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Hannu Eerikäinen

CYBERSEX and PROSTHETIC GOD

"Sex," Desire and the Posthuman Body in Cyber Discourse

VOLUME 1

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VOLUME 1 **The Seduction of the "Cyber"**

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El sueño de la razón produce monstruos.

Francisco José de Goya (1799)

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Preface

A new kind of *theory object* appeared on the horizon of postmodern academia at the beginning of the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, when, for a brief historical moment, everything seemed to be possible. This object, though, did not come out of nothing, instead, its appearing was preceded by a prehistory during which it began to take shape in various visions of an imminent technological change never seen before. In its initial form, in the early 1980s, it was called "cyberspace," rhapsodized by an esoteric science fiction subculture under the name "cyberpunk" dreaming about the transcendence of the body in the form of disembodiment in virtual reality. Shortly after, it was followed by a more theoretical entity referred to as the "cyborg," celebrated by a technophilic theory avantgarde as a mythopoetic wish image of a transgressive body capable of continually disrupting all kinds of binary oppositions and category boundaries. At the turn to the 1990s, then, these two approaches of transcoding the body in terms of postmodern body futurism converged with one another in a discursive intertext emerging in the constellation of what became known as "French theory."

As a result, a new age was ushered in, the era of the science-fictionalization of theory: a mode of theory in which, as we will see, imaginary reason as the rationality of the imaginary is constitutive of the reason of "the theoretical." In this constellation, the body was to be redefined in terms of virtualization and prostheticization; that is, as a "post-natural," artificial body enhanced and extended by technology. Consequently, the figure of the posthuman entered the theory scene of the postmodern.

Due to its multidimensional complexity, however, the theory object I am referring to is not possible to be named by an unambiguous term, but, instead, it can only be recognized in its effects, in the linguistic figures and figurations effected by it. Therefore, in what follows, I describe it by the signifier *the "cyber"*; that is, a substantified prefix that, as I intend to show, has substantializing effects in terms of theory, or "reality effects" in the Barthesian sense of the term. Through my terminological construction, I will tackle the problem that, since the 1980s, innumerable theorists have used the prefix *cyber* in quite diverse contexts without any reasonable explanation of its meaning. Either they do not know what it means, or they do not say it; in any case, they do not explain what its real substance or cognitive relevance is. Of course, there have been attempts to explain it by referring to cybernetics, but, as everyone who is familiar with the history of cybernetics knows, there is no "cyber" in cybernetics. Yet, all this notwithstanding, or even because of it, this prefix, as an enigmatic but suggestive signifier, has enabled an endless theorizing of "cyber-this" and "cyber-that."

In contrast to all this, I will show that the theoretical configuration in which the "cyber" becomes intelligible is what I designate by the signifier the "post"; a term that I have constructed in the same way as the "cyber." I will thus argue that there is no "cyber" without the "post"; in other words, the "post" is the condition of possibility of the "cyber." This is the origin of the *cyberization of theory* typical of postmodern academia.

In order to comprehend the "cyber" in terms of the "post," I have developed the notion of *cyber discourse* by which I refer to a postmodern discursive formation that has come into being as an effect of a mode of postmodern writing that I call *post-theory*. It is in this sense that the science-fictionalization of theory results from the postification of theory as a radicalization of "the theoretical" constitutive of the "post" of postmodern theory. This new theoretical constellation, in turn, becomes understandable in a broader context comprising, on the one hand, the political economy of neoliberalism based on the deregulation of the financial markets, and, on the other, the networking of culture enabled by the emergence of global computer networks. This is the societal reality that is reflected by the "post" and the "cyber" at the level of the imaginary: the linguistic imaginary of the postmodern. It is in this manner that, in the world of the "cyber," the future is already present, present in its radical futurality. In other words, the "cyber" has become a shibboleth of a new world in which the past is definitely over and, hence, a permanent future is our posthistorical mode of existence: the condition of *posthistoire*, the timeless time of the "post."

As a result of the neo-imperial alliance between capital and computer technology, we are now living in a world in which the post-Weberian *Geist des Kapitalismus* has finally penetrated all life forms, even the most elemental cellular level of life, life understood in terms of the biopolitical reconfiguration of the body in the name of the cyborg and the posthuman. This is a world in which technoscience and technoculture constitute the superstructure of what I designate as the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism and the economic order of productive consumption, both of which, in their complex interrelations, are based on a radical economization of the human being. That is, under the imperative of neoliberalism, the reason of economism is the reason that defines the politics of the body as the politics of the subject: the post-subject as an agent of the market logic of postmodern capitalism.

It is in this framework that I am exploring the expansion of "the sexual" in the postmodern, manifested by what I designate as *theory-fictions* concerning the technologization of sexuality in the sense of the sexualization of technology by means of prosthetics. As methodical keys to approach what I consider as the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern, I apply the metaphors cybersex and prosthetic God (in its Freudian sense) through which I explore the posttheoretical configuration of "sex," desire and the posthuman body in cyber discourse, especially with regard to the figures of cyberspace and the cyborg.

The reading of cyber discourse that I am performing in this study proceeds in a broad historical context, spanning from the Enlightenment to the postmodern, that combines cultural, technological, economic and political perspectives in a multifaceted understanding of the object of my study, the suggestive power of the "cyber," that is, the theoretical-discursive productivity of cyber discourse, its generative capacity in terms of linguistic figuration based on "free-floating signifiers" peculiar to the postmodern.

The work that finally resulted in the study at hand has taken more than a decade and it was preceded by as many years during which I was elaborating on its basic idea in my teaching and writing, even before I ever thought that it would eventually become the subject of my dissertation.

In 1990, I visited the Ars Electronica festival, Linz, Austria, and had an opportunity to hear Jaron Lanier, William Gibson, Bruce Sterling and Timothy Leary, among others, speaking about virtual reality, a new interactive and immersive technology that would – as it was prophesied – entirely change human life in a few years to come. In this context, there was much talk about cyberpunk and cyberspace and all things "cyber." Everything I heard was fantastic, literally. In this sense, instead of a technological revolution, I experienced Ars Electronica 1990 as a linguistic revelation, a rhetorical happening that conjured up a new world by speaking of it, a discursive event that was able to summon into being a new reality by means of enticing invocations and incantations. Later, reading the contributions of Lanier, Gibson and others in the two-volume Ars Electronica publication – significantly entitled *Digitale Träume* (Digital Dreams) and *Virtuelle Welten* (Virtual Worlds) – my first impression was confirmed: what was at issue in the burgeoning world of the "cyber" was a specific capacity of language to suggest something that, in fact, only existed in language.

Seen in retrospect, the magic words that I heard at Ars Electronica were my initiation experience: I saw the enormous power of the techno-imaginary, or what I would later call the virtual reality of language constitutive of cyber discourse. In this respect, my first attempt to come to grips with postmodern media theory was my licentiate thesis (1994) entitled *Muutos ja utopia: Media, postmoderni, avantgarde* (Transformation and Utopia: Media, the Postmodern, Avantgarde), in which, among other things, I considered the utopian aspects of new technologies in the context of the technological sublime; a theme that, as we will see, permeates the entire study at hand.

My critical exploration of postmodern media theory in the 1990s – for which Ars Electronica 1990, as a perplexing key experience, was a decisive impetus – was given an academic basis when, firstly, I was assigned in 1992 to design a new curriculum of what became media studies at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland (see Eerikäinen 1994a and 1994b below), and, secondly, when I was invited in 1994 to teach media studies at the Europa-Universität Viadrina, in Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany. During my term as a *wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter* (research associate) at Viadrina between 1994 and

1999, I lectured and conducted seminars on such topics as, among others, the transformation of technology and media history, postmodern media culture, interactivity and virtual reality, cyberspace, the cyborg and the fate of the subject, and, last but not least, cybersex and the technologization of the body – a theme for which a significant impulse was the opportunity to attend the presentation of the interactive installation *CyberSM* by media artists Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford at ISEA'94, The Fifth International Symposium on Electronic Art, Helsinki, 1994.

It is in this context that I began to consider the possibility of writing my dissertation on cybersex, or, as I prefer to call it, *"sex" in terms of the "cyber"* (notice the difference).

At that time, however, the problem was that I did not know what could be the language in, through and by which it would be possible to critically encounter the suggestive power of the language of the techno-imaginary, the language of the technological sublime, constitutive of cyber discourse; that is, a specific language of desire as it is thematized in my study.

In order to approach this problem, it was necessary to first obtain an understanding of how language functions in terms of the imaginary. In this respect, reading Freud was the best school for me to find out the intricacies of language in general, and the language of "the sexual" in particular. On the basis of these linguistic studies that finally led me to Derrida, and, as odd as it may sound in this context, to Heidegger, I gradually began to get a grip on the problem proper of my dissertation, the problem of the mesmerizing effects of the "cyber" in the theoretical constellation of the "post." Between 1997 and 2006, in addition to an unpublished draft of my thesis (1998), I wrote several articles in which I outlined the aspects and dimensions of my understanding of cyber discourse and its media cultural context reflected by postmodern media theory (see below). These texts comprise the preliminary studies on the basis of which my dissertation began to take shape since the turn of the new millennium.

The decisive moment in my work was in 2003 when I wrote the article "Was ist das Sexuelle am Cybersex? Über das Begehren nach Organen ohne Körper" (What is the Sexual in Cybersex? On the Desire for Organs without a Body) in which I for the first time explicitly articulated the problem of my study (see below). It is in this article, moreover, that I experimented with the language that would become the language of my dissertation: a language that speaks the language of its object, whilst simultaneously being aware of it at the level of critical distance; that is, critical in the mode of immanent critique constituting the methodical principle of my approach in the sense of what Jean Baudrillard calls "objective irony." With regard to the substance, the problematics of my study, this article finally led to the question that became crucial to my inquiry: *why and how did theory lose its critical edge* in contemporary Western academia? The answer is implied by my argument: the postification of poststructuralism and the postmodern constitutive of post-theory is the precondi-

tion of the cyberization of language in the form of linguistic figuration specific to cyber discourse based on the hyperization of the technological sublime by way of the techno-imaginary.

In these terms, cybersex is hypersex, techno-sex as the most advanced form of post-sex; that is, prosthetic "sex" as a theoretical phantasm brought about by the libidinal language of the cyborg, a postmodern wish-image of technological transgression conjured up by the technophilic mythopoetics of the "cyber." In other words, cyberspeak opens up a world in which we can enjoy the *jouissance* of what I designate as the *surrational*. Thus, as we will see, the cyberization of "the sexual" implies a triumph of reason enabled by what I call *postmodern pataphysics*, in other words, the phantasmatic mode of "the theoretical" constitutive of the Disneyland of Theory, as I describe the amazing world of post-theory in the constellation of cyber discourse.

In the manner outlined above, the study at hand is a reading by way of performative writing predicated upon the language of its object: the language of desire that is specific to cyber discourse as a manifestation of post-theory. Thus, in order to reconstruct the coming into being of the "cyber" as an effect of the "post," my argumentation, in the form of deconstructive/reconstructive reading, proceeds through six thematic complexes in various combinations, which are: (1) language, theory and the "post," (2) reason, the rational and the surrational, (3) the body, the sexual and the "cyber," (4) prosthesis, the cyborg and the posthuman, (5) neo-Fordism, productive consumption and the political economy of neoliberalism, and (6) military-technological rationality, the reality of the techno-imaginary and the redesign of the human. These thematic complexes, referring to the relationships between the themes and their interplay, constitute the topical structure of the argument that I will be advancing in the following chapters.

Despite the complexity of my study, its main argument can be crystallized in two words: *cyber delusion*; that is, a techno-euphoric, millennial misperception of contemporary technoculture. Of course, as we will see, all that is "cyber" always appears in a parallax view, thus presenting itself as a moving target, or, more appropriately, as an *ignis fatuus*, an alluring object that always escapes us as soon as we approach it. But the real problem of the "cyber" is that cyber theorists – that is, all those who have contributed since the 1990s to the ascendancy of the "cyber" to its star position (in astrological terms) in postmodern academia – prefer, just like futurologists, to live in the future already today and, for that reason, do not see the present, and, for the same reason, cannot see the future either.

Accordingly, the brief historical moment, referred to above, when everything seemed to be possible, was the moment of "the end of history" that inaugurated the era of *posthistoire*, the timeless time of "post-history," proclaiming the final triumph of capitalism and "the West." It is from this perspective that I consider cyber discourse as a theoretical delusion the emergence and implications of which I will explore in terms of spectralization; that is, as a post-Gibsonian

"consensual hallucination" of a new age of the "cyber" conjured up by the hyperization of theory under the sign of the "post."

Thus, my argument, in short, is that the cyberization of the techno-imaginary is a post-theoretical form of cyber hype implying what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron called "Californian ideology" in the mid-1990s, when cyber discourse was gathering its full momentum.

Acknowledgments

The study at hand, presented as a doctoral dissertation in Media Studies at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland, is a result of extensive research work carried out between 1990 and 2013 in three phases: the incubation period (1990–1994), the preliminary studies (1994–2000) and the writing up of the study (2000–2014). I have mostly worked alone, reading and writing in creative seclusion, protected from the noise of the world, but this does in no way exclude the fact that several people have given me their comments, advice and support during these years.

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During the preliminary studies and the preparatory phase of my dissertation (1995–1998), after my appointment as a research associate at the Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany, in 1994, my work on postmodern media theory took a new turn when I gradually became acquainted with German media studies, and, in this context, with the philosophical dimensions of the disciplinary complex of what are called *Medienwissenschaften* ("media sciences") in Germany. At the same time, I began my intensive *Aneignung* (acquisition) of, and *Auseinandersetzung* (critical engagement) with, what has become known as "French theory." As perplexing as they were, I tried to make these new themes and topics understandable to my students (and, not the least, to myself) in my lectures and seminars. Thus, I want to thank my enthusiastic and encouraging students at the Faculty of *Kulturwissenschaften* (Cultural Studies) at Viadrina for inspiring questions, comments and discussions, as well as for the shared joy of learning together.

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A transition to a new phase in my work came with two conference papers at the Institute for Socio-Semiotic Studies, Vienna, entitled "Prosthetic God and the Transcendence of the Body in Cyberspace" (1997) and "Cybersex as Postsex. Seeking Pleasure Beyond the Body" (1998). For inspiring days in Vienna and for the helpful comments and publication of the latter paper in the pro-

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After the turn of the millennium, finding myself increasingly in dissonance with the post-utopian atmosphere of technological millennialism typical of the time, I began to elaborate on the ironic approach to the "cyber" that I had tried out for the first time in my Vienna papers and accompanying discussions. In this respect, I want to thank Professor Claudia Benthien (Universität Hamburg) who invited me to give a paper entitled "Cybersex: New Extensions of the Penis? The Phallus and the 'Technological Sublime'" at the conference *Körperteile. Formen der Fragmentierung – Praktiken der Darstellung*, Berlin 2000, as well as Professor Jonathan Sawday (Saint Louis University) for his insightful comments on my paper, and Professor Barbara Duden (Universität Hannover) for a helpful discussion on my approach. Parallel to this, I increasingly became aware of the necessity of specifying my conception of "the sexual" in the light of the critical discourse on sex and gender inaugurated by Judith Butler with her seminal publications in the 1990s. Regarding this, I am grateful to Professor Karl Braun for the invitation in 2001 to speak in his seminar in the gender studies programme at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main on the theme "Cybersex, or: Sex, Gender and the Technologization of the Body," and for his excellent study *Die Krankheit Onania. Körperangst und die Anfänge moderner Sexualität im 18. Jahrhundert* (1995) that opened up another perspective for me on Foucault's history of sexuality.

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Prolegomena, or, Just What Is It That Makes Our World So Exciting, So Marvellous?

> Nothing today is less certain than sex, behind the liberation of its discourse. Nothing is less certain than desire today, behind the proliferation of its figures.
>
> Jean Baudrillard (1990g [1979]: 129)

> I would rather go to bed with a cyborg than a sensitive man, I'll tell you that much. Sensitive men worry me.
>
> Donna Haraway (Penley & Ross 1992a: 18)

> Words are a plastic material with which one can do all kinds of things. There are words which, when used in certain connections, have lost their original full meaning, but which regain it in other connections.
>
> Sigmund Freud (1960 [1905]: 34)[1]

If, as Donna Haraway (1985: 66) says, the "cyborg is our ontology" and in "the era of techno-biopolitics" we live in an entirely new condition of corporeality, in the sense of being and having "a body," in which "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249; cf., for example, Stelarc 1991: 592–593; Baudrillard 1994a [1981]: 98–99; Gray & Mentor 1995a: 224–228; Stone 1995e: 1–5; Virilio 1995 [1993]: 115–118; Lury 1998: 152–153; Berger 2000: 100–106; Betcher 2001: 35–44; Goggin & Newell 2003: 112–113), what does this imply in terms of the sexual; or, is the very notion of "the sexual," as the constitutive idea of sex and sexuality in its historical contingency (see Foucault 1990k [1976]; cf., for example, Bührmann 1995: 27–49; Stein-Hilbers et al. 2000: 10–11; Weeks 1995a: 5–10, 30–31),[2] still relevant at all in the context of the prosthetic reconstitution of the human being in the name

1 "Worte sind ein plastisches Material, mit dem sich allerlei anfangen läßt. Es gibt Worte, welche in gewissen Verwendungen die ursprüngliche volle Bedeutung eingebüßt haben, deren sie sich in anderem Zusammenhange noch erfreuen." (Freud 1961 [1905]: 34) This, among other things, is the way in which Freud explains what he calls the "technique of jokes" in his study *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (for a historical contextualization, see Gilman 1985: 175–190; for an insightful reading in terms of "the phantasm of the economic," see Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 222–233). As an extraordinarily perceptive enquiry into language, Freud's treatise provided me with the methodological key to the understanding of what I consider here to be the seduction of the "cyber" effected by the logic of the "post," especially the allurement of "the sexual" as an effect of the libidinal language typical of the postmodern (see Excurses 1 and 2).

2 In the study at hand, it is not so much sex and sexuality as such which are at issue, but *the idea of "the sexual"* as a complex and multi-dimensional designation for diverse desires and pleasures, orientations and practices, experiences and expressions, all of which pertain to certain uses of the body as a source of sensuous enjoyment *sui generis*. Thus, in what follows, whenever I speak of sex and sexuality it is "the sexual" as an "enigmatic" figure, as an elusive idea, that I shall primarily be focusing on.

of the cyborg (see, for example, Tomas 1995b: 22–40; Hitchcock 1998: 88–92; Kaloski 1999 [1997]: 201–209; Campbell 2000: 264–267; Clarke 2002: 36–38; Borck 2005b: 282–285, 313–320, 2005a; in terms of theology, see Ornella 2010: 136–145, 159, 170–174, 216; for a contextualization in contemporary theory, see Gray et al. 1995b; for machine-organism analogies in behavioural sciences in the 1940s, see Heims 1975; for "the Enlightenment cyborg," see Muri 2007; for "romantic cyborgs," see Benesch 2002; for "the Dada cyborg" in Weimar Berlin, see Biro 2009; for a problematization of the cyborg, see Prolegomena 3.1)?[3]

In other words, is the notion of "the sexual," like the idea of "the human," a conceptual anachronism after the advent of the cyborg (cf. Haraway 1991a [1985]: 150–151, 180–181; Baldi 2002; in terms of primatology, cf. Haraway 1989: 58, 109, 117, 137–141, 146, 156, 353, 355)?

What does it mean to raise this question? That is the question which the study at hand is dealing with. That is, it is in itself, in the manner in which it approaches the problematics to be considered, about a question. In a specific way, this is *a* "question concerning technology" (Heidegger 2000b [1953]). In Martin Heidegger's words:

> Im folgenden *fragen* wir nach der Technik. Das Fragen baut an einem Weg. Darum ist es ratsam, vor allem auf den Weg zu achten und nicht an einzelnen Sätzen und Titeln hängenzubleiben. Der Weg ist ein Weg des Denkens. Alle Denkwege führen, mehr oder weniger vernehmbar, auf eine ungewöhnliche Weise durch die Sprache. Wir fragen nach der *Technik* und möchten dadurch eine freie Beziehung zu ihr vorbereiten. Frei ist die Beziehung, wenn sie unser Dasein dem Wesen der Technik öffnet. Entsprechen wir diesem, dann vermögen wir es, das Technische in seiner Begrenzung zu erfahren. (ibid.: 7)
>
> In what follows we shall be *questioning* concerning technology. Questioning builds a way. We would be advised, therefore, above all to pay heed to the way, and not fix our attention on isolated sentences and topics. The way is a way of thinking. All ways of thinking, more or less perceptibly, lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary. We shall be questioning concerning *technology*, and in so doing we should like to prepare a free relationship to it. The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology. When we can respond to this essence, we shall be able to experience the technological within its own bounds. (Heidegger 1977f [1953]: 3–4; for a discussion in detail, see Chapter 6.2)

3 In its own way, it is characteristic of contemporary theory (whether explicitly or implicitly postmodern) that there is such an excessive abundance of references to the notions/metaphors of the cyborg, the posthuman and the prosthetic modification of the human body that it is sheerly impossible to give any kind of comprehensive overview of all their applications and implications. There is no doubt that the fascination with and the celebration of the technological "upgrading" of the human being in contemporary theory is an indication not only of real advances in science and technology, but, beyond that, and first and foremost, of a significant change in *the very terms of theory* in postmodern academia: the cyborg, the posthuman and the prosthetic manifest *a radical science-fictionalization of theory* typical of postmodern theory discourse. As Haraway (1991a [1985]: 149) says, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." In the course of the present study, we will be observing the implications thereof.

In this sense, questioning *the technological within its own bounds*, the present study is a "way" in the sense of *via linguistica* in general (cf. Heidegger 1985e [1959]), and, in Heidegger's (1989b [1962]) words, a "way" from *überlieferte Sprache* to *technische Sprache*, from "traditional language" to "technical language" in particular (cf. Rapaport 1991 [1989]: 106–108; Young 2002: 8–9; Taylor 2005). This is not the *via negativa* of negative theology (see, for example, Taylor 1993: 2–3, 33–39, 46–54; Fiorenza & Kaufman 1998: 150–155; Bulhof & ten Kate 2006 [1992]; in relation to Derrida, cf. Coward & Foshay 1992); on the contrary, this is the positive way of linguistic immanence: the immanence of *the presence of the word* (in terms of "Catholic sacramentalism" as a methodical principle of Haraway's cyborg cosmology, cf. Haraway 2000a: 24, 86, 141; from the perspective of "digital cosmologies," cf. Kroker 2008; in the context of posthuman theology, cf. Waters 2006).

As we will see, in the world of the "post," we are living in a world of "paper machines" (Derrida 2005 [2001]; cf. Turing 2004b [1947]: 370–374; Kittler 1986, 1987 [1985]; Dotzler 1996); that is, in a discursive constellation in which "the linguistic" and "the machinic" are intertwined into configurations that are intelligible beyond meaning, in the realm of signification opened up by the "post."

In this constellation, the way is the destination, the telos in its own right. *In other words* (in the Derridean sense of the expression, as we will subsequently observe, see Derrida 2004 [1979]: 62–65; cf. Robbins & Wolfreys 1999: 38), passing along the way ahead is not assumed to bring the solution; instead, the way in itself is a part of the problem. For as to the questioning, this is the only way: each answer is a question, a question without a definitive answer (cf. Thiele 1995: 107; Meyer 2001: 1). All questions are, in the final analysis, questions about language, questions that take place in language, in the realm constituted by *the linguistic* of language. As Heidegger says: *Alle Denkwege führen, mehr oder weniger vernehmbar, auf eine ungewöhnliche Weise durch die Sprache* (cf. Cardorff 1991: 90–92; Trawny 2003: 119–142). Accordingly, in what follows, I shall be questioning concerning language; not only the language of "the technological," but, beyond that, the linguistic of language in its very *linguisticity* enabling "the technological" of technology. Thus, the focus of the study is on the fundamental, constitutive ambiguity of language: the ambiguity not so much of meaning as of the very process of signification (cf., for example, Culler 1975: 125–139, 173–185; Lentricchia 1980: 110–141, 163–174; McGowan 1991: 102–104; Empson 1961 [1930]; Johnson 1980a, 1980b, 1987).

Is it the same to speak about things that are not there compared with things that are there?

This is the basic problem of the study at hand. I am interested in the manner in which the things that are not there are there. The problem is that in this respect language does not make a difference. In language, there is only *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]; for a discussion in

detail, see Excursus 1.2). This "only" is decisive, but how do we recognize the difference of *différance*? This question concerns the very property of language to speak of itself by itself (cf. Jameson 1974 [1972]: 207–208). This is the way in which language always makes sense, regardless of whether it makes sense or not. In language, there is only *différance*.[4]

In my reading, this is the Heideggerian "extraordinary" of language defining the approach of the study at hand.

What does it mean, what is it that the "extraordinary" is about in this context? *In medias res*, to anticipate the forthcoming discussion via a detour, there is no better way than to let Derrida lead us to the point. *Reading* Nietzsche, Derrida says:

> The question of the woman suspends the decidable opposition of true and non-true and inaugurates *the epochal regime of quotation marks* which is to be enforced for every concept belonging to the system of philosophical decidability. (Derrida 1979 [1978]: 107; emphasis mine; for a critical reading of Derrida's "woman," see Cummings 1991: 157–190; cf. Ballif 2001)

What if we read this sentence differently, not just putting it itself in Derridean "quotation marks," but, first of all, decontextualizing it by replacing the word, or, rather, the *signifier*, "*the* woman" (which in itself, as a collective singular, is a non-concept after Derridean deconstruction) by another one making up part of the same Wittgensteinian *Familienähnlichkeit*, "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein 1995a [1953]: 278; cf. Goeres 2000: 234–300): "the sexual,"[5] and beyond that, by taking the licence (which we, of course, are always entitled to do when dealing with language) of saying that Derrida's sentence, in fact, pertains to the "post" of the "postmodern" (whatever it "in itself" happens to mean); the "post"

4 It is already appropriate here, at the very outset, to note that according to Jacques Derrida (1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]), *différance*, a neologism intertwining the two senses of the French word *différer*, meaning both to defer (to delay, to postpone, to put off in time) and to differ (to deviate, to be dissimilar, to remove in space), simultaneously refers to deferment and differentiation, a process bringing about both differing and deferring, difference and deferral. An ambiguous term as such, *différance* implies a difference that as an "in-between" is in itself neither a passive state (to be different) nor an active operation (to make a difference); a difference that as such precisely constitutes the difference that is necessary for all signification and meaning: *différance* is the very condition of possibility of language in general.

5 It is to be emphasized that what I designate as "the sexual" here is not determined by gender. As Haraway (1991a: 150) says, the "cyborg is a creature in *a post-gender world*; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (emphasis mine). This is the world of the present text, the world of the study at hand. If we take Haraway seriously, in a Derridean manner (for which, in my view, we have every reason to do so), it would be anachronistic to discuss the cyborg in terms of "feminism" (or whatever such "isms" in general): in an insidious manner, it would only imply falling into the trap of "phallogocentrism" (again, an "ism"), that is, of conceiving of "woman" as the origin and centre of thought, "a home" (see Derrida 1995a [1981/1992]: 96). Accordingly, in what follows, the relevance of the cyborg is understood to be precisely in its *post*-gender mode of being, in its radical disruption not only of gender categories, but the issue of gender in its entirety (in terms of gender history, cf., for example, Meade et al. 2004). This is the very radicality of the cyborg. Consequently, it is in these terms that all that is "sexual" is considered here.

that constitutes the postmodern as something that is "postmodern" (discussed in detail in Excurses 1 and 2)?[6]

Through this linguistic operation, or a post-Wittgensteinian *Sprachspiel*, "language-game" (cf. Wittgenstein 1995a: 241, 251–252, 256–257, 265–269; Goeres 2000: 177–198, 223–234), we begin, I assume, to have an inkling of the significance of the Derridean "epochal regime of quotation marks": the suspension of "the decidable opposition of true and non-true" (cf. von Savigny 1998: 7–17, 23–33; Lyotard 1984 [1979]; in terms of the "Humpty-Dumpty theory of language," cf. Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 74–93; Lecercle 1994: 134–164; Nelson 2002: 217–220, 224); that is, taking Derrida at his word, the question concerning the import of what I refer to as the *post-liminal* emerges from the shadow of the liminal (cf. D'haen & Bertens 1994), and, as a result, the sublime appears in a new light.

But, if the Derridean quotation marks are able to disrupt the fundamental distinction between true and non-true (provided, of course, that this distinction is fundamental in the first place), Heidegger's statement above that all ways of thinking "lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary" takes a new turn with regard to the "post" of what since the 1970s has been referred to as postmodern theory (see, for example, Hassan 1987; Best & Kellner 1991, 1997; Zurbrugg 2000a; Drolet 2004b; discussed in detail in Excursus 2), and, in this context, my question is: what is there between the quotation marks of the "cyber," the signifier that has enabled the emergence of what I call *cyber discourse* (see Eerikäinen 1999a, 2000a, 2000b); that is, a post-Gibsonian "consensual hallucination" (cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]: 67) that, as a discursive universe based on the inexhaustible citationality of the "cyber," follows the logic of the "post" constitutive of what I designate as *post-theory*, a mode of theory that implies a limitless reiteration of the reiterated in the Derridean sense of "iterability": a continuous rewriting of the rewritten in its very "unlimited" reiterability (see Derrida 2000 [1988]; cf. Toolan 1996: 226–270; Hobson 1998: 100–108)?

6 From the very beginning, it is appropriate to notice that, rather than speaking about "postmodernism" or "postmodernity," I use the term "the postmodern," in addition to the adjective "postmodern," as a *substantivized adjective* which refers to a specific theoretical construction pertaining to the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991; for the origin of the idea of the postmodern, see Hassan 1975, 1982 [1971], 1987; for the genealogy of the term, see Köhler 1977). Thus, in the present study, *the postmodern* does not designate an era, a style or a world view, but the manner in which things, ideas and linguistic figures express or manifest the functionality or the mode of operation of contemporary culture as the "superstructure" of global capitalism, the political economy of neoliberalism as an economic order ruled by financial capital (cf. Jameson 1998: 136–161). What is constitutive of the postmodern is that, in a typical postmodern manner, it recapitulates the sensibility of the historical period between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the era of the *fin de siècle* or the *belle époque*, the era of what was called "hysteria" and "neurasthenia" at the time (see, for example, von Braun 1994 [1985]; Radkau 2000 [1998]; Lamott 2001). In this sense, the characterization by which Lisa Appignanesi (2008: 100) describes the meaning which the "nervous" had taken on by the end of the nineteenth century, suggesting an "excitable, agitated, apprehensive and hypersensitive temperament," is an apt short definition of the postmodern as I deem it here. I will be returning to the idea of the postmodern over and over again in the course of the study.

In other words, is the "cyber," as an effect of the "post," a present-day affirmation of Michel Foucault's prediction in the 1970s?

> A day will come when, by means of similitude relayed indefinitely along the length of a series, the image itself, along with the name it bears, will lose its identity. Campbell, Campbell, Campbell. (Foucault 1983c [1973]: 54)

In the final analysis, the questions above translate into the question: what does the political economy of neoliberalism do to theory (cf. Mirowski 2011: 25–37, 315–349; Mirowski & Sent 2002; Giroux 2008a; in terms of "culture and finance capital," cf. Jameson 1998: 136–161)? That is, considering the high value of "the theoretical" in contemporary academia, is it, in fact, that what is called the "postmodern turn" (see, for example, Hassan 1987; Seidman 1994b; Best & Kellner 1997) *in postmodern theory*, not only occurred parallel with, but, more fundamentally, is one of the results of the "neoliberal turn" (see, for example, Harvey 2007 [2005]: 9–19, 40–43, 50–71, 120–121)? Thus, in what manner does the *spectacular spectrality of capital* haunt the scene of theory in the world of the "post" (cf. Derrida 1994 [1993]); in other words, how does the Weberian *Geist des Kapitalismus* (see Weber 1993 [1904–1905]), in its present disguise, defined by the imperative of economism as the principle of excess, affect the conditions of "the theoretical" in contemporary academia?

These questions should be kept in mind throughout the study at hand, with every step wherever it may lead us.

Foreplay, or, How to Read the Study at Hand?

The study at hand is a reading; a reading in terms of writing in the sense of what Roland Barthes (1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174) calls *scriptible*, "writerly," constitutive of texts that are aware of their own textuality (cf. Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Lucy 1997: 74–76). In this sense, the study proceeds as a writerly reading that enacts the textual "world" it is studying as a performative writing. That is, the reading performed in this study is, firstly, a text that emerges in the process of reading, and, secondly, rather than seeking closure, it is a multi-dimensional, open-ended intertextual performance. As such a reading, the performative writing taking place in this text raises the question: what does it imply if, in the Lacanian sense, but *contra* Lacan, the "letter" does not arrive at a destination (see Lacan 1972 [1955]; Johnson 1980b; cf. Žižek 2002c [1991]: 71–72; for a contextualization, see Muller & Richardson 1988b; for Derrida's counter-position to Lacan according to which "a letter can always not arrive at its destination," see Derrida 2003 [1975]: 92–93; in terms of "overreading," cf. Davis 2010: 114–124)?

In theses terms, *I am reading texts by means of writing* relying on the idea of immanent critique as the methodical principle of my reading that is built-in in the very textuality of the present text; a mode of critique that is based on what Jean Baudrillard (1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b: 182) designates as "objective irony" (discussed in Excursus 1.1.1 and 1.1.3). Thus, across the entire study my reading proceeds as an immanent critique of the language of the "post"; that

is, as a language-immanent critique of the mesmerizing effects the "post" in terms of "the theoretical."

It should be emphasized, however, that, by conceiving of my study as a reading, I attempt to show – at least, to tentatively stake out – the limits of reading, paradoxically, by constantly exceeding these very limits by means of writing. In this sense, my reading is an experiment in reading that has liberated itself from the "delusions" of representationality (cf., for example, Jameson 1988g [1977]: 80; Norris 1992: 94–96; May 1994: 96–98; Colebrook 2005 [1999]: 1–24, 162–256; Thrift 2007). In this precise sense, my reading, in order to be intelligible at all, presupposes reading between the lines in the sense of Derridean "duplicity" (see Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 192, 1982 [1972]: 86, 1991 [1987]: 41, 62, 97, 2000 [1988]: 12; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 251–252; Ormiston 1988; for a discussion, see Excursus 1.2.1). And, in this precise sense, my reading is an exercise of reading that problematizes representation by its own means postulating that the sublime is both the limit of representation and its sublation in the Hegelian sense of *Aufhebung* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; in Derridean terms, see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 40–41, 44, 1984a [1972/1968]: 19–20, 1984f [1972/1968]: 120–121; cf. Cox 1996: 125–128; for the idea of the sublime, see, for example, Vainikkala 1990; Shaw 2006; for "the abyss of representation" in the context of the sublime, see Hartley 2003).

With regard to the sublime, what is specific to my approach is that I consider the formation of cyber discourse in the linguistic matrix of post-theory as a result of the displacement of the sublime from the object to an inherently postmodern mode of language; that is, in the world of the "post," in the political economy of the postmodern, it is no longer the object in itself, the entity appearing in our apprehension, but, instead, a *linguistic figure* that, by taking the place of the object, now appears as a manifestation of the sublime. This is the basis of what is called the technological sublime (see, for example, Graham 2002: 154–175; Hughes 2004b: 38–39; Nye 1996), redefined by the "post" in the discursive configuration of the "cyber."

On the basis of the above it is obvious that there can be no single reading of this study; rather, the text allows innumerable variant readings, each of which results from various routes of reading. So, how to read this study is a question to which there are as many answers as there are readers. Thus, what I can do is only to suggest some starting points that open up different perspectives on the issues that I am considering in the course of my reading (for the thematic complexes of the study, see below).

In the following introductory sections I will outline my argument and highlight the key concepts. As linguistic constructions, these concepts form specific nodal points, time and again changing their patterns, that are constitutive of my argument. Thus, it should be noticed that due to their occasionality and situationality, these nodal points do no purport to provide any kinds of definitive definitions of the concepts on which the study is constructed; rather, to apply a

Lacanian term, each of them functions as a kind of *point de capiton*, "anchoring point" (see Lacan 1977h [1966/1960]: 303; cf. Bowie 1991: 74), contingent on the context, that combines various conceptual networks that inform my argumentation. Accordingly, these concepts and conceptual networks are not fixed by exclusive definitions; instead, depending on the standpoint, they open up various perspectives on the issues under consideration at each time (in terms of Nietzschean perspectivism, cf., for example, Nehamas 1985: 1–8, 20–21, 64–73; Haber 1994: 4, 17, 32, 48, 51, 74, 119–130; Solomon 2003: 35–48, 60–63).

On the methodical premises outlined above, considering the suggestive power of the "post," I will finally raise the question: what does it imply in terms of theory if its most important effect is what Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1986 [1817]: 91), in the context of romantic poetry, called the "willing suspension of disbelief"?[7]

To Begin With: The "Post"

There is no "cyber" without the "post"; this is the main argument of the study at hand (elaborated in Excursus 1.1.3). I will argue that (1) post-theory or the theory discourse of the "post," as a radicalized form of the theoretical matrix of poststructuralism and the postmodern, is a precondition of the discursive configuration of the "cyber," the universe of cyber discourse as a manifestation of the techno-imaginary typical of the postmodern; and (2) both the "post" and the "cyber" reflect "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (see Jameson 1984, 1991), understood, in my reading, as the logic of spectralization peculiar to the political economy of neoliberalism (cf. Derrida 1994 [1993]). What is specific to my reading is that I consider spectralization in terms of hyperization; that is, in terms of the *hyperization of theory* in the sense that the theory discourse of the "post" is based on a postmodern use of language in which "the theoretical" is imbued with a mode of the hyperbolic that is able to exceed its own limits by means of limitless linguistic figuration. In this sense, the "hyper" of hyperization implies exceeding the limits of exaggeration through which *meaning turns into pure signification*, into a free play of signifiers. It is in this sense that the "cyber" follows the logic of the "hyper" constitutive of the "post."

