Canadian Journal of
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
THEORY

BODY DIGEST

Fashion, Skin & Technology

body invaders
body talk
body shops
body theory

"... an executive by day,
a rock star by night."
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BODY DIGEST

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BODY THEORY

CULTURAL STUDIES: NEW THEORY AND PRACTICE

BODY DIGEST
THESES ON THE DISAPPEARING BODY IN THE HYPER-MODERN CONDITION

Thesis 1. Body Aesthetics for the End of the World

If, today, there can be such an intense fascination with the fate of the body, might this not be because the body no longer exists? For we live under the dark sign of Foucault's prophecy that the bourgeois body is a descent into the empty site of a dissociated ego, a "volume in disintegration", traced by language, lacerated by ideology, and invaded by the relational circuitry of the field of postmodern power. And if there is now an insistent demand for the recovery of "subjectivity", this would indicate that hyper-subjectivity has because *the* condition of possibility for the operation of power at the fin-de-millenium. An ultra subjectivity for an entire society in ruins living on the excess energies of (its own) "borrowed power", becomes

No. 42 Study for *Temple Project,* 1980,New York, Francesca Woodman

interesting only because it is so deeply parasitical of a culture, whose key technological feature is, as Michael Weinstein claims, that *the mind is on its way to being exteriorized again*. The struggle for the happy return of subjectivity would then be complicit with the deepest grammar of power in the postmodern condition, and, for a culture living under the sign of Bataille's general economy of excess, the body to excess would be its perfect analogue.

Everywhere today the aestheticization of the body and its dissolution into a semiurgy of floating body parts reveals that *we* are being processed through a media scene consisting of our own (exteriorized) body organs in the form of second-order simulacra. And subordinations of the body to the apparatus of (dead) power are multiple. *Ideologically*, the body is inscribed by the mutating signs of the fashion industry as skin itself is transformed into a screen-effect for a last, decadent and desperate, search for desire after desire. *Epistemologically*, the body is at the center of a grisly and false sense of subjectivity, as knowledge of the body (what Californians like to call "heightened body consciousness") is made a basic condition of possibility for the operation of postmodern power: the "cynical body" for a culture of cynical power. *Semiotically*, the body is tattooed, a floating sign, processed through the double imperatives of the cultural politics of advanced capitalism: the *exteriorization* of all the body organs as the key telemetry of a system that depends on the *outering* of the body functions (computers as the externalization of memory; *in vitro* fertilization as the alienation of the womb; Sony Walkmans as ablated ears; computer generated imagery as *virtual perspective* of the hyper-modern kind; body scanners as the intensive care unit of the exteriorization of the central nervous system); and the *interiorization* of ersatz subjectivity as a prepackaged ideological receptor for the pulsations of the desiring-machine of the fashion scene. *Technologically*, the body is subordinated to the twofold hypothesis of hyper-functionality and ultra refuse: never has the body (as a floating sign-system at the intersection of the conflation of power and life) been so necessary for the teleonomic functioning of the system; and yet never has the body (as a prime failure from the perspective of a technological society that has solved the problem of mortality in the form of technique as species-being) been so superfluous to the operation of advanced capitalist culture. 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. Ironically, though, just when the body has been transformed in practice into the missing matter of technological society, it is finally free to be emancipated as the rhetorical centre of the lost subject of desire after

desire: the *body as metaphor* for a culture where power itself is always only fictional.

Indeed, why the concern over the body today if not to emphasize the fact that the (natural) body in the postmodern condition has *already* disappeared, and what we experience as the body is only a fantastic simulacra of body rhetorics? An *economic* rhetoric that would target the body as a privileged site for the acquisition of private property, and invests the consuming body with ideologies of desire (the "possessive individual"), a politico-juridical theory of rights (contractual liberalism), and even a media world (the abstract electrobody of the advertising scene). A *political* rhetoric that would constitute anew the public body in the form of "public opinion" as an elite substitution for the missing matter of the social, and massages, manipulates, and mediates public opinion at will, feeding it back to the political body in a dadaesque stream of message-response discharges. A *psychoanalytical* rhetoric that would desperately require the recovery of the subject as the site of the big reality-sign of the "unconscious", and recuperates the language of sexual desire and transgression as a way of marking the body with a whole language of sublimation, projection, and censorship, even tracing divisions between the body of pre-history (the *somatic* experience of the pre-oedipalized phase of childhood experience) and the body of post-history (the symbolically saturated world of *thetic* experience). A *scientific* rhetoric that would speak now of the existence of the teleonomic body at the intersection of genetic biology, structural linguistics, and cybernetics. And even a *sports* rhetoric that would celebrate the commodification to excess in publicity culture of particular body parts: 'arms' (pitchers); 'feet' (soccer); 'shots' (hockey); and 'jumps' (basketball).

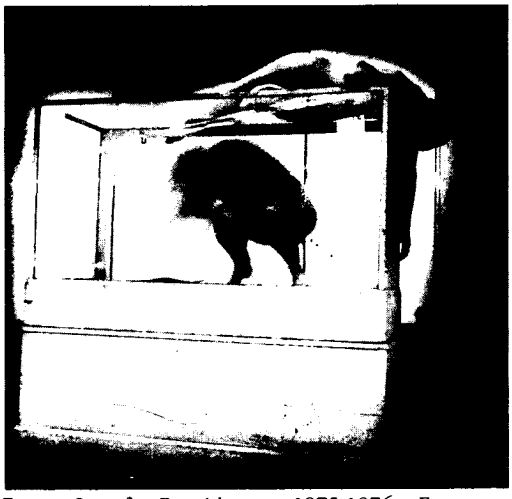
But if there is such a proliferation of body rhetorics, might not this, too, mean that, like sex before it, the body has now undergone a twofold death: the death of the *natural* body (with the birth of the languages of the social and, before them, the Foucauldian verdict of the "soul as the prison of the body"); and the death of the *discursive* body (with the disappearance of the body into Bataille's general economy of excess)? This would mean that we have entered the scene of panic bodies for the fin-de-millenium. Panic bodies living on (their own) borrowed power; violent, and alternating, scenes of surplus energy and perfect inertness; existing psychologically on the edge of fantasy and psychosis; floating sign-systems of the body reexperienced in the form of its own second-order simulacra; a combinatorial of *hyper-exteriorization* (of body organs) and *hyper-interiorization* (of designer subjectivities); and incited less by the languages of accumulation than fascinating, because catastrophic, signs of self-exterminism, self-liquidation, and

self-cancellation. Panic bodies: an inscribed surface onto which are projected all the grisly symptoms of culture burnout as the high five-sign of the late 1980s. This is why, perhaps, the perfume industry (those advance outriders of hyper-modern theory) are manufacturing a new scent — *poison* — for the olfactory pleasures of panic bodies; and why, if there can be now such widespread concern about viruses, this is symptomatic of a broader public panic about dead power as a body invader — the projection of evil within in the form of viruses as postmodern plagues.

Thesis 2. Blurred Images of Panic Bodies Moving to Escape Velocity at Warp Speeds

Smudged Images

Francesca Woodman's *Space* sequence is an exact photographic description of the exteriorization of the body in the hyper-modern condition. In the same way that the Irish painter Francis Bacon said that it is only by "smudging the image" that we can begin to capture the (disappearing) essence of the real today, Woodman's *Space* photography is a perfect dialetics of the blurred image. The image of the woman inside the case whirls in a dancer's pose as if to reflect that it is her imprisonment in this zone of surveillance (the glass case is the *reverse image* of Foucault's panoptic gaze) that gives her a certain magnetic, almost celestial, presence. But then perhaps we are all prisoners now of a panoptic power in negative image, and the blurring of the image of the dancing figure indicates exactly that limit placed on our freedom where the aestheticization of the body begins. Unless it is the opposite? Not the limit as the division *en abyme* between surveillance and emancipation but, as Foucault hinted in "A Preface to Transgression", the limit experience which only works to confirm the impossibility of transgression?



From *Space*[2], Providence, 1975-1976, Francesca Woodman

And so the woman framing the case is a *trompe-l'oeil*, distracting our gaze from the absence in the *Space* sequence of any border between inside and outside, between the limit and transgression. What we have in *Space* is not, as Rosalind Krauss has claimed in her interpretation of this work, an illustration of the "edge" in architectural practice, but the reverse. *Space* is the site of an endless body slide: an indeterminate optical refraction between the image of the reclining woman and that of the dancing woman, between the aesthetics of the "inert" and energy to excess, between the limit and transgression. What is this then, if not another meditation on immobility and frenzy as the key aesthetic moments of the hyper-modern condition: a violent and hallucinogenic scene of the unbound sign of the aesthetic operator flashing across the simulacrum like the trace of the "virtual particle" before it? Woodman's *Space* sequence is a photographic practice *in situ* of the body living between fantasy and psychosis, and of the disappearance of the border in the visual architecture of today's (mediated) bodily practices.

It is the very same with Woodman's study for *Temple Project* which is an evocative lament for the body as a metaphor for the ruins within and without. Here, the body undergoes instant metamorphosis into the ruined columns of classical antiquity — the body actually becomes the site of classical ruins — because, in western culture, it never existed anyway. It was always the empty scene for the play of aestheticized power: sometimes a "perspectival appearance" (Nietzsche); sometimes a "language trace" (Derrida); sometimes a disappearing sign of the "hyperreal" (Eco); sometimes an optical "after-image" (Levin); and sometimes only a "solar anus" (Bataille). *Temple Project* is so wonderfully parodic of the modernist representation of power because it is about panic bodies that are always aestheticized when most abstract, and exhibit all the pathological symptoms of a culture to excess when they are inscribed within their own (image) simulacra.

And, of course, *Temple Project*, like the *Space* sequence before it, is gender specific. It is about women's bodies as the negative image of the ruins within the postmodern scene. Because now as ever, the play of power within and against the text of women's bodies is an early warning sign of a grisly power field that speaks the language of body invaders. As privileged objects of a domination that takes as its focus the inscription of the text of the body, women have always known the meaning of a relational power that works in the language of body invaders. This is not, though, the wager of an old patriarchal power that announces itself in the transcendent and externalized language of hierarchy, univocity, and logocentricity, but a power field that can be multiple, pleasurable, and, indeed, fully embodied. Woodman's photographs are a scream that begins with the terrible knowledge women's bodies have always been

postmodern because they have always been targets of a power which, inscribing the text of the flesh, seeks to make of feminine identity something interpellated by ideology, constituted by language, and the site of a "dissociated ego". Thus, if Woodman's photographic practice is prophetic of the fact that, when power speaks in the language of a body invader, then the ruins within are also made complicit with the end of the emancipatory project, this may issue from her insight that women's bodies have always been forced to dwell in the dark infinity of the limit and transgression as serial signs: exchangeable and reversible poles in a power field that can be hyper-subjective because it is also hyper-simulational. Women's bodies are an inscribed text, this time in skin, not philosophy, a preface to (the impossibility of) transgression.

"Once the human body leaves this planet..."

So what is it to be then? Carol Wainio's brilliant artistic vision of the simulational body of the late twentieth-century (*Untitled/Sound*) where the body actually disintegrates as it moves at warp speeds across the mediascape, and sound too (most of all?) is experienced as a relational power-field? Or not the body as an aesthetic operator traversed by the sound waves and frenetic imaging-systems of the mediascape (where the body is still contained by technology), but the body as its own simulacrum?

Untitled(Sound) 1986 Carol Wainio. Photo: R.Max Tremblay, S.L. Simpson Gallery

Recently *High Performance*, a Los Angeles art magazine, published an important interview with Stelarc — a body artist from Australia and latterly Japan — who evidently follows Nietzsche in thinking of the body as a "dancing star."[1] Moving one step ahead of medical technology in using medical instruments to film the insides of his own body, Stelarc observed that in amplifying the sounds of his body — blood flows, muscles, heartbeats — he made of his own interiority an "acoustical landscape." Stelarc actually makes his body its own simulacrum: an

acoustical scene; a "musical situation" (*Deca-Dance: Event for Three Hands*); a "primal image of floating in 0-G" (*Sitting/Swaying: Event for Rock Suspension*); and evolutionary detritus (*The Body Obsolete*). For Stelarc, like Nietzsche before him, the body may be a bridge over the abyss, but where Nietzsche, the last and best of all the modernists, turned back to a tragic meditation on the death of God, Stelarc makes of his own body its own horizon of sometimes repulsive, sometimes fascinating, possibilities. He actually makes of his body an experiment in thinking through the endless sign-slide between torture/pleasure (*Event for Obsolete Body*), sensuality/exterminism ("What people saw was the internal structure of my body on a video screen as well as the sealed external body"); and skin/deskinning technologies ("new bodies" for people who manage to escape the 1-G gravitational field of planet One.)

STELARC'S THE BODY OBSOLETE*

The imagery of the suspended body is really a beautiful image of the Obsolete body. The body is plugged into a gravitational field, suspended yet not escaped from it.

My body was suspended by hooks with ropes from an 18-foot diamond inflated balloon. My body sounds were transmitted to the ground and amplified by speakers. I got sick — turned purple — the body sounds changed dramatically.

Sitting/Swaying — Event for Rock Suspension, Photo by Kenji Nozawa, Tamara Gallery, Tokyo

* All quotations are taken from *High Performance,* "The Body Obsolete", with Paul McCarthy interviewing Stelarc, Volume 6, Number 4, 1983, pp.14-19.

THE BODY AS SIMULACRUM

In our past evolution, the body has been molded in a 1-G gravitational field. The notion of designing the body for new environments fascinates me. Is it possible to create a thing to transcend the environment? Unplugging the body from this planet... Over four-million years, the body developed a response against viruses, foreign bodies, etc. But technology is just a couple of hundred years old. The first phase of technology contained the body whereas now miniaturized tech can be implanted into the body. If the tech is small the body acts as if it were not there. It becomes a component. Once the human body leaves this planet we have an excuse to invent a new body — more expanded and variable.

Handswriting, Stelarc, Maxi Gallery, Tokyo. Photo by Akihiro Okada, *High Performance,* Issue 24/1983.

Thesis 3. *Ultra Oedipus:* The Psychoanalytics of the Popular Viruses of (our) Bourgeoisie

In the late 1980s, we are beyond Deleuze and Guattari's theses in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* that power in the post-modern condition (the "body without organs") operates by transforming the body into a screen for all the pulsating signs of the fashion scene, by conflating power and seduction, and by dehistoricizing and delocalizing the body until it merges with all the relays and networks of the desiring machine of the *socius*.

Today it's this and more. Never has power been so deeply subjective and localized as the body is now recycled in the language of medieval mythology. In medieval times, extreme anxiety about the public situation was typically projected in the sign-language of sin onto the body as the enemy within. Indeed, as Umberto Eco hints in *Travels in Hyperreality*, the medieval scene was marked by a whole litany of cardinal sins for an apocalyptic age in which the body was made the truth-sayer of the ruins without. Now, as late twentieth-century experience comes under the big sign of the medievalization of politics, we witness an almost daily series

of media hystericisations of the body:[2] Coke (the seeming addiction of the whole middle class in a media-defined drug frenzy); AIDS (panic fear about sexually transmitted diseases); a nation of "drunk drivers"; and even "missing kids" (who make even milk bottles a metaphor for a spreading panic fear about the "missing family" of traditional American mythology).

In a key political essay, "Anxiety and Utopia"[3], Franz Neumann argued that neo-fascism American-style would be marked by a twofold psychological movement: the *externalization* of private stress in the form of the projection of residual anxieties about the missing ego of the bourgeois self onto the "enemy without" (scapegoating of the weak by the politically powerful is the keynote of the contemporary politics of ressentiment); and the desperate search for *authoritarian political leadership* which would offer (at least) the media illusion of a coherent political community.

No longer under the sign of the political economy of accumulation but in the Bataillian scene of the general economy of excess, the psychological dissolution of the bourgeois ego follows exactly the *reverse* course to that theorised by Neumann: no longer the projection of the existential crisis (the missing matter of the old bourgeois ego) onto the enemy without, but the *introjection* of the public crisis (the death of the social and the self-liquidating tendencies of the economy of excess) onto the "enemy within." A whole contagion of panic mythologies (AIDS, anorexia, bulimia, herpes) about disease, panic viruses, and panic addictions (from drugs to alcohol) for a declining culture where the body is revived, and given one last burst of hyper-subjectivity, as the inscribed text for all the stress and crisis-symptoms of the death of the social.

Everyone benefits from this ressurrection of the "medieval body" positioned as a passive screen for all the hystericizations and panic mythologies of the (disappearing) public realm. When the scene of general cultural collapse is shifted onto the terrain of subjectivity, the political results are predictable. The return of an authoritarian regime in labour relations and the disciplinary state are legitimated anew as political elites (responding to programmed public moods in the form of opinion polls) and economic elites (the valorized leaders of late modernity) shift the crisis without onto the previously private terrain of the body. Images of the sinful body, then, for a political scene where the elites get exactly what they want: the media monopolize the rhetoric for the just-nominated addiction of the week; political elites inscribe the body with the disciplinary agenda of the conservative mood (mandatory drug-testing as a privileged site for focussing on the "enemy within"); economic elites recycle the labouring body of primitive capitalism; and reactionary moral elites (from family therapists to the new fundamentalist

outriders of sexual repression) transform fear and anxiety about panic addictions and panic viruses into repressive political retrenchments: against feminism, against gays and lesbians, and against the young. In the politics of decayed vitality for the twilight time of the twentieth-century, even the missing bodies of (our) Yuppies — the ascendant class-fragment of late capitalism — are happy: the nomination of the body as a crisis-centre fit for the immediate entry of the therapeutic agencies of the state and vulnerable to a moral wash of guilt and repentance is the *trompe-l'oeil* necessary to disguise, and repress, the fact of the "disappearing body" as the fate of late modernity. And the return of hyper-subjectivity is only a certain indication of the presence now of body invaders — from the fashion scene and panic viruses to the proliferating signs of consumer culture — as the language of postmodern power.

Thesis 4. Structural Bodies

> With the end of the *bound* sign, the reign of the emancipated sign begins, in which all classes acquire the power to participate... With the transition of the sign-values of prestige from one class to another, we enter the world of the counterfeit in a stroke, passing from a limited order of signs, where taboos inhibit "free" production, to a proliferation of signs according to demand.
>
> J. Baudrillard, "The Structural Law of Value and the Order of Simulacra"

Good Health without a Body

> Health might be treated as a symbolic circulating medium regulating human action and other life processes... We treat the health complex as strategic in a society with an activistic orientation.
>
> T. Parsons, "Health and Disease"

Talcott Parsons, the bourgeois social theorist, provided a privileged understanding of the hyper-modern body when, at the end of his life, he developed a series of key theorisations about the creation of the "structural" body as the way in which we now reexperience our organs in the form of their second-order simulacra. For Parsons, late modernity is marked by the organization of social experience within the symbolic (genetic) apparatus of the "structural paradigm": Baudrillard's world of the unbound sign. Typified by "instrumental activism" as its central moral code, by "institutionalized individualism" as its theory of (bourgeois) emancipation, and by the *"vis mediatrix"* as its cultural ideal, the structural paradigm is driven onwards by the liquidation of the social, and the exterminism of the "bound sign" in the cultural excess of

a system that has the proliferation of "circulating media of exchange" as its basic cultural apparatus and the language of "nomic necessity" as its grammar of power.

In instrumentalist language that was a perfect mirror-image of the culture of technicisme he sought to describe (and celebrate), Parsons insisted that health no longer has a *natural* existence, but only functions in the purely simulated form of a generalized, symbolic, and circulating medium of exchange. Health is outside the body, reconstituting it as a relational field of power (the "health complex") which the body is compelled to traverse. Stripped of health as a natural referent, the hyper-modern body is regulated by a health complex that imposes a specific *normative* definition of health ("the teleonomic capacity of an individual living system to maintain a favourable, regulated state that is the prerequisite of the effective performance... of functions"); legitimates an ominous politics of illness as "societal disturbance"; embodies a fully *technicist* ideology (the professionalization of medical practice); privileges health as a strategic and materially inscribed method of social control; is invested with a specific "will to truth" (bio-technology as emblematic of Foucault's "power and death over life"); and, finally, subordinates the body to a threefold axis of power: a market-steered pharmaceutics of the body; a culturally inscribed definition of public (and private) health norms; and a politics of health as cultural telemetry.

Parson's world, which is, after all, only the most recent, and eloquent, expression of the advanced liberal theory of the body, is that of "*cynical health*" for a cybernetic culture where the body, disappearing in the interstices of the structural paradigm, reappears in the form of an after-image of the health complex. Like Baudrillard's emancipated sign before it, health has lost its representational capacity. Health in the hyper-modern condition is a complex and proliferating sign-system invested by the language of bio-technology, horizoned by the species-dream of genetic biology, steered by the relentless imperatives of market-accumulation, and coded by a relational power field that speaks only the language of the *teleonomic capacities* of the structural paradigm. The health of the "structural body" does not exist except as a purely relational and symbolic term: the processed world of the health complex (health without bodies) in which we come to know the truth about our (disappearing) bodies. Here, Stelarc's fascinating, yet chilling, vision of the new body which leaves this planet is revealed to be not an instance of futurism, but of history. The scanned body of medical telemetry is both the condition of possibility for and justification of the rhetoric of (teleonomic) life in late modernity.

Intelligence without Minds

> As a generalized symbolic medium of interchange, we conceive intelligence as circulating. It can be acquired by individuals — for example, through learning, and it is spent as a resource which facilitates the solution of cognitively significant problems. It should, however, be clearly distinguished from knowledge. Just as money should be distinguished from concrete commodities.
>
> T. Parsons, *Action Theory and the Human Condition*

It is the very same with intelligence which, in the late twentieth-century, floats free of its organic basis in the mind (which was always a purely discursive concept anyway) and is on its way to being exteriorized. Here, Parsons refuses the humanist vision of the thinking subject (as, perhaps, the ideological fiction of classical liberalism), and speaks instead of the relational, disembodied, and purely cybernetic world of intelligence (the ideological fiction of the MIND in the last days of liberalism). Intelligence is the emancipated sign of knowledge in the hyper-modern condition. Like money before it (the perspectival fiction at the end of the *natural* order of the commodity economy), intelligence can be "contentless" because it is a relational process owned by no one, but that takes possession of the mind-functions of teleonomic society.

Existing at the edge of the death of knowledge and the triumph of the negative image of dataism, intelligence refers to the exteriorization of consciousness in late modernity. Possessing only a purely symbolic value (*prestige*); convertible into the exchange-value of *influence*; emblematic of the victory of *science as the language of power*; and controlled by the leading elites of *technocracy*, the valorization of intelligence is a certain indication that we are living the great paradigm shift prefigured by the exteriorization of mind as the dynamic momentum of technological society.

The exteriorized mind of technocracy is endlessly circulating (the radical semiurgy of data in information society function by tattooing the body). This is the world of panic science where consciousness is metaphorical (intelligence has no value in use, but only value in exchange); where information is regulatory of energy in a new cybernetic order of politics; and where EXTERIORIZED MIND is, itself, only a medium across which the shuttling of techno-bodies in search of a brain function takes place. A world of computer enhanced individualism; or as Parsons would boast in a language which is all the more chilling because so hyper-pragmatic:

> Intelligence is not knowledge but the capacity to mobilize what it

> takes to produce or command knowledge.[4]

An already elegant tombstone, then, for *our* imprisonment in the new world of panic science.

Thesis 5. What About Me? The Body Exteriorized

Why then be sad as the body is unplugged from the planet? What is this if not the more ancient philosophical movement of immanence to transcendence as the body is on its way to being exteriorized again? Behind the popping outwards of the organs lies a power field which is only the darker dream of a bad infinity. With the threnody of screams, there are also sighs of pleasure, as the body is reborn in its technified forms:

Alienated Wombs: the ideological constitution of birth which is marked by the medicalization of the woman's body and the breaking into the body of a whole technological and juridico-discursive apparatus typified by the exteriorization of reproduction in the form of *in vitro* fertilization and technologies of genetic reproduction. In bio-technology at the *fin-de-millenium*, the womb has gone public, alienated from nature, inscribed by eugenics, bonded to public law, and made fully accessible to the exchange-principle. Or, as Mair Verthuy has said about feminism and bio-technology:

> ... We have become a bio-society without even noticing it. Genetic manipulation is a daily event in our universities, in industrial laboratories, military installations. Reproductive technologies are listed on the stock market... Already female foetuses are aborted in greater number than male; femicide is a fact of life in China; work is being carried out to predetermine the sex of the foetus; lactation can be developed in males; artificial placenta exist; it will soon be possible to implant an embryo in any abdomen: male, female; animal, human... Now men can procreate.[5]

Virtual Heads: A story in the *New York Times* illustrates perfectly the obsolescence of the body in the new universe of virtual technology. The United States Air Force had uncovered a critical flaw — the inadequacies of the body reflexes of pilots — in the creation of ultra-sonic jet fighters. According to the aircraft designers, the human body is no longer capable of absorbing, yet alone responding, to the "information environment" of jet fighters moving at hyper-speeds. From the perspective of aerial technology, the human body *is* obsolete and, as Stelarc predicted, what is desperately required is a new body fit for the age of ultra-technologies. In fact, this is just what the designers have created, at least beginning with

the *heads* of fighter-pilots. To compensate for the inability of human vision to match the speed and intensity of the information environment of jet-fighters, designers are planning to equip pilots with virtual heads: special helmets which block out normal ocular vision and, by means of a video screen projected on the inside of the mask, feed the pilot at a slowed-down and selective pace specific, strategic information about his aerial environment: altitude, presence of other aircraft, speed, target range. A system of perspectival vision, therefore, for the advanced outriders of teleonomic society.

Computer Enhanced Individualism: "Escada was the first to bring computers into the design room. Why? To respond to the rise of individualism in today's world. The incredible union of electronics and artistic talent makes possible the creation of more colours than any human eye has ever seen. Moreover, this technology makes the matching of colours — even on differing fabrics, patterns or designs — exact."

Escada Ad., *Vogue*, 1986

"It was as if fashion dreams were bubbling out of the underground..."

Vogue, October 1986

The Capezio Woman[6]

The Capezio ad is also about the body debased, humiliated, and inscribed to excess by all the signs of consumer culture. The woman is prostrate and silent as if to emphasize the reduction of her body to a shoe tree. And, like a manic fantasy which follows from knowing ourselves only through a psychotic simulacra of bodily images (the advertising machine), the woman's body, from her facial expression ("devilishly") to the positioning of her limbs, intimates that subjectivity itself is now colonized. And why the shoes to excess? A twofold hypothesis: the advertisement is hyper-functional from the viewpoint of primitive accumulation (more product per image); and the prostrate body

is all that is left after being inscribed as a background text for shoes: an object of parody, a site of impoverishment, a social remainder. Just because it runs to excess and, indeed, states openly about the humiliation of the body what other ads only suggest, the Capezio woman is a perfect sign of the "structural body" of the 1980s. The Capezio woman is, in fact, the advertising equivalent on the dark side of Francesca Woodman's *Space* sequence.

All the while, though, there is that sigh of lament from the hidden recesses of subjectivity, another (bodily) image of women waiting to be born once again in remembrance of love lost and recovered, another *no* in the "war of the images" against the structural body.

> And so I came home a woman starving
> for images
> to say my hunger is so old
> so fundamental, that all the lost
> crumbled burnt smashed shattered defaced
> overpainted concealed and falsely named
> faces of every past we have searched together
> in all the ages
> could rise reassemble re-collect re-member
> themselves as I recollected myself in that presence
> as every night close to your body
> in the pain of the city, turning
> I am remembered by you, remember you
> even as we are dismembered
> on the cinema screens, the white expensive walls
> of collectors, the newsrags blowing the streets
> —and it would not be enough.
> This is the war of the images.
> We are the thorn-leaf guarding the purple-tongued flower each to each.
>
> Adrienne Rich, *The Images*[7]

Arthur and Marilouise Kroker

Notes

1. "The Body Obsolete", an interview with Stelarc by Paul McCarthy, *High Performance*, Los Angeles: 1983, Volume 6, No. 4, pp. 14-19.

2. I am grateful to Kim Sawchuk, Julia Emberley, and Peter Kulchyski for their helpful comments on the body mythologized. The thesis on *Ultra Oedipus* is an elaboration of the discussion of panic sex and body invaders in *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986; and Montréal: New World Perspectives, 1986.

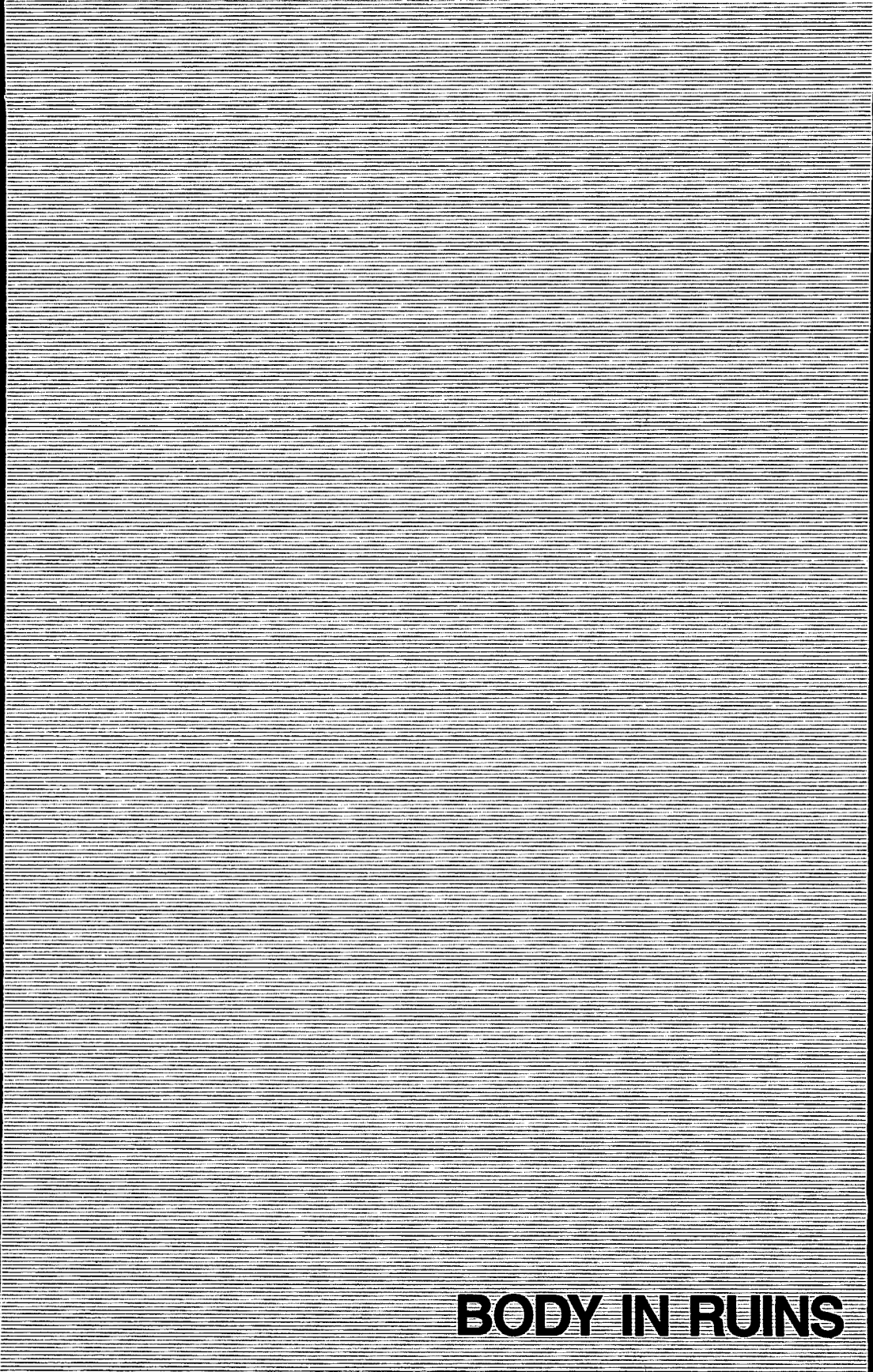
3. Franz Neumann, *The Democratic and Authoritarian State: Essays in Political and Legal Theory*", Glencoe: Free Press, 1957, pp. 270-300.

4. Talcott Parsons, *Action Theory and the Human Condition*, New York: The Free Press, 1978, pp. 137-138.

5. Mair Verthuy, "Is There Life After Specificity?" *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1986, pp.189-191.

6. *The Capezio* ad was produced by Ross and Harasym, photo by Shun Sasbuchio.

7. Adrienne Rich, "The Images", from *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1981.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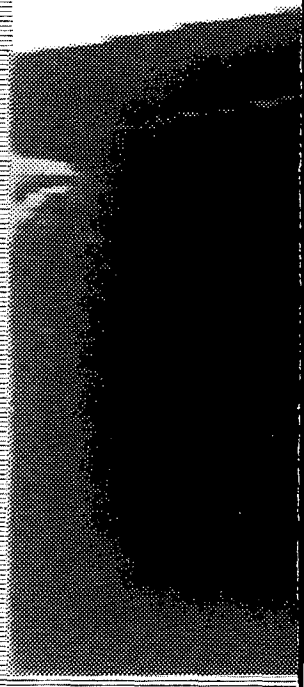

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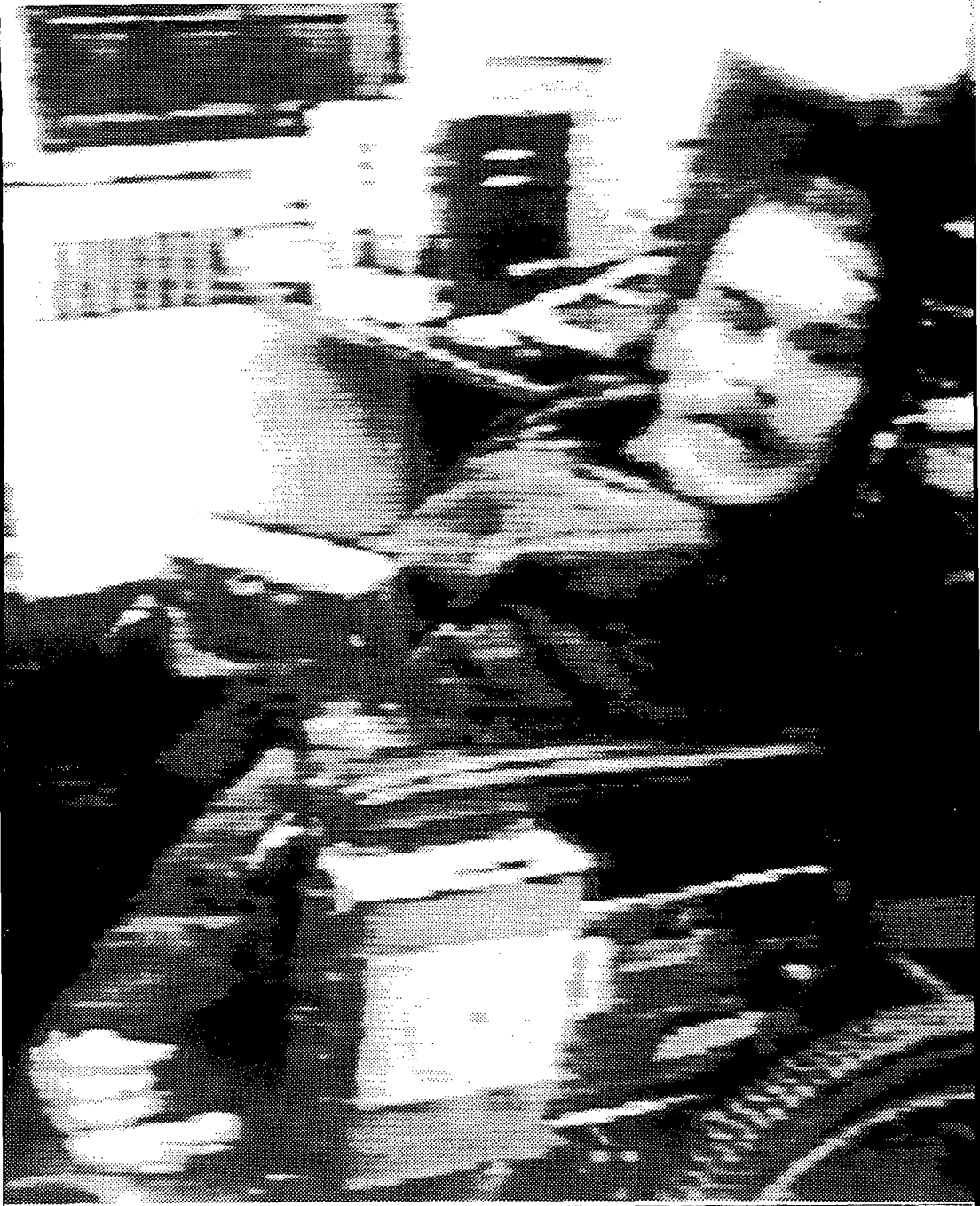

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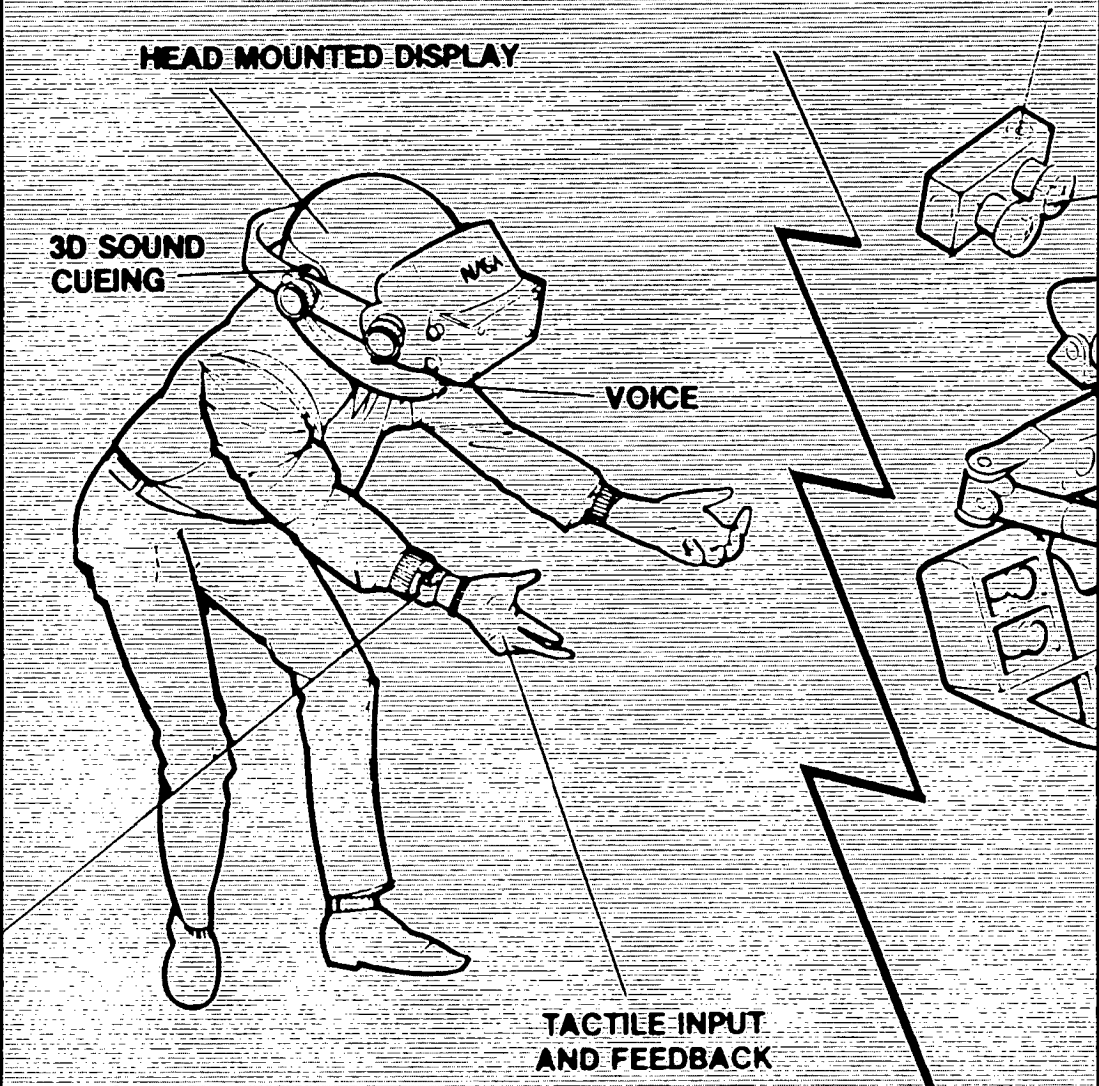

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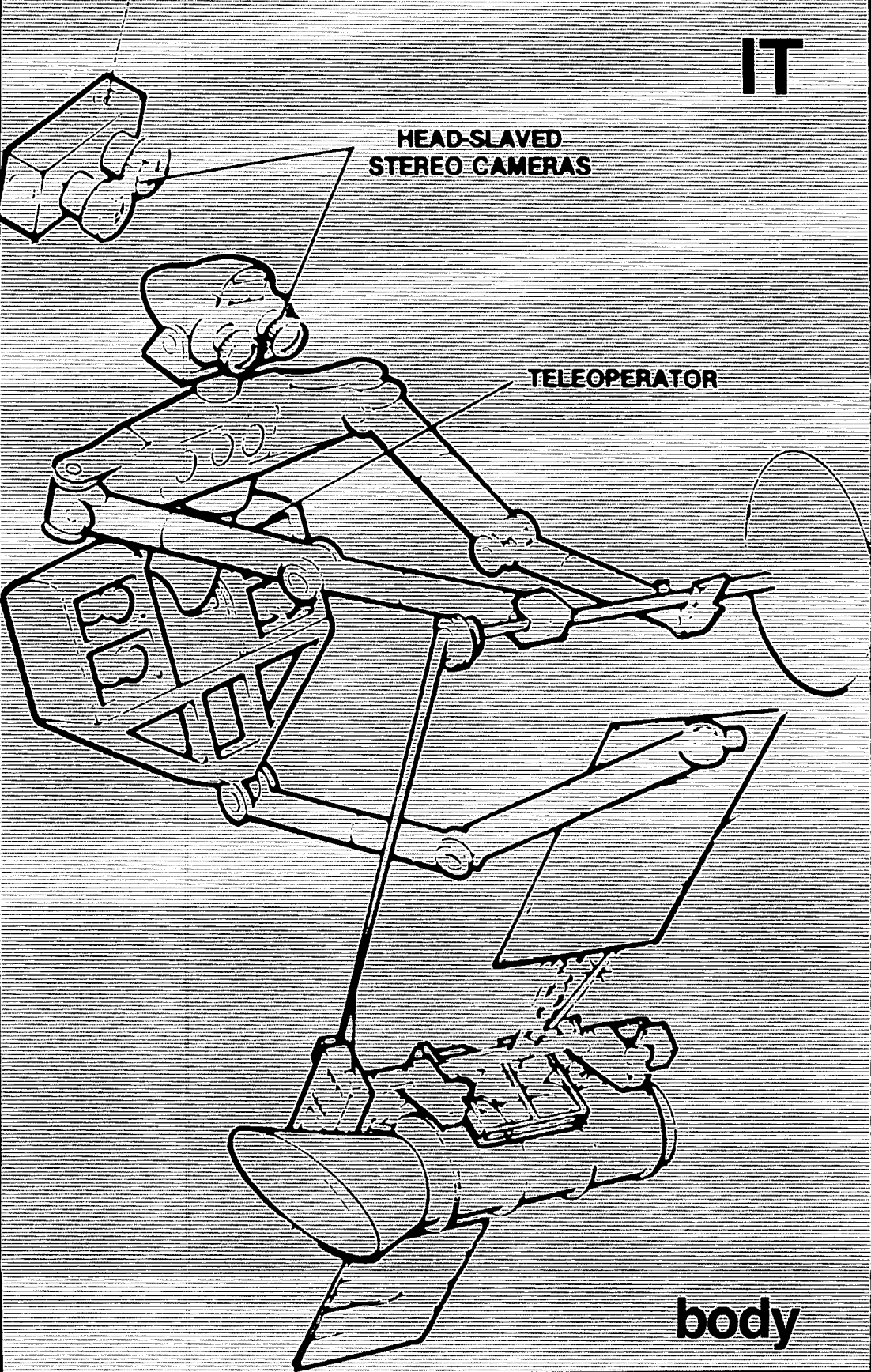

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Acknowledgements

Videotape: "Computer Access for Disabled Individuals", Trace Research and Development Center, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1986.

Fisher S, "Virtual Interface Environment", Ames Research Center, 1986.

Layout help from David Tomas, Anne Delson.
Gordon Morris: computer formating.

CATHERINE RICHARDS

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THE DANCE OF THE SCARECROW BRIDES

Rae Anderson

CROW.BRIDE.: a re-interpretation of a myth

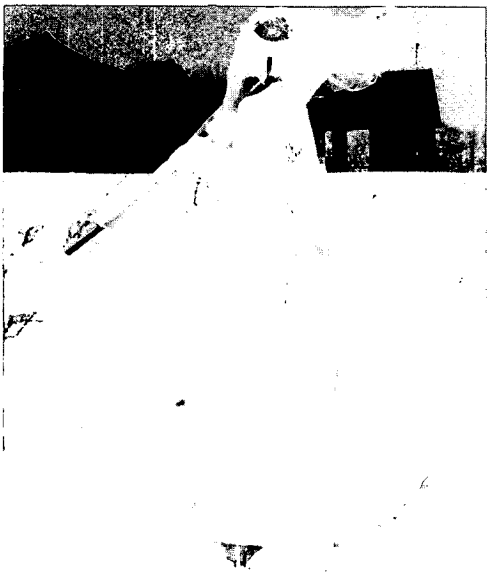
The installation CROW.BRIDE., mounted at the Centennial Gallery, O.akville, Canada, in May 1986, unites my interests in both masks and scarecrows. The installation comprises a circle of nine cruciform figures clothed in bridal gowns and veils; a series of nine masks of "Crow" are set to hang in a slightly wider circle between each bride.

The Dance of the Scarecrow Brides, Rae Anderson. Photo by Rae Anderson.

"The Dance of the Scarecrow Brides" is an outgrowth of a project begun in January of 1982 to experiment with the artform of the scarecrow. I am fascinated by the fact that we take our old clothes, stuff them, and place them out on the land as our representatives and watchdogs. When seen from a distance, they are startlingly human and alive.

I like to fashion objects from materials which may no longer be able to serve their original function. What new life can apparently useless things regain—useless things such as old wedding dresses? Where did all these dresses come from? Who wore these dresses, now yellowed with age? Do these brides not recall the day of your own wedding? Is it not a sacrilege that these gowns ended up in a musty bin in a secondhand shop? Where is your wedding dress? Have you kept it carefully wrapped, hidden away as a sacred vestment to be brought out perhaps for the marriage of your own daughter? Some of these dresses are very old—the brides who once wore them may now be dead. Is this a circle of ghosts—pale reflections of youth, health, and beauty? And yet they seem very alive.

Every bride is beautiful, so the saying goes—and every bride is beautiful because of this mask that she wears. Hours of love and care were lavished upon this lacy whiteness, this veil of seduction which holds out the promise of ripeness and fitness to bear children. Remember the dance of the seven veils. The veil also reminds us of christening clothes; this same veil then encompasses the final of life's ceremonial robes, the shroud.



Scarecrow Bride, Rae Anderson. Photo by Rae Anderson.

I can speak of how much the white circle of brides reminds me of the moon, one of the most female of symbols. There are the barely definable moments of approaching the circle, joining the dance, then daring to enter into the circle's centre. Each stage of participation has a different feeling about it.

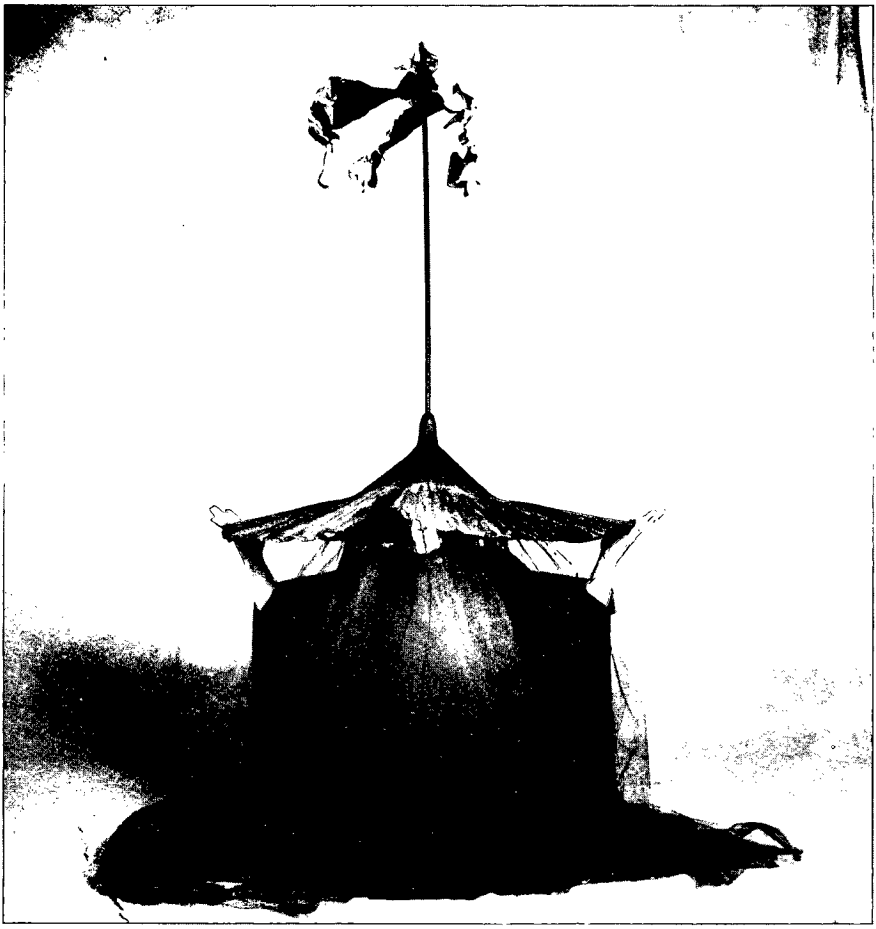
And what of the link between scarecrow and bride? To start from the very beginning, I bought my first secondhand wedding gown in January 1982, simply because it was a very beautiful piece of art. Then one grew to two, to three. Eventually I had a whole collection. I don't know when the idea came to put these clothes out to stand in the middle of the field, but put them up we did... and it was breath-taking, an absolutely pure, strong image. They seemed to be waiting, watching as a silent chorus. It was only afterwards that the rationale, the historical basis for such a reinterpretation of scarecrows revealed itself. For the Greeks had a phallic scarecrow god named Priapus. He was a wooden fertility statue set up in the garden as a scarecrow, and offerings of wine and fruits were made to him to ensure protection of the garden. The original scarecrow as a fertility effigy overlaps the function of the bride as a fertile vessel.

Crow's Nest, Rae Anderson. Photo by Winston Romaine Fritz

The black masks of Crow wait outside the white circle, never daring to enter. How doth the scarecrow scare the crow? The masks tell stories of that mythical creature, renowned in different cultures as the Trickster and the Creator. This is not the crow we know merely as a "pesky varmint". The masks offer a vision of Crow's birth, his youthful pranks, his maturation, and his own death in bringing forth new life. Dichotomies reverberate—the black and the white; the dark side of the moon, the full moon; the male and the female; the ambiguity of Crow's androgynous nature, the scarecrows as equally androgynous with their phallic cross structure and female overlay; Crow of many faces, the brides faceless; Crow's fertility as the mythical Creator of the world itself, the brides' circle as a pregnant image of fertility. Crow as harbinger of death and decay, an ill omen, echoes the brides' ghostly skeletal aspect. The concentriccircles embody at once the womb that brings forth and the tomb that swallows all things.

Toronto

Crow Howls at the Moon, Rae Anderson. Photo by Susan Ross.



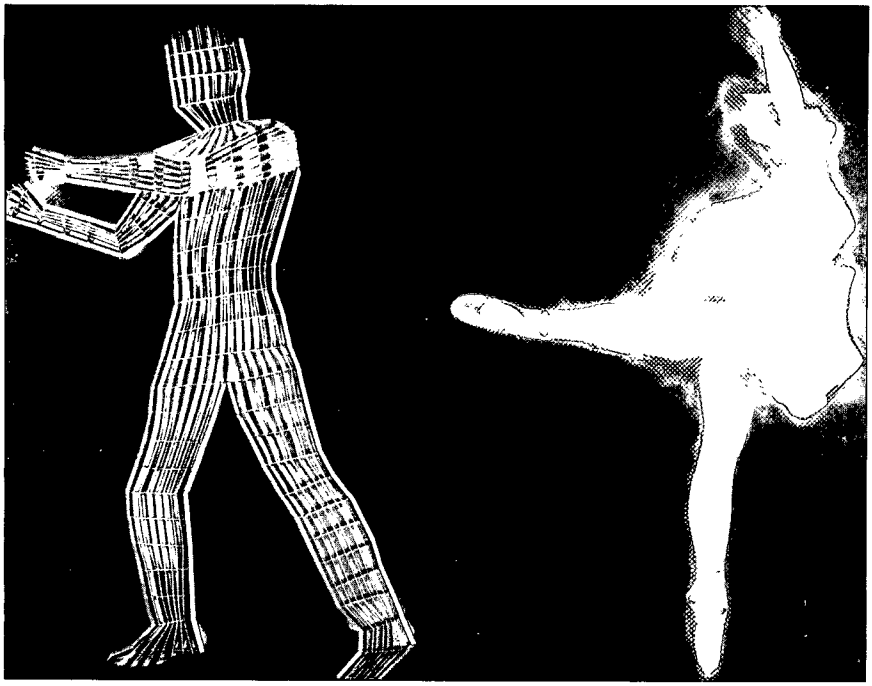
Crow's Shadow, Rae Anderson. Photo by Rae Anderson.

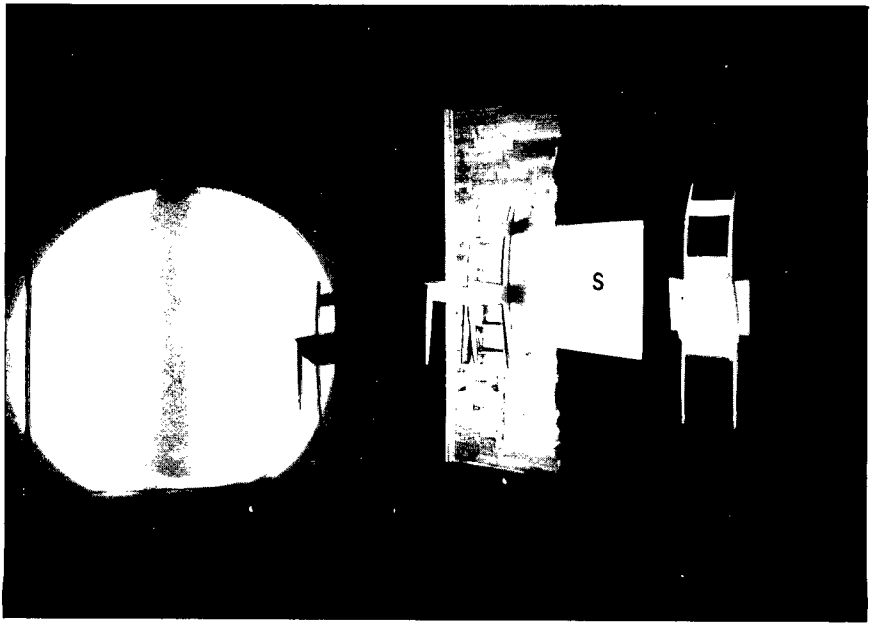
HYPERREALISM

Tony Brown's Spinning Bodies

The following articles are from the catalogue for the exhibition, *Tony Brown Day Dreams,* held at *The Winnipeg Art Gallery,* September 14 - October 26, 1986. The exhibition was curated by Bruce Ferguson and Shirley Madill under the directorship of Carol A. Phillips.

