razlastitev telesa

Ključne besede: *tehnologija, biometrika, medijska umetnost*

Trenutna "vojna proti terorizmu" je podprla proizvodnjo že znanih biometričnih tehnologij, pospešila sorodne raziskave in razširila široko rabo njenih naprav. Obenem je v precejšnji meri legitimirala nadaljnji razvoj podobno vsiljivih tehnologij, ki posegajo v nekoč zasebno domeno telesne avtoritete in identitete. Je kodiranje (in posledični proces raztelesenja) v zapleteni zanki med človekom in strojem zgolj prvi člen daljše verige, uvod v nadaljnje dogodke, ali pa morda nova stopnja družbene evolucije, ki nas bo osvobodila omejitev časa, prostora in celo naših lastnih teles? Razprava preučuje premestitev človeškega telesa, do katere pride po zasluzi z informacijsko tehnologijo podprtih tehnik za ugotavljanje istovetnosti in nadzorovanj, ter predstavlja umetnostne interpretacije vmesnika med človekom in strojem.



PARUL DAVE-MUKHERJI

Bodies, Power and Difference: Representations of the East-West Divide in the Comparative Study of Indian AestheticsKey words: *post-colonialism, naturalism, cultural difference*

The paper attempts to raise certain methodological issues concerning the study of Indian aesthetics. It seeks to draw attention to the need for conceptual rigour in the usage of related terms derived from western aesthetics through a critique of the comparative method in the study of Indian aesthetics. In particular, this method, predicated upon a certain binarism (east/west, culture/nature, practice/theory), offers a disciplinary coherence to comparative aesthetics even as it renders it open to criticism. Body as a central trope gets caught up in the polemics concerning the representation of Indian art and philosophy, either as a marker of difference or sameness, in relation to western art and philosophy. It underlines the importance of contextualizing aesthetics in its emergence as a discipline within a specific intellectual history of the West and of understanding the circumstances of its entry into the non-West under the aegis of colonialism.

PARUL DAVE-MUKHERJI

Telesa, oblast in razlika: reprezentacija vzhodno-zahodne delitve v komparativnih študijah indijske estetikeKljučne besede: *postkolonializem, naturalizem, kulturna razlika*

Razprava skuša odpreti nekatera metodološka vprašanja, ki se nanašajo na preučevanje indijske estetike. Prizadeva si, da bi pri preučevanju indijske estetike s kritiko primerjalne metode usmerila pozornost na potrebo po konceptualni strogosti, ko gre za rabo sorodnih izrazov, ki izhajajo iz zahodne estetike. Ta metoda, ki je temeljila na določeni binarnosti (vzhod/zahod, kultura/narava, praksa/teorija), vnaša v primerjalno estetiko disciplinatorno koherenco, četudi se prikazuje kot odprta za kritiko. Telo kot osrednji trop se ujame v polemiko o reprezentaciji indijske umetnosti in filozofije, bodisi kot znamenje razlike ali istosti, v razmerju do zahodne umetnosti in filozofije. Obenem poudarja pomembnost kontekstualiziranja estetike kot discipline znotraj določene intelektualne zgodovine Zahoda in razumevanja okoliščin njenega vstopa v nezahodne kulture pod vplivom kolonializma.

PATRICK D. FLORES

Postcolonial SufferanceKey words: *colonial aesthetics, post-colonial future, body politics, trope(s)*

The paper regards Philippine contemporary art as a body of work that suffers. Conversing across the disciplines of art criticism, history, aesthetics, and anthropology, it discusses certain tropes in a current artistic tradition that reference suffering as an articulation of ideological strategy in the broader context of post-colonial history and its struggling body politic. Suffering here is re-motivated as a force or energy for prevailing amid the constraints and chances of the current world; it is reconverted from a colonial aesthetic into a redemptive transfiguration of a possible post-colonial future for the Philippines.

PATRICK D. FLORES

Postkolonialno trpljenjeKljučne besede: *kolonialna estetika, postkolonialna prihodnost, politika telesa, trop(i)*

Razprava obravnava filipinsko sodobno umetnost kot trpeče delo. Tekst, ki posega v discipline umetnostne kritike, zgodovine, estetike in antropologije, razpravlja o nekaterih tropih v trenutni umetniški tradiciji, ki navaja trpljenje kot artikulacijo ideološke strategije v širšem kontekstu postkolonialne zgodovine in njene prebijajoče se politike telesa. Trpljenje je remotivirano kot prevladujoča sila ali energija med omejitvami in možnostmi sedanjega sveta; iz kolonialne estetike se je na novo preoblikovala v odrešilno transfiguracijo možne postkolonialne prihodnosti za Filipine.

