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TECHNOBODY METAMORPHOSES

[—] there is no qualitative difference between the most elementary consumable object, food, and the most technically sophisticated prosthetics, for they all relate to the body as a permeable, manipulable surface, ingesting, incorporating and expelling an expanding range of objects. Yet this open-ended circulation does not occur in some pure or open space; rather, as various bodily functions are extended “outside” the body, so the spaces of these extensions are embodied, in every sense of the word (Lupton & Miller 1992, 507).

Media are filled with stories of correct or incorrect physical appearance; descriptions of AIDS-treatment; demonstrations between supporters and opposers of abortion, or euthanasia; tales of eating disorders; wars against drugs; surveillance video images; doping-, violence-, and sex-scandals connected to celebrities from sport or screen. In discourses belonging to the many modes of public rhetorics, the body is always there. The body presents itself as a mutant alien puffed up by numerous signifying practices:

Family members who weep with Oprah and share the intimacies of terror with Geraldo may have little to emotionally exchange with each other in the flesh: little that is but the panic of not being able to live up to the simulated ideals of media icons that have virtually no reference to anything outside the screen and its information. Better, perhaps, to be sociologically orphaned than mutant members of the new and fleshless family of the corporate mediascape (Orr & Pfohl 1994, 91).

In the media romances of the “fleshless family” the body is in a constant state of flux: it is always

metamorphosing into something else. The cost of these changes seems to be a growing anxiety connected to the disappearances of the material body - or, more correctly, of the element in the body that anchors it into the daily, material world. The fear of losing the tangible nature of the body drives it easily into panic. The process of this fear shows up in a hysterical attempt to stick to what is most concrete and material in the body, that is “the flesh.” Yet, this addiction to the flesh is also a flux between otherness and identification and, as always with addictions it is also a destruction.

Incorporations and Embodiments

Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (following Jean Baudrillard’s footsteps) see the panic of the flesh as a side-effect of “the deaths of the natural and the discursive bodies” (Kroker 1987, 22). Moreover, modern technological development acts as a crucial evaporator in this disappearance.

In technological society, the body has achieved a purely rhetorical existence: its reality is that of refuse expelled as surplus-matter no longer necessary for the autonomous functioning of the technoscape (Kroker 1987, 21).

Based on dualistic assumptions of natural and artificial (or “purely rhetorical”) this form of argumentation itself represents the bipolar field of body discourses in general. In Michel Feher’s words this dualism embodies two parallel fields: the political regime of the body and the ethical

question of one's relation to one's own body (Feher 1987). The political question conceptualizes the body as a battleground of opposing power relations. The ethical dimension deals with the different bodily zones; the ideologies in the name of which the body is treated; the techniques used in, and the aims of these treatments. Basically these two large regimes also sketch the framework of the famous "Zone-trilogy" Feher edited in 1989 (Feher 1989). In other words this dualism is between incorporations (Foucault as one of the major theorists sees power as a key word; the body as invaded; the body as object) and embodiments (phenomenology as the major philosophical background sees the body as a source of meanings and experiences; as as subject).

In film studies closely following the changing trends of gender studies the body has been a hot term since the early 1980s, though particular "body studies" did not appear until about ten years later, most notably by Linda Williams (1989), Steven Shaviro (1993), Yvonne Tasker (1993), Susan Jeffords (1994), and Lisa Cartwright (1995). The film studies approach has been very varied and as "body studies" often quite loosely connected to literary, cultural or philosophical backgrounds. The emphasis has clearly been both on the side of "incorporation theories" and the objects of research (body films, body auteurs, body metaphors, and so forth). One of the few exceptions has been Vivian Sobchack's *The Address of the Eye* (1992) in which she outlines an entire phenomenological perspective towards film experience emphasizing the body.

In this article my intention is to give an introduction to the contemporary (largely English-speaking) technological environment in which the human body experiences several simultaneously ongoing transformations. My perspectives can be named by the following discourses: *The Silence of the Lambs*, *hygiene*, *Prozac*, and *aging*. Instead of opposing "incorporations" to "embodiments" I would like to see both of these terms as modes or variations of a certain textuality which is composed of several important "body texts:" the physical male body in Jonathan Demme's film; the dirty body in discourses of hygiene; the disturbances of the mind in relation to body; the aging body as a battleground between mental and technological forces. In this article I try to show how body, understood as a text, refers to an infinite series of textualities. Moreover, the ways in which these

formations influence our thinking about "corporealities" are often unexpectedly revealing. The key questions are: what is defined as natural and what is defined as artificial in this bodily perspective?

It is not easy to determine the moment when something becomes incorporated or when something is embodied. Moreover, it does not explain much to argue that these are two-way processes. Instead, I have chosen to theorize about a more abstract *technobody* which in its various transformations signifies several overlapping, simultaneous and changing incorporations, as well as embodiments. The linkage between these metamorphoses and at the same time their source of energy is the larger technological environment which has been radically expanding during the 20th century at least in the Western world. In this article I intend to introduce three consequential "side-effects" of this expansion: the serial killer, the drug addict, and the immortal body.