Figure 1: Two Machines for Feeling, Ydessa Gallery, photo by Robert Keziere; *Figure 2:* Private Collection; *Figure 3: Untitled,* Ydessa Gallery, photo by Ernest Mayer.

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Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale, Volume XI, Nos. 1-2 (1987).

UNNATURAL ACTS

Bruce Ferguson

Tony Brown's sculptures are constructed to invite simultaneous audience responses which might range from the intellectually thoughtful to the more immediately visceral. The works may promote investigations into traditional questions of aesthetics or to the societal relations they reference or the works may be more directly emotive in their effects. Or it is possible then to find a directly articulated response to one of the works while experiencing it or to be caught inarticulately in its often hypnotically spectacular and dramatic conditions. In other words, the works have deliberately allowed spaces or points of entry which are diverse or even contradictory to address his understanding of a heterogeneous audience. In the works, this is accomplished by a layering in parallel strands of visual presentation together with conceptual strategies and temporal movements within suggestive textual moments. In effect, there is the creation of a theatre, the restaging of a reality process as a model, the linking of many diverse cultural elements which offer an engaging field of potential responses.

The force of this multi-dimensional work is directed toward an active participant, not a passive viewer, or it might be said that it is directed toward a person potentially outside the habitual constraints of the normally mediated art discourse. This deliberately emphasized shift to a consideration of active kinesthetic experience rather than to an isolated

visual gaze, and therefore, from guaranteed elitist to unpredictable populist possibilities is fundamental to the works intentions and critical implications. A 'viewer' was the assumed product of a more reified predication from the theoretical concept of the 'visual' arts. This adjective — 'visual' — was in some ways always a deflective misnomer — a convenient categorical name which best served the interest of certain aesthetic theories, academic specialities and functioning bureaucracies. 'Visual arts' was utilized to assume and naturalize as well as purposefully reduce the role of audiences to 'viewers' or passive receivers, postulating a determinant role for the sign (the sign-system, the code, the work of art) to impose an austere hierarchy in a one-way system of communication. Which is to say that such efforts gave the appearance of being a one-way system of communication by concentrating on and privileging only one side of the equation.

To assign the code such a privileged position of authority is a basic tenet of modernism as theorized and practiced by proponents of a dominant version of the historical avant-garde. It corresponded to a need for an emphasis on progress (Walter Benjamin's "storm blowing from paradise"), subject autonomy and essentialist transcendence of consciousness. Such beliefs stemmed from other disciplines' positivistic and condescending assumptions regarding audiences (or publics or masses). These theories of sign determinism were given even more textual force through recent transliteration into the art discourse of narrow structuralist versions of the dominance of language as a socially determining formal code. As Boettger says... "The belief in the primacy of language in constituting consciousness has dominated the interpretation of literature, art, film and cultural artifacts over at least the last two decades" and that excessive uses of this proposition of cognition... "also posit a false dichotomy between representational form (seen as a retreat to tradition) and modernist abstraction (with its corollary avant-garde, constantly and radically innovative)."[1] In retrospect, then, it is possible to see how this century's long reductive development of modernism (retreat into form) in the 'visual arts' is forcefully normative and now through transliteration is made congruent with equally reductive and often paranoid notions of the determining codes in versions of structural semiotics (retreat into the text).

If the world of human warmth was closed to him so that to feel was to be hurt, he would create one where feelings had no place. But since things do happen, it had to be a world without feelings being involved. It had to be a world of machines.*

Elsewhere (1960) I have discussed the fact that while all psychoses are due to conflict within the person, his specific delusions will reflect the

hopes and anxieties of the society he lives in... What is entirely new in the machine age is that often neither savior nor destroyer is cast in man's image anymore. The typical modern delusion is of being run by an *influencing machine*.

The overriding problem with such reductive theories reproduced by both leftist and conservative thinkers alike, who battled for the power assigned to the sign, is that they are only theories of production. Which is to say that like theories regarding sex and violence on television, both in the attack and the defense mode, they assume a work of art to be a 'cause' which produces a specific 'effect' on a 'viewer' as if no other factors were at play, or as if when the communication is ineffective, that the 'viewer' has an inferior consciousness. Such theories assume a linear relationship between subjectivity and subjugation.

Just as the angels and saints of a deeply religious age help us to fathom what were man's greatest hopes at that time, and the devils what he trembled at most, so man's delusions in a machine world seem to be tokens of both our hopes and our fears of what machines may do for us, or to us. In this sense Joey's story might also be viewed as a cautionary tale.

Such limited systems of thought about production avoid the 'viewers' own experiences — their own histories of the particular sign systems, or, importantly, their own "misinterpretations" due to age, gender, ethnic or cultural difference. Emphasizing the emotionally receptive side of aesthetic experience or what he calls the "affective intensity" in opposition to the rationally analytical, Jean-Francois Lyotard repeats this shift from determination to reception... "It shows that the problem is not so much knowing what a given discourse says, but rather how it is disposed."[2] Or it is not so much that modernism has failed or is over or is often pronounced dead or "liquidated", as it is that as a theory of production only modernism is insufficient and incomplete for describing the experiences of art. For it ignores the world of events, references and their received connotations and institutions (or of pre-production, of various mediations and of receptions). Or, in short, it ignores History in its idealistic formulations of art as a pristine, non-tactile, soundless, metaphorical abstraction. In his close reading of the philosophical basis of modernism's most influential 'visual arts' writer, Clement Greenberg, and his understanding of a medium as a "primordial fact" of art, the critic Donald Kuspit has said... "The big question here, of course, is whether it is possible to have aesthetic experience that is not culturally conditioned".[3]

Often it took a conscious act of will to make us perceive him as a child. Unless we held him in the focus of our attention, he escaped into nothingness. In the same way we are blind to pieces of machinery around the house unless we are using them and they whirl. This boy-machine was only with us when working, it had no existence at rest... Though just an instant ago not "there", in the next Joey seemed a machine, the wheels busy cranking and turning, and as such held us rapt, whether we liked it or not.

That a schizophrenic child, particularly an autistic one, can create a vacuum around him, can wholly isolate himself in his delusions or empty preoccupations, is so well documented that alone it is hardly worth mention. But Joey had the added ability to hold the fascinated attention of those who watched him in this vacuum, to seduce them into believing him a machine.

Even an object, eg. a painting, can be perceived (understood, enjoyed and engaged) only by virtue of being in relation to someone; a someone already enmeshed in the social, psychological, cognitive and physical networks of existing complex relationships (of ideas of realities and ideas of metarealities — of empirics and abstractions — of socially constructed representations). No object, much less a process, was or is purely visual (or by implication, flat, or any other autonomous absolute quality), but always stands in a negotiable relation to an already multi-dimensional receiver (an agent). Brown's use of the aphoristic text in his works (like that of Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger) is a characterization of this understanding. It is a device first used modernly by Nietzsche to oppose the narrative closure of tracts which he identified as a will to systematize, a will he thought indicated a "lack of intellectual integrity". The aphoristic mode problematizes the oscillation between writer and reader, art and audience, to open the world of being and the world of becoming, of relative truths and even personal truths.

In retrospect it is easy to see what was so upsetting to those of us who tried to become close to him. All of us have feelings about how powerful our machines have become: in this nuclear age we have reason to fear that our own creations may destroy us. In Joey it was so blatant that this had already happened. Joey had lost command of himself to machines; he was living proof that our fears were not groundless. This is why, however strange his talk, his behavior, and later his drawings, they cannot compare in shock quality with what we experienced in his presence.

To bother to rehearse the well-known deficiencies of modernism as understood within the art milieu is neither new nor radical. But it seems

important to reiterate that as a theory of production only, the modernist assumption of equivalence between the sign and its effects and the lack of information about audience reception is not just a matter for theory (especially today during a crisis of museums). For it was not only theory (feminisms, post-structuralisms, cultural studies, cybernetics, etc.) that engendered the reaction against a narrow modernism; it was the actual practices of artists primarily in the post-Kennedy era who moved from metaphorical analogy to questions within all fields of representation (from pre-production to reception). It was the intense immediacy of new political agendas associated with the marginal and the systems of technology that ruptured the theoretical closure of modernism. Some of these practices included realignments of art to vernacular processes of distribution or popular media practices in general, ie. performance, installation, video, etc., within structures of representational narrativity.

During Joey's first weeks with us we watched absorbedly for example, as he connected himself with his source of electrical energy. Then he strung the wire from an imaginary outlet to the dining room table to insulate himself, and then plugged himself in. These imaginary electrical connections he had to establish before he could eat, because only the current ran his ingestive apparatus. He performed the ritual with such skill that one had to look twice to be sure there was neither wire nor outlet nor plug. His pantomime was so skilled, and his concentration so contagious, that those who watched him seemed to suspend their own existence and become observers of another reality.

To trace Tony Brown's maturing development as an artist would be to follow an individual map which is typical of those value shifts from color-field painting to conceptually-based process sculpture through considerations of photographic representation to the kind of theatrical installations here. It would describe an arc which began in formally educated assumptions of specifically informed viewers and which has progressed to assumptions of a more non-homogenous audience now respected for its ability to experience simultaneously, and even contradictorily, constructions of complex meanings. It is a move from a fixed state to a variable one and from beliefs in the passive (cultural dope) to the active participant. It is an arc which traces the recent attempt to reassert the practice of art as a socially meaningful activity.

What this new engagement of artists like Brown means for interpretation is significant. The work, being performative, like speech-uses as opposed to language as a code, is caught constantly reconstituting itself. It "drifts" or is vulnerable to the interpretation of others; in fact, it demands it, sacrificing the authority of a code for a rich expression which can surprise or open experience rather than reaffirm tired

dogmas. Like desire itself, it simply continues. It can split audiences by being in this continual process, a model which makes meanings and then revises them. Interpretation is consequently made vulnerable and less authoritative, or simply, contingent. This does not mean that any interpretation is possible as the narrative has images and texts, however fragmented, which define a focus within a field of representation. But it does mean that the work returns his art to diversity and imbalance, to questions over answers, to history over historicism and to audiences in place of critics. This admission is that subjectivity is not more a fixed state than objectivity was believed to be. The avant-garde position of dissidence, dependent on hopeful failure but now thoroughly absorbed by an unshockable audience, is replaced by a site of reciprocity. The vulnerability and transitional nature of Brown's work, like certain theatre and speech-uses, allows then for only provisional and tentative thought — for stimulations.

Electricity provides us with warmth and light, both of importance to our well-being and survival. But electricity is also power. So if electricity also powered emotions, powered the vicious circle of longing and anger, and if this circle was all there was to Joey's life, then it did indeed power his life. And if it did all that, couldn't it also provide what he so deeply needed, what for want of a better name I might call sustenance through love? If electricity provided so much that we normally look to from a mother, why not expect the rest from it too? Then, to "plug himself in" was to connect himself to the flow that sustains life.

If one wished to extrapolate from Joey to other autistic children who use rotating objects to state where they most need our help, one might say that to them the turning objects represent a vicious circle that goes from longing to fear to anger to despair, and comes full circle when the longing has started up anew.

Without attempting to assess the autobiographical and psychological sources of Brown's production (which would be misleading in any case), it may be enough to say that the works' increasingly technological base and its representations of direct social occurrences (sleep, home, gender relations) constitute a deep consideration on the human immersion into a technologically based system of domestic society and its implications for understanding. At a material level, the work depends upon technological systems (from electricity to museums). To experience the work is to be in a condensed environment in which the technological systems are visible, present, situated at a first order of experience. At a metaphorical level, the controlling source is the nature of infantile autism or arrested development, and in particular the famous case history of Joey the

Mechanical Boy (of which excerpts of Bruno Bettelheim's observations scatter these pages as a kind of mnenomic interpretation of modernism and technology). At a representational level are images and texts of "ordinary" daily North American life — of beds, of homes, of people — general figures of activity, of emotions, of fantasies, of social memory. In other words, the work reproduces or doubles or makes a facsimile of the very conditions it addresses without occupying a simple critical position of superior and contemptuous distance. It is fast, confusing, and never-ending, ever-circulating, a complicit imperative toward the subject.

There were moments for example, when a long span of non-existence would be interrupted by the machine starting up, getting into even higher gear, until its climax was reached in a shattering "explosion"... Once the time had arrived to explode the world, this child who lived in utter stillness, mute and unmoving, would suddenly go beserk, running wildly and screaming, "Crash! Crash!" or "Explosion!" as he tossed a bulb or a motor. As soon as the thrown object had broken and the noise died away, Joey died with it. Once the machine had exploded, no movement was left, no life, nothing at all.

Old liberal and Marxist dualisms of individual/society, conscious/unconscious, theory/practice, play/work, subjective/objective, are gone through — oscillated like an electrical circuit, and return privileging neither. Instead a house "breaks", but returns to its original state. Another house is never finished but is caught in an endless tautological circle of either seemingly banal or virtually hysterical movement. Or a male robot stutters gesturally and begins a linear dance bathed in still and moving images of a female ballet dancer. In each, two polar axes are forever intersected in overstimulated but unfulfilled circumstances. The works oscillate between the poles constantly — sometimes seductive entertainment, sometimes serious alienation. There is no attempt at unmasking, just the unstable activity itself exposed — a double-bind which admits its complicity with the systems it points to, but which does not allow singular meaning to be possessed.

In Joey's system only machines produced things. So becoming aware of elimination posed nearly insolvable problems. If he produced feces, was this further proof of his being a machine? If, on the other hand, he was a human being and the stools were his, then how could something that was part of his body be outside of his body? What were the boundaries of his physical existence?

For a long time he continued to view the body as a machine. But if this Joey-machine eliminated, wasn't it logical to assume that all other machines did too? Thus the particular form in which Joey wrestled with

the problem of self versus nonself around elimination was this: either this is not my elimination or else everything eliminates.

To accomplish this complexity of purpose and possible effect. Brown's formal strategy has been to reverse the experience of "seeing" a film. In a movie theatre, as in a museum, the 'viewer' is situated architecturally, socially and technologically in the position of the gaze, the seat of the voyeur, the site of the tourist of illusion. By making the 'screen' active, Brown instigates the modernist technique of estrangement not toward the object of production but to the space itself, not to meaning of images and texts made strange but to the physical experience of reception. The act of perception becomes a decision-making process for each participant in the space. Each becomes their own editor in their own time. Thus, strategies of manipulation or overdetermination are replaced in favour of the participant's own interests and judgements, and depersonalization is replaced by the possibility of public experience which could lead to social knowledge. If art is to have any other use or purpose in the late twentieth century beyond its value as a luxury commodities market, it must give up the position of authority for this one of reciprocity and address itself to those concerns which are of the body politic. It is to this transition that Brown's work speaks.

Because to be born again, to be able to feel, even to wish to be liked, is not enough for a full human existence. What is still lacking is the ability to be active to deliberately reach out to others for warmth and affection, to dare on one's own to close the gap between self and other; to reach out and change one's physical apartness into closeness between body and body; to be a lover and not merely to enjoy being loved.

New York City

Notes

* All quotations in bold are from Bruno Bettelheim's *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self.* The Free Press, New York, Collier-MacMillan Limited, London, 1967. The quotes are from the Chapter entitled *JOEY*, a case history of an autistic child who believed himself to be a machine.

1. Susan Boettger, "Regression in the Service of...", in *Art Criticism*, ed. Donald Kuspit, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1986, Art Department, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY, p. 60 and 58. In reinstigating the healthy uses of "regression", Boettger is in agreement with Bettelheim who earlier said... "Why then do I not refrain from using the term regression? Because it has its use when it is clearly understood that what we are talking about is how a behavior looks to the observer who knows nothing of what it means to the person who enacts it. Thus the dictionary definition would be entirely acceptable if it were to stress this important qualification. It would have to read as follows. 'Regression is what simulates a return to some earlier level of adaptation'." (cited above).

2. Jean-Francois Lyotard, "On Theory", in *Driftworks*, ed. Roger McKeon, Semiotext(e), 1984, New York, NY, p. 29. Lyotard also has something to say about the notion of the unconscious as expressive or deconstructive as well. "Unconscious processes transgress the two spaces of discourse ie. that of the system and that of reference. The space which contains them and that they themselves produce is then another space, differing from that of the system in that it is in incessant mobility and from that of reference in treating words like things." p. 61.

3. Donald Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic*, the University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979, p. 18. Kuspit goes on to later answer his own question writing... "The being of art, if it can be understood, whether by modernist or other methods, is a language, and as such a symbol, ie., in a certain relationship to life... It is hard to see how art can be said not to point to another thing, or how if this pointing is acknowledged it can be ignored in the determination of art value and the quality of individual works, or in any description of art." p. 158.

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SYNAPSE LAPSE

Arthur Kroker

Hyperreality

> But today the scene and the mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflexive surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold — the smooth operational surface of communication.
> ... the schizo is bereft of every scene, open to everything in spite of himself, living in the greatest confusion... He is only a pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstacy of Communication"[1]

Because of his brilliant productions in electric art. Tony Brown is already an important contemporary artist of the postmodern kind, and is, in fact, the direct successor in sculpture to the hyper-technological vision of Marshall McLuhan. This is to say, then, that Brown is an artist of technology and postmodern culture *par excellence*. In his sculptural simulations, ranging from *Two Machines for Feeling* and *Spinning House* to *Breaking Screen*, we are processed through the hallucinogenic, implosive, and hyperreal logic of technology in the postmodern condition. Indeed, Brown's artistic vision runs just at that edge where quantum physics enters popular culture, and where the overriding mood is that of "uncertainty" as *we* become screens for electronic imaging-systems (from television and the information society of micro computers

to the blast of the advertising machine) which are seductive only because they engage in a series of sign crimes. What makes Tony Brown's simulations of postmodern technology and society so fascinating is that they reveal, in grisly yet seductive detail, the extent to which life in the processed world of technological society runs at the edge between ecstacy *and* decay, between processed world as violence and seduction, between hyper-technology as "space invaders" and body invaders.

In *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan insisted that we cannot understand technological experience from the outside. We can only understand how the electronic, and then digital, world works us over if we recreate the experience, in depth and mythically, of the processed world of technology.

> All media work us over completely. They are so persuasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments.[2]

It was McLuhan's special insight that twentieth-century experience is dominated by actual "exteriorizations" of the human sensory capacities and of the human mind itself in the form of the disembodied world of the electronic media. What's the real meaning of the medium as massage? It's just this: we now live *in reverse image* as the central nervous system has gone outside in the form of the environment of the technological media of communication (the "artificial intelligence" of computers as approximating the externalization of consciousness; television as a sightscape; Sony Walkman's as a soundscape where our heads become broadcasting booths); and the media environment comes inside in the form of the seduction of desire which is the language of the advertising scene today. For McLuhan, technology *is* the real world!

Now, Tony Brown may be the direct successor to McLuhan's privileged vision of the technological media of communication, but there is one key difference between Brown and McLuhan. McLuhan might have warned us that the big change precipitated by electronic technology was actually to flip human consciousness and sensory experience inside out as we live within the processed world of the mediascape, but Brown has gone much further than McLuhan in actually *decoding* the inner language of postmodern technology and culture. In a series of pioneering simulations of the mediascape, Brown shows exactly how the various technological media of communication function to exteriorize the human mind and the human sensory capacities, to actually take possession of the central nervous system and of consciousness itself like

body invaders of the media kind. Moreover, he has provided important clues to what the social and cultural impact of life in the fast track of the technoscape, '80s style is likely to hold for the future.

Tony Brown is, in fact, that rarity of an artist: a visual prophet of the age of quantum technology whose art can be at the height of its times because, rather than seeking to evade the blast of the technoscape, it does just the opposite. Brown's electric sculpture is a brilliant case study in art as "probe", seeking out the most intensive participation possible in the most dynamic, yet hidden, aspects of postmodern technology. His electric or, perhaps better, *digital* sculpture thus has a twofold importance which gives it a more urgent claim to general cultural significance in understanding the postmodern condition. It is a profoundly original and deeply seductive vision of what is happening to *us* as we are worked over by the silent language of the technoscape; and, in addition, it provides a critical method — the artist as probe — for understanding technology. This is just to say, then, that Brown's artistic productions have a more pressing and, in fact, global, significance as one of this country's most accurate (and chilling) decodings of the silent language of technology in the quantum era. Indeed, Brown's simulational art has done just that which the French theorist, Jean-Francois Lyotard, writing in *Driftworks* said would be most difficult for critical art today: deciphering not only the explicit contents of the mediascape, but actually foregrounding the ideological effects of the mediascape which are hidden in the very *form* of the technological media of communication. Brown forces the processed world of postmodern technology to reveal its hidden ideological agenda; and in doing so he compels us to think anew about the fate of technology and culture in the contemporary century.

In Brown's electric art, technology inscribes itself on the body in the seductive language of imaging-systems; everything is driven from within by the relentless dynamo of centrifugal forces; and every element of popular culture (from the TV Guide of *Two Machines for Feeling* to the advanced consumer culture of *Spinning House*) is already on its way to a grisly terminal point in reversal, cancellation, and exterminism. Brown actually compels the simulacrum to reveal its secret: a processed world modelled on the "screen and the network" is also the terrain of dead power, dead sex, and dead culture. What's Brown's processed world? It's technology as the inscription of power in the form of advertising on the text of the body, and as the disappearance of the body itself into the disembodied and perfectly bleak (just because so aesthetically seductive) scene of the mediascape: an electronic scene which reduces itself quickly to the "smooth operational surface of communication": which functions psychologically under the sign of schizoid personalities who as "pure

screens" are also "open switching centers for all the networks of influence" and whose key cultural tendencies are parasitism and excess.

Brown's artistic vision — the world of communications as one big synapse lapse — runs parallel to the theoretical vision of postmodern technology proferred by the French avante-garde theorist Jean Baudrillard, in *Simulations*:

> The very definition of the real has become: *that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction*... The real is not only what can be reproduced, *but that which is always already reproduced*. The hyperreal... which is entirely in simulation.[3]

"A Performance without Performers"

It's not just that Brown's sculptures actually tease out the ideological inscriptions hidden in the form of things by foregrounding the background effects of the mediascape (although that too). No, the cumulative impact of Brown's sculptural productions is to create, at a deep psychological level, the actual *emotional experience* of technological media. And they do so by *simulating* the media environment which is, anyway, how we experience the real world of technology today. Brown's sculptural *simulacra* draw together something of the actual physical blast of the cyclotronic mechanisms of particle physics (the centrifuge in *Two Machines for Feeling* and *Spinning House* as a teasing out of the violence of quantum technology); the power of information society as it inscribes the surfaces of just about everything (from the frame construction of *Spinning House* to the disembodied robots of *Two Machines for Feeling*); science as the language of power today (the micro-computer which coordinates the robotic movements and imaging-sequences of *Two Machines for Feeling* to the infrared, x-rayed world of *Breaking Screen*); and the despairing mood of the inhabitants of the spinning world of post-industrial society ("Get up"; "Make Breakfast"; "Go to Work"; "Come Home"; "Watch TV"; "Go to Bed"). And what's more, Brown's sculptures are linked together by a deep thematic unity, which moves from the external effects of the mediascape (*Two Machines for Feeling*) to progressively more intensive and interior — indeed, almost *metaphysical* visions — of technology as body invaders: the publicity culture of *Spinning House* and the suicidal nihilism of *Breaking Screen*.

Indeed, it's because Brown is really a metaphysician of quantum technology that he is able to sum up in his artistic vision many of the key tendencies in a whole generation of theorists who have thought deeply about technology and culture: Baudrillard's hyperreal, implosive, and violent world of technological simulacra is the background text for *Two Machines for Feeling*; Michel Foucault's brilliant essay "A Preface to

Transgression"[4] is suggestive of the lightning-flash of *Breaking Screen*; and *Spinning House*? that's perfectly suggestive of Roland Barthes' dead world of *Camera Lucida*[5] where we are saturated by electronic imaging-systems of staged communications, inert photographs, dead signs — a whole world of advertising culture as toxic poisoning of the semiological kind.

However, this is not to say of Brown's sculptural productions that they are fatalistic. Quite the opposite! Brown says of his own works that they move at the edge of ecstacy and decay, and they do so because just like the technological media which they simulate, they take their materials directly from popular culture. His is a sculpture of "a performance without performers".

> Today, there is a real uncertainty of experience. The mediascape constructs and deconstructs. Where there is narrative continuity, things are, in fact, most violent.[6]

Brown says further of the *method* of his work that it's just like performance art:

> It does at the level of technological simulation what performance artists did in self-immolation. It's intended to show how the exteriorization of the senses occur in the media... how technological media become violent, hallucinogenic, and implosive... *how technology today actually pivots into psychosis!*[7]

Brown's recurrence to the site of popular culture as the focus of his sculptural simulacra is strategic. It is intended to show both how the ideology of the technological imperative has inscribed itself, most deeply and pervasively, in the most prosaic items of contemporary consumer culture (the house as an ideological site of consumption *par excellence* in *Spinning House* or the simulacra of the image-system in *Two Machines for Feeling*); and to disclose a possible avenue of escape. Brown seems to suggest that it is only by thinking in terms of absolute negativity, in thinking the worst that can be thought or imagined (the nihilistic implosion of experience in *Breaking Screen*; the wasteland culture of *Spinning House*; the degendered sex of the ballerina figure and the mechanical robot in *Two Machines for Feeling*) that the rage for political action can commence. This is not an abstract art at all: rather it is profoundly concrete. And it is concrete just because Brown's sculptural simulacra begin and end with the necessity of thinking humanism anew within the limits and possibilities of technology as the real world. Indeed, Brown can understand the hyperrealism of the new order of technological simulacra (television, computers, chip technology) so well, just because he is a realist on the question of understanding technology.

It is Brown's special insight that it is only by deciphering, in exact detail, the new language of quantum technologies as they inscribe their power on the surfaces of just about everything (from the body as text for advertisements to consumption as publicity culture to the hyper) that we can discover a method for enhancing the possibilities of technological media of communication while limiting the unlimited dangers of technology without any sustaining or guiding ethical vision. Just like McLuhan before him, Brown is, in the most constitutive and profound sense, deeply religious in his approach to understanding media. He seeks to realize the possible "epiphanies", or possibilities for the aestheticization of reason in technological experience; and to do so without illusions and with a full understanding of paradox, irony, and ambiguity as the deepest language of technology in the quantum condition.

It is just this tension between technology as violence *and* redemption — this insistence of revealing exactly how technology as language takes possession of our bodies, our culture, our sex, our vision, and on disclosing how technology is (paradoxically) most seductive just when it is most violent — which is the deep thematic unity running through three of Brown's major works: *Two Machines for Feeling, Breaking Screen*, and *Spinning House*. A careful study of those works reveals an artistic imagination which has translated the most important insights of French poststructuralist thought (from Derrida's "traces" to Baudrillard's insights into technological simulacra as the death of the social) into successively deeper and more psychologically profound understandings of the semiotics of quantum technology; and which has, moreover, presented the challenge anew *to us* of rethinking ethics in the quantum condition.

Missing Matter: *Two Machines for Feeling* and the Death of the Social

There was a story recently in the British magazine, *Nature*, which said, and this without any sense of irony, that after the Big Bang which began the universe, 90% of the *physical* matter of the universe went missing, just disappeared, and no one — astro-physicists most of all — know where it's gone. Now, I would argue, and this with respect to the critical importance of *Two Machines for Feeling*, that after the equally Big Bang of communication technologies which began the new universe of postmodern (signifying) culture, 90% of the *social* matter of the universe went missing, just disappeared, and no one — with the possible exception of artists like Tony Brown — know where it's gone.

It's not at all surprising that the art critic for the Montréal Gazette should have said recently that "to experience *Two Machines for Feeling* is to know immediately that you are in the presence of a masterpiece".[8] After all, *Two Machines for Feeling* is a privileged sculptural simulacra. It

is *quantum art* fully equal to the task of taking measure of the dynamic and implosive language of quantum technology!

This sculptural production shows us on the outside what we have become on the inside in the era of postmodern technology. It's like a 1980's version of the almost surrealistic mirror-reversals, time-warps, and space shifts of *Alice in Wonderland*, except this time rather than slip from the Real into the fantasy world of a deck of cards come alive, in *Two Machines for Feeling* we actually enter into the (dark) semiological interior of information society. In a culture which is pulverized by the mediascape to the extent that we can speak realistically now about neon brains, electric egos, and digitalized eyes as the bigger circuitry of a society held together by the "smooth surface" of the screen and the network, entering into the simulacra of *Two Machines for Feeling* is something akin to being positioned in the real (hallucinogenic) world of postmodern technology. It's like space travel in the society of the super-chip; just where, however, we become passive observers of what is happening to us every day in the complex sign-system of information society. *Two Machines for Feeling* is, in fact, a perfect simulacra of a culture modelled on the "screen and the network"; and driven from within by the reduction of experience to the transparent surface of the image-system (communication), with us this time as dangling schizos: "a pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence".[9]

As an analysis of the complex, inner *discourse* of postmodern technology, *Two Machines for Feeling* is very insightful. This artistic production is, to begin with, about the "virtual body", the body which doesn't exist except as the site of convergence of the axes traced by three great discourses: the *digital coding of a culture which is coordinated today by the power of computermatics* (the micro-computer in *Two Machines for Feeling* controls the action of the robots and the sequencing of the image-system); *the implosive and hallucinogenic logic of image-systems* (this is a perfect image of television with the "pixle images" as the Real and us as the "missing matter" of the production); and the *immanent violence of the cyclotronic ballerina* (Brown says that "narrative continuity in information society can be assured only by a violent speeding-up of the dynamo"). As a semiology of technology to the hyper in the postmodern condition, *Two Machines for Feeling* is just perfect: it's all *gender side* (the robot has no sex; and the ballerina has no existence except as a tiny porcelain doll; the production is about the existence today of only a degendered, virtual sex); it's all *technologically dependent* (just like in performance art, turn off the energy system and the apparatus is just inert rubble); everything *plays at the edge of the ecstacy of communication and the detritus of excremental culture* (Brown says, in fact, that he is interested in just that moment when

"fascination turns into psychosis");[10] and it forces to the surface the *ideological inscriptions* hidden in the formal structures of technology (the visual continuity of the dancing ballerina is maintained only by the flattening of the image — *and us with it* — at warp speeds; and we are ideologically positioned as inert observers of the spectacle).

The overall mood of *Two Machines for Feeling* is one of ambiguity, paradox, and even parody as that which is most aesthetically seductive (the image of the dance of the ballerina, the shadow play of the mechanical robot) is also shown to be a real site of immolation (Brown actually foregrounds the inner circuitry of the computerscape which controls the deconstruction and reconstruction of the image-system). Indeed, this production suggests that industrial technology (the mechanical robot) and post-industrial technology (the simulacra of the ballerina's dance) are *not* different order of phenomena; but, in fact, are two deeply convergent tendencies in a common (technological) process of seduction and immolation. And why not? Everything in *Two Machines for Feeling* suggests that technological society *as domination* functions now by a relentless invasion on the part of the technological dynamo of the *interior* (the manipulation of desire in a promotional culture where power works as seduction) and of the *exterior* (the mechanical robot as a simulacra of Chaplin's *Modern Times*). Indeed, *Two Machines for Feeling* is emblematic of the closing of the circle of technological domination in three key ways. *Optically*, the production works under the psychological sign of illusion: an illusionary system, however, which is intended to be seductive just because it is visually disorienting like the hallucinogenic world of TV where narrative continuity is provided by the positioning of our faces as screens for the play of TV images. *Digitally*, just like an avant-garde expression of the world of computer-generated imagery (which is the deepest language of quantum technology), all of the movements of the production are controlled cybernetically (the microcomputer with its adoption and use of pioneering programming techniques on Brown's part). Like the quantum condition which it simulates, *Two Machines for Feeling* is the emblematic sign of a system which is high in information, but low in energy. And finally, *cyclotronically*, the violence of the technological dynamo as the underlying logic of postmodern culture dynamo is simulated by the relentless force and speed-up of the centrifuge which is at the (disappearing) centre of the production. Ironically, what is most interesting is that it is only when the centrifuge achieves a speed which is life-threatening (and thus has to be boxed in to protect the audience) that it produces an illusion of narrative continuity by gradually flattening the image of the ballerina. The idea of the cyclotron with its violent, implosive language of speed-up is, of course, specific to particle physics, the real language of quantum

technology today. In particle physics, the cyclotron is the decisive experimental mechanism for blasting apart physical matter in order to make it reveal its most elementary (quanta) building-blocks. The implication is clear. If particle physics (as the language of contemporary power) begins by *imploding* the elementary constituents of physical experience to their very limits in the micro world of leptons and baryons, then an artistic strategy which would seek to foreground science as today's language of power should do exactly the opposite. It should foreground the background of the cyclotron (the centrifuge as "technological dynamo") in order to both tease out the inner violence in technological experience and to show that information society actually functions by *deconstructing* cultural experience (blasting apart society into its elementary particles: "the screen and the network" with us as "computer blips" on the bigger neural circuitry of the new communication order); and by *reconstructing* the cultural residue (that's *us* after the big blast of the mediascape) into hallucinogenic wholes (information society as *ersatz community*). And, of course, the double reversal of the language of particle physics and, with it, the logic of quantum technology itself, is exactly the artistic strategy and the sure and certain source of the brilliance of *Two Machines for Feeling*. This sculptural simulacra can be recognized, at once, as a "masterpiece" because it has not only deciphered the inner grammar of quantum physics as the contemporary language of power, but it has also revealed, in a way that is fully parodic and ambiguous, how science has taken possession of popular culture and of us with it. Indeed, if the aesthetic appeal of *Two Machines for Feeling* has to do with its *charm* (the dance of the ballerina), *beauty* (the visual rhythm of the optical illusion), strangeness (the edge of violence and seduction), and *symmetry* (the robot and ballerina in contiguous motion), then it's worthwhile to bear in mind that these are also the exact aesthetic categories of quantum physics today. In a way which is fully parallel to the race in contemporary quantum physics towards the construction of the world's biggest "atom smasher', Tony Brown has created in *Two Machines for Feeling* the art world's first "culture smasher". And just as much as the violent, centrifugal action of the cyclotron in atom smashing is intended to whip elementary particles around until they reach escape velocity, that's exactly what *Two Machines for Feeling* does. It combines optics, cybernetics, robotics, and industrial centrifuging into an exact simulacra of how *power* functions today. And what are the elementary *social* particles which are whipped into an endless free-fall from this violent and hallucinogenic act of culture smashing? Well, that's the *social* itself as the dark "missing matter" of the new universe of communication technolo-

gies. In the end, *Two Machines for Feeling* is about the death of the social and the triumph of a (signifying) culture.

"Body without Organs": *Spinning House*

It's the very same with *Spinning House* which focusses on ideology and power in the age of disembodied desire. More so than *Two Machines for Feeling* which explores the perceptual implosion at the (disappearing) centre of the mediascape, *Spinning House* plays just at the edge between a deep existential reflection on the nihilism of consumer culture and a semiological analysis of the inscription of power in the sign-form of commodification to such a degree of abstraction that culture itself becomes an image.

In *Spinning House*, ideology is inscribed on the transparent frame construction of the house, on its occupants, and on their social routines in the form of the laconic messages pulsating from the house itself. Just like in David Cronenberg's *Videodrone* in which TV comes alive as a desiring-machine and takes possession of its viewers, *Spinning House* shows that ideology now has sunk into the everyday, background surface of popular culture; and, moreover, that ideology is most pervasive just when most transparent. Here is a perfect study of how ideology functions today in the language of popular culture (the house as a key consumption site). The family is lacerated by language and broken into by the violence of imaging-systems (it's a *spinning* house); the occupants' minds are a volume in disintegration and a study in ruins ("Go to bed", "Wake Up", "Go to Work", "Eat", "Watch TV"); the cultural routines of the house are policed by the interiorization of entertainment ideology (television) and by the normalizing power of the work order ("Go to Work"); the psychological sensibility of the members of the spinning house is what Nietzsche described as a culture of "last men" (passive nihilists who just want their entertainment and blink, "and who are incapable of thinking deeply just because they have never learned to despise themselves");[11] and the house itself undergoes a great, violent implosion until it becomes a scene of consumer culture as residue. *Spinning House* is a bleak study of cultural disintegration: the house, as the site of consumption culture *par excellence*, is traced by the ideology of consumption, achieves a narrative (optical) continuity only when the level of violence (the centrifugal forces) achieves escape velocity; is reduced to a carceral for the domestication of social power; and is the anguished scene for a free-fall into suicidal nihilism. This is just to say, though, that *Spinning House*, just like the whole network of suburban culture which it simulates, *does not exist*. As a consumption site to the hyper, *Spinning House* is just an empty scene into which is injected all the seductions and social residue of excremental culture. It's a pure

discursive site: the scene for the convergence of a whole network of discourses of power, from the language of consumption ideology and television culture to the routinization of power in work experience. And, of course, just like *Two Machines for Feeling*, the blast of the *Spinning House* positions us perfectly: we're flattened, delocalized, and inert observers of the triumph of ideology under the dark sign of the high-intensity market setting.

Indeed, *Spinning House* with its grisly, yet aesthetically appealing, recitation of technological violence, its ideological inscription of the signs of desire on the text of the home and on the flesh of its inhabitants, and its bleak meditation on the immanent nihilism of consumer culture is a perfect expression of what the contemporary French psychoanalysts, Deleuze and Guattari, have described in *Anti-Oedipus* as the society of the "body without organs".[12] In the "schizoanalysis" of *Anti-Oedipus*, power is experienced today as a matter of relational effects, as the inscription on the surface of things (the home, the family, the flesh) of a sign-language of desire and absence which is always delocalized, dehistoricized, and dematerialized. In *Anti-Oedipus*, just like in *Spinning House*, it's no longer power and oppression, but power and seduction; and, in fact, power no longer speaks in the language of presence, but of absence. *Spinning House*? It's just what Nietzsche said in those fateful words which begin *The Will to Power*: "Nihilism is knocking at the door. Whence comes this most uncanniest of guests?"[13]

"Darkness to Infinity": *Breaking Screen*

The profound reflection on technology and nihilism which runs like a dark arc across *Two Machines for Feeling* and *Spinning House* reaches its most intense expression in *Breaking Screen*. Here, in a way remarkably akin to what Marshall McLuhan predicted would be our fate in the twentieth-century (to live in a culture in which we are "x-rayed by television images"), the rotating bed in *Breaking Screen* actually begins to pulsate and to visibly disintegrate into an x-ray image as it traces a great path of implosion. As Brown says: "*Breaking Screen* does what television always promises, but never does. The mechanical bed actually pivots into psychosis".[14]

The psychosis invoked by *Breaking Screen* is everywhere. The sound environment of the production is that of crickets and screaming cars, just like so much background radiation. The images inscribed on the screen speak searingly of the ruins within: " 'So you lie there dreaming of another's life'; 'Alone in your room with nothing to do but wait for something to happen that never does'; 'Lost Dreams' ". The frame of the house is burned. And the overriding psychological sense is that in the society of the *Breaking Screen*, it's catastrophe itself which is desired and

this in just the same way that Baudrillard has suggested in *Oublier Foucault*.

> This time we are in a full universe, a space radiating with power, but also cracked, like a shattered windshield still holding together.
>
> Do you think that power, economy, sex — all the REAL'S big numbers — would have stood up one single instant without a fascination to support them which originates precisely in the inversed mirror where they are reflected and continually reversed, and where their imaginary catastrophe generates a tangible and immanent gratification?[15]

And what about the lightning-flash which is the moment of violence and immolation towards which everything in *Breaking Screen* is directed. In his classic essay, "A Preface to Transgression", Michel Foucault anticipated the secret of the lightning-flash as a transgressionary act which lights up the blackness of the sky for one single instant only to reveal the immensity of the darkness within:

> Transgression, then, is not related to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity; the flash loses itself in this space it marks with its sovereignty and becomes silent now that it has given a name to obscurity.[16]

Tony Brown's *Breaking Screen*, with its lightning-flash which illuminates the sky only to reveal the "darkness within" is an almost eerie sculptural expression of Foucault's profound philosophical understanding of the meaning of transgression in nihilistic culture. Just like Foucault's "transgression", the lightning-flash of *Breaking Screen* is not a division between opposites nor is it a gesture of the cut or even a permanent refusal. It is, in fact, that most difficult and delicate of artistic manoeuvres: a reminder in the language of absence itself not just of the immensity of the ruins within, but also of the fate of transgression itself as nothing more now than a throw of the dice in the spider's web of the technological dynamo. The lesson of *Breaking Screen* is explicit: the catastrophe has already happened, and we are its survivors and not so

transgressionary victims. It's Nietzsche's time now: terror speaks in the language of the aesthetics of seduction.

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Notes

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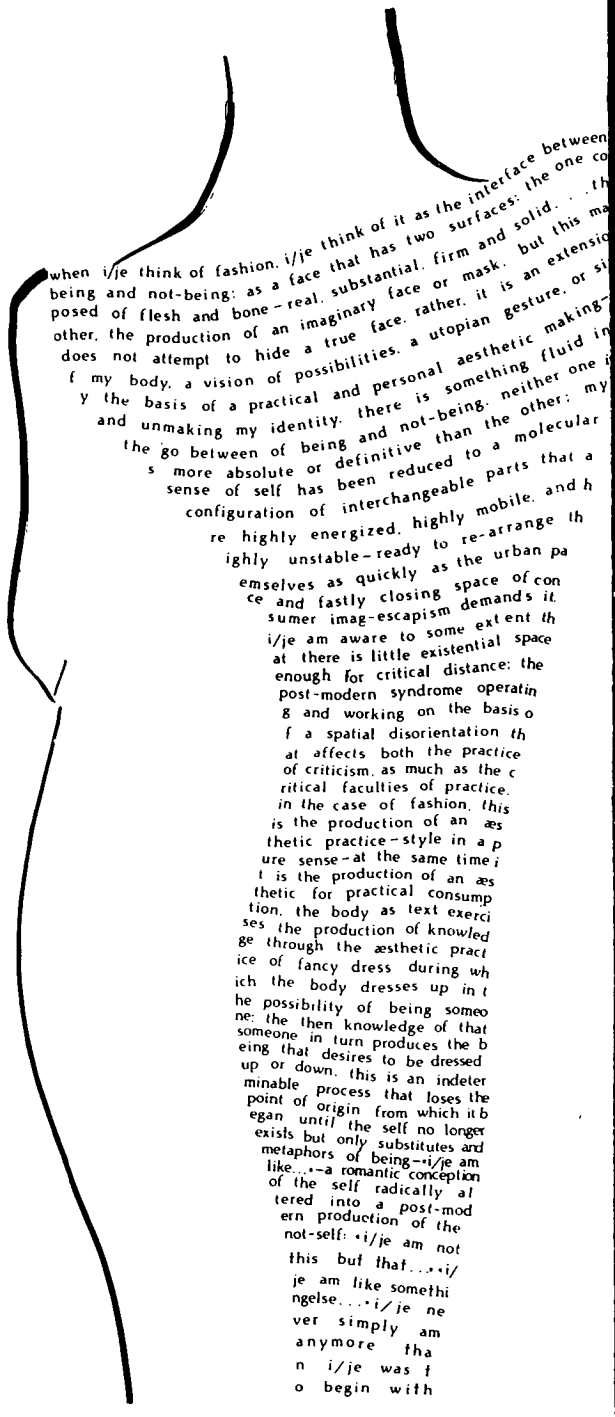
3. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983, p. 146.
4. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in Donald F. Bouchard (editor), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 139-164.
5. Tony Brown, interview with author, March, 1986.
6. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
7. Tony Brown, interview with author, March, 1986.
8. *Montreal Gazette*, June, 1986.
9. H. Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, p. 133.
10. Tony Brown, interview with author, May, 1986.
11. For a searing account of Nietzsche's reflections on nihilism, see George Grant's *Time as History*, Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969, p. 33.
12. For a provocative reflection on Deleuze and Guattari's recuperation of Antonin Artaud's vision of the "body without organs", see the special issue of Semiotext(e) organized around a discussion of *Anti-Oedipus*, Volume II, No. 3, 1977.
13. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, New York: Vintage Books, 1968, p. 7.
14. Tony Brown, interview with author, March, 1986.
15. Jean Baudrillard's text, *Oublier Foucault*, remains the best contemporary critique or representational conceptions of power and of the desire for catastrophe which is essential to the logic of the order of simulacra.
16. M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 35.

patchworks

fragments on fashion
threads of thought
discursive lines

product	text
process	texture
affect	textuality



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THE FASHION APPARATUS AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF POSTMODERN SUBJECTIVITY

Julia Emberley

The production of a not-self we could call a *displaced sense of origin-ality*. In an effort to retrieve a sense of an original self, the urban consumer creates the self-image of a personal aesthetic, or a style that signals originality, so as to distinguish itself from the uniform conformity deployed by the fashion apparatus that threatens and succeeds in denying self-knowledge and self-expression. Fashion — the production of seasonal products for mass consumption — is bracketed by style-consumers as mundane, ordinary and devoid of a creative drive desparately needed by the individual-subject searching for personal style. The fashion apparatus and its strategies for producing consumption depend on this "negative" reaction to the products it makes available; the fashion apparatus operates on the basis of its own denial, producing its own lack so as to (re)produce desire(s) for the image(s) that will fill the w/hole of the self and its experience of being. Fashion produces the not-being or the anti-fashion subject.

A British fashion magazine describes the anti-fashion tendency inherent in the fashion conscious subject as follows:

> To be fashion conscious or 'fashionable' is still deemed to make you 'fickle', 'shallow', 'dumb', 'ephemeral', 'fascist', 'fashist' (and some people do aspire to this!!!) — But in the real inner reaches of

your outer limits... anything is possible — even liking clothes...[1]

Fashion has a bad reputation and the consumer implicitly or explicitly knows that there exists a fashion that could be characterized as *homogenous* — clothing rack after clothing rack of the same article of clothing with marginal variations in cut, colour and shape — and *expressionless*, precisely because of the repetition that neutralizes the effect of being unique or individual; and finally, *totalizing*, in that the fashion display insists on a coherent coordination of the parts, whether they be colour-coordinated or shape-coordinated along similar or dissimilar lines, into a whole that gives rise to the "total look".

What fashion offers in order to escape the regime of fashion is diversity, and the freedom of choice to create an individually unique style that is specially marked with personal and artistic idiosyncracies.

Inscribed in the fashion ethic is the insistence that fashion does not want to restrict individual imagination or imperialize the body for its own interest. What the fashion apparatus offers, then, is not fashion, per se, but the opportunity for the individual to create a fashion, to liberate oneself from the fetters of a mundane daily existence that denies pleasure, joy, a sense of self and an experience of being. And yet, in order to produce the space of desire for that "liberation" the fashion apparatus must ensure that sufficient alienation, self-loathing, boredom and sterility exist. In the necessary production of its own contradictions, the fashion apparatus holds the subject within a spectrum of choices which close at the extreme ends of total freedom, on the one hand, and absolute control, on the other.

The Body as Text and the Texture of the Body

In a passage from William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying*, Addie, the character whose bodily-consciousness is the "I" of the text, describes the process of sexual and spiritual celebration and alienation that occurs between herself and her lover, a local preacher, and between herself and her husband, Anse. In the following excerpt, clothing becomes the dominant metaphor for shaping the experience of Addie's body to various forms of her sexual being in the religion of her world, her family and her self:

> ...I would think of sin as I would think of the clothes we both wore in the world's face, of the circumspection necessary because he was he and I was I; the sin the more utter and terrible since he was the instrument ordained by God who created the sin, to sanctify that sin He had created. While I waited for him in the woods, waiting for him before he saw me, I would think of him as dressed in sin. I would think of him as thinking of me as dressed

> also in sin, he the more beautiful since the garment which he had exchanged for sin was sanctified. I would think of the sin as garments which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air...
>
> Then it was over... I would never again see him coming swift and secret to me in the woods dressed in sin like a gallant garment already blowing aside with the speed of his secret coming.
>
> But for me it was not over, I mean, over in the sense of beginning and ending, because to me there was no beginning nor ending to anything then.[2]

Modernist obsessions with the internal and intensive experience of disintegration surface in this passage as a description of the disintegration of Addie's subjectivity. The interface between her "self" and "the world's face" is the surface of her body — its flesh — a common boundary between two spaces of opposing identities that cause her body to implode and disintegrate under the pressure of their irreconcilability. This passage also has the appearance of being characteristically post-modern, in that the body has been turned inside out and exploded out to the surface where experience has become an outer garment, an extension that inscribes the body with meaning(s). Here, the body is an open space, an open text, with "no beginning nor ending"; a body inscribed by the vestimentary symbols of a dead and meaningless corpus of religious doctrine: dressed in sin, stripped of her soul, Addie is re-dressed with guilt, shame and sin. The texture of Addie's body has been re-contextualized as a religious text. Stripped naked and re-clothed, the heurmeneutic body uncovers its intimacy, secrecy and hidden meaning, in the same way the preacher discloses and interprets the original scripture in order to recreate, or rather reproduce, or better still refashion wo/man in the image of the model woman: the unidentified god, the god with no body, the nobody.

Addie's experience of sexual and spiritual alienation described and inscribed through the metaphorical agency of clothing, translates in the present world economy of fashion as fashion's complicity in the concrete manufacture of alienation. The fashion apparatus operates on the basis of a primary contradiction: it claims to fabricate within you your being, your individual sense of expression, while at the same time forcing you, through its freedom of choices, to conform to the market uniformity of seasonal products; what is produced here is alienation, alienation from self and one another because of the way fashion negates life, by becoming the dominant repository of what it means to live and to have a "life-style".

Being fashionable inverts life into the concrete manufacture of alienation *from* life, thereby inducing a process of mechanical reproduction. There is no umblical cord here to be severed but rather an electrical plug to be plugged into the wall to turn on the blow dryer, the iron, the washing machine, the electric toothbrush and other therapeutic commodities that will make you feel better about yourself and loved as only your benevolent mother could love you: the guise of the benevolent state that perpetually keeps you at a conveniently arrested stage of irresponsibility and juvenility, so as to answer your every need and in so doing produce a reality of the real through the image: to produce the real image.

* * *

> The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the *total occupation* of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its world. Modern economic production extends its dictatorship extensively and intensively. In the least industrialized places, its reign is already attested by a few star commodities and by the imperialist domination imposed by regions which are ahead in the development of productivity. In the advanced regions, social space is invaded by a continuous superimposition of geological layers of commodities. At this point in the 'second industrial revolution', alienated consumption becomes for the masses a duty supplementary to alienated production. It is *all the sold labor* of a society which globally becomes the *total commodity* for which the cycle must be continued. For this to done, the total commodity has to return as a fragment to the fragmented individual, absolutely separated from the productive forces operating as a whole.[3]

The globalizing tendency of fashion to dominate a world perspective moves both intensively and extensively — moving inward into "the real inner reaches" (the immediate, daily and local experience of the supermarket check-out counter or bank lineup that mitigate against an "ideal" existence) and moving outward into "the outer limits": space, the East, the exotic, and the Third World. Within a global framework the fashion apparatus circulates and recirculates the language of representation of the Other both on the level of the person and body (anonymously) and on the level of the nation, but with de-politicized neutrality or impersonality. The imaginary vehicles of a "first world" fashion apparatus can be seen to impersonate a Third World "reality". This process personifies the living experience of the Third World in the one-dimensional persona of the paper real-image.

Economic exploitation of the Third World in the fashion industry is well known at the level of clothing production where cheap labour and the comparatively low cost of raw materials, natural fibres and fabrics have been and continue to be easily appropriable commodities for purposes of augmenting the scale of western capital and profits. That these forms of economic exploitation have recently reterritorialized into the sphere of cultural imperialism, signifies an important and complex moment in the socio-economic relations of the West and the Third World. Consider briefly Christian Dior's latest make-up line, entitled *Les Coloniales*. The advertisement contains the framed face of a woman that has been un-naturally whited except for the exotic colours encircling the eyes like the plumage on a wild parrot. It is also interesting to note the use of *anthuriums* with their drooping phalluses that surround her face. The image signifies a colonial elite or the imperialist class of phallocracy. While the geographical space represented is that of the Third World, the indigenous inhabitants have been displaced. This displacement follows from an initial displacement previously used by the fashion apparatus where the native black woman, for example, is eroticized on the basis of her exotic-otherness and exploited for her representational value as such. Having burned out the commercial value of this image, the fashion apparatus has returned to the western image-scape and a hyper-subjected representation of the western white-faced woman. The western woman, whose already white face has been layered with an artificial white mask, has been re-eroticized in this advertisement as an exotic-other, western-subject. The result of this otherization of the western subject is the double displacement of the black Third World subject. And also, a reconfiguration of the Other has taken place where the Other becomes for the western subject an interior danger projected out to the surface, in this case in the form of a white mask, in order to exorcise the fear of difference and alienation by covering over its real presence, both to itself and within the Third World.

There are two co-extensive strategies of power at work in the fashion apparatus I would like to draw attention to: first, the continuing cultural imperialism of the Third World by the western fashion apparatus that transgresses national, political and social boundaries in order to discover new material for its creative exploits and in so doing produces an image — an aesthetics of poverty — of the Third World for first world audiences, consumers and producers that displaces other discursive and visual realities of the Third World; thereby masking the relations of exploitation, oppression and imperialism that exist on socio-economic and political levels between these two worlds; and secondly, to bring home the immediate concerns of the local urban space where a kind of aesthetic "gentrification" is taking place and pushing the ghetto, the site

of a violent creative energy, (punk, for example) further and further to the margins of the urban-scape, to the point on the horizon where the land mass disappears from view. Relations of exploitation and oppression are masked and made invisible by an aesthetics of poverty, sterility, waste and death produced by the fashion apparatus. These two strategies, the one reaching out globally, extensively and the other turning inward, intensively, form a complicit w/hole where the fashion apparatus fragments the identity of the consumer-subject along divided lines and boundaries of an (inter-)national and local being.

A Fashion Text: John Galliano's "Visions of Afghanistan: Layers of Suiting, Shirting and Dried-Blood Tones"

For purposes of theorizing the productive and non-productive effects of the fashion apparatus, I have chosen a fashion text from the popular British fashion magazine, *Harper's and Queen*. The March 1985 publication of *Harper's and Queen* presents a spring collection, entitled "SPRINGLOOSE", with an opening portrait that exemplifies, both in its discursive and visual text, the strategies and techniques involved in producing an aesthetics of poverty, waste and death that displace the internal and external problems of exploitation, imperialism and alienation manufactured by the demands of western late capitalism.

The discursive text:

Foucault's distinction between the utopia and the heterotopia, quoted in the following passage, provides a useful model for discussing the discursive effects of Galliano's fashion text:

> *Utopias* afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold: they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*; heterotopias desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve

our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.[4]

Fashion promises the utopic experience, an untroubled region designated the "free-world" where the individual liberates her self from the burden of a regulated and mundane existence and transforms daily life into an ideal of endless and fantastic possibilities of being in the world. And yet, its strategy for producing the desire(s) for this utopic experience can only be described, I think, as heterotopic: a multiple and diverse field of discontinuous and incongruous spectacles lacking in syntactical continuity. In the specific case of *Harper's and Queen*, we have John Galliano's "Visions of Afghanistan: Layers of Suiting, Shirting and Dried-Blood Tones", a title and image that is both thematically and syntactically heterotopic; in the incongruous catalogue of words 'suiting, shirting and dried-blood tones', "and" signifies the production of a coherent list of three related elements that is not born out by this particular chain of signifiers; words differ from themselves — the unconventional conversion of articles of clothing, suits and shirts, into activities of ways of dressing and the peculiar mixture of the concrete dried-blood as a modifier for the impressionistic 'tones' — and words differ from one another — though the sequence begins with an alliterative homology between 'suiting' and 'shirting' the sequence is disrupted and stops dead in its tracks by the modifier 'dried-blood' used to designate the dominant colour motif. An unusual choice for a colour preference because of its disturbingly human, or rather, inhuman referent: the reification of the body as commodity where blood, in this case, is valued for its colour potential in the circuit of exchange between production and consumption and, in the process, loses its connection to human life and the living body — a deadly transformation of the real into the imaginary.