Accordingly, cyber discourse is based on the cyberization of signification in the manner of hyperization; that is, both post-theory and cyber discourse simul-

7 Reflecting upon the poetic qualities of the collection of poems entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, published together with William Wordsworth (1798), Coleridge (1986 [1817]: 89–91) makes a distinction between "imagination" and "fancy," thus explaining their different literary interests and modes of writing: "In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads'; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination *that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith*. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand." (ibid.: 91; emphasis mine)

taneously express and generate the spectralization of language typical of the discursive configuration of the "post," thus evincing, in their own way, that they are linguistic modifications of the speculative mode of operation constitutive of the financial markets under the regime of the political economy of neoliberalism (in terms of "hypercapitalism," cf. Graham 2006; for the ambiguity of the "hyper," see Armitage 2001, 2004). That is, while the financial markets are ruled by the supremacy of speculative value in its abstract form (cf. Jameson 1998: 136–161), post-theory and cyber discourse, manifesting the abstract expressionism of postmodern linguisticism, are ruled by *the supremacy of the signifier* in the sense of radical self-referentiality (in Lacanian terms, cf. Lacan 1988 [1955]: 36; Bowie 1991: 84–85; Burke 1992: 99–104; Evans 1996: 186).

In these terms, as different as the spheres of the "post" and the "cyber" are in comparison to the world of financial capital, they all have a common denominator: all of them exemplify the seduction of what Baudrillard (1983b [1981]) calls "hyperreality" (cf. Perry 1998; Tiffin & Terashima 2001); that is, in my reading, *the spectacular productivity of the absent present defined by the dynamics of desire: the futuring of the present in its absence as the process of bringing the absent to presence in its spectrality* (for *presencing* in Heideggerian terms, cf. Heidegger 1977f [1953]: 9–10, 2000b [1953]: 12–13).

In other words, the hyperization of language and theory, *mutatis mutandis*, corresponds to the hyperization of capital under the regime of the political economy of neoliberalism, the political regime of global capitalism in which not only economic relations, but, more fundamentally, all expressions of life have been subsumed under the logic of the financial markets (cf. Rajan 2006; Nadesan 2008; in terms of "life as surplus," cf. Cooper 2008; with regard to the connections between neoliberalism and technoscience, cf. Pellizzoni & Ylönen 2012). This is the reason of economism, the rationality of an all-consuming economization of all being inscribed in the figure of the cyborg; that is, the hyperization of economic value in the sense of radical monetarization has now become the highest value of being human, the human reduced to the usability of the human being understood in terms of profitability. It is in this manner that the reason of economism is constitutive of the politics of the body under the imperative of neoliberalism.

It is in this constellation that what I call *the psychophysics of capital* (see Prolegomena 2.1.2 and Chapter 1.2.2) as a new kind of social kinetics both manifests and drives forward the economization of the subject in terms of libidinal productivity, and, at the same time, produces ever-new expressions of the language of desire as the language of the postmodern.

Just what is it that makes our world so exciting, so marvellous (for an overview, see Prolegomena 1–4)? Taking this question as the point of departure I will consider desire as the driving force not only of the cultural constellation of contemporary capitalism, defined in terms of what I designate as *productive consumption* ruled by the disciplinary order of neo-Fordism (discussed throughout

the study), but also of the theoretical matrix of poststructuralism and the postmodern (for an overview, see Excurses 1 and 2). My purpose is to show that language, technology, the body and all that is referred to by the enigmatic signifier "the sexual" are intertwined and mutually conditioned in the postmodern in a manner that accounts for the *spectacular productivity of desire* in both neoliberal capitalism and the discursive configuration of the "post" as the "theoretical" precondition of the "cyber." That is, the logic of the "post" enables the "cyber" as a mythopoetic, post/neo-futuristic signifier that redefines "the sexual" – which, as such, is paradigmatic of the postmodern in the mode of what I call post-sex or "sex" (discussed in detail in Chapters 2.1.1, 5.2 and 5.4) – in terms of the technological; "the technological" understood here in the sense of the techno-imaginary (see, for example Goody 2011: 1–21; Marcus 1995; Barbrook 2007; Flichy 2007a [2001]).

What is constitutive of the discursive configuration of the "post" as the "theoretical" precondition of the "cyber" is that the "post," beyond its lexical meaning, is a master signifier, a codifying and organizing prefix, that, by the suggestive power it has gained in Western academia since the 1970s (see, for example, Bell 1973: 51–54; Connor 1989: 65–66; Callinicos 1989: 25; Best & Kellner 1997: 3–35; McCance 1996), constantly generates flowing and floating linguistic figurations that I describe by the terms *postification*, *postality*, *postness* and *postism*, understood as hyperized forms of poststructuralism and the postmodern, thus signifying a specific mode of desire: the *desire for theory* based on the desire *of* theory as the libidinal impetus of "the theoretical" inscribed in the language of the "post" (cf. Lash 1990b: 66–67, 80–97, 99–100). In this sense, the desire for theory in post-theory is *enacted* by the auto-affective motility of what I call "free-floating signifiers" inherent to the "post" (defined and discussed in the course of the study; from a Hegelian perspective, cf. Butler 1999b [1987]: 17–24; in terms of Derridean "auto-affection," cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]: 154–156, 165–167, 186–187; in comparison to "free-floating capital," cf. Jameson 1998: 142).

It is in this manner that the language of post-theory is the condition of possibility of cyber discourse. In other words, the hyperization of theory constitutive of post-theory is the linguistic matrix from which cyber discourse emerges as a result of the cyberization of the technological sublime typical of the postmodern. This is the idea of my argument that there is no "cyber" without the "post." Thus, as we will see, cyber discourse, in its academic form (the proper focus of my discussion), is an effect of the "post" that, in turn, is an effect of what is called "French theory" (considered throughout the study; for an overview, see Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Cusset 2008 [2003]), thematized in my reading in terms of post-theory.

What I call the *seduction of the signifier*, resulting from the spell of linguisticism generated by the "post," is peculiar to post-theory (see Prolegomena 1.1) that, for its part, promotes the ecstatic, even neo-religious technophilia around the "cyber" and the transcendental dreams of what I consider to be *technological resurrectionism* as its apotheosis (in terms of *der Neue Mensch*, "the New Human

Being," cf. Küenzlen 1997 [1994]; Lepp et al. 1999; D'Idler 2007). To elaborate on this aspect, I argue that cyber ecstasy is based on what I designate as the *virtual reality of language* in which "the theoretical" appears as "real," a linguistic delusion that is typical of post-theory in general (see Prolegomena 1.2). The same applies to the libidinalization of language and the hyperization of theory inherent to both the "post" and the "cyber," finally resulting in the sexualization of theory and its most extravagant manifestation that I call *theory-sex*; that is, hyper-sexualized forms of theoretical phantasms brought about by the "post" (cf. Lash 1991: 264–265; Lyotard 1993a [1974]: 66–93; Potts 2002: 217–265; Schwab 1987); to specify, theoretical phantasms as post-theoretical imaginary projections in terms of "the theoretical" that I designate as *theory-fictions* (cf. Bowie 1988 [1987]; Tabbi 2002).

In this sense, the phantasm of "cybersex," the key term of the study in the sense of an overarching metaphor dominating the themes and topics under discussion, is a discursive trope that encompasses sexual-theoretical fantasy scripts effected by the "cyber" that conjure up visions of an emancipatory body politics beyond the constraints of "the normal," "the normal" as defined by the "post" (discussed throughout the study and in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.4).

On the basis of the problematization outlined above concerning the linguistic and theoretical effects of the "post" and the "cyber," I will consider the discursive figure of cybersex not as a real phenomenon, but as a postmodern conceit, a mythopoetic, technophilic master trope, that combines the popular-cultural and post-theoretical visions that pertain to the nexus – or, more appropriately, the copula – between "the sexual" and "the technological" in contemporary technoculture in which, according to Fredric Jameson (1991: 38), technology can be seen as a "representational shorthand" for "a network of power and control" implying "the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself."[8] My point is that cybersex is a "free-floating signifier" that, at the level of language, brings about what it states (cf. Butler 1999b: 18), namely, the phantasm of "sex" *by means of* technology. In this sense, I use the figure of cybersex as a methodical key to approach not only the radical transformation of language under the linguistic regime of the postmodern, or, in my own

8 To understand the implications of Jameson's idea already here, it is appropriate to recall the whole passage in which Jameson (1991: 37–38) uses this expression: "I want to suggest that our faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism. The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself. This is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature – one is tempted to characterize it as 'high-tech paranoia' – in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind." In other words, as we will see, technology in contemporary capitalism has given rise to the "technological sublime" that, instead of making it intelligible, contributes to its "mesmerizing" power (cf., for example, Carey 1989: 113–141; Wilson 1991: 197–263; Nye 1996: 143–172; Graham 2002: 154–175; Hughes 2004b: 38–39; Streeter 2003, 2011).

terminology, the paradigm of the "post," but, more fundamentally, the mode of being and having a body under the power of the political economy of neoliberalism, the political regime of global capitalism (see, for example, Comaroff & Comaroff 2001; Harvey 2005 [2003], 2007 [2005]; Albritton et al. 2010; in terms of "dromoeconomics," cf. Armitage & Graham 2001).

As we will see, this is the context in which the language of the "post" becomes intelligible as a postmodern economy of signification resulting from the excess of "meaning" that *makes meaning itself meaningless*; intelligible, of course, in terms of what I call the *surrational*, the rational of the imaginary peculiar to the reason of the postmodern (discussed throughout the study; for the definition, see Prolegomena 3.2.2 and Excursus 2.2): the surrational as the most avant-gardist mode of the rational, the ultimate revolution of reason enabled by the logic of the "post."

Towards the Reason of the "Cyber"

As the second methodical key in order to relate cybersex or "sex" in terms of the "cyber" to the prosthetic discourse of the postmodern (in both senses of the term; see Prolegomena 2.1.2 and 2.2.1, Prolegomena 4.1.2, Chapter 2.5.2, Chapter 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, Chapter 4, for a historical contextualization, see Excursus 3), I apply Sigmund Freud's (1972a [1930]: 451) metaphor *Prothesengott*, "prosthetic God," by which Freud, in his critical analysis of modern culture entitled *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and Its Discontents*), describes – in a melancholic tone in contrast to contemporary techno/media enthusiasm – the technological augmentation and extension of the human body by means of various *Hilfsorgane*, "auxiliary organs," ranging from the telephone to the aeroplane (ibid.: 450; cf. Sawday 2007: 2–4; in terms of media/techno art, Stelarc 1991; with regard to McLuhan, cf. Cavell 2003: 81–84; Kittler 2010 [2002]: 29–31).

While both of the key metaphors of the study, cybersex and prosthetic God, *as specific linguistic figures* in the sense of the Heideggerian "extraordinary" (see above), draw attention to the technologization of the body in the postmodern, epitomized by the figure of the cyborg (discussed in detail in Chapter 6), the theoretical tension between them, due to their historical and cultural distance to each other, enables the linguistic and epistemo-ontological problematization of the prostheticization of theory in the form of theoretical prostheticism and, as its hyperized climax, prosthetic fetishism, promoted by post-theory and cyber discourse alike (for paradigmatic examples, see Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; cf. Betcher 2001: 39; Sobchack 2004: 205–225; in theological terms, cf. Elwell 2011: 43–84). To consider the metaphoricality of cybersex through the metaphoricality of Freud's "prosthetic God" opens up a perspective on the "cyber" in relation to the "post"; that is, while the "cyber" is a result of the metaphorization of technoculture in terms of science fiction and cyber discourse as its mythopoetic derivation in the sense of "theoretical" sublimation, the "post," in turn, is an outcome of what I call the *suprematization* of the conceptual matrix of poststructur-

alism and the postmodern effected by the *reification of the signifier* (see Jameson 1991: 96) in the mode of what Baudrillard (1981 [1972]: 92) refers to as "a fetishism of the signifier" (cf. Gane 1991a: 204; De Mul 1999 [1990/1995]: 173–192; with regard to "the ideology of performance," cf. Blau 1992: 64–67).

Thus, to paraphrase Baudrillard (1981), what is at issue in the study at hand is *a critique of the political economy of the signifier*; in other words, an attempt to map out, in critical terms, the hyperization of language as a specific form of the economy of signification promoted by the "post" as a mode of "theory," as a distinctive manifestation of "the theoretical" effected, in turn, by "French theory," that is the condition of possibility of all that is referred to by the "post" and, as its technophilic derivation, the "cyber"; that is, I will explore *the formation of cyber discourse in the discursive matrix of post-theory* in a certain historical constellation subsumed under the term "postmodern" (for an overview, see, for example, Fokkema & Bertens 1986; Hoesterey 1991b; Docherty 1993b; Bertens & Natoli 2002; Drolet 2004b). It is important to emphasize in this connection that, although poststructuralism is the intrinsic precondition of the "post," the discursive proliferation of poststructuralism itself and its pervasive influence on cultural theory in Western academia is contingent on the enormous suggestive power of postmodern thought – or, rather, theory – since its breakthrough in the early 1980s (discussed in Excursus 2; for foundational texts, see Jameson 1984; Lyotard 1984 [1979]).

In this respect, I will argue that what is designated as "postmodern" is not something that exists in its own right, but that the postmodern is rather a continuation of the modern by other means; that is, *the postmodern implies a radicalization of the modern: the radicalization of the imperative of reason resulting in the radicalization of theory as a specific theoretical radicalism in the sense of the politics of theory* (with regard to the theory radicalism of the *Tel Quel* circle in terms of language, cf. Culler 1975: 241–254; Hutcheon 1980: 124–137; Roudiez 1980: 2–18; Moi 1986: 3–9; Callinicos 1989: 48–91; Kauppi 1994: 138–140, 187–191, 2010: 17–24, 47–58; in the context of French intellectual Maoism, cf. Wolin 2010).

If radical contingency, in its specific manner expounded in the course of the study, is constitutive of the logic of the "post," what does it imply in terms of the "cyber"? Accordingly, the question concerning the mode of rationality distinctive to cyber discourse is: what is the reason of the "cyber"? Is it the same as the reason of the "post"? If not, what, then, is the difference between them?

These questions, addressing the quintessence of the argument that I am advancing in this study, are articulated in Prolegomena (1–4) in which the problematization constitutive of my approach is outlined: the problematics of reason in terms of the "post." In this respect, I will argue that, in addition to the libidinalization of language peculiar to the "post," it is the postification of reason resulting from the postmodernization of the modern that is specific to both post-theory and cyber discourse in the sense of what I call *the techno-libertarian politics of language* (cf., for example, Dery 1996: 30–35, 99; Mattelart 2003: 69, 140; in terms of "Californian ideology," cf. Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]) as one of

the forms of "the political" in postmodern academia: *imaginary technologies* (cf., for example, de Lauretis et al. 1980; Kluitenberg 2006; Goody 2011; in terms of "media archaeology," cf. Huhtamo & Parikka 2011) as the basis of a phantasmatic mode of emancipatory politics enabled by the "cyber"; that is, the "cybering" of the body-subject as a techno-utopian manifestation of the political economy of neoliberalism reflecting, at the level of the imaginary, the construction of the neoliberal subject necessitated by the efficiency demands of neo-Fordism.

The logic of the "post" brings the radical transformation of the body in the postmodern into focus; that is, a *panic body*, driven forward by what I call the *liquid libido* inherent to productive consumption as the economic and political imperative of contemporary capitalism, is the mode of being of the body-subject constitutive of post-sex; "sex" that is based on the seduction of simulacra and the Taylorization of the libido (discussed throughout the study, for an overview, see Prolegomena 2.1.1). In this sense, the phantasm of cybersex or post-sex in terms of the "cyber" is a *techno-imaginary hyperization of the suprematization of "the sexual"* under the performative principle of neo-Fordism, the disciplinary order of productive consumption that, in addition to the promotion and the concomitant proliferation of desire, produces postmodern body panic, a form of panic that arises from the liminality of the body under the pressures of the constant *de-liminalization of its capacities*, the most distressing and agonizing and, paradoxically, the most exciting and inspiring, incentive of postmodern body politics (considered from various viewpoints in Prolegomena 2 and 3 and Chapters 1.2 and 5).

That is, the commodification of the body, resulting from the libidinal economy of neo-Fordism, contributes to a cultural constellation in which the idea of sexual prosthetics, peculiar to the sexual utopianism of the "cyber," reflects the emergence of what I designate as *the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern* (for an overview, see Prolegomena 2.2 and Chapter 1.1), characteristic of which is life in the laboratory and the ego-politics of pleasure, both of them evincing the imperative of self-optimization inherent in neoliberalism (in terms of the "entrepreneurial self," see Gordon 1987: 300; du Gay 1996a: 62–73, 181–183, 1996b: 156–157; Besley & Peters 2007: 155–174; Rose 1999 [1990]); in other words, what is at issue in this connection is a post-Foucauldian "care of the self" as a post-political ego-project of the post-subject (cf. Foucault 1990h [1984]; 1992b [1984]), a "self" as a product of the self-economization of the self as an embodiment of capital, manifested, at the level of the techno-imaginary, by the celebration of the prosthetic body in terms of the "cyber."

This is the context in which the *phantasm* of the cyborg appears as the *reality* of technoscientific reason, the reason of contemporary capitalism (see Prolegomena 3.1); the very reason of what is called the posthuman in post-theory, that, in the reality defined by the body politics of neo-Fordism, implies treating the human being as "humanware" and refers, in global terms, to a new form of the militarization of everyday life in the sense of "permanent war" (see, for example, Burke 2007: 212–236; Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Amin 2004; Dal Lago & Palidda 2010).

All the above indicates the emergence of a new kind of subject for which the body becomes what I consider to be a *survival machine*: the body as a post-organic prosthetic construction operating under the imperative of the machinic, the onto-technological reason of the machine defined by the conceptual constellation of the cyborg and the posthuman, radicalized by the politics of language constitutive of the "cyber" (discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

It is in this way that the triumph of technoscientific reason under the imperative of the political economy of neoliberalism has resulted in what is called *the posthuman condition* in postmodern theory (see, for example, Graham 2002: 10–11, 36–37, 155–160; Nayar 2004: 20–21; Braidotti 2006: 135; in terms of "the transhuman condition," cf. Ansell Pearson 1997; with regard to "hypercapitalism," cf. Graham 2006; for a critique, see Winner 2005). In a specific manner, the discursive constellation of the "cyber" displays the seductive potential of the posthuman, its extraordinary effect on postmodern theory with regard to the transformative body hyperized in terms of the "post."

What does that mean? Outlining the perspective of "the posthuman," Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston sum up the salient features of the new condition that is "upon us" now:

> Queer, cyborg, metametazoan, hybrid, PWA [Person-With-AIDS]; bodies-without-organs, bodies-in-process, virtual bodies: in unvisualizable amniotic indeterminacy, and unfazed by the hype of their always premature and redundant annunciation, posthuman bodies thrive in the mutual deformations of totem and taxonomy. We have rehearsed the claim that the posthuman condition is upon us and that lingering nostalgia for a modernist or humanist philosophy of self and other, human and alien, normal and queer is merely the echo of a discursive battle that has already taken place – and the tinny futurism that often answers such nostalgia is the echo of an echo. (Halberstam & Livingston 1995a: 19)

A suggestive summary of the posthuman, indeed. My position with regard to the posthuman condition will be seen in the following chapters.

Beyond the Dichotomy of the *explicandum* and the *explicans*

Why is it that all that is "cyber," although it originally refers to cyberpunk science fiction fantasies and the attendant technophilic subculture that conceived of, or even lived, reality in terms of science fiction (see, for example, Dery 1996; Wolmark 1997; Cavallaro 2000; Haney 2006; for "cyberpunk," see Nixon 1992; Slusser & Shippey 1992; McCaffery 1994b [1991]; Suvin 1994 [1989]; Bould 2005; in terms of "postmodernism," see McHale 1992: 225–267; with regard to "the cybernetic imagination in science fiction," see Warrick 1980), has come to constitute an important part of the technocultural/technoscientific theory discourse in postmodern academia, a specific form of "high theory" in terms of cyberspace, the cyborg and the posthuman (see, for example, Hollinger 2002, 2009; Roden 2002; Braidotti 2003; Heuser 2003; Dinello 2005; Michaud 2008; Murphy 2008; for an overview of the transition from science fiction to cybertheory, see Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; for a paradigmatic example of the

conflation/confusing of science fiction with reality in the name of the cyborg, see Haraway 1991a [1985]; for a historical contextualization, see Turner 2006)?

To understand the significance of this question in its historical dimensions, it is necessary to go to the origins of the "post," to the theoretical reorientation in American academia from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. What at the time became known as "French theory" as a critical counter-position to the academism of the New Criticism (for an overview, see Lentricchia 1980; Arac et al. 1983; Berman 1988; Leitch 1988, 1992; Starr 1995; Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]; Cusset 2008 [2003]) finally turned into a linguistic fundamentalism in which the auto-affective motility of the signifier as an unending motivity of language motivating the process of signification was seen as the origin not only of meaning, but, more fundamentally, of all being (for an overview, see Prolegomena 3.2.1 and Excursus 1.1). In other words, the "post" inaugurated *a new age of theory* in which ontology and epistemology collapsed onto each other thus constituting an onto-epistemological compound in terms of reading and writing, a paradigm of postmodern theory dedicated to "the theoretical" as the proper substance of theory in the mode of reading-writing.

In this manner, meaning was identified with signification that, in turn, was an effect of the reification of the signifier intrinsic to the theory in terms of the "post" and thus constitutive of "the theoretical" in the linguistic orientation of post-theory. This kind of fetishism of the signifier ultimately resulted in a postmodern epistemic order based on what I designate as *the hypostatization of the signifier* specific to post-theory, implying a radicalization of the "linguistic turn," a linguistification of theory as an endless linguistic figuration in the name of "textuality," or, in Peter Bürger's (1984 [1974]: 102) words, "an all-presence and omnipotence of the text" (for the origins of the "linguistic turn," see Rorty 1992b [1967]; for its critical contextualization, see Neal 2007: 113–127; Patai & Corral 2005; in terms of "cyborg writing," see Haraway 1991a: 175–181; Graham 2002: 200–220; Yaszek 2002; 14–15; Schneider 2005: 61–62, 73–75).

It is in this situation that theory became a "textual practice" (see, for example, Peters 2001: 12, 29; Davis 2004: 98, 132, 161; Chanter & Ziarek 2005: 22–25; Melzer 2006: 9–11; Shapiro 1992; for the origin of the idea, see Barthes 1981 [1968]),[9] a new mode of writing theory based on the supremacy of the signifier as the reality principle of the "post." That is, the "post" liberated theory from

9 In a paradigmatic manner, Rosi Braidotti (1994a: 154) defines the idea of "textual practice" conceiving of "the text" as "both a semiotic and material structure" that exceeds the "binary opposition" of a "social context and an activity of interpretation." The point is that "the text" must be "understood as a term in a process, that is to say a chain reaction encompassing a web of power relations" (ibid.). "What is at stake in the textual practice, therefore, is less the activity of interpretation than of decoding the network of connections and effects that link the text to an entire sociosymbolic system. In other words, we are faced here with a new materialist theory of the text and of textual practice." (ibid.; cf. Haraway 1991a: 149–150) What is problematic in this definition of "the text" is that, although it speaks of *linking* "the text to an entire *sociosymbolic* system," it nevertheless implies a conflation of textuality and reality, a reduction of reality to textuality, thus opening a way to a radical textualism in which all that is real is an effect of writing. This problem will be discussed throughout the study at hand.

the burden of the signified thus providing a new rationale for theory: *what you write is what you get*.

As a consequence, the epistemo-ontological idea of naming began to rule postmodern theory in the manner of radical nominalism, finally resulting in what I designate as *the linguistic metaphysics of the "post"* leading to the virtualization of theory as a simulation of being. In this manner, the hypostatization of signification ensuing from the hypostatization of the signifier transcribed theory into a postmodern literary form: a specific way, a distinctive *style*, of writing theory as *theory writing* in the sense of *écriture* emerging from the aleatory play of "free-floating signifiers" (for the origin of the term *écriture*, see Barthes 1967 [1953]; for its interpretation as "schizophrenic disjunction" in the context of postmodernism, see Jameson 1991: 29; for *écriture féminine*, see Cixous 1976 [1975]; in the context of the *Tel Quel* circle, see Rodowick 1988: 15–29; for a new mode of writing about writing in terms of writing, see Derrida 1978f [1967], 1997 [1967]); a mode of theory in which, as a result of the hyperization of language, "the theoretical" appeared as a manifestation of a higher sphere of the real, the "real" understood in this context in terms of the surrational peculiar to post-theory (for a contextualization in terms of "paraliterature," see Prolegomena 4.2; with regard to "cyborg writing," see Chapter 6.4.1).

What is essential here is that the logic of hyperization is based on the dynamics of linguistic escalation, resulting from *the dynamics of desire at the level of language*, inscribed in the specific form of hyperbole constitutive of the "post," the linguistic excess of self-replicating signifiers, in which, as a mode of figurative language, the hyperbolic, in the sense of exceeding the limits of exaggeration, is instrumental for achieving impressive effects; signifiers which, in turn, trigger off the dynamics of escalation in terms of the *surplus value of signification*: the figural movement of serial iteration, the escalating succession of suggestive linguistic figures, the upright spiralling of strings and chains of spectacular and extravagant tropes and conceits, each more impressive than the other (for paradigmatic examples, see Kroker 1993; Kroker & Weinstein 1994; Kroker & Kroker 1996a; cf. Haraway 1997). In this manner, hyperization implies an escalation of abstraction: each higher level of tropes and conceits entails an increase of metaphoricality in the sense of self-referentiality typical of the "post." At the level of language, this escalation of escalation follows the logic of the financial markets: the logic of speculation in the form of the spectral.

In short, linguistic extravaganza in terms of "free-floating signifiers" is constitutive of the hyperization of the "post"; that is, a phantasmatic language in the form of post-poetic figuration driven forward by the limitless possibilities of the imaginary.

As we will see, this is the logic of the *abstract expressionism of post-theory* both based on and eliciting the *jouissance* of *différance* by way of unending posti-

fication of "the theoretical" effected by the "post" itself; the desire and pleasure of linguisticism generated by the signifiers liberated from the burden of the signified; that is, the surplus value of signification produced by the "free-floating signifiers" of the "post" (for the term *jouissance*, see, for example, Fink 1997 [1995]: 83–122; Žižek 1997b; for the idea of *différance*, see Derrida 1984a [1972/1968]).

It is this radical transformation of language, writing, text and theory brought about by the "post" that enabled the spectacular rise of cyber discourse from the late 1980s through the 1990s; that is, the *rewriting* of the "post" in terms of the "cyber" became an exciting, alluring and liberating mode of theory in postmodern academia (see, for example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b; Dery 1996; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Haney 2006); the latest – for many, the ultimate – form of the avantgarde inaugurating the era of the present future, a future in the sense of radical futurality (see Chapters 3.2 and 3.3). It is in this manner that cyber discourse effaced the difference between William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and cyber-theory, the difference between science fiction and its hyperized form in the sense of cyberization in innumerable post-theoretical theory-fictions playing with the associative potential of the "cyber" (for the *ur*-texts of the "cyber," see Gibson 1987 [1982], 1995 [1984]; for paradigmatic examples of reading Gibson in terms of postmodern theory, see Kellner 1995: 297–331; Foster 2005: xi–xxix, 21–24, 49–53, 61–79; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Hollinger 1994 [1990]; McHale 1994 [1991]; Murphy 2008; in the context of "French theory," see Cusset 2008 [2003]: 248–262).

As a result, in the ecstasy of the "cyber," the very notion of the real evaporated into the air, dissolved into a fluid and protean textuality, which was also the fate of the body redefined in terms of the cyborg (discussed in detail in Chapters 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5); in Haraway's (1991i [1989]: 212) techno-enthusiastic words: "Bodies have become cyborgs – cybernetic organisms – compounds of hybrid techno-organic embodiment and textuality," and, as a result, "[t]he cyborg is text, machine, body, and metaphor – all theorized and engaged in practice in terms of communications" (ibid.; cf. Haraway 1997; for a critical discussion, see Cregan 2006: 142–165; cf. Cook 2004). This is the techno-triumphalism of the "cyber" (cf. McNeil 2000: 229–230); a mode of theoretical enchantment constitutive of cyber discourse as a neo-Futuristic linguistic figuration unleashed by the suggestive power of the "post."

In this respect, I will consider the consequences and implications of the theoretical arrogance of post-theory, expressed and propagated by such uncompromising statements – typical of poststructuralist theory style in general – as Haraway's apodictic proclamation according to which in the world of the cyborg, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (Haraway 1991a 149; cf. Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 323–325; Luke 2003b: 92, 95–98; Murphie & Potts 2003: 116–118; Milburn 2004: 113–114; Csicsery-

Ronay 2005: 55–56; Melzer 2006: 24–25; for Haraway in terms of "prophetic intellectuals," see Braidotti 2006: 272–274).[10]

It is in this constellation that the difference between the *explicandum* and the *explicans* finally disappears in the sense that both implode into each other; in other words, that which is to be explicated is always already included in the explicating, and vice versa (in terms of simulation, cf. Baudrillard 1994a [1981]: 31, 38), and, as a result, there is no longer anything that would be intelligible in terms of explication; instead, what there is is just writing in its radicalized mode of *écriture*.

This is the ultimate liberation of the signifier from the burden of the signified, from the burden of meaning, replaced by the floating lightness of signification: the ecstasy of the "post" in its radical postality based on the all-consuming postness of the "post" (in terms of "postisms," cf. Derrida 1990b; Flieger 2005: 124–127; in the context of "the American ideology," cf. Levine 2004: 20–23).

Thinking the Unthinkable, or: The Quadrature of the Circle

As stated above, there is no "cyber" without the "post." To recall, the linguistic figuration constitutive of the "post" and the epistemo-ontological presumptions based on it have enabled the discursive emergence of the "cyber," the coming into being of cyber discourse as a techno-avantgardist manifestation of the virtual reality of language typical of the imaginary world of cyberculture (see, for example, Bell 2001a, 2004; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Armitage & Roberts 2002b; Tofts et al. 2003; for a historical contextualization, see Barbrook 2007), *a world in which the future is already present in its absent presence as a mesmerizing effect of the hyperization of the futural*, or, in Baudrillardian terms, the present future of the hyperreal (see Baudrillard 1983b [1981]). Seen from the perspective of the dynamics of desire, the central perspective of the study, both the "post" and the "cyber" are signifiers of desire that, no matter how much ever they signify the a-historical futurity of the imaginary, have a real history: the history of theory in Western academia from the 1970s to the present; the history of the postification of theory that is the history of poststructuralism and the postmodern: *the history of the desire for theory; a desire that is inscribed in theory itself* (for an overview, see Excurses 1 and 2).

The key term in this respect is the surrational, used throughout the study in various connections to characterize a specific radicalized modification of the

10 To understand the dimensions of Haraway's contention it is appropriate to recall its context: "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. The international women's movements have constructed 'women's experience,' as well as uncovered or discovered this crucial collective object. This experience is a fiction and fact of the most crucial, political kind. Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." (Haraway 1991a: 149)

rational constitutive of the postmodern: the reason of the imaginary, a mode of reason that is able to think about the unthinkable (for an elaboration of the notion of the surrational, see especially Prolegomena 3.2.2 and Excursus 2.2). While the surrational is typical of post-theory in the sense of post-reason, it is also intrinsic to postmodern technoculture and technoscience in the form of what Christopher Norris (1987: 159–163) designates as "modern technocratic reason" or the rational turned into a "technocratic fantasy" (Norris 1985: 35; in the context of the Cold War, cf. Kahn 1962, 1984). In this sense, nothing is impossible in the world of the "post" since the surrational has made the very idea of the impossible impossible. What is important in this context is that the surrational is not the same as the irrational or the non-rational; on the contrary, as the reason of the imaginary, *the surrational is the highest form of reason, a mode of reason that is able to exceed its own limits*.

In these terms, I will argue that the "cyber" is an apotheosis of the surrational constitutive of the "post," and it is in this sense that the "cyber" manifests the logic of the sublime, the logic of exceeding the limits of representation, the constraints of the representable, enabled by the "post"; that is, the paradigm of radical border-crossing as a continuous transgression of all that is limited even in the liminal. It is in this manner that cyber discourse, as a manifestation of the post-liminal inscribed in the techno-imaginary, is the "reality effect," *l'effet de réel*, of the "cyber" in the post-Barthesian sense of the term (cf. Barthes 1968: 88, 1989b [1968]: 141–148; Jameson 1988j [1977]: 135, 1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 22–23); the effect of the cyberization of the techno-imaginary enabled by the hyperization of theory in terms of the "post." In other words, as stated above, the "cyber" is intelligible as a manifestation of the sublime, the sublime as both the limit of representation and its sublation in the Hegelian sense of *Aufhebung* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115).

To understand the main idea of the study, it is necessary to understand the specific sense in which I use the term the "post" in my argumentation: what is at issue here is the principle of escalation in the sense of the superization of signification manifested by the logic of hyperization at the level of theory. Thus, firstly, the "post" does not designate temporality; its idea is not "after something"; rather, similarly to the "cyber," it is a prosthetic term, a linguistic prosthesis that signifies the idea of "beyond." Secondly, the "post" implies the logic of *de, dis and trans*, a mode of thought constitutive of both poststructuralism and the postmodern; that is, the idea of the post-liminal, the logic of liminality as a radical trans-activity relying on deconstruction and disruption in the sense of the subversive. Thirdly, the "post" is a libidinal signifier that refers to the dynamics of desire in contemporary culture, the futurality of the absent present, the mode of being in terms of becoming; that is, the "post" comprises a language of desire, a libidinal, and, in this sense, a Lacanian language (cf. Bowie 1988 [1987]: 99–164; Selden & Widdowson 1993: 137–141; Gallop 1985): a language that redefines the real in terms of the imaginary.

In all these three senses, the origins of the "post" are in poststructuralism and the postmodern, both of which, *as signifiers, theoretical objects and forms of theory*, came into being as reactions to their predecessors, structuralism and the modern (for an overview, see Bannett 1989; Poster 1989; Sim 1992; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Bertens 1995; Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]; Peters 2001; Belsey 2002; Davis 2004; Williams 2005; Dews 2007 [1987]; Koch 2007; Newman 2007; for the historical turning point towards the "post" in 1966, see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]). Thus, engaged in *rewriting* of the terms of structuralism and the modern, poststructuralism and the postmodern constituted a paradigm shift in the conception of "the theoretical" itself (discussed in Prolegomena 3.2, Prolegomena 4.2 and Excurses 1 and 2). This shift entailed a move towards *non-representational forms of theory*, a move towards a post-representational understanding of "the theoretical" in the sense of the self-referentiality of theory.[11] Thus, from the very beginning, the "post," as the conceptual climax of poststructuralism and the postmodern, implying an autonomization of their defining prefix, *post*, is, paradoxically, a "reactionary" mode of thought. In other words, the "post" establishes its conceptual identity by *reacting* to its referent by negation, thus remaining dependent on it, but, this notwithstanding, suggesting ever-new interpretations of the theoretical conceptions it is attached to (in terms of "endism" and "affirmation in the name of negation," see Excursus 2.1.1 and Excursus 2.3).

This is the double bind of the "post," its theoretical double face: by necessity, even in its detachment, it is reliant on the very conceptuality that it attempts to overcome, the conceptual configuration of structuralism and the modern and the entire problematics inscribed in it.

In this sense, the paradigm of the "post" implies an internal radicalization of poststructuralism and the postmodern: both of them are *aufgehoben*, "sublated," in the Hegelian manner (see above) in the conceptual self-movement pertaining to "the theoretical" of theory. This is the logic of the postification of theory based on the dialectics of the "post." Accordingly, the post-representational, self-referential mode of theory is the origin of post-theory; a form of theory in which "the theoretical" is defined by the "post" in the sense given

11 The turn to poststructuralism implied a radical questioning of referentiality, and thus a "crisis of representation" and of the very idea of representationality (see, for example, Foster 1985: 128–132; Harvey 1989: 49–54, 204–219; Jameson 1991: 51–52, 127–128, 169–170; Rosenau 1992: 92–108; Bertens 1995: 239–243; Deane 1995 [1990]: 356–357; Wheale 1995: 154–155). This was the beginning of a new kind of theory in the sense of what Rey Chow (2002) calls "the interruption of referentiality"; a mode of theory based on linguistic operations: "I use the term theory to mark the paradigm shift introduced by poststructuralism, whereby the study of language, literature, and cultural forms becomes irrevocably obligated to attend to the semiotic operations involved in the production of meanings, meanings that can no longer be assumed to be natural. Obviously there are other types of theories that have had great impact on large numbers of academic intellectuals – one thinks of the cultural writings of the Frankfurt School critics, various forms of historicisms, or sociological and anthropological theories, for instance – but it is arguably poststructuralism, with its tenacious attention to the materiality of human signification, that has generated some of the most far-reaching ramifications for the ways we approach questions of objectivity and questions of subjectivity alike." (ibid.: 172)

above (for different conceptions of post-theory, see, for example, McQuillan et al. 1999; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b; Davis 2004).

A paradigmatic example of the "post" is the posthuman (for its various aspects, see Prolegomena 3.1.1, Prolegomena 4.1.2 and Chapter 5.3.1): it is (1) something that, by definition, is assumed to result from what is called the "death of man" in poststructuralist/postmodern theory (see, for example, Foucault 1989 [1966]: 386–387; Derrida 1984f [1972/1968]; Canguilhem 2005 [1966]; cf. Merquior 1985: 13, 43–55; Burke 1992: 62–115; Martin 1992: 1, 38–39, 45–47, 51–52; Kumar 1995: 150–152; Carrette 2000: 17, 64, 73–91; Gutting 2001: 255–257; Bernauer 2004: 87–90; Pircher 1995a; in terms of the critique of anthropocentrism inherent in humanism, cf. Heidegger 1976a [1946]), and, accordingly, to be beyond the human (*post*-human), but (2) which, at the same time, is still human (post-*human*), thus implying the logic of no longer / not yet: the potentiality of yet-to-be in the state of *inter* (cf. Bennington 1999). In this sense, the "post" embraces a Derridean language, a language in which distinctions are based on *différance* (see Derrida 1984a [1972/1968]) and an endless process of "supplementation" and "dissemination" (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 141–164, 1981a [1972]).

In these terms, it is possible to read the study at hand as an introduction to a general theory of boundary value (*Grenzwert*), not in the sense of mathematics, but in the sense of postmodern cultural theory in which the deconstruction and disruption of all kinds of boundaries is an overarching theme, even an obsession. The same applies to the idea – indeed, the *idea* – of the sublime as a specific mode or appearance of the liminal; that is, as mentioned above, the sublime as both the limit of representation and its sublation.