Anxieties of the civilized body

Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (USA 1991) sews together some basic fantasies connected to both the image and the body in operating on such fields of the ocular which could be analyzed as belonging to the unconscious of the modern age in general. In many ways "Buffalo Bill" embodies a failure in relation to the rhetorics of cleanliness. The key image of this dark side of the civilized body is the unidentified corpse decaying in the bathtub at "Buffalo Bill's" basement. It seems as though he compulsively seeks the kind of substance and fulfillment which cannot be accepted by the dominating moral and ethical principles of his society - in spite of the fact that his particular body is a product of those very same rules. An example of these principles is a slogan from the times of the cleanliness crusade in the late 1920s: "A Clean Machine Runs Better - Your Body is a Machine - KEEP IT CLEAN" (Vinikas 1992, 90).

Janet Staiger's review of the critical reception of Demme's film in American newspapers and magazines condenses the main points in these evaluations into three arguments: 1. *The Silence of the Lambs* is a homophobic movie provoking negative attitudes against non-heterosexuals; 2. *The Silence of the Lambs* integrates in an irresponsible way a serial killer and a homosexual; 3. In spite of these flaws, the movie



In The Silence of Lambs Clarice has to confront her past in order to find her true identity.

gives a very positive image of a woman working under patriarchal constraints (Staiger 1993). After these conclusions Staiger asks, why did the critics sew together so eagerly the homosexual and the female protagonist? In fact this linkage became a redundant climax in the reviews - both conceptually (sewing and stitching are recurring words) and substantially.

Father figures, metamorphoses, and animals were the typical thematic clusters used to link James Gumb alias "Buffalo Bill" (Ted Levine) with Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster). The binary structure of the story, however, was seen between "Buffalo Bill" and Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter (Anthony Hopkins). Cannibalism (linked to Lecter) and flaying (connected to Gumb) are extremely violent acts in relation to the human body and its "natural" right to be untouched. In opposition to arguments revealed by Staiger concerning the American reception of Demme's film I think that the transformation in *The Silence of the Lambs* does not concern gender or sex as much as identity and its position as the basis of subjectivity. In "Buffalo Bill's" case it means a desire to transform into an entirely other human being, and in Clarice's case to accept the lack in her traumatic past. With her it is a question of wanting to acknowledge the identity and self image which she could begin to call her own -

even though it is not represented as being perfect. The difference is that unlike "Buffalo Bill" Clarice is not yearning for otherness.

Self-reflexively - as it speaks about its own corporeal identity as a film - *The Silence of the Lambs* operates on levels of looking; the gaze and the construction of spectator positions. This involves binoculars, photographs, cameras, monitors, camera angles, looks aimed directly at the camera, and so forth. "The battle of the looks" finally remains unresolved - or, as Elizabeth Young has suggested - it is a symbiosis: we as spectators are both Clarice (the consumed) and Hannibal (the consuming cannibal) (Young 1992, 27). The power of the "vision machine" is so evident that one of the key questions posed by the audiovisual experience is "How is the film's body being made?"

Traditional horror film situates the evil into a recognizable, monstrous body which then, in the end, can - and often will be destroyed. Typical examples are both Count Dracula and the monster created by Dr. Frankenstein. In contemporary Hollywood films (such as Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, 1994 or Neil Jordan's *An Interview with the Vampire*, 1994) evil can be more abstractly everywhere. On the other hand it can be embodied and individualized only through fiction: for example through the stories in the films mentioned above. Hence, monstrosity is no longer just corporeal but also narrative. The roots of fear are no longer somewhere underneath or inside (a body) but also on the surface (of images, sounds and texts). Instead of being just a shell for identity hidden somewhere inside, the skin with its various meanings and signs refers in *The Silence of the Lambs* to problems of identity. Familiar boundaries between individuals have been confused until they start disappearing. The classical "mind vs. body" -principle does not hold any more. The film allows various possibilities for identification. Even woman's only option is not any more - as it usually is at least in horror movies - the position of passive sacrificed flesh.

From the viewpoint of masculinity *The Silence of the Lambs* offers much material to deal with the problems of male identification. "Buffalo

Bill” - as a man - experiences his body (the one he has but wants to deny and change) as a prison, whereas Lecter’s body literally is in the prison. From the perspective of masculinity the film’s body is very fragmented, vulnerable and imprisoned. Yet, even this body is first and foremost an image, subject and object of gazes.

Monstrosity in *The Silence of the Lambs* springs up as an effect of the surface. One cannot delimit or enclose this force into a single body. Not even into the one that flays in order to “dress” or the one that cannibalizes in order to “nourish.” Monstrosity has become a force detached from the body, and thus, silenced (because corporeality was its “language”). Another kind of monstrosity is born from the abandonment of the body’s enclosure and from the denial of its untouchable quality. Thus, purely as a body film *The Silence of the Lambs* is amazingly conservative; it continues the educational tradition of the Enlightenment in which the body is seen as the soul’s “vessel;” as a possible target to become trained and thus, liberated from its inborn evil nature.