In the syntax of Galliano's title we find the heterotopia, a heterogeneous splitting and fracturing which is translated in the "world of fashion" as a multiple and spectacular field of types and tropes that circulate on the surface of visual and textual representations. The fashion-effect of his title dismantles narrative continuity of presentation because syntax is broken, dismembered, shattered and replaced by a "layered effect" — horizontal syntax, discontinuous and fragmented, gives way to a vertical effect of imaginary and semantic layers. In fashion, images cut across traditional barriers of limits of representation and efface, along the way, differences and historical specificities, thus producing, instead, a unitary effect of congenial pluralities that apparently 'hold-together' without contradictions.

What is also interesting in the title of Galliano's text is the site of Afghanistan as the mythical image-scape from which he draws creative


SPRING LOOSE

RAVE NEW LONDON MAKES THE BIGGEST VIBES IN '85. MODERN PSYCHADELIA MOVES IN WITH A REVIVAL OF OP-ART PRINTS AND SKINNY RIBS. BRANDISH A BARE MIDRIFF WITH CATSUIT LEGGINGS AS A SECOND SKIN. COLOURS RUN RIOT THROUGH BLUE, AQUAMARINE AND LIME TO PINK, ORANGE AND BURGUNDY. TAKE A HINT FROM THE HIPPY TRAIL AND ADD IT TO THE TECHNOLOGICAL EIGHTIES

PRINTED COTTON AND SUITING THREE-QUARTER LENGTH COAT, £450; striped waistcoat, £170; deep burgundy n voile overshirt, £122; sheepskin hat, £50; broken glasses, £5, all by John Galliano, from Browns, 23 South Molton St

GALLIANO'S VISIONS OF AFGHANISTAN: LAYERS OF SUITING, SHIRTING AND DRIED-BLOOD TON

insight. But this mythical landscape is not properly a site of utopian possibilities and the dream world of a benevolent otherworldliness; more accurately, it is a distopic vision which embodies a spatial and mythical coherence that is characteristically nightmarish — the nightmare of Third World poverty with its threat of extinction because of famine, disease and war that make it difficult and even impossible to stabilize minimal living conditions for the large groups of indigenous people.

Galliano's incongruous visionary criteria demonstrates more than a heterotopic shattering of a relationship between life and language. Afghanistan, the site of creative exploitation, represents a distopic heterotopia: a *dis-heterotopia* where the borders of obliteration, evaporation and extinction converge in the single image of dried-blood. In a similar way the first world experiences the possibility of its own evaporation and extinction through the threat of nuclear war: to bring home the distopia to the mythical homeland of the West. If this image-scape has any spatial roots in the imaginary, it is in the mythological dream-scape of the nightmare where the fear of dying, resonances of death, and dried-blood tones predominate.

The visual text:

When looking at the picture of the woman in the introductory fashion portrait I am struck by the unconventionality of the fashion model, model woman; s/he is not beautiful, perfect, smoothed and glossed over in ways that conventionally exemplify the fashion magazine object(ive). S/he has the face of one sandworn, rough, lined and marked by imperfections — the impression contrived is one of being make-up-less, though the effect of no make-up is one that has clearly been produced theatrically. Her hair shoots out in all directions, scattered, unruly, Medusa-like — the appearance of one who cares little for appearance; but again it is a calculated disarray. Her spectacles sit precariously on her face, dislodged from direct contact with her eyes, they appear broken and worn, a prop for the histrionics of an "adventure narrative." In the list of clothes and prices provided by the fashion magazine in the upper right hand corner, I am surprised to find a reference to the glasses; the description reads "broken glasses £5". A joke? The fashion consumer can pay for the appearance of a broken commodity, a brand new pair of glasses dressed up with medical tape applied in band aid fashion to the bridge and the arm joint: the production of a purchasable broken commodity and one that "works" in that it produces the desirable fiction-effect.

The multiple points of view on fashion — aesthetic, socio-economic, political — converge and separate, bind together and blurr apart; vision extends outside the immediate photographic spectacle and returns to the

spectacle at hand: broken spectacles, broken vision, short-sighted or far-sighted, the wide gaze and the limited point of view. Galliano's "visions" of Afghanistan telescope that vast geographical and cultural spatial distance between the West and the Third World, hold the bridge between these worlds together with little more than a band-aid, in order, perhaps, to keep the (in)stability of those "visions" both imaginary and intact. But his visions explore and exploit, occluding utopian hallucinations or dreams with a distopic series of representations, like the old text she protects under her arm, bound together by a pretty ribbon, so as to keep it from falling apart, intact but inaccessible. And what does the very old and worn text contain? Traditional knowledge, historical understanding? A different currency in the exchange of "seeing" where to "see" is to know, to acquire knowledge. In her other hand she holds open another worn text but the invasion of the western gaze disrupts her activity. She has the look of one caught in the act, guilty, paranoid and party to clandestine activity.

If I were to put a narrative to this visual text, it would be in the genre of the adventure story, a story of intrigue and danger, the crossing of unwelcome and hostile boundaries, the near possibility of being caught, trapped in an underworld of surreptitious cultural exchange where her flight dramatizes the bringing of knowledge to the Third World or an illicit activity, such as reading texts that are traditionally restricted to "men's eyes only" — a James Bond scenario, except that the central character is a woman, and one whose aesthetic practice loosens the bonds of a conventional feminine identity. Her role mimics that of the male hero, but her heroism is one that appears to take larger risks. The unwelcome and hostile boundaries that s/he must cross-over are ideological, sexual, psychological and social as well as spatial and temporal. Her symbolic existence plays out a dangerous and terrifying composition. To read this scene allegorically would be to see the risk wo/men take in moving out of conventional identity-burdened spaces into new and exciting spaces that are liberating but at the same time frightening; once the mask has been chosen s/he must wear it in perpetuity lest the cover becomes discovered and rendered unconvincing and improbable. Her constant mobility, paramount to the illusion of her "self," threatens to become undone by the close of the camera shutter that catches the image, fixing her irrevocably.

The nihilistic experience of post-modernism we could attribute to its erasure of history, to the destruction of the cycle of life and death by levelling experience onto a continuous plane of "change", that is constituted by the eternal reproduction of the "same," albeit, in an apparently new set of clothes; the cycle is no longer a cycle but an unbroken chain of death and mechanical reproduction, a "vacunt" (Sex

Pistols) reproduction of the image that glosses over and smooths out the sur-face of the w/hole body effacing under the conditions of its transformations into the idealism of "being", imperfections, anomalies, differences, mortalities even, all of which have been pushed under, buried under the weight of a systematic and mechanical "womb-to-tomb" post-modern life-style — the parody of which is to be found in the death-like appearance of punks whose ghastly shades of white and black and skeleton disfigurations of the body remind us of another meaning embedded in the phrase "late capitalism".

The relationship between Fashion and Death is an old one. In Giacomo Leopardi's "The Dialogue of Fashion and Death" (1824), Fashion persuades her sister Death that she is a worthy and important accomplice to Death's desires and aims and, significantly, that her success depends on the desire for immortality (where immortality is the refusal and denial of death's finality and inevitability). In the first passage quoted, Fashion makes clear her capacity and talent for bringing the body closer to its destruction. In the second passage, Fashion explains her distinctive relationship to the desire for immortality on the part of her subjects, that eventually becomes their demise. In dialogue with Death, Fashion explains:

> ...you from the very start went for people and blood, while I content myself for the most part with beards, hairstyles, clothes, furniture, fine houses and the like. But in fact I have not failed... to play a few tricks that could compared with yours, as for instance to pierce ears, lips and noses, and to rip them with the knicknacks I hang in the holes; to scorch the flesh of men with the red-hot irons I make them brand themselves with for beauty's sake; to deform the heads of infants with bandages and other contraptions, making it a rule that everyone in a certain country has to have the same shape of head... to cripple people with narrow boots; to choke their breath and make their eyeballs pop with the use of tight corsets... I persuade and force all civilized people to put up every day with a thousand difficulties and a thousand discomforts, and often with pain and agony, and some even to die gloriously, for the love they bear me.[5]
>
> Little by little, but mostly in recent times, I have assisted you by consigning to disuse and oblivion those labours and exercises that do good to the body, and have introduced or brought into esteem innumerable others that damage the body in a thousand ways, and shorten life. Apart from this I have put into the world such regulations and customs that life itself, as regards both the body and the soul, is more dead than alive... And whereas in ancient

> times you had no other farmlands but graves and caverns, where in the darkness you sowed bones and dust, seeds that bear no fruit; now you have estates in the sunlight; and people who move and go about on their own feet are, so to speak, your property and at your disposal from the moment they are born, although you have not yet harvested them... Finally, as I saw that many people had preened themselves with the wish to be immortal, that is, not to die completely, since a fair part of themselves would not fall into your hands, however much I know that this was nonsense, and that when they or others lived in the memories of men, they lived, so to speak, a mockery, and enjoyed their fame no more than they suffered from the dampness of their graves... The result is that nowadays, if anyone dies, you may be sure that there is not a crumb of him that isn't dead...[6]

The fashion apparatus presents the style of immortality, a brand new life-style where nothing decays or gets old, masking death, waste, poverty and absence. Punk, on the other hand, localizes the style war on the urban-scape, producing an anti-aesthetic style that engages the violence, waste and poverty of the urban-other. The cynicism of punk effectively amplifies the "hate-system," reinscribing violence onto the body in an exaggerated fashion by piercing the flesh with safety-pins and perpetrating violence in the "punk-boot" that kicks back the waste of the bourgeoisie picked out of their garbage cans and retrieved from foot to hand to foot again in a violent gesture designed to scare the shit out of "them."

The final cooptation and colonization of punk-style by the fashion apparatus as a style that has come to signify a subversive and sub-cultural way of life on the urban front, and the definition of its cultural parameters produced by this process of signification, raises questions as to whether it is possible to ad-dress fashion as a potentially subversive activity. While anti-fashion may have sporadic and intermittent success at exposing the dominant and repressive fashion discourse or "life-style," the reproductive tendencies of post-modern late capitalism effectively neutralize and dissolve its potential through an inevitable re-creation of its process. The fashionability of "style-wars," characteristic of the emergence of other transgressive urban forms such as grafitti and break-dancing during the late 70s, as well as punk, has become the dominant critical mode of the post-modernist trend.

What is generally understood as a clash of identifiable styles can also be read as a style war against the very notion of identity and the final closures that are placed on the urban subject. In an effort to break away from the ultimate closures that are placed on bodily-consciousness by the

fashion apparatus, a certain stylistic madness is emerging where all possible and imaginable styles converge on the fashion subject; covered in layers of historical differences, the subject bears the weight of a heterogeneous and multiple explosion of styles. The result, one could imagine, would be the final collapse and implosion of the body, burnt-out from the pressures of the post-modern pace.

The desire for closure emerges as a desire for death where death, itself, embodied in the confrontation of punk, on the one hand, and in the aesthetics of poverty produced by the dominant style apparatus on the other, has come to be our *life-style*. To be fixed within the confines of one, single identity, and to desire immortality through the perpetuation of an image, is, in the final instance, to be condemned to a living death. In the words of Buffo the clown, from Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*:

> It is given to few to shape themselves, as I have done, as we have, as you have done, young man, and, in that moment of choice — lingering deliciously among the crayons; what eyes shall I have, what mouth... exists a perfect freedom. But, once the choice is made, I am condemned, therefore, to be "Buffo" in perpetuity. Buffo for ever; long live Buffo the Great! Who will live on as long as some child somewhere remembers him as a wonder, a marvel, a monster, a thing that, had he not been invented, should have been, to teach little children that *truth* about the filthy ways of the filthy world.[7]

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Notes

1. From *i-D* magazine, No. 32, December/January, 1985-6.
2. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (New York: Vintage Books, 1930, 1957), pp. 166-7.
3. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), #42.
4. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeaology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. xxiii.
5. Giacomo Leopardi, *The Moral Essays, Operette Morali* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 51.
6. Giacomo Leopardi, *The Moral Essays*, p. 53.
7. Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (London: Picador, 1984), p. 122.

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A TALE OF INSCRIPTION/FASHION STATEMENTS

Kim Sawchuk

"... so many political institutions of cryptography."

Jacques Derrida
Scribble (writing-power)

Still Life

Let me begin with two allegories, two dreams, for it is precisely the question of allegory and representation in relationship to the social sciences, particularly cultural studies and feminism, which is at issue in this paper. The first is taken from literature, the second from experience.

In Franz Kafka's short story, "In the Penal Colony", an explorer is invited to the colony to observe and report on its system and method of punishment. At the colony, the explorer is introduced to a machine, a fantastic machine upon which the condemned are placed and their punishment meted. However, prior to their placement on this machine the condemned have been told neither their sentence nor their punishment; knowledge of their transgression and the lesson they are to learn from it will be inscribed on their bodies by vibrating needles as the inviolable dictums of the community such as "Honour thy Superiors" or "Be just" are written into their flesh in a beautiful and decorative script.[1]

Meanwhile, it is November in Toronto, and my mother visits me. We travel to Harbourfront which is packed with holiday shoppers. The crowds circulate throughout the complex amongst the glittering gold and silver decorations in a frenzy of buying and selling. Mannequins have

been strategically placed throughout the mall to draw attention to and create desire for the fashions that are for sale.

As we approach these dolls our sensibilities are startled. What we have taken to be plastic models are, in fact, flesh and blood women imitating replicas of real women; representations of representations, women who cannot move, cannot respond to the excited gestures of this mob of consumers. Having exchanged their mobility for a wage, they are compelled to stand in awkward poses for extremely long durations of time while curiosity seekers gaze at them, poke fingers in their direction to force a smile, a movement, and photograph this spectacle of female beauty.

The Object of Fashion

Fashion: what, or whom, are the objects of its discourse? It is a subject without the institutional support or legitimacy granted to other academic subjects, save a few obscure accounts of changes in dress and costume, fleeting references to fashion in the history of European commerce and trade, and the occasional semiotic analysis.[2] What is most conspicuous is the lack of material on the subject, a subject which raises both metaphysical and political questions.

Perhaps this is because, as a topic, we do not know how to frame it, how to address the questions it asks of us. Films, books, photographs, paintings, are all bound by a border that renders them analysable. However, the question of what constitutes the field of fashion is far more ambiguous. As I will argue, it is a phenomenon which threatens the very stability of segregated zones: man/woman, subject/object, the personal/political, reality/illusion. The body, lying in both the realm of the public and private, is a metaphor for the essential instability of objects in their relationship to each other. Like a fence, or the bar between signified and signifier, it is bound to both, but the property of neither.

As Kafka's allegory reminds us, when we are interested in fashion, we are concerned with relations of power and their articulation at the level of the body, a body intimately connected to society, but which is neither prior to it, nor totally determined by it. For example, in the 1950's Frantz Fanon commented on the French colonial government's attempt to destroy Algerian society by outlawing the veil under the guise of liberating Algerian women.

> The way people clothe themselves, together with the traditions of dress and finery the custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness, that is to say, the one that is most immediately perceptible.[3]

Whether naked or clothed, the body bears the scatalogical marks, the historical scars of power. Fashionable behaviour is never simply a question of creativity or self-expression; it is also a mark of colonization, the "anchoring" of our bodies, particularly the body of women, into specific positions, and parts of the body in the line of the gaze.

In this respect, it is ironic that the French Fashion conglomerate Christian Dior's summer make-up line was titled "Les Coloniales". "Les Coloniales" with an 'e' on the end to signify woman as the colonized subject at the same time as she is elevated to the level of the exotic. European woman, whose unveiled white skin, blue eyes exuding "the coolness of water and shade", peers from behind a cluster of bright red flowers. From a distance, these flowers seem to be a traditional headscarf. On closer inspection it is clear that they are anthriums, whose phallic resemblance cannot be coincidental. The bloody history of French colonialism and the Algerian war is magically transformed, re-written eyebrow pencils and lipgloss. The white light of the camera attempts to erase the lines and creases of this history which might be sedimented on the face of this woman; "White mythology," a cool and distant look has displaced the face of the desert. "Les Coloniales" is an appropriate third metaphor in our triumverate of allegories.

Theoretically, it is tempting to interpret Kafka's allegory, Harbourfront, and "Les Coloniales", as relatively clear examples of how ideology

functions; patriarchal ideology to repress women, white mythology to distort the reality of colonialism. However, these images are more paradoxical than is obvious at first sight. "Fashion", like "woman" is not an undifferentiated object in-it-self which suddenly appears on the stage of history; nor should it be easily reduced to a mere reflection of social and economic developments, to what Freud called a "master key" which seems to account for the manifestation of the object. Within both Marxism and feminism there is the tendency to treat the object as simply a reflection of social movements, or as an index of the horrific effects of capitalism. It is this analysis which currently dominates the feminist and Marxist interpretation of fashion and popular culture.

For example, Anne Oakley, in her section on fashion and cosmetics in *Subject Women*, says that certain styles of dress reflect specific ideologies. In periods of feminist rebellion, women have called for changes in dress towards "a plainer, more masculine style of dress."[4] In the modern era, types of dress, such as work boots or spike heels indicate either the radical or conservative nature of female subjects in a relatively transparant manner.

Furthermore, women's relationship to fashion and the fashion industry is said to reflect the positioning of women within patriarchal capitalism. Women in European cultures have been socialised to be passive objects: they "appear," while men "act." Many feminists draw upon John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*,[5] in which he argues that the history of European painting shows that the looks of women are merely displays for men to watch, while women watch themselves being looked at. This determines both relationships between men and women, women's relationship to other women, and women's relationship to themselves.[6] Whenever women look at themselves, they are acting like men. Laura Mulvey's seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", develops this concept of the gaze in its three manifestations, objectification, narcissism, and fetishism, as predominantly gender-determined and male, in relationship to film.[7] Like the women at Harbourfront, whether through economic necessity or their internalization of patriarchal values, they turn themselves into objects for this gaze and further reinforce this phallic economy of desire.

Women's love of clothes, cosmetics, jewellery, their obsession with style and fashion, reinforces the myth that we are narcissitic and materialistic. In turn this reinforces capitalism, which depends upon this obsession with our bodies for the marketing of new products. Griselda Pollack's work expands on this thesis by showing how the solidification of the identity between a woman's body and the notion "for sale" is an extension of the tradition of European high art within popular culture.[8]

There is an element of truth to these arguments, given the historical development of the advertising and clothing industry. But they tend to fall within the trap of decoding all social relations within patriarchy and capitalism as essentially repressive and homogeneous in its effects. As Teresa de Lauretis explains, the visual world is treated as a series of static representations. It is assumed that images are literally absorbed by the viewer, that each image is immediately readable and meaningful in and of itself, regardless of the context, the circumstances of its production, circulation and reception. The viewer, except of course for the educated critic who has learned to see beyond this level of deception, is assumed to be immediately susceptible to these images.[9]

However, fashion, like social being, is constituted through the effects of language, through the circulation and vagaries of discourses which affect the very nature of its images and its objects. Derrida writes:

> Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each "element" — phoneme or grapheme — being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this textile, is the *text* produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.[10]

It for this reason that I emphasize that these inscriptions of the social take place *at* the level of the body, not *upon* it. We must take care in our own theoretical discourse not to position the body or the social in a relationship of radical alterity to one another. Neither fashion nor woman can be seen as objects determined simply by two variables, such as sex and class, for they are constructed in this fabric of intertextual relations. At any specific historical juncture, fashion is located in a discourse on health (corsets, suntanning, fitness), beauty (ideal shapes of breasts, buttocks or lips), morality and sexuality (dress as sign of one's moral fibre), the nation and the economy (the question of the veil in Algeria), and location (climate, geography, seasonal variations), to name only a few possibilities. These discourses involve the body, produce the body as a textured object with multi-dimensional layers, touched by the rich weave of history and culture.

The intertextual constitution of subjectivity and objects has repercussions for what has been the standard Marxist and feminist interpretation of fashion; fashion as a reflection of the social onto the body, fashion as the repression of the natural body; fashion simply as a commodity to be resisted; fashion as substitute for the missing phallus. Derrida's description of intertextuality is, I believe, theoretically related to the concept of allegory developed by Walter Benjamin, and to Freud's critique of previous methods of dream analysis. Both writers challenge the relative

transparancy of the object as simple sign, symbol or icon.[11]

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud noted that the difference between his theory and past methods of dream analysis was that for him, "...memory is not present at once, but several times over, that is, laid down (*neiderlegt*) in various species of indications [*Zeichen*, lit. signs]..."[12] He emphasized that dream interpretation must begin its analysis "en detail," not "en masse," as dreams are of a composite character, and as such, are often confusing.[13] He suggested that there were three understandings of this relationship, and three techniques of dream analysis: the symbolic, which "seems to be a relic and a mark of a former identity;"[14] decoding, which "treats events as a kind of cryptography in which each sign can be translated into another sign having a known meaning in accordance with a fixed key"[15]; and a third method which is one of interpretation, of deciphering.

> My procedure is not so convenient as the popular decoding method which translates any given piece of a dream's content by a fixed key. I on the contrary am prepared to find that the piece of content may conceal a different meaning when it occurs in different people or in various contexts.[16]

The memory of events, and of history, is never completely transparent; it is constantly rewritten or overdetermined by present cultural practices. For this reason, language and culture should not be understood as symbolic, for this implies that they are fixed within the chain of signification or in relationship to the "signified." It is this critique of culture as symbolic (i.e., expressive) that is at play in Benjamin's cultural analysis.

Benjamin's study of baroque drama and its allegorical nature critiques the concept of the symbol from the perspective of its ahistoricity. "The measure of time for the experience of the symbol is the mystical instant in which the symbol assumes the meaning in its hidden, and if one might say so, wooded interior."[17] Instead, allegory treats each object as a cultural ruin in which the temporality of all life is encapsulated. Quoting Dante, Benjamin noted that the basic characteristic of allegory is its absolute fluidity, where "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else".[18]

> The basic characteristic of allegory, however, is ambiguity, multiplicity of meaning; allegory and the baroque, glory in richness and meaning. But the richness of this ambiguity is the richness of extravagance; nature, however, according to the old rule of metaphysics, and indeed, also of mechanics, is bound by the law of economy. Ambiguity is therefore always the opposite of clarity

and unity of meaning.[19]

A shop window, a photograph, or the line of a song, these fragments or ruins are the most significant aspect of any dream or culture. It is this potential richness of objects, their infinite number of associations, and their possible reconstellation in another field which makes dream analysis, and all interpretation, tentative rather than subject to rational decoding.

The "meaning" of cultural phenomena is neither expressive of one or two primary social relations, nor is it "symbolic". One cannot assume that a crucifix worn by Madonna is an expression of her essentially Christian nature, or that the wearing of high heels reflects a woman's identification with a patriarchal sexual economy.[20] Part of the challenge of alternative fashion adherents has been to dislodge and re-appropriate the traditional significance of fetishised objects. Spike heels, fishnet stockings and crucifixes juxtaposed with black leathers and exaggeratedly teased hairdos were all adopted as costumes by punk women. Not only did this condense different and often disparate styles, but it pushed the most common indices of femininity to their extreme limits, in order to draw attention to its artificiality and construction. Of course, as in the case of Madonna, these trends were re-appropriated by capitalism and the fashion industry as quickly as they appeared, necessitating yet another transformation in style for those interested in establishing an alternative to the industry.

Feminist criticism must regard events, objects, images, as cultural signs or allegories which do not have one fixed or stable meaning, but which derive their significance both from their place in a chain of signifiers, a chain which is itself unstable because of the constant intervention of historical change. Allegories are like the fragments of a dream in which remembrances of the past leave their historical traces, at the same time overdetermining future interpretations of events by an individual subject.

This makes the question of political or aesthetic judgment more complex than the discourses of Marxism and feminism which have only allowed the dichtomization of the world into polarities; man/woman, capital/labour, bourgeiosie/proletariat. Judgments have to be made within the context of discursive situations making a fixed position on any one issue problematic. For example, as Fanon notes in the case of Algeria, the veil was assigned a significance by the colonist that it had not had. "To the colonist offense against the veil, the colonised opposes the cult of the veil."[21] In other words, it was the highly charged atmosphere of the national liberation struggle, as well as the attempt by the French to "Westernise" Algerian women which lead to the polarization of positions.

Likewise, within the history of the dress reform movement, judgments about 'fashion' itself must be understood in the context of our predominantly Christian heritage. Contrary to the assumption of Anne Oakley, an anti-fashion discourse cannot be assumed to be inherently feminist, for it has often been tied to a discourse which is intent on repressing women's potentially subversive sexuality and returning them to the proper sphere of the home. In many writings from the early 19th and 20th century, fashion was anthropomorphized into a tyrant, who was said to deprive all, and women in particular, of their freedom and money, block them from more fulfilling pursuits, jeopardize their health, and drop them into the stagnant waters of immorality. As Pope Pius said in 1940, women who were bowing to the tyranny of fashion were "like insane persons who unwittingly threw themselves into fires and rivers."[22] In fact the dress reform movements of the early 20th century were often less concerned with making women more comfortable than with returning them to the proper sphere of the home; they were part of the movement for social purity. Just as improper dress indicated a woman's lack of reason and her immorality, a proper form of dress was said to enhance her "natural" beauty, emphasizing her health and freshness, and promising her fecundity.[23]

A woman's concern for the aestheticization of her body was seen as a sign of her unreasonableness, her potential weakness in contrast to the rationality of men. The argument for austerity in dress and the return to more neutral forms not only valorizes what is seen as characteristic of men (their rationality), but there is the possibility that an anti-fashion sentiment feeds into an already existing discourse of woman's superficiality, duplicity, and the threat that her sexuality poses to men.

Not only does this discourse falsely believe that there is a natural beauty, a core of being beyond socialization, but this position can be accused of a typically 'masculinist' belief that one can be transcendent to one's body; to one's culture, and immune to the seductions of the material world. Although one should not invest one's identity in crass consumer behaviour, it is neverthless true that you are what you eat, wear, and consume; as Spinoza said, there is no separation between the formation of mind and its ability to recollect, to remember, and the impingment of the senses onto our subjectivities. To believe otherwise is to engage in a Cartesian opposition between the 'in-itself' and the 'for-itself'.

The problem in all of these cases is not that we respond in a sensual manner to the world, but the fixing or territorialization of desire into a restricted economy: the closure on erotic pleasure that the culture industry can create by reinforcing and fixing very specific notions of what is desirable in women, in men, in sexuality, in clothing, and its hegemonic

control over the "imaginary" through its domination of cultural mediums. While promising Nirvana to all, the restricted economy limits the flow of goods and services to those with access to capital thus reproducing the forms of class domination; it creates desires while denying them and making them dependent on the flow of capital. In phrasing the necessary critique of capitalism, one must be careful not to lapse into a discourse of economy and restraint, which opposes the ethics of thrift, hard work, and self-discipline to the 'immorality' and 'decadence' of capitalism. As Neitzsche says in *The Will to Power*, "residues of Christian value judgments are found everywhere in socialistic and positivistic systems. A critique of Christian morality is still lacking."[24] Perhaps capitalism's only saving grace is the decadence that it produces, its excesses and surpluses, that allow the person who delights in its cast-offs to live a parasitical existence on its margins.

To assume that all clothing is reducible to the fashion industry in this restrictive sense, and that all looking, and aestheticization of the body is an objectifying form of commodification is simplistic. As Marx himself noted, objectification is part of the process that allows human beings to create themselves, their social relations, and their history.[25]

As Laura Mulvey has argued the film industry has capitalised on scopophilic pleasure. However, one must be careful in transferring paradigms from film theory, which tends to concentrate solely on the notion of the look, and on the eye as the primary organ of experience. Clothing, the act of wearing fabric, is intimately linked to the skin, and the body, to our tactile senses. As author Jean Rhys reflects, women have been sensitized to the relationship between their personal and cultural history as it is inscribed in their clothing. "It is as though we could measure the degree of happiness of particular events in her life through the clothing she was wearing and the rooms she inhabited."[26] Fashion and clothing — being stylish — can also be a poetic experience, intimately connected to the history and remembrance of the lived body. Again it was Freud who suggested the importance of material objects, of memories of clothing, jewellery, in triggering memory and overdetermining thought and action in both the waking and dream states. Because the fashion industry is constantly resurrecting histories and cultures, placing us all in a perpetual schizophrenic present, the experience of fashion and clothing is contradictory for women. It is, perhaps, this longing for a world of fantasy, this desire for the return, and the smell and touch of the body which the fashion industry (in fact all of our sentimental culture) capitalizes on. The acts of shopping, of wearing an article of clothing, of receiving clothing as a gift, can be expressions of recognition and love between women, or between women and men, which should not be

ignored, though they may fail to transcend the dominant phallic economy of desire.

Simulation and Representation: the Object in Postmodern Culture

The foregoing analysis is not intended to suggest that we totally reject a Marxist analysis of the commodity or the feminist analysis of patriarchy; but the metaphysical assumptions in place within these discourses must be rethought, rearticulated, reinscribed, for they have produced a history of theoretical closure regarding fashion.

The latter, I believe, has come about for two reasons. First, it seems as if the idea of fashion has been articulated so closely with women, the body and the personal, and therefore with doxa, unreason, and the inessential, that it has been ignored by academic institutions dominated by a sort of antiseptic Platonism. Secondly, and concomitantly, the study of fashion has required a methodological shift in the social sciences: not just a shift from the idea of cultural phenomenon as symbolic or expressive of some fundamental social relation, but away from a metaphysics of presence which favours denotation over connotation, as in semiotics, and use-value over exchange value, as in Marxism. This critique of the metaphysics of presence links the work of Benjamin and Derrida to that of Baudrillard. Some aspects of feminist thought, which criticize fashion on the basis of its 'misrepresentation' of women, and advocate a return to the 'natural' body, and 'natural' beauty have also had to be abandoned. Moving beyond these polarizations makes possible a more in-depth reading and understanding of fashion.

A discourse of representation, which is connected to the concept of the symbol, is inappropriate for an analysis of fashion; yet as we have seen, this is the basis of the majority of writings on fashion. What the phenomenon of women imitating models brings into play is the question of the real, of the referent, as in any sense originary in (post-) modern culture. The live mannequins mentioned in my second allegory do not startle us simply because these women have been reified into a stationary position; they shock us precisely because we are living in an age which anticipates an image. The present era, the age of the postmodern, marks a collapsing of the space of these borders. Reality, the referent, is called into question at that juncture where artificial signs are intertextually mixed with 'real elements.'

In this sense, Kafka's allegory, "In the Penal Colony," does not signify a modern form of repressive, administrative power; what it seems to signal is the end of a mapping of a predetermined code of the social onto the body. The latter was a judicial form of power based on the notion of the pre-existing authority of the norm, or the rules of a cohesive community over the individual body. It is the system of justice and

control of the explorer, rather than the keeper of the machine, who will triumph in the postmodern era, the age of late capitalism. Gone is the archaic writing machine which treats the body as a *tabula rasa* upon which a predetermined message is scrawled. In the present age, forms of self-discipline prevail the self colonization of the body and its enslavement in an intertextual web.

Baudrillard's writings explore the demise of any transcendental posture that one may be tempted to adopt in cultural critique. He states:

> The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology still belongs), the second inaugurates an age of simulacra... in which there is no longer any God to recognize His own, nor any judgement to separate the true from the false, the Real from Artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance.[27]

The power of late capitalism is in the imaginary, where subjects are maintained in a circuit of desire and anxiety. Baudrillard's work echoes Kafka's sentiments, and is seminal for further discussions of the implications of the fashion industry within the present economy. "Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or sub-stance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality; hyperreality."[28]

Fashion, with its lack of commitment to this world, with its attempt to create clothes, figures, looks that are irreverent, towards any form of natural beauty, is emblematic of this "precession of simulacra", and the dis-simulation of the logic of the symbol and representation. Baudrillard terms this collapse and instability of border an implosion — "an absorption of the radiating model of causality, of the differential mode of determination with its positive and negative electricity — an implosion of meaning. This is where simulation begins."[29]. Where simulation begins, the notion of representation ends. The failure of the distinction between poles marks the age of the politics of simulation, embodying both the potentially liberating collapse of old borders, while at the same time making possible hegemonic manipulation through control of capital flow and the production of new technologies.

However, the history of this implosion, this circuitry, is not simply a modern phenomenon. Baudrillard's radical deconstruction of these poles is both epistemological and historical. In fact, the archeology of this tendency for the implosion of the space between the imaginary and the real can be seen in the relationship between the naked body and the development of clothing styles. As Anne Hollander shows in her book, *Seeing Through Clothes*, styles of the female body have changed; indeed,

the figures admired and hence idealized within the tradition of nude art are themselves shaped by current clothing styles. For example, in Europe, the upper body, i.e. the breasts, was strictly corsetted to emphasize the sweeping outward curve of the belly. Nude paintings which were thought to reflect the natural shape of the body, in fact retain the shape of these clothes; what is depicted by the artist as a "natural body", a representation of a woman's figure, is itself overdetermined by these fashions.[30] Thus, a neat causal relationship between an object and its transcription in some form of "writing" is problematic. It implies that there is an objective reality outside of the critic or artist — a natural body as the originary site — depicted or distorted by mass culture; but images are not mimetic of a natural world prior to representation. As Barthes says, "your body, the thing that seems the most real to you is doubtless the most phantasmic."[31] Not only does a feminist politics based on a notion of representation, on a return to the natural body, or neutral forms of dress, ignore the pleasures involved in the possession of an article of clothing, but the impossibility of this return to the represented.

This process is exacerbated in the era of postmodernism, where technologies make possible the doubling of life, giving a new force to the powers of the imaginary and the memory trace to dominate and completely substitute the real. Baudrillard's social theory, like Derrida's philosophy and Freud's psychoanalysis, signals the continual collapsing of the scene and "the mirror," the prerequisite for any notion of representation as reflection or imitation:

> ... instead there is the scene and the network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a smooth, non-reflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold – the smooth operational surface of communication.[32]

This smooth operational surface which ruptures the depth model implicit in classical Marxist humanism inaugurate a different notion of causality: neither 'expressive,' nor simple structural, it questions the possibility of isolating all determinations of a given phenomenon, object, or event.

All of the social sciences have been predicated on a notion of system, either as a relatively stable set of signifiers, as in semiotics, or upon the isolation of a community, as in Marxism, in which human activity is localizable in space and time, generalizable because common meanings are shared amongst its members. Baudrillard's analysis of postmodernity, or late capitalism, throws these assumptions into question. As Philip Hayward notes in "Implosive Critiques," Baudrillard problematizes the notion of a cohesive social upon which the disciplines are based.[33] In a world of fluidity and fragmentation in which the stable boundaries of traditional communities such as the family, the church and the nation are

in constant disruption, relocation, and solidification into exaggerated forms, we need a new methodology to complement these transformations.

One way to approach the fragmentation of the social is to study cultural signs as allegorical objects which have a multiplicity of possible meanings rather than any one fixed interpretation. This is not simply an idle, idealistic or nihilistic pursuit. As Elizabeth Cowie explains, meaning is never absolutely arbitrary in any text.

> Rather, the endless possible signification of the image is always, and only a theoretical possibility. In practice, the image is always held, constrained in its production of meaning or else becomes meaningless, unreadable. At this point the concept of anchorage is important; there are developed in every society decisive technologies intended to fix the floating chains of signifieds so as to control the terror of uncertain signs.[34]

The contradiction within any analysis is that in order to communicate, one is faced with having to "modify" a text; that is, to classify and identify the regime of codes which govern its production, while being vigilant to their inevitable mutation. Benjamin's concept of allegory, like Derrida's notion of intertextuality, is a strategy of reading which opens up the possibility of deciphering, rather than decoding, the fashion object and other cultural texts. Decoding, as Freud explicated, implies that there is a master system to which all signs can be returned; deciphering, on the other hand, implies that we are cognizant of the instability of all meaning.

This method, or anti-method — *allegoresis* — takes cultural sign objects as emblematic. As Benjamin said "Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things."[35] Like all forms of cultural production, fashion cannot be considered a mere expression of the current *Zeitgeist*, for it is a constituent relational element in the fabric of the social.

Conclusion

Capitalism and the Colonization of the Imaginary

I began this excursion into a discussion of fashion with two dreams, supplemented by a third; a dream of inscription of the social, the mapping of a typically modern form of power onto the body, and its eclipse in the era of postmodernism with its dependence on an abstract disembodied form of self-discipline; secondly a dream of a woman caught, trapped, embedded within a circuitry of power, of competing discourses which not only position her, affect her, but name her "Woman" as distinct in nature and temperment from "Man", thus

creating as both subject and object; thirdly, a dream of a resurrected past, capitalism's cannibalization of the other, its treatment of them as already dead museum pieces, and its resurrection of them as fashion — the colonialism of advanced capitalism powered by the energy of seduction and desires.

The use of allegory in relationship to fashion and postmodernism is appropriate, given postmodernism's use of allegory as a form of artistic practice and criticism, and given the breakdown of stable communities upon which the social sciences base their use of representation as a concept for giving meaning to behaviours. In the place of 'real communities' and the 'social', a simulated community is born; tribes of consumers who buy Tide, T.V. families on shows such as Family Feud, the world in Harmony as in the Coke commercials, a world that we may not feel compelled to conform to but which offers itself to us as a type of hyper reality. Capitalism operates in full knowledge of the power of the imaginary, of our desire to join into these masquerades, and re-creates the social as a series of dream-works, much like the landscapes analysed by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

The imaginary, as Freud, Lacan, and Althusser knew, must be taken seriously because it has very real effects; any rigid separation between the two realms is impossible. In fact, both zones, if indeed there are only two, are always overdetermining, collapsing in on each other. It is the imaginary which informs what is to be our experience of both past and future. Hence, the colonization that capitalism achieves is also an imperialism of the imagination — not just domination over such physical spaces as the third world.

Indeed, as postmodernist forms of architecture such as the Eaton's Centre in Toronto, the new Air Canada Building in Winnipeg, and the West Edmonton Mall indicate, this resurrection of defunct fictions can either be a pleasurable fantasy or a nightmare. In these architectural dreamscapes one can experience life in a Paris cafe, on a beach in Miami or in a submarine, without ever having to leave one's province or suburb. On the other hand, many other pieces of postmodern architecture are a direct reaction to the monumentalism of modernist style, which reduced every city to the megalopolis, and flattened every indigenous horizon to "the Same".

Postmodernism fluctuates between the poles of kitsch and a return to the local. It is both a form of populism, and a totally artificial rendering of history and space. Pee Wee Herman's America is the best example of this hyper-reality: it results in more livable spaces at the same time that it degenerates into a celebration of consumer culture.

Likewise, postmodern thought does not merely extoll naively what Frederic Jameson describes as the superficial and artificial surface. It is

pragmatic in its realization that the modernist valorization of the real and of authenticity was insensitive to the superficial. Modernism tended to be a romantic discourse, it longed for a return to some prehistoric origin, and positioned itself, as educated critic outside and above the culture it criticised — in the place of God. While modernism valued what it took to be the essential, the real, the substantial over the ephemeral, the imaginary, the formal, postmodernism has been engaged in questioning these divisions, and this transcendental position. As I have argued, this was a most dangerous abdication of power. Postmodern thought realises the full ability of capital to capitalize on every alternative discourse, every act of charity, every emotion and sentiment. Therefore it forces one to adopt the strategy of guerilla warfare, of insurgency, interference and destabilization, rather than the archaic model of revolution that is a part of the language of classical Marxism.

Most importantly, postmodernism enjoins us in the necessity for engaging in a cultural politics, politics that exploits the media, that is based on a language of celebration and ecstasy, as in the most recent efforts of the Toronto Arts Community in bringing attention to the need for sanctions against South Africa. It is not surprising that the most interesting theoretical works and reflections on the state of contemporary culture and politics have come out of art and literary magazines such as *ZG, October, Impulse, Borderlines*, and the French "fashion magazine" *Pole Position*; and that significant interventions in photography and art have come from women such as Mary Kelly, Cindy Sherman, Martha Rosler, Lynne Fernie, and Christine Davis, who have attempted to grapple with these issues, particularly the issue of the representation of women. They do not necessarily offer positive images of women, but they do question the notion of "Woman" as a natural construct. They do not offer solutions, but instead force the readers of their works to develop skills in interpreting and reading. It is important to transmit skills that will allow consumers of capitalism to understand the power of images in general and to question the notion of the immutability of that which we take to be real. It is at this juncture that aesthetic judgment and politics meet.

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Notes

1. Franz Kafka, "In The Penal Colony", *The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schoken Books, 1961), pp. 191-230.

2. The most interesting recent work on fashion is by Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), is another seminal piece, although it is rife with difficulties for the reader because of its extremely technical semiotic approach to

the topic. Barthes' own critique of this work can be found in *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Hillard and Wang, 1985). As well, I recommend Kathy Meyers, "Fashion N' Passion", *Screen*, vol. 23 # 3 (October, 1983), pp. 89-97., and Rosetta Brooks, "Fashion: Double Page Spread," *Camera-works*, # 17 (Jan./Feb., 1980), pp. 1-20.

3. Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled", *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haaken Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p.35. Read Fanon's piece in conjunction with the essay by Jacques Derrida, "White Mythologies", *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). This "white mythology" contained in the most trivial of objects, the fashion photo for a cosmetic company, is integrally connected to another "white mythology", the history of metaphysics. It is the metaphysical position which privileges the notion of Reason over the emotional and the sensual which I will argue has relegated the topic of fashion to the inessential. Derrida, p. 213.

4. Anne Oakley, *Subject Women* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 82.

5. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972).

6. Oakley, pp. 45-47. See also, E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983). She says: "The construction of woman as spectacle, internalized, leads women to offer their bodies in professions like modelling and advertising, and film acting, and to be generally susceptible to demands to be made a spectacle." (p. 73).

7. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Karyn Kay and Gerald Pearcy (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), pp. 412-428.

8. Griselda Pollack, "What's Wrong With Images of Women?" *Screen Education*, 3 24 (Autumn, 1977).

9. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 38. De Lauretis' work provides a clear and cogent summary of many of the theoretical debates within both Marxist, feminist and semiotic analysis as they pertain to the question of the representation of women in film images.

10. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 26.

11. Walter Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977). Given Benjamin's very clear sympathy to the concept of allegory over and against the classical notion of the symbol, it is unfathomable how Lukacs could so misread Benjamin's work. Lukacs, pp. 40-44. Paul de Man's work on allegory and symbol should be read in conjunction with Benjamin. As de Man notes in relation to European literature "... in the latter half of the eighteenth century... the word symbol tends to supplant other denominations for figural language including that of allegory." Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality", *op. cit.*, p. 188. For examples of how deeply the concept of the symbol permeates Marxism's understanding of culture as symbolic, see William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally's excellent study, *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products and Well-Being* (Toronto: Methuen, 1986), pp. 55, 66.

12. As quoted in Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing", *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 206.

13. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976), p. 178.

14. *Ibid*, p. 468.

15. *Ibid*, p. 171.

16. *Ibid*, p. 179. This distinction originally was brought to my attention in a footnote in a friend's Masters Thesis. Forest Barnett Pyle, "Walter Benjamin: The Constellation of A Cultural Criticism", University of Texas at Austin 1983, p. 51. Pyle attibutes this distinction to Gayatri Spivak, but does not reference a source. I have traced the distinction to Freud.

17. Benjamin, p. 165.

18. *Ibid*, p. 175.

19. *Ibid*, p. 177.

20. The work of Louis Althusser still provides the most important critique of this notion of causality, relating it to the philosophical legacy of Hegel within Marxism. Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970).

21. Fanon, pp. 47-48.

22. Jeanette C. Lauer and Robert Lauer, *Fashion Power: The Meaning of Fashion in American Society* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1981), pp. 73-101.

23. *Ibid*, p. 80.

24. Friedrich Neitzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 17.

25. I owe this reading of Marx to another friend, Lori Turner. Lori Turner, "Marx and Nature," unpublished manuscript, York University, 1986, p. 8.

26. Jean Rhys, *Good Morning Midnight* (New York: Harper and Row, 1930), p. 113. See the anthology, *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

27. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), pp. 12-13.

28. *Ibid*; p. 2.

29. *Ibid*; p. 57.

30. Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: The Viking press, 1978), pp. 97-104.

31. Barthes, *Grain of the Voice*, p. 365.

32. Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstacy of Communication", *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*", Hal Foster, ed. (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), p. 127.

33. Philip Hayward, "Implosive Critiques", *Screen*, vol. 28, 3-4-5- (July-Oct., 1984), p. 128.

34. Elizabeth Cowie, "Women, Representation and the Image", *Screen Education*, # 2-3 (Summer, 1977), pp. 15-23.

35. Benjamin, p. 178.

36. Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", *The Anti-Aesthetic*, pp. 111-125.

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FASHION AND THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF POSTMODERNITY

Gail Faurschou

The Politics of Style[1]

Until recently, the decoration of the body has been a subject confined mostly to the disciplines of sociology[2] and anthropology although literary references to what we might call a 'fashion consciousness' are numerous. I am thinking here specifically of Proust, although Baudelaire and Balsac, among others, were fascinated by the ambiguity surrounding desire, sexuality and style.

If anything can be said about fashion at a general level it is that its history testifies to the fact that the adornment of the body has rarely been a question of strict material or functional necessity. Indeed, as in precapitalist societies, it has constituted a privileged point of departure for inscribing the socius in and through the body and its vestments, the process of recording a memory of alliance, a system of symbolic in-vestment and exchange. Moreover, as with those cultural practices that have persisted throughout all social formations, albeit occupying radically different positions, adorning the body as a form of consuming the social surplus means that here is etched out not only an aesthetic and symbolic but a *political* terrain, an economy that marks and inscribes the most intimate surfaces of our skins. In these designs where the lines of power and desire are drawn, one can trace the fundamental contradictions intrinsic to the history of all societies. Thus bodily decoration becomes a form of cultural production that can simultaneously both limit

and enrich symbolic communication, constitute a site of freedom or restriction, submission or rebellion, eroticism or domination, identity or difference. Its intimate relation to the body means it weaves upon it both pleasure and pain, sacrifice and selfindulgence.

As cultural theorists sensitive not only to the subtleties of power in the apparently most insignificant of cultural texts, but also aware of the possibility of complicity with it through moralizing and universalizing judgements, we cannot but approach the subject of fashion with ambivalence. This is not only the ambivalence we face when interpreting past cultural practices of which we are not a part, but the ambivalence that strikes us particularly in evaluating practices in which we participate and, in many cases enjoy. Like many of the exploratory contributions feminist theory has made to contemporary cultural studies, including the recent debates on sexuality, pornography, and images of women in general, an analysis of fashion must be aware of the intricately entwined relations not only of power and domination, but also of desire and play, however complex and abstract these relations have become in the ever expanding boundaries of the mass society of late capitalism.

There is much work to be done here. Even the initially most simple questions soon prove elusive. What makes up a style, a look? How do shapes and folds of clothing appear aesthetically pleasing or ridiculously old fashioned? How does the play of difference in fashion create a meaningful code and in what sense can we speak of symbolic or expressive communication between subjects — if at all?

While there are many theoretical avenues that one could pursue in relation to fashion, for example, semiotics, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction, I am primarily concerned in what follows with how, on a more general level, we can view fashion and its promotional industries as a point of departure for exploring some of the contradictory tendencies of our present period.

If fashion today appears as the most ephemeral and trivial of leisure pursuits, infinitely distanced from its ritual, mystical, religious, cememonial, or simply symbolic capacity for communication, surely this makes it all the more an interesting and important area to explore. The fashion-object appears as the most chaotic, fragmented, and elusive of commodities, yet it circulates a pervasive and enveloping logic. I would argue that, for this reason, it constitutes an exemplary site for examining the cultural dislocations and contradictions of the transition from modernity to the late capitalist, new wave, postmodern era. In particular, I will attempt to show that the widely noted tendency toward the abstraction, disembodiment, and even disappearance of the subject is implicit in the very principles of an expanding fashion culture — that if the subject is on the way out, it is going out in style.

II

Modernity: Fashion as a Commodity

Before discussing fashion as a late-capitalist, postmodern phenomenon, a few words need to be said about its development from that initially crucial stage of its origin in modernity. It is, of course, only with the rise of industrial capitalism and the market economy that fashion becomes a commodity produced for the realization of economic exchange value in the division of labour and the separation of production and consumption. In this regard, it is interesting to note that clothing was the first industrialized sector of capitalism and that Marx began his analysis of value equivalence in *Capital* with the example: 10 yards of linen equals one coat[3]. Indeed, the whole rationalization process of capital originated with what would seem to have become the most irrational of commodities. But in the 19th and early 20th century, dress was still a commodity produced according to the existing structure or 'ideology of needs'. As William Leiss, et al. point out in their recent study of advertising[4], this production-oriented phase of capitalism marketed its products primarily on the basis of improving, but not changing, one's existing mode of life. The early capitalists emphasized the craftsmanship, traditional values and tastes that were important to the social economy of prestige and class distinction. One can observe this attitude to fashion apparel in the way clothes were marketed in early magazine advertisements and catalogues. Here we find long descriptions of the quality of the material, its impeccable construction, durability, etc. Every effort was made to place these new products in the familiar context of established cultural significations.

It is also interesting to note, in this regard, that it was not until the rise of the market and the bourgeois class that fashion became a notably gendered phenomena. As Elizabeth Wilson points out in her study of modern dress[5], fashion became a way of distinguishing the bourgeois class and its values from the artistocracy and its excessive lifestyle and extravagance. The bourgeois woman was now to become a sign of the conservative family unit: feminine but modest, attractive but frugal.

Similarly, Wilson notes, early feminists' critiques of dress focused on the value of clothing to the body, movement, health, and activity. The Rational Dress Society was only one of the dress reform movements of the 1900's that debated the corset, the introduction of trousers for women, and the return to what they saw as a freer more 'natural' look that was influenced by the art of the Pre-Raphaelites. Even many socialist movements took up the issue. But it would be wrong to assume these debates on the use value of clothing excluded the issue of beauty and femininity which was still a foremost concern. In the modern period,

beauty as a cultural ideal retained much of its classical importance and allure. That is to say, beauty in early modernity was still thought of as an aesthetic category that bore on some ideal of the ultimate expressiveness of the human soul, specifically one that linked it to its embodied form. Clothing was supposed to assist and accentuate this embodied beauty. Ambiguity and vulnerability, unrefined hints of subjectivity, remained vital aspects of its aesthetic appeal. This is a point to be kept in mind when we turn to our discussion of postmodernity.

In the early 20th century, modernist objects still retained some capacity for symbolic investment, whether that of use value, prestige, or the expression of identity. According to Frederic Jameson, this was possible because commodities still bore traces of the human labour objectified within them. They were not yet the disembodied, free-floating, abstract commodities of the mass consumer market. Jameson argues that surrealism was emblematic of the status of objects in the high modernist period.

> the human origins of the products... their relationship to the work from which they issued — had not yet been fully concealed... what prepares these products to receive the investment of psychic energy characteristic of their use by Surrealism is precisely the halfsketched, uneffaced mark of human labour, of the human gesture, not yet completely separated from subjectivity, which remain therefore potentially as mysterious and as expressive as the human body itself.
>
> ... We need only juxtapose (the object of surrealism), as a symbol with the photographic objects of pop art, (Andy Wharhol's) Campbell soup can, pictures of Marilyn Monroe, ... the gasoline stations along American superhighways, the glossy photographs in the magazines, or the cellophane paradise of an American drugstore, in order to realize that the objects of Surrealism are gone without a trace.
>
> Henceforth, in what we may call postindustrial capitalism, the products which we are furnished with are utterly without depth; their plastic content is totally incapable of serving as a conductor of psychic energy... All the libidinal investment in such objects is precluded from the outset, and we may well ask ourselves, if it is true that our object universe is henceforth unable to yield any 'symbol apt at stirring human sensibility,' whether we are not here in the presence of a cultural transformation of signal proportions, a historical break of an unexpectedly absolute kind?[6]

The meaning of this break is also clear for Jean Baudrillard: "The era of function and the signified has revolved, the era of the signifier and the

code is beginning."[7] The object of postmodernity has finally become the true object of consumption, Baudrillard argues, when "...released from its psychic determinations as *symbol*; from its functional determinations as *instrument*; from its commercial determinations as *product*; (it) is thus *liberated as a sign* to be recaptured by (the logic of differentiation) the formal logic of fashion."[8]

III

The Postmodern Fashionscape

In contrast to the productivist ethic of industrial modernism, late capitalism is the society of consumption, the society of the mass market and multinational capital, the age of media, information, and electronic reproduction.[9] It is no longer an economy seeking to fulfill the needs of a modernizing society but a society driven to create a perpetual *desire for* need, a need for novelty, for endless difference and instant satisfaction.

In postmodernity, fashion has become the commodity 'par excellence'. It is fed by all of capitalism's incessant, frantic, reproductive passion and power. Fashion *is* the logic of planned obsolescence — not just the necessity for market survival, but the cycle of desire itself, the endless process through which the body is decoded and recoded, in order to define and inhabit the newest territorialized spaces of capital's expansion.[10] A line of escape at one moment, fashion is recaptured in the network of images the next; frozen in the mirror of the media scape, we gaze forever at our suspended moment of flight. As Guy Debord says of the "society of the spectacle": "the image has become the final form of commodity reification."[11] This is Baudrillard's world of the hyperreal, and the infinite simulacrum, the abstract, compulsive innovation of signs: arbitrary but perpetual, empty but brilliant. It is Jameson's aesthetic of the euphoric hysterical sublime, the frantic schizophrenic explosion of multiple glossy surfaces without depth, the gleaming hallucinatory splendor of style without substance. Fashion has become our contemporary mode of being in the world — and our contemporary 'mode' of death. Style-speed-seduction-death. We need only think of Hollywood's glamourized version of itself in Warner Brothers "To Live and Die in L.A.," or its television spin off, "Miami Vice," or even the increasing popularity of the novels of J.G. Ballard, to realise its imagistic appeal.

Postmodernity then is no longer an age in which bodies produce commodities, but where commodities produce bodies: bodies for aerobics, bodies for sports cars, bodies for vacations, bodies for Pepsi, for Coke, and of course, bodies for fashion, — total bodies, a total look. The colonization and appropriation of the body as its own production/

consumption machine in late capitalism is a fundamental theme of contemporary socialization.

> ...monopoly capitalism...not content to exploit the body as labor power, manages to fragment it, to divide the very expressiveness of the body in labor, in exchange, and in play, recuperating all this as individual needs, hence as productive consummative forces under its control...[12]
>
> ... the body, beauty, and sexuality are imposed as new universals ... emancipated by abundance and cybernetic revolution. The deprivation, manipulation, and controlled recycling of the subjective and collective values by the unlimited rival speculation over sign values renders necessary the santification of a glorious agency called the body that will become for each individual an ideological sanctuary, the sanctuary of its own alienation.[13]

For Baudrillard, fashion is the epitome of the cynical survival of capitalism. It is the celebration of a perverse, fetishized passion for the abstract code, at the expense of any collective investment in symbolic exchange. The logic of the commodity multiplies indefinitely in the fascination for objects eviscerated of their substance and history, reduced to the pure state of marking a difference. As Baudrillard writes, "A thousand contradictory definitions of beauty and style are possible [but] one thing is certain: they are never a calculus of signs."[14] Indeed, Baudrillard argues, the very category of beauty is liquidated when the semiological order succeeds the symbolic order.