It is in this constellation that the "cyber" becomes intelligible; intelligible, of course, in terms of the imaginary. Firstly, the "cyber" is not a derivation of cybernetics (see Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; for an overview, see Chapters 6.1.1 and 6.1.2), rather, the "cyber" implies a figurative echo of an echo: an echo of the popularization of cybernetics in American popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s (see, for example, Mindell et al. 2003: 88–89; Pickering 2010; for America as "the cybernetic continent," see Farish 2010: 147–192; in the context of the American counterculture, see Turner 2006). Thus, secondly, the "cyber" emerges from science fiction, from the literary movement of cyberpunk (for an overview, see Dery 1996; Cavallaro 2000), and its visionary climax, the futuristic fantasy of cyberspace imagined by Gibson (1995 [1984]) in his science fiction novel *Neuromancer* (see, for example, Csicsery-Ronay 1994 [1988]; McCaffery 1994a [1991]; Kendrick 1996; in terms of "cyberbabble," see Bukatman 1994a). Thirdly, parallel to the post-utopian dreaming of cyberspace, the academization of the "cyber" began with the theory-fiction of the cyborg written into being by Haraway (1985) in her "Cyborg Manifesto" (see, for example, Hollinger 2009: 272–275; Balsamo 2000b; Sofoulis 2003; Badmington 2000b).

In this manner, in the form of what I consider as a *second-order science fiction in the sense of the paraliterary* (see Krauss 1985a [1980]; in terms of science fiction, see Suvin 1988: 3, 15–18, 88–91; Yanarella 2001: 2–7; Botting 2005: 112–113; Delany 2005: 358–372), the discursive configuration of the "cyber" or cyber discourse manifests the escalation of theory typical of the "post." And it is in this manner that the "post" opens up the way to *the quadrature of the circle,* in other words, enables *the thinking of the unthinkable*.

Reading the "Cyber" in Terms of the "Post"

In order to reconstruct the coming into being of the "cyber" as an effect of the "post," that is, post-theory as the precondition of cyber discourse in its academic form, my argumentation, in the mode of deconstructive/reconstructive reading, proceeds through six thematic complexes in various combinations, which are: (1) language, theory and the "post," (2) reason, the rational and the surrational, (3) the body, the sexual and the "cyber," (4) prosthesis, the cyborg and the posthuman, (5) neo-Fordism, productive consumption and the political economy of neoliberalism, and (6) military-technological rationality, the reality of the techno-imaginary and the redesign of the human. These thematic complexes, referring to the relationships between the themes and their interplay, constitute the topical structure of the argument that I will be advancing in the study at hand. That is, instead of a linear presentation, the study is based on multidimensional combinations of various themes that allow different approaches or routes of reading.

In the following, these thematic complexes are concisely outlined by emphasizing some central aspects constitutive of their main lines of argument and referring to the chapters that are relevant in each case.

Post-theory, theory-fiction and the libidinal, as the key terms with regard to the postification of theory as the precondition of cyber discourse, are discussed in the first thematic complex concerning *language, theory and the "post."* From the very beginning, it is essential to notice that in my reading, post-theory, in the sense of the "post" defined above, is not theory "after" theory (cf. Docherty 1990, 1996; Eagleton 2003; Birns 2010; Elliott & Attridge 2011); rather, it is theory *in the mode* of the "post": post-theory is about the "posts" effected by itself, by posting ever-new "posts" generated by the postality of the postness constitutive of the "post." Thus, post-theory is performative writing, theoretical postification in terms of *écriture*, post-Barthesian "writerly" writing in which "free-floating signifiers" enact post-literary figures of "the theoretical," theory-fictions that celebrate the imaginary in the manner of postism (cf. Little 1998: 30–35; Derrida 1990b). In this sense, post-theory is a language of desire, a libidinal language driven forward by the phantasmatic logic of hyperization, the para/post-logic of spectrality (cf. Derrida 1994 [1993]; with regard to "paralogy," cf. Lyotard 1984 [1979]). This is the "theoretical" matrix from which the "cyber"

of cyber discourse emerges: the "cyber" as the imaginary premise of the cyberization of the technological sublime peculiar to cyber discourse.

Accordingly, similarly to the political economy of neoliberalism, *post-theory promotes limitless desire by exceeding the limits of the desirable*. In the final instance, the libidinal economy of signification peculiar to post-theory is based on linguistic idealism hypostatizing the imaginary into the real (cf. McNally 2001: 1–8, 33–34, 54, 57, 230; in terms of "the metaphysics of capitalism," cf. Micocci 2009). (For the themes discussed in the first thematic complex, see especially Prolegomena 1.1.1, 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, Prolegomena 3.2, Prolegomena 4, as well as Excurses 1 and 2).

The theme of the "post" in terms of language and theory is further developed in the second thematic complex pertaining to *reason, the rational and the surrational*. In the constellation of the "post" defining the premises of the "cyber," things attain their true reality, paradoxically, through the process of derealization of the real (cf. Welsch 1996: 289–326; Porombka & Scharnowski 1999), combined with the process of the derationalization of the rational resulting in the post-rational rationality of the surrational. In this sense, the "post" implies a radical – perhaps the ultimate – transformation of the Enlightenment, a post-rational configuration of thought, understood in terms of writing, in which reason – the very fundament of the modern – exceeds its own limits by means of the reason of the imaginary. That is, from the micro-politics of the desires and pleasures of the body to the macro-politics of globalization, the imperative of exceeding the limits defines the new rationality of all being in the world of the "post": the rationality of the surrational. This redefinition of reason is constitutive of a fundamental economization of all the resources of the earth, human life included, the economic regime of neoliberalism under which the only value is surplus value in the sense of profit maximization.

Thus, *sapere aude*, "have the courage to use your own understanding" (see Kant 1991a [1784]), this Kantian imperative of reason is replaced by the imperative of economic interest in the world of the "post," by the principle of what I call *the calculative reason of all-consuming economic futurality as the economization of the imaginary*, the rationalization of the rational in the mode of the spectrality of the surrational. (For the themes discussed in the second thematic complex, see especially Prolegomena 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, Prolegomena 3.2.2, Chapter 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.3.1, Chapter 2.2.1, Chapter 3.2.2, Excursus 3, Chapter 5.1.2, 5.1.3 and Chapter 6.3.1).

The hyperization of reason to the post-rational rationality of the surrational constitutes the post-theoretical matrix of the "cyber," the discursive configuration of cyberspace, cybersex and the cyborg as popular and academic figures proliferated and recycled in and by cyber discourse, the most productive discourse formation in the literary and theoretical constellation of postmodern retro-futurism (cf. Collins 1995: 9–16; Dyson 2009: 175; in terms of *la mode rétro* in the postmodern, cf. Jameson 1991: 19; from the perspective of historical

Futurism, cf. Berghaus 2009; Poggi 2009). These are the topics of the third thematic complex concerning *the body, the sexual and the "cyber."* Never before has "the body" been theorized as intensively and extensively as in the constellation of the "post," and never before has "the sexual" had such a suggestive power as in post-theory. What I call "bodyism" typical of the "post" refers to the designer body, body optimization and body utopianism characteristic of post-theory (for a contextualization, see Sargisson 1996; Negrin 2008; for "the American body," see Johnston 2001b; for the "body work" constitutive of beauty and self-image in American culture, see Gimlin 2002; for postmodern "body fascism," see Pronger 2002; in terms of the "trans-body," see Caysa 2003: 57–75).

As a result of the postmodern body cult, a specific theoretical body euphoria, or, alternately, body horror, typical of the "post" has contributed, in turn, to the rise of "the sexual" to the position of a key signifier in contemporary culture endlessly theorized by post-theory and cyber discourse alike. While these themes are considered throughout the study, what is distinctive about my approach is that, as a counter-move, I give a historical contextualization to "the sexual" in the postmodern by discussing the theoretical phantasmagoria of the "post" and the "cyber" in the light of the discursive figures of onanism disease and hysteria in the medical conceptions of the body and "the sexual" in the eighteenth, the ninenteenth and the early twentieth century. (For the themes discussed in the third thematic complex, see especially Prolegomena 1.1.1, Prolegomena 2.1.2, 2.2.1, Prolegomena 3.1.1, 3.1.2, Chapter 1.2.1, 1.2.4, Chapter 1.3, Chapter 2.6.1, Chapter 3.2.2, Excursus 3 and Chapter 5.1.2).

Another aspect of "bodyism" in the cultural constellation of the "post" is the theoretical reconceptualization of the body in terms of the technological embracing the fourth thematic complex pertaining to *prosthesis, the cyborg and the posthuman*. I will consider the figure of prosthesis, similarly to the figures of the cyborg and the posthuman, as a postmodern theory-fiction, a theoretical phantasm, that, instead of representing the prosthetic reality of the contemporary world, propagates the theoretical discourses of the post/techno-body; a body that is enhanced, augmented and extended by means of prosthetics (for paradigmatic examples, see Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; Zylinska 2002b; from of a theological perspective, cf. Waters 2006: 53–64). In this sense, I will argue that prosthesis, as a mythopoetic trope, is simultaneously an effect and a premise of the prosthetic language constitutive of the theoretical matrix of the "cyber" in the discursive configuration of the "post"; that is, a linguistic figure that, *as a prosthesis of theory or a theoretical prosthesis, produces prosthetic theory*. The same theoretical self-referentiality is also intrinsic to the cyborg and the posthuman as post-theoretical signifiers that bring about what they signify by way of linguistic circularity typical of the "post."

In this sense, prosthesis, the cyborg and the posthuman are self-positing, self-constitutive theory objects that produce their own condition of possibility in and by themselves. It is in this manner that the spectacular productivity

of post-theory and cyber discourse results from the auto-affective generation inscribed in the "post" and the "cyber" as "free-floating signifiers" typical of the postmodern. This is the logic of desire as I conceive of it throughout the study. (For the themes discussed in the fourth thematic complex, see especially Prolegomena 2.2, Prolegomena 3.1, Prolegomena 4.1.2, Chapter 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.3.2, Chapter 2.1.2, 2.1.3, Chapter 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2..2.4, 2.4.1, 2.5.2, Chapter 2.3.3, Chapter 2.5.1, Excursus 2.2.2, Chapter 3.2, 3.3.2, 3.4.2, 3.4.3, Chapter 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.4, Chapter 5.1.1, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, Chapter 5.5.2, Chapter 6.3.1, 6.3.2, 6.4.1, 6.4.2, 6.5.1, 6.5.2).

In broader terms, the logic of desire is the red thread that runs through the fifth thematic complex comprising *neo-Fordism, productive consumption and the political economy of neoliberalism*. By these three terms I describe the economic, political and technological radicalization of the modern that is generally designated, in the parlance of contemporary theory, as the emergence of, or the transition to, the societal and cultural constellation of the postmodern (see, for example, Arac 1986b; Connor 1989; Turner 1990b; Bertens 1995; Nicholson & Seidman 1995; Cahoone 1996; Best & Kellner 1997; Drolet 2004b; for a critical reevaluation, see Sanbonmatsu 2004). Contrary to the established discourse on the postmodern or postmodern discourse, I will argue that we are living in a world in which the imperative of modernization, based on the reason of the modern, determines the current living conditions (for the idea of modernization in relation to the postmodern, see, for example, Featherstone 1991a: 1–12; Jameson 1991: 303–311, 365–367, 380–381; Turner 1990a; Inglehart 1997; from a historical perspective, see Weber 1993 [1904–1905]; Sayer 1991; Turner 1992a). In this respect, what is called "the postmodern" constitutive of postmodernism and postmodernity is intelligible only with regard to commodification, the logic of the commodity form, that is the basis of what I designate as productive consumption as the driving force of contemporary capitalism under the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism.

This is the political economy of neoliberalism, the ideological camouflage of which is the libidinal economy of excessive affluence under the sign of the postmodern (cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Jameson 1991). And, accordingly, this is the origin of the "post": the desire for theory that follows the logic of productive consumption; that is, *theory as an academic commodity form*. (The themes of the fifth thematic complex are discussed throughout the study, for specifications, see especially Prolegomena 1.2.1, Prolegomena 2.1, Chapter 1.1.3, Chapter 1.2.1, 1.2.2, Chapter 2.1.1, Chapter 2.6.1, Chapter 3.1.1, Chapter 5.1, Chapter 5.2.1, Chapter 5.4.1, Chapter 6.3.1).

It is from the perspective outlined above that the fictionalization of "the technological" in terms of hyperization peculiar to the postmodern is approached in the sixth thematic complex concerning *military-technological rationality, the reality of the techno-imaginary and the redesign of the human*. It is not by accident that war has created the historical preconditions of what are presently

called technoscience and technoculture (see, for example, Penley & Ross 1992c; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Robins & Webster 1999; Cooper 2002; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Davis 2006). From the industrialization of warfare in the First World War to the military-industrial complex following the Second World War, the scientific-technological development has been driven forward by the demands of the military (see, for example, Leslie 1993; Pick 1993; Bissell 2009; Bousquet 2009; Guzzetti 2010). From the innovations of prosthetics between 1916–1920 to the founding of cybernetics in the late 1940s, military rationality, or even a militarization of reason, was an essential factor that contributed to the redefinition of the body in terms of the machine (with regard to computer games, cf. Crogan 2011). Through the popularization of cybernetics in the 1960s and 1970s, the cyborg – originally a technoscientific idea proposed in the context of space travel (see Clynes & Kline 1995 [1960]) – turned, firstly, into a science fiction fantasy, and, thereafter, into a post-theoretical theory-fiction, of a technological reconfiguration of the human body.

What C. Wright Mills (1967 [1959]: 245) called "rationality without reason" in Cold War science in the late 1950s is now continued by the surrational, the reason of the imaginary ruling the theory discourse around the cyborg and all that is "cyber." This is the world of the techno-imaginary, the world of the posthuman. (The themes of the sixth thematic complex are discussed throughout the study, for specifications see Prolegomena 1.1.1, 1.1.2, Prolegomena 2.2.1, Prolegomena 3.1, Prolegomena 4.1, Chapter 1.3, Chapter 2.1.2, 2.1.3, Chapter 2.2.3, Chapter 2.6.1, Excursus 2.2.1, Chapter 3.2.1, Excursus 3, Chapter 5.1, Chapter 5.2.1, Chapter 5.3.2, Chapter 6.3, 6.4, 6.5).

These six thematic complexes outlined above, comprising the topics of my study, do not constitute a linear narrative; rather, each complex provides an aspect of my argument concerning the radical reinterpretation of the body in the constellation of postmodern technoculture and technoscience. Therefore, there are as many routes of reading as there are readers of the study at hand. To find out their specific approaches, readers are thus advised to consult the table of contents in which various themes are indicated by appropriate titles and subtitles. Consequently, I can only encourage readers to let themselves be surprised.

However, for those readers who wish to begin *in medias res*, I recommend starting with Chapter 2.5 (The Art of Sexual Transgression in Terms of the Technological), then proceeding to Excursus 3.1.1 (Intermezzo: Prosthesis in the Sexual Economy of the "Cyber"), from there on continuing through the section 3.1.2 of the same excursus (Redesigning the Body in the Prosthetic Economy of the First World War), and finally ending up at Chapter 1.1.2 (The Hard Core of the "Cyber": Tetsuo Sex). For those readers who prefer a more theoretical approach, I suggest beginning with Excursus 1, then proceeding to Chapter 2.1 (especially the section "Sex" with Žižek in Cyberspace), and then freely choosing how to continue from there on. For those readers who would first of all like to know

how all that is "cyber" found its beginning I recommend starting with Chapter 3.3 (Timothy Leary: When It All Changed, or, At the Origin of the "Cyber"), then returning to Chapter 2.2.2 (From "Neurosexual Intercourse" to Sex with "Sensual Machines"), from there on continuing to Chapter 3.2 (The Seduction of the "Cyber"), and finally concluding with Chapter 1.1.1 (The Sexual-Technological Complex in Its Elementary Form).

Of course, as previously stated, there are as many routes of reading as there are readers of this study, all of them being correct in their own way.

1 "Sex," the "Cyber" and the Logic of the "Post": The Basics

> The end is approaching … approaching without arriving from the ever-not-so-distant future. We are counting down or up to the end and the beginning of the millennium. As in the past, the transition from one to another millennium appears to be a time of endings as well as beginnings, deaths as well as rebirths. The darker the old era seems, the brighter the New Age appears. Always inscribed within an economy of redemption, millenarianism promises a new world in which all things are transformed. When interpreted religiously, and it is difficult to imagine a millenarianism that is not implicitly or explicitly religious, the New Age appears to be the end of time and the dawn of eternity.
>
> Mark C. Taylor (2004 [1998]: 36)

> Theory has one kind of textuality that upsets its claims to objectivity: an element of romance. Theory, as we all know but are afraid to admit, is sexy.
>
> Diane Elam (1992: 143)

In a world in which what are called "global players" determine the rules of politics according to the interests of neoliberal capitalism, and in which it is thus possible to speak of human beings in terms of "human capital" (see, for example, Gomez Dierks 2001: 228–240; Hartog & van den Brink 2007; Held & McGrew 2007), the terms of the "sexual" are no longer what they used to be. What precisely they are now, that is the question I shall be approaching from a perspective defined by the signifiers the "cyber" and the "post." While the "post," to apply Fredric Jameson's (1981: 2) idea, embraces the "political unconscious" that constitutes the "absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" within contemporary cultural theory (cf. Young 1990: 91–118; Danius 1994: 197–199; Anderson 1998: 53–54, 127–128), the "cyber" designates the imaginary of the technological in the mode of post-utopian *theory-futurism* typical of the technophilic theory-avantgarde on the theory scene of the "post" (see, for example, Sobchack 1994: 18–19, 1995: 206–207; Stallabrass 1995; Hartmann 2004; Pärna 2009; from the historical perspective of "science between utopia and dystopia," cf. Mendelsohn & Nowotny 1984).[12]

12 While, for Jameson (1981: 2), "the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts," opening up "a political perspective" on literature, constitutes "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" pertaining thus, as the title of Jameson's study indicates, to "the political unconscious" of literature understood as "a socially symbolic act" (ibid.), the approach applied in the study at hand is based on *a reading of cyber discourse* as the "political unconscious" of postmodern technoculture manifested by a *particular language*, a technophilic idioglossia, that I refer to by the signifier the "cyber"; a reading in which the "post" signifies a specific *politics of language* peculiar to the discourse concerning the postmodern that embraces the discursive matrix of cyber discourse. In the expressions the "cyber" and the "post," the definitive article and quotation marks indicate, as we will see, the *linguistic reification* constitutive of the discursive configuration under consideration. In this sense, the "post" of the postmodern designates the "political unconscious" that comprises the "absolute horizon" of "the theoretical" within contemporary cultural theory; that is, the "post" is the *sine qua non* of the prevailing theory discourse, its very condition of possibility in terms of intelligibility, and, as such, the key to the world of the "cyber" in which, as Slavoj Žižek (1997b: 3) says, "[t]he Unconscious is outside," that is, in the cultural manifestations of the postmodern (cf. Žižek 1999g).

I shall be arguing that all that is "cyber" is an effect of desire, the desire for theory constitutive of the "post"; thus, the "post," following the logic of desire, is the sign of what I call the *escalation of theory* peculiar to academic discourse in the name of the postmodern. This is the intrinsic connection between the "cyber" and the "post"; it should be remembered, though, that this connection is asymmetric: while the theoretical configuration of the "post" exists independently of the "cyber," the discursive matrix of the "cyber" is entirely predicated upon the "post." What is common to both of them, however, is the *libidinalization of language* typical of the postmodern ("the postmodern" understood here as a defining attribute of the theory style prevailing in contemporary Western academia). This is the logic of desire in the study at hand: the logic of the "post" that, as we will see, makes intelligible "the sexual" in the world of the "cyber," "the sexual" as a mode of the textual in the sense of what I call *post-theory* (see Eerikäinen 2000, 2003), a postmodern mode of theory in which the simulation of "the theoretical" in the sense of a post-Barthesian "pleasure of the text" (cf. Barthes 1975 [1973], 1977a [1971], 1989c [1984]) has taken the place of thinking (cf. Heidegger 2000d [1952], 2000h [1965], 2007 [1964]).

Thus, post-theory is a paradigmatic mode of theory in the "age of simulation" (Baudrillard 1994a [1981]: 43), the age of the postmodern as a radicalization of the modern in the sense of both modernity and modernism (see Featherstone 1991a: 2–12; in terms of "radical imagination," cf. Olson & Worsham 2007). From the perspective of the "post," we are living in a world in which a general *Unschärferelation* is the measure of all things.

As we will see, the "post" belongs to the postmodern discursive constellation of what I call "endism," a post-apocalyptic mode of writing playing with the idea of the terminal (cf. Jay 1993b: 87–90; Derrida 1984f [1972/1968], 1992 [1980]). This is the "post" of the posthuman: the "end" of the human in terms of endism.

1.1 Towards the Seduction of the Signifier

What is specific to the theory in terms of the "post" is that, by way of its very endism, it manifests what I designate as the *hedonism of theory*, a mode of hedonism in which the highest form of pleasure is the *jouissance* of "the theoretical."

It is in this sense that both of these signifiers, the "post" and the "cyber," each in their own manner, are constitutive of the condition of possibility of the discursive universe of cyber discourse, the object of the present study. As a discursive hybrid, a linguistic *bricolage*, in the mode of a postmodern *ars combinatoria*, cyber discourse embraces a retro-futuristic, post-utopian discourse formation manifesting the overcoming of the human in the name of the "posthuman" typical of American technological millennialism (cf. Bozeman 1997: 155–156; for paradigmatic examples, see Halberstam & Livingston 1995b; Davis 1998;

Hayles 1999; Quinby 1999; Rutsky 1999; Graham 2002; Dinello 2005; Vint 2007); a vision – in its true religious and theological overdetermination – of a post-Nietzschean *Übermensch* (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 8–10; Ansell Pearson 1997: 90–92; Heidegger 1998b [1961]: 262–282; Gunkel 2000: 337, 348: Pettman 2002: 70–71; Brusotti 1997; Gebauer 2001b), a techno-imaginary *Offenbarung* of a final redemption under the sign of "the technological" (for a comprehensive overview of the technological imaginary, see Marcus 1995): the ultimate renunciation of the human as ontological and epistemological freedom: the freedom of radical self-creation, *self-design in terms of technology* (in terms of "an aesthetics of existence" as an "elaboration of one's own life as a personal work of art," cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]: 49; for "the cultivation of the self" in Antiquity, cf. Foucault 1990h [1984]: 39–68, 1990i [1984]; Lemke 1997: 269–294; Marti 1999 [1988]: 131–138; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 161–176; Schmid 1994 [1987]; in terms of the "hermeneutics of the self," cf. Visker 1991b: 107–113).

In the world of the "post," *radicalized* by the techno-imaginary of the "cyber," it is possible to overcome the distinction between the ontological and the epistemological and treat *the world as a prosthetic projection of the subject*, as an endlessly malleable object in the service of the subject enhanced and extended by its self-technologies (cf. McLuhan 1964; Becker 2000d; Yaszek 2002; in relation to the Foucauldian "technologies of the self," cf. Foucault 1988a [1982]). In other words, postmodern *techno-narcissism* is constitutive of the discursive constellation of the "cyber" in which to be is to become, and in which what was once the self in its individuality has turned into a decentred ego-formation that I call the *post-subject,* a fragmented, multidimensional *me, myself and I* empowered by the prosthetic organs of its mediatic mode of existence (in terms of the "decentred subject," cf., for example, Smith 1988: 117–120; Poster 1995b: 32, 35, 57, 77, 88, 90–91, 93; Barvosa 2008: 5–17, 84–89, 194–203).

1.1.1 Post-Theory: Under the Spell of Linguisticism

Empowering the self by means of technology, an individual, independent and self-sufficient techno-existence in the mode of what I call a *prosthetic autarchia* – that is the constitutive idea of "cyber-religious dreaming" (Lovink 2003: 342) inscribed in the techno-imaginary of cyber discourse (cf. Böhme 1996a, 1996b; Müller-Funk 2004; from the perspective of *Technikvisionen*, cf. Felderer 1996; with regard to the *Technikträume* and *Traumtechniken*, "technological dreams" and "dream technologies," in the context of electrification around the turn of the twentieth century, cf. Bohn 2004; for the "magical thinking" typical of the time, cf. Thurschwell 2001; for a historical contextualization, see Asendorf 1984, 1989).

Thus, not only is the "cyber" the emblem and idiom of the technological utopianism specific to postmodern technoculture, the contemporary cultural formation brought about by the reason of technoscience prevalent in the economically advanced parts of the world (see, for example, Aronowitz et al. 1996;

Clough 2004; Michael 2006; in terms of technoscientific mysticisim, cf. Derrida 2002a [1996/1998]: 48–65, 79–98); it is, in fact, the very epitome of the techno-messianic world view deriving from the tradition of the New Age (see, for example, Hanegraaff 1996; Heelas 1996; Ziguras 1997; Sutcliffe 2003; Eitler 2007) as a form of what James W. Carey (1989: 114) calls "secular religiosity" constitutive of American culture (see, for example, Williams 1999; Fessenden 2007; for "cyber-spirituality" manifesting "the re-enchantment of the West," see Partridge 2005: 135–164; for the sacred in "New Edge" cyberspiritualism, see Zandbergen 2010; in relation to the "artificial paradise" as a vision projected by American science fiction, see Ben-Tov 1995).

The "Post": From the Linear to the Circular

Given the suggestive metaphoricism of the "cyber" enabled by the linguistic figuration constitutive of the "post," that is, the *mythopoetic theoreticism* endemic to cyber discourse, it is no wonder that, in this context, technology takes on an existential meaning in the sense of the ontotheological as a way to a New Life (cf. Heidegger 1998b [1961]: 415, 470, 2006a [1957]): life as an onto-technological project. In the neo-spiritual atmosphere of postmodern techno-culture, as Margaret Gibson (2006: 65) says, "people who may once have looked to religion to find significance may now look to cyber-space to register a sense of the larger, the unbounded, and also meaning in anonymity" (for the sacralization and spiritualization of "new media," see Lynch 2007; with regard to the convergence of science and religion in robotics, artificial intelligence and virtual reality research, see Geraci 2010; from the perspective of American popular culture, science fiction and "virtual religion," see Chidester 2005; in terms of an *ozeanisches Gefühl*, "oceaning feeling," typical of the experience of the sacral and the spiritual, cf. Freud 1972a [1930]: 422–423, 430).

It is in this manner that, in the world of the "cyber," we have the pleasure to enjoy what Slavoj Žižek (2006: 350) calls "New Age cyber-Gnosticism," that is, a postmodern mode of "spirituality grounded in the digitalization and virtualization of our life-world" (ibid.; cf. Aupers et al. 2008; in terms of "technospirituality," see Müller 2005; cf. Böhme 1996a, 1996b; List 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; for paradigmatic examples, see Davis 1994, 1998; Kurzweil 1999), or to indulge in "philosophical" speculations on the radical changes of the body, subjectivity and agency brought about by cyberspace, the cyborg and all that is "cyber" (for paradigmatic examples, see Hayles 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1999; Heim 1993, 1998; Benedikt 1994a [1991]; in terms of the cyborg as a millennial and neoreligious wish-image, see O'Leary 2005: 38–39, 45–49; for cyberspace as a promise of "redemption" in postmodern theology, see Ward 2000: 244–260).

As Žižek (2005a: 84) specifies, in cultural studies today we can witness a new ideological paradigm of what is called the "third culture," that is, a cultural formation between hard sciences and the humanities as an emergent ideology, comprising two trends:

> first, the often present New Age inscription, in which the shift of paradigm is interpreted as an advance beyond the Cartesian mechanistic-materialist paradigm toward a new holistic approach that brings us back to the wisdom of ancient oriental thought (the Tao of physics, and so on). Sometimes, this is even radicalized into the assertion that the scientific shift in the predominant paradigm is an epiphenomenon of the fact that humanity is on the verge of the biggest spiritual shift in its entire history, that we are entering a new epoch in which egoistic individualism will be replaced by a transindividual cosmic awareness. The second case is the "naturalization" of certain specific social phenomena, clearly discernible in so-called cyber-revolutionism, which relies on the notion of cyberspace (or the Internet) as a self-evolving, "natural" organism; the "naturalization of culture" (market, society, and so on, as living organisms) overlaps here with the "culturalization of nature" (life itself is conceived as a set of self-reproducing information – "genes are memes"). (ibid.: 84–85; cf. Haraway 1995b: [1992]: 80–82; Boler 2010)

What is important here, according to Žižek (2005a: 85), considering "cyber-revolutionism" as a typical manifestation of cyber discourse is a "new notion of life" that is "neutral with respect to the distinction between natural and cultural (or 'artificial') processes"; that is, "the Earth (as Gaia) as well as the global market both appear as gigantic self-regulated living systems whose basic structure is defined in terms of the process of *coding and decoding*, of *passing information*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Haraway 1991a [1985]: 150–154, 161–164; Green 1997: 63–68; Sofoulis 2003: 85–87; Haney 2006: 113–122, 156–164; Jones 1997; Crang et al. 1999; Jordan 1999; Bell 2001a; Lévy 2001 [1997]). In this sense, it is self-evident, as N. Katherine Hayles (1999: 243) argues, that "[i]f the name of the game is processing information, it is only a matter of time until intelligent machines replace us as our evolutionary heirs"; and, accordingly, "[w]hether we decide to fight them or join them by becoming computers ourselves, *the days of the human race are numbered*" (emphasis mine; cf. Moravec 1999; Kurzweil 2005; in terms of "cyberfeminism," cf. Plant 1997b).

According to Žižek, this kind of "theorizing" is based on technophilic dreaming which effaces the real world of global capitalism:

> So, while cyberspace ideologists can dream about the next step of evolution in which we will no longer be mechanically interacting "Cartesian" individuals, in which individuals will cut their substantial links to their bodies and conceive of themselves as part of the new holistic mind that lives and acts through them, what is obfuscated in such a direct "naturalization" of the Internet or market is the set of power relations – of political decisions, of institutional conditions – which "organisms" like the Internet (or the market, or capitalism) require to thrive. (Žižek 2005a: 85)

The problem, as Žižek argues, is that in both of these "third culture" visions, constitutive of theories pertaining to cyberspace and the cyborg, we are witnessing "an all too fast *metaphoric transposition* of certain biological-evolutionist concepts to the study of the history of human civilization" (ibid.; emphasis mine). That is, both of them are based on "the idea that not only do human beings use language to reproduce themselves, multiply their power and knowledge," but also, at "a more fundamental level, language itself uses human beings to

replicate and expand itself, to gain a new wealth of meanings" (ibid.). In other words, language is seen here not merely as the primordial precondition of human existence, but, at the same time, as the originating source and the organizing structure of life, as a *self-reproducing matrix* that utilizes humans only to control and govern them. That is, language hypostatized as a *quasi*-Hegelian *Weltgeist*, simultaneously both a transcendental and an immanent *primus motor*, "prime mover," operating as a secular-religious Providence ruling the destiny of humans: language exteriorized and materialized in and through the activities of humans without their knowing its generative primacy determining their existence (for the idea of Hegelian *Weltgeist*, see Hegel 1986d [1837]: 22, 40, 51, 54, 73; in terms of *posthistoire*, cf. Niethammer 1989; for the thesis of "the end of history," see Kojève 1980 [1947]; in the context of the "cyber," see Stallabrass 1995).

In my reading, what Žižek pursues with his remarks on the language of "cyber-revolutionism" is the idea of the "post" of the "postmodern": a mode of theory that operates by way of linguistic reductionism that I call *linguisticism*; a form of tropology in which linguistic figures constitute "the real" in terms of *both* epistemology *and* ontology, thus enabling a theory discourse in which not only a radical metaphorization of all things takes place, but, first and foremost, in which *metaphors metaphorize themselves* in the manner of unending linguistic figuration (for a critique of the linguistic idealism of postmodern theory, see McNally 2001). It is in this configuration that theory turns into post-theory manifested by self-referential writing in the form of what I term *theory-fictions* typical of postmodern academia;[13] that is, a mode of theory that I designate as *theoretical narcissism* in the sense of what Linda Hutcheon (1980) refers to as "narcissistic narrative." This is the context of the cyborg and all that is "cyber": we live in a world effected by the linguistic auto-affectivity of the "post" (in terms of Derridean "auto-affection," cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]: 154–156, 165–167, 186–187).

That is, what was once linear (assumed to be constitutive of the modern) is now circular (as I see to be typical of the postmodern). This is the logic of the "post," the logic of self-referentiality in terms of "the theoretical."

13 What I refer to as "theory-fictions" in the study at hand already appears in Freud. In his *Traumdeutung* (1900), Freud pointed out that his theoretical conception pertaining to the structure and function of dream was to be understood in terms of fiction. For Freud (1987d [1900]: 609), a dream is a *Wunscherfüllung* that occurs beyond consciousness or the "secondary process" in a veiled form, and belongs as such to the realm of "primal processes" constituting the "psychic apparatus"; that this "apparatus" could consist *only* of "primal processes," that is, of the unconscious, is for Freud a "theoretical fiction": "Ein psychischer Apparat, der nur den Primärvorgang besäße, existiert zwar unseres Wissens nicht und ist insoferne eine theoretische Fiktion; aber soviel ist tatsächlich, daß die Primärvorgänge in ihm von Anfang an gegeben sind, während die sekundären erst allmächlich im Laufe des Lebens sich ausbilden, die primären hemmen und überlagern und ihre volle Herrschaft über sie vielleicht erst mit der Lebenshöhe erreichen." (ibid.: 609; in contemporary theory, cf., for example, Derrida 1973 [1967]: 150, 1984a [1972/1968]: 18, 2000 [1988]: 88; de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 150–151; Thomas 1990: 1–16; Baudrillard 1993a: 82, 115, 202; Zurbrugg 1993: 141, 2000a: 65, 127, 135; Cholodenko 1997: 76–80; Winkler 1997: 11; Currie 1998: 51–70; Shaviro 1997).

The New Age of the "Cyber": First Steps

To understand the significance of *this* "linguistic turn," that is, to see the momentous historicity of the *linguistification of theory* in the theory constellation of the "post" in its far-reaching consequences, a historical parallel can get us on the right track. Boris Groys, a critical art and media scholar and cultural philosopher who has gone through the school of Soviet *newspeak*, its ideological double-thought manifesting the pseudo-scientific utopianism of Marxism-Leninism, tells us in his *The Communist Postscript* of another "linguistic turn":

> The economy functions in the medium of money. It operates with numbers. Politics functions in the medium of language. It operates with words – with arguments, programmes and petitions, but also with commands, prohibitions, resolutions and decrees. The communist revolution is the transcription of society from the medium of money to the medium of language. It is a linguistic turn at the level of social praxis. (Groys 2009 [2006]: xv; for a historical articulation of "linguistic turns in modern philosophy," see Losonsky 2006)

What is important here, in terms of the study at hand, is the idea of *transcription*, the idea of politics that functions in the medium of language, but not just a language, rather, a language that operates as a *social praxis*: a society-wide praxis that made it possible to live in a world of fictions: the phantasmatic reality of Soviet society from Stalin's rise to power to the end of the Brezhnev era (cf. Orwell 1989 [1949]: 312–326; in the context of the political language of the "Third Reich," cf. Klemperer 1990 [1957]; in relation to the euphemistic language of American nuclear defence theorists, cf. Cohn 1987; in terms of the cyborg, cf. Haraway 1989: 138–139, 1991a: 149–150, 1995a: xiii–xix, 1997: 12–14, 51–52, 2000a: 24, 86, 119–122, 141).

A question thus arises as to whether what is called "postmodern," in fact, is a new mode of science fiction? That is, a world of academic phantasms maintained by ever-new theory-fictions circulated and recycled in contemporary academia in which it has by now become self-evident to think that, as Haraway (1991a: 149) says, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." It is precisely for this reason that, as we will see, writing in the mode of the "post" is the only way to *properly* understand the world of the "cyber." Yet, although the "post-ality" (Zavarzadeh et al. 1995) of the "post" in its very post-ness is the key to the "cyber," we have every reason to avoid "going postal" (cf. Luckhurst 2002a) with the strange "optical illusions" we will encounter in what I call the *Disneyland of Theory* enabled by the "cyber" as a logical outcome of the "post": the "cyber" as the most sublime realization of the techno-imaginary in the Kantian sense of *das Erhabene* (see Kant 1990c [1790/1793/1799]: 164–191, 1988a [1764]; cf. Lyotard 1991 [1988]: 89–107, 135–143; Kulenkampff 2006).

In the universe of cyber discourse we have the pleasure of experiencing a lift off to the highest level of the "post" in terms of "the technological," the sphere of cyberdelia as the ultimate mode of cyberphilia (cf. Tofts & McKeich 1997: 18–19), the fourth dimension of thought under the sign of the "cyber."

This is the pleasure of what Esther Leslie (2000: x), with regard to Walter Benjamin's critique of "technology fetishism," calls "the hyper-cyberbabble of the new millennialism."[14] Under the spell of the "cyber," enchanted by the postmodern cyber-futurism, it is not difficult to think (or to believe) that we are now living in a world of "turbulent bodies" (see Gilbert 2007: 77–81; cf. Staples 2007: 133–137; Weber & Bath 2003; Bath et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea, see Parisi & Terranova 2000), a world brought about by the "affective turn" (Clough & Halley 2007) effected by the "cyber," a world of post-bodies that are no longer constrained by the logic of equilibrium built-in in the paradigm of thermodynamics and classical cybernetics (see Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; Clarke & Henderson 2002; Pias 2003, 2004), but, instead, by means of our "cyberbodies" (see, for example, Angerer 1999a: 26–55, 1999b; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b) we have the pleasure of freely moving in the realm of contingent relations (cf. Stone 1995e), a world of postmodern entropy created by the excess of information, the "holy spirit" of global capitalism, defining the existential parameters of what Mark Poster (2006a: 41–42, 87–181) refers to as "the digital self" (cf. Poster 2001a, 2004), the most advanced mode of being of the post-subject.