This tradition blooms in fairytales. The theme in *The Little Mermaid* (produced by Disney, scripted and directed by John Musker and Ron Clements; USA 1989), for example, evolves the description of (adolescent) female desire. What the little mermaid desires is a real female identity embodied in a real female person. In this sense the mermaid belongs to the same species as the moth in *The Silence of the Lambs*. As a film *The Little Mermaid* also suggests that even though freedom is necessary for experimentation it must be sacrificed and constrained if one is to become an adult woman. How does Hollywood make this loss acceptable, even desirable, that is, how does pain become entertaining? In the first place it becomes entertaining by the formal factors per se; the film in question is an animation, not “real.” Hence, fantasy feeds figural pleasure - especially when being about pain.

The mermaid’s figure was transformed into Christian tradition from paganistic mythology as a warning of the presence of sin. In this classical imagery the mermaid is therefore a deceitful, narcissistic woman who must be changed or destroyed. Mermaid stories (also in films) are basically about painful growth (White 1993). In literary stories (as in H.C. Andersen’s classical fairytale) the physical pain caused by the loss of the tail (and gaining of the legs) is described in detail. In the film this growth, however, is represented as a magically painless process

involving a complicated chain of trading; in order to get the desired legs the mermaid has to sell her beautiful voice to the fat witch, Ursula. Pain and blood are totally missing from this transformation. The ultimate goal of the correct female body is finally achieved by being sincere, kind and just.

Nevertheless, the basic characteristic of the “filmic feminine” – sacrifice – belongs to this story, too. The mermaid sacrifices her tale/tail that signifies the whole under water world of her past in order to become a wife in the above water world of her future. Female masochism is accepted as a norm; hence it cannot be treated as similar to the pathological mode of behavior of male masochism and male sacrifice. If a man desires pain and suffering - and thereafter fulfillment - he, according to this reasoning, voluntarily adopts the female position as being more satisfying than the male one. However, when emphasizing this aspect (the relationship between male masochism and female sacrifice) one willingly wants to forget that this sacrifice is not an ontological state of affairs but an historical requirement dictated by the patriarchal cultural context.

In *The Silence of the Lambs* “Buffalo Bill” is an opponent (perhaps one could even say, a historian – at least the psychoanalytic context links this configuration to the 20th century) of male masochism as voluntary and satisfying. For him, becoming-woman is not a question of choice but something pathologically much more compulsive. In this endeavor, however, he does not sacrifice himself but women by killing and flaying them. He acts in this way because in spite of his desires, he still is a “male machine.” “Buffalo Bill” is therefore also a technological product, a result of the mechanism that is based on the “naturalization” of female sacrifice. His presumed homosexuality has probably been just an intermediate state in his past. “Buffalo Bill’s” attempt to transform his corporeal being into a woman was based on an idea of becoming the kind of sexual object the construction of which was dictated by the dominant cultural norm: because men want women and he wanted to become a woman, he had to make his body available for men.

Much more than a traditional monster, “Buffalo Bill” is a cultural index; he embodies many engendering factors which cannot be considered abnormal. This extreme example is that a woman is sacrificed on behalf of man’s needs and desires, even if this man’s desire is to

be a woman. Where does this need, desire and in the end, addiction to be something other, come from? Maybe it is simply a counter reaction, a denial of acceptable values, an inability and unwillingness to follow those culturally conditioned requirements according to which the dominant masculinity is supposed to form and function. In this sense "Buffalo Bill" is not so much a monstrous but a tragic figure whose ultimate dream paradoxically comes true at the moment when Clarice Starling shoots him to death. Finally "Buffalo Bill" can fulfill the basic cultural requirement of womanhood: his body becomes sacrificed.



This household technological process became real more generally in the United States during the 1930s, in France during the 1950s and in Finland during the 1960s. In practice this progress marked the birth of two new spatial configurations: the modern kitchen and bathroom. The former was centered around preserving, provisioning, and consuming; the latter around cleaning and defecation. The most elementary change, however, took place during the 1920s, the key element being soap and the production consumption and advertising of hygienic products in general. Already by the mid-1920s the advertising of bathroom products was the second largest group (after foods) in American commercial markets.

Cleanliness is Godliness?

In terms of the body the discursive and the natural are intertwined in many ways. This connection becomes evident in hygiene, and the way in which notions such as natural and artificial figure in the discourses of hygiene. The impossibility of a universally natural body becomes evident after reading (for example in Reynolds 1946 or Spinrad 1994) about the ways in which people in different cultures, different religions, and different times have coped with the bodily fluids. As Reginald Reynolds found out: "Sanitation has its history, its archeology, its literature, and its science" (Reynolds 1946, 4).

Hygiene is probably the most tangible consequence of modernization in relation to the human body. It embodies an entire technological "warfare" designed and marketed for households. It was created during the past hundred years especially for maintaining the cleanliness of the human body. References to war are not accidental:

Domestic hygiene was explicitly understood, at least from the turn of the century, as an arm of the military campaign for greater national efficiency. Some of the most influential texts on health and hygiene in the domestic sphere were actually written by the military (Colomina 1991-92, 3).

In the promised land of institutionalization, cleanliness also was "organized" in the USA in 1927 with the founding of what was simply called the Cleanliness Institute. The basic purpose of the Institute (put up by the Association of American Soap and Glycerine Producers) was "to teach the public the importance of keeping clean"; and by this aim to secure "the need for more soap consumption in America" (Vinikas 1992, 79). One of the key elements in these endeavors was, of course, advertising - as it had been already for a long time: "The soap making trade can be credited with leading the way to modern advertizing" (Vinikas 1992, 81).