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SARAH FRANKLIN

Dolly's Body: Gender, Genetics and the New Genetic CapitalKey words: *biology, genetics, genealogy, property*

Using Dolly as a kind of shepherd, the author follows the implications of Dolly's creation in terms of how scientific knowledge comes to be embodied, how biology is seen to be authored, and how in turn such acts of creation are protected as forms of property. Dolly's coming into being disrupts the traditional template of genealogy: she was born from a new kind of cellular assemblage, in which donor cytoplasm effectively "reprogrammed" her nuclear DNA to "go back in time" and become newly embryonic. Dolly's biology is as cultural as her ontology is historical, and she is part of a number of new animal kinds, or breeds, which instantiate larger changes in what Foucault denominated "the order of things" connecting life, labour and language.

SARAH FRANKLIN

Dollyjino telo: (družbeni) spol, genetika in novi genetični kapitalKljučne besede: *biologija, genetika, genealogija, lastnina*

Avtorica uporabi Dolly kot nekakšnega pastirja in sledi implikacijam Dollyjinega spočetja; zanima jo, kako pride do utelesitve znanstvenega znanja, kako se zdi, da ima biologija avtorje, in kako so takšni akti stvarjenja varovani kot oblike lastnine. Dollyjin prihod na svet je pretrgal tradicionalni vzorec genealogije: rodila se je iz celičnega asemblaža nove vrste, kjer je darovalčeva citoplazma učinkovito "reprogramirala" njeno nuklearno DNK, da se je "vrnila v preteklost" in postala embrionična. Dollyjina biologija je v enaki meri kulturna, kot je njena ontologija zgodovinska; Dolly spada med številne nove živalske vrste ali pasme, ki sprožajo večje spremembe v tistem, kar je Foucault poimenoval za "red stvari," ki povezuje življenje, delo in jezik.

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NATAŠA GOVEDIĆ

What a Wonderful Fascism: Claiming the Real in Lars Von Trier and Dogma 95Key words: *the Real, documentary film narrative, esthetical system of representation*

In many respects, the DOGMA 95 film movement was intended and presented as their founders' (Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg) plea to turn from the traditional or fictional film narrative towards the framings of documentary film narrative within traditional cinema: towards the real. What was perceived as unreal was genre film, technologically advanced film editing, Hollywood's ideological, economical and esthetical system of representation. In more utopian terms, DOGMA 95 initially wanted to escape the boundaries of commercial film history and the logic of art as rhetorical sign.

NATAŠA GOVEDIĆ

Kakšen čudovit fašizem: prisvajanje Realnega pri Larsu Von Trierju in Dogmi 95Ključne besede: *realno, dokumentarna filmska naracija, estetski sistem reerezentacije*

DOGMA 95 sta njegova ustanovitelja (Lars Von Trier in Thomas Vinterberg) v marsikaterem pogledu zasnovala in predstavila kot poziv k obratu od tradicionalne ali fikcijske filmske pripovedi k okvirom dokumentarne filmske pripovedi znotraj tradicionalne kinematografije: k Realnemu. Kot nerealne sta pojmovala žanrski film, tehnološko napredno filmsko montažo, hollywoodski ideološki, ekonomski in estetski sistem reprezentacije. Ali z bolj utopičnimi besedami, DOGMA 95 se je sprva skušala odrešiti omejitev komercialne filmske zgodovine in logike umetnosti kot retoričnega znaka.

MARINA GRŽINIĆ MAUHLER

RuptureKey words: *limits of accumulation, capital, de-territorialization, subjectivity*

The history of capitalism is not limited to one original accumulation. When capital started reaching the limits of accumulation within the nation state, where there was suddenly hardly anything left to be expropriated any more, the process of original accumulation started again at the beginning. Capital was forced to reproduce itself again and again, and this process of constant repetition and reproduction moved the notion of territory, activating new sectors of production, distribution and exchange. De-territorialization is not a process of erasing territories, but first and foremost it is a process of re-territorialization: constant cannibalisation of old and constant re-invention of new ones. Biotechnology and genetic engineering are the hallmarks of such a framework, whereas the Internet provides re-territorialization its new address.

