
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



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

that hyper-subjectivity has because *the* condition of possibility for the operation of power at the fin-de-millennium. An ultra subjectivity for an entire society in ruins living on the excess energies of (its own) "borrowed power", becomes

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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 *outring* 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

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

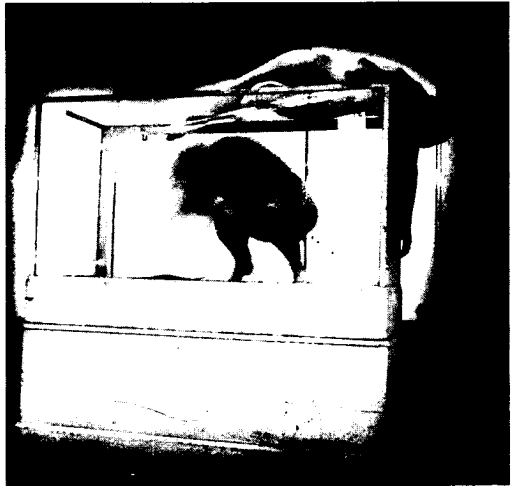
Indeed, why the concern over the body today if not to emphasize the fact that the (natural) body in the postmodern condition has *already* disappeared, and what we experience as the body is only a fantastic simulacra of body rhetorics? An *economic* rhetoric that would target the body as a privileged site for the acquisition of private property, and invests the consuming body with ideologies of desire (the “possessive individual”), a politico-judicial 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-millennium. 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 dialectics of the blurred image. The image of the woman inside the case whirls in a dancer's pose



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

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?

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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

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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

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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.

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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 implan-



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

ted 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.

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

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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 resentment); 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 resurrection 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

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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

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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 technicism 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 pharmaceuticals 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.

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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

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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-millennium*, 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

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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 sub-

jectivity 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



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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.

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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.