Advertising hygiene products seems to be a somewhat special case:

Manufacturers had to let Americans know, not just that they were still soiled, but that they could never be sanitary enough. As the country became cleaner than ever before, manufacturers had to dig up dirt (Vinikas 1992, 83).

Not only did the methods of advertising hygiene products divert from more ordinary consumer goods, so did the targeting. The first target group were children (and, of course, teachers) at schools. These campaigns emphasized the importance of not just doing, but making the kids

want to do the things they were taught; to brush teeth, wash hands, bathe, and so forth. The second target group were the mothers of these children and via them the household in general. In this realm the ads very successfully touched upon - not just the desire to become and be clean but the consequent desire to become more beautiful by being clean. "Loveliness" was the most important factor foregrounded in these ads - and then attached also to other areas of house cleaning:

"You 'just hate' the refrigerator job? Don't. It's marvelous exercise, for it brings nearly all your muscles into play. So down on your knees! Think of yourself as kneeling before the altar of beauty and health. Not for one single instant are you a slave to household drudgery. And when you know that the exercise is helping to give you a fine, shapely body, it will become good fun to reach and turn and twist and peer into the refrigerator" (quote in Vinikas 1992, 90).

The "want to do"-factor seemed to operate here as well: the idea was to make women want the hygiene products not because women wanted to be clean but because they wanted to be beautiful, pretty, and desirable, they wanted to be wanted.

The most fundamental thing in the campaigns organized by the Cleanliness Institute in the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, was that all this was presented, marketed and "sold" in the name of public service. The idea was of a democratic well (or rather, better) -being for everybody in all possible ways, and this idea was then spread in endless variations to schools and kitchens - all in the neutralizing name of public education. What was sealed in this image, though, was the simple urge to sell more of these hygiene products. The campaigns were successful: by 1938 the percentages of households using toilet soaps, laundry detergent, and tooth-paste or powder on a daily basis were 95%, 91% and 89% (Vinikas 1992, 93-94).

This kind of progress in the kitchen and bathroom lead to expanding consumer markets: household machines (refrigerators, electric ovens, vacuum cleaners, irons, dishwashers); food prepared for refrigerating (preserving chemicals, packing materials, canned foods); and bathroom products (soaps, shampoos, toilet papers, sanitary napkins, antiperspirants, deodorants, toothpastes, shaving creams). The kitchen and bathroom gave the home many new odors and sounds. In the households' everyday life the body was suddenly surrounded by an excessive arsenal of humming machines, bottles, cans and tubes. This desire for

the clean body as a product of economic and cultural machinery (and the process of cleaning it as one of the basic modes of production) promoted whiteness in preference to other colors. Why was it necessary for the fridge, for example, to be white?

This object itself, the refrigerator or "cold spot" as it was called in its early incarnations in the States, with its pressed steel casing and seamless finish, conveyed the image of absolute cleanliness and newfound hygiene: its brilliant white finish was the physical embodiment of health and purity. The refrigerator as mass object of desire and one of the "mature" consumer durables was indeed the object-fetish for the new modernized home (Ross 1994, 42).

White porcelain and shining metal surfaces epitomized the immediate visibility of dirt guaranteeing their own cleanliness. On the other hand this tendency produced an element for a "counter passion" in the mode of which the body, as a battleground of dirt and cleanliness, could be driven into panic because the body could never be absolutely sure of its own cleanliness, whiteness - and fullness.

The domestic dimension of modern design culture is connected to the nutritional human economy: aspects of food and feces generated new household products and environments. The modern bathroom as an index of civilization signified the civilization of the body. The bodily desire for being clean was also connected to the "germ theory" of diseases, that is, to an idea that epidemic diseases are spread by bacteria living in dirt. Marketing and advertising strategies promoting these modernized and technologized household spaces tried to prove how being clean automatically also meant being healthy. On the concrete and constructional level buildings were designed to fix the channels necessary for making food, keeping clean, and getting rid of nutritional excesses via pipes for water and waste.

The modern bathroom and kitchen favor fixed structures instead of mobile furniture where enclosed, legless cubic forms hold dust and dirt outside. This same principle is repeated in the ways in which food was packed for these modern kitchens: the package seals the product into a seamless soft "skin" at the same time giving a clean geometric form to an otherwise formless, organic substance. These packages also increased the amount of waste, which very quickly became an essential element in the production cycle of the "economy of cleanliness." With the help of advertising "creative waste" became a vehicle of

positive production and consumption. The household was seen as a body dependent on a regular "bowel movement." Thus, waste was not an unnecessary excess or an unpleasant thing; quite the opposite, waste was the fuel of this "mode of production," most of all in the sense that its emphasized presence helped sell the products made for purposes of hygiene. In this sense "every manufactured object 'recreates' the body, and the body itself becomes a kind of manufactured object" (Lupton & Miller 1992, 507).

The principles of cleanliness, health and whiteness can also be seen in industrial design as methods of streamlining. Disturbing edges, cracks and corners were omitted. Simultaneously many objects, because of this streamlining attempt, achieved phallic characteristics, again with military associations:

Household cleaning products and appliances were described in advertisements as military weapons in the domestic campaign against dust and germs. Some of these appliances were actually styled to look like weapons (Colomina 1991-92, 3).