MARINA GRŽINIĆ MAUHLER

ZlomKljučne besede: *meje akumulacije, kapital, deterritorializacija, subjektiviteta*

Zgodovine kapitalizma ne omejuje ena sama prvotna akumulacija. Ko se je kapital približal mejam akumulacije znotraj ene nacionalne države, kjer je bilo nenadoma komajda mogoče najti koga, ki bi ga bilo sploh še mogoče razlastiti, se je process prvotne akumulacije začel na

začetku. Kapital se je bil prisiljen vedno znova reproducirati, ta proces nenehnega ponavljanja in reprodukcije pa je spremenil pojmovanje teritorija, aktiviral nove sektorje produkcije, distribucije in izmenjave. Deteritorializacija ni proces brisanja teritorijev, marveč najprej in predvsem proces reteritorializacije: nenehne kanibalizacije starih in nenehne reinvencije novih. Biotehnologija in genski inženiring sta zaščitni znamki tega polja, internet pa reteritorializaciji priskrbi nov naslov.



MARIA KLONARIS – KATERINA THOMADAKI

Dissident Bodies in the Digital Era

Key words: *intersexuality, virtualisation, pleasure, embodiment*

In the paper the potential of the dissident's body figures for the reconceptualization of body materiality and subjectivity are taken into consideration. The desire of marginalized and monster bodies are taken as a productive force, being an emancipation process that is also opening new wider experimentation possibilities in the field of art – photography, film, video and multimedia. The outcome is a process of strategic identification within philosophy and the theory of the emancipation of marginal figures (angles, monsters, twins). Here Haraway's idea of the cyborg (couplings of animal, machines, and humans) is producing influential political goals, strategic affiliations and terminal identities.

MARIA KLONARIS – KATERINA THOMADAKI

Disidentska telesa v digitalni dobi

Ključne besede: *interseksualnost, virtualizacija, užitek, utelešenost*

Razprava prinaša razmislek o potencialu disidentskih teles pri rekonceptualizaciji telesne materialnosti in subjektivnosti. Željo marginaliziranih teles in teles pošasti obravnava kot produktivno silo, saj gre za proces emancipacije, ki odpira in širi nove, širše zastavljene možnosti eksperimentiranja na področju umetnosti – v filmu, videu in multimedijskih umetnostih. Izid je proces strateške identifikacije znotraj filozofije in teorije emancipacije marginalnih figur (angelov, pošastnih dvojčkov). Na tem mestu ideja kiborga pri Donni Haraway (parjenje živali, strojev in ljudi) proizvede vplivne politične cilje, strateške povezave in mejne identitete.



BERNARD LAFARGUE

Invention of the Transgenic Man and the Transgenre in the Art of the XX Century

Key words: *transgenic, transgenre, reconfiguration(s), philosophy of art*

With the Romantic tradition that was repeated within the Frankfurt school and as well as with Francastel and Panofsky, it is the progression of the artistic creation toward the cultural, political and philosophical that is today the most forceful. It was Kandinsky that reformulated this law in the clearest way using the parabola of a triangle. We are witness to processes of deconfiguration and reconfiguration that lead art to an even greater freedom. This process, named also "a platform," is most visibly develop today within art projects and figuration(s) that constitute what it is possible to name a transgenic man and transgenre art in contemporary culture.

BERNARD LAFARGUE

Iznajdba transgenskega človeka in transžanra v umetnosti 20. stoletjaKljučne besede: *transgensko, transžanr, rekonfiguracija/rekonfiguracije, filozofija umetnosti*

Poleg romantične tradicije, ki se je ponovila znotraj frankfurtske šole in tudi pri Francastelu in Panofskem, je dandanes najsilovitejše napredovanje umetniškega ustvarjanja v smeri kulturnega, političnega in filozofskega. Ta zakon je najjasneje reformuliral Kandinsky, ko je uporabil parabolo trikotnika. Smo priče dekonfiguracije in rekonfiguracije, ki vodita umetnost proti še večji svobodi. Ta proces, ki mu pravijo tudi "platforma," se dandanes najvidneje razvija znotraj umetniških projektov in figuracije/figuracij, ki vzpostavljajo tisto, kar bi v sodobni kulturi lahko poimenovali kot transgenski človek in transžanrska umetnost