The disappearance of the beautiful as a sustaining category of pre-capitalist culture marks an important phase in the eclipse of subjectivity. According to Baudrillard, the forms of beauty were a symbolic play on the ambiguity of the subject. Beauty could be: "an effect of the soul (the spiritualist vision), the natural grace of movement, or countenence with the transparency of truth (the idealist vision), or the inspired genius of the body which can be communicated as effectively by expressive ugliness (the romantic vision)?[15]

In this juxtaposition of an erstwhile subjective beauty with the postmodern sublime, Baudrillard is not concerned to recall an 'essence', but to draw out the historical supercession of ambivalence and to distinguish this from the substitutive logic of the fashion cycle. In symbolic exchange, the social relations between individuals or groups, as mediated through the gift, the ritual, and writing on the body, are all virtual relations of desire and as such, relations of risk, of unresolved ambivalence, danger, and vulnerability. In this sense, the sign-object of fashion and the symbolic object exist in mutually exclusive cultural forms:

> The sign object is neither given nor exchanged: it is appropriated, withheld, and manipulated by individual subjects as a sign, that is as coded difference. Here lies the object of consumption. And it is always of and from a reified, abolished social relationship that is "signified" in a code.[16]

Opposed to the forever unresolved order of the symbolic stands fashion, an abstract, arbitrary exchange of signs, a system that manifests in its appearance of play and difference the "total constraint of the code." Replacing the traditional, socially ambiguous forms of beauty, fashion becomes a data base of aesthetic categories. Baudrillard refers to it as a "semio-aesthetic order," one which consists of "an interplay of referrals, of equivalence, of controlled dissonances."[17] This reinscription of the polyvalence of beauty within a homogenous, system of endlessly but equally differentiated signs has, Baudrillard, argues, as its ultimate goal, closure and perfection, a logical mirage suturing all social contradictions and divisions on the level of the abstract. This is the glamour of fashion, the glamourized body of disembodied perfection. This is *Vogue's* 'total look'; *Cosmopolitan's* 'perfect match'; *Mademoiselle's* 'elegant coordination'. This is the look of envy John Berger speaks of in *Ways of Seeing*. The look of solitary assurance, of impersonal power, a look absent and unfocused precisely because it looks out over the look of envy which sustains it.[18]

These are the images we find as we flip through page after page in fashion magazines. Despotic and total, each confronts us, but only to be overturned in an instant, replaced indefinitely in the continuous oscillation of absolute authority and immediate irrelevance.

Emblematic of this momentary, monthly, seasonal marking of time on the eternally reincarnated youthful body, oblivious to historical recording or wrinkling is *Vogue's* editorial, titled, interestingly enough, "The Last Word", summing up the new look for each issue. Here are a few 'last words' that would seem to exemplify the aesthetic ordering, of a semiological culture:

> What works? Lets start with a conclusion. When you're dressing in a small shaped suit or precise dress (and those clothes are some of the stars of this season... and this issue), you're wearing highly finished sorts of clothes. You've a total look; there's not much need to interfere...
>
> In terms of accessories, the modern key to this 'finished' way of dressing may be a certain elimination of things...[19]'
>
> Designers have solved the problem of dressing fast, with wonderfully thought out looks. You'll like these looks best if you enter in, more than somewhat to the equation... In almost any

clothes that sense of pureness is one sign of modernity...[20]

For Baudrillard, contemporary fashion is "the generalization of sign exchange value to facial and bodily effects. It is the final disqualification of the body, its subjection to a discipline... The signs are there to make the body into a perfect object."[21] Like Jameson's description of the images of postmodernity, this perfection of the body into an object of glamour "is a feat accomplished through a long and specific labor of sophistication... in which none of its real work (the work of the unconscious or psychic and social labor can show through. The fascination of this fetishized beauty is the result of this extended process of abstraction, and derives from what it negates and censors through its own character as a system."[22]

Like Berger's "look of envy", this fetishized beauty exercises what Baudrillard calls a "cold seduction." It has nothing to do with pleasure or play or "the illegible ambivalence of desire"[23] In these frozen figures, flawless skins, blank stares, there is no pain, no fear, nothing moves, and nothing could move these invulnerable figures bereft of affect and expression.

But Baudrillard goes even further. He calls this fetishized beauty 'anti-nature incarnate' and argues that the fascination we hold for this model of reification is the very essence of what desire has become in the postmodern era: the desire for closure and logical perfection, the desire of desire to be ultimately and resolutely sufficient unto itself.[24]

> this kind of beauty is fascinating precisely because it is trapped in models, because it is closed, systematic, ritualized in the ephemeral, without symbolic value. It is the sign in this beauty, the mark (makeup, symmetry, or calculated asymmetry, etc.) Which fascinates; it is the artifact that is the object of desire.[25]

Here the aesthetic effect plays on our initial misrecognition of the model for the mannequin and the mannequin for the model. We have to look twice. Yet this 'works,' as the language of *Vogue* would have it — and why shouldn't it? For isn't the reversibility of life and still life, nature and 'nature morte', a kind of epitome of the commodity system itself, a triumph of the principle of substitutibility?

In these inanimate figures, the idea of glamour goes beyond the perfection of the body, its making-up, dressing up, and even cutting up in plastic surgery — toward death itself.

In the latest issue of *Vogue*, Calvin Klein has eliminated the last distinction between the body and its adornment.[26] The body has imploded into the pure play of surfaces, its outline delineates the imaginary otherness of the simulacrum, the substance that never was. Beyond the subject as object, made-up model, idol, mannequin, artifact. Beyond the pure positivity of desire perfected in the object, we now have the equivalent of the photographic negative. In place of the subject, a shadow, a ghostly absent presence clothed in angelic white silk. A shadow illuminated in its outline like the radiated figures of Hiroshima: it haunts us. But, it also seduces us. The empty abstract black hole of desire... beckons. Sleepwear. Deathwear. Shrouded in fashion — the ideal logic of late capitalism.

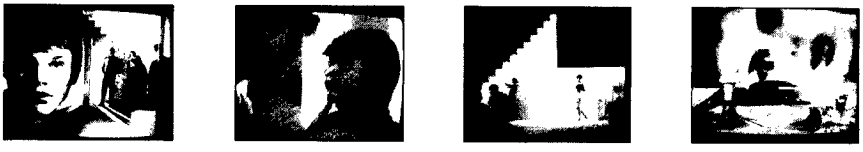
IV

Obsession*

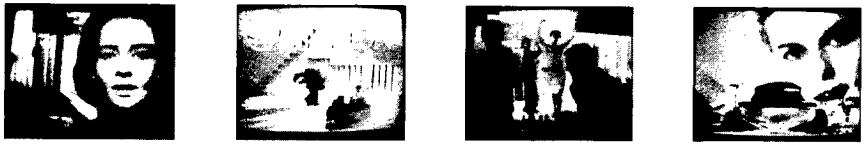
A Scents of Style: Some Thoughts on Calvin Klein's Obsession (four 15 second commercials on Video)

"There are many loves but only Obsession"

"In the kingdom of passion the ruler is Obsession"



"Love is child's play once you've learned Obsession"



"Between love and madness lies Obsession"*

* This section was written in collaboration with Charles Levin

Between love and madness lies Obsession. Desire and power spiral interiorized in this zero space of shadows and staircases leading nowhere, mocking all lines of escape. Obsession. All are positioned around it. Everything falls before it. All are reduced "to ashes, all ashes," "abandoned to the wreckage of themselves."

Why Obsession? Why name a perfume after the structure of neurotic inhibition? It appears that in a world so affectless, so sterile, only aggression sustains enough intensity to attract. What is initially most memorable for the viewer of this series of commercials is that in each the sign of the perfume is inserted into an obsessional collection of fetishes, the tokens of destroyed love, of loss, aphanisis, depression. In the first, it is the stolen chess piece, the king; in the second, scattered flower petals, yellow like the Narcissus; in the third, the pathetic child's diary of frustrated Oedipal passion; and in the fourth, the grieving mother's black scarf. In this fourfold cycle, like a Frygian mythos, laughter and love are followed by castration and perversion. The denouement is always an affective metonymy, in which the fragment of a broken bond is liberated as an ironic sign. Each segment transfixes a symbolic relation at its moment of destruction and adds it to the cumulative economy of Obsession. The perfume thus becomes a kind of liquid intensity, a condensation of failed or faded libido.

The phallic, pre-Raphealite woman is the simulacrum of incarnation, an angel, a fever — "all heat and hunger" — "taunting, exquisite creature" — like a wayward Ariel. She begs to be saved, but always escapes. In this sense, Obsession is alchemical, a distillation of the product at the conclusion of each episode, seated in the collection of fetish objects, marks the dynamic mutation of leaden desire into the signifier of charged memory. Each gesture, each touch, each utterance revolves around an absence. "To breathe her innocence was life itself" — a trace.

As in Klein's sleepwear ads, the simulation of 'obsession' produces an absence in order to forestall the death implicit in completion, or semiotic perfection. The 'system' cannot function without its Imaginary other, but this otherness only exists in a relational form, as the abstraction of a sign-object which refers back to a lost body. In the 'Oedipal' sequence featuring the little boy, his diary, and his idealization of the female model, there is a reference to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*: "the whispers at my bedside, her arms, her mouth..." This maternal projection is "the only woman I'll ever love" — but she steals his fantasies away. "Did I invent her?" the little boy asks.

The sign of obsession is the cynical sign of a purely relational, abstract power, a power which thrives on its own self-hatred. It could be argued that the Obsession commercials interpellate a representation of the social world of late capitalism by recoding desire in Oedipal form, as a despotic

signifier which territorializes fantasy as family theatre.[27] But this 'signifier', together with the family organized around it, are no longer credibly interpreted as Oedipal or patriarchal or even phallic. The paternal simulacrum (the narrator in the first episode) is a defeated Prospero, not only stripped of his secular power, but forlorn, unmagical, without spiritual authority. His gold has already turned into lead, his Miranda is a mannequin; and the purloined chesspiece is not a symbol of the procreative possibilities of kingship, but merely a mnemonic ingredient in the nostalgic simulation of coenesthetic seduction, a psychic ruin of bodily attraction.

The Lacanian father no longer has any of his symbolic authority, not even as an ideological constraint on "desire", not even as the progenitor of words. Everywhere and nowhere, language becomes cynical and hollow, evoking a pervasive structure of deauthorization and panic.[28] There is, to be sure, an Oedipal theatre, but it is empty, and the lines of memory echo in its phantom acoustic space like rehearsals for a play the actors know will not be performed.

The grieving mother of the fourth and final sequence surveys a scene in which neither conflict nor repression have any meaning. Sublimation tunrs out to have been a cruel, patriarchal joke. Like the helpless child, this dark, Trojan woman represents an emotional testimony; but she has witnessed neither struggle, nor death — only the schizoid terror of undifferentiation, the futile will to total consumptive passivity. Obsessional destruction is not final, merely recurrent: it is a repetition compulsion which infects each figure who participates in the concept of the family, and forces him or her to play out destiny in a pattern whose meaning all must pretend not to know, in order to create the illusion of meaning. The signs of absence multiply like the snakes on the Medusa's head, but not because something like the missing phallus is feared and repressed. It is not the phallus which is missing, but the *absence* of the phallus — or in other words, the issue is not absence, but the absence of absence. Not the anxiety of sexual difference, but the depressing apperception of endless sameness. The obsessional meaning-effect overdetermines itself, swallows its own tail in a circle of disembodied power. Every time we grasp a signification, it is substituted by another, which only adds to the collection of objects, but takes us nowhere in time or space. The death instinct, an overpowering odour, beckons.

Department of Sociology
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APPENDIX

[Contract]

CALVIN KLEIN'S
OBSESSION

From the contract between Calvin Klein and model Jose Borain, the "Calvin Klein Girl." Borain appears in advertisements for the designer's fragrance Obsession.

AGREEMENT made as of the 25th day of September 1984 between CALVIN KLEIN INDUSTRIES, INC., a New York corporation (hereinafter called "CK"), and BORAIN ENTERPRISES, LTD., a New York corporation (hereinafter called "Consultant").

In consideration of the mutual covenants contained herein, the parties hereby agree as follows:

I.A. CK hereby retains Consultant and Consultant hereby agrees to be retained by CK and to provide to and for CK the "Services" of its employee, Jose Borain ("Borain"), as a model in all respects which services shall be deemed to include, without limitation, all broadcast advertising, promotion and exploitation (e.g., network, local, cable and closed circuit television, AM & FM radio and cinema), print advertising, promotion and exploitation (e.g., printed hang-tags, labels, containers, packaging, display materials, sales brochures, covers, pictorial, editorial, corporate reports and all other types of promotional print material contained in the media including magazines, newspapers, periodicals and other publications of all kinds), including but not by way of limitation, fashion shows, run-way modeling, retail store trunk shows, individual modeling and other areas of product promotion and exploitation which are or may be considered to be embraced within the concept... of fashion modeling.

4. Consultant shall, and where applicable shall cause Borain to:

A. Keep CK informed of Borain's schedule in the event she travels outside the metropolitain New York area for periods of more than two (2) days consecutively;

B. Maintain Borain's weight, hair style and color and all other features of Borain's physiognomy and physical appearance as they are now or in such other form as CK may, from time to time, reasonably request. Consultant and Borain represent that Borain's current weight level is between 120 and 125 lbs. and CK agrees that Borain's weight up to 130 lbs. will be an acceptable weight pursuant to the provisions hereunder. Illustratively, Borain shall wear hair styles, utilize such make-up and wear such apparel and accessories as CK requests from time to time; use such hair stylists as CK engages or approves; maintain such reasonable physical regimen (including exercise, diet and nutritional programs) as will best enable Borain to perform her Services hereunder; and when requested by CK, consult and comply with the reasonable advice and reasonable recommendations of such physician, exercize coach, hair and makelup stylists and others, etc.;

C. Maintain a personal lifestyle which will, in CK's sole subjective judgment reasonably exercised, be appropriate and most suitable to project an image and persona that reflect the high standards and dignity of the trademark "Calvin Klein" and that do not diminish, impair or in any manner detract from the prestige and reputation of such trademark.

7. A. CK shall pay or cause Consultant to be paid the aggregate sum of one million dollars ($1,000,000) for all of Borain's Services during the three (3) year term hereunder, i.e., the sum of $333,333 per year for each employment year during the term of this Agreement...

13. CK may... terminate this Agreement forthwith by written notice to Consultant upon the occurrence, or upon CK's becoming aware of the occurrence, of any one or more of the following events:

A. In the event of Borain's disfigurement or disability, which shall be deemed to mean any illness, accident or other physical or mental impairment which renders her, in the sole subjective judgment of CK reasonably exercised (except with respect to disfigurement or other change in physical appearance which may be exercised solely based on Mr. Klein's

sole aesthetic subjective standards), incapable of performing or unqualified to perform her Services whenever required under this Agreement...

B....If by reason of [Borain's] deliberate or inadvertent action or conduct she shall come into disrepute or her public reputation shall become degraded or discredited so that the Services she is to provide pursuant hereunder shall, in CK's sole subjective judgment reasonably exercised, have become less valuable to CK in projecting the desired image consistent with the dignity and high standards of the CK tradition...

G. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein contained, this Agreement shall terminate automatically and forthwith upon the death of Borain, the bankruptcy or insolvency of Consultant, or the dissolution, liquidation, merger or consolidation of Consultant.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented in a session sponsred by the C.J.P.S.T., The Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association and The Winnipeg Art Gallery at the Learned Societies, Winnipeg, 1986.

2. While most sociological literature on fashion has tended to be primarily descriptive or historical rather than theoretical, the exceptions are phenomenologically oriented studies for the obvious reason that they take the embodied subject as their point of departure. In the introduction to John O'Neill's recent study of contemporary society, (*Five Bodies*, Cornell University Press, 1985) he writes, "We are continuously caught up and engaged in the embodied look of things, especially the look of others and of ourselves. Although philosophers and moralists have decried our attachment to appearances and superficialities, as sociologists we cannot ignore the elaborate social construction of embodied appearances in which we are necessarily engaged as persons... Because *society is never a disembodied spectacle*, we engage in social interaction from the very start on the basis of sensory and aesthetic impression." p. 22.

3. See vol. 1 ch. 1 of Karl Marx's *Capital*. It is also interesting to note in this regard that Adam Smith's archtypic example of the rationality of the division of labour in *The Wealth of Nations* was the manufacture of pins used primarily to secure clothing and cloth in sewing.

4. William Leiss, et al, *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products and Images of Well-Being*, Methuen, Canada, 1986, See esp. chs. 4 and 5.

5. Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* Virago Press 1985, Ch. 6.

6. Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, Princeton Univ. Press. 1971, p. 106.

7. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Translated by Charles Levin, Telos Press, 1981, p. 98.

8. Ibid, p. 67.

9. Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review*, #146, Fall 1984.

10. Gilles Deluze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Translated by R. Hurley, et al, The Viking Press, New York, 1977.

11. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red, Detroit 1983, p. 11.
12. Baudrillard, p. 97.
13. Ibid., p. 97.
14. Ibid., p. 188.
15. Ibid., p. 94.
16. Ibid., p. 65.
17. Ibid., p. 188.
18. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, B.B.C. and Penguin Books, 1979 p. 133.
19. *Vogue*, 'The Last Word', Sept. 1982, p. 568.
20. *Vogue*, 'The Last Word', Feb. 1983, p. 336.
21. Baudrillard, p. 94.
22. Ibid., p. 94.
23. Ibid., p. 188.
24. Ibid., p. 94.
25. Ibid., p. 94.
26. *Vogue*, May, 1986.
27. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.
28. Cf. Jean Baudrillard. *L'échange symbolique et la mort,* Paris: Gallimard, 1976, e.g. pp. 174-6.

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The following corporations kindly gave permission for the reproduction of their advertisments: Figure One; Saint Laurent Inc., New York, Figures Two and Three; Calvin Klein Inc. New York.

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'OBSESSION' AND DESIRE: FASHION AND THE POSTMODERN SCENE

Berkeley Kaite

The insertion of 'fashion' into the postmodern terrain points to exciting possibilities regarding new ways of problematizing body adornment, visual codes and writing the body textual. The preceding papers allow for (at least) three important directions in feminist scholarship by dislocating previous assumptions about the fashion apparatus and visual imaginaries. First, the point is well argued that fashion as a sign system is not merely reducible to the commodity-form but is an exchange of products, bodies (biological and textual), subjects, meaning, desire, etc. Second, challenges are put to the (implicit and explicit) radical feminist and separatist indictments of the so-called 'counter-insurrectionist' concern with clothes; and, concomitant with that, the construction of a female spectacle. Finally, the three essays subvert representational logic: there *is* no essential, ulterior feminine 'real' to which all representations refer, and thus distinctions between "positive" and "negative" *images* are tenuous, as are antinomies which posit the representation as an alibi for a pure, distilled referent, be it the "feminine" voice, body or essentialist category 'Woman'.

The importance of studying sign systems relating to body adornment is well served here. *Everybody* wears clothes, at varying times in and out of bed, at home, on the street. Clothes invest the body symbolically: surely this has import beyond their functional significance. It is still of interest,

however, that in the preceding essays the terms "fashion" and "style", and their attendant discourses, are addressed via their encoding/decoding in either the frozen or moving (i.e. TV) visual moment. This perhaps conforms to the postmodern "culture of sensation" (Lash, 1985): the camera, as we know, quotes death. Similarly, television is the self-reflexive medium, having created an "indigenous voice" as its defining characteristic: everything on television is about being on television — "antinarrative... preoccupied with performance over content; fascinated with bourgeois kitsch as a sort of moral principle" — television is concerned with its own performance, its look, its style: "... there are no stories anymore, no tales left to tell, nothing is at stake... Performance is its own content..."[1]

Thus fashion here becomes its own performance, imbricated in its specular and spectacular (invoking visual/pleasurable imaginaries) discourses and, I would want to add, other discursive chains as well. The visual displays under discussion (magazine adverts or fashion spreads and television ads for Calvin Klein's 'Obsession') are constructed in highly symbolic ways, dependent on, and implicating, a female spectator. Her subjectivity is gendered around, among other things, enlistment in the pleasurable viewing of these ads with the fantasy (achieved or otherwise) of engaging in various forms of body adornment or costuming for her subjectivity. As noted by Faurschou, fashion and styles of clothing were originally designators of class location; however, the emphasis has gradually shifted to arbitrary gender positions. Thus I would want to highlight questions regarding a gendered Symbolic (in Lacanian terms), women's location within it, and signifying chains which position these ads — and the female spectator — for their meaning. In other words, I'm left wondering about the "institution of the subject in the visible", how we "see" ourselves through the "culturally seen".[2]

I would also want to invoke 'questions of desire' on a number of levels: after all, the artifacts under discussion were chosen by the authors following, one assumes, their consumption as objects of pleasure (and I agree with Faurschou for the need to theorize "not only power and domination but also desire and play"). And, representations of desire within 'dominant fictions' sustain sexual identity and sexual difference, certainly central to the formal and substantive composition of the photos/ads.

Clothes and the Model Woman

Self-adornment is the inscription of the body into discourses or, as Elizabeth Wilson would say, the linking of the "biological body to aesthetics."[3] Perhaps an ad like that of Galliano's (discussed by Emberley), in the words of Angela Carter, "captures the mood of the times almost to the point of parody, as if to say: we are all... refugees in an empty world. (T)he dominant mood of the eighties (is) a way of dressing

that makes you look like the victim of a catastrophe."[4] However, an "aesthetic of poverty" or the "recession style" only go so far toward an understanding of *which* bodies are linked to any particular aesthetic. I therefore enjoin the significance of the broken glasses and "woman-as-Afghanistan" motif in the Galliano ad. One could argue that there are other than "adventure narratives" at play which inflate the glasses with meaning. The "visions" Emberley refers to also point to a sexual narrative around a *female* (perhaps not Third World but Other-worldy) appropriation of the gaze, although this is occluded by the model looking over the rim of her glasses, and the very fragile state of the glasses themselves: always threatening to destroy her vision. Her subject position lies somewhere between seeing and not-seeing, that discursive no-woman's land. Is this Lacan's evocation: "Nothing can be said of woman"?

But, also, the dominant movement of the photograph directs our eyes to hers and the useless glasses (for indeed she is not using them and they have already been rendered near-defunct by their two broken places) and thus the viewer is privy not just to the look of the model but of a model looking. She is not simply the object-of-the-male-gaze (a familiar cliché) but subject of, and subject for, *women* watching, presumably in pleasurable or, at least, contradictory ways. After all, men don't make passes at girls who wear glasses. Indeed, the semantic use of glasses and metaphors of vision in sexual discourse are demonstrated elsewhere (cf. the 1942 Bette Davis film, "Now Voyageur").

How then do women encounter desire, the scenario of which is informed by a patriarchal symbolic, and at what cost? Loss of vision? Castration? Desire, like the body, is a script into which we are written. This is not to support the impulse behind "French feminisms" which wants to re-instate "writing the body," but to argue that the body is written on, and is thus a history of discourses. The point is simply that there are visions and there are visions: women's vision(s), of themselves, of each other and of men, form a complex of narratives which can be overdetermining, shifting, and part of the signifying operations of culture and the unconscious. There is no unmediated body. But surely one needs to stress how bodies are articulated through their insertion into discourses which privilege, in the first and final instance, sexual difference.

Writing the body textual also applies to the association of the female model with the terrain — Afghanistan — and the harmonious twinning or metonymic usage of "Les Coloniales" (the Dior make-up line) and its accompanying photo-advertisement. The unwritten female body, denied access to masculine discourse, is prey to colonization: we are talking of more than a western representation of a Third World subject. The female

subject/body is colonized through its inscription into patriarchal discourses: there is more to *this* discourse-of-difference than what is masked in the relations of production.

Obsession: A Play on Desire

Calvin Klein's 'Obsession' ads invite discussion of the symbolic legislation of sexual difference and questions of desire.

His television ads are astonishing, alluring and seductive. They operate on a number of levels; some notes from Lacanian problematics of desire may provide entry to their allure and larger questions regarding the anatomy of subjectivity.

Desire, within this framework, emerges when need and demand are not met and coheres around a desire for the mother and to *be everything* for the mother (hence circuits of desire). The primary dyadic relationship between mother and child, constituted around unrepressed longings to be satisfied by and to satisfy the central care-giver, is an Imaginary register disrupted by the "Law of the Father" (signified by the phallus: discursive, not anatomical), the prohibition against incest. Desire is coincident with lack (lack of the phallus or paternal signifier which will satisfy the mother's desire), which also defines sexual narratives based on difference: the most fixed of sexual discourses. Conjointly, desire is fixed around the inauguration of the subject into meaning with the acquisition of language, figurative of the Symbolic order. What Lacan calls "kinship nominations" (the power behind the name 'mother,' 'father,' 'sister,' 'brother,' etc.) are the superimposition of "the kingdom of culture" and it is these linguistic transactions which secure sexed identity.

Calvin Klein's "Obsession" is another man's/woman's "Desire": I want to argue that the ads can be seen as dramatic plays on the workings of desire. The relational nature of desire — it only emerges with meaning, alienation of the self and separation from the first objects of identification — situates it around lack and the impossibility of its (i.e. desire's) realization. The impossibility of desire is structured into one's relationship to two ideal representations "forever beyond the subject's reach": the first being model perfection in its mirror image, the source of its "identity;" the second refers to identifications made in the symbolic order which center further on lack and paternal signification[5]

A Lacanian reading of the text renders the formal qualities of desire — or obsession — as being shared by both narrator and the female subject of the narrative. Indeed, there is no discernible boundary between the narrative of one and the narrative of another: that is, whose obsession/desire is speaking? The individuals', whose lives are briefly incited by the young woman's desire? or *her* story/desire? We return to Lacan's *circuits* of desire. She (the central and recurring character of all four television

and print 'Obsession' ads) is possessed by her desires and the three males (one a young boy) and one female who narrate are possessed with desire of her. The elusive yet pervasive nature of desire is signified by the model's mysterious appearance (she is always there but with no point of origin); and around her just as mystical departure (although she leaves her traces or marks of desire). And the traces of others' desire are left with her as well — the flowers, the chess piece, the child's book... Desires are conflated to the unconditional whim of the Other, "this whim that introduces the phantom of the Omnipotence, not of the subject, but of the Other in which his demand is instilled... and with this phantom the need for it to be checked by the Law."[6].

The "content" of this desire shifts according to its discursive context. This is best exemplified in the ad which dramatizes a young boy's need/demand/desire for his at-once present and absent mother wherein configurations of desire conform to Lacan's emphasis on the first instance of lack: being, with the realization that one cannot have a symbolic unity with the mother. This is consolidated with the child's entry into the Symbolic Order, typified by acquisition of linguistic signifying systems, *this* signified by the boy's book = language.

Within the Lacanian schema the Symbolic is a patriarchal one, represented by the Law of the Father (the "ruler" in the "kingdom of passion," mentioned in one of the ads), a father endowed with phallic power who interferes with the original dyadic unity between mother and child. The unconscious is opened up in encountering the Symbolic and is founded on *repression* of desire for merging with the mother. The father interrupts these "imaginary" desires and constitutes the law which is repressed desire. Thus, in the "kingdom of passion" the "ruler" is Obsession/desire. The most intriguing aspects of the text surround the circuits of desire involving the narrated and the narrator: which is which? Also, it appears that the central female character is saturated with a desire rarely seen so explicitly in television advertising (although one wants to avoid reference to a "feminine" specificity or non-discursive desire). This poly-sexuality, the insatiability of desire, a female-centered discourse in which she is a carrier of far more than the male gaze: these are the representations of desire, a "... description of feminine sexuality... an exposure of the terms of its definition, the very opposite of a demand as to what that sexuality should be."[7] This is relief from the dominant fictions into which we are inserted: best rejected by our obsessive/desiring subject who, in knocking the chess pieces off the board, refuses to play by the rules of the game.

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Notes

1. Powers, 1986:40.
2. Lacan, 1981:106; Silverman, 1987.
3. 1983:25.
4. 1983:65.
5. Lacan, 1977; Silverman, 1983.
6. Lacan, 1977:311.
7. Rose, 1982:44.

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CARNAL KNOWLEDGE OF AESTHETIC STATES: THE INFANTILE BODY, THE SIGN, AND THE POSTMORTEMIST CONDITION[1]

Charles Levin

PART 1: The "fading" of the body in postmodern thought

> I want to speak to the despisers of the body. I would not have them learn and teach differently, but merely say farewell to their own bodies — and thus become silent.
> "Body am I, and soul" — thus speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children.
> But the awakened and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.
>
> Neitzsche[2]

The Psychology of the Afterimage

We tend to think of images in terms of memory; that is, when we talk about images, more often than not we are talking about afterimages: the image as the memory, the trace, the aftereffect, of an experience. This is the domain of the semiotic. The word, the dream, the picture, the thing — all these can be thought as if they were decomposible into signifying elements, or signifiers, which function in systems of *re*presentation.

This conception of the image as afterimage was powerfully reinforced as one of the forms of social theory by psychoanalysis, in particular

through Freud's model of the psychoanalytical process as *re*construction, the retrieval and retelling of events in childhood, the recovery of childhood experience. This orientation in psychoanalytic thought is reflected in the metaphor of the unconscious as a junkheap, a repository of repressions that resurface as signs, a wastebin of images which fester and ferment and finally foment, in the 'return of the repressed.' As Deleuze and Guattari have tried to show in the *Anti-Oedipus*, this vision turns the unconscious into a field for the application of power, and psychoanalysis becomes a problematic of control, of neutralization or "reterritorialization."[3] Desire is theorized as the retrospective functioning of a lack, whilst the activity of desire — creative energy or "desiring-production" — is defused, dematerialized. The affirmative desire *for* something gets transposed into the negative desire *of* something, and desire becomes desire of desire itself, or "will to will," a rearguard action against *aphanisis*, the extinction of desire, the exhaustion of the signifying field. It is as if the warmth and light of the mind were nothing but the fading ember of the mind's refuse, signifying both the mind's consumption of psychosocial debris as fuel, and it's rejection of life itself.

As Deleuze and Guattari show, it is to Lacan that one must turn to find a theory of passive desire, a completely denatured psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the body exists in biological fragments, it is a shattered *tabula rasa* which must be "granted an image."[4] On this body of absence, Lacan superimposes a quasi-linguistic model of the adapted personality. It is a void (desire) waiting to be filled, a body-without-organs attending the phallic punctuations of signification, a gap subtending the marking operations of power. This discursively positioned subject is the perfect material for a neodisciplinary exterminist society. It is precisely the "volume in perpetual disintegration" which Foucault so gingerly describes, that "inscribed surface of events... traced by language...", a docile receptacle to be "totally imprinted by history."[5]

Lacanian psychoanalytic theory describes the schizoid strategy of the body, in which the body distills itself into the feeling tone of an afterimage, the *déjà vu*. The psyche is theorized as representation, a kind of generalized sign economy which only touches on the physical body at points where it is socially coded, certain primarily genderal "points de capiton" relating mainly to the late phases of psychosexual development in classical psychoanalytic theory.[6]

Lacanian thought holds the greatest interest for those who think about culture today precisely because it is a psychology of the afterimage, a hermeneutics of life as lack, castration, and death. The Lacanian "law of the father" is like a second law of psychodynamics, in which the flesh is entropically vapourized by metonymical concatenations of deferral and

"infinite referral" — what Derrida once called *différance*. In a way, Baudrillard's "generalized political economy of the sign" (that system of third order abstraction he calls the simulacrum) is a logical extension of Lacan's externalized and sociologized unconscious (the "discourse of the Other") in which the subject is defined as a "signifier for another signifier." For Lacan, binarism and disembodiment have ontological status. Culture is primordially so: it is a pure system, an unadulterated code. As Baudrillard shows in his critique of the production category in contemporary social thought, even the "material infrastructure" of society is caught up in the process of metonymy, of mirroring and misrecognition, which constitutes the Imaginary.

All of this amounts to saying that there is no cultural "base," or in other words, that there is no foundation of thought in the realm of the living: "Power is dead."[7] In the classical, and more recently, the structuralist opposition between nature and culture, nothing substantial can be placed on the side of culture, or of the human, because sociality is conceived as a superimposition of pure form, code, convention, law. All of culture, including the "forces and relations of production," is thought of as superstructure, an afterimage at play in the field of effects. It is always already a memory, a misremembering, or what acidheads used to call a "flashback."

The Ontology of Postmodernity

The essence of the theory of postmodernism is to interpret Lacanian psycholinguistics as a cultural condition, as a collective way of life. Unfortunately, when Lacanian thought is explicated at the level of the postmodern socius, its presuppositions still function to achieve an epistemological closure. These presuppositions have been developed into their purest form in the contemporary theory of textuality. Lacanian feminism, for example, always reproduces the "phallus" as an occult principle, because in its attempt to erase the phallus, it not only furthers the Lacanian project of translating the body into an algorithmic language, but deepens the phallic logic of inscription itself. As for the politics of desire, its deep-seated epistemology of the signifier usually evades the question of desire by starting from the play of formal differences at the level of "effects," and then deriving from this a formal model of desire as a generalized principle of direct investment, of "plugging in."[8] Even deconstruction, in all the purity of its self-effacing operations, gets caught up in the Lacanian circle: an endless oscillation of phallus and hole, presence and absence, trace and space, mark and blank, form and (non) substance, signification and "force" — in short, the epistemological circle of inscription and "writing:" the logic of the separation of the

symbolic and the physical, the metapahorical split between "culture and nature."

The structuralism latent in postmodernist theory — the vision of culture as an autotelic system of signs — compells the intellect to think the *Anti-System*. But the Anti-System is a conception as ideal as the signifying *System* it opposes. The Anti-System usually appears as an alloy of classical substance and modern force: an unmediated desire, an absolute unconscious, a pristine nonmeaning, a pure power, a negative being, a non-entity. The Anti-System thinks the body as a completely closed and dimensionless, unruptured surface "without organs." This nonpresence is not so much "nature in the raw" as nature in fine filigree. The concept of matter and energy without extension or sensible qualities becomes the new infrastructure (in the politics of desire) and the new referent (in deconstructive philosophy). Everything is defined as a manifestation — an *effect* — of power, desire, *différance*. Thus, the post-structuralist negation (e.g., the critique of Levi-Strauss and Lacan: the subversion of the "system of signs" and the "symbolic *order*") emerges as a paradoxical revival of nineteenth century models of base and superstructure, ranging from Marx's "forces of production" to Freud's "libidinal economy" and various "secondary drive" theories of "socialization." As in the behaviourist paradigm, nature functions as a kind of nonspecific base, while human behaviour counts only as a reflex. According to Deleuze, for example, Nietzsche was concerned "with forces [on the one hand], and [with] forms of general semiology [on the other]. Phenomena, things, organisms, societies, consciousness and spirits are signs, or rather symptoms, and themselves reflect states of forces."[9] In Deleuze's *Logique du sens*, the relation between the Anti-System and the System is one of pure cause and effect.[10] Everything in the alleged System is conceived as an effect of the Anti-System, or the Will-to-Power (which is also necessarily the purest expression of the System). But the Anti-System is just chaos (in the sense of disembodied formlessness): it is nothing more than the abstract negation of Plato's Doctrine of Ideas — its mirror image. The "logic" of sense of which Deleuze writes exists only within the cut-off and castrated realm of effects, so that when the System is deconstructed, nothing is left over but the unsullied negativity of the Anti-System: a world without sensible being, a desire without objects, a force without energy.

The Body and the Sign

There is an intimate connection between our ability to conceive what we call postmodernity and the deconstruction of the sign. The latter plays on the appearance of logical regression set up by the temporalization of the sign's metaphysical constituents (signifier, signified, and

referent). The diachronic relation between sign and sign destroys the trinitarian unity of signification, so that the constitutents of a completed meaning are volatilized in the protensional void of an infinite referral process. The conception of society as sign and simulacrum, which is ideologically contemporaneous with Plato's Idea and Pythagoras' *ratio* of discrete harmonic relations, is revived in the crisis of the sign's dissolution. And this deconstructive moment of history imposes upon the mind a heightened consciousness both of history and of the futility of remembrance, such as Nietzsche explored in *The Use and Abuse of History*. If meaning is composed by a sign, and if it exists by virtue of a system, as our rationalist and schizoid ego impulse would lead us to believe, and even to wish, then the temporalization of the sign, and consequent failure of the ideal, traps the meaning of being-alive-now in the tempered scrutiny of the screen memory of the signifier. We become fascinated by the mystery of the signifier's presence, the enigma of the forces and sequences which must have carried the signifier hither. The signifier, or screen memory, condenses an absence that compells us, and we are hypnotized by the prospect of a personal significance in the apparently random constellations of effects before us. Life becomes a kind of obsession with fate which Freud would have linked to the subterfuges of a perverse superego, and which Nietzsche would have read as the nihilism of *ressentiment* itself.

The theory of postmodernity translates deconstruction — as exemplified in the thought of Lacan and Derrida — back into the field of the "referential illusion" which deconstruction has systematically evaded. An example of this is provided by Baudrillard, who simply takes Derrida or Kristeva or the early Deleuze and reads them directly into social experience. In effect, Baudrillard says: "Let us take these exalted theorists of language at their word: there is no such thing as metatheory, metaphysics, or epistemology — everything they appear to be saying about the philosophy of meaning is nothing more than a mediated description of what they feel like being alive in the world today." In other words, we live in a world of afterimages, of ghosts, signifiers, and simulacra.

Reflecting on this relationship between philosophical deconstruction and postmodern social theory, one cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that no attempt to deconstruct the signifier itself has ever been carried off successfully in this era of the linguistic turn, and that both philosophy and cultural science are themselves caught up in the mesmerism of the signifier. This is because the strategy of temporalizing the sign, though it may dissolve the scientific pretensions of structuralism, is itself implicated in the metaphysics of Rationalism. Deconstruction depends on the technical procedure of reduction to the discrete which constitutes the

metaphysical problem of the sign in the first place.[11] The regression released by the deconstructive technique cannot begin without taking the constituted and historically constructed existence of the signifier as a given. The signifier is the formal starting point of rationalist thought: it is the discrete manipulable segment which makes analysis, abstraction, and substitution possible, and thus enables the construction of models for the independent organization of thought. Deconstruction merely plays with such potentialities, without really questioning the concealment of the signifier's origin in an operational reduction. Once the signifier has been granted this ontological status, it takes only a slight shift in perspective from traditional (i.e., realistic) rationalism, to arrive at a skeptical version of rationalism in which the entire and unfathomable state of irretrievability and regression to which it gives rise, ceases to look like the consequence of formal segmentation. Instead, it presents itself as a kind of negative causality which leads inexorably to the signifier itself, producing the signifier's discrete and closed effect as a necessity, an already totalized and inescapaable world of screen memories and sourceless effects, the timeless aftermath of the postmodern condition.

Deconstruction finds that we must begin with "writing," and that we are properly directed toward the formal and formalizable status of the word, and not toward the body which speaks and writes it. Of course, the deconstruction of the sign engages us in a discourse of the body. But this is the Lacanian body of *points de capiton*, discrete markers, and decoupage. Deconstruction invokes the death of the body against the living word, the furrowed "ground" against the dancing figure (the phallus, the signifier). But it can only accomplish this corporeal referentiality as an inversion, a moment of extinction, the exhaustion of a formal regression which cannot begin without its privileged moment within the sign, the formal or phallic moment, which is already a reductive cancellation of the body. Deconstruction theorizes the body, to be sure, but only as a kind of negative theology or temporal mystery. The body becomes the unlocalizable antecedent of the sign — an absence lurking behind the dense significance of the signifier: merely the site of a future depletion.

Postmortemism and Ultramodernism

The argument of this paper links together the classical conception of psychoanalysis as reconstruction (of a forgotten or obscure past), the deconstructive paradox of the temporalized sign, and "postmodern experience" itself. The connection implies that contemporary social experience and the dominant academic theories about it are overdetermined by the rationalist wish for historical recovery and completion, the revealed impossibility of such recovery, and the paradoxical nature of any

attempt to think meaning and the image as the traces of a determinate reality. Since the rationalist effort at reconstruction always fails, and always for perfectly rationalist reasons, the rumour has started to go round that perhaps there is no body to be reckoned with; that there are only the abstractions, the shifters, and codings that mark out the spaces where the body might have been.

The theory of postmodernism may therefore best be described as a social theory of the afterimage, a theory of collective life as an aftermath. In short, postmodernism is really a kind of "*postmortemism*." There is an ontogenetic analogy here with the way a person may grow up into a being organized around the introjected core of the parents' unconscious grief or sense of failure. This is something like the situation of the most radical contemporary social theory. Yet, in a way, postmortemism is a healthy maladaptation — an Adornoesque refusal of the potential terrorism of all instrumentalizable thought. Postmortemism sees contemporary history largely as it is: a juggernaut of operationalized rationalism (the celebrated "unity of theory and practice," from dialectical materialism to the semio-cybernetics of urban space). Contestation becomes inconceivable, except as living on the fringe and testing the limits of contradictory experience. Postmodernists think and write about aesthetics, artworks, art practices, textuality, indexicality, and death. As witness of intellectual history, the postmodern mind is paralysed by the devastations wrought by modern social and technological science.

But postmortemism has the unfortunate result of reducing everything that is happening now to a mnemic effect of what went before. It forces us into the mode of reconstruction and the logic of bases and superstructures. In fact, postmortemism posits a chain of such mnemic effects, reaching back indefinitely in historical time. One only has to read such dystopic reconstructions as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to realize that the seed of Fascism, if it is to be conceived as the culmination of an historical process, is irretrievable in time.

Freud talked about screen memories, those condensed and highly-charged doubles that mask the prehistories of the psyche. What was the pre-history of the social body that is masked and condensed in the "runes" of the postmodern aftermath? Was it modernism? Or was modernism itself just the sliding signifier of the classical world, the play of afterimages in the wake of sinking civilizations — what Marx called the "childhood" of humanity? Derrida has shown that, in principle, the logic of the afterimage, the logic of the signifier, is an infinite regress.

And yet, perhaps the problematic of the sign can be pinned down to certain historical determinations. As Arthur Kroker has argued, there is reason to believe that the theory of institutionalized Christianity, particularly as preserved in the work of Augustine, may be pivotal for

comprehension of the deep structures of modern experience.[12] The church father worked with a concept of the signifier, its imaginary double, and the mediation of a vanishing point in experience (signifier, signified, referent?). There are a variety of such trinities in Western thought, all of which revolve around the paradox of mentality and its relation to earth. What is new about such an interpretation is that it depends on the Freudian concept of idealization (and its underlying Nietzschean conception of *ressentiment*). And it is significant for our understanding of both postmodernism and poststructuralism that all of this psychology of idealizing defence finds perfect expression in Lacan's theory of the phallus as the structural principle of signification.

Popular intellectual historians like Bertrand Russel and Kenneth Clark have depicted Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the first modern thinker, with good reason; but Augustine wrote a much earlier "Confessions;" and it was perhaps Augustine who fully grasped the reflections of the ego, the selfless recounting of deeply-felt compromise, as an emblem of the human condition and as a model for a new theory of socialization. For the thoroughly modern individual, to tell a story, to recount, is actually to recant: to confess, as Foucault has argued.[13]

Kroker has also proposed that the theory of postmodernism be abandoned in favour of a new kind of critical radicalism coalescing around the concept of the "ultramodern." This term should suggest neither the tortured aftermath of modernism nor a primitivistic short-circuiting of cultural history, but rather the dissolution of modernist consciousness itself, as it lives on in the postmodern taste for linguistic and collective models of being.

Modernism contemplated the history of Spirit, Idea, Mind, Convention, and Sign, and defined progress as faith in a kind of thickening skin of such idealizations. By returning to Nietzsche and Freud, postmodernism as critical theory notes the absurdity of such an encrusted barrier against the real — not by returning us to 'reality,' but by trying to demonstrate the nullity of the real itself through the paradox of the temporality of the sign. Thus, postmodern skepticism does not so much defeat modernist idealism, as take over its duties. Postmodernist theory tends simply to reverse the meaning of the rationalist equation of idealization with knowledge. The failure of the Ideal becomes the failure of all activity. It is as if, having condemned the hypocrisy of pure Reason, we then throw ourselves into the abyss with it, in order to retain one last link with it, and thus remain pure ourselves.

Nietzsche was prone, like Freud, to interpret psychological defences like projection and splitting as cognitive barriers; he anticipated Freud's discovery that the Ideal can serve as a defence against fantasies of (good and) evil. An intelligent reading of Nietzsche might reveal that the

cognitive problem of reference (or lack of reference — the "transcendental signified"), and in particular, the existential problem of the difference between human constructions on the one hand and natural formations on the other (the great epistemological and sociological issues of modernity), are emotional in origin: universal predicaments, but not constitutive of thought in themselves. Of course, as a young professor, Nietzsche made an influential (and unfortunately somewhat moral) distinction between the pretensions of human knowledge ("wretched... shadowy and flighty... aimless and arbitrary"), and the vast realms of real nature beyond human cognition and control.[14] But this kind of ironic distinction, typical of poststructuralist thought, in which the sheer poverty and impertinence of human Reason and Language have become a kind of status symbol setting history and society apart from the nonhuman 'eternities' of nature, is no longer possible once Creationism has been forfeited. There are no grounds for believing that anything that humans might ever do (however linguistic, rational, or ridiculous) is any *less* a significant part of "nature" than other phenomena. The relativity of culture and the "arbitrariness of the sign" are no substitutes for divine favour. If God is dead, his *absence* must also cease to be significant for our interpretation of the world. This, Freud grasped better than Nietzsche. We no longer have the theological luxury of trying to demarcate the desirable from the undesirable by demonstrating that our own thought unaided leads nowhere. We cannot return to something else, or produce it later. Neither fusion nor transcendence is either past or future, neither nature nor spirit is merely lost or pending. We are already as much "it" as anything else, because the past and the future exist only as potential intensities of the present. Real nature bumbles along, and our bodies with it.

A farewell to the rationalism of modernism and its sequel in postmortemism requires, in addition to the usual Nietzschean reading of Freud, a Freudian reading of Nietzsche. The referential aporias of the temporalized sign nearly always turn out to be questions of the physical body in relation to other physical bodies, informed only secondarily and uninterestingly by the celebrated "arbitrariness" of the linguistic "construction of reality" which we have a tendency to read back into the outlooks of Nietzsche and Freud.

The "reality" of the body will have to be explored much more deeply if 'ultramodernism' is to be more than another version of postmodernism, i.e., another face of modernism itself. The idea of the ultramodern would then no longer participate so blindly in the Lacanian cosmos of ontological lack, the ascetic suction of a protensional void, of which the theory of textual deconstruction, of displacement as a kind of romanticized death instinct, has lately served as such a fine example. The prefix

'ultra' implies a kind of concentrated and cohesive madness, perhaps even the implosion of the signifier itself into the fulness of an immediate physical relationship — an extremism which will be presented in this paper as the perfectly ordinary, but thoroughly underrated and unlikely psychosomatic reality of the infantile body.

Part II: The Aesthetic Substance of the Infantile Body

> The mind does not know itself, except in so far as it perceives the ideas of the modifications of the body.
>
> Spinoza[15]

Psychoanalysis has rarely concerned itself with the problem of reference or the normativity of theories of reality because the reconstruction of the past is in a way merely a tangent of the psychoanalytic process. The process itself has more to do with the adumbration of psychosomatic states through dreams, talk, and the negotiation of a peculiar but highly specific relationship. Remembrance takes place, of course; but the fact that every narrativization recedes eventually into temporal oblivion worries few who have been impressed by the intensity, immediacy, and increasing explicitness of bodily states. In dreams, every variety of sophistication is expressed as a situation of the body, its relations, states, and parts.

The fact of being a body is inescapable, it cannot be deferred, lost in a chain of reference, or divided into signifier and signified. Neither *différance*, nor indeterminacy, nor the ideological constitution of the subject, nor the social or linguistic construction of reality, can succeed in disguising the biological status of our existence.

One does not have to be a body without organs in order to undo the order of representation (Deleuze), any more than one has to build up sensorimotor schemas in order to be able to match the gestures of others (Piaget).[16] Psychoanalysis discovers that the body is not just an obscure relation to its afterimages, but a being which is an immediate image of itself; and that the transference is not only repetition, but the physical difference of bodies in the present. The body *is* the symbol; and while the relationship between what constitutes meaning and the functioning of the body can be separated out and arranged in the discrete markers of temporal sequence, its actuality is never exhausted by this or any other variation of linguistic modelling.

When psychoanalysis breaks out of the logic of reconstruction and the conundrum of the afterimage (signifier), it encounters the fact that the infantile body knows nothing of political systems or family systems, nothing about signs and machines. Theodor Adorno defined the whole as the untrue; psychoanalysis would add that the body is the truth of the

unwhole — that it cannot be synthesized with its totalizations and investments.

The popular image, in *Anti-Oedipus* and other poststructuralist works, of a prodigious infrastructure of instinctual nature ("desiring-production") is in many ways an evasion of the question of the body. One of the great psychoanalytic contributions to general knowledge was to show that nobody really knows where the "inside" of the body ends and the "outside" begins. The body inevitably generates a kind of "hermeneutic circle," but it hardly follows from this that the inside and the outside may simply be translated into one another, or that the "internal world" can be evacuated, through the plugs and ducts of some libidinal machinery of discharge, directly into the socio-political field. The insight that desire is never merely a "lack," or a sort of ineffable excess of fixed structures (as Deleuze and Guattari correctly point out), does not turn desire into a virile apparatus of production. The ideology of structuralism is not overcome simply by adding the concept of flows and currents to the paratactic chains and metonymical networks of the linguistic model. The desiring substance of energy is just as much an abstraction of the body as the formalism of a linguistically-structured concept of the symbolic.

The infantile body is saturated with fantastic meaning, which can never be entirely discharged through "linkages" of "production" or "investment" (cathexis). But this does not mean that the infant is "blind," a "narcissistic" bundle of nerves, or a "blooming, buzzing confusion." The infantile body already knows that it is in a predicament, dependent on an ecology which evades complete understanding and fantasies of control. The infantile body knows that there are holes in itself, that you can put things in and force things out, that it is a body in a physical world of bodies with ambiguous boundaries, entrances and exits; that bodies fold in on themselves and unravel, that they may contain each other and things, or be contained, that there are emotions, that these are powerful, ecstatic, annihilating, unmanageable without help. This is one of the things that a very small body already knows: that it cannot go it alone or, at least, that going it alone is only a hypothesis, depending on whether those other bodies that *seem* to be able to go it alone really can. This is what psychoanalysis is about: not the paradoxes of linguistic communication or the aporias of reconstruction, but the question of how people live through the situation of being a neotenous body, the strategies of being in a world of bodies and things, and their various consequences.

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In 1913, Sandor Ferenczi wrote of how the child's "attention is arrested above all by those objects and processes of the outer world that

on the ground of ever so distant a resemblance, remind him of his dearest experiences." (One might add, of course, the child's least dear experiences as well.) Ferenczi had in mind

> those intimate connections, which remain throughout life, between the human body and the objective world that we call *symbolic*. On the one hand the child in this stage sees in the world nothing but images of his own corporeality, on the other he learns to represent by means of his body the whole multifariousness of the outer world.[17]

Here, Ferenczi emphasizes the basic psychoanalytic intuition that the bodily imagination is the substratum of all our "models." But there are some problems with the way he thinks this through. In Ferenczi's days, for the most part, psychoanalysts tended to think of the baby as proceeding by analogy, animistically, identifying everything with its own pleasurable functioning. Freud's "hungry baby" in *The Interpretation of Dreams* cannot tell the difference between its hallucinatory afterimage of the mother's breast and an actual feeding. Freud's baby will only achieve this distinction between the internal production of imagery and the external object by means of the reality principle, which will gradually evolve out of the frustrating experience of the image.

The philosophical behaviourist and empiricist assumption that the neonate is a narcissistic and autoerotic isolate has led to an overemphasis in psychoanalytic theory, particularly in North America and France, on the problem of psychological differentiation, what Freud called the "reality principle" and Lacan called "language," or "le nom (non) du pere." The father is supposed to be the one who is responsible for rupturing the "narcissistic" closure of nature (mother-child dyad) by introducing language, culture, deferral, displacement, the signifier, and the Law. But the foregoing is largely a social scientific and culturalist myth.

We privilege the ego-function of abstraction and decoupage, and thus set up a hierarchy in which the signifier or "word-presentation" has authority and priority over the symbolic process or "thing-presentation." But there is a further degree of abstraction involved: the immediacy of the internal world (what the Romantics called Imagination) is reduced, in theory, to the status of hallucination, which will eventually be trained through frustration to become the ego function of memory. The symbolic activities of the infantile body are viewed as a kind of mnemic anarchy, a play of afterimages yet to be subjected to the governance of a temporal order and the order of rationality. The pleasure of imagining is reduced to the pressure of need, which has no object, but only an aim of gratification — or in other words, abeyance, blankness. (This aspect of

Freud's early instinctual theorizing has been spun out into a vast generalization of Thanatos by Lacan and his followers: the imagination is toward death, the symbolic is the dead father, living is castration, etc.). In this way, the infantile body is fitted into the temporal logic of the signifier, psychic life and even dreaming are comprehended one-sidedly as a play of afterimages, and the body without language is condemned to the status of false consciousness (the Imaginary), and replaced with the false empiricism of the body without organs.

This whole approach hinges on the half-truth that the difference between the inner and the outer, the dream and the object, is alien to the organism, a secondary acquisition imposed by the harsh lesson of necessity. The infant is supposed to know no outside of itself, only so that it can eventually learn that in principle, there is no inside either, except by virtue of blind instinct and ideological delusion. But the clinical and experimental evidence no longer supports this generalization. The difference between the imagination and the external object is always relative, never either wholly absent or complete. The cognitive distinction between the self and other is not actually learned from scratch; it is built in to the organismic structures of perception at birth, gradually refined, lost in affective retreat, exaggerated in self-defence, practiced according to a cultural code. But it is always there. Difference is a very difficult experience, but its existence rests on more than the reality principle, or the therapeutic discoveries of linguistic philosophy. The problem for the infantile body is not to cognize difference as a first principle under the reign of necessity, but what to make of difference emotionally. And what one *makes* of this cognition is always symbolic — always a state of the body. It cannot be reduced to a series of discoveries about "external reality" (ego psychology) or "language" (Lacan, deconstruction). It is an active creation of new images, a way of being; and not just a progressive differentiation between memory and perception, signifier and signified.

Long before language and Oedipal sophistication, the infantile body has discovered that its own subjectivity shifts with each displacement of the object. If the symbolic substitution of the object creates a third term, the body becomes a fourth term in relation to a fifth, producing a sixth, and so the baby discovers that it can lose itself. Triangulation and displacement are, along with splitting, incorporation, and projection, the basic forms of symbolization, they are inherent to the human body. Melanie Klein theorized all these goings on as the deferral of object anxiety. In her view, symbolization is "the foundation of all fantasy and sublimation but, more than that, it is the basis of the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality."[18] This, in 1930, still sounds like Ferenczi, but there is a subtle shift. The infant is still narcissistic and

autoerotic, but no longer an isolate ignorant of the existential fact of otherness, as Lacanians and ego psychologists claim. Babies differentiate their bodies from others', and people from things, and they do all this without benefit of language. The neonate quickly discovers that it can get outside of itself and into other bodies, and that it can destroy other bodies and their organs or take them inside itself. Klein already understood deeply through the analytic process what the most recent experimental psychology of neonate cognition is only just beginning to discern.[19]

There is another way of looking at symbolization which might be described as epiphanic, because it involves a joyful dissolution of boundaries, and is less driven by object-anxiety. There are times for lucky people when desire is in a manically omnipotent and playful phase, and just then another person will come along and present this manic fantasy back to the infantile body in the form of a real external object. This kind of experience has several consequences, one of which might be called aesthetic experience.[20] Such coincidences increase the capacity of the infantile body to acknowledge and contain its own pain without recourse to defensive splitting and projection. (The body is, after all, both "a pleasure palace and a torture chamber.") But this kind of experience also inclines one to feel eternally grateful for the existence of other bodies. One acquires a certain faith that bodies and fantasies can intermingle without destroying each other's internal worlds, that bodies can get in and out of each other and intensify each other's pleasure without too great a risk of destruction.

Considerations such as these eventually lead to the idea of the "mental image" of the body, or in other words, the *body image*, which has just been taken up as a special theme in the most recent issue of *Psychology Today*.[21] Apparently, the body image is something that people have and can learn to manipulate. The body image appears, in other words, as an afterimage, something to do with Oedipal codings and adolescence. This is true so far as it goes, but it does not take us very far. In fact, the body's image of itself is not an afterimage (or in other words, a signifier): the body *is* its image of itself. As Nietzsche wrote: "In the tremendous multiplicity of events within an organism, the part which becomes conscious to us is a mere means: and the little bit of "virtue," "selflessness," and similar fictions are refuted radically by the total balance of events." And Nietzsche added: "We should study our organism in all its immorality."[22]

In his classic psychoanalytic study of the image and appearance of the body, Paul Schilder argued that we must dispose of "the idea that there are [sense] impressions which are independent from actions. Seeing with an unmoved eye when inner and outer eye muscles are out of function

would not be real seeing, and would not be seeing at all, if the body were completely immobilized at the same time." He continues: "The perception is always our own mode of seeing... we are emotional beings... Our knowledge will be dependent on the erotic currents flowing through our body and will also influence them... The postural model of the body is in perpetual inner self-construction and self-destruction."[23] In other words, perception of other bodies is immediately proprioception, and self-perception is immediately perception of other bodies. The activity of sensory experience cannot be analytically extracted from the basic levels of fantasy. Signifiers are not necessarily involved. The infantile body is like an Alladin's lamp containing the genie of the whole world — it's skin is already psyche, for the epiderm is saturated with nervous fibre — and all you have to do is rub it.