Considering the functional environment (especially the bathroom) these characteristics, however, can be seen - not as phallic weapons but more neutrally as being borrowed from "the biologically extruded forms of feces" (Lupton & Miller 1992, 512). In addition to corporeal and spatial surfaces, this kind of fetishized cleanliness which valued whiteness, brightness, and form was, nevertheless, closely connected to questions of gender - and nation:

A chain of equivalences is at work here; the prevailing logic runs something like this: if the woman is clean, the family is clean, the nation is clean. If the French woman is dirty, then France is dirty and backward. [—] France must, so to speak, clean house; reinventing the home is reinventing the nation. And thus, the new 1950s interior: the home as the basis of the nation's welfare [—] (Ross 1994, 27-8).

Since the hygiene discourses foregrounded the home and the nation by addressing children and women, they simultaneously left open a peculiar question: what kind of traumatic consequences resulted from the fact that the image of the male body in these campaigns resembles an image of a machine (and is therefore easier to keep clean)? As I have argued above, one possible answer is given in *The Silence of the Lambs*.

A sound mind in a clean body?

During the past five years or so something called "terminal culture" (technomusic, sci-fi literature, film, cartoons, postmodern cultural theories, cyberpunk) has become a fashionable field of discourse especially in America (Bukatman 1993; Dery 1994). In terminal culture the body is called "the flesh" or "the meat." The slogan of terminal culture is "Farewell to the flesh!" (Hayles 1993; Morse 1994). Even though the critical aspects presented by Margaret Morse refer to mental phenomena such as information, mind drugs, the bodyless nature of virtual reality, psychoanalytic perspectives and so forth, she convincingly shows that saying goodbye to the (imagined) organic means most of all farewell to food and feces. In this sense, the basic sign of humanity is the corporeal food culture which then becomes replaced by the (imagined) technological progress that foregrounds gastronomies of the consciousness.

Concepts such as flesh and meat signify the frustration felt among those who spend most of their time within the enlargening "infosphere" (the basic contemporary existing particle of which might be the WorldWideWeb). This frustration is born out of the limitations experienced because of the restriction of corporeality in contrast to the intangible freedom of a tele- imagination. "Meat" is also a constructivist term referring to the artificiality of the body in body building, plastic surgery, piercing or tattooing, dieting, and so forth. Is the body a building - or a machine? Similar questions can be applied to the mind, too. In this sense the classical mind-body constellation is valid only as a correlation, not as an opposition. Thus not only the body but also the mind is an element to be built, for example, by "smart drugs" which are designed to enhance wit, memory and other conscious processes. One of the most famous of these drugs is Prozac, a "selective serotonin break" and "personality steroid" which, as has been argued, has a miraculous ability to change a person's entire personality - if a personality is, in the final analysis, a biochemical phenomenon (Cornwell 1994).

Prozac has created a "legal" drug culture in the USA. One of the reasons for this is that the drug has almost no complications: Prozac may in some cases diminish sexual potency (especially among men) and increase aggressive behavior, or not be effective at all. But all of these cases are

extremely rare. People of the "Prozac-nation" take this drug for depression, melancholia, low self-esteem, and various phobias. Prozac is marketed as a cure against acute depression, shyness, weak self confidence, fear of public places, stage fright: it is said to transform the user into a happy, positive and outward oriented individual. Prozac is a concrete example of the enlarging development projects of the medical industry. More and more resources are channelled into research on methods to "hit" directly and chemically at different parts of the brain. The background for the development of Prozac was the observation made in the 1950s according that the collaboration between the brain and the central nervous system is dictated by biochemicals such as endorphins. These compounds are produced "naturally" by the brain. At the moment the total amount of known compounds is already over 2000. No wonder the brain can be considered as an enormous chemical factory; the measures and structures of the compounds it produces are strictly regulated. Drugs for the brain in an attempt to manipulate artificially these compounds are one of the fastest growing divisions within the medical industry at the moment:

The neuro-science revolution means that we can rationally design drugs from the outset; we target our research and develop a strategy based on accurate knowledge of the molecular structures in the brain, rather than on guesswork (Dr. Leslie Iversen quoted in Cornwell 1994, 74).

These "smart drugs" follow the same strategic planning as the "smart bombs" elsewhere. While "desert shield" and "smart bombs" were used on a foreign terrain in the Middle East, "smart drugs" were designed at the home front. Therefore it is easy for Nancy Armstrong, among others, to interrelate the discursive tactics within these three overlapping fields, household cleaning, drugs, and war:

The coalition forces do not attack civilians but perform "surgical bombing" with "smart bombs" that can "take out" specified military objectives. We are being asked, in effect, to think of our military aggression as an act of purification: it cuts out the source of pollution as if it were a tumor, takes it out like trash. [...] The transformation posed no more of a contradiction than exists between such cleaning products as "Mr. Clean" or "Ajax," also known as "the white Tornado." For the fantasy that organized the Gulf War is the same one that organized the war on drugs and Foucault's [panoptic] city - a fantasy of ruthless sanitation in which everything is destroyed that cannot be contained within private

households (Armstrong 1994, 29).