MARIE-JOSÉ MONDZAIN

Figures of Alterity and Distance in the work of Maria Klonaris and Katerina ThomadakiKey words: *image, icon, sublime, aesthetics*

Experimental film and visual works by Klonaris and Thomadaki suggest that specific visions of alterity and distance produce a new sort of liberty of expression, iconic imaging and body figures. Because of Klonaris and Thomadaki's intensive structures of disasters and visual nonlinearity it is possible to theorise domains of influence against the hegemonic discourses. It is a constant productive change that makes interesting suggestions for agency in dealing with others and distance. Their work articulates a real and pervasive figure of embodied experience in connection with sophisticated theoretical interpersonal confrontations and relations to media technology.

MARIE-JOSÉ MONDZAIN

Spremenljive in oddaljene figure v delu Marie Klonaris in Katerine ThomadakiKljučne besede: *podoba, ikona, sublimno, estetika*

Eksplozivni filmi in vizualna dela Klonarisove in Thomadakijeve nakazujejo, da specifične vizije spremenljivosti in razdalje proizvajajo svobodo izražanja nove vrste, ikonično upodabljanje in telesne figure. Uporaba intenzivnih struktur razdejanj in vizualne nelinearnosti pri Klonarisovi in Thomadakijevi omogoča teoretsko razpravo o domeni vpliva nasproti hegemonim diskurzom. To je nenehno produktivna sprememba, ki prinaša zanimive poglede na delovanje v razmerju do drugih in na razdaljo. Njuno delo artikulira realno in prodorno figuro utelešene izkušnje v povezavi s sofisticiranimi teoretskimi medosebnimi soočenji ter razmerji do medijske tehnologije.

ŽARANA PAPIĆ

Europe after 1989: Ethnic Wars, Fascisation of Social Life and the Body Politics in SerbiaKey words: *Enemy-Otherness, pro-Fascist construction, social life, ethnic wars*

The paper deals with the specific area of representational practices in which the media production/appropriation of reality in Serbia played the decisive part in the process of the fascisation of social life and every day practices in Serbia – before and during the wars in the Former Yugoslavia. It is concerned with showing how the chosen discourses of appropriation of social memory, collective trauma and the re-creation of the Enemy-Otherness in image and event can become an integral, “self-participatory” agent in the pro-Fascist construction of the social reality – through the very image/concept of the “reality” itself, which then becomes the lived experience of people exposed to the constant working of the image/concept.

ŽARANA PAPIĆ

Evropa po letu 1989: etnične vojne, fašizacija družbenega življenja in politika telesa v SrbijiKljučne besede: *Sovražnik-drugačnost, profašistična konstrukcija, družbeno življenje, etnične vojne*

Razprava se ukvarja s posebnim poljem reprezentacijskih praks, znotraj katerega je medijska produkcija/prilaščanje realnosti pred in med vojnami v nekdanji Jugoslaviji odigrala odločilno vlogo v procesu fašizacije družbenega življenja in vsakdanjih praks v Srbiji. Avtorica skuša prikazati, kako lahko izbrani diskurzi prilaščanja družbenega spomina, kolektivna travma in poustvarjenje Sovražnika-Druagačnosti v obliki podobe in dogodka postanejo integralni “samoudeleženi” dejavnik profašistične konstrukcije družbene stvarnosti – prav skozi podobo/koncept same “stvarnosti,” ki nato postane doživeta izkušnja ljudi, izpostavljenih nenehnemu delovanju podobe/koncepta.



CLAUDIA REICHE

“Living” Anatomies 1900/2000: Cinematography of Serial Sections and Voxel-based Volume VisualisationsKey words: *discourse-figure, computer, medical cinematography, the “Visible Human Project”*

Around the turn of the last century –1900 – the new medium film was conceptualised as “Living Photographs,” today – around 2000 – a different kind of media-application is called “living:” that of the computer. The popular and scientific representations of the “Visible Human Project™” form an especially interesting example, because in it a forgotten prehistory of the “information age” can be found in the motifs and techniques of early medical cinematography, which animated serial sections of human tissues. Karl Reicher’s and Victor Widakowich’s film experiments, since 1907, have led to specific concepts of time and space, which prefigure not only the discourse-figure of “living” media artefacts, but the anatomical visualisation of human bodies in Virtual Reality as well. This history of scientific imaging is reflected also in the filmic avant-garde of the 1920s, especially in Oskar Fischinger outstanding “Wax-Experiments.”