The body image, or body schema, as some call it,[24] is profoundly unconscious, but it is not closed onto itself, as we consciously think of it; like Rabelais' grotesque, which is so beautifully described by Bakhtin,[25] the unconscious body is inside out and upside down, full of orifices, studded with protrusions, great big bellies and pointy heads, ears like vortexes, spilling out organs, exploding into pieces, drowning the world in urine, piling up turds and making them into space invaders or babies, swallowing the whole cosmos, constantly in the throes of death and rebirth.

The body is its own postural, kinesic, proxemic, temporal model. The body in relation to other bodies is the substratum of the imagination, the psyche is nothing if not the body's own image of itself, and its elaborations of this.

The psyche-soma can think of itself as split between body-machine as extension and mind-spirit as time, or as desiring-production versus coding and signs; but this is only another way the body imagines itself, this split image is then the body. It is not a signifier and signified, running away in time from a referent. Bodies interact directly. Pure mind is a particular kind of physiological state; the schizoid who feels that he exists hundreds of feet up in the air, above his body, attached to it only by an umbilical string, is living entirely within his body, this is the way that the schizoid body is actually functioning, it *is* this image of itself in the world.

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For a long time, Freud thought that repression was the central structuring agency of the psychesoma. Dreams could be explained by the way the ego ideal performed a few clever manouevres across a horizontal threshold called the repression barrier. The explanatory power of this elegant model made it possible to think of all the complicated actions of

the bodily imagination in terms of the two broad and very general categories of fusion and division — or "condensation" and "displacement."

Freud's explorations of repression revealed the psychosomatic origins of the ontotheological split between "mind" and "body." Yet the tendency to interpret the concept of defence as an essentially horizontal split suggests that traditional spiritualist dualism has retained its influence. The persistence of the 'above' and 'below' model of psychic organization has severely limited our conception of what primary symbolization may be like. In fact, the body can divide itself up in numerous ways, as Freud was well aware. The early work with Breuer on hysteria was concerned also with *vertical* splits, and other forms of "defense." But it was not until later in Freud's career that attention returned to problems of splitting, projection, and identification.

Unfortunately, the dominant image of what Freud left behind remains an oversimplification: there is consciousness (an afterimage which only appears to exist in the "here and now"), and then there is that "andere Schauplatz" (the "other scene"). In this version of Freud, the unconscious is also divided from the body: it straddles the region *between* the body (as a kind of given), and the blandishments of the external world. In practice, this model usually corresponds to the traditional commonsense division between a natural core of needs, drives, and schedules on the one hand, and a complex of externally imposed psychic contents on the other. In short, it tends to be assumed, even in psychoanalytically informed cultural theory, that the body is a kind of biological given which can be cancelled out of the equation or simply held constant; whereas the matter to be studied and understood is rather what society pumps into the body (or "writes" onto it). In this light, it appears as if Freud was really concerned with the (semiotic?) *rules* (metaphor and metonymy?) according to which "what society (the Creator?) pumps in" (i.e., a Soul or a Culture) is further sorted into what is conscious and what is repressed. In this way, even the psychoanalytic conception of the psyche can be held theoretically apart from the empirical body, and the old division between meaning and its husk of matter can, in spite of impressive anti-Cartesian rhetoric to the contrary, be effectively maintained.

Theoretical aesthetics and socio-cultural thought can no longer get by with a simplified model of the psyche in the body as a process of mediation between drives and codes. The theory of culture cannot rely solely on the linguistically-oriented study of mnemic images and signifiers, while leaving the rest to a sociology of conventions and structures. The view of the body as a kind of libidinal *tabula rasa* just waiting for entire systems of culture and politics to impose their

repressions and taboos was liberating and useful in its time, and led to some interesting developments in social theory; but as a way of understanding the potentialities and activities of the body (or as a way of grasping what psychoanalysis is about), it is anachronistic and inadequate.

The question remains: what kinds of experiences do those who are only *potential* members of society have, and how significant are they? Social thought needs to develop a clearer appreciation of the difference between the social intuitions of the infantile body and the process of "socialization" (which really ought to be called "societalization"). If babies are already social before they are socialized (i.e., societalized), and continue to be so as they grow up, then our whole concept of what it means to talk about 'society' and 'culture' needs to be revised.

There is today a growing realization that the body has already undergone several revolutions before it reaches the Oedipal or phallic phase of development, and that the social orientation of the body at the age of less than two (which may already be blown apart) is going to be decisive for the way the body, as potential member of society, will react to the societal codes, and the gender issue, which will be introduced to it and generally imposed upon it with increasing assiduity in the ensuing years. Moreover, as Freud was perhaps beginning to recognize, the infantile body is not only pleasure-seeking (or pain-avoiding); it is something more like an organismic intensity, oscillating at times wildly between ecstatic totalizations (the "oceanic feeling") and abject annihilation (the "death instinct"). The infant is not only functionally dependent on its caretaker, and otherwise blissfully ignorant (the pleasure-pain axis); but threatened with psychic death in the prolonged absence of an object, and groping for the internal worlds, the life experience, of others (the self-object axis). This is not just a matter of pleasure through gratification, followed by discharge or repression, all of which will be secretly revived in the adult social world of signs and rituals (the consumer society hypothesis); it also has to do with identifications, projections, splits, incorporations, destructions, massive creations, tragic atonements, an ideal love matched only by moments of abyssal hatred — all of this well before there is any question of repression and socialization in the classical sense. The issue is that not just instinctual — but also emotional life — is pre-societal. In other words, the infantile body has already constructed a whole cosmos entirely out of the corporeal aesthetics of a few interpersonal relationships well before its surface is even tickled, let alone "traced" (as Foucault would say) by language. The body will survive a multiplicity of extinctions before it becomes that socio-cultural or epistemic "volume in disintegration" which Foucault describes.

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It may seem simpler, but in the long run it is misleading, to make hard and fast distinctions between states of the body and processes of symbolization, however susceptible to semiotic formalization symbolization (the Symbolic!) may appear to be.

The great literary student of symbolic process Kenneth Burke was one of the first to explore the implications of the fact that meaning is not just a matter of *systems* of signs, but of inchoate bodily states and fluxes of interaction. Burke developed a theory of *substance* which is based on the ambiguity of the word 'substance' itself.[26] The substance of a thing is taken to mean what a thing *is*, in its most essential "inner being." Yet, in a sense, the "essence" of a thing is really what stands *under* the thing and holds it in its being: the *sub-stance* of the thing. Thus, the substance of something is, in a curious kind of way, precisely something other than the thing — something under, or behind, or perhaps even *after* it. And if the substance comes "after," this might be because it is a kind of "symbolic exchange," or in other words, an emergent property or "equifinality," which cannot be derived from a "ground" or initial condition of the "system." (The concept of the "simulacrum" would be appropriate here, if it were not for the word's Christian connotations of diabolism.)

At any rate, Burke's point is not that substance is a linguistic category mistake to be banished for its metaphysical or theological overtones — although he would admit that it is hardly anything solid. Substance is indeed a kind of illusion, like the relation of the infantile body to its objects: it is both inside and outside, subjective and objective, as in the chance coincidence of a fantasy and the external world. Like the infantile body, substance is a fundamentally contradictory and paradoxical process, slipping and sliding, refusing to remain still. Its world is an elaboration, without an original or final point of reference which can be codified. Yet it has a certain kind of inevitability about it. No society can completely abstract this "substance" without destroying itself, no historical process can supercede the infantile body and determine it in its essential being, or reduce it completely to a signifier or an afterimage.

All of this amounts to saying that the body is not reducible to the structures and conventions of its "invaders," that there is something about the body, which I have tried to define in terms of its infantile dynamics, which is indestructible so long as it remains biologically viable. In other words, there *is* a kind of "animal substance." In the age of sophisticated theory and the linguistic turn, such a claim will seem outlandishly naive and absurd, but that is precisely the effect it should have. If the infantile body were not absurd, it would have no critical or

aesthetic value whatsoever — it would just be a subject for various "materialisms" and "idealisms."

The issue for the theory of postmodernism is not that the body has been evacuated and absorbed by the cultural system, but that the body, the unconscious, the infantile, the grotesque, the aesthetic — or whatever we choose to call it — seems to have become *irrelevant*, especially for theory. There are two likely reasons for this. On the one hand, there is the supervention of a certain kind of techno-logic, or instrumental reason, with its problematic of *simulation*; and on the other hand, there is the academic hegemony of rationalism in cultural thought, which is epitomized by the rise of the language paradigm in critical philosophy and social science. The latter has an uncanny tendency to recapitulate the epistemological assumptions of the former, as Baudrillard has demonstrated in various books.[27] So the carnal knowledge of aesthetic states (the infantile body) seems to have become now virtually meaningless and irrelevant on both counts. Yet, it is probably when the aesthetic dimension becomes sociologically irrelevant that it is most radical and interesting, which is not irrelevant at all.

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Notes

1. A shorter version of this paper was presented to the graduate seminar on "Postmodernism and Aesthetics" at Concordia University, Montreal, April, 1986. I would like to thank the members of that seminar for their engaging response; also Marty Allor, Loretta Czernis, Michael Dorland, Bruce Ferguson, Arthur Kroker, Elspeth Probyn, and Beth Seaton for their conversation, comments and encouragement in connection with this particular piece of work; and A.T.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), p. 146.

3. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, et. al. (New York: Viking, 1977).

4. Jacqueline Rose, "Introduction-II," in *Feminine Sexuality*, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1982), p. 30.

5. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 148.

6. For a discussion of Lacan's "points de capitons," see Anthony Wilden's commentary in Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Delta, 1968).

7. Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault* (Paris: Editions Galilee, 1977).

8. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 1ff; p. 29: "... libido has no need of any mediation... in order to invade and invest... *there is only desire and the social, and nothing else*;" p. 166: "... the individual in the family, however young, directly

invests a social, historical, economic, and political field that is not reducible to any mental structure or affective constellation."

9. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.x.

10. Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1969).

11. For further discussion of these points, see my "La Greffe du Zele: Derrida and the Cupidity of the Text," in *The Structural Allegory: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought*, ed. John Fekete (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 201-227.

12. See Arthur Kroker's reflections on the psychohistory of the sign in "Augustine as the Founder of Modern Experience: The Legacy of Charles Norris Cochrane," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Fall, 1982), 79-119.
See also Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* (Montreal: Oxford/New World Perspectives, 1986).
Kroker's hypothesis of the "fictitious unity of the Western episteme" is based, in part, on his discovery of an internal pattern of experiential inversions and structural reversals, reaction formations and denials, which links early Christian thought symbolically (as a condensation of the historical impasse in classical culture) with the central themes of the philosophical and aesthetic canon of modernity and its aftermath.
In *Symbols That Stand for Themselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), the anthropologist Roy Wagner has worked out an interesting formal model of the internal dynamic connecting medieval Christian culture with modernity. Wagner traces a "process of figurative expansion" and "obviation" (reversal), in which symbolic strategies for organizing experience, beginning with Augustine's theory of the sacrament, exhaust and recapitulate themselves in a succession of permutational registers. According to Wagner (p. 121), "the medieval and modern core symbols have developed in relation to each other through a holographic process of figure-ground reversal." In his view, "our contemporary epoch realizes the third and final cancellation of the modern cycle."
Kroker's work is focussed intensively on the details of contemporary experience, at the James Joycean level of the hermeneutics of quotidian epiphany; yet the framework of his analysis implies a theoretical supervention in the whole discussion of postmodernity. Where Foucault, as the major representative of the "new French thought," suggests an "epistemological break," Kroker discovers the lineaments of a significant continuity, which itself must be overcome.

13. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

14. "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), pp. 42-47.

15. Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1955), Part 2, Prop XXIII.

16. See A.N. Metlzoff and M.K. Moore, "Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human neonates," *Science*. 198, 75-8.

17. Sandor Ferenczi, "Stages in the Development of the Sense of Reality," in *Sex in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Ernest Jones (New York: Brunner, 1950), p.228.

18. Melanie Klein, "The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Development of the Ego," in *Love, Guilt and Reparation & Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Delta, 1975), p.221.

19. For some standard neonatological references, see Margaret Bullowa, ed., *Before Speech: The Beginnings of Human Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); George Butterworth, ed., *Infancy and Epistemology: An Evaluation of Piaget's Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); and Edward Tronick, ed., *Social Interchange in Infancy: Affect, Cognition, and Communication* (Baltimore: University Park, 1982). For the most recent attempt at synthesis, see Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

    From the point of view of any cultural reality principle, the problem may be less whether the baby will learn to perceive the distinction between bodily fantasy and external objects, than whether it can be persuaded to continue doing so. In fact, there is some clinical evidence that the only basis upon which such a distinction (between self and object) can be securely maintained by the ego is, paradoxically, an unconscious *identification* of self and object. Melanie Klein called this the "internalization of the good object." To put the whole matter in a different set of terms, one might say that the schizoid is consciously and manifestly narcissistic because he is, in a sense, unconsciously *too* realistic, i.e., too *deeply* detached for existential comfort.

20. See W.R.D. Fairbairn, "The Ultimate Basis of Aesthetics," in *The British Journal of Psychology, 29*, Pt. 2 (1938), 167-181. See also D.W. Winnicott's discussions of the transitional object, in *Playing and Reality* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican, 1971), and his discussion of Schechehaye's concept of "symbolic realization" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965), p. 60.

21. *Psychology Today*, April, 1986.

22. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 355, #674.

23. Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche* (New York: International Universities Press, 1950), pp. 15-16.

24. W.C.M. Scott, "The Body-Scheme in Psycho-Therapy," *Brit. J. of Med. Psychol.*, Vol. XXII, 1949.

25. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968), pp. 303-367.

26. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 21-58.

27. See Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981); and *L'echange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

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THE ANOREXIC BODY

Elspeth Probyn

> Yet today the subject apprehends himself 'elsewhere', and 'subjectivity' can return at another place on the spiral: deconstructed, taken apart, shifted, without anchorage: why should I not speak of 'myself' since this 'my' is no longer the 'self'.
>
> Roland Barthes[1]

> She must learn to speak/starting with We/starting as the infant does/with her own true hunger/and pleasure/and rage
>
> Marge Piercy[2]

Some time ago I came across Angela McRobbie's article, "Jackie: An Ideology of Adolescent Femininity."[3] I flipped through, interested in finding a reading of ideology which wasn't cold, distanced and impenetrable. In this article McRobbie seemed to be searching beyond a straight structural or formal reading of ideology to what might be called a textualization of a hegemonic practice. In other words, one could see the move away from an Althusserian insistence on ideology as always-already 'there', to a perspective that wanted to account for lived experiences (and contradictions) within ideology. McRobbie's article also attracted me as I had read *Jackie* when I was in my early teens. Her argument about how *Jackie* constructs a world for teenage women (a text which entices with its comfortable naturalized notions of femininity) seemed at first quite valid. I also liked her argument of the ways in which *Jackie* 'works': of how this teenmag articulates romantic narratives to the mapping out of

the everyday for its teenaged women readers. In the juxtaposition of romantic fiction with 'how to' tips on keeping your man or applying make-up, we can see how *Jackie* both naturalizes and reproduces an ideology of teenage femininity, as it literally and symbolically occupies the space of the 'private'. As such McRobbie's analysis is a tentative description of the hegemonic, and thus, uncoercive 'hailing' of feminine sexuality.

However, at the same time a small voice in me questioned what seemed to be the over-privileging of this particular text and the over-determination of the reader's experience. I mean, I read *Jackie* and I didn't go around yearning for boys and clothes and despising my female friends. In fact, buying *Jackie* was part of a small site of defiance and in a way solidified the group I hung around with. At that time in pre-Thatcher Britain, all state schools provided subsidized hot mid-day meals which were, as one might imagine, rather foul. In any case it became the thing to do to keep the 10 shillings for the week's meals and sneak up to town to buy chips, smoke a cigarette and read *Jackie*. This lasted for a while but gradually the event disintegrated — one of the group was pregnant, another spent an her time studying for the O Level Exams, one switched to a tougher (and more interestingly defiant) crowd, and I became anorexic.

What I want to underline is that none of us acted in a way that could be attributed to our having been simply hailed by *Jackie*. Even, or especially, in a boring Welsh rural community, there were many more pressing discourses and practices at work. I suppose of all the *Jackie* readers I knew, my anorexia would come the closest to being construed as some sort of over-determined reaction to the magazine and the ideology it undeniably articulated. Indeed, the argument would have been (and still is) that anorexia is a perfectly normal (i.e. straight forward and even quite rational) reaction to the dominant interpellations for women in this society. In this argument anorexia is just another example of being hailed. Or to follow a more seductive line, the anorexic attempts to disappear quite literally into our desire as women to actually become the representation of our flesh - to live out the lie of eternal slim youth. However, this doesn't seem an overly satisfying account, and certainly has little to do with the complex ways in which my friends and I read *Jackie*. Nor do I think that we can explain away anorexia by merely invoking the spectre of discourses hailing and interpellating the female body. This essay will try to open up and explore anorexia as an embodied moment of negotiation: as a site which shows up the articulations of discourse, the female body and power. While this perspective obviously recognises the power of discourse to position, it also requires that we be careful about collapsing very real voices and bodies into mere matter to be

appropriated by discourse. Thus, in exploring the anorexic's practice, I shall be concerned with developing a notion of how certain practices come to be negotiations of discursive positioning.

Anorexia has recently hit the headlines as *the* post-modern illness. However, as with that other celebrated condition of our times, AIDS, the popular and medical press have imploded the multiple discourses that both the anorexic and the AIDS sufferer experience, at the site of their bodies, into one causal and moral discourse. Thus, one condition is explained away as the result of women taking their bodies too seriously (trying to reduce them to the representations of their sex), and the other is the moral wage for men being too close to their own sex. In this way, the portrayal of these two conditions is the antithesis of postmodernism; the signifier and the signified have been fused together at the site of the body.

Unfortunately, these generalizations are not limited to the media. At this point, I would like to trace out a few of the analytic discourses which deal with anorexia, in order to consider the ways in which the anorexic is captured. In exploring the epistemology of these arguments, I shall be concerned with discursive articulations which contain and work over the body. In his book *The Body and Society*, Bryan Turner notes that, "if hysteria in the pre-modern period was an illness of scarcity... anorexia in the twentieth century is an illness of abundance."[4] This example of 'loose' discourse analysis seems to ignore the ways in which discourses are multiply interwoven, and hence do not suddenly and cleanly erupt within different centuries. From a clinical perspective, Hilde Bruch states that she:

> is inclined to relate [anorexia] to the enormous emphasis that Fashion places on slimness... magazines and movies carry the same message, but the most persistent is television, drumming it in, day in day out, that one can be loved and respected only when slender.[5]

Here we can see that Bruch leans towards a causal model of the media as directly responsible for all social ills, and anorexia in particular as a fall-out from experiencing too much representation. From within an American liberal feminist stance, Susan Brownmiller comments that: the typical anorectic usually comes from a privileged background and she is often described as an over-achieving perfectionist whose obsessive pursuit of thinness has crossed the line into self-destruction,[6] thus rendering any further discussion of anorexia rather flat.

As we can see, the dominant image of anorexia that emerges is that it is a modern affliction caused by too much affluence, women's lib., fashion and media. While in part all these factors may be in play, what we can

clearly hear from these descriptions is that women are pathologically susceptible to media images. As such this idea is hardly new when we consider that the moral panics over television violence, etc., were academically grounded in research that took women and children as their (half) subjects. Somehow it seems that only women suffer from living in the late twentieth-century mediascape. Thus what we have here is the articulation of gender, class, media representation, and our present 'affluent' society. While empirically it may be stated that many anorexics are white, middle-class women, I would contend that this categorization of anorexia has more to do with the preoccupations of the Western medical establishment and the articulation of its discourse to other discourses that capture women. Thus we can begin to see that anorexia is situated at the nexus of several discourses, and that it is particularily constructed through the articulation of the body, women's sexuality, class, and the Western post-industrial society.

I would argue that it is specifically the insistence on the contemporaneous nature of anorexia, the popular discourse on anorexia as the 'epidemic' of our times, which fuses together the discourses on anorexia. In order to disturb this constellation of discourses, I would now like to briefly present an historical case, which if nothing else requires that we question the equation of modern mediated society and anorexia. Moreover, while anorexia is an important manifestation of current societal contradictions, looking at an example of anorexia beyond our own time and space may lead us to understand what Jeffry Weeks terms "a history of the historical present as a site of definition, regulation and resistance."[7]

In tracing through the history of anorexia, we first encounter that the name itself is a misnomer: anorexics do not suffer from a lack of appetite. The term 'anorexia' was coined simultaneously by a French doctor, Laseque, and the English physician, Gull, in the 1870s. For my purposes, Laseque's naming of 'anorexie hysterique' is the more interesting. We should remember that at this time in France, what Foucault calls the 'hysterization' of the female body was well underway. But what we have with Laseque, Charcot and de la Tourette is a more precise classification of the female body within the general rubric of hysteria. This is a good example of what Paula Treichler has pointed to: that "diagnosis stands in the middle of an equation which translates a phenomenological perception of the human body into a finite set of signs called symptoms."[8]

However, before the medical profession got around to claiming the anorexic body, the Church had firmly defined the body in general, and had classified the anorexic body in particular as '*inedia miraculosa*.' From the early middle-ages on, there are several tales of young women who were said to live on the host and air. The Church was pleased to

stake them as miracles until they were caught cheating, in which case they were burned to death. A case that intrigues me is one that straddles two periods and two discourses: from *inedia miraculosa* to hysteria. I shall outline this case as an insistence of the discourses of the Church and the Medical vying for the body (and soul) of a starving young girl. This is to consider what Robert Castel has referred to as moments when "the discourses of the Church and medicine each tried to appropriate [bodies] with regard to producing knowledge."[9]

What *The Lancet* of 1869 called "The Strange Case of Sarah Jacob" took place in Llanfihangel-ar-arth, a small Welsh hamlet. Sarah started her practice of starvation in 1866 and her fasting ended in December of 1869 with her death. What makes her case fascinating is that she died of 'simple' starvation under the noses of England's finest: Guy's Hospital. To backtrack slightly, and to sketch out the facts — for reasons unknown, Sarah Jacob one day stopped eating. She remained in good form and her parents were quite proud of their daughter. In fact she was installed in the central room of their small farmhouse where, garlanded in ribbons, she spent her time writing and reciting from the Bible. The local vicar claimed her as a miracle and then went on to taunt the medical profession to come and prove him wrong. Guy's duly sent a team up to watch her and before two weeks were up she was dead.

From a Foucauldean perspective, this death could be seen as a consequence of what Castle referred to: the discursive appropriation of bodies. Sarah's dead body is situated quite truly in the juncture between two discourses. The medical discourse has literally taken over the ground of the Church, with its stated goal being not welfare but rather surveillance. Again, in a Foucauldean reading, Sarah's body becomes a surface upon which to inscribe the medical discourse and to delimit the realm of the possible: thereby effectively excluding the Church.

But is rivalry of discourse the only possible reading of Sarah's situation? Or is this merely another example of the progression of rationality in the name of the medical, clearing away superstitions and finally bringing to an end "the age of miracles which did not seem to be done with in nineteenth century Wales"?[10] While it is easy to see Sarah as merely caught between the sliding discourses, let us consider the events from another perspective: one which acknowledges her silent standpoint. She was obviously positioned to a certain extent by the Church, and by medical discourse (to say nothing of the family). Yet to consider her fast solely as a causal reaction to the interpellations of discourses is to impoverish her act.

To begin with, one would have to say that Sarah was positioned by more than two discourses. For example, it seems that she traversed a difference within church authority itself in the reach of one church's

discourse over another. Wales was at that time (and still is) predominantly 'low Church', whereas Sarah was taken up by the 'high' Church of England, which goes in for a celebration of the suffering of the body much more than the 'low' Methodist faith. Without overly weighing the agency of her act, we can say that the discourse of the C of E sustained her starving, giving it meaning and allowing her room to live the contradiction of a poor farming girl dressed to the gills and reading poetry in bed. Of course, this luxurious position was dependent on the articulation of the Church's discourse with that of her sex (there are no references to male 'inedia miraculosa') and her act of starvation. Although this may be evidence that she was simply 'hailed' by the Church, I think that there is more at hand here.

To take another tack, we could describe the above situation as the operation of one of the apparatuses of the time. So therefore, Sarah was not interpellated by any one discourse, but was rather positioned by the articulation of discourses within an apparatus. Since the apparatus is not homogeneous, this would seem to be a more satisfying description. Furthermore, from this perspective we way begin to consider Sarah's starvation not as an act (thus implying some sort of free will) but as a negotiation of the particular discursive articulations within the apparatus. Thus we may begin to theorize the meaning of Sarah's starvation, and consider it as an embodied strategy that allowed her some small movement across the discourses of her time.

Difficult though it is to articulate historical events to modern occurances, I would intimate that historically, and currently, anorexia can be taken as a practice or a strategy for negotiating discourses. Anorexia leads us to consider the contradictions within and between discourses, and the negotiations carried out against and across them. To my mind, this constitutes a site for the possible emergence of what Foucault has hinted at: namely that there are 'forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself.''[11] Here I am referring to Foucault's ''technologies of the self'' and the ways in which individuals ''affect by their own means, a certain number of operations on their bodies, their souls...[12] While there is insufficient time to engage with Foucault's argument, I wish merely to point to ways of conceptualizing practices (such as anorexia) that avoid the perils of a dichotomous argument of either strict interpellation or full human agency. The site of anorexia shows up the entanglement of discourses and articulations of any particular time, and leads us to consider how the meanings we live with, the significance of our selves, are produced intertextually across a range of discourses. In this manner the anorexic's strategy serves to disturb the nexus of ideologies which seek to contain women. To concretize these notions let us move back to the contemporary scene.

As mentioned earlier, many of the popular images of anorexia centre on establishing direct causal links or chains between the anorexic and the paper-thin representations of women. In fact the underlying structure of most popular commentaries on anorexia comes off sounding like a warning to women - don't try to be equal to the representations of your sex. The picture further darkens if we consider the epistemological assumptions of the clinical discourse which supposedly 'treats' anorexia. Although much of the family therapy work on anorexia is well-intentioned (such that of Selvini Palazzoli for instance[13]), this discourse's articulations of the female body, her place in the family and her sexuality is quite frightening. The underlying logic of this discursive formulation is to use anorexia to articulate an essence of female sexuality to the discourse of the family. This is particularily dangerous at the present time when the political right is increasingly sucessful in articulating the family and reproduction to its political agenda. Specifically what we see within family therapy is that the anorexic is reduced to what is called the 'dysfunctional role' within the family. Her actions, strategies and practices are dismissed, stripped of their possibility of meaning in the name of maintaining the family equilibrium. As if this weren't enough, the mother of the family is crudely blamed for the anorexia. Peter Dally, a specialist in anorexia, claims that "the mothers of many anorexics were frustrated and hence overly ambitious for their daughters."[14]

This tendency is perhaps an inevitable outcome of a discipline that rigidly assigns roles within the family and jealously delineates the family from society. It is however a movement that we can see as integral to the medicalization of society into a familial entity, and thus must be taken to task outside of its own perimeters. To reconsider my earlier analogy of AIDS and anorexia, it is clear that the effects of these articulations of the family, and conservative delineations of sexualities and a healthy society, are being felt beyond the particular instances of the individual 'patients.' The political ramifications are no longer hidden under liberal covers as sexual preference, and the gains of women are being legislated out of existence. In other words, if we consider that the anorexic disturbs certain articulations of the body, female sexuality and the family, the way in which she is currently treated should give us cause for concern; in many ways and in many psychiatric wards, the reproduction of certain vicious ideological articulations is progressing.

Having so far sketched out some of the issues that anorexia raises, I will try to bring together what these various signifying bits might mean for a feminist theory and practice of communication. First, I have tried to follow through what McRobbie has recently pointed to: "a different working practice or methodology that emphasizes establishing loose sets of relations, capillary actions and movements, spilling out among and

between different fields"[15]. To my mind this necessarily includes 'allowing for the ambiguous' — an approach that seeks and recognizes the intertextuality of our practices, and constantly works against the containment of these practices, whether it be by theoretical discourses, medical practices, or the everyday and night appropriation of the tube. This is also to work against the ways in which these institutions articulate our bodies, our sexualities, and our practices.

Second, I think that we should seriously recognize the power of these discourses to position. What I mean by this is that in looking at instances of what seems to be simple positioning by discourse (such as anorexia, or reading teen mags, or making ourselves up, etc) we encounter complex webs of meaning. And while I don't think that we should forget Foucault, Althusser, or any of the other intricate analyses of ideology, I do feel that we must recognize the immediacy of our involvement in the reproduction of hegemony.

Similarily, we find that in certain theoretical practices, gender-as-problematic has become 'normal', while the everyday body has disappeared. Of course, gender, or sexuality, or reproduction are complex and dense discourses which must be analytically deconstructed; however, it is at the site of the body that we see their tenacious articulations. And it is here that they are individually negotiated. This is not to slide into an overprivileging of experience for experience's sake. We have learnt from some of the early Birmingham work that, unfortunately, lines of sexism and racism can be reproduced on the grounds of authentic experience. In a similar manner we have seen that in some feminist work an over-privileging of women's reproductive nature has lead us into a sort of biological determinism. Accounts of experience mean little without an idea of the various historical and present articulations at work. But by looking closely at our practices, our everyday strategies and negotiations, we may find the areas that are bounded by discourses, riddled with articulations, but yet not wholly colonized. It is the ambiguity of these areas between discourse and ourselves that we must explore.

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Notes

1. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 168.

2. Marge Piercy, in Kim Chernin, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness*, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1981), p. 45.

3. Angela McRobbie, "Jackie: an Ideology of Adolescent Femininity," in *Popular Culture: Past and Present,* ed. B. Waites, T. Bennett and G. Martin (London: Croom and Helm and The Open University Press, 1982).

4. Bryan S. Turner, *The Body And Society: Explorations In Social Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 83.

5. Hilde Bruch, *The Golden Cage: The Enigma Of Anorexia Nervosa.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. viii.

6. Susan Brownmiller, *Feminity.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 49.

7. Jeffrey Weeks, *SEX, Politics And Society* (London: Longman, 1981), p. 21.

8. See Paula A. Treichler's excellent essay, "Escaping the Sentence: Diagnosis and Discourse in 'The Yellow Wallpaper'," *Tulsa Studies In Women's LITERATURE 3*: 1984, 61-77.

9. Robert Castel, in Michel Foucault ed., *I, Pierre Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister And My Brother...,* translated by F. Jellinick (New York: Patheon, 1975), p. 252.

10. J. Cule, *Wreath On The Crown: The Story Of Sarah Jacob, The Welsh, Fasting Girl* (Llandysul: Gomerian Press, 1967), p. 9.

11. Michel Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude" in *On Signs,* ed. Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 367.

12. Ibid.

13. Mara Selvini Palazzoli, *Self-Starvation: From Individual To Family Therapy In The Treatment of Anorexia Nervosa,* trans. Arnold Pomerans, (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978).

14. Peter Dally, *Anorexia Nervosa* (London: W. Heinemann Medical Books, 1969).

15. Angela McRobbie, "Dance and Social Fantasy" in *Gender And Generation,* eds., Angela McRobbie, and Mica Nava, (London: MacMillan, 1984), p. 142.

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FOUCAULT'S DISAPPEARING BODY

Greg Ostrander

In the folds of the reduction to language, Foucault's thought discovers the body although this discovery is not stamped with the problematic of origin:

> The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of substantial unity), and a volume in disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.[1]

History has thus destroyed the body. Certainly one day which, with Foucault, has perhaps arrived, in asking about our bodies and how they have been formed, we will discover how very little we know of them. Secular philosophies of the soul, related in this to a "positivism" of the body, have conspired to limit knowledge of the history of the body. If the body was not considered to be the despised prison of the soul, it was considered to be a sort of residual datum in which immediacy was deposited. There can be, within this positivism, a powerful de-mystifying tendency. Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's sense consciousness as originating inevitably in the body or the reduction, by the young Marx of Hegel's theory of sovereignty to the body of the sovereign are two examples of this. But the history of the body — how it became what it

became, not biologically, but politically; how it moves in this way rather than another way; why it enjoys in this way rather than another — this history has only begun to be written and it bears the name of Foucault.

Foucault teaches us that the soul is the prison of the body, an historical reality and the effect of relations of power. The soul is not merely a religious illusion but rather it is a "reality-reference" on which diverse concepts and fields of research have been engraved — the so-called human sciences:

> This is the historical reality of this soul, which, unlike the soul represented by Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint. This real, non-corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. On this reality-reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out: psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc; on it have been built scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism. But let there be no misunderstanding: it is not that a real man, the object of knowledge, philosophical reflection or technical intervention, has been substituted for the soul, the illusion of the theologians. The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and the instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.[2]

Foucault discovers in his investigation of disciplinary power, the arcane history of the body, the reasons for why such a history has not previously been possible. The third part of *Discipline and Punish* on "Discipline"[3] from the Man-the-machine of La Mettrie to the Panopticon of Bentham is a powerful essay on the politics of details and bodies. It demonstrates the possible meaning of a microphysics of power and what it might mean to manufacture an individual.[4] Foucault examines here the evolution from the invention of the spy-glass to the development of new techniques of surveillance based on the model of the military camp.[5] And, as suggested by the telescope, the trick is to see without being seen:

> The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible. Slowly, in the course of the classical age, we see the construction of those 'observatories' of human multiplicity about which the history of the sciences has so little good to say. Side by side with the major technology of the telescope, the lens and the light beam, which were an integral part of the new physics and cosmology, there were the minor techniques of multiples and intersecting observations, of eyes that see without being seen; using techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation of an obscure art of light and the visible was secretly preparing a new knowledge of man.[6]

It was probably inevitable that Foucault, after investigating first madness, then that master of life and death, the medical gaze, and finally the prison, would find himself confronted with that astute production of bodies and of codified reciprocity that is discipline. The mad individual, the ill, the prisoner but also the soldier, the student and the worker, are all entangled in a network of diffuse and anonymous micropowers. We must ask ourselves whether, with the discovery of the significance of discipline, we have not found the historical ground of the dialectic of recognition — a ground that is located outside the existentialist mythologies and consisting of the technology of bodies, not the labor of the spirit. We must also ask whether or not Marxism intentionally neglected the importance of these corporeal powers and if this has compromised any liberation struggles. But Marx, as Foucault notes, insisted in several places on the analogy that exists between the problems of the division of labour and those of military tactics.[7] This is the disciplinary red thread that connects the oppression in the factory with that within the army. According to Foucault, Marx was also aware of the importance of surveillance as a power mechanism.[8] With these traditional references and his strong praise for the "great work"[9] *Punishment and Social Structures* by Frankfurt Marxists Rusche and Kirchheimer, Foucault attempts to defuse anticipated Marxist criticism of his perspective. He fails to note that Marx only examined these techniques (surveillance, discipline, etc.) as they were applied to capital. The problem of the inter-relation of the abstract domination of capital, which is based on the creation of the commodity, labor power, and the fine texture of individuated micropowers remains open. Without referring to these micropowers, it seems we certainly cannot account for the imprisonment of the mad whose chains appear not in the night of the

medieval ages but rather at the dawn of an age that supposedly saw the breaking of man's chains. Neither can we account for the passage from the glorious tortures of an earlier age to the planned surveillance of today's prisons. These and other relations of power are not reducible to the capital-labor relationship.

In the process of unearthing these micropowers, Foucault has consciously condemned the traditional theory of power which saw the latter focussed exclusively on the concept of the state. Foucault's new concept means that power can no longer be seen as a property but rather must be now viewed as a strategy. Its model is that of

> a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory. In short, this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the "privilege," acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions – an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who "do not have it"; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them.[10]

Foucault's microphysics considers the state to be a point in the strategy of power, certainly an important point, but not the most important. It is not the organ of power *par excellence* precisely because such an organ does not exist. Beneath and surrounding the state operate a thousand techniques for ranking bodies. This type of approach is especially valuable today as a counter to the new forms of statolatry characteristic of much modern political theory. (Witness, for example, neo-Marxism's absorption in new theories of the state.) Politics, the regulating Technique, the supreme Jacobin 'ratio', has its domain continually eroded by the micropowers. Its autonomy is seen to be quite 'relative' with Foucault's theory. Even if the substantiality of the state is radically put into question, it is very difficult to finally eliminate that current of political thought that has always worshipped its power. The state is revived in some radical theories (especially, Leninist theory) as the model of a pure will to power to which even the party itself must adapt. Foucault has furnished tools that allow us to criticize this false autonomy of the state and explore the zone in which the political interweaves with the social to achieve domination. Foucault's approach is a micropolitical one that bases itself upon all of the recent work in the field of anti-psychiatry. However, unlike certain currents of the latter, he avoids any temptation of embarking on a cure of the soul.

The political investment of the body, which characterizes disciplinary society, involves a total inversion of the processes of individuation:

> In certain societies, of which the feudal regime is only one example, it may be said that individualization is greatest where sovereignty is exercised and in the higher echelons of power. The more one possesses power or privilege, the more one is marked as an individual, by rituals, written accounts or visual reproductions. The 'name' and the genealogy that situate one within a kinship group, the performance of deeds that demonstrate superior strength and which are immortalized in literary accounts, the ceremonies, that mark, the power relations in their very ordering, the monuments or donations that bring survival after death, the ostentation and excess of expenditure, the multiple, intersecting links of alliegance and suzerainty, all these are procedures of an 'ascending' individualization. In a disciplinary regime, on the other hand, individualization is "descending": as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized.[11]

This means that, for Foucault, the individual is not simply an ideological production — that atom which is at the base of political theory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The individual is also a reality fabricated by disciplinary power. This new power uses the ritual of the examination as the means to achieve "the pinning down of each individual in his own particularity."[12] In this new system, "the individual receives as his status his own individuality... and is linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the 'marks' that characterize him and make him a 'case.'"[13]

The new theory of the individual is an important result of Foucault's investigations, It leads to a different status being conferred on the individual and it throws new light on the anthropological disciplines that make of the individual their proper object of research. Foucault also contributes to the liberation of research from the somewhat ingenuous separation of ideology and science — as if ideology was the chaff and science the wheat — that characterizes the human sciences. Foucault shows that not only the theoretical choices but also the very object of study of these sciences are products of power. In a Nietzschean fashion, power produces truth — power is always power/knowledge and no knowledge can flourish outside of power.

For Adorno, on the contrary, utopia would be precisely an anti-power truth which for this reason abides in a state of ineffectuality.[14] Utopia cannot survive within the relation of power/knowledge. Utopia, for

Adorno, remains committed to the idea of objective truth — it flees the vice of instrumental reason and forms the point of escape from power relations. Foucault, however, believes that this escape or utopia does not exist or only existed as the goal of the socialisms of the nineteenth century. The counter-attack against existing institutions must, today, base itself on experience. Perhaps, Foucault argues, a new society is delineated in the experiences of drugs, sexuality and community life. He himself stresses the experiential bases of his own theoretical innovations: his early experiences as a mental health worker in France, his experience of the "non-repressive" welfare-state of Sweden and of the overtly repressive society of Poland. Especially important, he argues was his encounter with the students of Tunisia during the mid-sixties who attempted to formulate a radically new political ethic *despite* their nominal adhesian to Marxism. Thus, much more than May '68 in France, March '68 in Tunisia, marked a decisive turning-point, in his intellectual/practical career. One also, of course, thinks of his work in the prisoners' rights movement in France (his founding of the G.I.P. and its theoretical effects: *Discipline and Punish*.

The source of new experiences, Foucault believes, will never be those who benefit from a given system of governmentality. Rather, new heterogeneous practices are always thrown up from below, from the plebs. In this, he agrees with Bataille against the more romantic notions deriving from Nietzsche, notions Bataille believed infected the surrealist movement of his own time. This romanticism resulted in an idealist longing for a "reconstruction of the foundation of humanity before human nature was enslaved by the necessity for technical work... or tied to ends dictated by exclusively material conditions."[15] The surrealists sought an idealistic overcoming of society in the sacred realm of "surreal" art or in a very restricted concept of surreal *activity*. They did not realize that heterogeneity, art or the sacred simply *are* a part of society. Bataille owed his understanding of this to his reading of Durkheim on the elementary forms of religious life. Even the surrealists' self-proclaimed materialism failed to come to grips with the actual links between art and life and, thus, earned Bataille's contempt: "If one determined under the name of *materialism* an offensive emanation of human life poisoned by its own moral system, a recourse, to all that is shocking, impossible to destroy and even abject — all that debases and ridicules the human spirit — it would be possible to determine at the same time *surrealism* as an infantile disease of this base materialism."[16] For Foucault, the linkage between these experiences of resistance and politics must always remain rather mysterious since the truth, for him, is always completely absorbed in power/knowledge and, thus, the move-

ment against present-day power is prevented from generating clear social and political perspectives.

Just as he refutes the notion of utopia, Foucault suspects that of ideology because this always involves the reference to something which poses as the truth as opposed to error. Archaeology, on the other hand, realizes that it is the discursive practices which constitute the channels within which we necessarily speak and think. Genealogy merely claims to bring to light the knowledges deposited in these practices. There are only limited references in Foucault to something that might subterraneously determine the outcome — discourse itself is the first and last level on which the genealogist installs himself. Or as Foucault stated in his inaugural address to the Collège de France in 1970:

> It is as though discourse, far from being a transparent, neutral element, allowing us to disarm sexuality and to pacify politics, were one of those priviliged areas in which they exercised some of their more awesome powers. In appearance, discourse may well be of little account, but the prohibitions surrounding it soon reveal its links with desire and power. This should not be very surprising, for psychoanalysis has already shown us that discourse is not merely the medium which manifests — or dissembles — desire; it is also the object of desire. Similarly, historians have constantly impressed upon us that discourse is no mere verbalisation of conflicts and systems of domination, but that it is the very object of man's conflicts.[17]

Foucault knows how to carry out a profound analysis of unconscious ideologies (that is, ideologies that are not ordered around a subject but, rather, are prior to any subject), seizing their quality of being merely circulating discourses.[18] However, in eliminating the concept of ideology, Foucault loses the nexus appearance/reality — a loss which has the ideology of the primacy of discourse as its correlate. Discourses only retain the reality side of this nexus. They are dense realities, charged with power/knowledge — positivities or monuments which can be exhumed from time which has concealed them. How, then, can they be criticized? To this question, Foucault gives no response. The critique of ideology, as developed, for instance, by the Frankfurt School, has always attempted to demonstrate the non-correspondence of reality with its concept and, consequently, revealing the character of socially necessary appearance that the latter assumes is false consciousness. This means that ideology has real social force. This is often forgotten in certain vulgar tendencies within Marxist theory. Foucault has broken with this (not innocent) neglect and has turned his attention on those discourses which, although presenting themselves as sciences, nevertheless engage themselves within

a network of powers. This is the case, for example, of discipline; a subtle discourse involving the technology of bodies and the formation of subjects (that is, of the subjugated). Discipline is an unconscious ideology, which despite its lack of recognition remains, nonetheless, terribly efficacious.

An analysis, however, which insistently remains at the level of the positivity of a discourse, risks only attaining its object in part. Discipline is a necessary connection that produces subjects and of which subjects act as supports — it operates a continuous totalization. An ideological analysis would not only reveal the whole that disciplinary power constitutes, it would also indicate the space from which the possibility of breaking through this whole may emerge. The analyses of Foucault, by remaining at the level of the exhumed positivities, are prevented from seeing the internal possibilities of change. This is without a doubt imputable to the panic that Foucault (similar to Deleuze) feels for any theory of liberation — a theory that, for him, must always involve a new counter-productive totalization. Thus, Foucault's microphysics has a kind of fore-shortened perspective and is proud of it. The abandonment of the concept of ideology is, consequently, a sign of his disgust with utopia — the point of escape for radical theories.

The philosphy of desire remains more committed to the survival of the subject despite its efforts to disperse it. Whether desire is pre-formed à la Lacan or not, the subject remains tossed in the current of desire. This philosphy tells us nothing about the subject in its impact with the body. Thus, in both of its extreme forms (Lacan's pre-formed desire or originary desire), desire is hypostatized in the effort to demolish the hypostatization of the subject. A desire liberated from the subject is a 'quid pro quo' that can flourish perhaps in a mythological vision of madness. Desire springs up together with the subject of which it constitutes the other face. A dispersion occurs only insofar as a totalization was first posited. Desire is grafted in the political investment of the body. And the body, which is not merely a linguistic element, is irreducible. Its sufferings and enjoyments are not simply a matter of signs but rather of nerves and muscles. Since Foucault draws all of the implicit consequences from the archaeological finding of the body, from the discovery that the body itself is pre-formed, the result is a profound change in the orientation of his thought. The first aspect to be eliminated is the reduction to language. To be precise, Foucault refuses to align himself with the philosophy of desire (despite his admiration for Deleuze) and his barely commenced research on sexuality proves this. His study is focussed on bodies and their pleasures rather than on desire. He seeks to study the 'apparatus of sexuality' as a field of micropowers rather than sex as a desirable object:

> It is the agency of sex that we must break away from if we aim — through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality — to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.[19]

However, in his 1963 "A Preface to Transgression," we see the reduction to language at work:

> Sexuality is only decisive for our culture as spoken, and to the degree it is spoken: not that it is our language which has been eroticized now for nearly two centuries. Rather, since Sade and the death of God, the universe has absorbed our sexuality, denatured it, placed it in a void where it establishes its sovereignty and where it incessantly sets up as the Law the limits it transgresses. In this sense, the appearance of sexuality as a fundamental problem marks the transformation of a philosophy of man as worker to a philosophy based on a being who speaks.[20]

Six years later, when his historical research dragged behind it only the wreckage of a problematic compromised by ontology, Foucault described the work of the sexual archaeologist in the following terms:

> ... instead of studying the sexual behaviour of men at a given period (by seeking its law in a social structure, in a collective unconscious, or in a certain moral attitude), instead of describing what men thought of sexuality (what religious interpretation they gave it, to what extent what extent they approved or disapproved of it, what conflicts of opinion or morality it gave rise to), one would ask oneself whether, in this behaviour, as in these representations, a whole discursive practice is not at work; whether sexuality quite apart from any orientation towards a scientific discourse, is not a group of objects that can be talked about (or that it is forbidden to talk about), a field of possible enunciation (whether in lyrical or legal language), a group of concepts (which can no doubt be presented in the elementary form of notions or themes), a set of choices (which may appear in the coherence of behaviour or in systems of prescription). Such an archaeology would show, if it succeeded in its task, how the prohibitions, exclusions, limitations, values, freedoms and transgressions of sexuality, all its manifestations, verbal or otherwise, are linked to a particular discursive practice. It would reveal, not of course as the ultimate truth of sexuality, but as one of the dimensions in accordance with which one can describe it, a certain "way of speaking"; and one would show how this way of speaking is invested not in scientific discourses, but in a system of

prohibitions and values.[21]

As we can observe from the above passage, Foucault in 1969 believes that discourse is one among several possible ways of approaching sexuality. By 1976, however, and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, this becomes *the* approach *par excellence* to the study of sexuality. In this study, sexuality appears exclusively insofar as it is put into discourse or spoken by an insatiable will to know. From medieval Christianity, with its technique of meticulous confession, through *Les Bijoux Indiscrets*, to modern psychoanalysis (in which sexuality itself speaks), sexuality constitutes the field of an immense discourse and the object of a continual enjoyment via the discourse which is its basis. The transgression of the system of prohibitions defined by the discourse on sexuality is possible within this same discourse. The prohibition is posited in language as is the transgression — the prohibition incites the transgression and, consequently, the resultant pleasure. Thus, to demonstrate the way in which bodies revolt and engage in a strategic struggle against the moves of the dominant power, Foucault takes the example of auto-eroticism.

> The restrictions on masturbation hardly start in Europe until the eighteenth century. Suddenly, a panic theme appears: an appalling sickness develops in the Western world. Children masturbate. Via the medium of families, though not at their initiative, a system of control of sexuality, an objectivisation of sexuality, through thus becoming an object of analysis and concern, surveillance and control, engenders at the same time an intensification of each individual's desire, for, in and over his body. The body thus became the issue of a conflict between parents and children, the child and the instances of control. The revolt of the sexual body is the reverse effect of this encroachment.[22]

Foucault's discourse maintains within itself an interesting duplicity — if sexuality is a discourse, it is a discourse traversed by conflicts. This undoubtedly represents something which was not present in his writings on literature. The will to know, which provides the impulse for discourse, is completely involved in a Nietzschean fashion with power. A power/enjoyment corresponds to the power/knowledge. Power and pleasure do not contradict one another but rather support one another. Where there is desire there is already present a relation of power. Even perversions are continually solicited by discourse which itself induces these transgressions. Unlike Marcuse's concept of the polymorphously perverse, sexuality is not a free zone but, instead, constitutes part of the power/pleasure complex. This is important because it indicates the

elimination of the traditional concept of repression in Foucault's perspective. Sexuality consists of a network of micropowers, analogous to the disciplinary powers that, far from repressing the individual, permits and encourages his pleasures. The concept of repression, for Foucault, cannot avoid (as in Reich or Marcuse) making reference to a certain uncontaminated "humanity" to which each individual will some fine day have to return. Foucault, who in *Madness and Civilisation* was very much influenced by this concept, breaks with it in *Discipline and Punish*.

In his research on the history of sexuality, the break with the notion of repression is very marked, especially in his new concept of "power over life."[23] This is a power that channels but also provokes life — a power which compels us to live. This new "bio-power"[24] replaces the earlier right of life and death of the sovereign over the subject (the right to kill or to *allow* to live) and signifies the beginning of a positive political investment of life and the body. Sexuality, as an apparatus, can, thus, only be grasped against the background of this power. Power presents sex as desirable and even more than desirable. Power links sex very intimately with death which remained the 'outside' in Foucault's earlier work. The death instinct that traverses sex is an historically determined fact — it is entangled in the contemporary apparatus of sexuality. Foucault describes this employment of 'sex' as strategic ideal used in the domination of bodies in a concluding passage of *The History of Sexuality*:

> It is through sex — in fact, an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality — that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of a history). Through a reversal that doubtless had its surreptitious beginnings long ago it was already making itself felt at the time of the — Christian pastoral of the flesh — we have arrived at the point where we expect our intelligibility to come from what was for many centuries thought of as madness; the plenitude of our body from what was long considered its stigma and likened to a wound; our identity from what was perceived as an obscure and nameless urge. Hence the importance we ascribe to it, the reverential fear with which we surround it, the care we take to know it. Hence, the fact that over the centuries it has become more important than our soul, more important almost than our life; and so it is that all the world's enigmas appear frivolous to us compared to this

> secret, miniscule in each of us, but of a density that makes it more serious than any other. The Faustian pact, whose temptation has been instilled in us by the deployment of sexuality, is now as follows: to exchange life in its entirety for sex itself, for the truth and the sovereignty of Sex. Sex is worth dying for. It is in this (strictly historical) sense that sex is indeed imbued with the death instinct. When a long while ago the West discovered love, it bestowed on it a value high enough to make death acceptable; nowadays it is sex that claims this equivalence, the highest of all. And while the deployment of sexuality permits the techniques of power to invest life, the fictitious point of sex, itself marked by that deployment, exerts enough charm on everyone for them to accept hearing the grumble of death within it.[25]

Thus, the circle within Foucault's work is closed. That which was initially the ontological experience of death and origin (and of their collapsing one into the other in an eternal recurrence), is now the experience of a power that seizes us. The Other of desire is now the Same of discourse.

To locate the unthought in a pure outside means to abandon it, finally, to the web of micropowers. For a long time, these micropowers have occupied what seemed to be an outside and have, thus, made nonsense of ontology. Origin, death, desire, transgression — all are not at all outside but rather inside these networks. The theory that wishes to forget this runs headlong into them. This is no cause for despair, however. It simply means that contradiction must be conceived immanently although this, of course, is no panacea. That bodies appear in Foucault only as subjugated is due to the fact that they really are such, rather than due to the reduction to discourse carried out by him. This reduction *illustrates* a reality but, because it prohibits the radical questioning of this reality, it remains to a considerable extent politically impotent. Discourse, thus, becomes the monologue of power or rather, the chorus of the micropowers. The radical challenging of reality would involve the question, in what way is it possible to think, always negatively, the breaking of this network of power that holds bodies? Perhaps it will be necessary to start with the negative experience of the difference that opens in every enjoyment between the enjoyment itself and the totality that surrounds it. Perhaps, we could locate at this point, the possibility of an 'unhappy consciousness' of the body. We do not yet know. All we know — and the later work of Foucault has taught us this — is that the

'liberation' has already taken place. We must now liberate ourselves from liberation.

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 148.

2. Idem, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 29-30 (hereafter cited as Foucault, *Discipline*).

3. Ibid., pp. 135-228.

4. One thinks of the case of President Schreber who was the subject of a famous study by Freud which revealed the pathogenic effects of the disciplinary machines invented by Schreber's father.

5. Foucault quotes from "Rules for the Prussian Infantry" (1973) to show how the new power of the gaze reshaped these initial observatories:

> In the parade ground, five lines are drawn up, the first is sixteen feet from the second; the others are eight feet from one another; and the last is eight feet from the arms depots. The arms depots are ten feet from the tents of the junior officers, immediately opposite the first tent-pole. A company street is fifty-one feet wide... All tents are two feet from one another. The tents of the subalterns are eight feet from the last soldiers' tent and the gate is opposite the captains' tent... The captains' tents are erected opposite the streets of their companies. The entrance is opposite the companies themselves.

Foucault then goes on the explain the functioning of this new alert, discrete source of power: The camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of a general visibility. For a long time, this model of the camp or at least its underlying principle was found in urban development, in the construction of working-class housing estates, hospitals, asylums, prisons, schools: the spatial "nesting" of hierarchized surveillance. The principle was one of "embedding" ("encastrement"). The camp was to the rather shameful art of surveillance what the camera obscura was to the great science of optics." (translation corrected; Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 172-173

6. Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 171.

7. In Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 163-164, Foucault quotes several passages including the following passage from *Capital*, Vol. I:

> Just as the offensive power of a squadron of cavalry, or the defensive power of a regiment of infantry, is essentially different from the sum of the offensive or defensive powers of the individual cavalry or infantry soldiers taken separately, so the sum total of the mechanical forces exerted by isolated workmen differs from the social force that is developed, when many hands take part simultaneously in one and the same undivided operation.

8. See Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 175 for this passage from *Capital*, Vol. I: "The work of directing, superintending and adjusting becomes one of the functions of capital, from the moment the labor under the control of capital, becomes cooperative. Once a function of capital, it requires special characteristics."

9. Foucault, *Discipline*, p. 24 and p. 54.

10. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

11. Ibid., pp. 192-193.

12. Ibid., p. 192.

13. Ibid.

14. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

15. Georges Bataille, *Complete Works*, Volume VII: *L'Economie à la mesure de l'universe. La Part maudite, la Limite de l'utile (fragments, Théorie de la religion, Conférences, 1947-1948)*, ed. Thadée Klossowski (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 386.

16. Idem, *Complete Works*, Volume II: *Ecrits posthumes, 1922-1940*, ed. Denis Hollier (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 93.

17. Michel Foucault, "Orders of Discourse," *Social Science Information*, 10:2 (April 1971): 2-3 (translation corrected).