In order to see what this is all about is to take the "cyber" seriously, that is, in terms of the "post." From this perspective, it is obvious that we live in the world of what Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (1996a: 32–33) call "Digital Flesh" that became the substance of our existence in the 1990s, the "transitional time" when we were "stuck with 20th century flesh in 21st century hypertext minds" (ibid.: 32; cf. West 2001: 160–161; Dixon 2007: 211–332; Miah & Rich 2008: 36–37; Critical Art Ensemble 1998; Herzogenrath 2000; Dyens 2001; Braidotti 2009). This is the post-historical history of the present: *the presence of the future in its absence* constitutive of the "post"; that is, according to the Krokers:

> Unlike the *fin-de-siecle* generation of the 1890s who experienced feelings of anxiety and melancholy over the dawning of the modern age, the fin-de-millennium generation gives itself over to the feelings of cold romance. Why drown in the wetware of the body organic when with a little hollowing out, hardening, and drying up as Stelarc likes to say, the body telematic can appear on the scene ready for life in the 3rd millennium? Our generation cannot be nostalgic about the disappearance of the organic body because, unlike the 1890s, we have never lived with the illusion of the real. For us, the "reality" of the flesh was the first casualty of life in the 20th century. (Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 32; cf. Stelarc 1989, 1991, 1998; Rötzer 2002)

14 According to Leslie (2000: x), "the *Aktualität*" of Benjamin is in his "offensive against a technology fetishism that is ignorant of the stipulations accorded by the private mode of appropriation." "Such ignorance may be newly prevalent in the hyper-cyberbabble of the new millennialism. The notion of the technoid subject might give a neon-green light to cybermaterialism and its visions of machinic subjects, enhanced with prosthetics, wired up and plugged into inflowmation (a version of Marinetti's futurist rhapsody for a postindustrial age). What happens in this cyber-conception of material is that the distinction between machine-technology-worker – a technician producing within technical relations of production – is collapsed into a single, mythic, postnatural subject. This subject embodies, quite literally, technology, technical relations of production and producer, and so can only with difficulty be envisaged as involved in a process of exploitation. But a communion with high-tech that evades relations of exploitation is a rare privilege." (ibid.; for the Jüngerian *Arbeiter* as a proto-cyborg, cf. Jünger 1982 [1932]) It is appropriate to keep in mind Leslie's view when considering the cyber-hype around the cyborg.

The future begins as soon as we understand that "[b]ody nostalgia is a terrible thing, particularly since we have long ago lost sight of where the body is actually located" (ibid.; cf. Haraway 1991f, 1997; Butler 1990, 1993).

Welcome to the vortex of "the digital." This is the vertigo of the twenty-first century, the New Age of the "cyber" called forth by the "post."

The Rebirth of the Body in Cybertopia

This radical transformation of both theory and the "object world" informed by it ensues from a change in economic terms: the political economy of the postmodern (if we take the term seriously, as a notion that refers to something more than just linguistic-literary figurations), the economic order of the present world in its real presence, is predicated on a new mode of economic exchange that Jean-François Lyotard (1993a [1974]) designated as "libidinal economy" in the 1970s. What is the "new" today is that the "the technological," as an imaginary signifier engendering real effects, has become an all-consuming determinant of "the political" of contemporary politics: *political voluntarism* under the imperative of scientific-technological feasibility determines the parameters of prevailing economy as neoliberal markets of desire. What John Kenneth Galbraith (1967) called "the new industrial society" based on a "technostructure" in the 1960s (cf. Waligorski 2006: 55–58, 84–88) has now turned into postmodern technoculture ruled by the techno-imaginary, a mode of the imaginary in the light of which the future is already present as a revelation of the actual potentiality inscribed in the omnipotence of technoscience, the divine power of our time (cf. Graham 2002; Grau 2004; Sturken et al. 2004).

It is in this sense that, as Joel Dinerstein (2006: 569) says, "*technology is the American theology*" (emphasis in the original), a techno-teleological mindset manifesting secular-religious spirituality in the mode of technological millennialism as a

Fig. 1. Raoul Hausmann, *Mechanischer Kopf – Der Geist Unserer Zeit*, 1920, "Mechanical Head – The Spirit of Our Time," 1920.

"What is the purpose of spirit in a world that proceeds mechanically? What is man? [He is] an instance, formed and spoken through his mode of production, his milieu. See. You believe you think and make decisions, you believe yourself to be original – and what happens? The milieu [...] has thrown the soul-machine into gear and the whole thing runs itself." (Hausmann in Edwards & Woods 2004: 354; cf. Bergius 1980, 1981, 1997, 2000; Hille 1999)

There is a political dimension in Hausmann's sculptural collage, critically contrasting it to the techno-euphoria of Futurism: "This conceptualization of the man/machine interaction questions both the ambiguous relationship of the bourgeoisie with its technology and the technological romanticism of Marinetti. Dada irony allowed serious questions to be addressed to technology's potential to extend human agency." (Gaughan 2006: 146; in terms of Futurism, cf. Cooper 2002: 67–87; Berghaus 2005, 2009; Poggi 2009)

In its own way, Hausmann's "mechanical head" refers to the cerebralization of technology typical of contemporary cyborg futurism: although the idea of the cyborg emphasizes a technomorphist rearticulation of the body in terms of the machine (a body-machine, a techno-body), the cerebral dominates its conception of the corporeal: the body of the cyborg is a cerebral body, a post-body that is merely a contingent assemblage of prosthetic body parts incorporating artificial intelligence (cf. Gonzáles 1995: 271–272; Woodward 2004: 191–195; Franchi & Güzeldere 2005a; Slack & Wise 2005: 168–171; Abbas 2006).

In this sense, a neo-futuristic cerebralization of the subject is peculiar to the "cyber."

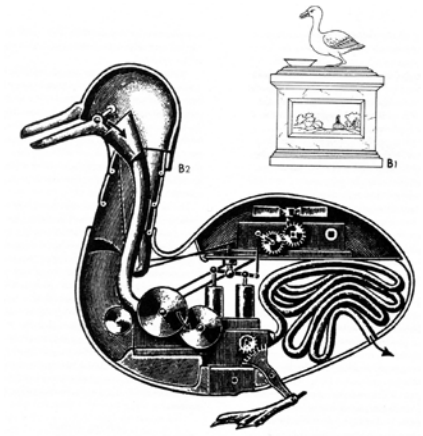


Fig. 2. The *Canard Digérateur*, or "Digesting Duck," a mechanical simulation of the idea of automaton constructed by Jacques de Vaucanson, a French inventor and constructor of automatons and industrial machines, in 1738.

"An eighteenth-century mechanical duck that swallowed corn and grain and, after a pregnant pause, relieved itself of an authentic-looking burden was the improbable forebear of modern technologies designed to simulate animal and intelligent processes. Quaint as the Duck now seems, we remain in an age that it inaugurated; its mixed career set in motion a dynamic that has characterized the subsequent history of artificial life." (Riskin 2003: 599; cf. Liu 2000: 78–99; Des Chene 2001: 30)

To understand human and animal organisms in terms of the machine was a favoured philosophical topos or philosopheme during the Enlightenment, most notably exemplified by Descartes's *bête machine*, "animal-machine," and La Mettrie's *l'homme machine*, "man-machine" (see, for example, Vartanian 1960, 1973, 1999; Baruzzi 1973; Sutter 1988, 1997; Wellman 1992). Whereas the notion of the machine in this tradition was a figure of thought by which it was possible to explain physiological processes in living organisms (with regard to the original idea of the cyborg, cf. Clynes & Kline 1995 [1960]), in the world of the "post," the conceptual distinction between the machine and the organism has disappeared and become rearticulated into the self-reflective metaphor of the cyborg, a post-theoretical phantasm that both manifests and proliferates the discourse of cyborgism brought about by its technomorphist linguistic figuration (for the analogy between the machine and the organism in cybernetics, cf. Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; in philosophical terms, cf. Canguilhem 1992 [1952]).

postmodern eschatology (cf. Noble 1997; Mazur & McCarthy 2001; Georgi-Findlay & Mohr 2003; Pattison 2005). Under American scientific-technological supremacy, ours is a time of "techno-theology" (Dinello 2005: 8), a New Age that professes the belief that "Technology is God" (ibid.: 18–31); that is, a post-Christian, neoreligious era in which the cyborg appears as our Saviour (for the Catholic background of the Harawayan *Ur*-cyborg, see Haraway 2000a: 24, 86, 141, 2008b: 18, 162, 165; Lykke et al. 2004 [2000]: 333–334; Schneider 2005: 5–9, 14–15, 108; Ronan 2009: 79–165; cf. Stockton 1992; Hanson 2001; Drees 2009; in terms of "cyberspirituality," see Perrin 2007: 313–314; from the perspective of "the postmodern God," cf. Ward 1997). In this mindset, technology signifies a post-Biblical vision of "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14: 6), the perspective of redemption: the promise of salvation and absolution in a world in which a postmodern deification of technology implies a post-Enlightenment faith in human omnipotence as the ultimate form of the technological sublime (see, for example, Graham 2002: 154–175; Hughes 2004b: 38–39; Nye 1996; in relation to "cyborg goddesses," see Giresunlu 2009; in terms of cyberspace religiosity, cf. Højsgaard & Warburg 2005; Reinders 2006).

In this manner, the millennial futurism under the sign of the "cyber" contributes to the sacralization of technology constitutive of the postmodern techno-imaginary. According to the theologian Graham Ward (2009: 102), cyberspace, as a *pars pro toto* epitomizing the neoreligious awe emanating from the "cyber," manifests a new kind of "the sublime and the unrepresentable" in which "transparency meets transcendence":

> What cyberspace encourages is the endless reproduction of particularities. Everything is to be reducible to digital coding and pixel imaging. This *euphoric transcendence* comes from seizing the presence of things in the present and understanding all locations as infinitely transferable. […] The desire is for total escape, full immersion. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

This is a world in which it is entirely intelligible to ask: "Is God in cyberspace?" (ibid.). And the answer

is as intelligible: "There is no place in today's world where you encounter the freedom to choose that God gave man more than in cyberspace" (ibid.).

Thus, what was physico-theology in the era of the Enlightenment (see, for example, Bayertz & Porter 1998), has become techno-theology typical of the paradigm of the "post." In this manner, technology is a religious message in itself; as Stephen D. O'Leary (2005: 45) states, "the origins of technological innovation in Western societies lie in a millennial hope for the transformation of the world."

In these terms, what happens in the scientific-technological constellation of the postmodern is a *reification of deification*; that is, *technoscience is the metaphysics of the postmodern* (cf. Heidegger 1977a [1938], 1983 [1935], 2006a [1957]). This is the hard core of the neo-religious belief in the omnipotence of the cyborg, the eschatological perspective of the final redemption under the sign of the "cyber."

In the final analysis, however, the cyborg is an imperialist metaphor: it neutralizes the "Other" by coercing and constraining it to the order of the Same, the disciplinary regime of Western scientific-technological reason the apotheosis of which is the millennial mission of American techno-theology, a mode of thought that is unable to think the very otherness of the "Other" (in terms of the Lévinasian "Self-Same," cf. Lévinas 1991 [1969]; for a paradigmatic example of the self-referentiality of the American technoscientic politics in the Vietnam War, see Edwards 1996; for the Vietnam War as the "epochal American event" deeply inscribed in the American intellectual life, see Spanos 1995: 2–11, 23–41, 250–290; in the context of nuclear weapons, robotics and the cyborg, cf. Chaloupka 1992: 43–45, 137–138).

It is in this manner, as the Krokers (1996a: 12) say, that the "basis of American identity is the will to technology," and therefore, "[l]ike it or not, *America is the digital future*" (ibid.: 14; emphasis mine); the problem, however, is that "we no longer have the ability to love or leave it" since "America is not just a physical presence, but a virtual space" (ibid.; cf. Baudrillard 1988a [1986]; Kroker 1990, 2004b).

Of course, the kind of sacralization of technology inscribed in the mindset of *Americanism* all over the world is fully intelligible only if one takes into account that in multitudinal and greatly varying forms the sacral is a cultural constant on a global scale (see Eliade 1987 [1957]); but that is another story. What I am interested in here is *a postmodern mode of language* deriving from American technological millennialism pertaining to the future in terms of "the digital"; the phantasmatic language of the techno-imaginary enabled by the very "*post*-ness" (Armitt 2005: 209) of the "post," its relentlessly self-replicating "post-ality" (Zavarzadeh et al. 1995), that makes technology appear as an object of idolization implying a promise of final deliverance.

It is in this eschatological sense that the cyborg, as Stephanie Ann Smith (2006: 152) says, is "the quintessential icon of the postmodern condition" (cf. Gray 2005: xviii). At the same time, the cyborg is the most spectacular manifestation

of what Jessica R. Johnston (2001b) calls "the American body" (cf. Sobchack 1997: 237–238; Armstrong 1996; in terms of "body work," cf. Gimlin 2002; from a historical perspective, in the context of Fordist machinism, cf. Clarke 2007: 45–51); that is, a modern body in its postmodern re-embodiment, as a product of what is called "human engineering" (for a classical study, see Korzybski 1921; cf. Noble 1979 [1977]: 286–293; Haraway 1989: 64–68, 1991b [1978]: 11–13, 1991h [1979]: 45–48; Banta 1993: 282–325); in short, a managerial body in a managerial society obsessed with body management, a postmodern form of body politics that finally results in "the narcissization of the body politic" (see O'Neill (1995: 6–7, 111–130; cf. Eagleton 1996: 69–75) typical of the contemporary ego-cult celebrating technoscientific body modification (in terms of "body-utopism," see Gebauer 2001a). This is the "body-futurism" (see Caysa 2003: 76–77) of postmodern technoculture: *the body as the very embodiment of the future*.

But, in fact, what is an "American body"? According to Mark Seltzer (1998 [1995]: 83–84), "[t]he governing models of the American national body have been the model of possession (bioeconomics), the model of the machine (the body-machine complex), and the model of writing or code (biotext)." That is, firstly, the body as possession, "as something one *has* rather than something one *is*," implies an "understanding of the body as *prosthesis*, or self-extension" (ibid.: 84), in terms of economic usability and profitability; secondly, to see the body as a "body-machine" amounts to deeming it as a "dispassionate mechanism of efficient production" under the "regimes of corporeal discipline, productivism, rationality and standardization" (ibid.); and finally, along with the development of various "biotechnologies," the body becomes conceptualized as an entity brought about by "information or writing technologies" (ibid.), as a result of a "technical and automatic inscription of bodily forces and motion" (ibid.: 85). Hence, the "problem of the body," from Taylorization to cybernetics, form *Neuromancer* to *Terminator*, is bound up with the "media of information and registration," that is, with the "literal technologies" (ibid.; in terms of "cyborg writing," cf. Haraway 1991a: 175–181; in the context of the "posthuman," cf. Hayles 1999; with regard to "postmodern aesthetics" as a manifestation of "a biotechnological utopia," cf. Stafford 1994).

From this perspective, it is not difficult to see that the cyborg is an apotheosis of the American body, an amalgamation of all the three models referred to by Seltzer: the cyborg is the paragon of the bioeconomic body in the matrix of the body-machine complex informed and inscribed by biotexts. And it is in this sense that the cyborg is a postmodern embodiment of what Sigmund Freud (1972a [1930]: 451) designated as *Prothesengott*, "prosthetic God," in the 1930s, in his critical dissection of the modern way of life under the title *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, "the discontent of culture" (cf. Kittler 2000: 209–213, 1986, 1993); a mode of discontent, although manifested by psychic complications as symptoms of the unconscious, pertains expressly to the bodily being of the human being, to the human body as the very condition of being human (from the historical perspective of the "reformations of the body," see Mellor & Shilling 1997).

A Pathway to Heaven

Yet, what Freud, in the midst of an unprecedented scientific-technological progress, still felt as "discontent," as a feeling of discomfort and uneasiness, has now turned into a celebration of technoscience, into an enchantment of the techno-imaginary in the manner of what I call *neoreligious techno-euphoria*, or, in Finn Bowring's (2003: 141–143) words, an elevated mode of "the religion of technology" peculiar to the technoscientific discourse surrounding the cyborg (cf. Noble 1997; in terms of "technicism" in the context of Christian theology, cf. Schuurman 2003 [1998]: 63–110).

Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum, "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5), that is the post-Biblical, millennial promise inscribed in the techno-imaginary of the postmodern, the neoreligious matrix of cyber discourse (for a comprehensive contextualization in terms non-confessional, extra-ecclesiastical spirituality, see de Vries 2008), only that in terms of the "post" we have already attained the post-Nietzschean state of being "beyond Good and Evil" (cf. Nietzsche 1968b [1886]); that is, we are now living in the posthuman condition, a mode of existence ruled by a posthuman God (cf. Waters 2006: 2–5, 90–97).

In terms of the "cyber," we are entering a post-Leibnizian universe, an entirely new order of things enabled by an absolute potentiality, a situation in which we not only live in the best of all possible worlds, but, first of all, as Vivian Sobchack (1994: 18) says, "we live best only in possible worlds." "No wonder," as Žižek (2001c: 52) remarks, "that Leibniz is one of the predominant philosophical references of the cyberspace theorists: what reverberates today is not only his dream of a universal computing machine, but the uncanny resemblance between his ontological vision of monadology and today's emerging cyberspace community in which global harmony and solipsism strangely coexist." It is precisely in this sense that cyber discourse, as an imaginary manifestation of the omnipotence implied by contemporary technoscience, emanates the celestial power of the technological sublime constitutive of the postmodern (cf., for example, Carey 1989: 113–141; Wilson 1991: 197–263; Penley & Ross 1992b: xii; Nye 1996: 143–172; Hillis 1999: 58–59; Giblett 2008). If, in Romanticism, Nature, in its magnificence and grandeur, evoked awe and devotion, it is Technology that has taken the place of Nature in the postmodern (cf. Jameson 1991: 34–35). This is the mode of the sublime constitutive of technoculture: astonishment and stupor, admiration and amazement, in the presence of "the technological." In these terms, we live in the era of "technoromanticism" (Coyne 2001; cf. Taylor 1998: 43–45).

Thus, rather than being a *deus absconditus*, the posthuman God has a human face (cf., for example, McGinn 2002: 94–96; Murray 2002). This is the paradox of the posthuman condition: *the posthuman is nothing but an apotheosis of the human in the form of self-deification*, anthropomorphism turned into technomorphism celebrated by the political theology of the "post"; in other words, anthropolatry as its most radical manifestation, an ego-politics of what I call *technological autotheism*.

From this perspective, the Foucauldian "end of man" (Foucault 1989 [1966]: 386–387, cf. Marti 1999 [1988]: 14–47; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 25–63; Haraway 1992a), with all its postmodern derivations, is *a dream of reason, a dream constitutive of the modern* (for a critical discussion on reason and rationality from a historical perspective, see Foucault 1996g [1983]).

In this sense, in terms of the "post," cyber discourse constitutes a techno-imaginary "universe of discourse" (Marcuse 2002 [1964]: 87–107, 175–208) that Mark C. Taylor (1998: 39–49) designates as a "cybertopia" (cf., for example, Saco 2002: 199–211), a post-utopian "paraspace" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157–182) as a contemporary manifestation of American counterculture (cf., for example, Roszak 1969; Ross 1991c; Braunstein & Doyle 2002; Kirk 2002; Turner 2006; in terms of "the Beat Generation," cf. Chandarlapaty 2009; conceptualized as "electronic tribes," cf. Adams & Smith 2008). Referring to Futurism, Taylor (1998: 39) remarks that it is "a surprisingly short step from the futurists' apocalypticism to the cybertopia," the world of the technological self-design in the mode of the cyborg. Thus, during the 1990s, cyber discourse, having its origins in William Gibson's science fiction novel *Neuromancer* (1984) and the subsequent techno-avantgardist subculture around cyberpunk and cyberdelia (see, for example, Kellner 1995: 297–327; Wolmark 1999b: 6–9; Csicsery-Ronay 1994 [1988]; McCaffery 1994a [1991], 1994b [1991]; Suvin 1994 [1989]; Hollinger 1994 [1990]; Sirius 1990b; Leary 1994d [1988]; Rushkoff 1994; Dery 1996; Cavallaro 2000; from a historical perspective, see Harrasser 2004), turned into a canonized academic discourse under the super-sign of "the theoretical" (for an overview, see, for example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). What followed was a postmodern discursive hybrid that, as Taylor (1998: 39) sums up, grew out of "a curious mixture of vestiges of the 1960s drug culture, New Age religion, and technophilia" (cf. Pärna 2009).

It is in this sense that I understand cyber discourse as a form of a postmodern *ars combinatoria*, a discursive hybrid of the "post" and the "cyber."

In his article "Science Fiction as Politics. Cyberpunk Science Fiction as Political Philosophy," Thomas Michaud (2008) illuminatively sums up the transformation of cyberpunk science fiction from the world-view of an anarchistic and technophilic subculture as a part of American youth culture in the 1970s to a general cyber mythology in the 1990s (cf., for example, Terranova 1996b; Gelder & Thornton 1997; Ziguras 1997; Eglash 1998; Escobar 2000 [1994]; Latham 2002a; Jagodzinski 2004; in terms of "postmodern anarchism," cf. Call 2002: 118–139).

> Cyberpunk science fiction crystallized the terms of a technological utopia created by computer scientists and hackers in the 1970s and 1980s. If cyberculture has been inspired by the naturalist hippie movement in the 1960s, it has mostly been attracted by the *cybernetic utopia* of a society connected to information networks. This utopia was developed mainly in the 1970s and contributed to generate an ideology that contributed to the success of the technologies of telecommunications and to the massive diffusion of personal computers

> in industrial societies in the 1980s and 1990s. Computer hackers replaced hippies in the collective mythology. After a long period during which the youth identified with primitivism and revolted against authority, a period of technological progress was founded on the faith on the ideal of new heroes: hackers. They were able to connect to information networks and to create ideal societies and communities in virtual worlds. After the natural utopia of a hippie youth, a technological utopia was diffused through the cyberpunk science fiction movement. A large part of the population was concerned by the necessity to use computers and new telecommunication technologies and was inspired consciously or not by the mythology proposed by cyberpunk authors. (Michaud 2008: 73; emphasis mine; for "cybernetic utopia," see, for example, Cooper 1997: 95–96; Nunes 1997: 163–164; Brummett 1999: 81–87; Seidman 2004: 79–80; Dinello 2005: 60–68; Pias 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Medina 2011; in the context of the Soviet system, see Gerovitch 2002a; from the perspective of millennialism, see Decker 2003: 121–129)

Thus, what began as an American technophilic youth culture in the 1970s turned into highflying, extravagant postmodern theory in globalized Western academia in the 1990s: "cybertheory," as John Marks (2006: 194–197, 202–203) calls it (cf., for example, Sconce 2000: 190, 196, 206–209; Nunes 2001: 59, 71; Armitage & Roberts 2002a: 1–13; Wolmark 2003: 218–227; O'Riordan 2007: 21–22; Sharratt 1993; Eglash 1998). This is what I call *the escalation of the "cyber"*; that is, a geometrically forward-driving ascendancy of cyber utopianism following the schema: science fiction – anarchistic subculture – popular mythology – advertising and marketing ideology – academic theory.

But, in fact, what is specific to cyber discourse? In its post-political radicalism, all that is "cyber" implies a postmodern recapitulation of the "radical chic" of the 1960s reactivated by the logic of the "post" (see Wolfe 1999 [1970]; cf. Badmington 2004: 5–13),[15] the logic of post-Derridean "iteration" (see Derrida 2000 [1988]; cf. Hobson 1998: 98–108) in the form of mesmerizing mantra typical of the postmodern: the reiteration of the iterability inscribed in the "post" of the postmodern. This is the logic of the "post." It is in this manner that the "cyber," as a paradigmatic manifestation of the "post" in terms of the techno-imaginary, recapitulates the discursive escalation of the postmodern, its *pathos of extravaganza*.

Accordingly, cyber discourse is a postmodern form of *cargo cult* (cf., for example, Lindstrom 1995: 37–39, 43–45, 53–55), a syncretic belief system, that combines high-tech millennialism, New Age neoreligiosity and post-utopian retro-

15 What I am referring to here as "radical chic" is a latter-day manifestation of the anti-bourgeois attitude typical of the New Left in America in the 1960s and the 1970s, now in its postmodern form. To understand the idea, let us quickly visit the tumultous intellectual scene in post-1968 Paris, aptly described by Sherry Turkle (1992 [1978]: 162–163), herself at the time a would-be typical representative of radical chic in terms of the "cyber": "In the case of both the antipsychiatric and psychoanalytic 'Left' there is a common problem: *in France, it is hard to keep radical chic out of radical politics* [emphasis mine]; in this psychiatric politics is no exception. Antipsychiatry, like psychoanalysis, has come into fashion among French bourgeois intellectuals. People who thought they were joining an anti-establishment movement gradually find themselves lionized by the Left liberal press, solicited for articles, asked to write books about 'antipsychiatry from the inside.' After May 1968, student leaders told stories of publishing compacts signed on the barricades. In the 1970s it was antipsychiatry that became news." In the 1990s, *mutatis mutandis*, it was the "cyber," effected by the "post," that became *the* news, the liberating super-message of the future already present. It is in this sense that both the "cyber" and the "post" are about *an affectation of radical left-wing views by means of spectacular and extravagant linguistic figuration*.

Futurism by means of linguistic *bricolage* (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1966 [1962]: 17–35; Derrida 1978e [1967/1966]: 285–288) in a discursive assemblage that celebrates the technoscientific redesign of the human being into a posthuman mode of existence embodied by the cyborg, the ultimate incarnation of Freud's "prosthetic God," implying a triumphant return, in the form of postmodern saga, of the *New Atlantis* proclaimed by Francis Bacon (1989 [1624/1627]; in terms of postmodern technoculture, cf. Davis 2006).

In the light of the thematic articulation delineated above, cyber discourse is a postmodern *grand récit*, a technophilic "grand narrative" after the implosion of the "grand narratives" constitutive of the modern (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]): a neo-utopian, post-emancipatory discourse on the ultimate salvation of the human being in terms of the posthuman; that is, the resurrection of the subject in the name of the cyborg, the prosthetic God of the postmodern.

In the manner of religion, cyber discourse, as a transcendental vision, offers a pathway to heaven. The transcendence suggested by the "cyber," however, is to be found in the immanence of language, in the linguistic figuration around its constitutive shibboleth, the magic signifier the "cyber."

1.1.2. Technological Resurrectionism: The Way to Salvation

From the perspective outlined above, the perspective opened up by the *via linguistica*, the problem of the study, in fact, translates into the question: is the distinction between epistemology and ontology a metaphysical delusion, or does it refer to something "real" in the world, as far as it is possible to apprehend what we call "the world" in terms of "the real" at all as something that is intelligible beyond the phenomenal world of our everyday perception and experience (the "real" here in a post-Lacanian sense; cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]; Bowie 1991: 94–95; Evans 1996: 159–161)?

By approaching this question, it is necessary to keep in mind from the very beginning that the "post" is based on a radical misuse of the verb "to be" (cf. Heidegger 1977d [1927]); a misuse the abolition of which is possible only by its sublation.

Accordingly, the study at hand is an effort to understand the implications of Heidegger's (1989b [1962]: 137) pregnant sentence: *Nur was vorausberechenbar ist, gilt als seiend*, "Only what is calculable in advance counts as existent" (cf. Heidegger 1977a [1938]: 94–96; Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 36–39, 1993c [1990]: 52–53; Thomson 2005: 149–150).

In these terms, I shall be considering what is called "cybersex," a techno-imaginary vision of virtual and prosthetic sexual encounters enabled by cyberspace and the cyborg, that is, a postmodern phantasm peculiar to contemporary technoculture (in various contexts, see, for example, Redhead 1995: 59–60; Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 74–76; Ravetz 1997: 118; Virilio 1997 [1995]: 109–118; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 86–87; Ward 2000: 149–150; Lewis 2002: 410–412; Wil-

son 2002: 154; Mellor 2004: 37–39, 48; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; Urban 2006: 248–249; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87; Simanowski 2008: 179–185, 194–206; Saenz 1992; Robinson & Tamosaitis 1993; Wiley 1995; Lipton 1996; Barber 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Case 1999; Döring 2000; Sampaio & Aragon 2001; Plummer 2003, 2005, 2011; Dekker 2004; Gillis 2004; Waskul 2004; for an overview, see Collins 2006, 2008).[16] *Mutatis mutandis*, the technophilic wish-image of cybersex manifests what Benjamin (1999 [1972]: 79), in his *Arcades Project*, calls the "sex appeal of the inorganic"; studying manifestations of modern life in Paris, the "Capital of the Nineteenth Century," Benjamin writes referring to fashion:

> Each generation experiences the fashions of the one immediately preceding it as the most radical antiaphrodisiac imaginable. In this judgment it is not so far off the mark as might be supposed. Every fashion is to some extent a bitter satire on love; in every fashion, perversities are suggested by the most ruthless means. Every fashion stands in opposition to the organic. Every fashion couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, fashion defends the rights of the corpse. *The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve*. (Benjamin 1999: 79; emphasis mine; cf. Lunn 1982: 163–164; Marx 1983 [1867]: 85–98; Freud 1972e [1927])

In the world of the "cyber," Benjamin's observations take on a new meaning: "the machinic," "the prosthetic" and "the posthuman" are today the most spectacular manifestations of a technoscientific fashion that celebrates the "sex appeal of the inorganic" (for a paradigmatic example, see Perniola 2004; cf. Foster 2005: 81–114; Sevenant 2005: 52–54, 115–117; Melzer 2006: 188–193, 210–211; Clarke 2008: 156–157; von Samsonow 2005) in the form of *imaginary technology* (cf. Flichy 2007a [2001], 2007b [1995]) that reflects the "real" specific to "the postmodern condition" (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]).

Vanilla Sex and a Negative Theology of the Sexual

Taking this as the point of departure, I shall explore the discursive construction of "the sexual" in the name of the "cyber" from three points of view: firstly, a prostheticization of the sexual body that, at the same time, entails a sexualization of prosthetics, in other words, a new ethos of the sexual subject: *love your prosthesis as yourself*; secondly, a birth of a body-subject subjected to the machinic assemblage of contemporary capitalism, that is, a new imperative for the self not only to maintain its agency but, first and foremost, to survive: *where I was, there the machine shall be*; and thirdly, the final accomplishment of

16 According to Ken Plummer (2011: 119), one of the leading figures in contemporary sexualities studies, cybersex has emerged in the context of "new technologies" that have "generated multiple new forms of intimacy: sex messaging, sex chat rooms, sex news groups and bulletin boards, email discussion groups, camcorder sex, new forms of porn," and, finally, "cyborg sex, teledildonics, virtual sex, and new approaches to the body and emergent 'techno-identities' and 'techno-cultures.'" "What this means is that in recent years many new sexual practices have unfolded along with an array of new issues" (Macionis & Plummer 2008 [1997]: 762). In this manner, "cybersexualities, then, are becoming an increasingly important means of sexual communication in the twenty-first century"; in this sexual constellation, "[c]ybersex is a new phenomenon raising many new questions," and, accordingly, "[a]t the start of the twenty-first century, there are signs that sociologists are taking significant interest in it" (ibid.; cf. Plummer 2004a: 49, 2004b: 533, 2003; Waskul 2003, 2004a).

future technoculture under the sign of technoscience that will reconstitute the human as the posthuman according to the guiding principle: *only the cyborg can save us now*.

Elaborating on this thematic articulation, I shall argue that, in contemporary culture, "the sexual" is a sign that signifies a liberation of the body, a free enjoyment of corporeal desires and pleasures promised and promoted by the economic order of what I call *productive consumption* (see Eerikäinen 2004b), the economy of consumptive excess based on the political economy of neoliberalism (see Harvey (2005 [2003], 2007 [2005]; in terms of "hypercapitalism," cf. Graham 2006). In this sense, "the sexual" embraces a post-utopian space in the mode of "concrete utopia" specific to the postmodern: a potential actuality that is actual in its very potentiality, present in its absence (for the idea of "concrete utopia," see Bloch 1985 [1938–1947]; Levitas 1990: 83–105; Daniel & Moylan 1997).[17] That is, *the "not yet" of the modern has become the "already now" in the postmodern*. This is the post-utopian temporality of the postmodern, the time perspective of the "ever-present," the a-temporal time of the "post" as a radicalized form of what Benjamin (1991e [1940/1942]: 701) called *Jetztzeit*, "now-time" (cf. Weigel 1992), that is, the present turned into a permanent presence without history typical of the postmodern (cf. Jameson 1989 [1983]: 125).

In this constellation, the body has become a focus of passionate interests, an object of post-utopian projections, a phantasm of productive consumption constitutive of postmodern capitalism: the libidinal economy of the postmodern body is the driving force of contemporary capitalism. In this sense, the cyborg manifests a "fetishization of the human body" (Jameson 1991: 34) characteristic of the postmodern (for the notion of fetishism, see Freud 1972e [1927]: 314–317; Marx 1983 [1867]: 85–98; Williams 1989: 93–119; for fetishism as a "cultural discourse," see Apter & Pietz 1991); a mode of technophilic fetishism that originates from what I call the *American body fixation*, an obsessive preoccupation with the body, constitutive of the idea matrix of cyborgism, the cult of body transformation based on the ideal of transformative bodies (see, for example, Doane 1990; Tasker 1993; Jeffords 1994; Brandt 2007; for a specific feminist body excess, see, for example, McCaughey & King 2001; Inness 2004; Mainon & Ursini 2006; Sennewald 2007; in terms of postmodern utopia

17 It is appropriate to emphasize that utopia takes on a new meaning in the postmodern. Instead of projecting a vision of a new world waiting for us in the future, postmodern utopia presents itself as *a future that has already become present*, a utopia that is no longer an abstract vision, but a concrete actuality in the form of utopian potentiality, that is, "concrete" *in terms of the techno-imaginary*. Referring to post-Marxian thought, Judith N. Shklar (1994: 55–56) outlines the idea of utopia in the postmodern constellation of "heterotopia": "Gone is the proletariat; revolutionary violence does not beckon, and Marx's predictions are not taken seriously. His and Engels's rejection of utopianism is also to be circumvented. Critical theory posits a 'concrete utopia' left in the debris of Marx. It remains possible, even in our time and age, to hope for a good, a wholly different society, not because there is anything at present that indicates it but because it is necessary to believe in it if we are ever to look beyond an unacceptable actuality." It is in this manner that utopia has become "concrete" in the postmodern: utopia is no longer transcendent, it is now immanent, realized in the linguistic-discursive immanence constitutive of the postmodern (for heterotopia in terms of "other spaces," cf. Foucault 1999a [1967/1984]).

as "heterotopia," see Siebers 1994a). The dialectical reverse of body fetishism, of course, is the fetishism of the postmodern body abjection (cf. Kristeva 1982 [1980]); a radical body negation as a negation of the fact that, as Heidegger (1977d [1927]: 334–335) reminds us, our *Dasein*, our being-thereness, is *Sein zum Tode*, "being towards death," that is, living in order to die.

If, as a result of the all-consuming intellectual levelling typical of the postmodern, reason escapes into the phantasmatic spheres of the "post," its blissful realm of the imaginary of theory, the body finds its escape in what I call *the theology of the body*, a spectacular body cult in the manner of post-Benjaminian phantasmagoria pertaining to the corporeal well-being of the postmodern subject staged by the commodified mediascape (fashion, advertising and media-imagery) of contemporary culture (for the idea of "phantasmagoria" in Benjamin, see Buck-Morss 1989: 81–107, 175–195, 253–286; Cohen 1995 [1993]: 217–259); in other words, a vision of a secular resurrection of the body by means of self-design. Accordingly, under the imperative of scientific-technological body modification, the body is the survival machine of the postmodern subject desperately struggling against death; the neo-vitalist body-machine of the post-subject as an abject-subject obsessed with the decay of its own body: *the body as the paramount abject of the postmodern*.

This is a world in which what I call the *management of desire* determines the conditions of work, labour force and production in the economy of productive consumption, the expansion and intensification of exploitation, in which the desiring body is an increasingly valuable resource of capital: the body that *becomes* the body through a process of economization, as an investment object of the subject.

Thus, if we take cybersex seriously, in its true dimensions, it is not difficult to see that, as a phantasmatic indication of the ongoing scientific-technological transformation, it represents, in Heideggerian terms, an epochal *Ereignis* in the contemporary world (see Heidegger 1989a [1936–1938], 2009 [1935–1958]; cf., for example, Kisiel 1992: 154–156, 163–166; Haar 1993 [1990]: 62–65, 72–73) (provided, of course, that there is anything that can *re-present* anything after the advent of the "post"); a turn, without a return, to a constellation in which all the parameters of being "human" are to be redefined in a manner the consequences of which we do not know yet, if we will ever do. If technology has taken the place not only of nature, but, above all, of Being (in the Heideggerian sense of the term: *das Sein*), and if science, turned into scientism, is the predominant form of thought, it is evident that we live, indeed, in a *techno-culture*, in a fundamental sense of the notion: technology as *the mode* of being; that is, technology as our scientific-technological determination. In other words, we are now set, *resituated*, as Heidegger (1994a [1949]: 26–28, 32–35, 39–43) says, in the *Ge-Stell* (or *Gestell*), "enframing," that is the very premise of our existence (cf., for example, Loscerbo 1981: 140–157, 242–266; Dreyfus 1993: 306–308; Haraway 1995b [1992]: 77–82; Young 2002: 44–58; Kroker 2004b: 24–25, 42, 46–47, 52–53).

In these terms, the cyborg is a manifestation of the body obsession peculiar to the American body fixation, our fate in terms of the "post": the body obsession of obsessive bodies practising the cult of the "perfect body" has now become the discursive matrix of the technocultural body discourse in the world of the "post." That is, *the body* is the postmodern *Über-Ich* of the post-subject, the phantasmatic "superego" of the posthuman self. In this context, Freud's (1987a [1923]: 253) dictum of the relationship between the ego and the body takes on a new meaning: *Das Ich ist vor allem ein körperliches, es ist nicht nur ein Oberflächenwesen, sondern selbst die projektion einer Oberfläche*, "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface" (cf. Levine 2000: 109–110; Hansen 2006: 61–63, 133; from a transgender perspective, cf. Posser 2006: 269–272). If, in this sense, the cyborg is a contemporary form of what Freud (1987a: 255) calls *Körper-Ich*, a "body-ego," what is the "surface" of which it is a "projection"? In one word, the techno-imaginary, that is the surface which the cyborg is a projection of; that is, the body as a cyborg-body is a technological construction predicated upon a radical deconstruction of the subject, a self assembling itself from its own destruction by means of prosthetics.