CLAUDIA REICHE

“Žive” anatomije 1900/2000: kinematografija serijskih izsekov in na “voxlu” utemeljene volumnske vizualizacijeKljučne besede: *diskurz-figura, računalnik, medicinska kinematografija, “Vidni človeški projekt”*

Na prelomu minulega stoletja, okoli leta 1900, so tedaj novi medij, film, konceptualizirali kot “žive fotografije,” danes, okoli leta 2000, pa za “žive” veljajo medijske aplikacije druge vrste: računalniške. Popularne in znanstvene reprezentacije “Vidnega človeškega projekta™” so še posebno zanimiv zglede, kajti v motivih in tehnikah zgodnje medicinske kinematografije, ki je animirala serijske izseke človeških tkiv, je mogoče odkriti pozabljeno prazgodovino “informacijske dobe.” Filmski eksperimenti Karla Reicherja in Victorja Widakowicha iz obdobja po letu 1907 so razvili posebne koncepte časa in prostora, ki niso predvideli le diskurza-figure “živih” medijskih artefaktov, temveč tudi anatomsko vizualizacijo človeških teles v navidezni resničnosti. Ta zgodovina znanstvenega upodabljanja se zrcali tudi v filmski avantgardi dvajsetih let 20. stoletja, zlasti v izstopajočih “Voščenih eksperimentih” Oskarja Fischingerja.

ANDREA SICK

Viral Structures of CyberfeminismKey words: *virus, cyberfeminism, borderline, host*

If cyberfeminism is a virus, it will denote an operation of infection and replication which subverts, disassembles, expands and discloses existing systems – and not only bio- and systems of information-technology. Models of viruses as they are found in bio- and information-technological discourses serve as a foil to question the political and theoretical functions of cyberfeminism. Here the virus cannot be investigated without taking into account the effect of the media – inflating every virus into an epidemic situation.

ANDREA SICK

Virusne strukture kiberfeminizmaKljučne besede: *virus, kiberfeminizem, mejnost, gostitelj*

Če je kiberfeminizem virus, označuje operacijo infekcije in replikacije, ki subvertira, razstavlja, širi in razkriva obstoječe sisteme, in to ne samo bio- ter informacijske in tehnološke sisteme. Modeli virusov, kakršne najdemo v bio- in informacijsko-tehnoloških diskurzih, naj bi služili kot kontrastno ozadje za spraševanje o političnih in teoretskih funkcijah kiberfeminizma. Pri tem virusa ni mogoče preiskovati, ne da bi upoštevali učinek medijev, ki vsak virus napihnejo v epidemično situacijo.

MIŠKO ŠUVAKOVIĆ

The Limits of Discourse: A lecture on the Relationship between “Theory,” “Art” and “Body” in the XX CenturyKey words: *theory, art, body, interdisciplinarity*

The author intends to persevere in the “*diadisciplinarity*,” in the crossed out or exceeded disciplinarity which does not allow the objectification of the relationship between “art,” “theory”

and “body” into a firm method. He keeps that method in a state of crisis of heterogeneous events or incidents. The relationship between theory and art “through” body is the “event” or “incident” of the located representation or presentation. What is at stake here is the “representation” or “presentation,” not the literal portrayal of “theory” and “art” through body; the *constructs or figures* are instrumentalized or used to provoke procedures, forms and functions of theory and art.