18. There is no doubt that Marxism has for too long neglected the critical exploration of unconscious ideologies. It has too long lingered on the analysis of intellectuals as producers of ideology and consensus and, consequently, on the analysis of those ideologies which have attained a certain level of conceptual systematization. These ideologies can be conceived of as being the product of subjects and of being, at least apparently, a matter of free choice. The inverse is the case of unconscious ideologies which circulate without even allowing the questions of 'believing' in them or consensus around them to be posed.

19. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I: *An Introduction*, trans. David Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1976), p. 157 (hereafter cited as Foucault, *Sexuality*).

20. Idem, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays And Interviews.*. ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 50.

21. Idem, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 193.

22. Idem, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. with a preface by Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 56-57.

23. See Foucault, *Sexuality*, pp. 133-159.

24. Ibid., p. 143.

25. Ibid., pp. 155-156.

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PROJECTIVE READINGS: CULTURAL STUDIES FROM HERE

Martin Allor

Over the last ten years Cultural Studies has developed from being a significant strain within British Marxist theory and practice into one of the major articulations of the anglophone human sciences. In that period its influence has spread from England to North America, Australia and South Africa. The field has undergone academic institutionalization: a number of first degrees in English Polytechnics; the Cultural Studies Programme at Trent: and a growing presence in Communication Studies in Canada, the United States and Australia. We have seen the publication of a number of important books, as well as the appearance of a number of journals specializing in the area: the Hutchinson series[1]; *Theory, Culture and Society*; the revised *Screen*; *Formations*; *The Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*; and, the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* itself. The announcement of the forthcoming *International Journal of Cultural Studies* is perhaps the most significant sign.

These very signs of success, however, are also signs of potential liabilities. Academic institutionalization brings with it all too often the sedimentation of a critical field of inquiry into a settled discipline. The construction of a canon of texts, and of histories of the field, can easily lead to the kind of codification that constricts a loose problematic into a paradigm. Cultural Studies emerged as a critical practice located at an interdisciplinary site: between Marxist historiography, ethnomethodology, semiotics, and literary studies. Moreover, its emergence cannot be

separated from the specific conjunctures that the British Left operated in during the nineteen-sixties and seventies. The current international spread of Cultural Studies, then, is problematic in a dual sense. As a transferable intellectual commodity (critical cultural capital) cut off from the context of the specific political and epistemological debates in which it emerged, it is relatively easy to frame the field as a set of propositions constructed as normal social science. More crucially, as levels of abstraction and analytic categories developed within the British social formation are borrowed into the new world, the spread of Cultural Studies has tended to lead to a lack of specificity in our own analyses. Thus, to read Cultural Studies from here is to engage its propositions critically from the historical moment of the mid-eighties and from the site of political contradictions located here.

Around the turn of the decade the key epistemological debates within the field revolved around the so-called Culturalist/Structuralist split. In part, this was connected to different objects of study, ranging from working class culture on the shop floor to the ideological address of the cinematic apparatus. It was also due to the differential influence of other disciplines: for example, psychoanalysis versus ethnomethodology. Politically, it can be traced to the ways in which the question of the subject and the challenge of feminism were taken up.[2] What is clear at this point is that this split wasn't so much resolved as dispersed. The critical orthodoxies that led to the polemics of the period ran out of steam. *Screen* theorists began to question the relations between subject positions in texts and located practices of reading. Researches into located sub-cultural forms began to appropriate aspects of discourse theory's structural approach to subjectivity.[3]

The legacy of this split and its non-resolution has been to foreground (for me at least) the crucial position of mediation within the problematics of the various positions within Cultural Studies. From Raymond Williams on, of course, the term culture has come to designate a theoretical space within which the base/superstructure metaphor could be overcome.[4] The domain of the cultural has come to designate the relations between levels of the social formation, as well as the realtions between the human subject and the social field. The deliberate ambiguities in Williams' own propositions (in the definition of culture itself, or the "structure of feeling"), can be seen as symptomatic of the problematic 'reach' of any simple concept of mediation. Certainly, the core of Cultural Studies has been the examination of the discourses and practices that articulate power and social difference within particular social formations. The Culturalist/Structuralist split was ultimately centered in a debate over the levels of abstraction which were most important to such a project. The sub-cultural theorist's concern with the relations between class, culture

and the social formation led them to focus on social signification as a set of practices: precisely the struggle over social location and power. Discourse theory's concern with textuality, ideology and subject formation led to a textualization of practices themselves. 'Culturalist' approaches conceptualized mediation within the arc of a sociological pull. Shop-floor culture or punk style were read off as privileged sites of the negotiation of social identity within a capitalist social formation in decline. 'Structuralist' approaches conceptualized mediation as a kind of social epistemology. The human subject, social texts and ideologies were read off in relation to one another: as positionalities constructed in discourse and inhabited by subjects.

In the eighties the field has passed through the theoretical moment of the split in three ways. The first has been to work on specific aspects of the conceptual apparatus without necessarily questioning the underlying model of mediation. The concepts of codes, of class and of hegemony have all been variously scrutinized and fine-tuned.[5] The second kind of intervention has been a more directly political one. This work has turned outward from epistemological debates towards the changing nature of the historical conjuncture. The important work on 'Authoritarian Populism' and Thatcherism is perhaps the best example of this direction.[6] Within this approach the various conceptualizations of the field have been elaborated in relation to the strategic demand of struggles over the field of the social formation itself. The third direction for work has been to question the theoretical apparatus of the field from specific sites of social difference. In this way, some of the residual baggage of the base/superstructure metaphor (for example, the relative privileging of class formations) has been separated out from cultural studies' analysis of difference and social power. It has been feminism which has provided the bulk of this movement, but the analysis of racial difference has also been important.[7] All of this work has had an important and beneficial impact on the development of cultural studies. In general, all three forms of intervention have tended to bring cultural studies back to its strengths as a form of critique of late-capitalist, patriarchal social formations. The second and third directions in particular, by refocusing the movement between levels of abstraction on concrete sites, have resisted the trend towards codification and institutionalization.

To move forward from the mid-eighties however, an additional strategy seems necessary. Grounding analyses of mediation in concrete examples of contradiction and struggle will always be key tactics. The analysis of Thatcherism and Reaganism has altered not only our conceptualization of the politics of the moment; it has sharpened the forms of critique clustered around the problematic of hegemony as well. But the risk contained in this conjunctural turn in the development of cultural studies

is that it will spin out refined conceptions of one site (and model) of mediation without rearticulating the underlying conceptual framework. It should be added that much recent feminist discourse analysis projects the opposite liability, in extending a critique of gender representations based in a normalized model of social representation.[8]

The Culturalist/Structuralist debate remains an unresolved 'trouble in the text'(s) of cultural studies. In the diversity of approaches in practice today, there still remain two clusters which reproduce the terms of the split. In one the dominant model of mediation is one of representation as a discursive process. In the other it is social reproduction which takes centre stage. The additional strategy that seems necessary to me is a rewriting of the problematic of mediation from the ground of multiple sites, both within and across borderlines. This kind of strategic epistemology would mine the analysis of specific conjunctures in order to work over the theoretical first principles. This is all the more crucial at a moment when the key theoretical challenge to cultural studies has shifted. It is no longer a more political-economic version of marxism which is the leading rival. Rather it is (particularly in North America) postmodernism, which denies the importance of mediation itself as a problematic for the analysis of modern power formations.[9]

One first step in this strategic response to the international codification of the field, and to the complacency of grooved logics of inquiry, is a kind of projective reading of the tradition. It is past time that we, within the new world, began to question the conceptual apparatus of the discipline in relation to our own intellectual traditions as well as our own historical conjuncture. Projective readings then, would begin to rearticulate the central terms of debate for Canadian and American cultural studies. How does class function differently in relation to cultural practices here? How might this affect the analysis of youth-culture and popular music? How might Canadian feminist debates over pornography rearticulate Cultural Studies analysis of gender representation? If Canada is to a unique extent, a 'technologically mediated' social formation, can the post-modernist critique of mediation be integrated with the practice of cultural studies? Can video and film practices function as interventions within cultural studies, but outside the academy? The essays that follow are a beginning in what I hope is an on going process of 'landing' cultural studies here.

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Notes

1. This is the continuation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Working Papers series.

2. See Stuart Hall "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture and Society* 2 1980, Richard Johnson "Histories of Culture/Theories of Ideology: Notes on an Impasse," M. Barrett, et al eds. *Ideology and Cultural Production* (NY: St. Martins, 1979). For a more recent overview see Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *CCCS* stencilled occasional paper 1983.

3. See Philip Corrigan and Paul Willis, "Cultural Forms and Class Mediations," *Media Culture and Society, 2 1980.*

4. See Stuart Hall, "Rethinking the Base-and-Superstructure Metaphor," in J. Bloomfield, ed., *Class Hegomony and Party* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977).

5. For example, John Corner, "Codes and Cultural Analysis," *Media Culture and Society*, 2, 1980.

6. See, Stuart Hall, "Popular-Democratic vs. Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of 'Taking Democracy Seriously', in Alan Hunt. ed., *Marxism and Democracy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980). See also, *Formations of Nation and People*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

7. For examples of the feminist critique see, *Women Take Issue* (London: Hutchinson, 1978) and Angela McRobbie, "Settling Accounts with Sub-cultures," *Screen Education, #34*, Spring 1980. For the critique based on the analyses of race see, *The Empire Strikes Back* (London: Hutchinson, 1983).

8. For example, Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality*, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1985).

9. As one example of the beginning of this engagement, see Dick Hebdige, "The Bottom Line on Planet One," *Ten*: 8, 1985.

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FEMINISM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Elspeth Probyn

Rosalind Coward. *Female Desires: How They Are Sought, Bought and Packaged*. New York: Grove Press, 1985.

Christine Griffin. *Typical Girls? Young Women From School To the Job Market*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.

Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance, Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

> We are heavy with bodies. If men bore children, we imagine, that they would burst from their heads, not their asses, and be fully grown, and dressed, and godlike, with no need to eat, no substance pouring from their substance. But we are mothers...
>
> Susan Griffin[1]

In attempting to think through the relation of cultural studies to feminism the first question that arises for me is, does feminism need the former? The converse question can here be briefly answered in the affirmative. Perhaps the most important contribution that feminism has brought to cultural studies is the debate over issues of subjectivity and sexuality. While the impact of feminism has been problematic within the field of cultural studies (Stuart Hall has recently pointed to the

"bifurcation of the theoretical project"[2]), it has brought to the fore many interesting issues. Apart from their insistence on formulating materialist theories of ideology, feminists have also pointed to rather glaring absences in male (sub) cultural research. Thus, on both material and epistemological levels one may say that, along with its problematic aspects, feminism has become integral to the cultural studies' project.

In returning to the first question, I would like to ground a necessarily brief discussion of these issues in a North American context. It seems fair to say that most North American feminists would laud the differing theorizations of 'living in and with difference' that have been the hallmark of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. As the quote from Susan Griffin makes clear, the issues of reproduction and the family, and the problematic positioning of women within these discourses, are central to the North American feminist project. One might think that it would be rather difficult to be involved with these concerns and ignore the specificity of women's difference. A central tenet of Canadian feminism, as exemplified in the work of Mary O'Brien amongst others, has indeed come to be articulated around theorizations of women's values. Stemming again from the problematic of reproduction, this work attempts to re-articulate women's specificity from the flattened out annals of history. This research is needed in that it brings to our attention the historical absence of women's experience in Western philosophy. However, much more focused historical research is called for if we are to reveal the complex interactions between discourses and the struggles and negotiations of those positioned by them. Abstract theorizations about a generalized women's specificity do not always correspond to the experiences and contradictions of women living out the discourses of the family and reproduction. From a political perspective, these sites and others have become the new battleground, as the right ever increasingly attempts to appropriate them. And this is no mere abstract attack, as we witness the defeat of the ERA movement in America, and the attempt to dismantle abortion and other rights in Canada. It is particularily difficult and heart-breaking that this onslaught is lead and supported by a movement which links ultra-rightist male ideology with REAL women (and other neoconservative 'feminine-ist' groupings). Thus it is that the hard-won gains by feminists are currently being eroded in the name of preserving the family. Part of the success of the new right in appropriating the family and motherhood is their re-articulation of 'naturalist' assumptions. By constructing universal and ahistorical conceptions of 'motherhood' and the family, the right builds a narrative that may be seductive to women. How then do we struggle against the appropriation of these sites that are so politically crucial to feminism?

In the light of this right-wing swing in both the States and Canada one is tempted to say that North American feminism 'needs' any help it can get. With this in mind I would like to consider these three texts, which for this particular exegesis will be taken as representative of three approaches within feminist cultural studies.

Of the three, Griffin's *Typical Girls?* comes closest to the type of work associated with the Centre in Birmingham. By this I mean that her methodology is entirely that of 'open interviews', with hardly a trace of abstract theorizing. This is not to say that *Typical Girls?* is unsophisticated; it is a fine piece of ethnomethodolgy. From a wider epistemological and political point of view, its importance lies in the way that Griffin takes a concrete instance, the 'common-sense' assumptions about teenage girls, and methodically unravels it. Here we can see the legitimating discourses of the school, the family and the job market, which construct 'normal' roles for young women. Griffin's research makes it clear that racism and sexism ("they can't be British they ain't white," or "female apprentices were seen as exceptions proving the rule that engineering was not really women's work") rest on shared understandings of what is naturally acceptable. Through her grounded research with English school-leavers, their guidance teachers, and the eventual bosses, Griffin looks at how the 'given' categories for girls are continually reproduced, and also how these young women negotiate them. It is precisely at this conjuncture, between discourse and experience, that the strengths of feminist cultural theory begin to emerge. In listening to the specific voices in Griffin's book we hear not only the obvious: that the institutions have to an extent positioned these young women. More importantly, these voices also tell of the micro-politics of the day-to-day negotiation of sexuality, race, gender, class and family.

In *Female Desires*, Rosalind Coward has put together a collection of essays that each tug at societal constructions of women's pleasures. This elegant but incomplete book offers us a kaleidoscope of the mythologies that we inhabit. Whether it be sex, the family meal, or the never-ending (perhaps the key to its narrative success) soap of the Royals, Coward presents us with the imaginary extensions of ourselves which supposedly contain the kernel of our desire. Reminiscent of Barthes in *Mythologies*, she jostles these narratives in order to reveal the power relations that structure them.

But while we do see these "representations of female pleasure as 'producing'... feminine positions" (p. 16), Coward does not really enter into the mechanisms which sustain us in them. By not going into more detail as to how these positions may variously affect us, she risks over-privileging the practices she analyses. In a similar manner, she states that she does not treat "female desire as something universal, unchange-

able, arising from the female condition" (p. 16). However, there is meager evidence of the material conditions that support our fictions of pleasure. Coward does strip the veneer off these reified baubles of desire, but without a deeper analysis of their importance, we feel nothing of their power to differently position. Coward concludes with a wonderful montage of quotations from Freud, Foucault, Sappho, Atwood, and others, but this also tells nothing of their difference. In ignoring the very different analytic perspectives from which these authors problematize the site of desire, Coward gives us moving images instead of a theoretical 'tool-box.'

So far the texts that I've briefly discussed have not been overly problematic in either subject-matter or methodology. Griffin takes the concrete experience of young women in Birmingham, and Coward deconstructs the myths of our pleasuring. While working at different levels, they do identify a rich density within the research in feminist cultural studies. Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* however, raises deep questions and hestitations which I can only sketch out here. Radway takes on an extremely sensitive area: women reading romantic fiction, and one that certainly merits serious thinking by feminists. It is a problematic area which like a black-hole swallows up many different concerns (mass communication research, ethnomethodology, popular culture, sociology and so on). Within these various fields we find differing methods for attacking the nebulous phenomenon of women engaging in this seemingly harmless pass-time. Feminist scholars, such as Tania Modleski, Ann Douglas and Ann Snitow, amongst others (that Radway critiques), have done much to show how romances reproduce the conditions of possibility for women's domination – and for the acceptance of physical and psychological violence. It is not an easy subject-matter to approach and even less so to research, seeped as it is with women's seemingly willing participation in patriarchy. Nonetheless, Radway makes an effort to recapture the act of reading the romance. Unfortunately, her methodolgy does her in; copious survey questions as to the family income, level of education, religious preference, etc., serve to further entrench established conceptions of the romance reader. Key to the problems that I have with this book, is that Radway renders her sample group fictionalized under the name of the 'Smithton women'. These women who live in the midwest "surrounded by corn and hay fields" (p. 46) become Everywoman and hence flatten out any real understanding we might hope to gain of how women actually do use romances to negotiate patriarchal discourses. Within this framework her research into the reading practices of the women studied gives us little to build on. As Radway puts it in the conclusion: "if... the reader remains unsure as to whether the romance should be considered fundamentally

conservative on the one hand or incipiently oppositional on the other, that is not suprising" (p. 209). No, it is not; even Radway's feminist impulse can not save her from the snares of a social scientific epistemology.

So, what conclusions can we draw from these rather scattered readings about the objectives of feminist/cultural studies? At the least this articulation requires that we look at specific discourses which place women. At the most, our questioning of these practices should compel us to take into account how women negotiate societal constructs. This nexus requires that we undertake what Valerie Walkerdine has identified as "a historical analysis... of the complex interplay of conditions of possibility in a way which centrally implicate[s] forms of political, psychological and educational argument and struggle as well as the matter of the individuals and groups who [are] so positioned in these struggles."[3] Put simply, it seems to me that this demands not only concrete historical research, but also an approach that continually asks how we live with ourselves: the filigree of body, biography and mediation. The work of Coward and Griffin exemplifies two strains, which if brought together would come close to approaching Walkerdine's admittedly difficult challenge. Coward's deconstructionist strength lies in asking how we deal with seeing fragments of ourselves perfected and naturalized in books, in ads, and in another's eyes. Combined with Griffin's ethnomethodological approach we may consider how the everyday sites of getting a job, or eating a family meal, are also the nexus for both the reproduction and negotiation of discourses. The strength of an articulation of feminism and cultural studies is that we can at least start from there.

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Notes

1. Cited in Kim Chernin, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1981), p. 76.

2. Stuart Hall "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates", *Critical Studies* in *Mass Communication* 2, 1985: 103.

3. Valerie Walkerdine, "Developmental psychology and the child-centred pedagogy: the insertion of Piaget into early education," in Julien Henriques, et al., eds., *Changing the Subject*, (London: Methuen, 1984). p. 200.

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THE POLITICS OF MUSIC: AMERICAN IMAGES AND BRITISH ARTICULATIONS

Lawrence Grossberg

The history of rock and roll in the U.S.A. has to be written as a transnational discourse, which draws the complex connections between various American (north and south), African and British musics. In the common versions of this history, the interactions amongst the various cultures marked by the first two of these terms may be acknowledged to construct a capillary network, while the British influence has been constructed as a series of invasions, beginning with the Merseybeat sound. This normalized history fails to recognize the continuous penetration of the American market by recontextualized images (both visual and sonorial), not only of our own soul and rock heritages, but also of our own national identity reflected back to us as a displaced signifier of many taken-for-granted aspects of our everyday lives. Even more importantly, such histories have failed to locate reflexively their own indebtedness to British discourses which have shaped the ways we write and talk about rock and roll, and the ways we experience and evaluate it as well. The British did not teach us how to produce rock and roll but rather, how to interpret it and thus, how to enjoy it. And the lessons, whether imperialist or intended, continue.

In a recent review of Iain Chambers' *Urban Rhythms*, Robert Christgau notes both the growing intellectual respectability of popular music studies (where?) and the apparent absence of such treatises from authors

in the U.S.A.[1]. It is in fact quite true that North America has produced few self-consciously theorized books on pop music, comparable to the body of work produced by such British authors as Simon Frith, Iain Chambers, Dick Hebdige and others. (The exceptions are themselves illuminating: Greil Marcus' *Mystery Train* locates rock and roll in a distinctly literary and mythic domain, Denisoff's *Solid Gold* and Chapple and Garofalo's *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay* remain within the traditionally "empiricist" traditions of socio-economic and political-economic analyses. None of them have generated a continous critical debate[2]). However, do we know what difference this presence/absence marks? Do we know how to read the fact that many U.S. writers seem to content (condemn?) themselves with the fragmentary and often obscurely placed form of the academic article and that, moreover, when they seek a theoretical framework for their analysis, it is often taken from their more visible British colleagues?

There are obviously many conditions that have enabled this difference: the economics of publishing, the relations between academic and popular critical discourses, geography and the configuration of the music audience, the organization of the media of music dissemination, etc. These conditions have had their discursive impacts, not only on writing about music but on the dispersion and effects of musical statements themselves. Emblematic of this are the divergences between the major histories of rock and roll that each has produced: Charlie Gillett's *Sound of the City* and *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*.[3] The former is linear, rational and located within larger, if implicit, sociopolitical contexts and debates; the latter is fragmented, celebratory, with little sense of an intellectual or political argument. The former seems confident of the major trends and moments in rock history; the latter seems unwilling or unable to make such choices. The former projects a homogeneous and secure audience; the latter's audience is apparently nomadic and fleeting. In fact, a coherent framework which makes sense of the polyphonic and polymorphic (perverse?) body of pop in the U.S. would continuously have to acknowledge its inability to identify the appropriately necessary emblematic moments. Whether this means that any consistent critical discourse is impossible, it has enhanced the impact of British theorizations, making them attractive if not necessary.

There are in fact, two interrelated moments to this intellectual imperialism: subculture theory and a particular version of postmodern theory. Each rearticulates a number of common assumptions that both fans and critics use to construct their own relations to the music into a particular set of interpretive and political problematics. The former places pop within the broader terrain of the ideological politics of style organized around an opposition between center and margin; the latter

subsumes both music and style into the question of the politics of pleasure as resistance within the space of an assumed identity of media and metropolitan defined cultures.[4] If one is ever to construct (fabricate) the uniquely North American politics of rock and roll culture, both of these articulations of rock and roll – into a subcultural politics of style, and into a metropolitan politics of pleasure – have to be challenged, not because they do not work in the context of their own presentation but because, as soon as they are appropriated into the very different landscape of North America, they essentialize the dilemmas of the politics of pop music (into expressions of class or urbanity, into the politics of ideology pleasure, and into oppositional contexts of marginality or mainstream).

Subculture theory institutionalizes the common sense wisdom of rock and roll's collective self-consciousness by equating three sets of differences: (1) the difference between the good and the bad child. The latter, marked stylistically (the teenager versus the juvenile delinquent, the high school versus the gang, the hop versus the street, the early Alan Freed movies versus *Blackboard Jungle*) was a particularly powerful discursive element of the dominant ideologies; (2) the fluid gap between *our* music and theirs (rock and roll versus Tin Pan Alley), which was itself articulated to the opposition between youth and adult. This often powerfully expressed youth's need to affirm fun (and the importance of their own experiences) in the face of the boredom and severity of the adult culture; (3) the emergent distinction within sociological (labelling) theory, between the mainstream culture and deviant subcultures (which were now to be granted their own identities, experiences and world-views). It is the last which provided the new theoretical framework within which all of postwar youth culture and the history of rock and roll could be understood.

Subculture theory rightly points to the power of style to mark a difference. Hebdige argues that this difference is the product of the visible artificiality of such styles, of the fact that they display their artificiality on their own surfaces and thus challenge the assumed naturalness of the mainstream.[5] After all, one could learn to be a punk by observing surfaces in ways that are not available to those trying to learn to be "normal." Style's flaunting artificiality becomes a "semiotic guerilla warfare." The argument continues beyond this rather situationist reading: this difference constructs as well a "forbidden identity" which expresses the lived contradictions of the particular subculture (located between class, age and race contradictions, although the first is always and necessarily primary) and offers finally a "magical solution" to them (e.g., the mods lived the cliche that you worked so that you could enjoy the weekend). The connection between the bricolage of style and the

representation of/imaginary solution to lived contradictions is theorized as a chain of homologies which, in Hebdige, takes on the form of a signifying practice that binds together the various dimensions of the argument and levels of the subculture's sociocultural positioning; each subculture "uses" signs differently, practices its own mode of communication by differently articulating the signified to the signifier (e.g., it was not a matter of what the mods wore but of how they wore it). It is not the signs themselves but the ways they are fit together to form a language of sorts that constitutes both the identity and difference underlying the subculture's resistance.

But the rupture or double articulation – from difference to identity – within the very notion of style itself locks subculture theory into a politics of incorporation. As long as the gap remains abstract and untheorized, the assumed difference between authenticity and cooptation remains constitutive and equivalent to the difference between subcultures and mainstream, margins and center. On the one hand, style marks a difference, its artificiality is on its surface and it is, to varying degrees, disruptive of the assumed naturalness of mainstream style. On the other hand, style is ideologically oppositional insofar as it constructs something more than difference, namely a *forbidden* identity.

Subculture theory was a response against visions of hegemony as an abstract and monolithic structure of domination which allowed little or no possibility of resistance (or even, for that matter, culpability and participation). Subculture theory sought out and found pockets of resistance – in fact, it found them everywhere it looked, wherever there was an isolatable and identifiable subculture. But the demand of insularity meant that hegemony was once again reconstituted, if not as monolithic and all powerful (because full of gaps and leaks), as an abstract and omnivorous mainstream against which subcultures were always constituted as other, as a threat. To protect the claim of resistance, the subcultures had to be encapsulated and studied from within their own claims of absolute difference. A boundary, always overcoded with both signifiers and signifieds, was the only way they could be placed into the broader social context of the social formation. (There was little motivation to study mods at work, or growing up and out of the subculture, or youths who were only ambiguously and marginally identified with the subculture). Rather than examining the fluid boundaries between subcultures and the mainstream, subculture theory itself was always trying to locate the one magical moment before a particular subculture had become visible enough to begin the inevitable process of incorporation. Paradoxically, at the moment of its visibility, when it becomes available to be studied and interpreted, it has already begun its dissolution into the mainstream.

Moreover, resistance becomes an unanalysed opposition; if subcultures resisted, it was impossible to define the unique stakes in each struggle, or to decide in which instances some victory, however small, had been won. Subculture theory failed to recognize that sometimes struggles are lost, and sometimes struggles are carried on in ways that merely end up reconstituting their own submission.[6] Recent work goes a long way to correcting this essential view of resistance: Aggleton and Whitty point out the necessity to distinguish between intentions and effects in such matters, between wide-ranging "resistances" and local "contestations" and between "transformative effects" and "reproductive resistances."[7]

Still the very difference between subcultures and the mainstream is problematic, a matter of degrees and of situated judgments. For example, both yuppies and mods mark their stylistic differences, both are consummate consumers opting for a sense of constant change that results in a game of stylish one-upmanship. The untheorized other in all of subculture theory is the mainstream, as if it were simply identifiable with hegemonic power and dominant ideologies: while it is true that the mainstream sees itself as normal and natural, it does not construct itself as conformist but rather as the site of individualism; it is the margins (whether as subcultures or capitalist extravagance) which appear as the site of conformity.

While this construction is problematic and certainly ideological, equally problematic are the ways in which subcultural differences are taken for granted in subculture theory. For while the center of mainstream is constructed as homogeneous, it is more accurately seen as a social pastiche, a bricolage of cultural codes and historical debris, constantly incorporating and rejecting pieces of the margins. The mainstream is not without its differences; it is a collection of overlapping cultural styles, defined by sets of productive and consumptive practices. And the margins are not inherently marginal, they only come to be expelled in this way in the context of the ongoing fluid articulations of the mainstream. It is only in relation to this changing mainstream that subcultures are constructed within our discourses.

And if, as I would argue, the U.S. has no center and therefore, no margins, then the center is a constantly floating configuration of marginality. In this context, it is impossible to decide whether artificiality constructs difference or difference constructs artificiality; it remains always a matter of local effectivity. Even within the parameters of subculture theory, it is historically problematic when the history of rock and roll in the United States ignores the politics of the mainstream, as if the latter were nothing but the weakening of the stylistic differences and the necessary displacing of any political resistance. Any history of pop

music which denies the possibility of a politics of the masses is likely to repeat the pessimistic conclusions of modernist critical theory.

At the same time that subculture theory makes obvious the need to interpret any cultural event only in the actual context of its deployment (e.g., one could never make sense of the connection between hardcore and skateboarding apart from the broader context of the subculture), it also ignores the possibility that the context has to include the mainstream within which the subculture is constructed and positioned. Further, it continues to read the mainstream and its signs as if they could be read in isolation, as if one could know that the simple fact of a sign's entrance into that anonymous space of the masses guaranteed that it had been coopted.

Thus, subculture theory leaves us with three problematic oppositions[8]: style as artificiality in the face of ideological naturalization, marginality as difference from the center or mainstream, and resistance as a refusal of merely living with contradictions. In fact, in the context of postwar U.S. history, subculture theory operates as a way of disarming the resistance of the mainstream and of isolating the threatening possibilities of a politics of style as in-difference. For by its criterion, the American sense of style without depth (Warhol), of the celebration of a politics of surfaces that remain disconnected from any specific social positioning or experience, can only be seen as precariously situated on the borders (but not the limits) of hegemony. And furthermore, the great mass of rock and roll fans – who refuse not only any particular subcutural identity but often, any visible sense of style as otherness – can only be written out of the history of pop music. If style has no necessary depth, no constitutive moment of identity, then subcultural events are merely conjuncturally isolated moments of bricolage, moments which operate within the mainstream to mark it as a configuration of differences (e.g. contemporary designer clothes that present themselves as the "MacDonalds of fashion"). Particular styles, whether cool or hot, do not by their own existence set themselves outside of the mainstream but rather, rearticulate the affective investments that traverse the possibilities of organizing the pieces of our cultural lives.

Pop styles (within which music functions as a powerful articulating principle) clearly mark differences, but difference is always a matter of local effects – and it can exist – it often does – without identity. Style is the commonly dispersed bricolage of fitting together our cultural debris, both past and present. Thus subcultural style is neither identical to nor different from the mainstream any more than the margins are either within or outside of the mainstream. It is not merely a matter of deconstructing these oppositions, but of seeing their historical rearticulation into in-difference. In-difference describes a particular historical

structure of self-relationship enacted in the contextual play of identity and difference. Difference exists only because it is in-difference. U.S. pop style, as well as rock and roll, refuses ever to implode into a common center or identity (it has, from its very emergence, been marked by difference); and yet, at the same time, it refuses to invest in real differences as if it could mark powerful moments of identity. Fans – youth – in the U.S. fight over territory, not identity. Style as in-indifference operates against the grain of ideology. It places one, as a nomadic subject, in an affective space. It is, at every point on the surface of the social body, the socially constructed configuration of selective affective investments.

However, moving the question of the politics of style into the affective structure of in-indifference (which does not implode but rearticulates the relation of the margins to the mainstream) away from questions of ideology (identity and representation) does not entail entering into discourses of pleasure as the site of resistance. Pleasure, whether a repressed moment of anarchic disruption, a dangerous distraction (the ultimate imaginary because so immediately real), or an excess never entirely recuperable, remains the affective economy of the historical "deployment of sexuality" (Foucault). Pleasure signals, at best, a momentary respite from the demands of ideological economies even as it remains locked within them. In-difference seeks to restructure the economy of our affective investments, offering itself as a way of "making sense" outside the logics of signification and representation.

Pop music and pop style, finally, cannot be separated from the broader historical context within which they emerged as powerfully articulated affective economies. Pop culture is a way of living well in impossible times, a celebratory defensiveness which not only enables us to "hide from the light" but to enjoy our own self-constructed difference; a defensive narcissism which cannot be reduced to Baudrillard's hyperconformism; an anti-elitist elitism which is not merely a matter of the politics of pleasure. Pop culture cannot be separated from the hyper-realization of the experiences of modernity that constitute much of contemporary life. Nor can it be separated from the broader mediascape within which the line between image and reality, and between identity and difference, have become a matter of indifference. The danger is that one essentializes (or structures) the wild proliferation of events and experiences that are fluidly constituting our hypermodernity. Any attempt to create a center which marks the identity of the social surface – Baudrillard's simulacrum, or Lefebvre's metropolitan existence – negates the dispersed in-difference of the masses in pop style. In the terms of subculture

theory, we must recognize that the mass audience of pop, the mainstream of style, is the postmodern subculture.

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Notes

1. Robert Christgau, "All that jazz," *Village Voice* February 4, 1986: p. 50.

2. Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train*. New York: Dutton, 1976; R. Serge Denisoff, *Solid Gold*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1975; Stephen Chapple & Reebee Garofalo, *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1977.

3. Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of the City*. New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970); Jim Miller (Ed.), *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*. New York: Random House, 1976.

4. Iain Chambers, *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985; Dick Hebdige, "Posing... Threats, Striking... Poses: Youth, Surveillance and Display." *SubStance* 37-38 (1983): pp. 68-88.

5. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen, 1979.

6. See, for example, Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour*. Westmead, G. B.: Saxon House, 1977.

7. P.J. Aggleton & C. Whitty, "Rebels Without a Cause? Socialization and Subcultural Style Among the Children of the New Middle Classes." *Sociology of Education* 58 (1985): pp. 60-72. See also Leslie G. Rothaus, "Intimacy, Labor and Class: Ideologies of Feminine Sexuality in the Punk Subculture." Madison: unpubl. ms., 1986.

8. The following is an extension of Lawrence Grossberg, "'I'd rather feel bad than not feel anything at all': Rock and Roll, Pleasure and Power." *Enclitic* 8 (1984): pp. 94-110.

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THE WORK OF FILM IN THE AGE OF TV/VIDEO PRODUCTION

Catherine Russell

Part of the problem that television seems to pose for film studies is that it is always both aesthetically and ideologically problematic. The specificity of television is at once technological and economic. The video image is fundamentally different from the cinematic one, but so is its dissemination and reception. The difference between television and video, or between broadcast TV and its medium of expression, is a difference that makes claims on two spheres of study — the political and the aesthetic.

The dominant approach taken by film scholars has emphasized the political or socio-cultural dimension of television. Summed up in an AFI anthology entitled *Regarding Television*[1], film scholarship has rallied around a prospective "theory of television."[2] But such a theory, utilizing the tools of analysis developed in cinema studies, can only be as thorough, useful and extensive as the texts that it takes as its object. In *Regarding Television* these range from soap opera to sports. The one essay included on video art (by Maureen Turim) doesn't mention a single work. While one can engage with broadcast TV at any given point, the absence of a canon of video art seems to be prohibitive of serious discussion. Thus, of the two spheres of investigation, the political tends to take precedence over the aesthetic in the study of the "other" medium, television.

Any discussion of the aesthetics and politics of contemporary media and art is indebted to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. A common criticism of T.W. Adorno's aesthetics is that his exclusive category of autonomous art constitutes a reductive elitism. But one is not necessarily subscribing to an "elitist theory" when one differentiates autonomous art from what the Frankfurt school called "the culture industry." It is not always an easy distinction to make, nor a necessary one.[3] However, it was a central point of contention in an important debate between Adorno and Walter Benjamin, recently published in *Aesthetics and Politics*.[4]

In his seminal essay of 1935, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin's purpose was to explain how the new photographic technology demanded a new conception of art, and to indicate the potential politicization of art (especially film) as an instrument of the left. The omnipresence of television today as the dominant mode of mechanical (or now, electronic) reproduction necessitates some revision of Benjamin's prognosis, but several of his categories or motifs remain valuable parameters for discussion of contemporary media. His essay can, in fact, be read as a preliminary theory of video.

Most importantly, Benjamin's thesis that "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art,"[5] is largely confirmed with television. "Aura" for Benjamin refers to the material history embodied in an object:

> The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissable from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced... and what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.[6]

The locus of authority in television is problematic: on the one hand the role of "author" is eliminated, or at least very cleverly disguised, and on the other hand, certain aspects of television, such as TV news, are couched in an unambiguous authoritative voice.

Benjamin's optimistic conception of technological art also involved what he called its component of "shock". For Benjamin, this was simply the experience of discontinuity, of disparity and fragmentation that characterize modern industrial life. Its almost Brechtian manifestation in film was the potential of montage to "put the public in the position of the critic," through an increase of distraction over contemplation.[7] Distraction has lost a good deal of the political potential that Benjamin ascribed to it, and yet video imagery, through the pulsations of light emmission and its heavy reliance on close-ups, is characterized by discontinuity and

fragmentation. Again, it is as if Benjamin was anticipating television in his theorization of a cinema that never existed.

Thirdly, Benjamin lamented the disappearance of storytelling in our century, a form of narration that has paradoxically reemerged with television.[8] Storytelling differs from both novel and information in that it is thoroughly embedded in the life of the storyteller, so that the narrative extends beyond the arbitrary limits of its telling. Television is largely experienced as a "flow",[9] insofar as it has so many beginnings and endings that there is often no actual beginning or end. The integration of commercials and the smooth transition between programmes constitute an ongoing narrative into which the viewer inserts him or herself. The storyteller in this case can be understood as the entire corporate industrial structure of broadcast TV; the "life experience" that is passed on is the cumulative and repetitive range of cultural norms and values.

These concepts of aura, shock and storytelling are important components of an aesthetic of reception. By putting as much weight on the act of communication as on representation, Benjamin rethought art as media in the sense of mediation. If we return to the Adorno/Benjamin debate alluded to above, the limitations of this application of an aesthetic of reception should become clear. In a letter to Benjamin dated 18 March 1936, Adorno detailed his reservations about "The Work of Art":

> ... what I would postulate is *more* dialectics. On the one hand, dialectical penetration of the "autonomous' work of art which is transcended by its own technology into a planned work; on the other, an even stronger dialectization of utilitarian art in its negativity,... You under-estimate the technicality of autonomous art and over-estimate that of dependent art.[10]

Film theorists who have recently turned their attention to television have made valuable progress towards the latter dimension of Adorno's directive, subjecting the "culture industry" to intensive critical analysis. I would like to indicate here the ways in which the "autonomous work of art" has been "dialectically penetrated" with a view towards a transcendence "by its own technology." That is, while film theorists have been attending to television and producing valuable results, filmmakers have also been attending to video with equally important achievements. Of course the work of video artists shouldn't be underestimated, and the following analyses are not meant to replace consideration of video art, but to indicate another mode of discourse on and in the medium.

The filmmaker who has dealt most extensively with the relationship between film and video is Jean-Luc Godard. Since his involvement in TV and his incorporation of it in his films is both complex and diverse, it would require a separate discussion to deal adequately with it. Much of

his television work, as well as his 1975 film Numero Deux, consists of commentaries on the film-video dialogue that are far more illuminating and perceptive than anything possible on paper. Godard's influence on other filmmakers, including Wim Wenders, Yvonne Rainer and Chantal Ackerman, has been tremendous, and the work of these three people is perhaps representative of the scope of the film-video dialogization.

Video is extensively represented in most of Wim Wenders' films, usually with unambiguous negative connotations. In *Room 666* (1982) this antagonism is most explicit. Sixteen filmmakers attempt to answer the so-called question: "The cinema is a language about to get lost, an art about to die?" in a hotel room with a television set behind their left shoulders. The TV is not always on, and different interviewees cope with it in different ways. Godard himself changes the channel to watch a tennis match; other directors' addresses are completely upstaged by the highly visual imagery (movement and colour) behind them; others turn off the TV, etc.

With the exception of Godard, most of the directors seem to agree that auteurism is on the wane, and that this is unfortunate. Many causes are mentioned, including Speilberg's labour problems, but the recurring theme is TV, especially home video. The role of the TV set in *Room 666* indicates the source of the Satanic threat. The representation of video in some of Wender's other films indicates just what this threat consists of.

In both *The American Friend* (1975) and *The State of Things* (1981), death is witnessed by video cameras without human connections. In the first film a bank of surveillance monitors do not interfere with or prevent Jonathan (Bruno Ganz) from murdering a man in the subway station that they "survey"; they simply represent the event simultaneously, whether or not anyone is watching. The last shot of *The State of Things* is the video picture captured by Fritz's camera after he is shot. Again, it is instantaneous and disembodied. These are the features of video that most effectively dissolve "aura" as Benjamin conceived it. Video in the form of portapaks and surveillance devices pretty well eliminates "the distinction between author and public," another feature of aura.[11]

The unconscious dehumanized qualities of TV that Wenders emphasizes come to the fore in *Lightning Over Water* (1980). The narrative of this film is structured by Nick Ray's actual death from cancer, and both Farrell and Wenders play themselves, emphasizing their 'surrogate son' relationships with Ray. Farrell wields a video camera and Wenders directs a film crew. Farrell's footage is featured intermittently throughout the film, sometimes blown up to screen size and sometimes on monitors, and it shows mainly Ray's talking head as well as some shaky verité-style sequences.

Wenders' relationship with Farrell is never made explicit, but his status as a filmmaker and Farrell's as a videographer stand in the film as an expression of sibling rivalry. But it is a metaphor that goes both ways, as their relationship colours their different mediums in the same way as Wenders' "anxious" relationship with Ray has its source in Bloomian aesthetics. Ray is his auteur father only insofar as Wenders admires — and presumes to imitate — his filmmaking style. Likewise, Farrell is a threatening, competitive brother only in his choice of an alternative medium. In short, it is a film in which professional/artistic relationships are cast as familial ones.

In *Sauve qui peut*, Godard drew an analogy between the film/video relationship and the Cain/Abel relationship, and in *Lightning Over Water*, Wenders seems to be taking him seriously. Video is constantly posited as a subsidiairy discourse to film, lacking both its scope and its responsibility. The danger, for Wenders, of the dissolution of aura is the corresponding de-emphasis of auteurism as authority. Furthermore, insofar as the incorporation of video images of Ray's deteriorating body sets up a graphic display of temporal discontinuity, juxtaposing the stages of this death in a single image, Wenders also exploits the "shock" effect of technological reproduction through his use of video. And Farrell's video discourse, especially as compared to Wenders' larger, controlling cinematic one, is very much a form of storytelling. Its continuous unstructured quality, lack of extravagant technology, and Farrell's ability to shoot everywhere all the time at close range gives his discourse an intimacy unavailable to Wenders' authoritative structuring of Nick Ray's demise.

Yvonne Rainer's film *The Man Who Envied Women* (1985) is about discourse itself. One strand of the many conflicting voices and languages is shot in video. It is used to cover a debate that Rainer, as a New York City resident, was involved in; a debate between artists, immigrants, developers and politicians over New York City housing. The various speeches made by representatives of the different groups are scattered through the rest of the "enacted" material of the film, which exibits, on the whole, high production values. The video sections create a contrast of textures as well as a variety of levels of "realism".[12]

Traditionally, black-and-white stock and verité camera-style have connoted "realism" in cinema, and blown-up video tends to take over this role to a large extent. But unlike, say, the "documentary" sequence of *Citizen Kane*, which functions as a comparitively objective and distanced discourse, in *The Man Who Envied Women*, the video-taped sections are relatively subjective and intimate. The issues raised in the video portions concern the events and experiences of people's lives. Compared to the abstracted theoretical debates between

post-structuralism and political analysis, Freud and Marx, feminism and capitalism, that dominate Rainer's film, the housing issues and their video-taped representation constitute an "everyday language."

Like Farrell's discourse in *Lightning Over Water*, the difference that the video image makes is one of relative banality. Immediacy, spontaneity and even an "ideology of liveness,"[13] as well as certain formal properties — low definition image, light emission, etc. — are used for specific political and aesthetic ends in these films. Whether one calls this discourse "de-auratized," "everyday language," storytelling, or "more real", its incorporation into film constitutes what Mikhail Bakhtin calls a dialogical relationship of discourses, or "heteroglossia."

A crucial feature of Bakhtin's model of double-voiced discourse is that the new language belongs to "another" — some person or group whose world-view the traditional dominant discourse cannot accomodate. The dialogic effect is double-edged. When a new speech and its attendant style and politics are incorporated into the author's (in the cinema we might call this the 'filmmaker's' or even the 'production's') text,

> any direct work and especially that of the dominant discourse is reflected as something more or less bounded, typical and characteristic of a particular era, aging, dying, ripe for change and renewal.[14]

On the other hand, the alien, appropriated language(s) are potentially "qualified and 'externalized', show as something historically relative, delimited and incomplete... they, so to speak, criticize themselves."[15]

Thus, in *Lightning Over Water* the tension between Wenders and Farrell and their respective media is a dramatic expression of the question posed in more explicit terms in *Room 666*. Rainer, on the other hand, escapes the threat that video poses to Wenders simply by setting different stakes, replacing his artistic ego with a question of realism.

A third film that dialogizes film and video is Chantal Ackerman's *Les Annees 80* (1983; released in English as *The Golden Eighties*.) The first half of this 85-minute film is shot entirely in video and blown up to the film size, resulting in a textured image of constant light movement in which the outlines of figures are slightly blurred. The few long shots and medium shots are noticeably less distinct than the dominating close-ups, and camera movement is minimal. This section of the film consist of auditions and rehearsals of individual actresses and actors for the musical that we see directly on film in the second half. Part One is not *the* film, but an assortment of performances by individuals, some of whom will be cut from the *real* film, Part Two. And yet they are performances, directed, edited and organized by Ackerman, who actually appears in the film in

these capacities. The first part concludes with Ackerman herself singing very badly in rehearsal.

The final production in the second half of *Les Annees 80* is more like a bad dream than a musical. It is distinguished from Part One by virtue of its narrative, group performances and image quality, but it is equally decentered. The singing and dancing are meaningless cultural forms. Compared to the individual struggles of performers in the first half to "get it right," to become someone else, to express things that "don't come easily," and to embarrass themselves, the ensuing musical is superficial trash. Ackerman uses the "everyday" quality of television and the "special" character of film to explode the mythologies of both media; the intensity and depth of the former is opposed to the superficiality of the latter. Through the banality of the video medium the banality of cinema is revealed. Bakhtin explains why *skaz*, which is "not a specific style but only a socially or individually defined manner of storytelling," is necessary in certain historical periods: "When there is no adequate form for an unmediated expression of an author's intentions, it becomes necessary to refract them through another's speech."[16] In the three films discussed above, television is incorporated as a medium of expression that contains within its very form the politics and aesthetics of our experience of the medium. Because it is channelled into our home everyday, television is far closer to an "oral tradition," an accessible, familiar discourse than is its older sibling, the cinema. The video voice is one that can be and is ignored as much as it demands and receives attention.

The evolution of art and literature has always involved dialogization and incorporation of popular or less sophisticated forms. But in the video/film dialogue, the blown-up video imagery has an unusually significant scope, primarily because it raises the question of media rather than art. The two media are differentiated economically and experientially; we have different physical and cultural relationships with film and television. Stripped of the contents of television, the video image is still a sign of television; blown up, the low-definition of the video image is exaggerated, so that whatever is represented through video in film is represented at two removes. It is a reflexive device that can be made to double back on itself, introducing an image that is inaccessible to film, but paradoxically doing so in a film, on film.

The difference between video and TV, a difference which pertains mainly to reception — viewing conditions and expectations — can be misleading. The implicit assumption in Bakhtin's model of heteroglossia is that we cannot dissociate the purely formal elements of a discourse from our previous experience of it — from its prior manifestations outside the text. What the filmmakers discussed above have privileged in

the commercial experience of TV is its familiarity or ordinariness. It isn't that everyone makes video every day, but we all participate in it daily. Compared to film, it does lack aura, and it is precisely this secularized accessibility that speaks when video imagery is incorporated into cinema.

This cinematic heteroglossia does of course have a radical potential. If the "logic of late capitalism" is indeed an indifferent monolothic identity in which oppositional strategies consist of restoring the value of difference and pluralism,[17] there is perhaps some value in the hybridization of discourses for their own sake. The introduction of a video discourse into film has proved to be an essential means for filmmakers such as Wenders, Rainer and Ackerman to represent themselves, their audiences and/or their society, as decentered and differentiated. Other filmmakers who have worked with such a dialogization of film and video include Orson Welles, Nicholas Roeg, George Landow and, of course, Godard.

It is the use of the concept of authorship and its attendant spheres of hierarchy within the work, from authority to aura, as an indirect allegory of society as a single dominating, standardized system, and their mutual eradication, that constitutes radical art today. Chantal Ackerman's work in particular stands out as evidence that such a project is not impossible. Video and TV can provide the filmmaker with aesthetic strategies for a deconstruction of cinematic power structures: auteurism, voice-over, direction, etc. The value of television for filmmakers is its status as medium, as not-art, and as a form of mediation that originates between us and the world in our own homes.

Likewise, the value of the work of these filmmakers is their dialectical approach to media, the aesthetic and political nature of which we are, quite correctly, concerned about. Art, as Adorno points out, is inherently technological, and artists working outside the "culture industry" do indeed penetrate the technics of production in the society of which they are nevertheless a part. Adorno also wrote that,

> ... the principle that governs autonomous works of art is not the totality of their effects but their own inherent structure. They are knowledge as non-conceptual objects. This is the source of their nobility.[18]

The expense of film production may make it impossible for a filmmaker to escape the "culture industry" absolutely. And yet the incorporation of low-definition video imagery into a work can undermine that enforced participation. We may indeed need a "theory of television," but we also need to use television, to understand the political and aesthetic value it may have. Walter Benjamin was one of the first to

acknowledge that the key to understanding technological art is through analysis of the viewing experience. This is and should be a crucial feature in the dialectics of the avant-garde.

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Notes

1. E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Regarding Television*, (Los Angeles: The American Film Institute, 1983).
2. William Boddy, "Loving a Nineteen-Inch Motorola: American Writing on Television", in *Regarding Television*, p. 10.
3. These designations "culture industry" and "autonomous art" were not established as exclusive categories. However, it is significant that the Frankfurt School had no tools to deal with those works that might fall in between these designations. Of the filmmakers discussed in this paper, Ackerman and Rainer are fairly clearly "avant-garde", which is close enough to Adorno's conception of "autonomous". Wenders' films pose a problem in these terms, although it is likely that his romanticism would have committed him to Adorno's "industrial" category.
4. *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates Between Ernst Bloch, George Lukacs, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno*, (London: New Left Books, 1977).
5. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hanna Arendt, (New York: Schocken Paperbacks, 1969), p. 221.
6. Ibid., p. 221.
7. Ibid., p. 240.
8. Benjamin, "The Storyteller," *Illuminations*.
9. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1975). This work is cited by the authors in *Regarding Television* as frequently as Benjamin's various writings are.
10. Adorno, "Letter to Walter Benjamin, in *Aesthetics and Politics*, p. 124.
11. Benjamin, p. 232.
12. This is not to suggest that Rainer's use of video is necessarily more "honest" in terms of documentation. The fact that we are given only fragments of what is evidently a hot and complicated political confrontation presupposes a selection process, rendering it intensely subjective in political rather than aesthetic terms.
13. Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology", in *Regarding Television, p. 12.*.
14. M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Immagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 60.
15. Ibid., p. 45.
16. Bakhtin, "Discourse Typology and Prose," *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. Ladislaw Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska, (MIT Press, 1971), pp. 183-84.
17. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review*, no. 146 (July-August 1984), p. 75.
18. Adorno, "Commitment," trans. Francis McDonagh, *Aesthetics and Politics*, p. 193.

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LE CORPS RETROUVÉ SUPPLICIÉ

Roberto Miguelez

Le Ministère de l'Intérieur, se fondant sur des renseignements fournis par la police de la province de Buenos Aires, a informé l'opinion publique le mercredi 17 de la découverte du cadavre d'Ana María Martínez. Le corps de la jeune femme, trouvé le vendredi 12 à Dique Lujan, un endroit éloigné situé dans la localité de Tigre, présentait deux blessures de balle et, semble-t-il, se trouvait dans un état de décomposition qui le rendait méconnaissable et dont l'identification a donc exigé un examen nécropapiloscopique.

Ana María Martínez, qui travaillait comme ouvrière métallurgiste et militait dans le Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs (P.S.T.) — une organisation de la gauche radicale opposée au gouvernement militaire —, avait été enlevée de son domicile, situé dans la localité de Général Sarmiento, le 4 février. Quelques voisins ont pu voir comment un homme et une femme habillés en civil et portant des armes l'introduisaient par la force dans une automobile "Falcon" de couleur verte, pendant qu'elle appelait au secours. Averti de la situation, son mari, José Santiago Metrovich, avait essayé infructueusement de poursuivre les kidnappeurs. La police avait été immédiatement alertée et, étant donné les caractéristiques du cas, des organisations consacrées à la défense des droits humains dans le pays avaient été saisies.

Les démarches entreprises n'ont cependant pas pu réussir car tous les organismes de sécurité consultés ont affirmé ne pas avoir connaissance, dans le domaine de leur respective juridiction, du cas en question. Le

dimanche 14 une demande de rapide investigation signée, entre autres, par les écrivains Jorge Luis Borges et Ernesto Sabato est distribuée aux journalistes afin qu'Ana María Martínez — qui, par ailleurs, était enceinte — puisse "apparaître vivante". Le lundi 15 une délégation d'organisations consacrées aux droits humains (...) rencontre le sous-secrétaire aux affaires institutionnelles du Ministère de l'Intérieur colonel Bernardo Menéndez pour l'intéresser au cas. Le colonel Menéndez manifeste alors "n'avoir information aucune à fournir". Le mercredi 17, enfin, le mystère est partiellement dévoilé avec l'identification du corps qui avait été trouvé cinq jours plus tôt. (...) La voiture utilisée dans l'enlèvement d'Ana María Martínez avait été aperçue dans le voisinage de son domicile les jours précédents sans que les dénonciations effectuées alors ne donnent aucun résultat. (...) Lorsque les avocats de la jeune femme ont pris connaissance de la découverte d'un cadavre dans la localité de Tigre le 12 février, ils se sont présentés aux bureaux de la police afin de faciliter son identification mais des données contradictoires — taille supposée de la victime, vêtements qu'elle portait — qui leur ont été alors communiqués ne correspondaient pas à celles d'Ana María Martínez. Le cadavre, auquel les deux mains ont été coupées pour identification, a été inhumé "pour des raisons d'hygiène" sans que la famille puisse faire procéder à une autopsie.

CLARIN, Buenos Aires, 15/21 février 1982.

* * *

Et si c'était exceptionnel? Non, les chiffres varient selon les sources mais l'ampleur de la variation en dit elle-même long de l'ampleur du phénomène: entre quinze et trente mille personnes ont "disparu" en Argentine dans les dernières années. Est-ce par ailleurs seulement un problème de "disparit ions"? Refusant d'admettre la thèse officielle des "excès", la Commission interaméricaine des droits de l'homme (C.I.D.H.) chargée par l'Organisation des États américains d'enquêter sur la situation argentine conclut, en 1980, qu'au cours des trois années précédentes "la torture a été utilisée comme pratique systématique par les autorités publiques" et que "les méthodes de cette nature, leur généralisation à l'ensemble du pays, le grand nombre de cas dénoncés et le transfert des détenus conduisent, sans équivoque, à conclure que ces pratiques n'étaient pas ignorées par les personnes qui exercent les plus hautes responsabilités au sein du gouvernement et des forces armées" (Rapport sur la violation des droits de l'homme en Argentine, p. 237).

Suffirait-il alors d'imputer à une poignée de militaires la responsabilité d'une "stratégie anti-subversive" sans bornes, sans complexes d'ordre moral, inspirée par le seul souci d'une efficacité immédiate, produit

d'une crainte soudain réveillée ou engendrée dans la ponctualité d'une conjoncture particulière? Deux interprétations de ce phénomène ont cours, l'une à usage interne, l'autre destinée à rassurer ceux qui, dans les pays "avancés", pourraient l'observer avec inquiétude, voire une certaine culpabilité. Dans le premier cas on dira, comme en Argentine aujourd'hui, qu'à la violence de "gauche" a tout simplement succédé une violence de "droite" – le phénomène étant somme toute marginal d'un point de vue structurel puisque mettant aux prises deux "extrêmisme". Dans l'autre cas, on dira que cette violence – de "gauche" ou de "droite" est bel et bien structurelle mais ne correspond qu'à la structure "culturelle" des pays "sous-développés" – une "culture" (politique) que la "modernité" se chargera tôt ou tard de transformer, élargissant ainsi au "Tiers-Monde" la règle des systèmes politiques "avancés": la démocratie comme norme et le totalitarisme et la violence comme exception.