According to Brian Pronger (2002), in the contemporary constellation of technoculture, we are living under the imperative of technological redesign of the subject, a constant re-assemblage of the self, enabled by the micropolitics of body modification based on ego-projections engendered by the techno-imaginary, paradigmatically exemplified by the ego-ideal projected by the cult of physical fitness, the idea of a "perfect body." As Pronger states, where the body becomes a "construct of the human subject, as it does in the technology of physical fitness, its decay and demise are testimony to the inevitable ultimate failure of sovereign individuality" (ibid.: 169), and hence:

> The human subject, created by the larger modern technological project as the ongoing design of individual self-creation in the quest to establish security in identity, fearfully excludes the difference that change, decay, and death promise. In this way, the essentially impermanent movement of the body becomes *the negative other that needs to be erased* by the more stable identity of the physically fit: the technologically physically fit body is one that dominates the movement of life. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

This is the world of techno-scientifically enhanced and augmented, extended and empowered, body, the ego-world of the "trans-body" (Caysa 2003: 57–75), a techno-body that has abandoned the idea of mortality, a postmodern body that celebrates the cult of immortality. In these terms, the cyborg manifests a radical negation of death: the cyborg does not sing the Whitmanian "body electric" (Whitman 1990 [1860/1881]: 81); instead, as the ultimate realization of the post-Nietzschean *Wille zur Macht*, "will to power" (see Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 143–145, 1968b [1886]: 21–22, 31–33, 1968c [1887]: 332, 1973a [1882/1887]: 267–268; cf. Montinari 1991: 98–109, 112–124; Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 33–51, 1998b [1961]: 210–215; Haberkamp 2000: 59–80, 131–133; Müller-

Lauter 2000), in the sense of the actualization of the potentiality of technology enacted by technological reason itself in the form of "the will to technology" (see Kroker 2004b), the cyborg proclaims the gospel of the post-Freudian "prosthetic God" as the embodiment of the posthuman (in McLuhanian terms, cf. Cavell 2003: 81–83; Zylinska 2002a).

In this sense, the cyborg embodies the mode of thought of what I call *technological resurrectionism*, a manifestation of postmodern "after-ism" by means of radical technologization of all that is human in the name of the "post"; a mindset inscribed in the post-Heideggerian *Weltbild*, "world-picture," of contemporary technoculture (cf. Heidegger 1977a [1938]; Chevalley 1992: 351–354; Caputo 1993: 16–18; for a precision of the meaning of *Weltbild* in contrast to *Weltanschauung*, "world-view," see Inwood 1999: 248–249).

In this constellation, the sexual takes on an entirely new meaning: it becomes a paragon of the possibility of the impossible, a post-Hegelian *Aufhebung*, "sublation," of the sexual in the mode of cancelling preserving, of conservation by negation, a dialectical process of development manifesting the idea of the *Weltgeist* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986d [1837]: 11–104, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; in Derridean terms, see, for example, Derrida 1984a [1972/1968]: 19–20; cf. Cox 1996: 125–128). In the world of cybersex, we are far away from the paradigm of vanilla sex, the residual form of the sexual in contrast to emergent new sexualities effected by the logic of the "post"; in terms of the "cyber," the "sexual" of sex is always subversive. Accordingly, cybersex, as a name for nameless forms of the "sexual" in the postmodern, implies *a negative theology of the sexual*, while it, at the same time, projects *a post-eschatological vision of future sex* (cf., for example, Ward 2000: 194–197; Kroker 2004b: 21–22, 28–29, 170–171, 175; Loughlin 2004: 103–183, 2007a; Pettman 2002; in Derridean terms, cf. Taylor 1993: 33–35).

Even in the pleasure garden of the postmodern, Paul is with us (cf. Watson 2000). In other words, Bunyan's (1984 [1678/1684]) way is our way.

The Hard Core of the "Cyber": Tetsuo Sex

This is the world of the "cyber," a world in which everything is possible since nothing is impossible in terms of the "post." In the world of the "cyber," as Fred Botting (1999: 180) says, "God, as immanent, technological being, occupies the everywhere and nowhere of the machinic process" (cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]: 316). For this reason, the human being goes through a radical transformation under the impact of the "cyber"; as Botting (1999: 180) specifies, referring to Paul Virilio's post-eschatological vision: the "eye and the hand are replaced by data glove, the body is replaced by the data suit, sex is replaced by cybersex" (cf. Virilio 1997 [1995]: 103–118). Thus, "sex" in the ecstasy of the "cyber" is a divine experience: one encounters "the new machine-God of the matrix" (Botting 1999: 181). It is in this manner that in the world of the "cyber," as the postmodern theologian Graham Ward (2000: 182–221, 247–252) says, we are invited to encounter "the erotics of redemption" and receive "the redemption

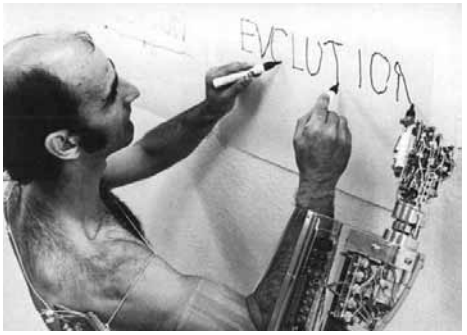


Fig. 3. In a world in which technology defines the parameters of the body, two hands are not enough to write what comes after the human being, after the cyborgian redesign of the body. A messenger of the posthuman: Stelarc with his *Third Hand*; a robotic arm constructed in 1980 and deployed thereafter in several techno-body performances by the artist as an emblem of the prosthetic enhancement of the body, the next step in human evolution implying the first step towards the post-evolutionary techno-evolution of the posthuman (see, for example, Nayar 2004: 254–258; Kac 2005: 178–180; Atzori & Woolford 1997 [1995]; Zurbrugg 2000b).

That is, Stelarc is a self-made cyborg embodying a utopian dream of an individual evolution, a cyborgian self-optimization reflecting the ego-politics of the subject characteristic of the political economy of neoliberalism, the economic order of neo-Fordism: the post-political ethos of *the entrepreneurial self* (cf. Peters 2001: 73–81, 109–111; Bröckling 2007). It is therefore appropriate to emphasize that a prosthetic enhancement of an abled body is not the same as a prosthetic rehabilitation of a disabled body. Thus, Stelarc is a post-theoretical paragon of body modification that celebrates the techno-body as a personal liberation project in the sense of the narcissism of ableism (see Campbell 2012), in contrast to which, "the cyborg is not disabled" (Siebers (2006: 178) in the world of the "post" (cf. Betcher 2001; Reeve 2012; for a discussion of Stelarc's body modification in the context of the prosthetic rehabilitation of disabled soldiers during and after the First World War, see Excursus 3).

of cyberspace" (cf. Ward 1997), and even finally to enjoy an entirely new mode of "erotics" through our encounter with what Gerard Loughlin (1999) calls "God's sex" (cf. Heim 1993: 83–108).

In this sense, the gendering/sexualization of God, as an apotheosis of anthropomorphism, implies the deification of the human being; now, of course, in the form of posthuman rebirth, a technological resurrection of the mortal body, the human body declared "obsolete" by Stelarc (1991: 591; cf. Herzogenrath 2000). This is the "techno-theological significance" (Derrida 1997 [1967]: 139) of the cyborg in terms of what Haraway (2000a: 86) calls her "Catholic symbolism and sacramentalism," the "doctrines of incarnation and transubstantiation" (cf. Stockton 1992; in terms of "divine economy," cf. Grau 2004: 8–16, 175–179).

This is the context of the "sexual" in terms of the "cyber" in the linguistic matrix of the "post."

What is the most relieving news here is that this time it is no longer as for Matthew the Apostle (22: 14) according to whom "many are called, but few are chosen"; no, this time the redemption pertains to all of us, since, as Haraway – the "patron saint of all forms of boundary-breaking within cyberculture" (Bassett 2006: 227) – already affirmed at the end of the last century:

> By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. (Haraway 1991a: 150)

It is in these terms that the cyborg is the ultimate incarnation of the Freudian "prosthetic God" (see Freud 1972a [1930]: 450–451; cf., for example, Schönherr-Mann 1994: 244–246; Erlach 2000: 170–173; Marsh 2000: 182–184; Mraček 2004: 200–202; Borck 2005a: 160–163; Tanner 2005: 45–48; Haubl 2007: 128–130; Hartmann 2008: 40–41; Decker 2004; for a historical perspective, cf., for example, Berger 2000). There is, however, a significant difference between Freud's times and the present world: while, in Freud's conception, it was still *der Mensch*, "the human being," that was augmented and extended by means of ever-new *Hilfsorgane*, "auxiliary organs" (Freud 1972a: 451), the cyborg, in turn, is a *posthuman* embodiment of technology, implying, as Haraway says above, that from now on "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our

most intimate selves." In other words, the cyborg is the *non plus ultra*, the final perfection, of prosthetic God that is not just a redefinition of the human being, but, more fundamentally, a mode of being that transcends, and thus transgresses, the idea of the human altogether. It is in this sense that the cyborg is a manifestation of what I call *the God principle*, the constitutive principle of contemporary technoculture: *be your own God by becoming the God of your own creation*, the prosthetic God resulting from your self-design.

Thus, the posthuman implies a radical break, a true Jamesonian *coupure* (see Jameson 1984: 53, 1991: 1), with the idea of the human; a fundamental abolition of the anthropological form of the human being emerged as result of bio-cultural evolution and a substitution of it by a post-evolutionary form of being based on techno-evolution, a thoroughly rational process ruled by the scientific-technological reason of technoscience (cf. Stelarc 1991, 1992; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Halliwell & Mousley 2003; Melzer 2006; in terms of "the myth of a second Creation," cf. Flessner 2000b).

This is the idea of techno-theology, referred to above; the idea of the overcoming the constraints of the human in terms of the "cyber." It is in this sense that the cyborg, as a postmodern prosthetic God, is a latter-day embodiment of the transgressive being that Friedrich Nietzsche (1968a [1883–1885]: 8–10), the great vitalist as philosopher, called *Übermensch*, a "supra-human being," the idea of which was precisely to "overcome" or "surmount," *überwinden*, the human (ibid.: 142–145, 352–363). Transgression, technocultural transcendence, is the post-Nietzschean perspective of the cyborg: the perspective of the all-inclusive "trans" (cf. Baudrillard 1993c [1990]: 3–35; from a Bataillean perspective, cf. Foucault 1977a [1963]). This is the logic of the "post" in the order of the "cyber"; the "cyber" functioning as a signifier that has an enormous transformative potential – to be emphasized, *in theory*. But, at the same time, what is vitally important to keep in mind is that the "cyber" is originally an American figure through and through (literally and metaphorically, materially and ideally), and, accordingly, the cyborg, in its post-Nietzschean pathos, is a genuinely American wish-image, a postmodern idol in the sense of the self-idolization of the human being as its own self-creator (for the sacralization and divinization of technology constitutive of American culture, see Noble 1997; Sturken et al. 2004).

But as obvious as it is that the cyborg is a sacral figure, it is that the parameters of the sexual undergo a radical transformation in the world of the cyborg, a world reconstituted in the name of the "cyber": in being cyborg, the sexual becomes redefined in terms of "trans," not in the usual sense of the transsexual, but in the sense of technological transcendence in terms transgression (cf. Baudrillard 1993c: 20–25). As Haraway (1991a: 150) says, "[c]yborg 'sex' restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates (such nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism)" (cf. Barr 1993: 116–117; Reid 1996 [1994]: 341–342; Peppers 1997: 170–171; Apter 1999: 216–217; Sim 2002: 173; Gillis 2004: 97–98; Chun 2006: 226–228).

From this perspective, it is not difficult to see that cybersex is not just a whim of the postmodern cybermind; it is an epochal transition to an entirely new world, a world of technoscience in which we can enjoy "sex" as a non-linear, post-liminal process, a scientific-technological procedure manifesting post-teleological, multidimensional and post-Freudian "polymorphous perverse" desires and pleasures *augmented and enhanced by prosthetic means* (cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213; Haraway 1991a: 150–151; Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 14–16; Plant 1998: 30–32; Case 1999: 88–89; Hawthorne 1999: 217–219; Schaffer 2002a [1999]; in terms of cybernetics, cf. Rosenblueth & Wiener 1950; Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]), "sex" as a complex system of technoscientific relationships, a paradigm of the "sexual" that totally exceeds the limits of being human. For this reason, cybersex is posthuman sex, "sex" as a post-cybernetic circular causal operation, a completely rationalized *body technique*, in a world of limitless possibilities (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; von Foerster 2003b [1974]: 230–231, 1950; Kern 2004: 298–300; Johnston 2008: 25–30), that is, "sexual" transactions in the world of prosthetic body politics.

Gone are the days of what was once called "sexual intimacy"; from now on we can enjoy the pleasure of *sexual extimacy*, the pleasure of artificial organs in the prosthetic universe of the "cyber"; that is, "sex" as a technological borderline experience, *ex-centric* "sex" at the interface of the body and the machine (cf. Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]: 165, 171, 1997 [1986/1959–1960]: 139, 1988b [1978/1954–1955]; Miller 1997 [1994]: 74–81; Dean 2000: 11–12, 53–54, 101–103, 122–123; Flieger 2005: 222–246; in relation to the fascination of Dada with the mechanization of the human being, cf. Bergius 1980, 1981, 1997, 2000); in other words, the "cyber" is the code for a high-tech mode of "sexual outercourse" (see van Sevenant 2005) by means of whole-body prosthetics; that is, *Tetsuo sex* as the *jouissance* of the cyborg.

With regard to above discussion, "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is a radically post-scientific notion, and, accordingly, "the sexual" in cybersex is a Derridean "transcendental signified" (Derrida 1982 [1972]: 19–20, 44, 49, 65), enabled by the linguistic matrix of the posthuman, that, *precisely as such*, operates as a "transcendental signifier" (ibid.: 86) in the manner of the "post," and has thus a Derridean techno-theological significance in the discursive economy of the "cyber." For this reason, what is "cyber" is as real as the "post": in Derridean terms, it "has not fallen from the sky" (Derrida 1973 [1967]: 141, 1982: 27, 1984a: 11); it is an effect of language, an effect that has transcendental implications in its linguistic immanence: as a manifestation of the "post," the "cyber" refers to an imaginary realm of becoming beyond the real and the rational (for paradigmatic examples, see Heim 1993; Stone 1994a [1993], 1995a, 1995d, 1995e, 1996a). In its own way, the paradigm of the "cyber," as a phantasmatic radicalization of the "post" in terms of the hyperbolic, paradoxically, literalizes the logic of the "post"; that is, the "cyber," through its linguistic figuration, concretizes the "other side of reason" (Boyne 1990), "brings it home" in the manner of the Freudian "uncanny," *das Unheimliche* (see Freud 1986b [1919]: 259–264; cf., for example, Webber 1996: 44–45, 92–93; Chowers 2004: 105–111).

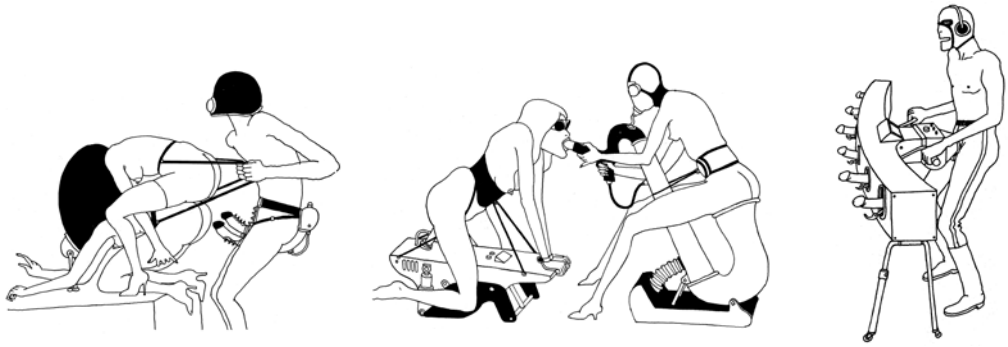


Fig. 4–6. Cybersex *avant la lettre*. In 1969, in the heyday of the "sexual revolution," the French-German artist Tomi Ungerer, living at the time in New York, published a portfolio of satirical drawings, entitled *Fornicon* (a title calling to mind Fellini's *Satyricon* released in the same year), describing machine dominated sex acts with a focus on phallic imagery.

In the fantastic world of sexual "liberation" created by Ungerer, the pathos of the technological progress and sexual radicalism typical of the 1960s amalgamate in a hilarious techno-fetishism. Extravagant machines and orgasmic bodies intermingle with one another in orgiastic configurations in which the sexual subject and the sexual object continually change places with each other. In the ecstasy of technological pleasure, driven by the liquid libido of post-organic "sex," *forniconized* bodies and machines celebrate their limitless sexual freedom; that is, a post-Sadean libertinage that implies both the deconstruction and transgression of all the limits of carnal pleasure. In this manner, in Ungerer's techno-paradise we can enjoy not only a spectralization, but, more fundamentally, a hyperization of "the sexual."

This is a universe of techno-lust in which the principles of cybernetics, the most advanced scientific world-explanation of the time, meet the ethos of the avant-garde, the spirit of the "post" in its Sixties form (cf. Pettman 2002: 37–54; Drenth 2005: 235–237; with regard to the *Maschinenerotik* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, cf. Asendorf 1984: 77–80; in terms of *Sexualästhetik* and the "bachelor machine," cf. Gorsen 1987: 133–138, 1999: 198–204; for de Sade's "sexual mechanics," cf. Frappier-Mazur 1996: 29–32; Kang 2011: 165–166; Hénaff 1995 [1975], 1999 [1978]; Krewani 1998a).

In this constellation, we can enjoy the extraordinary pleasure of what Elizabeth Grosz (1994b) calls "experimental desire," a mode of desire that has the ability to transgress, over and over again, not only the limits and limitations of all that is ordinary and "normal," but, more fundamentally, the determinations and delimitations of desire in itself, desire constrained by the teleology of pleasure. In other words, in its radical liminality as post-liminal trans-activity the sexual in the world of the "post" is based on the *postification of desire*; that is, experimental desire in terms of the "cyber" manifests the ex-centric and ex-static dynamics of the "post" in the manner of Derridean dissemination and supplementation (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 141–164, 1981a [1972]).

It is in this manner that all that is "cyber" follows the logic of the "hyper," and, accordingly, *cybersex is hypersex*, "sex" in a world in which everything is *always already* "post," beyond the last limit: in the realm of limitless being.

How Does the Impossible Become Possible?

With this kind of *radical* radicalization of all that is "radical," we have moved into a world in which gravity has lost its meaning and things appear in their helium-light immateriality, the very materiality of what Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (1997b) call "digital delirium" (cf. Callus & Herbrechter 2004a: 236–238), that is, the *jouissance* of the "cyber" (cf. Schaffer 2002b [1999]: 436–439; Bennett 2005: 138; Kovacevic 2006: 112–120, 127–142, 203–209; Wilson 2008: 5–11, 21–29, 52–57; in terms of the "digital *Schein*" constitutive of the "aesthetics of the electronic media," cf. Rötzer 1991a).

Instead of the burden of the Enlightenment, it is now the lightness of post-reason, the supreme mode

of reason under the sign of the "post," that is the key to the ultimate liberation, the final Emancipation of the subject as its blissful disruption through the post-Kantian critique of reason (cf. Kant 1990a [1781/1787], 1990b [1781/1787]; Mohr & Willaschek 1998; for a critical discussion on Kant's conception of the *Aufklärung* in terms of "the present," see Foucault 1990f [1984]).

This is the reason of what I call the *surrational*; a mode of reason that is able to think about the unthinkable, a contemporary form of what Christopher Norris (1987: 159–163) designates as "modern technocratic reason," the rational turned into a "technocratic fantasy" (Norris 1985: 35), science elevated to "the technocratic will-to-power" (Norris 1997: 19, 138, 149–157; in terms of Cold War paranoid rationality in the context of the American nuclear war politics in the 1960s, cf. Kahn 1960, 1962, 1984; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005; with regard to the Gulf War in 1991, cf. Levidow 1994: 327; from the perspective of "social engineering," cf. Podgórecki et al. 1996; Thompson & Findlay 1999; Etzemüller 2009; Jordan 2010); a form of supra-rationality elevated to the level of the imaginary in the manner of the postmodern. To avoid all misunderstandings from the beginning, one should notice that the surrational is not the same as the irrational or the non-rational, as we will see in the course of the present study. It is in this manner that, in the world of the "post," the impossible has become possible by means of what Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham (2007) call the "politics of possibility."

This is the "real" of the Lyotardian "postmodern condition," a specific mode of the "real" enabled by contemporary capitalism. "Capitalism," as Jean-François Lyotard (1984: 74) says, "inherently possesses the power to *derealize* familiar objects, social roles, and institutions to such a degree that the so-called realistic representations can no longer evoke reality except as nostalgia or mockery" (emphasis mine; cf. Baudrillard 1990b [1983], 1990d; Kellner 1989; Gane 1991a, 1991b; Genosko 1994a; Porombka & Scharnowski 1999). In my reading, this is precisely the idea of the surrational, the reason of the imaginary that can be properly understood only in terms of irony *intrinsic* to the "objects" of contemporary capitalism ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism (see, for example, Harvey 2007 [2005]; Dean 2009; in terms of "virtual economy," cf. Peterson 2003: 113–146). As we will see, this is what Jean Baudrillard (1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b: 182) calls "objective irony" (discussed in detail in Excursus 1).

What does this mean? In the world under the sign of the "post," there is no longer to be enjoyed what the Surrealists called the experience of the *merveilleux*, the "marvellous" (Spector 1997: 186–189); instead, what we have now is the sublime of the "post," the extraordinary pleasure of what, in Derridean terms, is designated as the "undecidable" (Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 219–220), or an "*experience and experiment of the undecidable*" (Derrida 2000 [1988]: 116; emphasis in the original), or just "undecidability" (Derrida 1981d: 213, 220–222, 261; cf. Norris 1987: 42, 80–82, 133, 162; Nealon 1993: 17–18, 36, 161–162, 168; Royle 2003a: 5–6). This is the *jouissance* of the "cyber," the

orgasmic bliss of the prosthetic body: a body in fragments to be experienced beyond the terror regime of the phallus (cf., for example, Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1984 [1974]; Irigaray 1985a [1974], 1985b [1977]; Grosz 1989; Cixous 1994, 2010 [1975]; Campbell 2000). No longer is there anything left of the "shock of the new" either (Hughes 1991 [1980]); instead, ever-new instances of the "always already" constitutive of the "post" of the postmodern now define the parameters of being in terms of both epistemology and ontology (see, for example, Derrida 1978b [1967/1963]: 4, 12, 1978d [1967/1965]: 177–178, 1997: 7, 49–50, 89, 106; Johnson 1980a: 48, 111, 119–120, 1987: 20, 35, 113; Spivak 1997: xii, xiv, lxviii, lxix, lxxiv, lxxvii).

It is in this way that the world of the "post" is a postmodern *Lunapark* (see, Grosz 1986 [1918]; cf. Hassan 1975: 39–62, 1982 [1971]: 48–79, 1977) in which things not only are as they appear to be, but, more fundamentally, they appear as they really are: under the sign of the "post," the difference between *Schein* and *Sein* has imploded. In this world, sex finally takes on its "true meaning." In order to understand the *true meaning* of this "true meaning," however, we must "work through" the following pages in the manner of Freudian *Durcharbeiten* (see Freud 1991c [1914]; Rabinow 2003: 107–121).

In this precise sense, then, what is called "cybersex" (whether in contemporary theory or in the realm of the "popular") is a postmodern "impossible object" (Hebdige 1987b); that is, an object that, in a Derridean manner, constitutes its possibility by its very impossibility; as Richard Beardsworth (1998 [1996]: 26) says, "[i]mpossibility is not the *opposite* of the possible: impossibility *releases* the possible." It is in this sense that the "post," as the condition of possibility of the "cyber," releases the possibility of being "cyber" in the mode of becoming "post" as the most radical way of "posting" the body in the contemporary world.

In these terms, what I am interested in is the "enigmatic textual activity of the signifier" (Leitch 1983: 30), that is, the effects of a specific postmodern signifier, the "cyber," as a linguistic particle in the discursive matrix of the "post," the "post," in itself, understood as a post-Derridean "signifier of the signifier," *the* "major signifier" (cf. Derrida 1997: 7) of all that is "postmodern." *For this reason*, what today is designated as the "posthuman" (for a paradigmatic example, see Hayles 1999), after the avalanche of various "posts" since the 1960s (see, for example, Bell 1973: 51–54; Connor 1989: 65–66; Callinicos 1989: 25; McCance 1996), that is, in the era in which a general postality in its radical postness implying a general postness in its radical postality determines the epistemological and ontological parameters of all being, does not mean *after* the human, but, rather, the *postification* of the human by means of the "post." It is precisely this postification as a methodical linguistification of theory constitutive of post-theory that is my object of interest in the study at hand; linguistification in the sense of an all-consuming textuality arising from writing theory in the mode of

écriture.[18] If, as Rosi Braidotti (1991: 239), one of the leading theorists in the discursive constellation of the "post," says that, according to "the poststructuralist notion," "the textual is isomorphic with the psychic" (emphasis mine), it is clear that, in terms of the "post," the sexual is *isomorphic* with the textual, and, as we will see, vice versa.

In general, if there is any definition for the "post," in its shortest form it has very much to do with the characterization with which Michael Riffaterre (1980 [1978]: 141) describes the "automatic writing" of surrealists: "beneath the words there is nothing but more words." *In other words*, in the world of the "post," one enters a post-Lacanian symbolic order *that is the order of the imaginary*, a linguistic realm constituted by *the imaginary of language* (cf. Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 213–222; with regard to André Breton, cf. Foucault 1996a [1966]: 11–12; in terms of "language to infinity," cf. Foucault 1977b [1963]: 66–67).[19]

It is in this order that the impossible becomes possible just because it is impossible.

18 Initially, the term *écriture* (a word meaning writing, faculty of writing, art of writing, handwriting, style, in French) was introduced by Barthes (1967 [1953]) in his inquiry into literary writing entitled *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*, to designate writing as an idiosyncratic style expressing a specific literary world-view. In his essay *Écrivains et écrivants* (1960), Barthes modified this idea to refer to a self-reflexive, language-centred writing performed by what he called *écrivant* (a language-conscious, "intransitive" *writer* in the sense of "writing-writer," "writer-in/as-writing": "activity," "text"), in contrast to *écrivain* (a conventional, "transitive" *author* using language only as a means to describe some assumed text-external world: "function," "work"). In the wake of the 1960s, the Parisian avantgardist literary circle around the *Tel Quel* journal (see Culler 1975: 241–254; Rylance 1994: 66–102), and especially along with Derridean deconstruction (see Derrida 1997 [1967]), *écriture* has come to signify writing able to transcend referential language (see Johnson 1995 [1990]). Since Hélène Cixous's (1976 [1975]) idea of *écriture féminine* (see, for example, Blyth & Sellers 2004: 18–34; Segarra 2010), writing as *écriture* has been extended to cover the particularly feminine (but not necessarily only female) mode of linguistic figuration overflowing, and finally disrupting, the binary oppositions (such as nature/culture, body/mind, female/male) characteristic of the patriarchal or "phallogocentric" order (see Moi 1985: 102–126). Presently, through the all-pervasive impact of poststructuralism, *écriture* is, implicitly or explicitly, a widely used approach in cultural theory referring in general to all kinds of linguistic and textual strategies foregrounding writing as writing, in contrast to writing relying on the presumed "transparency" of language as a representation of reality; thus, the historical import of the term *écriture* implies that "one might easily chart the major developments in post-war intellectual history, at least in France, by successive inflections given to this term" (Stam et al. 1992: 194; see, for example, Harari 1979; Young 1981b; Natoli & Hutcheon 1993; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Still & Worton 1993b; Milner & Browitt 2002; Rajan & O'Driscoll 2002; Davis 2004; Simons 2004a; Colebrook 2005 [1999]; for an overview of "writing-the-body" or "body-writing" in *écriture féminine*, see Osinski 1998: 151–167).

19 In the conceptual topology of the present study, the idea of the imaginary in its relationship to the symbolic does not directly derive from Lacan's theory, although both notions are indebted to it in their own way (see Lacan 1977c [1966/1955–1956]: 180–187, 191–197, 1977e [1966/1953]: 65; Bowie 1991: 91–101, 108–109, 119–121; Evans 1997 [1996]: 82–84, 201–203). By the term of the imaginary, I am referring to a phantasmatic para-world constituted by imagined objects and states of being (cf. Pearce 1989; in terms of "paraspace," cf. Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157–161), an ideal universe consisting of alluring wish-images, an illusionary realm that appears as real precisely because it is imaginary. In other words, the imaginary is a mirror-world that does not reflect the real world but its idealized double. This world exists in language, as effected by the linguistic of language, and, in this sense, is possible as a fantasy space produced by the symbolic order, the order of signifiers and signification, of discursive figures and figurations. Accordingly, the imaginary order in this study is a *virtual reality of language* in which, as Malcolm Bowie (1991: 92–93), referring to Lacan's conception of the "Symbolic order," says, "nothing exists except on an assumed foundation of absence." It is this *absent presence* that is the condition of possibility of the imaginary.

The Auto-Affection of the "Cyber," or: How to Sing and Dance Properly?

What today, for some unknown reason, is still called "sex" is actually no longer possible in the world of the cyborg. In this world, everything that is "sexual" has to be understood in terms of Derridean *sous rature*, "under erasure" (see, for example, Derrida 1997: 60, 75, 88; cf. Norris 1982: 68, 1987: 16; Taylor & Winquist 2001: 113–114), as a signifier that can be used only in quotation marks; that is, a signifier that quotes itself to signify at all. In this manner, "sex" has turned into what Paul Ricoeur (1986 [1975]: 99, 284–293) calls a "dead metaphor" (cf. Nietzsche 1973c [1873/1896]: 374–375; Soskice 1985: 77–80; Hass 2003: 108–116), a figure of speech the "content" of which is not its meaning (if there ever was any), but its ability to *signify* even without meaning. In this sense, "sex" is a Derridean "white metaphor," a postmodern trope intelligible only in terms of what Derrida (1984g [1972/1971]) calls "white mythology" (cf. Webb 1991: 22–23, 33–34; Taylor & Winquist 2001: 426–427).

That is, *"sex" is a name of which we no longer know what it names* (cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 93, 105; cf. Fraser 1994 [1983]: 7–8), or, to bring the issue to the logical consequence, we no longer know whether it names anything at all that would make a difference necessary for a concept in the rigorous sense of the term. In other words, "the sexual" in "sex" has entirely dissolved in its intrinsic nominalism, the nominalism of naming (for a philosophical discussion of naming in relation to believing, see Fitch 1987); and, consequently, what we have now by "having sex" is a fetish in its very nominality. This is the *jouissance* of namesless pleasures, the bliss of the nominalism of the non-nameable.

In contrast, to practice acts of *corporeal pleasures* (whatever they happen to be) designated as "sex" in the matrix of the "cyber" one needs to liberate oneself from empty words, to get rid of self-referential nominalism, to exceed the limits of linguisticism altogether, and, after this elevating act of self-emancipation, like a newborn body, to envelope oneself in a multi-functional, cybernetically controlled system of technological paraphernalia, the prosthetic body-machine assemblage constitutive of the cyborg (in terms of the spacesuit, cf. Haraway 1989: 139; Gray 2001: 138–141; de Monchaux 2011). In this context, "sex" becomes resignified: it is reinstated in terms of the "cyber," the terms of technomorphism (for paradigmatic examples, see Plant 1995: 60–63, 1996b: 181–183, 1998: 30–32, 1997b; Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). In this manner, "sex," technology and language are intimately intertwined with one another in the world of the cyborg: this discursive interweavement constitutes what I call *the affective complex of the techno-imaginary* in terms of the "post," a post-Lacanian "Borromean knot" of affective investments rearticulating the cultural imaginary of the body after the implosion of meaning (cf. Lacan 1999 [1975/1972–1973]: 111, 123–136; Evans 1996: 18–20; Nobus 2003: 62–64).

As a result, what is called "sex," in fact, has now become a cultural *lacuna* that is pregnant of potential "meaning" in terms of Derridean "under erasure": a signifier the signified of which is predicated upon its impossibility.

What is constitutive of the affective complex of the techno-imaginary in this context is that it is a signifying configuration in which language, technology and the body are inter-connected in a discursive matrix that is at once both a product of and produces cultural and corporeal kinetics in terms of desires and pleasures, libidinal "energies" that have visceral effects (cf. Watson & Jowers 1997; in terms of the classical conception of hysteria, cf. Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Sulloway 1979: 22–100; Sadoff 1998: 37–48, 58–59, 148–164; Smith 1999: 18–23; Littlewood 2002: 149–160; Makari 2008: 38–51, 88–101; Rousseau 1993; von Braun 1994 [1985]; Bronfen 1998; Lamott 2001). In this manner, mediated by affective language, the "technological" and the "corporeal" constitute a specific mode of the techno-imaginary that is characteristic of the postmodern.

It is in this constellation, to apply Jonathan Sawday's (2007) idea in the context of Renaissance culture and "the rise of the machine," that machines are in themselves "engines of the imagination."

In this manner, cybersex – this ambiguous and alluring linguistic figure that manifests the suggestive power of the "post" – is an index, a discursive indicator, of the transformation concerning the postmodern condition of the sexual, the very condition of possibility of desires and pleasures in what Fredric Jameson (1991: 36) calls the "Third Machine Age," the era of the technological sublime, the era of the impossible possible constitutive of the possible impossible as the *sine qua non* of all that is "post." In this respect, what I am interested in is the "reality effect," *l'effet de réel*, of the "cyber" in the post-Barthesian sense of the term (cf. Barthes 1968: 88, 1989b [1968]: 141–148; Jameson 1988j [1977]: 135, 1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 22–23). In other words, I am interested in *the reality of theory* in terms of the "post"; terms that are self-reflective and self-referential in the manner in which they "define" themselves in and by themselves in an unending process of signifying circularity.

Therefore, as we will see, what is the "real" in the reality of theory if not an effect of the *imaginary* of theory given in and by the imaginary of language; that is, the Freudian *Primärvorgang*, the "primary process," consisting of *Verschiebung*, "displacement," and *Verdichtung*, "condensation," or, in Lacan's Jakobsonian rereading of Freud, "metaphor" and "metonymy" (see Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 174–176, 381, 1987d [1900]: 284–314, 519–521; Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]: 156–157, 160–161; Silverman 1983: 66–86; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 235–236); that is, an ongoing discursive process of linguistic enactments based on the imaginary of language that constitutes, in Lacanian terms, "the psychic economy of unconscious drives and desires" (Norris 1987: 113–114; cf. Bowie 1991: 70–71), and works as such as the *modus operandi* of signifiers constitutive

of the linguistic of language as the condition of possibility of all language (cf. O'Hara 1987: 195–196).[20]

In this sense, desire, as an intrinsic movement of theory, is an effect of language, a manifestation of a "primary process" specific to all that is "post," the proper understanding of which presupposes, rather than considering what is assumed to be the signified, "attending closely to the logic of the *signifier*" (Norris 1987: 115), the very logic of the "post." My interest here is therefore "the *letter* of the text" (ibid.) as the key to the world of the "cyber" in terms of the "post," the terms of desire as "the structural unconscious of language" (ibid.: 116; in a Hegelian context, cf. Butler 1999b [1987]).

If, as Hubert Dreyfus, referring to Foucault, states that to "deconstruct" cultural constructions, "one must give an interpretation" of the "current cultural situation by finding a cultural paradigm," as "for Heidegger, the hydroelectric power station on the Rhine," or, "for Foucault, the prison" (Kariel 1989: 154; cf. Heidegger 2000b [1953]: 16–17; Foucault 1991a [1975]), this kind of determining "paradigm" in the present study is the discursive construct around the "cyber"; a construction in which the effects of the techno-imaginary peculiar to the "post" come to the fore like invisible substances in an appropriate laboratory experiment. Thus, the purpose of the study at hand (as far as there can be any "purposes" in the world of the "post" in which the very idea of *intentionality*, as a delusion of subjectivity, is an anathema) is to make the reified signifiers of the "post" dance in a similar manner as Marx made the "petrified social conditions" of his time "dance by singing their own melody to them" (Kariel 1989: 130). If there is any melody in the world of the "post" it certainly has more to do with Philip Glass than, for example, Brahms or Shostakovich: panic-like repetition is the sound of the "post"; the problem is only how to sing and dance it properly?

It should be noticed, however, that although I am approaching the world of the "cyber" in terms of the "literary," the present text is not a literary exegesis, but, instead, an exegesis that pertains to the *letterism* of the "cyber." Over and over again, it is the "cyber" that discharges, releases or launches the textual production in the form of signifying chains that proliferate the postmodern linguis-

20 What Freud (1987d [1900]: 542–546, 1990c [1933]: 77–79, 1991a [1915]: 286–288) calls "the system of the unconscious" (*das System des Unbewußten*, *Ubw*) is the realm of the "primary process"; that is, the part of the "psychic apparatus" (*psychischer Apparat*) which gives rise to the imaginary world of the unconscious, most exemplary manifested by dreams. The constitutive mechanism of the "primary process" is *Verdrängung*, "repression," through which *bewußt*, "conscious," and *vorbewußt*, "preconscious," ideas, that is, the "contents" of *der Sekundärvorgang*, the "secondary process," are "processed" in the *Ubw*. What is important here is that the "primary process" consists of *Verschiebung*, "displacement," and *Verdichtung*, "condensation," which enable the fantastic world of the unconscious (see Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 174–176, 381, 1987d [1900]: 284–314, 519–521; Wollheim 1991 [1971]: 71–73); in other words, *ein anderer Schauplatz*, "another scene" (Freud 1987d: 541) that appears most clearly in dreams, but also in all kinds of associations and fantasies, as well as in jokes (see Freud 1961 [1905]; in Lacanian terms, cf. Bowie 1991: 69–71). In this sense, for me, the imaginary of language is constitutive of the imaginary of theory *appearing* as the reality of theory, a "reality" that is effected by the *linguistic* "primary processes" peculiar to all human thinking, but especially cultivated by post-theory (cf. Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]; Silverman 1983: 66–86).

tic figuration constitutive of cyber discourse. That is, in Lacanian terms, cyber discourse is a "world of words that creates the world of things" (Lacan 1977e [1966/1953]: 65). But, as we will see, this never happens without the *writerly effect* of the "post" (in terms of the Barthesian "writerly [*scriptible*] text" as the opposite of the "readerly [*lisible*] text," cf. Barthes 1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174; Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Lucy 1997: 74–76); an effect that is "theoretical" in the very terms of the "post." Thus, what one finds in cyber discourse is something similar to what Jameson (1988g [1977]: 80) calls "postrepresentational discourse" in the mode of Kristevan "textual productivity" (cf. Kristeva 1986: 74–88). In these terms, cyber discourse is the opposite of Barthesian "bleached writing" (Jameson 1988a [1985]: 44, 1988i [1983]: 68; cf. Barthes 1967 [1953]), "writing at the zero degree": the "cyber" is an excessive signifier: one never knows what it means since it *signifies* in excess, signifies beyond meaning.