MIŠKO ŠUVAKOVIĆ

Meje diskurza: predavanje o razmerju med “teorijo,” “umetnostjo” in “telesom” v 20. stoletju

Ključne besede: *teorija, umetnost, telo, interdisciplinarnost*

Avtor je skušal vztrajati pri “*diadisciplinarnosti*,” pri izbrisani ali prekoračeni disciplinarnosti, ki ne dovoljuje objektivizacije razmerja med “umetnostjo,” “teorijo” in “telesom” v trdno metodo. To metodo ohranja v stanju krize heterogenih dogodkov ali incidentov. Razmerje med teorijo in umetnostjo “skozi” telo je “dogodek” ali “incident” locirane reprezentacije ali prezentacije. Pri tem gre za “reprezentacijo” ali “prezentacijo,” in ne za dobesedno prikazovanje “teorije” in “umetnosti” skozi telo; *konstrukti ali figure* so instrumentalizirani ali uporabljeni tako, da izzovejo postopke, oblike ter funkcije teorije in umetnosti.



KIKUKO TOYAMA

The Tactics of Perseus: Tackling the Invisible Other

Key words: *the Other, castration anxiety, vision, spectacle*

The paper re-examines the blinding effects of the Other’s gaze, targeting a certain vulnerability in our vision – a theme that has been so very prominent in the context of art discourses since the 1960s. It has been argued that the Sartrean gaze of the other self/subject has the quality of being unseen, as it causes self-reification as well as scotomization. Confronted with such invisibility, how does it ever become possible to see the Other, that is, to see Medusa, a figure standing for the Other’s petrifying look? The author refers to some representations of this monstrous Other and suggests that as possible devices to bypass the terror, various media of spectacle and of representation might be designed, notably painting, at times regarded as an “art of memory,” rather than an art of direct perception.

KIKUKO TOYAMA

Perzejeve taktike: spoprijem z nevidnim Drugim

Ključne besede: *Drugi, strah pred kastracijo, pogled, spektakel*

Razprava na novo preučí slepilne učinke pogleda Drugega in se usmerja na nekakšno ranljivost našega pogleda – gre za temo, ki vse od šestdesetih let 20. stoletja zavzema pomembno mesto v umetnostnem diskurzu. Veljalo je, da sartrovski pogled drugega jaza/subjekta premore lastnost, da je neviden, saj povzroči samoreifikacijo in skotomizacijo. Kako je v soočenju s takšno nevidnostjo sploh mogoče videti Drugega, t. j. videti Meduzo, figuro, ki predstavlja paralizirajoči pogled Drugega? Avtorica se nanaša na nekatere reprezentacije tega pošastnega Drugega in kot morebitne mehanizme, s katerimi bi se izognili grozi, predlaga raznovrstne medije reprezentacije, zlasti slikarstvo, ki je nekoč veljalo bolj za “umetnost spomina” kot za umetnost neposrednega zaznavanja.



HIROSHI YOSHIOKA

The Invisible Male BodyKey words: *disability, invisibility, masculinity, modernization*

The dominant role of man in modern societies is inseparable from the “invisibility” of the male body. In the visual culture deeply influenced by mass media, it seems to be surprisingly difficult to represent male bodies in normal, familiar situations. This can be most obviously seen in Japan because of its rapid growth into hyper-modernity. “Salary-man” and “Otaku” typically show the difficulty which Japanese culture has about male identity. Works by some contemporary artists help us consider this subject.

HIROŠI JOŠIOKA

Nevidno moško teloKljučne besede: *invalidnost, nevidnost, moškost, modernizacija*

Prevladujoča vloga moškega v modernih družbah je neločljivo povezana z “nevidnostjo” moškega telesa. Zdi se, da je v vizualni kulturi, na katero pomembno vplivajo množični mediji, presenetljivo težko reprezentirati moška telesa v normalnih, domačih situacijah. To se najočitneje kaže na Japonskem, to pa zaradi njenega hitrega prehajanja v hipermodernost. “Uradnik” in “Otaku” na značilen način prikazujeta težave, ki jih ima japonska kultura, ko gre za moško identiteto. K razmisleku o tem vprašanju nas spodbujajo dela nekaterih sodobnih umetnikov.

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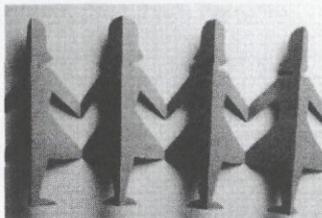
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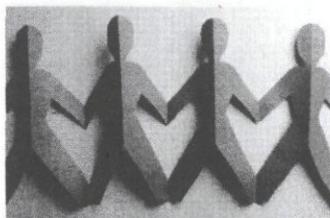
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