Nous soutiendrons que dans ce phénomène, il faut plutôt voir une stratégie *de pouvoir nouvelle*, dont l'armée n'est que le responsable naturel, destinée à se généraliser en vertu non pas tellement de son efficacité comme de son inéluctabilité. Davantage: comme une stratégie qui se généralise déjà bien au-delà d'une formation sociale particulière et de ses avatars politiques conjoncturels, bien au-delà d'un continent pour devenir tendance dans la "périphérie" du système mondial capitaliste et qui, loin d'être indépendante des stratégies nouvelles de pouvoir dans le "centre" de ce système, est articulée structurellement à celles-ci. Mais, d'abord, quelques points de théorie pour justifier cette hypothèse.

1. Détermination et dominance

Nous partons de l'argument suivant: si, dans les sociétés de classe, la *forme* d'appropriation du surproduit social est un indice décisif pour repérer la forme de la structure sociale, alors il est aussi un indice décisif pour saisir la forme spécifique de pouvoir, la manière dont la domination de classe s'exerce, le dispositif essentiel de la contrainte et de l'assujettissement social. Lorsque nous parlons de forme d'appropriation du surproduit social nous nous référons à un phénomène complexe qu'il importe de saisir ne serait-ce que dans ses déterminations fondamentales. Deux propositions deviennent alors tout-à-fait décisives: d'abord, ce serait la forme *économique* spécifique dans laquelle du surtravail est extorqué aux producteurs directs qui déterminerait la forme de leur rapport *social* de dépendance; ensuite, et par là-même, la *forme* de ce rapport social de dépendance devrait se définir comme articulation différentielle de l'économique, du politique et de l'idéologique de telle sorte que la structure de la domination sociale renverrait en dernier lieu à la forme économique spécifique dans laquelle le surtravail est extorqué. À cet égard, la forme du contrôle ou de la posession des moyens de

production par les classes dominantes constituerait un élément décisif dans la détermination de la forme de l'appropriation. Cette double affirmation suppose la détermination par l'économique comme détermination de l'"instance" (politique, idéologique et même économique) qui occupe la place dominante dans le rapport de dépendance, autrement dit dans la structure de la domination sociale.

Cette définition peut être saisie concrètement dans une comparaison du mode de production féodal et du mode de production capitaliste. En effet, qu'est-ce que cette comparaison montre? Dans le cas du mode de production féodal, le statut particulier des moyens de production, à savoir le fait qu'ils soient possédés par les producteurs directs mais constituent la propriété en titre des membres de la classe dominante (les propriétaires fonciers) instaure une disjonction dans le temps et même parfois dans l'espace, de deux procès: celui du travail (destiné à produire les moyens de subsistance du producteur direct), et celui du surtravail (destiné à la production d'un surproduit pour le propriétaire foncier). Dès lors, dans ce mode, des raisons d'ordre politique ou idéologique – c'est-à-dire extra-économique – s'avèrent décisives *dans le processus même* d'appropriation du surproduit. La dominance du politique et/ou de l'idéologique apparaît alors comme l'effet d'une organisation économique spécifique ou, d'un autre point de vue, la détermination par l'économique apparaît alors comme détermination de l'"instance" autre qui occupera la place dominante dans l'organisation sociale.[1]

Cette disjonction caractériserait non seulement le mode de production féodal mais tous les modes de production pré-capitalistes de type classiste dans la mesure où seul le mode de production capitaliste semble présenter une coïncidence entre procès de travail et procès de surtravail. En effet, la propriété-possession par le capitaliste des moyens de production a ceci comme effet décisif: que la production de plusvalue coïncide et dans le temps et dans l'espace avec la production de biens. Autrement dit, le surproduit est, en régime capitaliste, non pas créé par le producteur direct en dehors de son travail nécessaire (comme c'était, par exemple, le cas du paysan soumis au Moyen-âge à l'obligation de corvée), mais au cours même de celui-ci, de sorte que la production de plusvalue apparaît comme l'oeuvre du capital lui-même. À la différence de cette forme "primitive" de plusvalue qu'est, par exemple, la rente en travail ("corvée"), la plusvalue capitaliste se présente cachée, mystifiée par un rapport social – qui prend à son tour la forme d'un rapport entre choses: l'appropriation de cette plusvalue par le capitaliste ne revêt pas directement ou nécessairement un caractère contraignant du moment où elle a lieu au cours même du procès de travail nécessaire. Nous trouvons chez J. Habermas une description particulièrement éclairante de la nouveauté de cette situation:

> (le capitalisme) offre une légitimation de la domination qui ne descend plus du Ciel de la tradition culturelle mais peut être établie sur la base du travail social. L'institution du marché, où des propriétaires privés échangent des marchandises, jusque et y compris le marché où des personnes privées dépourvues de propriété échangent pour toute marchandise leur force de travail, promet la justice de l'équivalence dans les relations d'échange (...). Mais ici le principe de réciprocité est dès lors le principe d'organisation du processus social de production et de reproduction lui-même. C'est pourquoi le pouvoir politique peut être désormais légitimé 'par le bas', et non plus seulement 'par le haut' (en se réclamant d'une tradition culturelle). (...) Ce n'est qu'avec le mode de production capitaliste que la légitimation du cadre institutionnel peut être directement liée au travail social (...) Le cadre institutionnel de la société n'est que médiatement politique; immédiatement, il est économique (...).[2]

Comme nous le verrons, ce n'est pas que la politique ou, d'une manière plus générale, les facteurs ou conditions extra-économiques disparaissent ou s'effacent: l'appropriation du surproduit ou la forme de la domination sociale qu'elle suppose ne peuvent jamais être seulement économiques. C'est *leur position* dans la structure de la domination sociale qui change avec ou dans les sociétés capitalistes.

2. Forme d'appropriation et forme du pouvoir

Comment analyser cette immédiateté politique caractéristique des sociétés pré-capitalistes dans lesquelles le fait décisif est justement cette présence nécessaire et dominante de formes non-directement économiques dans l'appropriation du surproduit social? Examinons le cas (privilégié à la lumière de notre hypothèse) des sociétés "traditionnelles" de type féodal appartenant au grand ensemble de sociétés organisées sur la base d'un mode de production tributaire.

Comme nous l'avons vu, la possession par le producteur direct des moyens de production disjoint le travail du surtravail de sorte que l'appropriation du surproduit apparaît bel et bien comme un *prélèvement*: que ce soit sous la forme de rente en travail ("corvée"), en nature ou en argent, le seigneur prélève – littéralement, c'est-à-dire prend – une partie des biens produits par le producteur direct. Pour qu'il puisse avoir lieu en permanence et non pas exceptionnellement il faut que le producteur direct accepte ce prélèvement – qu'aucune raison d'ordre économique ne justifie. À la différence de la rapine ou du pillage, qui est un prélèvement exceptionnel fondé sur la seule violence, les diverses formes de rente constituent une forme d'appropriation dans laquelle

s'articulent, et doivent s'articuler, la violence et des effets d'acceptation ou de consentement. La question est alors de savoir d'abord comment ces effets d'acceptation ou de consentement sont provoqués, ensuite comment la violence y est articulée.

On connaît bien la réponse à la première partie de cette question: le pouvoir de classe se présente dans le mode de production féodal sous la forme de dépendance, d'assujettissement du serf à la personne du seigneur, et cette dépendance s'inscrit dans un ordre "naturel" créé par la divinité. À la limite, le seigneur et, avec lui, son pouvoir apparaissent comme une véritable incarnation/émanation de la divinité et c'est ce caractère sacré du seigneur qui légitime son pouvoir de prélèvement et induit ainsi des effets d'acceptation ou de consentement chez les assujettis. Et l'on peut bien comprendre alors la référence de Marx au rôle du catholicisme au Moyen-âge,[3] que Poulantzas reprend dans les termes suivants:

> (...) c'était le mode de symbolisation propre à la religion (la religion relie) qui permettait de consacrer les liaisons d'agents d'ores et déjà encastrés dans la terre, dans la famille, dans les castes et les états. Liaisons qui engendraient une série étagée de symbolisations premières sur le mode du sacré, que l'État enregistrait en tirant sa légitimité comme incarnation, au sommet de la pyramide signifiante, de la parole et du corps du souverain.[4]

D'où non seulement la dominance de l'idéologique mais aussi, à l'intérieur de l'idéologique, celle des idéologies religieuses. L'immédiateté du politique dont parle Habermas se laisse alors saisir comme immédiateté du rapport de pouvoir dans l'appropriation du surproduit, comme pouvoir de prélèvement direct – certes, légitimé par un ordre cosmologique sacré. C'est, donc, en dernier lieu, la disjonction du procès de travail et du procès de surtravail qui peut permettre d'expliquer cette légitimation "par le haut" décrite par Habermas.

À cette disjonction caractéristique du mode de production féodal se substitue la conjonction ou coïncidence de ces deux procès dans le mode de production capitaliste. Cette substitution n'a été rendue possible que par le *dépossession* du producteur direct de ses moyens de production: la substitution de la déposession au prélèvement, dont Marx retrace l'histoire dans les chapitres du *Capital* consacrés à l'accumulation primitive, définit alors la phase de transition d'un mode de production à l'autre. On connaît le rôle qu'a joué la violence dans cette déposession: le mythe à fonction apologétique de l'émergence du capital à partir du travail personnel s'évanouit face à l'histoire de l'expropriation brutale des petits producteurs (Cf. Marx, livre 1er. 8ème section). Ce n'est qu'alors – mais c'est alors – que le rapport immédiatement politique qui liait le serf

au seigneur se transforme en rapport de production immédiatement économique qui lie l'ouvrier au capitaliste.

Quelles conséquences découlent de cette transformation radicale de la forme d'appropriation du surproduit? D'abord, et comme nous l'avons déjà vu, la coïncidence entre procès de travail et de surtravail instaurée par la forme nouvelle de propriété/possession des moyens de production fait disparaître les facteurs extra-économiques du processus même d'appropriation du surproduit ("plusvalue"): l'économique occupe en même temps la place déterminante et dominante. Cela signifie que l'appropriation n'est plus prélèvement mais se présente sous la forme de *profit*. En deuxième lieu, cet évanouissement des facteurs extra-économiques dans le profit sépare le politique de l'économique: l'État acquiert une autonomie (relative) et se présente plutôt comme agent et garant des conditions de la vie sociale. Une double légitimation se met alors en place: légitimation de l'appropriation de la plusvalue du moment où le profit apparaît comme un résultat purement économique (une propriété du capital), et légitimation du pouvoir politique d'État dans la mesure où celui-ci se présente comme État de droit de tout le peuple, c'est-à-dire comme pouvoir qui règle, par la loi, non seulement le comportement des individus considérés formellement égaux mais le sien propre. En troisième lieu, et par là même, l'idéologie juridique devient la région dominante de l'idéologie – se substituant ainsi aux idéologies religieuses – dans un mode de production où l'idéologique n'a plus le rôle dominant. Il nous faut examiner maintenant comment la violence est articulée dans chacune de ces formes de domination aux effets différentiels d'acceptation et de consentement que nous venons de caractériser.

3. Corps et pouvoir

Deux postulats forment la toile de fond sur laquelle doit se réaliser cet examen: le premier, qu'aucune domination de classe ne s'exerce et ne peut s'exercer sans violence, c'est-à-dire sans l'usage d'une force contraignante ou intimidante; le deuxième, que toute forme de violence vise, d'une manière ou d'une autre, le corps ou fait du corps sa cible privilégiée ou ultime. La question de savoir comment la violence est articulée dans une forme quelconque de domination sociale à des effets d'acceptation et de consentement trouve alors dans une "politique" du corps l'indice pertinent pour sa réponse.

Quelle a été la "politique" du corps dans les sociétés féodales? Quelle est cette "politique" dans les sociétés capitalistes? Comment a-t-on fait usage d'une force contraignante ou intimidante, et quel genre de force, dans une société "à prélèvement", et comment se présente cet usage et cette force dans une société "à profit"? Plus précisément encore: quelle

violence induit le prélèvement, et laquelle le profit? Voilà la façon dont nous pouvons maintenant formuler en toute clarté notre problème.

Et cependant il nous faut encore introduire une distinction si nous voulons résoudre ce problème d'une manière satisfaisante. Cette distinction porte sur l'objectif de l'usage de la violence ou, d'un autre point de vue, sur les situations générales dans lesquelles a lieu l'usage d'une force contraignante ou intimidante. En ce sens, nous distinguerons la violence exercée afin d'assurer la reproduction des conditions qui permettent l'appropriation systématique et permanente du surproduit social dans n'importe laquelle de ses formes, de la violence exercée afin de *punir* tout acte constituant une attaque au pouvoir social dominant – ou perçu comme étant une attaque à ce pouvoir, ou comme ayant des effets directs ou indirects, à court ou à long terme, sur ce pouvoir. Cette distinction répond à un principe essentiel repérable dans tous les systèmes ou situations de domination sociale (tout particulièrement de domination de classe), à savoir que la forme de violence et la façon de l'exercer ne sauraient être identiques lorsqu'il s'agit de maintenir les conditions de la domination, c'est-à-dire de l'obéissance, et lorsqu'il s'agit du châtiment de la désobéissance, c'est-à-dire d'une attaque à la domination elle-même. C'est pourquoi toutes les sociétés divisées en classes ont développé un système *autonome*, *spécifique* de violence sous la forme de système punitif – ou, dans des termes "modernes", une "pénalité".

Le problème qui nous occupe ici a été traité notamment par M. Foucault. *Surveiller et punir* (1975) constitue, sans aucun doute, la contribution la plus remarquable réalisée jusqu'aujourd'hui pour la compréhension des caractéristiques particulières de la pénalité "moderne". Dans ce qui suit, nous nous référerons largement à des analyses de ce texte. Cependant, nous sommes déjà en mesure de signaler ce qui démarquera notre perspective de celle qui soustend les analyses de Foucault. D'abord, et surtout, nous examinons la question des systèmes de punition et, d'une manière plus générale, de l'usage de la violence, en rapport avec le mode d'appropriation du surproduit – et non pas dans le cadre d'une "stratégie" plus ou moins abstraite de pouvoir ni, même, du mode de production saisi à un niveau général. Ce qui, encore, doit nous permettre d'expliquer ce que ces analyses plutôt décrivent. Deuxièmement, et par conséquent, la question de l'usage de la violence apparaît dans notre perspective liée directement au problème de la forme de la dominance sociale et, par là, aux effets différentiels d'acceptation et de consentement induits par la structure du système de domination en question. Ce qui rendra possible l'examen du rapport entre violence et légitimation - rapport non examiné par Foucault. Enfin, nous envisageons la question de l'usage de la violence toujours en rapport avec les deux types de situation que nous venons de signaler –

d'obéissance et de désobéissance, si nous pouvons parler ainsi -, et non pas dans le cadre exclusif des systèmes de punition. Ce qui devrait permettre de repérer, dans toutes les formes de domination, des contraintes corporelles qui n'auraient pas le caractère relativement exceptionnel qu'elles présentent dans les systèmes punitifs. Cette démarche effectuée, nous précisons cependant que nous tiendrons surtout compte des systèmes de punition, et ceci pour deux raisons: d'une part, parce que le rapport organique dans lequel se trouvent ces systèmes (ou l'usage réglé de la violence dans les cas de désobéissance) avec les formes de légitimation est un rapport privilégié d'un point de vue heuristique, comme les recherches déjà entreprises semblent bien l'attester; d'autre part, parce que nous nous intéressons plus particulièrement au problème de la désobéissance politique, qui n'est qu'un cas de la désobéissance sociale. (Il va sans dire que, dans certains cas, les désobéissances sociales peuvent devenir, c'est-à-dire être perçues et vécues, comme désobéissances politiques).

Trois dispositifs, qui constituent trois stratégies de pouvoir comportant, chacun, un système spécifique de punition, et qui définissent trois formes d'investissement politique et économique du corps - trois "économies politiques" du corps - s'affrontent, signale Foucault, dans la dernière moitié du XVIIIe siècle: celui qui correspond au corps supplicié, celui qui, dans le projet des juristes réformateurs du XVIIIe siècle faisait de l'âme ou, plus exactement, de sa représentation le point central sur lequel devait porter la peine et, enfin, celui qui correspond au corps qu'on dresse. Or, dans la mesure où ce dernier dispositif se serait finalement imposé sur celui du projet des juristes réformateurs et demeurerait encore en place pour l'essentiel, et que le premier correspondrait au Droit monarchique dominant encore vers la moitié du XVIIIe siècle, nous nous référerons seulement au corps supplicié et au corps dressé comme les deux modalités historiques d'investissement économico-politique du corps. Ces deux dispositifs ou stratégies se laissent caractériser schématiquement à partir des éléments suivants:

le corps qu'on supplicie/le corps qu'on dresse
le souverain et sa force/l'appareil administratif
l'ennemi vaincu/l'individu assujetti à une coercition immédiate
la cérémonie/l'exercice
la marque/la trace

Comment comprendre l'articulation respective des éléments dans chacune de ces stratégies? Dans le Droit monarchique, signale Foucault,

> (...) la punition est un cérémonial de souveraineté; elle utilise les marques rituelles de la vengeance qu'elle applique sur le corps du condamné; et elle déploie aux yeux des spectateurs un effet de terreur d'autant plus intense qu'est discontinue, irrégulière et toujours au-dessus de ses propres lois, la présence physique du

souverain et de son pouvoir.[5]

Nous avons ici affaire à un "dispositif" dans lequel le châtiment consiste dans l'usage réglé d'une violence qui s'exerce *directement* et *publiquement* sur le corps de celui qui a désobéi afin de provoquer une souffrance. La pénalité est donc une pénalité du corporel et la modulation de la peine s'exprime sous la forme d'application différenciée de la douleur. Un art de sensations insupportables constitue ainsi la base d'un système punitif au sens strict, c'est-à-dire destiné à faire *subir* les conséquences d'un acte non permis.

Comment expliquer ce "dispositif" de punition? Ce que Foucault appelle le Droit monarchique n'est que le système de punition correspondant à un type de société dans laquelle l'appropriation du surproduit se présente sous la forme de prélèvement, tout particulièrement, aux sociétés de type féodal. Le pouvoir de prélèvement détenu et exercé par les classes dominantes repose sur un rapport social qui se présente sous la forme de *rapport personnel* de dépendance au sens strict du terme: de la personne du serf vis-à-vis la personne du seigneur (y compris même du corps de l'un vis-à-vis le corps de l'autre: d'où, par exemple, le droit que pouvait dans certains cas exercer le seigneur sur les corps des femmes). C'est le rapport de vassalité. Aux effets d'acceptation et de consentement induits par cette forme de légitimation dans laquelle la parole et le corps du souverain, au sommet de la pyramide sociale, incarnent un pouvoir d'origine sacrée s'articule alors un *double* usage de la violence exercée sur les corps: d'une part, une violence destinée à assurer la reproduction des conditions économiques concrètes qui permettent l'appropriation systématique et permanente du surproduit (la rente dans toutes ses formes mais spécialement la rente en travail et en nature – le passage à la rente en argent définissant, en quelque sorte, la période de transition correspondant à la disparition du servage). Cette violence est, pour l'essentiel, l'attachement à la glèbe - ou, en d'autres mots, les contraintes spatiales sur les mouvements (du corps) des serfs. D'autre part, un système de punition voit la lumière qui, fondé sur la notion du crime ou de la désobéissance comme attaque personnelle au souverain (ou contestation de la dépendance personnelle vis-à-vis le pouvoir du seigneur ou du souverain), ne peut avoir comme cible, à la fois rélle et symbolique, que le corps de la victime. La souffrance, la douleur, la terreur corporelle sont ainsi les éléments constitutifs de la peine, et le supplice devient un cérémoniel *publique* qui refait symboliquement le pouvoir attaqué. En ce sens, le supplice avait, comme le signale Foucault, une fonction juridoco-politique[6].

Deux "opérateurs" semblent donc bel et bien assurer l'articulation de ces éléments qui caractérisent le mode de domination d'une société "à

prélèvement'': le sacré et la terreur. S'il faut accepter alors, suivant Habermas, que nous avons affaire à des sociétés dont la légitimation de la domination descend du Ciel (de la tradition culturelle) et dans lesquelles, par conséquent, le cadre institutionnel est immédiatement politique, il faut aussi préciser (et c'est une précision essentielle dont Habermas ne tient jamais compte) que cette légitimation ''par le haut'', sacrée, fonctionne dans la mesure où elle est doublée, ''en bas'', par la violence directe sur le corps lui-même. Le sacré et la terreur: le Seigneur supplicié – le Christ sur la croix – ne devient-il pas alors, dans l'inversion des termes que permet la métaphore, la condensation autrement impossible de ces deux ''opérateurs''? Tout le Moyen-âge européen pouvait *voir* dans cette image métaphorique sa propre image, inversée. (Mais n'appartiendrait pas, comme le suggère Marx, au mécanisme propre de l'idéologie ce renversement de l'image à la façon dont le voir le fait dans la rétine)[7].

Comment maintenant comprendre l'articulation des éléments dont le corps qu'on dresse n'est que la condensation pratique, immédiatement réelle, en même temps que le point d'aboutissement? Nous dirons que cette articulation est celle qui définit l'''économie politique'' du corps dans une société ''à profit'', c'est-à-dire dans les sociétés à dominance du mode de production capitaliste. C'est par l'examen des conditions de leur fonctionnement, c'est-à-dire des conditions qui rendent possible la forme particulière d'appropriation du surproduit qui les caractérisent, que nous pourrons alors comprendre cette articulation.

Nous nous sommes référés au processus historique de dépossession du producteur direct de ses moyens de production examiné par Marx sous la notion d'''accumulation primitive'' et qui correspond à la phase de transition du mode de production féodal au mode de production capitaliste. Cette dépossession présente deux faces ou a deux effets simultanés: d'une part, elle enlève au producteur direct la possession des moyens de production; d'autre part, elle concède à ces producteurs leur liberté formelle: rupture de l'attachement à la glèbe, dissolution des rapports de dépendance personnelle (ou aboutissement du processus de dissolution de ces rapports). L'''accumulation primitive'' est donc, en ce sens, accumulation de capital en même temps qu'accumulation de la force de travail, c'est-à-dire processus au cours duquel une masse de force de travail est mise à la disposition du capital. Cette ''liberté'' du producteur est, comme on le sait, liberté de vente de la seule possession qui lui reste: sa force de travail. Et c'est alors, nous avons dit, que le rapport immédiatement politique qui liait le serf au seigneur se dissout pour laisser la place au rapport de production immédiatement économique qui va lier l'ouvrier au capitaliste.

Nous avons rappelé aussi dans la section précédente que, à l'encontre du mythe idéologique de l'économie politique, l'accumulation primitive

du capital n'a été rendue possible que par l'emploi de la violence. Mais cette violence met à la disposition du capital une force de travail affranchie qui n'est pas immédiatement prête à son utilisation économique, encore moins à sa meilleure utilisation économique. Comme Marx lui-même le signale:

> La création du prolétariat sans feu ni lieu - licenciés des grands seigneurs féodaux et cultivateurs victimes d'expropriations violentes et répétées - allait nécessairement plus vite que son absorption par les manufactures naissantes. D'autre part, ces hommes brusquement arrachés à leurs conditions de vie habituelles ne pouvaient se faire aussi subitement à la discipline du nouvel ordre social.[8]

Marx examine dans ce chapitre du *Capital* (chap. XXVIII) la législation sanguinaire contre les expropriés mise en place à partir de la fin du XVe siècle - législation contre le "vagabondage" et sur le salaire - mais ce sont surtout les analyses de Foucault qui s'attaqueront directement aux techniques historiques de "disciplinarisation" de cette force de travail.[9] Si la loi et l'appareil juridico-répressif contraignent les expropriés au travail, ce sont les "disciplines", c'est-à-dire des techniques spécifiques de dressage du corps qui vont rendre cette force de travail en même temps *économiquement utile* (à la lumière des exigences du nouveau mode de production), et *politiquement assujettie*. Ce mécanisme, Foucault l'examine en détail du point de vue du processus historique même de formation d'une "société disciplinaire", des différentes techniques disciplinaires, et des instruments du pouvoir disciplinaire. Nous ne nous arrêterons pas à cet examen tout-à-fait remarquable d'un point de vue descriptif. Ce que nous devons souligner c'est que l'articulation des éléments qui trouvent dans le corps dressé leur condensation ne devient pleinement compréhensible que comme "économie politique" du corps dans une société "à profit".

En effet, si dans ces sociétés le cadre institutionnel est, de part le type même de rapports de production, immédiatement économique, c'est-à-dire si dans ces sociétés l'économie est en même temps déterminante et dominante, alors les rapports de domination ne présentent pas une forme (politique) particulière - organisation en castes, en états, etc.-, ils s'évanouissent en tant que rapports sociaux (de domination): la société "à profit" se présente ainsi comme une société formée par des sujets formellement libres et égaux, ce que la loi, c'est-à-dire le juridique, est censé confirmer et garantir dans son principe. Dans ce cas, le type de violence et la forme d'emploi de la violence destinée à assurer la *reproduction des conditions* qui permettent l'appropriation systématique et permanente du surproduit - la plusvalue - dépendent essentiellement

d'un effet de *majoration*, de maximisation de l'utilité purement économique d'une force de travail affranchie, "libre". Il ne s'agit plus d'une violence exercée pour retenir, interdire - par exemple, les serfs, de quitter la glèbe ou les artisans les corporations - mais plutôt pour permettre, libérer, augmenter - la capacité économique du travail "libre". Ces disciplines, ou cette disciplinarisation de l'ensemble du corps social réalisée sur les corps des individus est du ressort d'appareils administratifs placés à la tête d'institutions et/ou d'unités de production ou de travail qui prennent en charge de manière toujours croissante tous et chacun des aspects de la vie des individus.

D'un autre côté, le type de violence et la forme d'emploi de la violence dans la punition de la désobéissance présentent celle-ci comme désobéissance à l'ordre social lui-même, à la société dans son ensemble, c'est-à-dire à tous et à chacun des sujets qui sont censés la composer: désobéissance non pas au seigneur ou au souverain, mais à la loi. La mort et, surtout, les supplices laissent leur place à une suspension des droits juridiques du sujet. Cette suspension se réalise cependant sous la forme matérielle et concrète de suspension de droits du corps lui-même: la prison réunit justement cette double suspension de droits ou, plus exactement, garantit l'une et l'autre, l'une à travers l'autre. L'administration de la peine, effectuée par un juge investi d'un pouvoir qui se veut public (c'est-à-dire purement social et nullement politique), se réalise en dehors de toute cérémonie (bien que non pas de tout cérémoniel), et se présente comme une simple application de la loi générale (sociale) au cas concret, c'est-à-dire à l'individu, au sujet en question. C'est ainsi qu'il faut saisir la dominance de l'idéologie de type juridique - de la loi abstraite, formelle, universelle - dans des sociétés où l'idéologie n'occupe pas la place dominante, où les mécanismes économiques sont, en même temps, mécanismes d'appropriation du surproduit et de légitimation de cette appropriation, et où le pouvoir politique se présente comme pouvoir autonome, extérieur à l'économie, possédant sa propre légitimité: pouvoir d'un État "de droit de tout le peuple". Or, il est essentiel de voir - et c'est encore Foucault qui l'a vu en toute clarté même s'il n'en a pas tiré toutes les conséquences - que si, historiquement, la bourgeoisie a mis en place un cadre juridique explicite, codé, formellement égalitaire, et un État "de tout le peuple" (parlementaire et représentatif), le développement et la généralisation des dispositifs disciplinaires constituent l'autre versant, caché, obscur, mais nécessaire du mécanisme de domination sociale de classe.[10]

Corps dressé, domestiqué, exercé, adroit mais aussi corrigé, redressé, manipulé: "douceur-production-profit", au lieu de "prélèvement-violence"? C'est, en fait, *un autre type* de violence, et *un autre emploi* de la violence ce qu'on retrouve dans les sociétés "à profit". Pas de corps

supplicié par le seigneur, dont l'image inversée du corps sacré supplicié rappelait en permanence, sous forme métaphorique, le principe d'une forme de domination de classe. Mais corps moulé, effectif, majoré dans son utilité et satisfait dans sa docilité: n'est-ce pas l'image publicitaire, directement économique, parfaitement profane celle qui fait voir et rappelle en permanence dans l'espace social tout entier devenu seul espace, le principe d'une société "normalisée", "disciplinée", en même temps qu'orientée par le profit - c'est-à-dire, organisée par une forme particulière d'appropriation du surproduit?

4. Violence et luttes de classes

Les sanctions appliquées à la désobéissance sociale ne peuvent pas se limiter à la pure punition, encore moins être des sanctions arbitraires: la punition se doit d'être efficace, c'est-à-dire avoir un effet de prévention, en même temps que "compréhensible", c'est-à-dire non arbitraire, "significative" - dans l'économie symbolique générale.[11] Ainsi, comme nous l'avons vu, le supplice non seulement avait pour tâche d'éveiller un sentiment préventif de terreur, il s'agissait d'une terreur corporelle suscitée par l'application directe et publique de la peine sur un corps qui ne pouvait pas oublier ainsi sa dépendance réelle autant que symbolique vis-à-vis le seigneur ou le souverain. Ainsi la prison n'a pas seulement pour tâche de suspendre, pour un laps de temps déterminé, une bonne partie de la vie (sociale et individuelle) du condamné, et susciter par ce biais un effet préventif particulier de crainte ou de peur; il s'agit aussi d'une suppression ou d'une interruption remplie, occupée par le libre exercice du pouvoir disciplinaire et normalisateur. Ce qui ne devrait pas manquer de rappeler la nécessité de *se conformer* à ce qui se présente comme un pur système de règles sociales, voir "naturelles" (d'où, par ailleurs, la notion de plus en plus centrale de "déviance").

Qu'arrive-t-il lorsque les classes dominées ne sont plus sensibles à l'effet de prévention de la pénalité et cessent donc, en même temps, de "comprendre" le sens de la peine, c'est-à-dire d'accepter l'économie symbolique générale du système de domination sociale en place? Le problème n'est qu'effleuré par Foucault, et encore plutôt dans le contexte du passage d'un mode de domination à un autre: il arrive un moment, par exemple, où les supplices, le grand spectacle des peines, ne fait plus peur au peuple - risque d'être retourné par ceux-là mêmes auxquels il était adressé, allume en fait des foyers d'illégalisme, renforce la solidarité de toute une couche de la population avec les infracteurs au lieu de consolider le pouvoir du souverain - ce que les réformateurs du XVIIIe et du XIXe siècle n'oublieront pas lorsqu'ils demanderont la suppression de ces exécutions publiques.[12] Mais le problème est double, et complexe: d'une part, c'est celui de la réponse des classes dominantes à cette perte,

voire à ce retournement du pouvoir de la violence dans la punition de la désobéissance, bref le problème des formes de la violence au cours de la lutte des classes; d'autre part, c'est le problème des nouvelles formes de violence correspondant à des nouvelles formes de domination lors de l'émergence d'un nouveau mode classiste de production. Les pages consacrées par Foucault à la perte du pouvoir de réponse des supplices placent le problème dans un contexte historique ambigu: processus de la lutte des classes au sein des sociétés féodales, ou mise en place d'une nouvelle forme de domination sociale? (Comme nous l'avons vu, la phase ou période de transition semble bien appeler une forme spécifique de violence.)

Si nous distinguons les deux problèmes, c'est parce que l'analyse des avatars de la lutte des classes au sein d'une société n'exige pas, bien au contraire, de croire que la forme de la violence, et la manière de l'utiliser, resteront identiques: les classes dominantes, confrontées à l'effritement du pouvoir de prévention et à la perte de signification de la pénalité, en somme, à l'évanouissement de son efficacité, se trouvent parfois à imposer des nouvelles formes de pénalité. Dans ce cas, la forme de la domination sociale subit un changement et la question de la légitimité du pouvoir se pose alors en toute acuité. Et nous rejoignons alors notre hypothèse initiale: le corps retrouvé supplicié renvoie aujourd'hui à une nouvelle stratégie de pouvoir qui se met en place dans la "périphérie" du système mondial capitaliste.

5. Les stratégies de pouvoir dans les sociétés "modernes"

Sous quelles conditions générales ou de structure l'appropriation du surproduit sous la forme de profit est-elle devenue possible? Nous pouvons dire schématiquement que les conditions suivantes semblent avoir été suffisantes: la dépossession des producteurs directs des moyens de production et leur appropriation et contrôle par la classe dominante; la constitution d'une masse de force de travail libre mais disciplinée; la mystification des rapports sociaux de classe en rapports purement économiques à travers la généralisation de la catégorie marchande; l'autonomisation de l'État et du juridique, c'est-à-dire leur séparation formelle vis-à-vis surtout l'économique; enfin, la mise en place d'un système de contrôle et de punition comprenant, à titre essentiel, l'institution policière. Il s'agit, nous pouvons le voir maintenant en toute clarté, d'un ensemble articulé de conditions économiques, politiques, juridiques et idéologiques qui trouvent leur matérialisation dans des institutions, des normes, des représentations et des pratiques. Nous pouvons alors définir l'obéissance sociale comme l'effet de l'ensemble de ces conditions, et le corps dressé, normalisé, domestiqué comme la

condensation ponctuelle, immédiatement réelle et concrète, de cet effet d'obéissance dans les sociétés "à profit".

Est-il possible de déterminer, parmi ces conditions d'ordre divers, celles qui joueraient un rôle décisif dans la reproduction du système de domination? À condition de tenir compte de la présence nécessaire des autres conditions, celles qui se trouvent en position dominante et qui, par là même, fondent le type de légitimation du pouvoir de classe semblent bien être des conditions en ce sens décisives. Ainsi, par exemple, il est décisif dans une société "à prélèvement" que l'organisation sociale qui apparaît immédiatement à la conscience comme système de domination se présente aussi immédiatement comme organisation sociale hiérarchique incontestable - le fondement sacré apporté par les idéologies religieuses étant alors une composante essentielle du système de domination. D'où que la lutte de la bourgeoisie pour imposer sa domination ait pris la forme d'une lutte essentiellement idéologique pour la désacralisation du monde. Ainsi, par exemple, il est décisif dans une société "à profit" que l'organisation sociale se présente immédiatement à la conscience comme système formellement égalitaire - les inégalités constatées, spécialement économiques, devant alors être attribuables à des différences individuelles d'aptitude ou de chance. D'où que dans ces sociétés la formation d'une conscience de classe, c'est-à-dire la lutte contre le mythe d'une société égalitaire devienne un moment décisif de la lutte idéologique. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, ce qui est en jeu dans la lutte est la *légitimité* du pouvoir des classes dominantes, car le pouvoir d'une classe dominante n'est légitime que dans la mesure où ses fondements idéologiques sont acceptés, autrement dit, lorsque l'idéologie de la classe dominante est socialement dominante. Ce qui veut dire qu'aucun pouvoir social n'est légitime en soi ni, non plus, par rapport à un principe absolu quelconque - Dieu ou le droit "naturel", par exemple - mais toujours par rapport à lui-même, c'est-à-dire à sa capacité de s'imposer en tant que pouvoir légitime en produisant sa propre justification et l'acceptation sociale de cette justification.

La question de la légitimité du pouvoir de classe est importante parce qu'elle commande l'organisation et l'exercice de la violence. D'abord, les rapports entre violence destinée à assurer la reproduction des conditions qui permettent l'appropriation systématique et permanente du surproduit social, et violence exercée afin de punir tout acte constituant une attaque au système de domination sociale en place - ces rapports dépendent du degré de légitimité du pouvoir des classes dominantes: plus cette légitimité est contestée, plus le déséquilibre entre ces deux systèmes de violence penche en faveur du deuxième. Ensuite, la profondeur de la "crise de légitimation" du pouvoir détermine concrètement les modalités de ce deuxième système de violence, c'est-à-dire les

modalités de la punition. Il est donc tout-à-fait décisif d'examiner ces changements dans les modalités de punition car elles constituent un indice pertinent, voire l'indice le plus pertinent, dans la détermination du degré de crise de légitimation du pouvoir de la classe dominante et, par là, de l'État et du degré de la lutte des classes. Dans cette perspective analytique, nous considérons le corps retrouvé supplicié comme la condensation d'une nouvelle stratégie de pouvoir constituant une modalité nouvelle de punition de la désobéissance, indice d'une crise profonde de légitimation du pouvoir des classes dominantes, expression d'un degré avancé de la lutte des classes.

S'agit-il d'une nouvelle stratégie de pouvoir qui se met en place dans l'ensemble des formations sociales dominées par le mode de production capitaliste, c'est-à-dire dans toutes les sociétés "à profit"? L'examen le plus rapide montre déjà qu'il s'agit de modalités de punition que l'on retrouve seulement dans ce que l'on appelle la "périphérie" du système mondial capitaliste. En ce sens, il faut signaler - et dénoncer - l'"européocentrisme" de ces analyses sociologiques - tout-à-fait remarquables à bien d'autres égards - qui font, par exemple, de la "persuasion-manipulation" *la* (seule) stratégie de pouvoir social des modernes sociétés "à profit" - et du passage de l'"autorité-coercition" à la "persuasion-manipulation" le modèle universel du passage d'une stratégie de pouvoir à une autre.[13] Car non seulement ces analyses ne tiennent compte que des seules formes de pouvoir dans le "centre" du système mondial capitaliste, elles s'interdisent ainsi de réfléchir aux stratégies de pouvoir qui, mises en place dans la "périphérie", rendent justement possibles ou contribuent à rendre possibles celles qu'on trouve dans le "centre" - les sociétés "à profit" constituant, pour la première fois dans l'histoire, un système mondial (aux articulations déjà bien connues). D'autre part, par ailleurs, c'est seulement une telle réflexion qui peut permettre d'écarter l'hypothèse d'une "diffusion" des techniques de pouvoir du "centre" à la "périphérie" - suivant la vieille idée de la généralisation du modèle des sociétés du "centre". Bien au contraire, dirons-nous, si un passage a été rendu possible d'une stratégi d'"autorité-coercition" à une stratégie de "persuasion-manipulation," et si une "diffusion" de techniques de pouvoir du type "persuasion-manipulation" a eu lieu et continue d'avoir lieu dans les sociétés du "centre" du système mondial capitaliste, c'est dans la mesure où la stratégie du corps retrouvé supplicié apparaît comme forme de domination ou d'assujettissement dans la "périphérie" du système.

En effet, indépendamment des différences que l'on pourrait repérer dans la caractérisation d'une stratégie de "persuasion-manipulation", la possibilité d'une *gratification* d'abord *économique*[14] apparaît toujours comme une condition essentielle dans la mécanique de production du

consentement à l'oeuvre dans une telle stratégie: la légitimité de l'appropriation du surproduit par les classes dominantes repose alors d'une manière cruciale sur la capacité économique d'une redistribution de biens qui, à la lumière des attentes des classes dominée — et, surtout, de leur manipulation (production et contrôle des attentes par la publicité notamment) — puisse renforcer les effets de consentement. Ce rôle central de la gratification dans une nouvelle stratégie de pouvoir des sociétés "à profit" "modernes" (ou du "capitalisme avancé" dont H. Marcuse a été, probablement, le plus pénétrant analyste) ne peut cependant être satisfait que si des conditions économiques précises sont assurées.

Or, dans la réalisation, le maintien et le développement de ces conditions, le processus d'appropriation du surproduit *à l'échelle mondiale* est (et devient de plus en plus) décisif. Ce qu'on a appelé l'"échange inégal," l'"accumulation à l'échelle mondiale" ou, tout simplement, le phénomène de l'impérialisme, n'est que ce processus d'appropriation du surproduit au niveau du système dans son ensemble. La conséquence est bien connue: le transfert de valeurs produites de la "périphérie" vers le "centre" du système ne fait, d'un côté, que développer le "développement" du "centre", de l'autre côté, développer le "sous-développement" de la "périphérie". Les conditions sont ainsi créées et reproduites d'une stratégie de "persuation-manipulation" fondée sur la gratification dans les sociétés "à profit" du "centre" c'est-à-dire dans les métropoles impérialistes - au prix cependant d'une stratégie de pouvoir dans la "périphérie", qui doit dorénavant s'ajuster à une exacerbation systématique de la lutte de classes, qui suit comme à son ombre ce processus de développement du "sous-développement": c'est la stratégie du corps retrouvé supplicié.

Quels sont les éléments de cette stratégie, c'est-à-dire comment se laisse-t-elle caractériser? Il faut partir d'un constat décisif: si la stratégie du corps retrouvé supplicié exprime un degré avancé de la lutte de classes, s'il est l'indice d'une crise profonde de légitimité du pouvoir des classes dominantes, ceci veut dire que les mécanismes producteurs du consentement ont cessé d'avoir leur pleine efficacité, donc que dans ces sociétés "à profit" *l'économique a cessé de jouer le rôle dominant* -en tant que mécanisme essentiel de légitimation. En d'autres termes, c'est parce que les rapports sociaux de classes ne sont plus, pour l'essentiel, mystifiés en rapports purement économiques et que la domination de classe apparaît maintenant à la conscience de vastes secteurs du peuple; c'est parce que le profit n'apparaît plus comme un résultat purement économique, comme une propriété du capital, mais comme appropriation du surproduit créé par le travail, que le système de domination cesse

de s'appuyer sur les mécanismes purement économiques pour faire appel à des mécanismes politiques.

Il est important de remarquer que selon l'analyse de J. Habermas, ce déplacement de l'économique au politique caractérise les sociétés du capitalisme "avancé" – ou du "centre"–. Ce phénomène est expliqué par Habermas ainsi:

> *La régulation permanente du processus économique grâce à l'intervention de l'État* est issue d'une réaction de défense contre un certain nombre de dysfonctionnements, dangereux pour le système, qui menaçaient le capitalisme abandonné à lui-même (...). La forme privée de la mise en valeur du capital ne pouvait plus être maintenue qu'en ayant recours aux correctifs étatiques d'une *politique* économique. (...) Le cadre institutionnel de la société s'est trouvé ainsi être repolitisé. (...) Mais cela signifie en même temps que le rapport a changé entre le système économique et le système de domination politique (*Herrschaftssystem*); la politique n'est plus *seulement* un phénomène de superstructure.[15]

Si notre analyse est acceptée, la "repolitisation du cadre institutionnel" serait observable tant dans les sociétés "centrales" que dans les sociétés "périphériques", mais ce phénomène s'inscrirait dans *deux* lignes d'évolution différentes (bien que dépendantes l'une de l'autre), et répondrait à *deux* situations différentes (bien que complémentaires): d'une part, dans les sociétés "centrales," à des besoins nouveaux engendrés par des conditions nouvelles dans la *mise en valeur* du capital, autrement dit par des exigences liées à la reproduction (élargie) du système économique lui-même dans des conditions historiques nouvelles. Dans les sociétés "périphériques," par contre, cette repolitisation répondrait à des besoins nouveaux engendrés par la *mise en question* du capital, par des exigences liées au maintien ou à la sauvegarde du pouvoir même d'appropriation du surproduit social. Ce serait pourquoi, dans les cas des sociétés "centrales," cette repolitisation du cadre institutionnel pose un problème de légitimation mais dont la solution est, d'une certaine manière, disponible: *la dépolitisation de la masse de la population* par une combinaison d'idéologie de la performance, de système de gratifications et de technocratisation. Dans les sociétés "périphériques," par contre, c'est la *politisation de la masse de la population* qui amène à la repolitisation du cadre institutionnel, provoquant ainsi une crise de légitimation *d'une autre nature* et d'une autre portée que le système de domination est impuissant à résoudre.[16] Le corps retrouvé supplicié peut alors être décrypté en tant que condensation et matérialisation de cette impuissance. En ce sens, notre

condensation et matérialisation de cette impuissance. En ce sens, notre analyse s'oppose d'une manière directe et complète à celles qui, couplant un culturalisme de mauvais aloi - pourrait-il en être autrement? - et un économisme aux relents marxistes, s'interdisent de tirer toutes les conséquences du phénomène de l'accumulation mondiale au niveau décisif de la lutte des classes et perçoivent le problème de la légitimation dans les pays "sous-développées" en termes de "combinaison" entre la légitimation "capitaliste" et la légitimation "traditionnelle" - les structures autoritaires du pouvoir puisant leurs sources dans "l'univers social des relations rurales hérité de la période coloniale".[17]

6. Le corps retrouvé supplicié comme stratégie de pouvoir

Trois éléments définissent, dans leur intersection, cette stratégie: le corps en tant que *cible* de la violence; le supplice ou la torture que l'on fait subir au corps comme *modalité* de la violence; et cette médiateté qu'instaure le corps retrouvé supplicé entre la reconnaissance de la punition (les traces du supplice) et le rituel du supplice ou de la torture, et qui renvoie à un certain type d'*exercice* de la violence. Mais c'est cette médiateté ou, plus exactement, ce qu'elle instaure, qui agit comme "opérateur sémantique", comme organisateur du sens de ce dispositif de châtiment de la désobéissance. Car, en effet, tout se joue dans la forme de l'exercice de la violence. Voici le scénario devenu classique:

1er acte. L'opposant est "publiquement" enlevé, c'est-à-dire qu'il est soustrait (au corps social) et qu'on laisse savoir sans équivoque qu'il est soustrait, bien que les auteurs de l'enlèvement demeurent anonymes, autrement dit non formellement identifiables.

> [Ana María Martínez, qui militait dans le Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs (P.S.T.) - une organisation de la gauche radicale opposée au gouvernement militaire -, avait été enlevée de son domicile. Quelques voisins ont pu observer comment un homme et une femme habillés en civil et portant des armes l'introduisaient par la force dans une automobile pendant qu'elle appelait au secours.][18]

2e acte. Un certain temps est alloué aux proches de la victime et aux diverses organisations sociales saisies du cas pour la recherche, dès le départ infructueuse, du disparu. Pendant ce temps, le pouvoir se présente en même temps comme pouvoir qui ne connaît pas et comme pouvoir qui connaît.

> [La police avait été immédiatement alertée et des organisations consacrées à la défense des droits humains dans le pays avaient été saisies. Les démarches entreprises n'ont cependant pas pu réussir car tous les organismes de sécurité consultés ont affirmé ne pas

> avoir connaissance du cas en question. Le colonel Menéndez a manifesté n'avoir aucune information à fournir.]

3e acte. Le corps mutilé de l'opposant est découvert quelque part dans un parage éloigné. Variante: des corps de sequestrés ne réapparaissent plus (cas des "disparus": la médiateté entre le rituel du supplice et de la mort, et sa reconnaissance est poussée à l'extrême et devient permanente).

> [Le corps de la jeune femme trouvé à Dique Lujan, un endroit éloigné situé dans la localité de Tigre, présentait deux blessures de balle et se trouvait dans un état de décomposition qui le rendait méconnaissable. Le cadavre, auquel les deux mains ont été coupées pour identification, a été inhumé "pour des raisons d'hygiène" sans que la famille puisse faire procéder à une autopsie.]

Quelle est la "logique" de ce scénario? Tout comme dans la stratégie du corps supplicié correspondant à une société "à prélèvement," il s'agit d'une penalité du corporel dans laquelle la torture comme art de sensations insupportables s'applique sur l'opposant afin de provoquer un effet de terreur sur l'ensemble du corps social. Les marques de cette vengeance dans le corps retrouvé renvoient cependant à un cérémoniel caché, non public, non officiel, dont la représentation imaginaire est pourtant susceptible d'être construite à partir justement de ces marques sur le corps retrouvé. Le rituel du supplice et de la torture réapparaît mais il ne renvoie plus à un pouvoir visible, éclatant même, à son tour matérialisé dans le corps du souverain mais à un pouvoir d'autant plus redoutable qu'il est invisible, sombre, dont les tortionnaires ne sont que des instruments. Pouvoir invisible dont on sait - parce qu'on le laisse clairement soupçonner - qu'il fait partie, qu'il est une modalité du pouvoir visible sans que, cependant, il soit possible de l'identifier, le repérer, le poursuivre.[19]

> [Lorsque les avocats de la jeune femme ont pris connaissance de la découverte d'un cadavre dans la localité de Tigre, ils se sont présentés aux bureaux de la police afin de faciliter son identification mais des données contradictoires leur ont été communiquées.]

Comment se fait-il alors que réapparaisse dans des sociétés "à profit" le corps supplicié, une pénalité du corporel, et pourquoi renvoie-t-elle à un pouvoir invisible et pourtant évident, à un pouvoir dont on laisse seulement entrevoir l'ombre gigantesque et monstrueuse - plutôt qu'à l'image éclatante du souverain dans le cérémoniel public de sa force?

Les sociétés "modernes" ou du capitalisme "avancé" semblent montrer cette double évolution divergente à partir du corps discipliné, dressé correspondant en quelque sorte au capitalisme concurrentiel, libre-échangiste ou auto-régulé: dans les sociétés du "centre," dans les métropoles impérialistes, la coercition immédiate et permanente sur le corps destinée, par l'exercice imposé par des appareils administratifs, à le soumettre ou à l'assujettir afin de le rendre utile en même temps que docile, laisse progressivement la place à une manipulation de *l'ensemble de la personnalité* par la voie privilégiée de mécanismes de persuasion massive qui ne sont pas gérés par des appareils administratifs mais, recouvrant tout l'espace social, apparaissent, dans leur dispersion même, sans ancrage, mobiles, insaisissables: ce sont les mécanismes publicitaires et, plus généralement, d'"information". Or, dans un certain sens pourtant crucial, la persuasion-manipulation n'est qu'une forme supérieure, plus élaborée et raffinée, plus efficace par conséquent, par rapport à la primitive ou première stratégie de l'autorité-coercition. C'est pourquoi la personnalité façonnée n'implique pas une rupture par rapport au corps dressé, bien au contraire elle représente un progrès, donc une avance de la domination et de l'assujettissement, et cela aussi dans la mesure même où toute forme de violence corporelle semble exclue:

> La manipulation (au sein de la "Publicité", R.M.) consiste avant tout en un travail psychosociologique qui permet de mettre au point le type d'offre dont les cibles sont certaines tendances inconscientes, et qui provoqueront des réactions prévisibles, sans par ailleurs obliger à quoi que ce soit ceux qui s'assurent ainsi d'un assentiment plébiscitaire...[20]

Et Baudrillard va plus loin encore lorsqu'il voit dans la publicité le substitut même des vieilles idéologies:

> Nous voyons par là l'immense rôle *politique* que jouent la diffusion des produits et les techniques publicitaires: elles assurent proprement la relève des idéologies antérieures, morales et politiques. Mieux encore; alors que l'intégration morale et politique n'allait jamais sans mal (il y fallait le secours de la répression ouverte), les nouvelles techniques font l'économie de la répression: le consommateur intériorise dans le mouvement même de la consommation l'instance sociale et ses normes.[21]

La normalisation par identification complète et l'obéissance comme assentiment plébiscitaire: voilà le modèle déjà latent dans la stratégie du corps dressé. Dans les sociétés "périphériques" cette stratégie du corps dressé semble, par contre, laisser la place à ce qui apparaît comme sa

négation: le corps retrouvé supplicié ou la renaissance d'une pénalité du corporel *sanctionne l'échec ou l'impossibilité d'une normalisation par disciplinarisation*, voire, et davantage, d'une manipulation persuasive fondée sur des gratifications. Le corps retrouvé supplicié, torturé, doit rappeler ainsi ce qu'il advient à l'indiscipline, à la désobéissance sociale; il doit rappeler qu'il n'y a, en fin de comptes, que le corps qui compte: ultime cible de la violence du pouvoir.

Indiscipline et désobéissance par rapport à qui, ou à quoi? Non pas par rapport à un souverain ou seigneur dont l'autorité et le pouvoir seraient ou se trouveraient désacralisés. Mais non plus par rapport à un "pouvoir public", à un État ou à un ordre juridique qui ne pourrait plus se présenter comme celui de tout le peuple et qui apparaîtrait maintenant à la conscience comme un pouvoir de classe, comme un État de classe. Mais par rapport à ce qui reste: le Pouvoir nu, dépourvu de toute légitimité mais en même temps pourvu de toute la capacité de violence, qui ne peut pas coïncider avec un pouvoir d'État quelconque, encore moins avec un ordre juridique quelconque, et qui se veut donc autre chose, parallèle et innommable: ultime démonstration du pouvoir de classe, ressource extrême qui commence à accompagner comme à son ombre le pouvoir d'État d'une classe qui n'a plus légitimité.

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Notes

1. C'est Étienne Balibar qui a développé cette thèse. Cf. E. Balibar, (1965): spéc. p. 220. Nous l'avons examiné en détail *in* R. Miguelez, "Détermination et dominance," *La Revue Canadienne de Sociologie et d'Anthropologie*, 19: 4 (Novembre, 1982).

2. Jürgen Habermas, *La Technique et la science comme "idéologie"* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 30-1.

3. Cf. Karl Marx, *Le Capital: tome 1* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1950 et 1976), p. 93.

4. Nicos Poulantzas, *L'État, le pouvoir, le socialisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1978), p. 97.

5. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 133-34.

6. Foucault, chap. 2: "L'éclat des supplices."

7. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'une pénalité du corporel incluant à titre décisif la torture se retrouve dans *toutes* les sociétés dominées par un mode de production impliquant un assujettissement *personnel* du producteur direct. Il n'est pas dès lors étonnant qu'on la rencontre dans *toute* l'histoire occidentale depuis les sociétés esclavagistes grecque et romaine jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle. Il n'est pas dans notre propos d'examiner ici ses caractéristiques historiques différentielles.

8. Marx, Livre 1er, p. 534.

9. Foucault signale parmi les aspects de la conjoncture historique dans laquelle se placent les "disciplines" la poussée démographique du XVIIIe siècle: face à

l'augmentation de la population flottante, dit-il, un des premiers objets de discipline, c'est de fixer; elle est aussi un procédé d'antinomadisme (Foucault, 220). En ce sens, il semble ne pas situer les disciplines dans le processus historique déclenché par l'accumulation primitive. Parfois, cependant, Foucault situe les disciplines dans le double processus d'accumulation du capital et "d'accumulation des hommes" et voit leur liaison d'accumulation nécessaire:

> "(...) il n'aurait pas été possible de résoudre le problème de l'accumulation des hommes sans la croissance d'un appareil de production capable à la fois de les entretenir et de les utiliser; inversement les techniques qui rendent utile la multiplicité cumulative des hommes accélèrent le mouvement d'accumulation du capital" (Foucault, p. 222).

Mais même alors, on le voit, les disciplines ne sont pas reliées à ce qui est le noyau de l'accumulation du capital et de la croissance de l'appareil de production: non pas l'entretien et l'utilisation d'une population mais l'entretien et la majoration du profit c'est-à-dire d'une appropriation historiquement spécifique du surtravail social.

10. Cf. Foucault, pp. 223, 224, 225.

11. Lors de son analyse de la violence en Amérique Latine et, plus particulièrement, du massacre d'Indiens au Guatémala, Yvon Le Bot signale que, à l'encontre d'une approche "réductrice" de la violence exclusivement politico-économique, il faut par exemple considérer ces massacres comme "une imbrication des stratégies politico-économiques avec des motivations qui s'enracinent dans l'imaginaire social et ses expressions symboliques" (Le Bot, Yvon, 1983: 65). Mais cette référence à l'imaginaire - devenue clause de style dans des analyses qui prétendent avoir dépassé le "réductionnisme" marxiste - n'est que référence à une symbolique qui, comme l'admet Le Bot lui-même, "plonge ses racines dans la violence de la conquête" (*ibid*), autrement dit, qui renvoie... à une stratégie politico-économique.

12. Foucault, pp. 61-72.

13. Cf. Robert Castel, *Le psychanalysme*: L'ordre psychanalytique et le pouvoir (Paris: Maspéro, 1976), spéc. chap. 8.

14. D'abord mais non seulement économique. Castel a examiné le rôle idéologique de la psychanalyse en tant qu'elle se donne aussi, en elle-même, comme l'opérateur de l'accomplissement du désir, de la réconciliation concrète de la subjectivité (Cf. Castel, spéc. 370 sq.).

15. Habermas, pp. 37-8. (Souligné par l'auteur).

16. Torres Rivas montre à propos du cas spécifique du Guatémala comment le recours à la force apparaît justement comme la compensation d'une faiblesse, mais d'une faiblesse de l'appareil de domination plus que de l'appareil de production, comme la conséquence d'une crise permenente au sein du bloc dominant. Cf. Edelberto Torres Rivas. "Vie et mort au Guatémala: Réflexions sur la crise et la violence politique", *Amérique Latine*, 2 (avril-juin, 1980).