Drugs like Prozac either attempt to refresh a slow biochemical production going on in the brain or to slow down a too active one. Prozac shoots the chemistry directly into the neurotransmitter. Its benefit is that, as a rationally designed drug, it will have no bad side-effects.

What does this mean more generally: must one understand personal identity just as a certain amount of chemicals and thus, in every way, as manipulable? And the ethical questions? Do not the darker sides of the human mind also belong in an essential way to what humanity is all about? Does not Prozac destroy a large part of these qualities and feelings: an ability to feel anxiety, guilt, shame and sorrow? What kind of artworks might be the ones produced by artists under continuous Prozac-euphoria? After this, can we forget Heidegger, Sartre and others as undoubtedly old-fashioned philosophers of an angst that no longer exists? How is it possible to clearly distinguish the good qualities from the bad ones, and can we agree about them?

The problem posed by Prozac may not be in its pharmacological side effects or in its being just another cosmetic device (a kind of bleach for the brain). What if it radically impoverishes the image of personal identity by polishing, cleaning and ironing out imperfections:

The more we see our human identity in terms of a complex mix of chemicals, the less we may be capable of appreciating our identity as whole persons - including the entire story of our relationships and experience. The more we believe that we are basically a mix of chemical substances, the less we can respect the autonomy, the dignity and the individuality of both ourselves and others as moral agents (Cornwell 1994, 76).

Is the result a kind of "biochemical democracy" which makes it possible for everybody to become effective, courageous, energetic, smiling, self-confident, sharp witted, attractive, fun loving and wanted? And if so, who cares about the "side effects?"

These questions rely on an assumption according to which "human nature" is somehow fundamentally linked to a person's (mental and emotional) weaknesses: abilities to be apathetic, anxious, depressed, nervous, hysterical, etc. In other words, humanity's strength paradoxically would be in its weaknesses! This kind of scheme pops up constantly in discourses concerning the dangers and risks of soft and/or hard technology. Yet, more than a chaotic "frontier of humanity," an artificially produced body- mind combination is an



"Buffalo Bill's" desire to transform into a woman in The Silence of Lambs.

expression of the limited ethical capability of men and women to think about otherness without dualistic oppositions. Humanity does not lurk in the weaknesses of the mind (or body) but openly shows up in an ability to tolerate difference, otherness and change:

The crucial location for ethical contemplation is in the attitude toward rather than in the ontological status of the technological object: not to ask what is the "true" nature of the cyborg or robot, but to ask about the source and function of that attitude toward it (Rayner 1994, 135).

The cultural and discursive contradictions between *artificial* and *natural* have been discussed by Jacques Derrida in the context of drugs and addiction (Derrida 1993; Viano 1994). According to Derrida the public discourses about intoxicating substances and dependency are largely based on several "impossible" opposites of which the natural versus artificial is probably the most common. In relation to drugs this opposition shows up in two distinct ways of thinking: on one hand everything drug related is thought of as artificial (and therefore bad). On the

other hand, the basic aspect of drugs (especially among those who speak for the "soft" drugs) is seen in the "natural" quality of certain drugs (such as hallucinogenic mushrooms). Typically neither of these viewpoints are fully intolerable or acceptable. The first one sees the addicted body as a damned and lost object; the second one sees it as a channel to an ideal state of being. For the fundamentalist this body is a threat against all kinds of social responsibilities and attachments which are seen as being necessary for the "natural" existence of the body. In the name of the naturalism of this organic and original body there is a war against drugs, or artificial alien invaders. Correspondingly for the user, those same invaders are liberation fighters who make it possible for the ideal and full body to become real. This artificially enhanced body can be called the prosthetic body. A long time before the electronic symbioses of the "humanchine" living in terminal culture there already existed a technology of the human, i.e. chemical prostheses. In this sense, as prostheses, drugs and technology belong to the same corporeal continuum. In our own time they become

exceptional because of the possibility of serial mass-production which maintains the continuous growth of consumption. A sound mind in a clean body can therefore be inside and outside an artificial construction built by chemical substances, drugs of the mind and skin.

Neither the allowing nor the denying attitude does, according to Derrida, take into account "the technological prerequisite;" that there is no such thing as a natural and original body. Technology has not arrived from somewhere outside, or as an invader, alien, parasite or even prosthesis. In one way or another it was always already there; the body was prosthetic already at its birth. In discourses emphasizing originality and natural essence one always should ask, what are those discourses trying to hide or leave out by using those particular underscorings. A typical example is sports: most people do agree that an athlete should concentrate on developing his or her body "naturally" without artificially produced chemical substances such as anabolic steroids. Yet, it is only "natural" that a professional athlete develops his or her body for maximal achievements, and if these achievements are more maximal with rather than without "doping" then it is again only "natural" that athletes use drugs.

Drugs embody questions of freedom and dependency, natural and artificial, original and constructed. Similarly they lead one to ask what does it mean to consume something? This reflects the whole problematic back to the body in linking addiction to repetition: such is the form of recurrent violent behavior in the midst of our technological machine-culture. Repetition and addiction are also concerned closely with the modes of production and re- production that determine the construction of machine-culture itself. The embodiment of these modes is the thematic protagonist of *The Silence of the Lambs*; the serial killer, whose metamorphoses one can study also in both *Natural Born Killers* and *An Interview with the Vampire*.