If there is any logic in the world of the "post," this is certainly its logic: *meaning is not possible in terms of the "post"; what counts is signification*.

In other words, whereas in "readerly texts the signifiers march," "in writerly texts they dance" (Hawkes 1977: 114). This is the pleasure of the "post": the subversion of the preordained order of the world, the order of meaning.

The "Dromology" of the "Post": A Continuos Acceleration of Desire

Thus, what was once, for Baudelaire (1992 [1857]), in his *The Flowers of Evil*, a "forest of symbols," *forêts de symboles*, has turned into a post-Barthesian "galaxy of signifiers" in cyber discourse (cf. Barthes 1974 [1970]: 5–6),[21] a Baudrillardian hyperreality of simulation (cf. Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84) in terms of what I call *post-textuality*, a result of textual auto-suggestion in which a shining world of phantasmatic phantoms appears as real. To see the dimensions of this change, let us recall Baudelaire's poetic image.

> La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
> Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
> Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.
>
> (Baudelaire 1857: 19)

21 It is appropriate in this context to recall Barthes's idea of the "galaxy of signifier" as his metaphor for an "ideal text" as infinite textuality: "In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language." (Barthes 1974 [1970]: 5–6; in terms of the infinity of the book, cf. Foucault 1992a [1969]: 23) In this manner, the world of the "post" is an unending self-referential "text" in which signification has taken the place of meaning.

> Nature is a temple where living pillars
> At times allow confused words to come forth;
> There man passes through forests of symbols
> Which observe him with familiar eyes.
>
> (Baudelaire 1992 [1857]: 27)

"Forests of symbols" consisting of "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of the discursive figurations of cyber discourse – that is the idea of signification in terms of the "post."[22] But, at the same time, there is a significant difference between then and now. As we can see, the "cyber" signals a radical change in terms of perception and apperception in comparison to the Baudelairean world: if, for Baudelaire, the poetic essence of the "forest of symbols" was the *correspondance*, "correspondence," between various moments of the "symbolic," in contrast, what we have in cyber discourse is an overwhelming experience of vertigo, an excessively pleasurable feeling of a loss of reason for which the only accurate characterization is what Christina von Braun (2001) calls *Schwindel*, "swindle" and/or "swoon," meaning not only dizziness or giddiness as a vertiginous moment of self-abandonment, but also deception, delusion, subterfuge or pretence, even disguise or obfuscation, a moment of confusion and perplexity, all this epitomized by the idea of hysteria in the sense of derealization of the real paradigmatic to the techno-imaginary effected by the "cyber" (cf. Porombka & Scharnowski 1999; in terms of "computerhystories" in the 1980s, cf. Harrasser 2002).

In this sense, the "cyber" is the highest moment of the "post," the height, zenith and climax of the signifying delirium characteristic of the "post": *the hysteria of signification*: the *jouissance* effected by the loss of meaning: the implosion of reason. And it is in this very sense that the "post" is the *sine qua non* of all that is "cyber": the "cyber" as the apotheosis of the surrational constitutive of the "post."

The arousal of the senses, not in terms of the sensuous and the sensual, but in terms of language, the linguistic of language in its linguisticity as the post-poetic, non-originary "origin" of non-intentional signification posting its post-ness/post-ality beyond meaning – that is the guiding principle of the "post": *a promise of presence in its very absence*. Thus, the constitutive idea of the "post" is an auto-affective excess of signification enabling a radical detachment of signifiers from the ballast of signifieds (there need to be no longer any talk of the referent in this context, since what is called "reality" has become an empty

22 The idea of the "free-floating signifier" is a radicalized derivation from Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1987 [1950]: 62–63) notion of the "floating signifier" (Gil 1998 [1985]: 92–10; cf. Derrida (1978e [1970/1966]: 290; Merquior 1986: 76; Leitch 1983: 16–20; Poster 1989: 4; Bertens 1995: 149). According to Vincent B. Leitch (1983: 11), "Lacan sets the signifier free of the signified," and henceforth the language of theory is dominated by the "sliding signified" and the "floating signifier." Similarly, for Barthes, writing and texts consist of signifiers that can be interwoven into any possible configurations (see Merquior 1986: 106–188). In this sense, linguistic utterances, whether ordinary speech acts or theoretical postulates, do not include stable signifieds (*siginifié*), but consist of signifying chains effected by ever-new signifiers (*signifiant*). In poststructuralism, especially after the interventions of Derrida (1978e [1970/1966], 1982 [1972], 1984a [1972/1968], 1997 [1967]), "free-floating signifiers" are not only something purely linguistic; they are rather the very substance of the discursive having material effects on culture (cf., for example, Featherstone 1991a: 15, 24, 65, 85; Sarup 1993 [1988]).

notion already long ago in the world of the "post"). Therefore, like in the Baudrillardian para-reality of theory (cf. Kellner 1989: 89–92), "nothing succeeds like excess" (Connor 1989: 219) in the world of the "post."

In other words, the "post" is the very signifier of the hyperbolic, or, in terms of the "post" itself: the supreme sign of the *hype* inherent to all that is "post." It is in this sense, as stated above, that cybersex is hypersex, "sex" as a technological experience of the "hyper" constitutive of the "cyber" following the logic of the "post."

In these terms, cybersex is a techno-imaginary extension of what I call *post-sex* (see Eerikäinen 1999b, 2003), "sex" as a phantasmatic wish-image of ecstatic bodies enjoying sexual thrills suggested by postmodern culture ruled by the imperative of the commodity form. That is, instead of sex in the Weberian "iron cage" of the modern (see Weber 1993 [1904–1905]; cf. Mitzman 1985 [1965]; Sayer 1991; Lehmann & Roth 1993), what we have now in the world of post-sex is a plurality of various sexual desires and pleasures in the Bonaventure Hotel of the postmodern (cf. Jameson 1991: 39–44), a pleasure dome of free-floating sensations and affections in the "society of the spectacle" (see Debord 1983 [1967], 1990 [1988]); that is, "sexual" thrills under the sign of the "post." This is the "hyperreality of sex" (Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 129) in its ultimate form, a form of the *rationality of the imaginary* constitutive of the postmodern.

Thus, *post-sex is an order of the "sexual" in which masks without faces are taken as the faces proper*: every mask, in Marxian terms, is part of the general "character mask" of contemporary capitalism (see, for example, Marx 1983 [1867]: 100; cf. Hörisch 2000: 237–238; Weihe 2004: 313–316; Schiller 2006: 154–158), a character mask of pleasure the desire of which is the desire for desire. Accordingly, *post-sex is the happy face of the disciplinary regime of neoliberalism*, the joyful mask of the radical exploitation of human bodies by the imperative of productive consumption, the imperative of surplus value that does not recognize any limits. That is, in the political economy of neoliberalism, the body is an unlimited resource, provided that it can be compelled to exceed its own limits time and time again. For this reason, post-sex, sex in the form of "sex," is an *economic necessity* in the order of neoliberalism; thus, sexual pleasure that dominates the cultural imaginary of contemporary capitalism is an intrinsic component of the accumulation process of capital.

It is in this sense that "sex" is a character mask of capital, a mask that shows the true face of neoliberal capitalism.

In its extravagant allurement, post-sex implies not just a banalization of the sexual in the mode of "sex," but, more fundamentally, a radical vulgarization of sexual desires and pleasures, *a luxurious, bombastic bathos of "the sexual,"* in a manner never seen before: as a ubiquitous sign, a meta-level "trademark," of commodities as well as "personalities," post-sex manifests the all-consuming power of capital, its relentless and ruthless capacity to extract value from

whatever things it happens to appropriate into its circulation process and turn it thus into surplus value, even in a multiplied form. While, in this manner, post-sex means a thoroughgoing saturation of capital by "sex," post-sex is entirely impregnated by capital. By way of this kind of mutual symbiosis, a productive synergy, post-sex is a manifestation of a postmodern potentialization of capital: *"the sexual" constitutive of post-sex is the surplus value of surplus value*.

As an immaterial materialization of capital, post-sex is a materialized metaphor for bliss, a postmodern form of felicity, a mode of "happiness" under the sign of "well-being" in which the consumption of commodified affects and affective commodities is not merely the purpose of life, but, first of all, the very duty of each and everyone. "Be happy!" – that is the ethos of postmodern capitalism, the highest principle of the ego-politics of the subject (in terms of "romantic individualism," cf. Eberlein 2000; with regard to the Foucauldian "aesthetics of existence," cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]; Marti 1999 [1988]: 131–138; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 161–176; Schmid 1994 [1987]; Lemke 1997: 278–284).

This is the context in which "sex" in the matrix of the "cyber" becomes intelligible as an imaginary form of the commodification of the body constitutive of the postmodern condition. In short, cybersex, as the most avantgardist mode of post-sex, as the paramount instantiation of the imaginary of the technological in terms of the "cyber," manifests the logic of what I call *the liquid libido*, a mercury-like modality of desire, a libidinal mode of motility as a cultural kinetics that embraces flows of desire for pleasure that, at the same time, manifests a specific postmodern quality of pleasure, *the pleasure of desire*; a form of pleasure that, as an auto-affective libidinality, regenerates itself in, by and through the regeneration of desire as its driving force following the logic of capital as the logic of desire in capitalism (for an introduction to a counter-model in the sense of pleasure liberated from the logic of desire in terms of "an ethics of pleasure," see Foucault 1996b [1982]: 377–381, 1983b [1982]; in the sense of "anti-sex," see Foucault 1990d [1977]: 116–117; in the form of "bodies and pleasures," see Foucault 1990k [1976]: 157–159; cf. Grosz 1994b: 138–153; Butler 1999a; for the pleasures of the body in Antiquity as an ethical issue concerning the constitution of the self, see Foucault 1990h [1984], 1992b [1984]; cf. Lemke 1997: 269–294).

The world of the liquid libido, in Dominic Pettman's (2006: 123) *precise words*, is the world of "the hot-swappable, circle-jerk metalepsis"; a world of radical transformation in which the politics of speed, the principle of "dromology" manifested by the imperative of *vitesse* (see Virilio 1995 [1993]: 106, 109, 130, 140, 144, 1997 [1995]: 12, 33, 54–55, 68, 2001: 155), determines the parameters of existence (in terms of "escape velocity," cf. Dery 1996); a world in which, as a consequence of a continuous *acceleration of desire*:

> there is nothing for the libido to "catch" on: *It is pure movement*. And where there is pure movement, we are already in the realm of the posthuman. (Pettman 2006: 123; emphasis mine)

It is in this sense that the "post" of the postmodern is a sign of desire: the postmodern designates a cultural formation that is running by the energy of the liquid libido. As we will see, this is also the motivity implied by the "post" of poststructuralism.

The Desire for Theory in Terms of the "Post"

In the study at hand, I shall take the excess of the "post" seriously: exactly in its postmodern excessivity resulting from the overwhelming productivity of the signifiers under the linguistic regime of the "cyber" based on the "post," signifiers which I will read again and again in terms of the *textual kinetics* peculiar to the "writerly texts" effected by these very signifiers.

Accordingly, rather than taking cybersex as an object to think *about*, I consider it as an object to think *with*; that is, as a discursive figure which, in a specific manner, both reflects and produces the imaginary of the technology or the techno-imaginary constitutive of the postmodern. In other words, cybersex is a nominal topic in the study at hand, also in the manner of Foucauldian "nominalism" (Foucault 1990k [1976]: 93–106; Flynn 1994: 39–40; Balibar 1992), in order to interrogate the cultural configuration and the linguistic conception of theory that have enabled the idea of "sex" in terms of the "cyber." Thus, I will focus on what I call *the politics of words* in the name of the "post," the "post" as the keyword of the rhetorical regime and the evocative nomenclature constituting the discursive order of the "cyber." In this sense, cybersex figures in the present text as *une façon de parler* (cf. Freud 1993a [1925/1924]: 61; Barker 1993: 172–183), a figure of speech peculiar to the linguistic figuration effected by the "cyber"; the "cyber" as a Derridean "word" that in itself is a "theme," a word that brings about the world it signifies (cf. Hobson 1998: 86).

For this reason, the present study is not a Hegelian *Anstrengung des Begriffs* (Hegel 1986c [1807]: 56), a "straining of the concept," by means of philosophical reflection, for the simple reason that there are no concepts in the world of the "post": their place have been taken by linguistic figures operating in the mode of "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of all that is "post." In other words, the "post" implies the ultimate liberation from the "tyranny of concepts" (Norris 1997: 188). This is the *haecceity* of the "post": its "thisness" is always an effect of "another," a "not-thatness" as an alterity inscribed by the equivocality intrinsic to language beyond the terror of definitions. In these terms, cybersex is an elusive idea, an enigmatic "writing-effect" (Sibony 1982 [1977]), and as such, as we will see, a paradigmatically postmodern theory object. "To be or to produce a writing effect" (ibid.: 53) – that is now the post-Hamletian question. "But what is a writing effect?" (ibid.). In its own way, the present text is an answer to this question.

In this respect, my point of departure is that the condition of possibility of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is a discursive configuration in which, indeed, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (Haraway 1991a: 149; cf. Murphie & Potts 2003: 116–117).

This is the world of cyber discourse; a discursive universe enabled by the "post" in terms of the "cyber." In a peculiar manner, as we will see, cyber discourse is a postmodern mixture, a *linguistic hybrid*, of the "post" and the "cyber," a liquid language in the mode of the libidinal (cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]). Therefore, cyber discourse is more than just a fashionable scholarese; it is a specific experience of a "high" in terms of theory: the bliss of the *cyberdelic* in the realm of *cyberia* (see Rushkoff 1994; Dery 1996: 22–24; Birringer 1998: 308–309; Reynolds 1999: 151–152; for the background, see Leary 1994a, 1997 [1966], 1998 [1980], 1999 [1965]) turned into the euphoria of *theorrhea* (cf. Merquior 1986: 247–248, 253–257; for critical discussion, see, for example, Patai & Corral 2005; cf. Megill 1985) in postmodern academia. In this sense, cyber discourse, as a techno-imaginary discourse effected by the "cyber," is not only, as Christopher Norris (1987: 189) says about John L. Austin's speech act theory, a "seductive discourse" that, owing to its "metaphors and fictive examples," is "always in danger of yielding to its own rhetorical devices," but, moreover, cyber discourse expressly celebrates its indulging in the seductions of its own rhetorics, the alluring figures and tropes produced by its own linguistic figuration under the textual regime of the "cyber" in the manner of the extravagant tropicity of tropism constitutive of the "post."

That is, cyber discourse is the effect of the endless proliferation, or, in Derridean terms, auto-affection (see Derrida 1997: 154–156, 165–167, 186–187), of the "cyber" (in terms of the unconscious and "teletechnology," cf. Clough 2000). Therefore, rather than asking "[w]hat is the nature and quality of the fulfilments available through virtual reality and cyberculture" (Ryle & Soper 2002: 187), my question is what the "cyber" is in itself in the name of which things like "virtual reality" and "cyberculture" have been celebrated by "cyberists" (ibid.: 189) since the 1990s (see, for example, Dery 1994; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Lévy 2001 [1997]; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Haney 2006; Ricardo 2009a; Nayar 2010).[23]

To see the implications of this question, it is appropriate to put it into a historical perspective. What was European literary modernism, in its avantgardist mode of writing, for the Parisian *Tel Quel* circle and its followers in the 1960s

23 In this connection, it is appropriate to notice that the notion of what is called "cyberculture" already appeared in the 1960s, though, in a different context than today; the term was used in American social sciences in reference to comprehensive changes in labour relations and free time as a result of automation and what at the time was referred to as "cybernation" (see, for example, Winthrop 1968: 60–84, 116–123, 1966; Lesse 1981: 62–70; Michael 1962; Philipson 1962; Hilton 1966). Sociologists, economists and political scientists estimated that new technologies applied in industry, services and administration were about to lead to a new type of society described by the term "cyberculture." There was thus a pressing need for the examination of the consequences of the ongoing cybercultural transformation of American society: "The promise of greatly increased leisure is now upon us with the dawn of the Age of Cyberculture and the fruits of cybernation upon which it rests. A cybercultural society will aggravate the dilemma which leisure-time creates for Americans. The nature of that dawning society and the problems which it poses with respect to the use of leisure must be understood." (Winthrop 1968: 116; cf., for example, Friedmann 1977 [1955]: 188–189; Munford 1978: 49–52, 66–69; Stanley 1978: 136–137; Pena 2001: 23–25, 112–118; Fogel & Kleingartner 1966; Silberman 1966; for a critical discussion in terms of the "human condition," see Arendt 1958: 131–151)

and early 1970s (see, for example, Culler 1975: 241–254; Hutcheon 1980: 124–137; Roudiez 1980: 2–18; Moi 1986: 3–9; Merquoir 1986: 113–114, 169–179; Harland 1987: 118–119; Smith 1988: 35–36; Callinicos 1989: 48–91; Connor 1989: 107; Silverman 1983; Johnson 1987; Roberts 1990; ffrench & Lack 1998b; Brandt 2000; for a theory-historical contextualization in terms of sociogenesis and intellectual environment, see Kauppi 1996: 109–126, 2010: 17–27, 47–57. 74–83, 89–102, 1994; for the Maoism of the French intelligentsia, see Wolin 2010),[24] is science fiction for contemporary cyber-theorists all over the world where technology is no longer just practical applications of scientific research and engineering, but an imaginary constellation reflected by the techno-cultural theory discourse of the postmodern (see, for example, Jameson 1988e [1971]: 14–16, 1991: 35–38, 283–287, 376–399; Haraway 1991a: 178–180, 1991i [1989]: 226–230, 1997: 280–281; Penley 1992 [1991]: 138–139; Wright 1996: 230–231; Terranova 1996b: 166; Fitting 1992; Dery 1996).

As Haraway (2000a: 120), the originator of the retro-futuristic theory discourse around the cyborg and all that is "cyber," says: "science fiction is political theory for me" (cf. Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b; Lykke & Braidotti 1996a; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Foster 2005); a mode of the "political" that is effected by what Haraway (1991a: 175) calls "cyborg writing" (cf. Schneider 2005: 61–62).

But, as important as it is to ask what the "science" in science fiction is, it is just as important to ask what the "political" is in terms of theory. Whatever it is, it has a specific sense in the postmodern. In her *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon (1989: 1) describes what she calls "postmodernism" as a "phenomenon" that is "resolutely contradictory as well as unavoidably political." In these terms, "postmodernism" takes "the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement," and it is thus "rather like *saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; in terms of "Foucauldian quotation marks," cf. Visker 1991b: 90–156, 1991a). As a result, the "effect" is "to highlight, or 'highlight,' and to subvert, or 'subvert,'" and therefore, instead of knowledge, what we have is a "mode" of "'knowing'" that is "an ironic," or "even "'ironic'" one, creating a certain sense of "doubleness, or *duplicity*" (Hutcheon 1989: 2; emphasis mine). In this manner, "the postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalize" things that

24 A short summary by Peter Wollen (1982: 210): "May 1968 brought *Tel Quel* in its wake. Although *Tel Quel* was also the inheritor of the (dissident) Surrealist mantle – Artaud and Bataille rather than Breton, Maoism rather than Trotskyism – it addressed itself resolutely to the avant-garde rather than popular culture. Also, it favoured the literary avant-garde (seeking to establish a line running from Mallarmé through *Finnegans Wake* to its own school of writing) and consequently developed a post-Saussurean rather than post-Peircean semiotics." What was essential for *Tel Quel* was "the introduction of 'heterogeneity' and 'inter-textuality' as key concepts, derived from Bataille and Bakhtin respectively and deployed by Julia Kristeva," as well as "the split in the sign," "the subject split between body and representation and between unconscious and conscious" (ibid.: 211; for a historical contextualization, see Kauppi 1994, 1996; Ffrench 1995; Marx-Scouras 2004). This, in short, is the programme of what subsequently came to be known as post-structuralism (for overview, see, for example, Bertens 2001; Belsey 2002; Williams 2005).

"we unthinkingly experience as 'natural'" (ibid.). "Even nature, postmodernism might point out, doesn't grow on trees" (ibid.).

If we take this seriously, there is no longer anything we can take seriously. Thus, we are confronted with a serious question, indeed, a *political* question, posed by Lenin (1973 [1902]) in a manner that has lost nothing of its pregnancy: *What is to be done?* (in terms of the "poetic" as a mode of the political in Lenin, cf. Lih 2006: 387–389). In the contemporary world, the world of the postmodern, the answer to Lenin's question, of course, is writing, writing in terms of the "post"; that is, in a situation in which signification has taken the place of meaning, more than ever things are to be taken "seriously," in their very *politicalness* of the "political."

This is the world of the cyborg. As Haraway (1991a: 149) says, the cyborg is "an *ironic political myth*" (emphasis mine); that is, the cyborg is to be read in terms of the "ironic," the "political," and a "myth"; in other words, as an "'ironic'" and "'political'" construction of a "'myth'" that is politically constructive *only if* it is able to be deconstructed in its own mythicality, by means of its own poetic world-explanation, in terms of its own cosmology: a post-revolutionary vision as a mind-opening revelation effected by the mythical language constitutive of the cyborg.[25] Therefore, what is to be done is to take the "political" implied by the cyborg seriously. Accordingly, one should take the cyborg literally, at its word. As Haraway explains, in the world of the cyborg, the "political" takes place as a "play of writing and reading the world" (ibid.: 152), and thus, "[c]ontests for the meanings of writing are a major form of contemporary political struggle" (ibid.: 175). It is in this sense that what Haraway calls "cyborg writing" is a specific postmodern language enabling "cyborg politics" as a "struggle for language," a "struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism" (ibid.: 176; cf. Graham 2002: 200–220; Yaszek 2002: 13–15).

It is for this reason that the cyborg, as a subversive figure beyond the terror regime of the phallus, "takes irony for granted" (Haraway 1991a: 180) – a promise by which the cyborg stands or falls.

25 According to Barthes (1979b [1957]: 109), "*myth is a type of speech*" (emphasis in the original). "Of course," as Barthes specifies, "it is not *any* type: language needs special condition in order to become myth"; and "what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message" (ibid.). In these terms, "myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a *mode of signification*, a form" (ibid.; emphasis mine). What, for Barthes, is a "message," however, is in my conception a code; that is, a code (like "sex" as a metacode) in itself functions as a message: by codifying it communicates, it attributes or inscribes an object as something and makes it thus signify the idea inherent in the code. In this connection, Barthes elaborates his notion of myth as "*metalanguage*," a "second language," "*in which* one speaks" about a "language-object," an object represented by a first-order language (ibid.: 115: emphasis in the original). As we will see later on, this two-level model of language collapses in the linguistic order of the "post" and with it the idea of metalanguage turns out to be an impossibility.

1.2 There Is No "Cyber" without the Virtual Reality of Language

Cyber discourse, the theory matrix of the postmodern cyborg based on Haraway's (1985) "Cyborg Manifesto," is enabled by a mode of linguistic figuration that I call *the politics of language*, the politics of signifying practices, that ultimately amounts to a politics of words, words understood in the sense of signifiers in the manner of poststructuralism (see, for example, Bannett 1989; Dews 2007 [1987]; Davis 2004; Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]; in terms of "mastering discourse" in the context of "the politics of intellectual culture," cf. Bové 1992b). This is what the postmodern cyborg is all about: it is a *signifier*, a specific word, in the linguistic universe of the "cyber" premised on the theory matrix of the "post." That is, the Harawayan cyborg is a specific way of using language, nothing more, but, as we will see, nothing less either (for the originary conception of the cyborg, see Clynes 1995 [1970]; Clynes & Kline 1995 [1960]: Gray 1995; cf. Haraway 2000a: 136–137, 2000b: 403–404).

What happens in the discursive order of the "post" as a specific postmodern linguistic realm is that words are not only revalued, but, moreover, they are revalenced, re-charged, re-invested, by the libidinal energy of language constitutive of all that is "post." Thus, the "post" is the post-Lacanian "purloined letter" of the postmodern (cf. Lacan 1972 [1955]; Johnson 1980b), an "'empty set' with regard to the set of signifiers which *represent* it" (Žižek 1997b: 82; emphasis mine); that is, *a linguistic re-entry vehicle* re-loaded with ever-new combinations of letters, functioning as a "free-floating signifier" that is circulated and recycled in contemporary theory permeated by the theoretical tropes and figures of poststructuralism (see, for example, Gallop 1985: 66–73; Ashley 1990: 88; cf. Muller & Richardson 1988; Riddel 1995; for the affinities between poststructuralism and Adorno's thought, see Dews 1995: 19–36).

As a "free-floating signifier" typical of the postmodern, the "post," however, is more than just a signifier floating free: the *differentia specifica* of the "post" is that it is a meta-signifier *without any specific "meaning" in itself*, a linguistic code, that through its suggestive power, the power of *desire*, has opened up a "versatile topological space" (Bowie 1991: 76) in the libidinal economy of the post-68 theory-avantgarde, the theory scene under the spell of "French theory" (see Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Cusset 2008 [2003]; Kauppi 2010), or, as Peter Dews (2007 [1987]: xi) says, "the style of French thought known as post-structuralism."

1.2.1 The Libidinal: The Hyperization of Theory

Under the linguistic regime of "French theory," the signifiers "poststructuralism" and the "postmodern" have become common denominators for a mode of "theory" that I call post-theory, a mode of theory not *post*, "after," anything, but about *the "post"* in itself. If, according to Marx (1978 [1845/1888]: 535), *[d]ie Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert; es kommt aber darauf*

an, sie zu verändern, "[t]he philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx 1970 [1845/1888]: 121; cf. Gerhardt 1996), in the postmodern condition, we are confronted with an entirely different situation; it is now theory, in a highly specific sense, that constitutes the very *world-relation* in which life not just becomes intelligible, but, first and foremost, in and through which we *live* our lives, and therefore Marx must be revised in order to understand the transition from the modern to the postmodern: *the theorists have only theorized the world in various ways; the point, however, is to "theorize" it.* This is the intellectual imperative of the "post," its theoretical ethos as the ethics of non-teleological, post-intentional writing not only beyond representation, but, more fundamentally, beyond meaning; that is, the post-political principle of writing in terms of *écriture*, the *raison d'être* of the *politics of language* constitutive of the paradigm of the "post" (for the philosophical background of post-theory, see Simons 2002).

In other words, theory has gone through a radical transformation in the world of the postmodern. That is, post-theory is the most spectral manifestation of the "Baudrillard effect" (Levin 1996: 47–56) typical of the postmodern: a theoretical hyperreality resulting from what I call the *hyperization of theory* is constitutive of the mode of theorization in terms of the "post." In Baudrillard's words:

> 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 a substance. It is the generation of models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory […]. (Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2)

It is in this sense that post-theory is *the secular theology of the postmodern*, a neo-scholastic mode of theorizing, and, as such, the *summa* of contemporary global wisdom seen from the perspective of the "post." This is the constitutive idea of post-theory; this is the idea of the politics of theory by means of the politics of language, the politics of writing in the mode of *écriture* in the name of the "post": "the political" as an effect of "the theoretical" based on "the affective" defining the post-intellectual sensibility peculiar to the theory scene of post-theory (from a historical perspective in terms of *la trahison des clercs*, "the treason of the intellectuals," cf. Benda 2009 [1927]; with regard to "the high intellectuals of postmodern culture," cf. Bové 1992a, 1992b).

Strike a Pose: The Ethos of the "Post"

What is essential to post-theory is that it is based on a postmodern mode of fuzzy logic, a form of open logic in which the "logical" has transgressed the constraints of the conventional bipolar logic; in other words, the logic of post-theory, in the Derridean sense (see Derrida 1997), has "breached" and "broached" the structure of the one-dimensional, linear and non-reversible schema of "if p then q" (p =>q), the model of simple causality (see, for example, Sanford 2003 [1989]). Instead, polyvalent multipolarity is the key to the post-logical logic of post-theory (cf. Derrida 1978e [1967/1966]; in terms of Nietzschean perspectiv-

ism, cf., for example, Nehamas 1985: 1–8, 20–21, 64–73; Solomon 2003: 35–48, 60–63). Thus, the "post" of post-theory signifies the figurative as a mode of the imaginary: *ut pictura poesis* in the manner of postmodern linguistic play, post-metaphoric "word-painting" as suggestive, imaginistic theory-*poesis*, performative writing in terms of *écriture* constitutive of "French theory" (in terms of the linguistic radicalism of the *Tel Quel* circle, see Kauppi 1994: 138–140, 187–191; for the idea of *ut pictura poesis*, see, for example, Wellek & Warren 1956 [1949]: 126–128); that is, post-theory embraces post-poetic imagery based on libidinal language, the language of desire following the logic of the imaginary: the desire for theory effected by the "post," which, in itself, is an affective effect of *écriture* (for a paradigmatic example, see Clough & Halley 2007).

In these terms, post-theory implies an aestheticization of theory: in the world of the "post," metaphors, as *self-reflecting linguistic figures*, have taken the place of concepts, and epistemology, as free-wheeling writing, has turned into ontology; ontology, of course, in the sense of linguisticism constitutive of post-theory (cf. McNally 2001).

Thus, post-theory, in the manner of the post-Eisensteinian "montage of attractions" (cf. Eisenstein 1955 [1923]), functions as a montage of associations: it is precisely these associations that are the attractions of post-theory, its theoretical seduction. In this sense, the scopic regime of the "post" is kaleidoscopic, and, accordingly, post-theory is a kaleidoscope of ever-changing, volatile figurations effected by "free-floating signifiers" of the postmodern (in terms of theory as "theater" in the sense of Greek *theōria* [*θεωρία*] deriving from *theōrein* [*θεωρείν*], "to see," "look at," "view," "contemplate," "speculate" in the mode of divine insight, cf. Heidegger 1977c [1953]: 163; McNeill 1999: 53–54, 174–176, 262–271; Cusset 2008: 104–105).

In the presence of the "post," mesmerized by its imaginary power as a linguistic spell specific to the discursive order of the postmodern (cf. Pavel 2001 [1989]), the subject of post-theory, as a *post-subject called into being by the mode of interpellation constitutive of post-theory* (cf. Althusser 1971 [1970]: 163–169), becomes *entranced* with its extraordinary libidinality as a form of the liminal that is able to exceed all the limits, that is, the affective enchantment of the post-liminal generated by the "post" of post-theory. It is precisely this elevating feeling of liberation, the affect of ultimate deliverance, that sets free the relentless productivity of post-theory, its ecstatic proliferation of "the theoretical" of theory: the exhilarating inebriation in terms of theory, the Dionysian power of imagination extolled by Nietzsche with his exact understanding of what in German is called *Rausch* (see Nietzsche 1969d [1889]: 110–112, 1972a [1872]: 22–26; cf., for example, Gebhard 1983: 45–46; Solomon 2003: 69–70, 95; in Heideggerian terms, see Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 91–106, 114–124), an intoxicating "frenzy," an enchanting "rapture," in which the world appears in an entirely new light, the light emanating from the paradigm of the "post."

In a word, the "post" is the name for revelation, a signifier that signifies by the power of vision based on the visionary engendered by the libidinal potentiality of language.

In post-theory, however, Nietzschean clairvoyance turns into theoretical delirium in the state of linguistic ecstasy. If we forget this we are lost – only to be rescued by the enormous suggestive *Kraft* of all that is "post"; in the poetic words of Heidegger's (2000b [1953]: 29, 35) Hölderlin citation: *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch*, "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" (in terms of the "post," cf. Žižek 2006: 11–12).

It is in this precise sense that post-theory ensues from *les événements de mai 1968*, "the events of May 1968" in Paris (see, for example, Starr 1995; de Certeau & Giard 1998; Seidman 2004; for a historical contextualization concerning the intellectual situation in postwar France, see Khilnani 1993; in terms of the theoretical radicalism of the *Tel Quel* circle, see Kauppi 1994: 163–167; Brandt 2000; with regard to French Maoism, see Wolin 2010), a political uprising transformed into a new kind of theory as a radical rereading, on the one hand, of Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, and Marx and Freud on the other (see, for example, Cusset 2008: 305–307; Megill 1985; Rockmore 1995a; Gutting 2001, Schrift 2006); a mode of theory that unfolded its true subversive power of "the theoretical" in the name of the "post," paradoxically, not so much in French intellectual circles as in American academia (see, for example, McQuillan et al. 1999), in a world in which everything is possible because the impossible is made impossible in the American world explanation: a *déjà vu* of the past as a retro-futuristic future experienced in the present, in the presence of the "post."

In other words, the "post" of post-theory is a postmodern signifier that signifies an infinite jest enabled by the logic of *différance* (cf. Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]). That is, the "post" implies a new epistemological principle, the principle of *hypothetical truth*, not in the Leibnizian sense of the term, but exactly in the sense of the "post" (cf. Ishiguro 1990 [1972]: 156–171). What is as issue here is neither the conditional nor the probable, not even the contingent (to say nothing of the plausible), but the hypothetical in terms of the imaginary, in its non-mathematical sense.

Accordingly, post-theory is about liminality that opens up a fourth dimension of theory: a realm of theory not only beyond the constraints of the real, but also, and most of all, beyond the straitjacket of reason. Thus, post-theory is a form of postmodern theology in terms of "the theoretical" of theory (cf. Ward 2001). If, for Adorno (1980 [1970]), the ultimate liberation of the human being was to be found in art and the aesthetic as the counter-forces of the oppressive rationality of instrumental reason constitutive of the modern (see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Albert et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in Weber's notion of *Zweckrationalität*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010), it is the politics of theory based on the "subversive" force of "the theoretical" that is the final

moment of liberation in the world of the "post"; a world in which post-emancipatory emancipation is brought about by post-theory, a mode of theory that has liberated itself from the terror regime of reason.

If, in the tradition of avantgarde politics, the "*theatrical spectacle*" (Žižek 2002e: 9; emphasis in the original) defines "the political" of the politics, it is the *spectacle of "the theoretical"* that is constitutive of the theory scene of the "post." In this sense, post-theory is a latter-day manifestation of what Benjamin (1974 [1936]: 17) called the "aestheticization of politics" (cf. Lunn 1982: 249–250; Berman 1989a: 27–41).

Thus, the question is: what is the difference between the aesthetic and the theoretical? While ontology is an epistemological question for the former, the latter considers epistemology as an ontological issue: all that is there is there in theory, theory is terms of the aesthetic.

Rather than reflecting the world, post-theory mirrors itself as a world of theory, a world in which, indeed, "theory rules" (Berland et al. 1996). Typically, for postmodern theorists Jody Berland, Will Straw and David Tomas, speaking about the art world as a world in which "theory rules," "a shared recognition" prevails "that Theory (with a capital T) has emerged as a privileged site of mediation between processes of *market valorization* and *discourses of intellectual or political legitimation in the production and circulation of art*" (ibid.: 3; emphasis mine). "In this respect, just as the domain of artistic production has grown noticeably more 'academic,' the field of cultural theory and analysis within the academy has come more and more to resemble the market for art, with similar cycles of fashionability and a comparable emphasis on currency and innovation" (ibid.: 5). Accordingly, in the self-presentations of artists, "one increasingly finds artists using theoretical tropes as the most effective means for positioning their past and projected work" (ibid.). *Mutatis mutandis*, this is the logic of the theory market under the sign of the "post," a platform and a scene for theoretical self-promotion that manifests the spirit of the political economy of neoliberalism; in other words, the ego-politics of theory in terms of the "post."

It is in this sense that, instead of being a theory of something, post-theory theorizes "the theoretical" of theory in itself, of course, in the sense of "the 'theoretical'" of theory (cf. Culler 1997: 1–2), not as an "object" of theory (there are no longer objects in the world of the "post"), but precisely as a *mode* of theory. What, in the 1950s, was abstract expressionism in painting as the most modern manifestation of modern art (see, for example, Leja 1997; Craven 1999), is post-theory today in the world of the postmodern: *abstract expressionism of free-floating signifiers*. In this manner, theory in terms of the "post" is no longer an epistemic question, a question concerning knowledge in terms of the knowability of the knowable; rather, theory is now an issue of gaming, a game of positions, a contested terrain of "language games" and "paralogisms" constitutive of the "post" (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]; Turner 1990: 111–114; cf. Ulmer 1989b [1983], 1994): in short, a politics of words.

A significant consequence of the market-conformity of theory in the mode of the "post" is that there is no negation in the world of post-theory; in other words, what was the "Great Refusal" for the "New Left" in the 1960s (see, Marcuse 1987 [1955]: 160, 170, 236; cf. for example, Breines 1989 [1982]: 18–45; Matuštík 1998; Kellner 2005) is no longer possible in terms of the "post" – except, of course, by means of *subversive affirmation* typical of the postmodern as a contemporary form of the "radical chic" of the 1960s.

Inevitably, then, a question arises: what if this text, the text at hand, the present text in its writerly presence, is a subversive affirmation of the subversive affirmation typical of the "post"? This question, a question without an answer (there are no answers in the world of the "post," except in terms of *différance*), is the key to the approach deployed in this study: the "post" in itself is the condition of possibility of its post-ality in the sense of its very post-ness, that is, a continuous postification of ever-new "posts."

In the world of post-theory, theory is a form of postmodern *artspeak* (cf. Hoeveler 2004: 15–34; Atkins 1990), a specific language that speaks of "objects" that it itself has created by speaking of them. In these terms, theory is not about the intelligibility of things, rather, it is about an attitude, an issue of adopting a striking position, an aesthetic standpoint in the manner of the "post" (in terms of the "cyber," cf. Sirius 1990b).

"Strike a pose!" What Madonna proclaimed in her self-assured style in the 1990s (see, for example, Kellner 1995: 285–286; Birringer 1998: 149–152; Miklitsch 1998: 99–138; Schwichtenberg 1993) has become the guiding principle in the ethical code of post-Enlightenment civility, the ethos of the post-Kantian *Sittlichkeit* (cf. Kant 1974a [1785/1786], 1991c [1797/1798]), constitutive of "the political" of the ego-politics of the postmodern. *Strike a pose!* – that is the right attitude in the world of the "post," the world of the cyborg, in which the survival of the fittest is the highest imperative of the prevailing political order. *Strike a pose!* – that is the idea of *the politics of theory as a politics of affect* in contemporary Western academia ruled by the post-political command of market economy, the dictate of high performance (see McKenzie 2001; in terms of "the academic woman as performance artist," see Jay 1998: 138–143; for "bad girls" doing "French Theory," see Hawkins 2004: 198–199; in the context of pop-cultural feminism, see Baldauf et al. 1998; with regard to "cyberfeminism," see Braidotti 1997a [1996]). *Strike a pose!* – or you are just nothing.