17. Voir, par exemple, l'analyse proposée par G. Mathias et P. Salama, *L'état surdéveloppé* (Paris: Maspéro, 1983).

18. Les informations concernant cet enlèvement sont tirées du journal *Clarín*, Buenos Aires, 15/21, février 1982.

19. Dans l'oeuvre dramatique d'Antonio Buero Vallejo, *La doble historia del doctor Valmy. Mito*, (1976), cet aspect de la stratégie est souligné par les protagonistes dans les termes suivants (c'est nous qui traduisons, R.M.):

> *Daniel*: Pourquoi ne pas inclure la torture dans les codes?

Paulus: Les gens sont incurablement naïfs et ne le comprendraient pas.

Daniel: Jadis les gens l'avaient compris et pourtant ils étaient plus naïfs que maintenant. Aujourd'hui il faut cacher la torture comme à un fils difforme. (pp. 117-18).

20. Habermas, p. 226.

21. Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système des objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968) p. 246.

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NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY AS IDEOLOGY

Ian Angus and Peter G. Cook

The present situation is characterized above all by the confrontation of two societies based on the domination of nature through scientific-technical apparatus. Despite important internal differences, authoritarian Communism and democratic Capitalism face each other divided by their common origin in Western humanism, which claimed to provide populations with freedom from scarcity and security (freedom from fear) in order to allow autonomous judgment at individual and/or social levels.[1] Due to the present undermining of this goal by developments which reach a representative apex in nuclear weapons, it is necessary to rethink the institutional bases of contemporary civilization.

In response to Stalinism, Fascism and mass society, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School developed a critique of civilization founded on the domination of nature. In questioning modern society as a whole it rejected the dichotomy of nature and freedom (technology and communication) upon which the domination of nature is based. The fate of this attempt, and the retreat from its most profound and radical insights, is indicative of the failure of thought in our time. In opposition to this retreat, we suggest that nuclear weapons demonstrate the inseparability of communicative and technological dimensions of human action. In the present essay, we explore the interdependence of the ideological function of the mass media and the ideological context of nuclear technology in order to clear the ground for a regeneration and extension of Critical Theory through connecting it to this significant practical movement of

our time. Concern with civilization has taken on a practical dimension. Nuclear disarmament is the practical index for thinking the prerequisites of civilization anew.

Critical Theory began by combining commitment to theoretical critique with solidarity in practical struggles. Only the mutual clarification of intellectual partisanship and the contemporary issues raised by praxis could unify practical reason with an historical agent. In its Marxist beginnings the proletariat was designated as the universal class which could end human exploitation and bring about a society of freedom and justice. Since the outcome of this project could not be known in advance, Critical Theory is an existential judgment with a historical dimension rather than a prediction, a logical or empirical truth.[2] However, the internal development of Critical Theory made the link to an emancipatory agent increasingly tenuous. Reproduction of psychic domination within the proletariat as well as the pervasion of the entire society by scientific-technical ideology increasingly isolated the intellectual task from the possibility of its practical realization. Rather than abandon social critique, or accept its bifurcation into bureaucratized opposition and a mythology of proletarian uprising, Critical Theory accepted the wager of isolation in order to protect the project of emancipation from compromise with the administered world. Such an encircled camp must of course be centrally concerned with its own possibility and justification. While specific critiques were forthcoming, they tended to turn on the pervasion of society and thought by instrumental rationality such that the ethical and political categories upon which social critique rests are withdrawn from the public discourse of the populace. Confined to the ideology of system-maintainence, public and intellectual discourse becomes incapable of formulating the categories of a qualitatively different society. The project of critique was displaced to a more fundamental task: Uncovering the prerequisites of civilization itself and their entanglement with systematic structures of domination. Thus scientific-technical society brings the civilizing project to a radical crisis such that its own possibility is questionable. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1946) by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno traces the twin figures of the origin of scientific-technical society in the domination of nature undertaken by the Renaissance and the project of enlightenment in Western civilization which originated with the Greeks. This theme was renewed by Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964). Humanism, the proudest product of the West, seems to have been undermined by its own success. Self-destruction requires remembrance for recovery. The critical theory of society became a critique of civilization.

The most recent work in Critical Theory has tended to retreat from the radical questions posed by *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and to accept the

fundamental categories of the modern project in dominating nature. Jurgen Habermas has pointed out that Marcuse's account of technological rationality implies that a free and just society would require a qualitatively new science and technology. If science and technology secrete ideological closure, enlightenment requires their redirection and reconceptualization. Against this Habermas argues that it is not science and technology *themselves*, but their ideological utilization in communicative interaction, that constitutes a barrier to emancipation.

> The idea of a New Science will not stand up to logical scrutiny any more than that of a New Technology, if indeed science is to retain the meaning of modern science oriented to possible technical control.
>
> . . .
>
> The alternative to existing technology, the project of nature as opposing partner instead of object, refers to an alternative structure of action: to symbolic interaction in distinction to purposive-rational action.[3]

If one retreats from the critique of civilization and accepts the characteristic features of the modern project, the ideological function of science and technology is divorced from its inherent conceptual structure and displaced to the communicative framework in which it is a distorting factor. The critical task is then to show how this ideological function can be limited externally by resuscitating and justifying communicative interaction. The critique of civilization, on the other hand, situated science within the context of the origin and development of Western reason, and saw its ideological function as inherent to the conceptual framework that it projects. This ideological function can change historically due to external factors but the fact that it is ideological and the internal structure of the ideology remain constant. In other words, objectivism can function differently in different historical periods, but it remains a deeply rooted and yet partial account of reason. However, it is difficult to see how such a wide-ranging critique can be brought to practical efficacy. Thus, we are not urging an uncritical return to the 'dialectic of enlightenment' as a sufficient critique of nuclear weapons, but rather that this is a better starting-point for a contemporary critical theory. The wager of Critical Theory has now been played both ways: as a reflection on the unity of emancipation and domination in Western reason and as a dualism which seeks to restrict domination to nature outside the interhuman sphere.

The perspective of the distortion of communicative interaction motivates important contributions to the critique of Cold War ideology

through its focus on the interaction of the military-industrial state and the media in the public sphere. In modern society, the systems of communication media which facilitate replication, storage and processing of information constitute a powerful means for the control and utilization of the socially available pool of meanings. For the question of nuclear weapons, which is remote from the experience of most individuals, the mass media are the primary source of information. In the West, public opinion is formed *through* the media, in interaction with state and legitimate institutions, on the one hand, and oppositional groups on the other. In the East, state and media are tightly compacted, forcing oppositional groups to find other means of expression and severely limiting their development. A critical theory of contemporary society which attempts to discover and extend political alternatives must criticize the influence of the dominant media in forming opinion and also contribute to the formation of an alternative public sphere in which oppositional analyses and actions are brought into public debate.[4]

To follow Stuart Hall's analysis: the ideological work of the media operates not through the imposition of a homogeneous world-view, but through setting the parameters of a legitimate diversity of opinion.[5] The classifications, distinctions, and weightings of opinion which the media make are presented as being reasonable, natural, and common-sensical. Through application of the professional values of balance, objectivity and so forth, the truth is always found to lie 'somewhere in the middle' of a structured plurality of opinion. Hall suggests that the underlying ideological value, or 'signified', of political coverage is 'parliamentarism', whereby issues are defined by, and presented through, the mainstream political parties. A similar value operates in the nuclear weapons debate. It is found not only in parliamentarism, but in the two-valued logic which assigns positions as either supporting the 'free world' or 'Soviet communism'. The two opposed superpowers define the limits of political alternatives. Cold-Warism is the global correlate of parliamentarism at the national level, but the logic of operation of each of these values is quite distinct. The Cold War opposition is an oppositional force-field in a strict sense: no in-between positions are allowed. The ideological work of the media, the success of which is not automatically assured, is to ensure that positions gravitate to one or other polarity. Balance is achieved only in the binary sense: one *or* the other. Unlike parliamentarism, which signifies the intent of underlying consensus, Cold-War ideology signifies underlying antagonism on the international level. The legitimacy of opinion is bifurcated according to the origin of the message. It is between these two well-entrenched polarities that the disarmament movement is attempting to insert itself, yet it perpetually faces dissolution by them.

Hall correctly stresses that the media are a site of struggle between contending positions and interests, and that this struggle is by no means neutrally reflected. This is becoming increasingly apparent in the field of arms control and foreign policy, as dissent from official alliance policies extends into ruling elites within and among nations (including some Eastern European nations). But as concern about nuclear weapons becomes 'respectable', attention is being deflected from the diversity of concerns and structures of the grass roots disarmament movement. In the course of ideological selection, the political analyses of anti-nuclear groups are reduced to 'single issue' statements and isolated observations attributed to a homogeneous entity. These 'inputs' may enter the framework of debate, but have lost the context whereby they are attempting to formulate a critique of the nuclear age *tout court*. The disarmament movement's strivings for a 'third way' in geopolitical relations is assimilated to a Cold War binarism. It is questions of non-alignment and neutralism which pose the greatest threat to the existing order of things, particularly in countries such as Canada, or in Europe, and it is here where much of the ideological work of the media takes place. Thus the disarmament movement is criticized for 'unilateralism' or for unintentionally operating in Soviet interests, and breaking down the cohesiveness and bargaining position of the NATO alliance. The external threat is used to shore up the illusion of an internal consensus. This 'for us or against us' option defined by Cold War-ism is the major contemporary ideological use of binary logic.[6]

A theory of the distortion of communicative interaction can explain the ideological function of mass media as sketched above. But in order to criticize the *weapons themselves*, and the conjunction of socio-historical forces crystallized in them, it is necessary to recognize that technological accomplishments are simultaneously formations of communicative possibilities. Nuclear technology has an inherent ideological function which, though it is extended and exacerbated in the mass media, is not confined to that realm. By their very existence nuclear weapons tend to close political options – even without being launched. Destruction of civilization as a real possibility testifies to the inseparability of message from receiver: the Other as enemy with the technique of destruction.[7] Word as club, club as word. It is not a question of opposing communication to technology but of the exterminist configuration which informs the *means* of social communication. Now that there is no outside to human action, the social dimension of technology can be seen in its materialized form. Nuclear weapons require a rethinking of the fear of otherness which leads technology to destruction. The romance of reason and power is at the root of our civilization.

NUCLEAR IDEOLOGY

Nuclear weapons are both information processing and instrumental systems which integrate communicative and technological dimensions in a spiralling race to self-destruction. The fear of otherness motivates the search for technical perfection of weaponry; the desire to perfect technique motivates the portrayal of the other as an "evil empire." In the end, the perfection of technique in weaponry short-circuits the desire for security: Every technical innovation by one side to 'improve' deterrence leads to a response by the other, increasing the destructive threat and destabilizing existing relationships. The United States historically leads in this technological battle, through which it communicates its 'resolve'. Under the guise of defusing the nuclear threat by 'limiting' it through technically precise means of 'escalation dominance', the chances of escalating conflict are increasing. As the technology of empire proceeds apace, reaction time is minimized. Intercontinental nuclear technology establishes instant communication – unifying trigger, launch and target in the global village divided by Cold War. The Star Wars research program is an implicit recognition of the failure of deterrence as a strategy and a legitimating ideology – a failure which the proposed 'solution' threatens to make absolute. Star Wars is a vivid example of nuclear technology as ideology, of a technical solution obscuring a practical issue, *à la* Habermas. Yet there is also a further level at which nuclear systems such as Star Wars operate ideologically to obsure the relations of global domination which nuclear weapons both depend upon and enforce. Nuclear technology itself has practical origins; it cannot be simply constrained communicatively 'always after' the technology is posited as a fact. Star Wars represents the meeting point of these two conceptions of technology as ideology: the false promise of technological liberation from the threat of annihilation posed by imperial nuclear systems. Whether the Star Wars proposal is technically feasible is not at issue here; the more technically feasible it is, the more will the opposing empires be consolidated as antagonistic high technology systems. Nuclear technology appears as an ideological hall of mirrors: effective escape hidden by redundant false alternatives.

In order to investigate the ideological function of nuclear weapons themselves it is necessary to recognize that nuclear weapons are *already* 'in use'; their deployment accelerates geopolitical division and brings to the surface the extent to which we are, and wish to remain, within the American orbit. The theory of deterrence notwithstanding, there are no 'peaceful' uses for nuclear weapons. The weapons can only have one purpose: coercion, destruction and, ultimately, self-destruction. The 'use' of nuclear weapons is the consolidation of world-empires and the maintainence of a state of fear in the internal population which closes political alternatives under the rationale of 'security'. Consider the case of

someone with a gun who walks into a store and demands money. He may get away. The gun may never be fired, but it has been used. The threat of firing is enough to induce people to act in ways in which they would normally not act. A gun is an instrument of coercion even if it is not fired. It is the same with nuclear weapons: very few people really want to see them fired, but while still in their silos, they affect the current configuration of world politics. The gun is now at our heads. The population of the world is being held to ransom by the nuclear states. Our actions, expectations, and fears are altered and induced by their weaponry. They confirm the present division of the world and pressure us to limit our politics to acceptance of this division. External aggression and internal uniformity is the price of the weapons of Cold War.

From this perspective, it is important to analyse disarmament initiatives to see to what extent they go beyond 'negotiation between empires' and tend to advance local, regional and national autonomy. The international 'bloc' of non-aligned nations is significant in this respect. Disarmament ultimately requires dismantling NATO and the Warsaw Pact. There are several proposals and discussions at the present time which deserve consideration as short term objectives: 'No First Use,' Mutual Freeze,' and various Uni- or Multilateral initiatives. Without extensive analysis of the strategic implications of these proposals (which is crucial to a complete evaluation), the concept of empire as utilized by Harold Innis allows a basic observation pertinent to their assessment.[8] The control of some purportedly independent states by others has in the present age become a division of the world into two imperial 'spheres of influence.' Empire, which inherently expands into world-domination, has come upon its internal limit with the simplification of its 'other' to a single opposing empire. Cold War binarism is the *telos* of empire, which requires an external other, and materializes in nuclear weapons. This external other rebounds within opposing empires to encourage a repressive image of social consensus which assimilates criticism to subversion. Almost all initiatives presently being considered are based on negotiations between the existing superpowers, representing their 'spheres of influence.' Multilateral disarmament and the mutual Freeze clearly rest on the US and the USSR being able to agree on the necessity to reduce arms stockpiles. While such initiatives should be encouraged and pressured for, they remain within the orbit of the present distribution of imperial power. Trudeau's Strategy of Suffocation advocated at the UN in 1978, and his peace initiative of November 1983, are of this type. This was recognized in the Liberal Government's acceptance of Cruise testing. In other words, arms control initiatives do not question imperial division as such, but merely attempt to contain nuclear weapons within a margin of safety.

The disarmament movement is a crucial factor in the present crisis of civilization. The existence of nuclear weapons on 'both sides,' caught in an escalating spiral, tends to escape Cold War ideology. It doesn't matter who pushes the button first. In order to develop a Third Way, the disarmament movement must, despite important qualifications, see *similarities* in both sides. The account of the reduction of politics to administration in Critical Theory provides a basis for comprehending a totalitarian closure of political options in both empires.[9] Internal repression in the East is further facilitated by the interpenetration of state and media institutions which influence more comprehensively than in the West the specific knowledge available to the population about the nuclear issue. However, the term 'totalitarianism' does not necessarily imply police and military repression, but rather specifies a closure of discourse about political alternatives. Without claiming a complete convergence of interests, or suppressing the socio-historical foundations of their respective systems, both the US and the USSR are primarily concerned with the maintainence and extension of imperial power.[10] Increasingly, the communist and liberal-democratic legitimations of their systems are becoming merely rhetorical devices. The secrecy and elite decision-making employed in nuclear allocation and development exacerbate this tendency. While embarking upon a massive increase in defence spending, the Reagan administration has seized upon arms control as a form of symbolic 'peace politics,' emphsizing rhetoric and procedures over substance. The ease with which these developments appear to be accepted, or at least not effectively resisted, in the greatest democracy on earth, suggests that nuclear technology and Cold War ideology operate powerfully in favour of totalitarian closure.

These insights take us beyond the Cold War version of the nuclear era, which focusses only on *external* factors. The goal of military technology was supposed to be security for the communist or liberal-democratic versions of Western humanism. But the development of imperial communications systems and destructive technology has eliminated the goal it was to serve.[11] Extension of imperial power in the post-War period has meant the denigration of the ends to which power was to be applied in both communist and democratic-capitalist political thought. Once power is separated from moral-political justification, legitimate discourse and criticism is confined within the parameters of existing institutions. In this sense, both East and West exhibit totalitarian tendencies which confine questions of the good society to choices within the imperial division of the world. These tendencies are exacerbated by the unprecedented destructive potential of nuclear armaments: instant communication through mutual annihilation.

In an age of nuclear empires in collision, it is essential to forge and protect political alternatives and alignments that take us beyond the Cold War. In Canada, concern with security has a great deal more to do with forging alliances with other 'peripheral' states, especially in Eastern Europe and the Pacific nations (and also with resistance to the extension of American imperial claims in central America), than with participation in a policy of nuclear confrontation designed by the U.S. and rubber-stamped by NATO. We have argued that public discussion of disarmament, due to the ideological functions of both the mass media and nuclear technology itself, has tended to confine legitimate debate within the parameters of the Cold War. Characterizing both sides as expansionary empires with totalitarian tendencies begins to reformulate these parameters, and to open a new agenda for disarmament perspectives in Canada. Indeed, we will have to rethink the foundations of our own contemporary society, in order to begin to disengage from traditional acceptance of our peripheral status within the imperial division of the world. With the testing of the Cruise missile, and the extensive implications for Canada of the 'Star Wars' proposal to militarize outer space, we have come to a crucial point in our international alignment. Only once, since the Second World War – in the Bomarc controvery in 1963 – have we in Canada had the chance to rethink the basis of our acceptance of the current world division.

Understanding the roots of the Cold War as a collision of empires with totalitarian structures and tendencies transforms the category of 'fear' within which potential conflict is perceived. Exploding the ideological form of 'fear of the enemy,' it becomes a less differentiated 'fear of annihilation' as such. Even without discovering forces, conjunctures and strategies, fear of nuclear extinction due to the unprecedented conflict of world empires undermines the rationale behind nuclear weaponry. But while this fear is an entry into thinking beyond the Cold War and exploding the arms control perspective, it can itself be debilitating and encourage passivity. Fear must cease to dominate our actions if we are to create an alternative, and not merely bewail the present state of the world. The irony of our situation is that we must patiently prepare the future even while we know there may not be one. For this, laughter may be more important than fear. Even 'fear of annihilation' cannot be a major organizing principle for a genuine disarmament movement, since it is fear that constructs the 'Other' on which contemporary Cold War binarism depends. In concrete terms, this requires a re-evaluation of the *internal* pressures for nuclear deployment – a reflection on self rather than hatred of other. In both the US and the USSR there are institutional forces which flourish from militarism. Internal contradictions within each power – unemployment and draft refusal in the US; dissidents, a de-legitimized

state, and paucity of consumer goods in the USSR – must be brought into the nuclear agenda showing how the imperial adventure demands resources from the domestic population.

The critique of civilization has become a practical issue. In public discussion of nuclear weaponry, the ideological function of the public sphere in reproducing Cold War binarism and the illusion of internal cohesion becomes evident. However, nuclear technology also functions ideologically outside the realm of mass media; moreover, this ideology is *inherent in* nuclear weapons, due to the socio-historical factors which are crystallized in them. Technology as ideology does not merely *distort* communication but *establishes* social interaction in an exterminist framework. Instant annihilation is perfect communication – nuclear technology is the unambiguous message of a divided world. Technology is the means whereby the complex of human purposes are constituted in social organization.[12] Dualistic separation of technology from communication consists in acceptance of the nature/society division fundamental to the modern project. It is precisely this division that has become untenable as the consequences of the domination of nature are unravelled with increasing ferocity.[13] In the name of freedom from scarcity and fear (security), Cold War technology is increasing the internal and external repressive apparatus of states and empires. The disarmament movement represents a chance to renew and extend the critique of civilization, by connecting it to a significant practical movement. The "nearest practical ends" which for Horkheimer and Adorno were the "most distant goal" have become again the nearest due to the failure to interrupt the logic of domination.[14] The extension of Critical Theory must bring these practical ends to theoretical clarity, a task which is not attempted here but whose starting-point has been formulated.

Marx turned to the proletariat for neither sentimental nor empirical reasons. It was the locus of a central contradiction in capitalist society – those who *create* the wealth in commodities of political economy but do not *enjoy* this wealth. The proletariat was designated a universal class because this contradiction expresses the essence of capitalism and also the possibility of transformation. Consequently, it unified short-and long-term goals that were later bifurcated into reform or revolution. We can distinguish ethical, economic and political aspects of this contradiction: loss of autonomy in the workplace, poverty in wealth, and the lack of bourgois rights of association. The pervasion of the whole of society by a logic of domination based on scientific-technical rationality eclipsed the *contradictory* character of the proletariat. Its failure to be a universal class consists in its reduction to a less advantaged position within the hierarchy of domination. The emancipatory potential of the proletariat waned with the pervasion of society by an ideology of

administration based in scientific-technical domination of nature. If the project of emancipation is to be renewed, the domination of nature must be radically questioned. It is not merely a question of the 'use' the which technology is put. Technologies *are* objectified social relations; for a free society we must design new tools.

Nuclear communication systems have no other use than the consolidation of totalitarian states and empires and the extinction of civilization. We can look at the three aspects of the universal class in the light of the disarmament movement. Ethical: empire versus national and regional autonomy. Economic: the massive proportion of the world's resources that go to militarism versus development based on human needs. Political: the increasingly secretive and repressive character of the 'national security state' – of which the Canadian government's new security measures are a surface manifestation – versus the democratic and participatory 'networking' structures of the disarmament movement.[15] Again, there is a possibility of unifying short and long-term goals, of situating arms control (reform) within a disarmament movement (revolution) through the critique of empire. The contradiction within contemporary civilization is most fully expressed in the conflict between this movement and its opponents. The possibility of civilized life is at issue. And if civilization is essential to humanity, the essence and meaning of humanity hangs in the balance. The universal contradiction is both global and lodged in the recesses of each human being: destruction and creation, barbarism and civilization are interlocked in the struggle of our time over freedom from scarcity and fear. If we cannot break with domination now, it will break us.

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NOTES

1. See Ian H. Angus, "Reflections on Technology and Humanism," *Queen's Quarterly* (Winter, 1984).
2. Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 227.
3. Jurgen Habermas, "Science and Technology as 'Ideology'," in *Toward a Rational Society*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 88.
4. We have pursued this analysis in an initial fashion in Ian H. Angus and Peter G. Cook, "The Media, Cold War and the Disarmament Movement: Reflections on the Canadian Situation," *Project Ploughshares Working Papers*, September, 1984.

5. Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect'," in James Curran, et al. (eds.) *Mass Communication and Society* (London: Edward Arndold, 1977): 315-348.

6. An important connection should be made here to the pervasion of everyday language by computer-derived jargon: judgment is reduced to binary opposition, knowledge to information, discussion to feedback, analysis to problem and solution. See, for example, Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1976), and the review by Ian H. Angus in the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Winter. 1979).

7. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), pp. 15-17.

8. The concern with empire is a fundamental theme in Canadian thought to which Charles Cochrane, Harold Innis and George Grant make significant contributions. In this case, it adds the international dimension to discussion of 'technology as ideology" which is absent from Critical Theory and is essential to a critique of nuclear weapons.

9. For the West, especially North America, see Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). For the Soviet Union, see Max Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State," in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Urizen Books, 1978).

10. An important qualification is that the U.S. continues to retain technological and economic superiority, which is reflected in its military forces. Moreover, the lessening of American ideological and military hegemony since the 1960s suggests that the nuclear option may be utilized in a panic attempt to regain control.

11. Innis remarked in "Political Economy in the Modern State" that: "The growth of nationalism and the enormous extension of power in the modern state which has overwhelmed the social sciences have meant that *power is regarded as an end rather than a means*, and that the checks to centralization of power which strengthened the position of the individual have declined in importance." Harold Innis, *Political Economy in the Modern State* (Toronto: the Ryerson Press, 1946), p. 136.

12. This theoretical position is developed in more detail in Ian H. Angus, *Technique and Enlightenment: Limits of Instrumental Reason* (Washington, D.C.: Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1984).

13. Parallel to the present argument, Joel Whitebook has pointed out that Habermas' conceptualizations are inadequate to formulate what is at issue in the ecological crisis. "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," *Telos* No. 40 (Summer, 1979).

14. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 42.

15. See Marcus G. Raskin, *The Politics of National Security* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979); Robert J. Lifton and Richard Falk, *Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

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TECHNOLOGY AS PRACTICE AND (SO) WHAT ABOUT EMANCIPATORY INTEREST*

Marike Finlay

New eyes for computers: chips that see.
Popular Science, 1982

In *Discipline and Punish* and in *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault suggested that, for reasons of efficiency, discursive institutions such as the penal system and mental hospitals organized themselves in such a way as to ensure the permanent visibility or surveillance of their charges.[2] They did so by means of the panopticon, first proposed by Bentham. The panopticon was a means by which the charge could be isolated, individualized, and backlighted. The observer in the central tower could always see the charge. The charge however could not look back and could never know when he or she was being observed. The charge is, therefore constantly obliged to behave correctly and eventually internalizes the rules of correct behaviour by internalizing the threat of the permanent look. Foucault transfers this architectural schema to the discursive realm whereby the charge surveys himself permanently by virtue of being obliged to practice a set of discursive procedures imposed upon him by the observing or controlling order. Physical restriction — chains — are no longer necessary since the client, criminal, patient or schoolboy has internalized the principles of his own surveillance by internalizing the discursive procedures of the watcher.

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EMANCIPATORY TECHNOLOGY?

In talk about anew communications technology, the panoptic motif surfaces time and again. Historically, one of the functions of electronic business machines, precursors to business computer-communications, was said to be to centralize surveillance of workers, payroll and customs.[2]

The desire for control via surveillance and record-keeping is quite unocculted even in very early writings on data processing.

> to throw some light on some of the great mysteries of why we behave as we do (...) psychologists may some day be able to come up with scientific means of setting problems for workers (...) we may be able to devise methods of presenting data so that it can be most easily transferred from one fellow to another, for example, in advertising or safety.[3]

The ubiquity of new communications technology as it is constantly being described[4], serves to indicate the panoptic nature of these technologies. New communications technology is described as expanding; what is more, new communications technology is described as the seeing eye, as a recording, remembering, watch-dog technology. Rather than being blind-sided by the privacy debate, one should perhaps analyse the type of social space where technology or surveillance communicatioin is ubiquitous and yet still expanding. This does not imply merely procedures of an individual internalization of surveillance, but those of a whole society internalizing surveillance. We might coin the term, "social panopticism," a new type of surveillance which, like other forms of panopticism, is the cheapest, most expedient way to maintain social control. It is this panopticism for which discourses on new communications technology express a desire and a design. Perhaps the electronic invention that best exemplifies panopticism is the lie detector:

> Electricity is used to solve crime mystery. By quickened heart-beats, and by a change in electrical resistance of his kin, due to an effort to conceal the truth, the "culprit" was easily detected... science is now able to aid in the war against crime.[5]

What is most important here is not so much the external supervision but the fact that power actually codes the interiority of subjects.[6]

Not only is panopticism a procedure of the practice of discourse about new communications technology, it is also a procedure of various practices of new communications technology itself considered as a set of discursive practices.

One practice of new communications technology, telematics, is a hybrid of computer processing facilities and telecommunications. This hybrid allows for increased memory and extensive cross-referencing of record keeping. The result of this is an increased surveillance capacity

quite akin to the way in which citizens in the seventeenth-century, by registering for philanthropic social services, were simultaneously yielding a record of themselves for purposes of social control, such as the draft.

The panopticon has an almost incarnate manifestation in the networking systems of "telematique" whereby users are individualized and connected to a central data-banking facility. The user has no full view of all that is in the central bank, while the central bank knows the information consumption habits of the user. And for individualized users to communicate with each other they have to pass through the central banking facility and hence expose themselves to surveillance. The central banking and processing facility increasingly enjoys a totalizing integration of the practices of discourse followed by the users. Also, in order to use these facilities, the user must follow the rules or procedures of discourse dictated by the program. The system is doubly panoptic. 1) It actually surveys one's communication habits. 2) It dictates rules of discourse to be used and eventually internalized by the person at the other end of the terminal. Thus, for example, buying a software package is tantamount to buying into a prescribed set of discursive procedures. The deployment of the Telidon system by the Vancouver police (1979) is further evidence that new communications technology is being practised as a discourse of surveillance.[7]

Lowi goes a step further to argue that surveillance is indeed built into the software of the technology, in order to survey not only the outside world, but also (the ultimate form of panopticism) for self-surveillance or internal housekeeping:

> Surveillance pre-determined by Software Information must be kept up to date and credible, and credibility and currency require continual surveillance, occasional house-cleaning, and regular viability checks.[8]

In *Computer Power and Human Reason*, Joseph Weizenbaum also insists that surveillance procedures are designed into computer technology, which is then necessarily practised as such.[9]

For Foucault, the ideology or values of a discursive practice are not outside the practice in a context: rather they are inherently built in as procedures that condition practices of the technology. For example, the inequitable exercice of power is not outside of technology, it is practised as the procedures of panopticism and exclusivity by the very discourse of technology. Power exists only as a set of interdiscursive relationships of "right". If we wish to question the ends of domination on the part of technology then we must question the very discursive procedures of technology as manifest in classical times.

In that the procedures of new communications technology seem to be redundant with those of classical science, the science that ushered in the industrial age, I agree with Leiss, though on different grounds, that *there is no communications revolution*. Were such a revolution to be said to exist, it would have to be shown that the discursive procedures had radically changed since the classical age. Were technology no longer to be domination-oriented it would have to exhibit means/procedures which were not those of what Foucault, under the sign of Nietzsche, calls the will to knowledge. The relationship of the practices of technology to context might be portrayed in the following way: techne and episteme refer not to any abstraction but to sets of discursive habits or procedures which condition future practices by virtue of having become "habit-forming". Techne and episteme mutually condition each other; changes in procedures of one both rely upon and condition changes in the other. Both sets of procedures are interested, in the sense of having power relations built into them. For example, the discourse on madness is a scientific or technical discourse which, in the seventeenth-century, indeed up until Freud, deprived the patient of the enunciative right to dialogue with the doctor. The doctor had the right to confine the patient. And, of course, this set of interdiscursive relations was reinforced by other interdiscursive relations such as those of the penal system and the State, as Foucault shows in his analysis of the internment of Sade.[10] If new communications technology is to change, then its practices and procedures must change. For this to happen the rules considered as those to follow when speaking the truth, i.e., those of the episteme, must change. For example, one could not install practices of participatory communications unless the episteme were to condone procedures of interaction as procedures of making true statements.

Alternatives to Domination

Demystification and critique have often been put forward as the only alternative to technocracy. In a interview with Leiss (May 1983), he suggested that at times he felt demystification to be the primary if not only enterprise of his own work on technology.

Demystification is an important first step in the search for an alternative, but it is not that alternative itself. As the critique of Adorno by university students in Italy and Germany would attest, theory (of technology) cannot be satisfied with remaining at the level of negative critique and demystification. Leiss himself, we may recall, was seen to criticize the Frankfurt School's approach to technology in that it never managed to provide a glimmer of an alternative to what was criticized as reification and commodity fetishism.

Leiss does, however, point to an alternative to the crisis of technocratic society: not an alternative technology, but an alternative society, one in which instrumental rationality would yield some space to forms of knowledge which discuss not only means but especially ends or social goals. Leiss's critique of the *Science Council of Canada's* approach to policy-formation is primarily directed against its neglect of social goals at the expense of a fetishism of means. The *Science Council of Canada* legitimates its policy suggestions purely instrumentally, i.e., as self-legitimating means. Policy is shown by Leiss to be defined tautologically by them as nothing more than the *means* of policy-making. The vacuity of reducing all rationality to a discussion of means could not be better demonstrated than by this tautology. An alternative society for Leiss, then, would allow an additional rationality whereby goals or a value-basis for technology could be discussed.

> The main point I wish to make is that the efficacy of techniques can only be judged concretely in relation to explicit goals and the processes that seem appropriate for them.[11]

For example, Leiss suggests that rather than passively surrendering to the "imperative" of the new communications technology, as most government policy-making agencies are presently doing, we should concentrate on a set of "zero-sum" issues such as health care budgets, ecological concerns, and income distribution.

> Whether capitalist, socialist, or a mixture of both, no society that remains committed to the basic course of modern development — including the organization of social relations according to formal principles (such as equality and individual freedom), industrial manufacture and scientific rationality — can expect relief from the cold abstractions of resource allocation, trade-offs and benefit-cost calculations.[12]

Once all social goals are decided upon by a rational discourse allocated to the discussion of ends, technology, still in the form of the domination of nature, could be emancipatory. For example, technology itself could serve the ends of ecological preservation.

> In *The Domination of Nature* all I claimed for the progressive side of modern scientific rationality was that, by virtue of its potential capacity to discourage certain kinds of irrational human projections into nature (not all of them), it could become — in a different social context — a force (not the only one) for the self — mastery of human nature. Nothing more. Judged concretely in relation to

> explicit technology.[13]

Such an approach, of course, fits in very closely with the project of critical theory as Frankfurt Schoolers such as Adorno envisioned it. The only way to an alternative, to utopia, was via a critique of utopia, via a negative dialectic.

This is, however, only a partial alternative. Finally, one must also ask: which goals? and what type of discussion of these goals? only by posing such questions can we also arrive at the question which avoids abstracting from technology as social practice: Which social practices of technology to meet these goals?

Recalling the schema presented earlier in this paper of the inextricably interactive conditioning of the procedures of knowledge in general (*episteme*) with knowledge of how to do or make (*techne*), it follows that what we require is a new set of procedures both of rationality and of instrumental rationality. In order to arrive at an alternative social order, we would require both an alternative discourse of technical knowledge and an alternative discourse of knowledge in general; all the more so where we have found *episteme* to have been usurped by *techne* in technocratic society. I agree with Leiss that we require alternative knowledge as a context for technology; but would add that we also require alternative technical knowledge. An alternative social order implies an alternative *techne* and an alternative *episteme*.

One of the first places to start in this quest for an alternative episteme is with an alternative discourse of history. Leiss suggests this when he u nequivocally refuses the Marxist dialectic of the emancipatory subject arising out of the contradictions of the purgatory of bourgeois society.

> Marxist theory asserts that the proletariat can break that spell as it gathers strength for the moment of revolutionary violence — i.e., while it is still under the rule of bourgeois class domination. Yet how is this theoretically and practically conceivable? To examine this questions closely is to understand how the critical theory of society could one day find itself entangled in the unresolved dilemmas of classical liberalism.[14]

Marxist theory seemed to get out of this paradox only by assuming in a rather unempirical vein, the *a priori* existence of such a consciousness:

> Thus there was a propensity in Marxian theory to assume the existence of a class which is autonomous a priori, or, in other words, to assume that capitalist society ***necessarily*** produced a class whose essential interest was general emancipation.[15]

This dilemma is the same as the one facing any attempt to maintain a liberalist philosophy of the emancipatory individual, which Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno all struggled to redeem as a ground for social theory.

> The program of enlightenment is premised upon the central feature of classical liberalism – namely, the struggle against those pressures originating in social institutions that subvert the possibilities for the self-creation of autonomous rationality in individuals. For Marcuse as well as for Horkheimer, the desperate struggle to rejuvenate the ailing spirit of classical liberalism is an unavoidable necessity for radical theory and action.[16]

The Frankfurt School simply could not renounce the doctrine of individual rights contained in liberalist thought. Leiss fittingly uncovers the paradoxes of the liberalist confidence in the emancipatory qualities of the "autonomous" individual consciousness. In a self-reflective attempt to evade the paradox of positing an autonomous subject arising out of a constraining situation, Leiss rejects the anthropocentrism that places the subject at the source of all historical change. Instead he looks for some other motor force of historical change than the individual or collective emancipatory consciousness that was supposed to arise out of the very chains that imprisoned it. As early as his first book, Leiss deanthropomorphizes the dialectic of history. Indeed it would seem to be no coincidence that both Leiss and Foucault arrive at such a stance of deanthropocentralization via the path of a critical examination of the tenets of the discourse of classical science and liberalism.

> "Man" as such is an abstraction which when employed in this manner only conceals the fact that in actual violent struggles among men technological instruments have a part to play. The universality that is implied in the concept of man — the idea of the human race as a whole, united within the framework of a peaceful social order and finally determining its existence under the conditions of freedom – remains unrealized.[17]

Like Foucault, Leiss can see no ground, be it historical or epistemological, for continuing to postulate the historical subject's consciousness as the emancipatory force of history. Indeed, both suggest that perhaps the very opposite is the case. For Leiss, subject-driven emancipation simply did not occur. There is no reason to suppose it will in the future. Rather, says Leiss, what is occurring is "the ever more thorough fragmentation of the networks of social relations among individuals and groups."[18]

Still, if Leiss rejects emancipatory consciousness does this imply that he also negates emancipation and emancipated subjects? I think not. Whereas Foucault would state that emancipation is impossible, that all discourse will always be qualified by constraints, and only the type of constraints may change, Leiss does not give up hope. While Leiss, just as

Foucault[19], seeks an alternative to the Hegelian telos, he is still searching for some other way of positing emancipation apart from the acceptance of an old social order (bourgeois society) as generating the very subject of its own transcendence.

Where then does Leiss look for such an alternative theory of emancipation? At first I suspected that Leiss' work on commodities, consumerism and advertising might be his attempt at an alternative scenario for how emancipation might arise. This just indicates that Leiss's book, *The Limits to Satisfaction*, on the consumer society, as well as his current research with Stepen Kline and Sut Jhally on advertising, are entirely gratuitous to the long-standing project that Leiss' work seems to have set itself, that of finding a future alternative to some of the tenets of critical theory[20]. Certainly Leiss's condemnation of the puritanical disapproval of consumerism by the Frankfurt School and their proselytes on the grounds of reification theory reveals that he does not think consumerism to be all that bad[21]. In his essay, "Nature as Commodity," he suggests that consumerism might be the site of some of the discussion of "goals/values" that he earlier stated must win back territory from the exclusivity of rationality's discussion of means only. In this same text, he states that what is required is not to do away with consumerism as an alternative but do develop a "value-basis for the degraded quality of many of the revealed preferences that emerge in this process."[22]

Equally, in "Critical Theory and Its Future," he optimistically sees in consumerism a concrete dimension of inter-subjectivity which is not "all repressive."

> The expanding realm of commodity production creates both conditions simultaneously (increasing interdependence and increasing isolation). The traditional ties mentioned above represented a concrete dimension of intersubjectivity — which had as well many repressive features, of course — wherein individual work and needs were articulated with reference to "regions" of consciousness that maintained a degree of relative autonomy vis-à-vis the economy. In consumption, for example, older values are subtly employed to allay guilt which might otherwise arise from spontaneous and reckless indulgence.[23]

Nevertheless, although Leiss himself may have at one point looked for some form of alternative to the Frankfurt School theory of instrumental rationality in his studies of commodities, he certainly became increasingly skeptical about any such possibility.

This returns us then to the task of finding some alternative to the paradoxes of liberalist theory. Where we do not renounce the humanist emancipatory ideal, but rather simply cannot see how it can come about in a system of non-autonomous constraint, the problem is still one of overcoming this paradox, and not of finding another ideal. This search for an exit from the paradox is more recently the task which the French

theorists of autonomy and "autogestion" have set for themselves.[24] How could an autonomous being/order be founded without grounding it in something which transcends it, hence making it no longer autonomous?

Leiss argues that such an autonomous order may indeed come into existence in a way not driven by some transcendental order or subject, such as the theoretical subject. Leiss is suggesting nothing short of an alternative genealogy of emancipation when he states: "it is beyond the power of theory to chart a sure course toward liberation."[25] Nor does Leiss make such a statement only once in passing. He suggests that the philosophical subject may not be the motor force of alternative social praxis:

> The issue is not one that is likely to be resolved by philosophical analysis alone. There is at least the possibility that the radical perspective articulated in these recent contributions may influence the course of personal and institutional development – and thus the course of social change in general – during the coming years. Philosophical reflection on the question of humanity's relationship to the rest of nature must continually demand clarification of both the process and the goals.[26]

These remarks resemble those of Peirce, Foucault and the work of the *CREA*. Moving away from a subject-driven view of history, we find the postulation of transformations of society (discourse and knowledge/power relationships) occurring regardless of a theoretical consciousness. There may be no philosophical ground to an alternative to domination apart from an appeal to some form of chance. Theory may not be the spearhead of alternative praxis. Alternative praxis may first simply arise - "*surgir* — as a transformation. Perhaps all that theory can do is attempt to identify it. Foucault answers precisely this to his Marxist critics, who attack him for not positing the historical subject. For Peirce, various social habits change due to two forces: Synechism – the tendency of all things to interact (with connotations of love – Agapism – involved here) and Tychism – the tendency of things to emerge through chance.[27]

However, as Foucault would insist, such an alternative genealogy is not fatalistic, but a way of seeking out the regularities by which transformations occur, of identifying such transformations and of exposing them in such a way as to reinforce them. Without resorting to a naive theory of the voluntarist subject, the intellectual must also recognize chance as a locus of change.

To transpose these reflections to the domain of technology and society, the task of the theoretician of technology would be to identify alternative practices of knowledge and discourse of knowledge which would not necessarily be domination - and hegemonically-oriented, and to insist

upon these transformations as ones which might be reinforced as the basis of an alternative dominant episteme. For example, were participational practices of new communications technology or community resistance to practices of social control to be perceived as emerging, then the theoretician might both explain and advocate such practices, rather than pretending to have invented them. Indeed, in the case of certain resistances to new communications technology, at least one form did occur stochastically. In several experiments with electronic polling, (yet another practice of social control), it often turned out that children were simply playing with the key boards, pushing keys at random. This yielded stochastic results which disturbed the practice of social control intended by the operations of polling. In the vein of science fiction writer, P.K. Dick, one might first perceive such a stochastic response to technology in society and then encourage it. Citizens could be encouraged to dephase practices of social control by feeding completely aleatory information into the information gathering, compiling and cross-referencing technological systems. Its effect would be emancipatory in the area of marketing control, one of the social practices where computer-communications technology is currently most employed. Such a response is not fully random but rather a well-calculated one that has a bit of random content which it capitalizes on. Chance is a concept useful for breaking the back of determinists because they deny the idea of a radical invention – intervention; yet except for Peirce's cosmology, *tyche* can also bring forth monsters. To say that philosophers and theorists alone cannot magically bring about social change is not necessarily to say that we weight all in favour of chance at the exclusion of conscious volition, choice, and desire. Perhaps, changes appear through chance but are identified and fought for by volitional subjects.

Such an appeal to the stochastic emergence of change would debunk the technological fix theory of society as well as the belief that we can bring about a new order of social discourse simply by consciously thinking it. The potential for such a scepticism would be vast indeed for those who advocate a degree of social (and now epistemological) modesty as regards ecological concerns.

To adopt such an alternative theory of history is simultaneously to recognize an alternative episteme, one which would reject the domination of techne. Science would no longer be posited and practiced as that which dominates other theories and as that with which discourse invents or commands alternative social orders. Theory/science would merely integrate itself into or choose from what occurs or arises through chance. Finally, to accept such an alternative episteme would be tantamount to recognizing the end of instrumental reason as the dominant episteme. The epistemology of an alternative discourse on new technology and

society is simultaneously an alternative science, an alternative technology. Both sides of such a change are implicit in the following quotation from Leiss.

> Now is the time to begin making the necessary discrimination. Now is the time to begin detaching our scientific culture from the popular expectations associated with the conquest of nature and the technological fix, to divorce the actual endeavors of science from the misguided belief (...) that humanity can and should strive to achieve "domination" over nature.[28]

This quotation becomes meaningful when we see it as applicable to social practices of technology as well as social practices of theoretical and epistemological discourse about technology. However, such a shift, whether at the level of the practice of technology or at the level of the practice of an epistemological discourse on technology, also means the renunciation of a driving force in the form of a subject of emancipation. Such a transformation would simply have to occur — *surgir* — and then be identified or chosen by the theorist. This would make change a mixture of rational and random, of order and disorder. The reason for my appeal to the simple recognition of a transformation rather than to some thaumaturgical subject to bring it about goes back a long way in the history of thought about changing epistemological frameworks. It was Kant and later Wittgenstein who impressed upon us the difficulties of thinking another logical space from within the old one. They showed us how we could criticize a logical space from within that space but not posit a transcendent one therefrom. Leiss himself makes much the same point when he states that transcendence "could only be embodied in and effectuated by an individual or group that stood outside the contentious process of social reproduction."[29] Needless to say, I would also like to believe that we do perceive some transformations in practices of both epistemological and technological discourses which might point to the existence of such a change. However, it is far from having become a dominant episteme in the same sense as instrumental reasoning may be characterized as a dominant discourse of knowledge in today's society.

Conclusions

Treating technology and society not as abstractions or essences, but as nothing more than specific but regularizable social practices, does seem to explain better how certain technological practices may be ideological in the sense of contributing toward an increase in social control. It also avoids many of the "naturalized" myths or clichés common in today's talk about technology by showing them to be historically relative to a discursive order rather than universally necessary and inevitable. Also,

where technology is but a social practice (as opposed to some universal essence) this leaves open the possibility of questioning the social role or function of that practice as well as for the possibility – *potentia/dunamis* — of a transformation of such practices of a very different social nature.

I have seen that Leiss himself came very close to showing up all of the myths of discourse on technology and of practices of technology itself. Had he gone a step further than Husserl, toward some of the insights about technology made by contemporary French discursive analysis then the last remnant of idealized abstraction would have disappeared along with Leiss' most welcome abolishment of abstraction from society.

Treating technology as a social practice made it possible to posit alternative technological practices regardless of any essence of technology. I suggested that the procedures of the socio-epistemological context in general —the episteme — would have to be turned away from their subservience and reduction to instrumental reason. I also suggest that the procedures of technological practice themselves might move away from a manipulative and subject-driven set of procedures and toward ones which would acknowledge "tyche". This suggestion implies the possibility of a change in both episteme and techne, something which is unthinkable if either is essentialized. I also suggested that Leiss himself seemed to be hinting at such a change when he agrees with the deauthorization of the subject as motor force of history and when he insisted that change in history, i.e., alternative social orders, may not be borne out of the head of theoretical consciousness. Science and theory have been reduced to a non-dominant position whereby they cannot "engineer" nature or history or social organization. They can only perceive and attempt to reinforce certain transformations of the instrumentalist-oriented discourse of knowledge. Such a change in epistemology would also be a change for the discourse of technology itself – one not domination-oriented. The mere conception of transformation in terms of epistemological and technological modesty, however, is still insufficient. Beyond the appeal to transformation through chance and to modesty, what else replaces the unilateral manipulation of nature and human nature, as manifest in most practices of technology to date?

It is Jürgen Habermas who reminds us that for Marx, in *The German Ideology*, two kinds of human activity were described, work and interaction. Work, of course, is but instrumental rationality, manipulation of the environment in man's own self-interest. On the other hand, Habermas accuses many Marxists of having ignored the interactional dimension of human activity, whence the discursive turn in political theory. If social practices are not to be dominanted by instrumental rationality, then the alternative would be interaction, as Habermas argues in *Toward a Rational Society*, *Crises of Legitimation*, and *Knowledge*

and Human Interests.[30]

While Habermas does not renounce the humanist subject as a motor force of emancipation, he does suggest that an alternative, emancipatory order would not be subject-dominated nature or science, but rather one where an alternative from of communication would be based on the knowledge interest of interaction as opposed to domination. Furthermore, Habermas does specify in rather concrete terms what such an alternative would be. He is not guilty of the vagueness and lack of description of an alternative for which Leiss accuses the Frankfurt School. Rather, Habermas has recourse to some of the work of the American pragmatists, namely Peirce and Dewey, for some suggestions as to what an alternative to instrumentality might be. He defines this alternative in communicational terms. It would be non-distorted communication — the "ideal speech situation." This is posed as a utopian ideal which is referred to only counter-factually, i.e., as a standard which has no ontological status but which is posited as something toward which to strive and on the basis of which to measure distortion. Such a standard is what Habermas describes as a "quasi-universal". Leiss himself, especially early in his career, does not totally reject the alternative of interaction. In *The Domination of Nature*, Leiss insinuates that what society requires as a response to instrumentalism is a set of decision-making institutions where interactional discourse takes place and legitimates decision-making:

> But whether it is known by this or any other name, the effort to frame institutions capable of subjecting the global social dynamic to the collective control of free individuals now represents an insurmountable necessity for the human race as a whole.[31]

Also, in 1970, Leiss was following Benjamin's line for an alternative technology which would be the mastery of the relationship between nature and humanity.[32] In 1974, Leiss again insists on interaction as the ground for social-discussion of goals and the legitimation of decision-making:

> Finally we should strive to understand how a genuinely autonomous consciousness in individuals may be substantively grounded in forms of social interaction and collective decision-making that are appropriate to advanced industrial societies. In this manner, the objectives of classical liberalism, which have been thwarted by the society which produced them, but which possess enduring value, may be preserved in a new synthesis.[33]

Such a scenario of interaction would be the only way to answer affirmatively the question posed concerning new communications technology as a democratizing or constraining social practice, that Leiss poses here below, as late as 1979:

> Will citizens be in a position to evaluate the construction of such exercices — the rules for coding information, the programming models, the selection of variables, the possible hidden

externalities?[34]

In this same text he seems to recommend collective, interactional decision-making as a way of being emancipated from technocratic constraints. He holds out hope for such institutions as public inquiries as a form of interactive, consensus-oriented participatory, decision-making. The procedures of discourse operative in such an institution would be interactionist as opposed to unilateral and control-oriented.

However, the question remains: would such an interactional practice of the discourse of knowledge and power be qualitatively different from what we have defined technology to be throughout this study? For Leiss, technology is always self-interest control; that is the essence of technology for him. However, its function may be emancipatory, depending on the socio-politico-economic context. Thus, interaction, for Leiss, is still such domination-oriented scientific knowledge in that he sees it to serve the self-interest of man:

> Is not the reorientation of human thought and action suggested therein essentially a recognition of enlightened human self-interest? And if so, does it really signify a qualitative change in the relationship of man and nature?[35]

There is a slippage here, however. Simply serving man's interest is not tantamount to instrumental reason which had as its primary tenet domination and as its corollary the service of man's interests. Furthermore, if we do not essentialize any one definition of technology, then alternative practices of technology are possible. Interactional technology as a social practice would also be possible. One would first have to cease the search for a rational ground and begin to conceive of interactional discursive procedures as workable practices. It would seem that this is what people have in mind when they talk about alternative technologies for participatory interaction rather than for social control. However, this would imply entirely alternative technological practices and designs. Interactional technological practices are possible, just as are interactional epistemic procedures.

The most important problem with interactional normative standards for technology is once again of an ontologico-epistemological nature. For example, what would be the ground for the Ideal Speech Situation above and beyond a return to Kantianism or some rather feeble examples from historical anthropology? How would the postulation of the "quasi-transcendental" status of the Ideal Speech Situation avoid falling back into positing Kantian essences? Habermas has tried to ground the ideal speech situation or the rationality of unconstrained interaction in historical anthropology, in Piagetian empirical analyses of child develop-

ment, and in a reconstruction of historial materialism.[36] None of these attempts avoids the need to posit the emancipatory interest as a sort of categorical imperative, as a standard by which all communications or technological phenomena would be evaluated as rational or irrational. The task, then, is that of finding a ground for an interactional definition of reason to replace an instrumentalist one.

Finally, there may just be such an epistemological ground for an interactional episteme and techne in several transformations of scientific discourse that may be perceived to date, for example, Heisenberg's quantum mechanics experiments and his interpretations of them. Heisenberg suggests that scientific truth is the interactional co-production of three entities: 1) the object, 2) the trace produced by the interaction of the object and the experimental apparatus, and 3) the cognitive filters of the scientist.[37] This is consistent with Peirce's triadic semiotic epistemology where knowledge is nothing more than a triadic production of three terms in interaction: Interpetrant, Representamen, and Object. For Peirce, triadic interaction is constitutive of reality and associated with "agapism," hence closely related to the tendency of all things to interact harmoniously.

In the end, the problem of a ground can also be turned against both Peirce and Habermas in whose works I have tried to find alternative solutions to the consideration of technology. Indeed, Habermas has been criticized for basing his theories of communication and their ethics on a universal or "quasi-universal" of emancipatory interaction as the condition of possibility for actual change in discourse and in the social. The problem of the ground, for a critique of technology then, returns to haunt us even at the level of communicational praxis. One may be criticized for putting forth no alternative to constraint and for avoiding doing so for want of a ground for such an alternative. This does not mean though that we can dismiss the problem of grounding an alternative social and discursive order. Some have said that we should leave off looking for a ground and simply *fight* for emancipatory and interactive interests that we deem valid. But the problem remains: how do we legitimate any choice of practicable interests to ourselves and to others without a ground or without a reign of terror?

Communications
McGill University

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); and *Histoire de la folie* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1961).

2. "Parade of Business Machines," *Business Week*, (October, 1935).

3. "Information", *Business Week*, (July 30, 1955).
4. *Life*, Vol. 31, no. 2, (1951).
5. *Popular Mechanics*, (April 1927), p. 604.
6. Francis Fox, "Annual Report", (Ottawa: Department of Communications/ Government of Canada, 1979 - 80), p. 14.
7. Theodor Lowi, "The Political Impact of Information Technology," in ed. T. Forrester, *The Microelectronics Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1981), pp. 453 - 472.
8. Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1976), pp. 271 - 2.
9. Foucault, *L'Histoire de la folie* (cf. sections on Sade).
10. "Technology and Instrumental Rationality," p. 136.
11. "Nature as a Commodity," ms., p. 23.
12. "Ideology and Science," p. 198.
13. Leiss, "Critical Theory and Its Future," *Political Theory*, Vol. II, no. 3 (August 1974), pp. 338 & 346.
14. "Critical Theory and Its Future," p. 342.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
16. *Domination*, p . 122.
17. "Critical Theory," p. 343.
18. Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard. 1971).
19. Leiss (in collaboration with Stephen Kline), "Les icônes du marché," *Communication/Information*, special thematic issue on theory, ed. Finlay-Pelinski, "Il était une fois la théorie," Vol. V, no. 2/3 (hiver/été 1983), pp. 133 - 156.
20. "Les icônes du marché," pp. 133 - 134.
21. "Nature as a Commodity," ms., p. 23.
22. "Critical Theory," p. 344.
23. Cf. publications by members of the Centre de Recherche sur l'Épistémologie et l'Autonomie (CREA) at the Polytechnique in Paris: Dupuy Scubla, and Aglieta. All of these thinkers are trying to come to grips with the paradox of autonomy and transcendence in their various disciplines.
24. "Critical Theory", p. 346.
25. Leiss, "The Problem of Man and Nature in the Work of the Frankfurt School," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. II, no. 3 (1975), p. 171.
26. I discuss the possibility of an epistemology based on interaction in "Semiotics or History," op. cit.
27. Leiss, "Domination of Nature and Respect for Nature," in ed. Vittorio Mathieu and Paolo Rossi, *Scientific Culture in the Contemporary World* (Milan: Scientia, 1979), p. 390.

28. "Critical Theory," p. 340.

29. Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970); *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Th. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975); *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

30. *Domination*, p. 160.

31. "Utopia and Technology," p. 588.

32. "Critical Theory," p. 346.

33. "The Social Function of Knowledge," p. 190.

34. Leiss, "The Problem of Man and Nature," p. 171.

35. Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1981).

36. I discuss at length the possibility of a new "epistem" one based on procedures of interaction and a triadic constitution of the ontological status of the object of knowledge, in Finlay-Pelinski, "The Potential of Irony: From a Semiotics of Irony Toward an Epistemology of Communicational Praxis. A Study of Schlegel and Musil," Ph.D. Diss., Université de Montréal, 1981. This episeme might be called one of "interactive pragmatic dialogism" which attempts to avoid the pitfalls of empiricism while not abstractions from the traces of concrete social practices.

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