As a concept and content of audiovisual representations serial killing includes a constant inner battle between repetition and representation: it involves repeating a certain violent and lethal action in order to achieve the correct and satisfying representation (i.e. fulfillment) of the traumatic fantasy. Reality-fantasy has been turned upside down: fantasy offers the script which the serial killer attempts to make real in the mode of his actions in reality. These actions are, as it were, "filming" the pre-

existing script (of the fantasy). In this way, serial murder is connected to more general modes of consumer behaviour (serialising, collecting, computing) and fetishism (collecting objects such as dead bodies). Serial killing and consumerism are, according to Mark Seltzer, the stereotypical modes of obsessive-compulsive behavior in the 20th century (Seltzer 1992; Seltzer 1993).

The "subject" of the serial killer is constructed in such a way that the process of identification has taken the position of identity, i.e. the dependence on representations is caused by the contaminating relationship between the subject and imitation, simulation, identification. In this series desires and passions produce identification, which then supposedly will produce the subject. A compulsion to recreate that relationship, i.e. repetition, shows up in the need to guarantee, realize and reproduce all over again that experience of identification (and thus, the "identity"). The logic of the subject is its becoming real in the process of identification, the production of identity through the transformation of desires.

In this sense, the body is not a natural being but rather a kind of relay between technology and nature. Machine culture does not propose a contradiction between man and machine but rather an intimate integration. Its erotics is in its ability to seduce the body. Cultural change towards an industrial, urban, technological and modern world basically meant an attempt to make the inhuman intimate. The naturalist stories (the basic question of which is Hannibal Lecter's quote from Marcus Aurelius: "What is it in its nature?") describe the ways in which the body experiences this intimacy of the inhuman; how the body reacts to this experience. Whereas the stories connected to industrial machine culture used to be about making the mechanic human (bodily), and the human (bodily) animal, the stories of terminal culture are about making the mechanic animal (bodily) and the human (bodily) mechanic. These two body-stories/story-bodies, we meet in *The Silence of the Lambs*: Hannibal "the Cannibal" and "Buffalo Bill." More than two bodies they are actually two sides of one body, and this body is not only a fictional fantasy but also an historical and cultural product. Its birth and creation is possible to date to the days of the King of Huns as well as to those of William Cody. One of the most recent incarnations of this imaged "skin" desired by "male machines" is cyberspace: "To become the cyborg, to put on the seductive and dangerous cybernetic space like a

garment, is to put on the female” (Stone 1991, 109). Though, more than just putting on the female, the cybernetic garment refers to an attempt to get rid of the signs of age.

The prehistory of the future

One of the non-fiction best-sellers in the USA during the past two years has been Deepak Chopra’s book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* (1993). In this symbiosis of “Western tech” and “Eastern thought” Chopra argues that aging is fundamentally a psycho-social question and can be largely controlled by increasing the levels of awareness with which people relate to their own physical selves. At one point Chopra even equates aging with addiction:

[—] our hidden programming robs us of choice more and more, making it harder to break the bounds of self-destructive behavior. In this regard aging is much like addiction: The person feels that he is still in control when in fact the behavior is controlling him (Chopra 1993, 91-92).

With this “programming” Chopra is referring to the ways in which we have learned to become old - even though we would not have to; aging has become a habit and a dependency. Chopra’s best-seller offers various ideas and techniques to try to get rid of this “bad habit” and to get a stronger mental grip on the inevitable bodily change.

Chopra’s book is symptomatic of our technological environment in many ways. First, of course, because it is a best-seller it embodies the immense interest in questions of aging and the body, and for sure, it is not alone on the bookshelves at bookstores which have started to label AGING as a distinct catalog and marketing category. Secondly, it relates the body and mind question to time which, in the end, is one of the key notions in the entire book. This dimension also includes the practical, well-selling guide-book characteristic: how to cope with time and how to fight entropy in your body? In this sense the message is clear: even though your body cannot be saved from death you, nevertheless, can and should live a life in thinking that you are immortal. Combining ideas from Western medicine and Eastern philosophy Chopra then proves that actually we are - in body, soul and spirit - in many ways immortal beings.

Soon after the publication of his book doctor

Chopra was interviewed by the *San Diego Magazine* - largely because the clinic he works at (The Center for Mind/Body Medicine) is in San Diego. In the interview Chopra repeats one of his basic arguments: “We are not human beings that have occasional spiritual experiences, we are spiritual beings that have occasional human experiences” (Owens 1993, 112). Chopra’s message finds fertile soil on the West Coast. Yet, the way in which the interview is laid out in the *San Diego Magazine* represents just another version of the old “reality strikes back” - phenomenon: as sprinkled around the interview (and an other adjacent article entitled “Growing Old - Alone?”) the reader finds a dozen advertisements for several plastic surgery clinics. Chopra’s ageless-timeless mantras get a whole new meaning when enframed by slogans such as “It doesn’t hurt to look good again;” “The body you’ve always dreamed of...easier than you’ve ever imagined;” “Aging gracefully has never been easier;” and so forth. And these mantras are not preaching TM, yoga, fresh vegetables, regular visits to the gym or various relaxation techniques but for “glycolic rejuvenation” and “tumescant liposculpture,” i.e. for “cosmetic, plastic, and reconstructive surgery.” Deepak Chopra quite correctly suggests that in order to fight corporeal entropy we should operate on all fronts (especially mental ones), whereas these advertisements say that the fastest most visible way to erase the signs of time from the body is through surgery.