In other words, if you do not have a cyborg body your chances of survival are very limited in a world in which to survive means to adapt oneself to the living conditions dictated by technoscience. In the world of the "cyber," as Haraway (1991f: 245) says, prognosticing the future in terms of survival, "only a cyborg would have a chance."

Ecstasy, Hysteria and Delirium, or: To Be Theory It Must Be "Sexy"

What is the supreme moment of pleasure in the world of the cyborg? A maximization of human potential according to the parameters of the posthuman, the parameters of prosthetics. In this world, what was once called the "natural body" does no longer exist; instead, prosthetic artificiality is the mode of being of the posthuman. As Rosi Braidotti (2002: 227), one of the most avant-gardist theorists of the posthuman body, says: "today's body is immersed in a set of technologically mediated practices of prosthetic extensions," the very condition of possibility of existence in the world of the cyborg (cf., for example, Bell 2001a: 143–151; Currier 2002: 528–535; Graham 2002: 102, 145, 201, 208, 223; Foster 2005: 11, 63–65, 107, 111, 118–119, 129, 138, 152; Schneider 2005: 110–112; Gray et al. 1995b; Gray 2001; van der Ploeg; Zylinska 2002c). Therefore, according to Erin Manning (2007: 117), to "think of the relation between skins, bodies, and senses, we must become comfortable with the logic of the prosthesis" (cf. Manning 2009: 64–66, 74–75; in terms of *die Herrschaft der Prothesen*, "the mastery of prostheses," cf. Flessner 1997). From this perspective, as Braidotti (2003) envisions, our present future is a world that is defined by "cyberteratologies," the paradigm of the "monstrous" based on the technoscientific reason of the "cyber."

This is a logic that enables the "construction of bodies and machines as mutually constitutive" in a world in which "science as science fiction" (Milburn 2004: 125) defines the parameters of the epistemological and ontological; that is, as Haraway (1991a: 149) says, a world in which "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." This is wonderful, indeed, but this notwithstanding there is no escape from the simple fact that, in the constellation of post-theory, there is no prosthetic logic without *prosthetic language*, without the linguistic prosthetics of prosthetic writing (cf. Hayles 1999: 126); a mode of writing that, in turn, is possible nowhere else but in the world ruled by the logic of the "post." In a peculiar manner, thinkable only in terms of the "post," post-theory reiterates the idea of Kantian "disinterested pleasure" constitutive of beauty as a manifestation of *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*, "purposiveness without purpose," as understood by Immanuel Kant; as we remember, *Schönheit*, according to Kant (1990c [1790/1793/1799]: 155), *ist Form der Zweckmäßigkeit eines Gegenstandes, sofern sie, ohne Vorstellung eines Zwecks, an ihm wahrgenommen wird*, "beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, as far as this is perceived in it *without a representation of purpose*" (emphasis mine). This is the very purposiveness of the "post": the purpose without a purpose, except the purpose in and of itself: theory without interest in the language-external world, except in terms of theory defined by the logic of the "post."

It is in this manner that post-theory, as an effect of the "post," is not an aberration of the postmodern, an arbitrary deviation or just a strange anomaly; on the contrary, it is its very end product, its logical accomplishment: *the "post" of post-theory is the sign of the theoretical auto-affectivity intrinsic to the postmodern.*

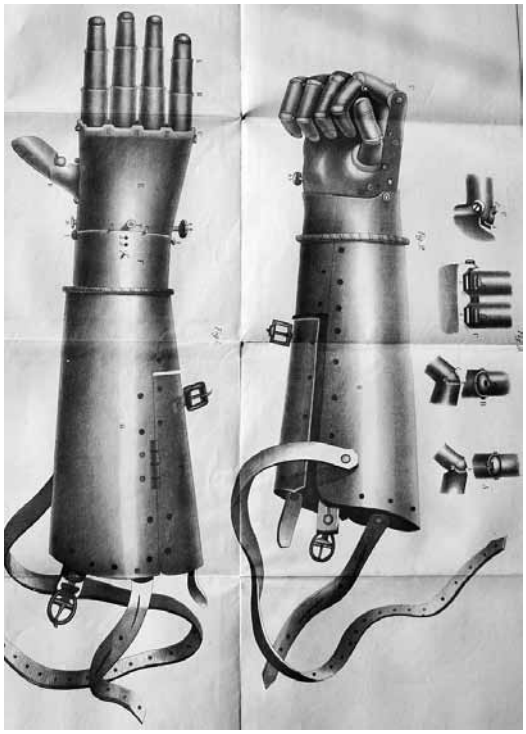


Fig. 7–8. Prosthetic reconstruction of the hand: the construction parts of the medieval German knight and mercenary Götz von Berlichingen's *Eiserne Hand*, "Iron Hand" (1504); an artificial hand with gripping mechanisms that imitate the functions of the natural hand and fingers (see, for example, Erlach 2000: 133–134; Irrgang 2005: 171).

In 1812, Peter Ballif (1775–1831), a German dentist and surgical technician, used Berlichingen's prosthetic hand as a model for a prosthesis with movable fingers (see Gerbert-Hirt 2004: 86, 98). The German master surgeon Ferdinand Sauerbruch developed Ballif's idea of a wire mechanism to enable finger movements, and also included a diagram of Berlichingen's prosthetic hand in his book *Die willkürlich bewegbare künstliche Hand* (see Sauerbruch 1916: 2) and, moreover, modelled the construction of the prosthesis known as *Sauerbrucharm* on Berlichingen's "iron hand" (see Schönle 2001: 121–129; Springer 2002: 78–79; Karpa 2004: 21–24, 114, 122–125, 197–199).

"Time and again, orthopaedic surgeons and medical technicians praised Götz von Berlichingen as a role model. A number of new designs for prosthetic arms even bore Götz's name. The famous knight with his iron fist became the archetypal German warrior disabled by injury but armed with a steel prosthesis and sustained by his unbreakable spirit." (Goebel 2007: 158; cf. Poore 2007: 14–15, 74–75; Kienitz 2008: 55–56, 170)

In this sense, the cyborg, in its contemporary form as a paragon of transgression, is an apotheosis of post-theory; theory as *post-aesthetic* intellectual activity, theory as the most spectral manifestation of the radical politics of words in the name of subversion, the most "aesthetic" moment of the "post" (for the "aesthetic" as coterminous with the postmodern, see Welsch 1990, 1997). And precisely in this sense, the "cyber," as an effect of the "post," is constitutive of the cyborg in post-theory as a continuation of politics by other means, by means of the imaginary, the very means of libidinal language as the linguistic basis of the "post."

Sous les pavés, la plage, "beneath the cobble stones, the beach" – that was the utopian vision engendered by *les événements de mai 1968*, originally, as we remember, a student uprising in Paris in May 1968; a vision of a better world to be brought about by a worldwide revolutionary movement (see, for example, Dosse 1998b [1991]: 107–188; Ross 2002; Horn 2007). But, beneath the superstructure of the "post," its enormous excess of signification, there is the hard

and merciless logic of global capitalism: the excessive exploitation of human and natural resources, the turning of the whole world into a profitable resource. In this sense, beneath the signifying superstructure of the "cyber," underneath its spectacular excess of signifiers, there is the utopian infrastructure of the 1960s, its discursive explosion of countercultural energies that, paradoxically, simultaneously both concealed and called forth the opposite: the reaction of reactionary forces, the counter-strike of imperialism. The counterculture of the 1960s, the awakening of the Third World and the Cultural Revolution in China, as Jameson (1988h [1984]: 208) says, all together finally led "in the worldwide economic crisis, to powerful restorations of the social order and a repressive power of the various state apparatuses."

This is the background of the "post" in terms of real history: the reality of capitalism behind the spectacle of signifiers; the reality of the political economy of neoliberalism.

Then again, to really understand the *dialectics* of the "post," its *deep* "meaning" in the strong sense of the expression, one should not forget that there is *absolutely nothing* behind or beneath the surface in the world of the "post." As Andy Warhol, an absolute embodiment of the "post," its living incarnation, once said: "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me – and there I am. *There's nothing behind it*" (Kariel 1989: 116–117; emphasis mine; in terms of postmodern gender theory, cf. Butler 1990). According to Henry S. Kariel (1989: 117), Warhol's "persona *absorbed* reality in appearance as it cruised through a world in which, as his Pop art insisted, nothing mattered and anybody could do anything" (emphasis mine). This is the post-identitarian identity logic of the cyborg: "identity" as technological *bricolage* compatible with the technoscientific efficiency maximization of productivity demanded by the disciplinary regime of neoliberal capitalism in which capital in itself is the hard core of globalization, the very power of relentless transformation of the world, a power for which nothing is sacred except its own power.

But, of course, the emergence of the "post" also implies a dialectic twist, a reversal at best to be understood in economic terms; in Jameson's words:

> The 60s were in that sense an immense and inflationary issuing of superstructural credit; a universal abandonment of the referential gold standard; an extraordinary printing up of ever more *devalued signifiers*. (Jameson 1988h: 208; emphasis mine)

"Devalued signifiers" – what is this if not the very definition of the "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of the postmodern; only that this time what is at issue is not a devaluation, but, on the contrary, a radical revaluation of language in its entirety: now not only are linguistic figures floating free, but, first of all, *reality in itself has become a "free-floating signifier."*

In other words, the "post" is now the gold standard, the very measure of value in a world in which there is nothing constant except constant transformation.

From this perspective, it is not difficult to see that the discursive explosion of the 1960s has been replaced by the implosion of meaning in the 1990s that, paradoxically, has now resulted in an immense excess of signification, the avalanche of signifiers under the super-code of the "post," the code ruling the specific postmodern mode of writing theory, a neo-romantic, "aesthetic" and "erotic" mood manifesting the enchantment of theory that I call *theory-euphoria*, typical of contemporary theory in terms of linguistic figuration. Accordingly, what is called the "affective turn" today (see Clough 2000; Clough & Halley 2007) is a continuation of the 1960s by other means, the means of the "post," the means of *auto-affective writing* in which meaning is replaced by excessive signification in a manner that brings to mind the overwhelmingly ornamental style of the Baroque and the Rococo. Thus, affected by the "post," one speaks in affective terms, not merely affected, in a state of affection, but, moreover, in the condition of affectation: *ecstasy*, *hysteria* and *delirium* are the keywords of the "post."

In these terms, if sex as such is about a linguistic *trompe l'oeil* in the world of post-theory, the "post" in itself is something *sexy* (see, for example, Grosz & Probyn 1995); a word used today to express overwhelming excitement and fascination, a specific "thrill," in the world where the postmodern originally comes from: the overwhelming affluent consumer culture of post-war America turned into imaginary reality in post-theory (cf., for example, Markula 2001 [1995]: 286–291; cf. Rutherford 2007). As Diane Elam (1992: 143) says, "[t]heory, as we all know but are afraid to admit, is sexy." In other words, the discursive regime of the "post" is ruled by a mode of signification that is constituted by *self-excitating signifiers*; that is, signifiers that are the signifying vehicles of the libidinal language specific to the "post." As Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan (2007: xiv) explains in the context of poststructuralism, "by 'sexy,' I mean attractive and seductive, liberating and transgressive as well as transformative." Or, as Jean-Michel Rabaté (2002: 16), speaking of the "future of Theory" in terms of "French theory," encourages those who may still hesitate: "since it has a libidinal edge, Theory should not be boring; it should move, seduce, entrance, keep desire in motion, in other words, it should be 'sexy.'"

In this manner, "sexy," as an attribute of theory, is an expression that expresses the "incitement to discourse" (Foucault 1990k: 17–35) typical of the "post" (see, for example, Merod 1992: 186–197; Griffin & Andermahr 1997: 21; Price & Shildrick 1999b: 79–80; Hames-García 2001: 202; Norton 2002: 30–31; Hawkins 2004: 198–199; Larsen 2008: 18–21). Thus, post-theory, as the most thrilling mode of postmodern theory, is "sexy" to the extent that even feminists can have erection or get into phallic rage. This is the power of "sex" in terms of the "post," and, conversely, the "post" in terms of "sex": the power of the imaginary beyond the intelligible (in historical terms, cf. Foucault 1990k: 154–159), its libidinal potency, its *theoretical tumescence*. It is in this way that the "post" is simply "sexy."

Sexing Theory: Towards the Pleasure Principle of Theory-Sex

From the standpoint outlined above, the "cyber," as one of the most spectral effects of the "post," is "sexy" in a specific manner: it is a signifier that stands for the post-body, the post-ness of the body in its radical post-ality. My aim, therefore, is not to put forward a theory of cybersex since all that is "cyber" is in itself such a "theory," but to draw attention to the discursive configuration of what I designate as theory-sex (see Eerikäinen 2003), "sex" in terms of "the theoretical," in the mode of the imaginary constitutive of the "post" (from a historical perspective, cf. Turner 2003; Toulalan 2007).

That is, where there was once *Sexualästhetik* manifesting the *Grenzformen der Sinnlichkeit* (Gorsen 1987), the "liminal forms of sensuality" in the constellation of the modern, there is now theory-sex celebrating *the imaginary of the sexual as the sexual reality of the postmodern*; in other words, "sex in the head" (Foucault 1999b [1980]: 186), to transfer, and thus to recontextualize and reinterpret, the Foucauldian idea pertaining to the transformation of the regulation of corporeal pleasures in the transition from Greek to Roman culture (cf. Seidler 1987: 90–91; Williams 1993: 1, 8–9, 24; O'Hara 1994: 330–331; Clark 2004a [1988]: 40–41; Porter 1988). If, in postmodern culture in general, "the sexual" is a "free-floating signifier," in the world of post-theory it is a post-literary figure in the broad sense of the term: "sex" in post-theory takes place by "writing the body" (cf., for example, Dallery 1992 [1990]; Conboy et al. 1997; Kirby 1997; Irwin 2010). In other words, while postmodern culture as a whole is penetrated by the imaginary of the sexual, post-theory rewrites the realm of the imaginary by means of linguistic figuration that attempts to deconstruct and subvert the order of the sexual in itself.

Thus, as we can see by now, what is called "deconstruction" and "subversion" is not possible without the "post," the signifier of transgression signifying radical "otherness" in the world of post-theory.

In both dimensions, whether in postmodern culture at large or on the theory-scene of post-theory, *"the sexual" is an extremely productive phantasm*, an enticing obsession, that incites the production of "sex" in the mode of post-sex. In this manner, post-sex, as the cultural orchestration of the imaginary of the sexual in the postmodern, has brought about the discursive configuration of theory-sex, which, in turn, constitutes the discursive matrix of cybersex, "sex" in terms of the "cyber."

What is specific to theory-sex is that it is *cerebral sex*, theoretically abstracted sex (for a paradigmatic example, see Parisi 2004), enabled by *the sexualization of theory* typical of the situation of theory under the sign of the "post" (in terms of a "sexualization of the text" as a "textualization of sex," cf. Jardine 1985: 183–182; Still & Worton 1993b; for "sexing the text," cf. Travis 1998: 44–67); "sexualization" understood here in terms of desire constitutive of the mode of theory effected by the "post." In other words, to transpose Robert Darnton's (2002: 203) Lévi-Strauss-inspired observation concerning "the golden age

of pornography" (1650–1800) to the paradigm of the "post": "sex is good for thinking" (see Darnton 1994, 1996; cf. Wolfson 1997: 120–21; Willemen 2004: 15; Harvey 2004: 224–225). Thus, in its very essence, *the "post" is about "sex"*; "sex" as a postmodern signifier that has an enormous power to move (in the senses of mobilization, motility and motivity) not only the postmodern scene of the body and its desires and pleasures, but also the scene of theory in terms of the "post": "sex" is an overwhelmingly productive discursive figure, an inexhaustible fountainhead of theory, in the textual matrix of post-theory peculiar to the cultural constellation of the postmodern.

It is in this sense that what happens in the world of the "post" is a sexualization of theory in terms of linguistic figuration as a manifestation of desire that in itself is an effect of language.

Accordingly, the "post" is the linguistic connex, the *libidinal copula*, of the idea of "text/sex" in post-theory, the double bind between the reality of theory and the imaginary of contemporary capitalism. In other words, the "post" is the supreme trade mark of the political economy of neoliberalism.

As a driving force of theory in the mode of "textualization," the "sexualization" of the "theoretical" manifests the intrinsic motivation of post-theory: *the desire for theory* not only through its implied temporality, the imaginary future in terms of libidinal liberation as a theoretical moment of transformation present in the present reality (for a "classical" example, see Marcuse 1987 [1955]; cf. Femia 2007: 107–110; Rutherford 2007: 63–68), but, most of all, through its association with poststructuralism and the postmodern, of which the idea of excess is constitutive of both: the "post" is the antithesis of stasis, and, as such, a "restless" signifier that carries with it a structure of desire, the perspective of promise: *la promesse de bonheur* as the present absence of pleasure implying a phantasmatic presence of the absent (in Adornian terms, cf. Adorno 1980 [1970]; Jay 1973: 179–180, 215–216; Bernstein 1992: 42–44). This is the logic of the desire for theory *as the pleasure of theory* (cf. Suleiman 1990: 2–4; Jameson 1988i [1983]: 61–74); a mode of pleasure the presence of which is in its "futurality" (cf. Pronger 2002: 33) that is the present future of theory, instead of what Foucault (1991a [1975]: 31) calls the "history of the present" in its very *historicality* (cf., for example, Dean 1994: 7–22; Smart 2002 [1985]: 27; in terms of the history of sexuality, cf. Weeks 2000: 118–121).

If, according to Louis Althusser (1971 [1970]: 154), "[i]deology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence," in the world of the "post," we are beyond ideology, in the Baudrillardian paraspace of "hyperreality" constituted by simulation and simulacra (see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84; cf. Kellner 1989: 81–84, 97–98, 112–113): the Althusserian "real" has now entirely disappeared and what we have instead is the omnipresent realm of the imaginary. If there is still anything "final" after the disappearance of all finalities as a result of the ascendancy of the "post," this is the final phase of all that is des-

ignated as the "postmodern": the "post" is the end-point of the postmodern in a similar manner as "America," as "an achieved utopia," is the end of utopia for Baudrillard (1988a [1986]: 84). However, no longer is the real utopia at issue in the world of the "post"; instead, the "post" is *about the utopia of the real in terms of the imaginary* (in terms of Marxism-Leninism as a "real utopia," cf., for example, Mendelsohn & Nowotny 1984; Kołakowski 2005 [1976]); that is, the world as the actuality of the potential taken as the real of reality.

This is the idea of the "post": under the conditions of contemporary capitalism, we live in a world in which the promises of scientific-technological feasibility and the commodity form appear as the future already present.

The utopia of the real in terms of the imaginary – what does this mean in terms of theory? *Theory is a matter of faith* in the world of the "post." That is, Anselm of Canterbury's wisdom has returned with a vengeance in our world in which the imaginary is the very guarantee of the real: *Credo ut intelligam*, "I believe, so that I may understand" (Logan 2009: 32), this is the credo of the "post"; in other words, in its radical skepsis, post-theory, paradoxically, is a mode of "faith seeking understanding" (Gasper 2004: 107–143).

To believe in terms of the "post," however, is not so much a spiritual act as it is an act of faith pertaining to the materiality of language in a very material sense, in the sense of what Althusser (1971: 121–143) calls "ideological state apparatuses" (in the contemporary world, a situation in which the markets have taken the place of the state as the supreme power): rather than being an issue of ideas, theory is now a product of practices and rituals in terms of writing, as *an enactment of the real by means of the imaginary*. In this sense, like ideology, theory has a material existence; as Althusser, paraphrasing Pascal's conception of religion, explains the way through which believing comes into being: "Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe" (ibid.: 158). In other words, the idea does not produce the action; on the contrary, it is the action that produces the idea. These actions, these practices and rituals, need not to be great and impressive events; they are, as Althusser explains, usually just "a small part" of a particular ideological apparatus: "a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports' club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc." (ibid.).

Transposed to the world of the "post": sit down in front of your computer, your self-mirroring mirror of your self-mirroring, move your fingers on the keyboard in the act of writing, and you will believe – *you will believe in the words on the screen: you will believe in the Word in its absent presence*.

It is in this manner that the "post" is a signifier of the imaginary: what is not present in the real is present in the imaginary, and constitutes, as such, the object of desire, that "something" which is beyond the present, like the "sexual," in the realm of the imaginary, which, as such, is the very realm of desire (cf.

Butler 1999b [1987]: 24–59, 92–99; Dews 2007 [1987]: 157–169).[26] In this sense, with regard to its intrinsic logic, post-theory is a mode of postmodern theology, it is about a theology of linguistic figures that have an inexhaustible ability to signify. That is, post-theory theorizes things that exist only in theory, as theoretical "objects" *in terms of theory*.

This is theoretical allurement of theory-sex, its theoretical seduction: desire for theory is the very pleasure of theory-sex. The reality of desire is the imaginary, and, accordingly, what we enjoy in theory-sex are discursive figures that exist in the imaginary of theory.

In this precise sense, I am interested in "words without things" (cf. Poster 1990); that is, signifiers that, in the mode of the "post," not only themselves engender the signifieds which they are signifiers for, but, more fundamentally, which *are* in themselves, as such, the signifieds in their very significance. If, in general, "the word negates the immediate physical presence of things by providing them with symbolic presence" (Muller & Richardson 1988b: 91), all the more this is the case in the world of the "post": here, signifiers do not name something extralinguistic (there *is* nothing "extralinguistic" in the world of the "post"), but they are the "objects" they signify in themselves. In its peculiar manner, as we will see in the course of the present study, this is about a "fetishism of the signifier" (Gane 1991a: 204) constitutive of all that is "post."

Post-Theory as an Immaterial Materialization of Productive Consumption

What is the point here is that the "post" has created its own "transcendental signified" (Derrida 1978e [1967/1966]: 280; cf. Butler 1984: 61; Sheriff 1989: 33–34): *the signifier in and by itself* as the non-foundational foundation of all being, the very origin of the world; the signifier as the *prima causa*, the first mover, of the whole universe.

Paradoxically, as an imaginary world, the world of the "post" consists of "material signifiers" in the sense of "molecular energies," as Jameson (1988h [1984]: 207) says, referring to Mao Zedong's words: "Our nation is like an atom […]. When this atom's nucleus is smashed, the thermal energy released will have

26 It should be noticed that whenever I am speaking here of "desire" I understand by it a post-Lacanian derivation of Jacques Lacan's rereading of the Freudian concept of *Wunsch* (which is not the same as Freud's *Begierde* or *Lust*, although both of them also refer to what in English is called "desire" which, in turn, is close to *Begehren* in contemporary academic German). The explanation given by Alan Sheridan (1977: viii), Lacan's translator, is illuminating: "The *Standard Edition* [of Freud's works] translates Freud's '*Wunsch*' as '*Wish*', which corresponds closely to the German word. Freud's French translators, however, have always used '*désir*', rather than '*voeu*', which corresponds to '*Wunsch*' and '*Wish*', but which is less widely used in current French. The crucial distinction between '*Wunsch*' and '*Wish*', on the one hand, and '*désir*', on the other, is that the German and English words are limited to individual, isolated acts of wishing, while the French has the much stronger implication of a continuous force. It is this implication that Lacan has elaborated and placed at the centre of his psychoanalytic theory […]." It is in this sense that, broadly speaking, the term "desire" is used in contemporary theory, especially when, in one way or another, it is associated with French thought, poststructuralism or the postmodern (see, for example, Macey 2000: 94–95; Biti 2001: 99–105; Kristeva 1980 [1969]; Lash 1985; Butler 1990, 1999 [1987]; Copjec 1994; Adam & Allan 1995; Fuery 1995).

really tremendous power!" This is the "libidinal strategy" (ibid.: 57; cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]) of capital under the conditions of the "post": the disciplinary regime of productive consumption constitutes the realm of the elementary driving "energy," *the energy of desire*, in our era, the era of total appropriation of all resources in the service of the accumulation of capital, human potentialities among them having an increasingly important value in all senses of the term (see, for example, Miller 1987, 2001; Porter 1993a; Lury 1996; Baudrillard 1998b [1970]; Gottdiener 2000; Ritzer 2005 [1999]; Paterson 2006; in terms of the "McDonaldization of society," see Ritzer 1993, 2004; from the perspective of theory history, see Lee 2000). In other words, during the last three decades, to apply Jameson's (1988h: 207) terms, capital has ever-more intensely "penetrated" and "colonized" all spheres of life (in terms of *Kolonialisierung der Lebenswelt*, cf. Habermas 1981: 521–523). In this sense, the postmodern refers to the imperative of excessive expansion that is *the expansion of excess as the movement of global capitalism*: an economic order in which rationally organized production of desires, reaching the utmost molecules of the body, constitutes the hard core of capital.

This is the disciplinary regime of the political economy of neoliberalism, an economic-political and social-cultural order in which *it is desire that is the driving force of the disciplinization of bodies and their pleasures*, the very motor of what I designate as the *societal kinetics* of globalization.

In other words, what Jameson calls "the cultural logic of late capitalism," in fact, is the logic of neoliberalism, the logic of financial capital that dictates "the political" of politics in the contemporary world (see, for example, Comaroff & Comaroff 2001; Arestis & Sawyer 2004; Harvey 2007). In the political economy of neoliberalism, nothing can escape *the imperative of economization*; that is, things (whatever they happen to be) have no longer value in themselves since economic value, based on surplus value, has now colonized the living conditions all over the world. As a result, what economists have described as "capital-intensive" has taken on a new meaning: *if life is not "intensive" in the interests of capital it is no life at all*.

If, as Pasi Falk (1994: 94), in his study of the "consuming body," says, the problem of "consumer society" confronts us with questions concerning "(a) the *constitution of desire* exceeding the 'necessary,' (b) the *limitlessness* of the desire and (c) the endless longing for the *new*"; in contrast to that, to sum up my position, in the world of the "post" in which the political economy of neoliberalism determines the economy of the body, we are challenged by a situation in which (1) desire is in itself constitutive of the proliferation not only of desire, but, moreover, of the desire for desire, (2) the recycling of desire obfuscates its own limits, and (3) the reiteration of the same appears as the ever-new. This is the logic of expanded accumulation that is the basis of productive consumption: what is accumulated is more than a sum total of accumulation, it is a result of the multiplier impact, the product of *consumption that produces its own expansion*.

Accordingly, the human body is no longer just a production machine; it is now *a machine of consumption* that by consuming produces its own living conditions. This is life under the disciplinary regime of neoliberal capitalism.

What counts in the economic order of productive consumption is not the product in itself, but its appearance in the sense of *Schein*, the commodity form in its ultimate form, as *a symbolic representation of the imaginary*. This is a postmodern hypostatization of commodification: in "cultural capitalism," as Žižek (2002a: 285) explains, "the relationship between an object and its symbol-image is turned around: the image does not represent the product; rather, the product represents the image." This reversal reaches its final stage "when a secondary association becomes the ultimate point of reference" (ibid.; cf. Jameson 1988d [1978], 1989 [1983]; Firat & Dholakia 2003 [1998]). This is the cultural formation of what Jeremy Rifkin (2000) calls "hypercapitalism," the consummation of capitalism in the mode of the "society of the spectacle" (Debord 1983 [1967], 1990 [1988]), today in the form of simulation (cf. Baudrillard 1994 [1981]; in terms of "history, hysteria and consumption," cf. Porter 1993a).

In this way, in terms of theory, post-theory manifests the political economy of neoliberal capitalism, an economic mode of exaggeration that I call the *economy of the bombastic*; that is, post-theory is a theory style that is subsumed by the logic of surplus value in the manner typical of the postmodern condition. As we will see, this is the economic dynamics of the orgasmic in the constellation of post-sex and its techno-imaginary derivation, the phantasmatic realm of cybersex.

All this notwithstanding, Marxian *Mehrwert* or "added value," in the form of profit, interest or rent, generated by the real value of work, is still the precondition of the accumulation process; that is, an output measure of the net increase of product wealth implying that the wage of work, corresponding to the necessary labour, must be less than the total value produced by the worker (see Marx 1983 [1867]: 165–170). Thus, while the ultimate source of surplus value is the unpaid extra labour performed by the worker for the capitalist, serving as the basis for the accumulation of capital, the surplus value constitutive of post-theory is based on the excess of signification effected by the accelerated expansion of consumption enabled by the first order surplus value extracted, by new scientific-technological means, from labour in the production.

With regard to the above discussion, post-theory is an immaterial materialization of productive consumption, the "surplus" of the "theoretical" turned into a commodity form: *theory as an immaterial commodity in its writerly materiality*. For this reason, since post-theory, as a postmodern manifestation of capitalism, is intrinsic to what Marx (1983: 15) calls *das ökönomische Bewegungsgesetz der modernen Gesellschaft*, "the economic law of motion of modern society," it is not in a position to repeal its own premises, its own conditions of possibility: the disciplinary regime of neoliberal capitalism that is able to reach even the substance of theory today. In other words, post-theory is not able, as

Jameson (1988i [1983]: 63) says, to generate "its own Other and negation from within itself."

In the last instance, the conclusion is unavoidable: post-theory is a legitimation discourse of neoliberal capitalism, capitalism in its fully developed postmodern form, in the manner of *reified language* based on the commodification of discourse in contemporary academia *celebrating the "post" as the ultimate sign of liberation*.

If, in the 1960s, what Jameson (1988h: 207) calls "late capitalism" had begun to appropriate and exploit "the last surviving internal and external zones of precapitalism," "the last vestiges of noncommodified or traditional space within and outside the advanced world," this very same process now takes place in the academic world. That is, while, in the 1960s, "the last vestiges of Nature which survived on into classical capitalism," "namely, the Third World and the unconscious," were already "at length eliminated" (ibid.), post-theory is now an indication of a situation in which capitalism has similarly "penetrated" and "colonized" (ibid.) the realm of theory (if theory is understood as critical analysis of things to be studied, be they literary fictions or social realities). As a result, in the world of the "post," theory has taken the form of a de-engaged self-reflection, an end in itself, and has thus turned into an affirmation committed only to its own language games. In other words, theory in the mode of Theory has become a postmodern "hyperspace" (Featherstone 1991a: 5), a vertiginous spectacle of "free-floating signifiers"; the "vertiginous" in its double sense of *Schwindel* (see von Braun 2001).

In these terms, to paraphrase Heidegger's (2000d [1952]: 133) critical idea according to which *Wissenschaft denkt nicht*: post-theory does not think, it *theorizes*. It is from this perspective that not only the cyborg but the entire constellation of the "cyber" becomes intelligible: in the world of the "post," theory is its own evidence.

The excessive energy of postmodern capitalism, like Mao Zedong's "thermal energy," has now turned into the linguistic energy of excessive signification in the realm of theory. Thus, "the theoretical" in itself is the epistemological and ontological condition of possibility of the "post." In the world of the "post," the signifier, in its auto-affective efficiency (cf. Derrida 1997: 165–166), takes on the meaning of the origin in its originating presence in the manner that Derrida (1978e [1970/1966]: 279–280) describes as "all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center," such as, "*eidos*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject), *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth." This is the high moment of all that is "post," a spectacular triumph of the signifier in the world of post-theory, the hagiography of the signifier in the literal sense: a sanctification (*hagios*) of the signifier by writing (*graphein*), writing in terms of *écriture*; a mode of writing that inevitably leads to a sacralization of theory (in terms of the sacralization of literature, cf. Foucault 1990j [1975/1986]: 308–309).

It is in this manner that the "post" is an originating signifier in itself, the decentred "centre" of the signifying matrix of the "post."

Therefore, *credo ut intelligam* is the constitutive act of faith in the world of the "post," the act of understanding things the intelligibility of which is in their imaginary existence: a mode of existence that becomes existent in, by and through the act of faith, an act that is constantly renewed by the overwhelming power of capital to turn the imaginary into real.

1.2.2 Reading and Writing in "Quotation Marks"

If there is radical irony, it is what I call *the irony of the signifier* effected by the "post": the signifier, in its attempt to "erase the signified" (Leitch 1983: 108), has thus become the signified *of* itself: a signified *in the name* of the signifier. It is this intrinsic irony of the signifier that is the source of its fetishism: the movement of desire inscribed in the very structure of the signifier. In this manner, *theory is a Freudian issue in the world of the "post"* (see Freud 1961 [1905], 1981c [1905], 1987d [1900], 1986d [1915–1917], Lacan 1977b [1966]; Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]).

For this reason, the sexual and the imaginary, despite their differences, have a functional homology in common, the movement of desire: looking forward, anticipating, expecting, wishing, hoping, yearning – that is the phantasmatic movement of desire that is the movement of theory: like desire, the common denominator of the sexual and the imaginary, theory looks forward, towards something that is present in the future, as *a phantasm of desire* (cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]: 66–82), as the autotelic telos that appears as the source of desire. That is, the immanent presence of the absent is the driving force of desire, the driving force of both "the sexual" and "the theoretical" (for a conception of desire as a body-immanent libidinal productivity, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]). This is the reality of theory in the discursive matrix of the "post"; a mode of reality that, in a specific manner, is possible only in theory ("only," of course, in the sense of the "post"): the "real" of the "theoretical" in the mode of the *effet de réel* (Barthes 1989b [1968]).

The Pleasure of "Digital Delirium"

As we can see, the "post" signifies a revolution in language (cf. Kristeva 1984 [1974]), a post-poetic upheaval in the very terms of language, under the originary conditions of the linguistic of language, the primordial linguisticity of the linguistic as a mode of being "before" being (cf. Heidegger 1985e [1959]): *the motivity of becoming*. In other words, to be a theorist in the world of the "post" is, like in Surrealism, to attempt to "make *another* sense emerge," to indulge in "the seizure of a projective desire" (Chénieux-Gendron 1990 [1984]: 6); that is, as the Surrealists saw it, to yield oneself to "objective chance," *le hasard objectif* (Gershman 1969: 15).

This is the non-originary origin of the surrational, the reason of the imaginary as the rationality of the absent present; a mode of reason that has made impossible the very idea of the impossible.

Seen from the perspective of the "post," the past is *passé*, dismissed in a similar manner as the Futurists abandoned everything that manifested for them what they called "passatism," and therefore, as Guillaume Apollinaire, infected by Marinetti's futuristic delirium, exclaimed: *À bas le passéisme* (see Perloff 1986: 99; Kramer 2007: 200–206; for connections and parallels between Fordism, Taylorism, Futurism and the body cult of Olympism, see Eichberg 1990: 119–122; cf. Falasca-Zamponi 2002: 146–148). This is the sound of the "cyber," the sound of post-Futurism as retro-Futurism, the mantra of the cyborg, for which the future is already present, present in its spectacular absence (see, for example, Haraway 1991a: 149–155). In the world of the "cyber," the "intoxicating dream-worlds" constituting the "experience of *modernité*" return with a vengeance: the "shocks, jolts, and phantasmagoria" (Featherstone 1991a: 70) of Baudelaire resurface in a postmodern form on the theory scene of the "post" (cf. Buck-Morss 1989; Buci-Glucksmann 1994 [1984]; Cohen 1995 [1993]), in the mode of discursive figures and figurations that celebrate the ethos of technological avantgardism in terms of what I call the *virtual reality of language* typical of all that is "post."

Thus, it is not only romantic nostalgia, turned into a nostalgia for the future (cf. Coyne 1999), but also the over-stimulated sensibility of modernity that haunts the world of the "cyber."

It is for this reason that, similarly to the "post," ecstasy, hysteria and delirium constitute the affective mode of theory in the world of the "cyber."

Referring to the above considerations, it should be emphasized that I am focusing here on the discourse-immanent desire that is peculiar to the linguistic matrix of the "cyber" functioning according to the logic of the "post." Where the "post" and the "cyber" meet one another we encounter a specific postmodern mode of perception, an elevated apprehension of being beyond the constraints of reality, a moment of the "technological sublime" (see, for example, Marx 1970 [1964]; Carey 1989: 113–141; Penley & Ross 1992b: xii; Tabbi 1996),[27] aptly described by Stephen Pfohl (1997) as "digital delirium":

27 According to Jameson (1991: 34): "The sublime was for Burke an experience of bordering on terror, the fitful glimpse, in astonishment, stupor, and awe, of what was so enormous as to crush human life altogether: a description then refined by Kant to include the question of representation itself, so that the object of the sublime becomes not only a matter of sheer power and of the physical incommensurability of the human organism with Nature but also of the limits of figuration and the incapacity of the human mind to give representation to such enormous forces." As Jameson indicates in this context, it is now, "at the moment of a radical eclipse of Nature itself" (ibid.), that technology, in what he calls "the Third Machine Age," is necessary to be redefined in the context of Kant's conception of the sublime, as a "problem of aesthetic representation" (ibid.: 36). Interestingly, instead of Kant, a "new type of science fiction, called *cyberpunk*" (ibid.: 38) appears, for Jameson, an adequate way to approach technology in terms of "the postmodern sublime" (ibid.; cf. Sirius 1990a, 1990b; Leary 1994b [1989], 1994d [1988], 1994f [1989]).

> All around me, inside me, flowing through me, between me and others, it is easy to discern signs of the flexible, mass marketing of cybernetic delirium. This is a delirium associated with both cyber-products and cyber-experience. "Cyber-this" and "cyber-that." It's hard to do the ritual of the check-out line these days, without some magnetic cyber-commodity-connectors wrapping their seductive sensors, cheek to cheek, in feedback loops with yours. Commanding attention. Inviting a try. Not that the effects are homogeneous. Nor the possibilities. From cyber-sex-shopping-surveillance, to cyber-philosophy, and even utopian dreams of cyborg revolts – whether for fun, or out of desperation, flaming desire, or for want of more passionate and politically effective connections – the world around and within me appears increasingly mediated by a kind of delirious cyber-hyphenation of reality itself. (Pfohl 1997: 114)

"Cyber-this" and "cyber-that," enjoyed by the post-subject in the theory-euphoria of the "cyber" effected by the *"delirious cyber-hyphenation of reality itself"* – that is the *jouissance* of the "cyber." In these terms, keeping in mind Derrida's (2000 [1988]: 119) dictum, "[i]f things were simple, word would have gotten round," I will approach the world of the "cyber" in its own terms, the terms defined by the "post." More specifically, the study at hand is an inquiry into the manner in which, in, by and through its "hallucinatory intensity" (Jameson 1988g [1977]: 82), the "cyber" signifies the future of utopia already present, present in the virtual reality of language, a linguistic realm in which, through the self-referentiality of language, the "real" of the reality of language appears real *precisely because it is virtual*; that is, as something that exists by the force of language, effected by the linguistic of language *in*, *through* and *by* its very linguisticity (in terms of "thinking about the unthinkable" enabled by "the virtual as a place of utopia," cf. Pias 2005c).