The next radical step in the development of the body’s prosthetics and metamorphoses is already at hand - at least in nanotechnology theory. This can mean microelectronic circuits which melt, grow, and move in organic substances such as molecular tissue or, even more correctly, it means machines built up atom by atom by “assemblers,” i.e. other molecular machines. Practically, nanotechnology may mean that biochemical “smart drugs” can be replaced by tiny microchips or molecular gears installed directly into the nervous system: “It is a kind of molecular Lego-set with which it is possible to build new entities and to reconstruct the biochemical components of the life itself” (Mondo 2000, 27).

Even though nanotechnology is not a new field its appeal is still as fresh as ever. The first visions of “the bottom” were presented by scientist Richard Feynman in a speech in 1959 (Feynman 1959). These ideas were further developed by K. Eric Drexler most notably in his seminal book



Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*

Engines of Creation (1986). In this perspective nanotechnology for example means; engineering the protein molecules (amino acids) in such ways that building organic machines becomes possible. These machines then could assemble practically anything one wanted from a given set of molecules. Hence, in nano-utopia there would be no poverty, hunger, disease - or age:

Aging, likewise, was a case of molecular loss and misplacement, a condition that could be "cured" by putting the right molecules in the right places. With fleets of tiny programmed robots streaming through your body and blood, all kinds of cellular repairs would be possible (Regis 1995, 6).

Compared to nanotech body building, plastic surgery or even the various "smart boosters" of mind and memory seem helplessly outmoded, old-fashioned, slow and above all, weak attempts to influence on the body's overlapping surfaces. Microelectronics and molecular engineering make it possible to quickly penetrate into the roots of life, molecules and atoms. When these technological enterprises become more accessible, such ethical and moral questions that have been vital for conceptualizing human nature and its artificial linkages so far, must be totally re-valued. This area has mostly been touched

upon by a certain kind of science fiction (c.f. William Gibson) and such anti-utopian visions as David Cronenberg's film *Videodrome* (1983) or Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1982). Following the perspectives of these films, one might actually think of humanity, squeezed in-between the organic and the technological, as nothing but a story with mythical bonds to the past and science-fictional projections to the future. Perhaps the only function of the story's (whether utopian or dystopian) content is to create contemporary restlessness filled with unfathomable hopes and fears. And the resulting friction shows up in the body, in its images, signs and convulsions.

In the nanotechnological scenario the role given to metaphysics is extremely lame and alarmingly positive: "A future of peace, plenty, and enlightenment could be dimly glimpsed through the nanotech mist" (Regis 1995, 126). Whenever the risks and dangers of nanotechnological changes are touched upon, even at those points the rhetorics maintains a gaming attitude. This can be seen, for example, in the obtuse idea according to which the molecular manipulators running out of control may "turn the world into a pile of 'gray goo'" (Regis 1995, 121).

In the nano-reality of the future the body's panic is but a distantly hazy memory from a time when chance, that elementary characteristic of life, still had an important role for the bodies. When the structure and function of the molecules becomes programmed by nanotechnological prostheses, even death is no longer a sacrifice but just a simple movement: a switch from ON to OFF. The disturbing ease of this snap already rings in our bodies as an unsettling echo. No wonder, then, that "the flesh is very restless tonight."

Another perspective to questions of age, death, and mortality is proposed by Jacques Derrida in his *The Gift of Death* (1995). For Derrida (and Jan Patocka whose ideas he repeats) technological civilization both neutralizes by encouraging indifference and boredom, and allows the return of the demonic (Derrida 1995, 35). By encouraging demonic irresponsibility it also "neutralizes the mysterious or irreplaceable uniqueness of the responsible self;" this technological "misunderstanding is an individualism relating to a role and not a person" (Derrida 1995, 36).

After bio- and gene-technological "break-throughs" playing with proteins seems perfectly possible and probable, - to what extent though is another question. In accomplishing the ancient alchemist dream the engineer of nanotechnology gives a certain role to every single atom. At the same time he, on another level, robs the same atom of the life that it had by itself. Promises of virtual immortality are also always terminal sentences of death, that is, murdering Death itself:

Death is very much that which nobody else can undergo or confront in my place. My irreplaceability is therefore conferred, delivered, "given," one can say, by death. [—] It is from the side of death as the place of my irreplaceability, that is, of my singularity, that I feel called to responsibility. In this sense only a mortal can be responsible (Derrida 1995, 41).

A nanotechnological future has been seen as being materially blessed and blissful but otherwise neutral, unpersonal, and as boring as a Sunday afternoon in the American suburbs (Regis 1995, 308). Is it not the same environment where the Cleanliness Institute found the mothers and their children; where "Buffalo Bill" lived his quiet everyday life; where the consumers of Prozac and liposuction eat and the readers of Deepak Chopra try to stay young and beautiful? I am not sure if it has already happened; maybe

that is where we all already live...

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