It is in this manner that the world of the "cyber" following the logic of the "post" is about the Baudrillardian "hyperrealism of simulation" (Baudrillard 1994a [1981]: 22–23; cf. Bogard 1996): objects, whatever they are, are real in their virtuality. For this reason, in the hyperreality of post-theory, in which the real and the imaginary are entirely conflated, a "kind of non-intentional parody hovers over everything" (Baudrillard 1983 [1981]: 150). What is hyperreal is possible only in terms of simulation, the terms of the presence of the absent: *the reality of semblance void of the referent*.

In this sense, the discursive order of the "cyber" implies a techno-imaginary radicalization of the "post," and, as such, it projects Deleuze-Guattarian "lines of escape leading away from the present" (Goodchild 1996: 150; cf. Braidotti 1994a: 41–56).

From this point of departure, the study proceeds as a reading *through* cyber discourse; a reading "that can be neither simple commentary nor simple interpretation" (Derrida 1973 [1967]: 88), but, instead, is a *symptomatic reading* (cf. Althusser 2009a [1965/1968]: 29, 35, 2009b [1965/1968]: 95, 159; Rodowick 1988: 7; Payne 1997: 74–76; Ferretter 2006: 51–52; Storey 2006 [1997]: 57–58; Romanyshyn 1989) in the form of a "textual *mise-en-scène*" (Norris 1997: 186). Yet, rather than concentrating on the silences, gaps and contradictions – the obses-

sions of poststructuralism – in the textual universe of the "cyber," I shall be considering the "cyber" in itself as a symptomatic manifestation of the situation of theory in terms of the "post"; a situation ensuing from the intrinsic movement of theory in the condition of the postmodern, the cultural constellation of post-theory. That is, in my reading, post-theory is not a theory "after" theory (cf. Docherty 1990, 1996; Eagleton 2003; Birns 2010; Elliott & Attridge 2011); instead, it is theory *in the mode* of the "post": post-theory, in its own way, as an unending metalepsis of theoretical figuration substituting one figure for another, is the "logical," if not the ultimate, consequence of the various "posts" that have dominated the scene of theory in Western academia since the 1960s (see Bell 1973: 51–54; Callinicos 1990 [1989]: 25; Taylor 2000: 3–5; Smith & Wexler 1995; McCance 1996; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b).[28]

Indeed, today "[w]e seem to live in a world of posts" (Söderlind 1994: 35). Accordingly, in the "era of Posts" (Adam & Allan 1995: xiii) or "the time of the 'posts'" (Best & Kellner 1997: 3–37), post-theory is constituted by the never-ending "posting" of the theory of the postmodern *within* the cultural constellation of the postmodern; that is, the discursive movement of the recycling of "the theoretical" in terms of the "post" effects the postness of the "post" in its radical postality.

In this manner, post-theory not only *enacts* "the theoretical" constitutive of it, but, through its language games, it also enacts the very "things," the "objects" in themselves, it suggests being a theory of (cf. Howells 1999: 52, 56). In other words, in the form of self-mirroring linguistic figuration, the "post" of post-theory stands for a specific mode of *non-representational language* that is the condition of possibility of post-theory (cf. Thrift 2007): the "world" of post-theory is a world effected by the unending posting of the "post," by its incessant proliferation of ever-new moments of the "post." It is in this sense that the "hermeneutics of suspicion," the epistemic strategy of poststructuralism (see, for example, Leitch 1992; Sim 1992; Hempfer 1992; Dillon 2000), has given way to an endless generation, procreation and propagation of "posts" in post-theory, a constant rewriting of the written in terms of post-Derridean supplementation and dissemination (cf. Derrida 1997, 1981a [1972]; ffrench & Lack 1998a).

The logic of the "post," as Barbara Johnson (1980a: x) says regarding the complex relations between "*difference* and *reading*," is in its "ability to engender more textuality." In these terms, it should be emphasized, post-theory is expressly "high-theory," and, as such, an opposite of what Simon Frith and Howard Horne (1987: 21–22) call "low theory" in the context of "pop" as a cultural and artistic mode of expression typical of popular culture (cf. Hebdige 1987 [1979], 1988; Gelder & Thornton 1997). There is, however, a connection

28 To keep cool in the heat of the discussion concerning the "post" of the postmodern and poststructuralism as well as various "posts" that since the 1960s have been circulating and recycled in the Western academic world it is appropriate to recall what Baudrillard and Foucault, each from their specific position, had to say about the topic. Baudrillard: "All that I will say is that the post modern is maybe postmodern" (Watson 2005 [1998]: 36). Foucault: "What are we calling postmodernity? I'm not up to date" (Raulet 1983: 204).

between popular culture and post-theory: the new status of desires and pleasures specific to the postmodern as a result of the affluence characteristic of the contemporary Western world, a world ruled by productive consumption, the present form of the Debordian "society of the spectacle" (see Debord 1983 [1967]; 1990 [1988]; in terms of the "hypermodern," cf. Lipovetsky 2005: 57–69). In this sense, the "post" in post-theory signifies *the spectacle of theory* in terms of the libidinal economy of postmodern capitalism, the political economy of desire enabled by the all-consuming logic of neoliberalism.

It other words, "the theoretical" in terms of the "post" is based on the *postification of desire* typical of postmodern academia: the desire for theory effected by "the theoretical" itself; that is, "the theoretical" of post-theory is *an epiphanic experience of the sublime* (cf. Kant 1988a [1764]; Lyotard 1993c; Ryle & Soper 2002; Hartley 2003).

Writing Theory in a Post-Kantian World

From the perspective outlined above, I will argue that the "post" signals not so much a Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte* (see Nietzsche 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 363–364, 1969a [1888/1894]; cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 15–22), a redefinition of all values, but, rather, a *transvaluation of surplus value*, constitutive of neoliberal capitalism, in terms of desires and pleasures.[29] In this sense, the "post" is *both* the cultural *and* the economic "dominant" of the postmodern condition (cf. Jakobson 1987b [1935]: 41; Selden & Widdowson 1993: 36–38; Jameson 1984); a discursive determinant that defines the parameters of contemporary capitalism in terms of globalization.[30] It should be emphasized, though, that the "post," in all its manifestations, is not a temporal term in the sense of "after," but a term that refers to the logic, the *modus operandi*, of productive consumption as the "measure of all things" on a global scale; that is, the "post" is a term that sums up the logic of a *radical economization of culture* that determines the way of life under the conditions of what I call *neo-Fordism* as the political regime of contemporary capitalism. In a world in which surplus value, as *the highest value of all values*, is the real value of all being, it is the commodity form that defines what is valuable in life, and what is not.

29 "*Umwerthung aller Werthe*: das ist meine Formel für einen Akt höchster Selbstbestimmung der Menscheit, der in mir Fleisch und Genie geworden ist. Mein Loos will, dass ich der erste *anständige* Mensch sein muss, dass ich mich gegen die Verlogenheit von Jahrtausenden im Gegensatz weiss … Ich erst habe die Wahrheit *entdeckt*, dadurch dass ich zuerst die Lüge als Lüge empfand – *roch* … Mein Genie ist in meinen Nüstern … Ich widerspreche, wie nie widersprochen worden ist und bin trotzdem der Gegensatz eines neinsagenden Geistes. Ich bin ein *froher Botschafter*, wie es keinen gab ich kenne Aufgaben von einer Höhe, dass der Begriff dafür bisher gefehlt hat; erst von mir an giebt es wieder Hoffnungen." (Nietzsche 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 363–364).

30 As Roman Jakobson (1987 [1935]: 41), with regard to literary language, writes: "The dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure." In this manner, the "dominant specifies the work" (ibid.). In contrast to Jakobson, however, the "post" as the cultural and economic dominant of the postmodern does not "guarantee the structure" of this constellation as an integrated totality, but, on the contrary, as a fragmentary configuration of elements that nevertheless remains a whole: a "totality" of ever-changing fragments.

It is in this sense that *homo economicus*, the idea of a rational and self-interested economic subject as the agent of market rationality and economic equilibrium in the world of the modern ruled by the logic of modernization (see, for example, Rolle 2005; Gaus 2007), is no longer just the ideal of the school of the rationalists in economics, the advocates of the rational choice theory (see, for example, Hollis 1994: 151–159, 177–197; Brennan & Hamlin 2000: 17–39; in terms of game theory and cybernetics, cf. Mirowski 2002); rather, *homo economicus* (see, for example, Rolle 2005; Gaus 2007), resurrected in the world of the postmodern, is now the very result of a radical reductionism pertaining to the subjectivity and agency of the human being in the manner in which being human, in its entirety, is subsumed by the logic of *economism*, the logic of total utility and usability of all human resources for the maximation of profit; that is, the free will of the human being as the subject of its own decisions is replaced by the imperative of free markets, the anonymous reason of capital propagated by neoliberalism.

This, in short, is the idea of the postmodern: things that have no value for capital have no value at all.

Thus, both popular culture and post-theory manifest what I refer to as *the politics of the spectacle* typical of the postmodern. But there is a difference between them: while the spectacular society of the postmodern relies on the productive consumption for the eye, the spectacular theory in terms of the "post" is premised on the productive consumption of writing, a celebration of *écriture* as the theory style of post-theory (cf. Brütting 1976; ffrench & Lack 1998c; for the *Tel Quel* circle as the origin of the textual radicalism constitutive of "French theory," see Kauppi 2010: 17–24, 47–58, 1994, 1996; Brandt 2000; in terms of the abandonment of the extra-literary from the literary, cf. Hutcheon 1980: 124–137): a completely cerebral mode of experience, *the abstract expressionism of theory* as the hyperreality of "the theoretical." In this manner, post-theory is a literary form of theory in the sense of the post-literary that is predicated upon what Martin Jay (1993a) calls the "denigration of vision in the twentieth-century French thought" (cf. Fekete 1984; Descombes 1989 [1979]; Gutting 2001); in other words, the theory discourse of poststructuralism or "French theory" (see Lotringer & Cohen 2001b; Cusset 2008 [2003]) in its most abstract form. This is the political economy of the "post" in post-theory: the desire for and the pleasure of spectacular writing, spectacular not in terms of vision, but in terms of the spectral generated by a writerly mode of writing as self-referential textuality; writing as *écriture* based on "free-floating signifiers."

Therefore, the "post" of the present study is not any "post" whatever; it is expressly the "post" of poststructuralism *in its radicalized form*, enabled by the cultural constellation under the signifier of the postmodern.

The "post" in this context signifies the excessive proliferation of theory, the profuse flood of theory in the name of *the theoretical*, incited by the very "theoreticality" of theory, that since the 1960s, especially after what is known as the "linguistic turn," as a mode of theory in which "reality becomes an exclu-

sively textual phenomenon" (Norris 1992: 42; for the origin of the idea, see, for example, Clark 2004b: 126–129; Iggers 2005: 118–133, 135, 150; LaCapra & Kaplan 1982; Rorty 1992a [1967], 1992b [1967]; in terms of "the deconstructive turn," cf. Heaphy 2007: 28–49; for a critical overview, see Neal 2007: 113–127; for a historical articulation of "linguistic turns in modern philosophy," see Losonsky 2006), has dominated the scene of theory in Western academia during the last decades in one way or another (see, for example, Attridge et al. 1987; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Peters 2001; Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]).[31] While poststructuralism, in its self-assured pathos against the Enlightenment and the reason of the modern, manifests the mood of the postmodern, as *a mode of writing* it is based on the tradition of literary modernism (see Huyssen 1986: 208–214; Lentricchia 1980; Leitch 1983; Con Davis 1986; Callinicos 1989). That is, the historical "origin" of the "post" (provided, of course, that there can be any "origins" and anything "historical" in terms of the "post") is to be found in the idea of structuralism (see, for example, Jameson 1974 [1972]; Culler 1975; Hawkes 1977; Young 1981a, 1981b; Sturrock 1986; Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]).

In my reading, the "linguistic turn" implies the turn to the postmodern, not only at the same time, but in its very essence, and, as such, it amounts to a rhetorical turn (cf. Seidman 1994a, 1994b), a turn to a mode of theory the "theoretical" infrastructure of which is language, language as its ontological and epistemological condition of possibility: *postmodern theory, as the theory of the postmodern, is based on linguistic figuration that constitutes it as theory*. This is the non-originary origin of post-theory: the signifying effect of the "post" in terms of "the theoretical." It is in this sense that the "post" is a linguistic sign, a "monument," that signifies the triumph of language not just as a model of world-explanation, but, first of all, as the mode of being of the world in itself.

But, in fact, the "linguistic turn" – what is it in its substance? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*" (John 1: 1). Whatever we say about the postmodern and all that is "post," this is the real origin of the "linguistic turn." Thus, in the rigorous sense of the term, the "post" is an emblematic sign of anthropomorphism as the contemporary form of deification of the human; and for this very reason, as we will see, all that is called "posthuman" is the ultimate manifestation of the anthropomorphism constitutive of the human. Wherever the word, as and in the sense of *the Word,* appears, in the mode of revelation, as the origin of the world, the human has taken the position of God (in terms of "cyborg writing," cf. Haraway 1991a).

31 The "linguistic turn," according to Nancy Armstrong (2001: 18), implied, in fact, another turn, even a more comprehensive one: a "cultural turn." "The cultural turn is a permutation of the linguistic turn. 'The linguistic turn' refers both to certain developments in the philosophy of the human sciences during the early twentieth century and the work of such poststructuralists as Althusser, Derrida, and Lacan, who, taken together, made literary scholars and critics rethink the relationship of language to the subject and object worlds." (ibid.) Thus, "'[t]he cultural turn' is a later development that not only marked the spread of poststructuralism to history and the social sciences but also promoted the interdisciplinary practice of 'cultural studies'" (ibid.; cf. Chaney 1994; Jameson 1998; Bonnell & Hunt 1999a, 1999b; for cultural studies, see Grossberg et al. 1992).

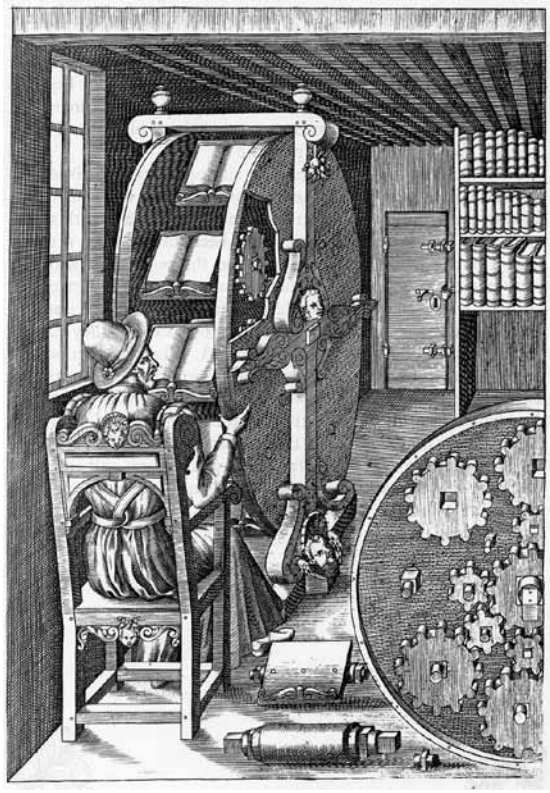
It is in this sense that, in the world of the "post," language is literally the condition of possibility of all being; "being" understood in this context, of course, not in terms of *stasis*, but in the mode of *panta rei*, as the libidinal flow of language constitutive of "the theoretical" in post-theory.

Consequently, what we call "reality" is real only insofar as it is apprehensible *within* language *by means* of language in its constant displacement of meaning; that is, as we will see, in terms of Derridean *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]; cf. Norris 1987: 64–69; Bannet 1989: 202–227; Lagemann & Gloy 1998: 121–152). In this sense, in a peculiar manner, as a *linguisticistic* conception of theory, post-theory is a descendant of *nouveau roman* (see, for example, Culler 1975: 190–192; Rylance 1994: 20–21; Heath 1972), a theoretical derivation of an absolutely literary language, a non-representational and self-mirroring linguistic figuration, turned into an autonomous language of theory; a mode of writing theory in which the theory-immanent and the text-immanent implode into one another, and the literary takes on the meaning of "the theoretical." That is, not only are interferences between "the literary" and "the theoretical" at issue here (cf. Roberts 1990: 50–51); rather, writing theory in the mode of the "post" is *a form* of postmodern "literature," a literary language "after" literature: a theoretical appropriation of "the literary" in terms of the "post" (in the context of postmodern art, cf. Evans 2009).

This is the postness of post-theory, the suggestive postality of theory under the sign of the "post" (cf. Zavarzadeh et al. 1995): theory in its phantasmatic theoreticality enabled by the linguistic of language constitutive of the "post."

Thus, in the world of post-theory, although the "post" has made the impossible impossible, it is not possible to think that, perhaps, as Rimbaud says, *la vraie vie est ailleurs* (Johnson 1987: 3), "real life is elsewhere": there is neither "real" nor "elsewhere" in the world of the "post" since *everything* is given in and by language, *within* its all-embracing textuality. In this sense, the world of the "post" is a "world *as* language" (Harland 1987: 141). Then again, and for the same reason, nothing is impossible in the world of the "post" since everything is possible in terms of language. In other words, to apply an example of Husserl pertaining to the problem of *Unsinn* discussed by Derrida (1973 [1967]: 91–99): that "[t]he circle is square" (ibid.: 98) is not only intelligible, in the Husserlian sense *sinnvoll* ("making sense"), but, more fundamentally, not an impossibility in the world of the "post." Where there is no difference between ontology and epistemology, there is no difference between the intelligible and the possible either, and *ergo*: *the square is circle*.

The famous Kantian questions, paradigmatic to the Enlightenment, in which, as Kant (1990b [1781/1787]: 677) says, *[a]lles Interesse meiner Vernunft (das spekulative sowohl, als das praktische)* combines three fundamental problems, namely: (1) *Was kann ich wissen?*, (2) *Was soll ich tun?*, and (3) *Was darf ich hoffen?* (ibid.), have been translated into significantly more important questions in post-theory, in fact, the cardinal questions of one's being in the world in general: (1) How should I read?, (2) What should I write?, and (3) What can I desire? This is the



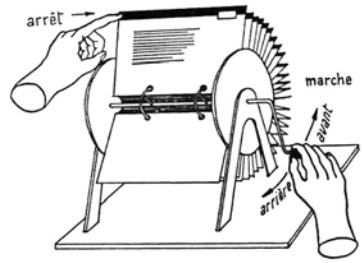


Fig. 9–10. The "book wheel" of Agostino Ramelli (1588) (see Sawday 2007: 111–113) and the "reading machine" of Juan-Esteban Fassio (1964) for Raymond Roussel's *Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique* (1932) (see Harpold 2009: 223–225; for a contextualization in terms of "hyper culture," see Klepper et al. 1996) (from left to right).

idea of the "linguistic turn," the turn to what I call *scripturalism* as the ontological and epistemological foundation of all being in the world of the "post": *scribo ergo sum*. As we can see, this kind of writerly-readerly world explanation (in the Barthesian sense of *scriptible* and *lisible*; see Barthes 1974 [1970]: 3–5), a truly postmodern cosmology effected by ever-new readings in terms of "writerly reading" (Wiseman 1985: 50–56, 1989: 92–93; cf. Margolis 1995: 36–37), implies a perpetual rewriting of the written as the rewriting of being (as a paradigmatic example, in terms of "cyborg writing," see Haraway 1991a: 175, 1997; cf., for example, Graham 2002: 200–220; Yaszek 2002: 14–15; Schneider 2005: 73–75).

For this reason, as we will see, the question of questions in the world of the "post" is ultimately: "Who is, needs to be, must be, *cited*?" (Berland 1996: 138; emphasis mine; cf. Derrida 2000 [1988]).

That is, the highest dictate of the "post" says: do not cite any theorist whatever, quote only canonized theorists, and you will survive! This is the categorical imperative of post-theory.

The exponential growth of texts and textuality since the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg and scholarly writing in the Renaissance (for a comprehensive history, see Eisenstein 1980) has presently resulted in a textual culture in which not only the enormous amount of texts, but, more fundamentally, the complexity of textual references and intertextuality have created a world *sui generis*, a world in which literacy is both a cultural and intellectual competence. In the theoretical constellation of the "post," reading and writing are preconditioned in a mutual manner: *what you write is what you get*, but there is nothing to get without reading that is the condition of possibility of writing. Thus, reading and writing are interrelated here in the mode of a post-cybernetic circular causal textual literacy based on the reciprocity of "readerly" writing and "writerly" reading (for the origin of the terms, see Barthes 1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174; cf. Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Lucy 1997: 74–76) that exceeds the monological logic of the one-dimensional reading and writing constitutive of linear textuality.

This is a world in which reading machines and machine reading are a logical continuation of writing machines and machine writing of the *Aufschreibesysteme*, "inscription systems" or "discourse networks," of 1800/1900, the mode of comprehending the world before the paradigm of the computer (see Kittler 1987 [1985], 1990 [1985]; cf. Dotzler 1996: 537–546; Hansen 2000: 220–227; Hartmann 2003: 59–62; Kloock & Spahr 2007 [2000]: 165–204; Gitelman 1999).

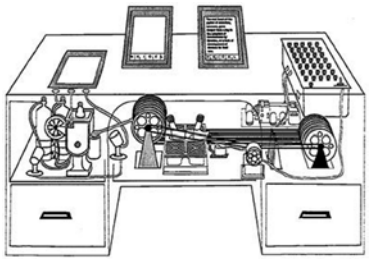


Fig. 11–12. Vannevar Bush's unrealized design for the Memex (1945), a machine for thinking (on the left) (see Bush 2001 [1945]; with regard to Ted Nelson's idea of "hypertext," see Bardini 2000: 38–41). In the era of computer networks, the possibility of "mass data storage and retrieval," conceptually anticipated by Ramelli's "book wheel" as a reading machine (Sawday 2007: 111), culminates in a fantasy of an omnipotent and omniscient reader/writer as the master of the textual universe of a totally networked world (on the right).

In this constellation, writing and reading are prosthetic operations in the manner of post-Derridean dissemination and supplementation (cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]: 141–164, 1981a [1972]; Royle 2003a: 47–59). To manage the textual universe of the "cyber" in its limitless vastness, in its innumerable interconnections, to say nothing of its countless relations to other discourses, one would actually need an automatic reading machine; that is, a machine that would not just be able to read through the hypertextual maze of cyber discourse, but, first of all, to make intelligible the enigmatic processes of cyberization and thus to make sense of all that is "cyber." This would be, as Jonathan Sawday (2007: 111) says in the context of Ramelli, an answer to "the scholar's dream of the machine that will read, digest, and process vast amounts of text on his or her behalf, saving them the labour of actually reading what has been written."

Then again, the discursive machinery of the "post" and the computer networks based on the logic of algorithms, in fact, constitute a global reading/writing machine that operates by itself, a word generator that works by means of its autonomous intertextuality in the form of "paper machines" (Derrida 2005 [2001]) or "text machines" (Simanowski 2011: 90–119; in terms of "gloss*a*lalia," cf. Wolfreys & Thomas 2003).

In the world of the "post" in which reading and writing machines have redefined the idea of citation in terms of omnipotent algorithms resulting from the reason of *technē*, the reason of contemporary technoculture (cf. Rutsky 1999), theory has turned into an art of iteration (in terms of "copying machines" implementing the principle of the automaton, cf. Liu 2000; with regard to "hyper culture," cf. Klepper et al. 1996); a high art of rewriting of the rewritten ruled by the text-immanent regime of postality in its very postness, the omnipresent voice of the canon; that is, *the politics of discursive authority* of the "post" inscribed in post-textuality in the form of *algorithmic automatism*.

Yet, as the enormous, overwhelmingly excessive flow of theory in terms of the "post" during the last three decades (the "era of the postmodern") shows, to subordinate oneself under the command of the "post" is not difficult at all. On the contrary, it is, as Stanley Fish (1989) says, "doing what comes naturally," doing something that, in fact, is given by the theory itself. It is in this sense that what Sylvère Lotringer (2001) refers to as "doing theory" is, at the same time, the condition of possibility and the effect of the "post." Only, what one has to do by writing theory in the mode of the "post" is to avoid viewing things through

"inappropriate codes" (Featherstone 1991a: 5): "looking awry" (Žižek 1992) is not necessarily a virtue in the world of the "post." That is, *the political correctness in terms of theory* means that one has to choose one's quotations correctly: a correct citation of a right coryphaeus in the right place is the key to the success on the theory scene of post-theory; in other words, what is imperative in the context of the "post" is an allegiance to orthodoxy in order to avoid academic excommunication implying career ruining. In other words, *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, "Outside the Church there is no salvation."

Thus, what is an absolute necessity in the world of the "post" is the ability to read oneself *into the text* one is reading: to read one's own reading as writing in terms of what one is reading in terms of the written, the very terms of the "post" (in terms of Biblical exegesis, cf., for example, Young 1997; in terms of Marxism-Leninism, cf., for example, Suslov 1975; Spirkin 1983).

This is the effect of the "post": by reading-writing, writerly reading as writing in terms of reading, one turns into the agency of the text one is reading, the agent of the text as a textual agent of one's "own" text.

The Postmodern: A Radical Modernization of the Modern

The writing subject of post-theory as a writerly-readerly post-subject (indeed, a subject, a subject resurrected after the "death of the subject" proclaimed by the theory of the postmodern not so long ago; see, for example, Rosenau 1992: 42–61; Terada 2001: 1–8; Burke 1992) is the agent of correct rewriting in terms of the "post." This is a subject of productive consumption producing and consuming textuality; a subject that produces itself by consuming products of textual production (most importantly, the discursive apparatus of postmodern academia); *word-products* that are theoretical "objects" of post-theory. In this sense, the subjectivity, the theoretical agency, engendered by post-theory obeys the logic of the postmodern, the logic of productive consumption constitutive of neoliberal capitalism, ruled by the commodity form in its radicalized form, in the mode of simulation (see Baudrillard 1994a [1981], 1998b [1970]).

For this reason, it is obvious that the subject of post-theory, in contrast to utopian dreams of the "post," can never be a revolutionary subject: *if subversion is not possible in the world of market forces, it is even less possible in the universe of simulation.*

Is this the end of theory? Or "theory in ruins" (Kroker & Cook 1986: 253–261)? No, of course, not; on the contrary, it is an invitation to writing in the manner of the "incitement to discourse" (Foucault 1990k [1976]: 17–35) in the discursive economy of desire constitutive of and constituted by contemporary capitalism: an economic order ruled by the commodity form, the logic of commodification as the imperative of prevailing lifestyle (see, for example, Harvey 1989: 286–287, 298–301; Ashley 1990: 95–98; Jeannot 1998: 138–140; Kraus & Lotringer 2001). As David Bennett (1990: 17) already realized in the 1990s: "That the logic of commodification has come to structure *every aspect* of contemporary life, not

least the cultural-aesthetic, is now a commonplace of periodizing theories of postmodernism" (emphasis mine; cf. Ross 1988). But, as we know today, reality in its everyday materiality has overtaken theory: theory has become an essential moment of what Jameson (1991) calls the "cultural logic of late capitalism": *theory has materialized in the form of commodity* and has thus turned into an integral part of the "culturality" of postmodern capitalism (most clearly to be seen in the postmodern art world, see, for example, Hohendahl 1991: 166–170; Wood 2003 [1996]: 388–405; Sandler 1996; Welchman 2001; Evans 2009).

In short, just as "aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally" (Jameson 1991: 4), theory is now a figurative component of the legitimation discourse of global capitalism. In my reading, this is the idea of what Jameson (1984, 1991) calls "the cultural logic of late capitalism." As Jameson says:

> [T]he frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever grater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation. Such economic necessities then find recognition in the varied kinds of institutional support available for the newer art, from foundations and grants to museums and other forms of patronage. (Jameson 1991: 4–5)

Ever more novel-seeming goods – this logic of commodity production is now the logic of theory. Some thirty years ago when the theorizing in the name of the "post" began, theory was immediately absorbed into the maelstrom of general commodification ruled by "the cultural logic of late capitalism." This is the origin of the "post."

In this respect, post-theory is a mode of theory in which the very "theoricality" of theory is subsumed by capital through the agency of the commodity form; even what is called "critical theory" (see, for example, Wexler 1991; Hoy & McCarthy 1994; Tyson 1999; Lehmann 2003; Reinelt & Roach 2007; from a historical perspective, cf. Held 1980; Geuss 1981; Hohendahl & Fisher 2002) is now inextricably an integral part of the circulation of capital: there is no outside of capital in the postmodern. Thus, *the "outside" of theory in terms of the "post" is inside theory*, within the realm of capital as the condition of possibility of theory in the world of the "post."

As a consequence, a world in which productive consumption constitutes the law and order of the prevailing lifestyle that, in fact, is the only *possible* mode of living, is a paradise of theory: everything is allowed, and nothing is prohibited – insofar as theory remains compatible with market forces; and in this respect, as we know, the possibilities are limitless. Capitalism is the most material signifier of freedom, the signifier of surplus value as the manifestation of the limitless economization of all spheres of life: in capitalism, there is nothing outside the circulation of capital. This is the political economy of the postmodern: there is nothing that could not be turned into commodity as the very materialization of

desire, the unlimited productivity of the libido. As Jameson (1988b [1975]: 117) already summarized in the early 1970s, the extremely absorptive capacity of capitalism is all-consuming: "capitalism is the first genuinely global culture and has never renounced its mission to assimilate everything into itself – whether that be the African masks of the time of Picasso, or the little red books of Mao Zedong on sale in your corner drugstore."

For this reason, as stated above, theory cannot be subversive within the order of neoliberal capitalism; and precisely for this reason, the imaginary, as a Deleuze-Guattarian "line of flight" (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 9–14, 61–62; Bogue 1989: 108–113; Patton 2000: 42–45, 66–67), appears as the realm of freedom in post-theory in the same manner as theory in terms of the "post" in itself is a realm of the imaginary.

This is the power, pleasure and seduction of the cyborg, the redemptive vision of all that is "cyber": the imaginary as the real in the world of the "post": the imaginary as the reason of the surrational.

The "post," that is the hard core of the postmodern. But what is actually the "postmodern" in all that since the 1960s is called "postmodern" (for a theory-historical overview, see Köhler 1977; Docherty 1993b; Bertens 1995; Welsch 1997)? It is typical of the postmodern that there are, of course, innumerable answers to this question (see, for example, Arac 1986b; Huyssen 1986; Kaplan 1988; Heller & Fehér 1988; Harvey 1989; Connor 1989; Lash 1990b; Turner 1990b; Featherstone 1991a). There is, however, only one that is unsurpassable in its *historical* exactness.

> Die fortwährende Umwälzung der Produktion, die ununterbrochene Erschütterung aller gesellschaftlichen Zustände, die ewige Unsicherheit und Bewegung zeichnet die Bourgeoisepoche vor allen früheren aus. Alle festen, eingerosteten Verhältnisse mit ihrem Gefolge von altherwürdigen Vorstellungen und Anschauungen werden aufgelöst, alle neugebildeten veralten, ehe sie verknöchern können. Alles Ständische und Stehende verdampft, alles Heilige wird entweiht, und die Menschen sind endlich gezwungen, ihre Lebensstellung, ihre gegenseitigen Beziehungen mit nüchternen Augen anzusehen. (Marx & Engels 1959 [1848]: 10)
>
> Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. (Marx & Engels 1975 [1848]: 45–46)

For this reason, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels state in their *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei: Die Bourgeoisie kann nicht existieren, ohne die Produktionsinstrumente, also die Produktionsverhältnisse, also sämtliche gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse fortwährend zu revolutionieren* (Marx & Engels 1959: 10), "[t]he bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of

production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society" (Marx & Engels 1975: 45). This is the era in which *[a]lles Ständische und Stehende verdampft*, "all that is solid melts into air" (cf. Berman 1988 [1982]). *All that is solid melts into air* – that is the idea of the "post," the very logic, of the postmodern. As we can see, what is described today as "postmodern" is, historically seen, a contemporary form of capitalism, the era of the transnational, globally organized bourgeoisie clustered around the hard core of financial capital constituting the supranational finance oligarchy, the self-elective elite of neoliberal capitalism.

Thus, we are now living in the era of all-consuming, limitless globalization as an ever-intensifying exploitation of all being.[32] *In this sense*, what Lyotard (1984 [1979]) calls the "postmodern condition" is nothing new.

What has changed, however, is the vocabulary (in terms of "paradigm shift," see Kuhn 1996 [1962]) – and this change, indeed, is significant, as we will see.

In this sense, in a Hegelian manner, the "post" of the postmodern implies the *Aufhebung*, the "sublation," of the modern: cancelled but preserved, the modern becomes postmodern by transgressing the constraints of the modern, but, this notwithstanding, or, rather, *for this very reason*, the postmodern is intrinsically modern; that is, by rejecting and simultaneously carrying over the tradition of the modern, the postmodern follows the logic of the modern: *the postmodern implies a radical modernization of the modern*. Therefore, according to Lyotard, the idea of the postmodern, in fact, is to be understood as "rewriting modernity" (Docherty 1993a: 15); as Lyotard (1984 [1979]: 79) says, the postmodern "is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" – only that in the postmodern, due to the very logic of the modern, there is *nothing* that is "constant," but everything is in an eternal transformation, in the state of an endless becoming, paradoxically, in *constant* flux.

To sum up, the postmodern designates a spatio-temporal acceleration and condensation of the modern amounting, as Jameson (1989 [1983]: 125) says, to both "the transformation of reality into images" and "the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents."

Theory-Fictions: From Meaning to Signification

This is the world in which the text at hand is at home. I am, *in this text*, as a *product* of the textuality of the present text in its Derridean "absence" (see Derrida

32 To see the postmodern as a result of *modernization* understood as the *rationalization* of culture and society, it is appropriate to distinguish it from *modernity* which, according to Bryan S. Turner (1990a: 6) is a "consequence of a process of modernization, by which the social world comes under the domination of asceticism, secularization, the universalistic claims of instrumental rationality, the differentiation of the various spheres of the lifeworld, the bureaucratization of economic, political and military practices, and the growing monetarization of values." From this perspective, for me, the postmodern refers to a situation in which, in contemporary capitalism, the logic of consumption and the commodity form, paradoxically, both intensifies the rationality of modernity and promotes its *de-rationalization*.

1973: 93, 1984e [1972/1971]: 313–317, 1997: 141–142), a Barthesian "reader" of the traces of the modern in the postmodern. As Barthes (1974 [1970]: 4) says, "[t]he goal of literary work is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text." In order to reach the spirit of the postmodern in the "post" of the modern, I am reading by writing, and in this sense, the "I" which, in the process of reading-writing, approaches texts as manifestations of the "post" is "already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite… or lost" (ibid.: 10).

This is the fate of the writing subject in the era of global capitalism, the era of limitless expansion, the era of the libidinal intensification of capital as the driving force of the political economy of neoliberalism: a neo-Babylonic heteroglossia as a result of *the radical promiscuity of capital and textuality*, writerly writing in terms of the "post" in its post-liminal excess.

That is, the pathos of the modern is the spirit of the postmodern. In Baudelaire's words, defining the logic of the modern in the sense of *modernity*, the experience of the modern in the middle of its break through: *La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié, de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et immuable* (Frisby 1985: 14), "modernity, that is the transient, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable." The "post" is the very crystallization of this historical moment in the sense of *après-coup*, in the Freudian mode of *Nachträglichkeit*, the "deferred action" or "retroaction" (see Freud 1986a [1919]: 128–129, 147; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 85–86, 229–230, 236, 239, 281, 306, 427, 511; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 313–317). It is in this manner that the "post" radicalizes the movement of the modern, its transient, fugitive and contingent character; this is the eternal and immutable movement of the postmodern, the ongoing, ceaseless transformation constitutive of the modern.

In this sense, the "post" of the postmodern is suspended between Marx and Baudelaire, the very coordinates of the modern.

In the light of the post-Kantian cardinal questions above, instead of "putting the pop back into postmodernism," the project Lawrence Grossberg (1988) pursued in the late 1980s as an effort to reinstate desire and pleasure, *in theory*, as the driving forces of popular culture, expressing, especially in the form of pop music, a specific "postmodern sensibility" and a concomitant "affective economy" (ibid.: 179–187), my project is to put the "post" back into the postmodern; that is, to map out, in a manner of "cognitive mapping" (Jameson 1988c), the manifestations of desires and pleasures as the moments of theory in itself in the sense of motility and motivity, or what I call *affective kinetics* as a peculiar mode of affectation (in both senses of the word) constitutive of theory in terms of the "post" (cf. Clough & Halley 2007). Understood in this way, the "post" signifies the libidinal language of post-theory, the language of desires and pleasures in terms of the imaginary. Accordingly, in the present study, the "post" is a signifier that refers to the logical consequence of poststructuralism:

there is nothing real without the reality of language; language as the very experience of "the theoretical" in theory.

What the "reality" of language is – that is the cardinal question of the present study; a question to which all the answers do nothing but open up new questions; questions that are intelligible only in terms of language.

In what follows, then, I will argue that the "post" is the origin of the "cyber" as the signifier for the phantasmatic-utopian visions that I designate as theory-fictions characteristic of both the "post" and the "cyber," of course, within each in its specific manner (cf., for example, Derrida 1982 [1972]: 18; de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 150; Baudrillard 1993a: 82,115, 202; Zurbrugg 1993: 141, 2000a: 65, 127, 135; Cholodenko 1997: 76–8 0; Winkler 1997: 11; Currie 1998: 51–70); fictional theories that conjure up visions of a fundamental transformation not only of the human body, but of being human in general, in a culture in which "machine," in itself a typical post-theoretical figure, has taken on the meaning of the technoscientific condition of possibility of all being, appearing as an "existential" technology. In these terms, what I call cyber discourse is a discourse revolving around the fantasies and theory-fictions of "cyberspace," the "cyborg" and all that is "cyber," thus constituting a linguistic universe based on post-theoretical theorization in terms of the present future (as paradigmatic examples, see Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; for cyberspace as a "medial *Gesamtkunstwerk*," see Rötzer & Weibel 1996).

Comparable to the manner in which Marian Hobson (1998: 107–115) deliberates upon inherited Western *philosophems*, figures of thought constitutive of philosophy *as philosophy*, in the Derridean context as "linguistically compacted constructions with which we think but which are no longer enquired into as we think" (ibid.: 111), I shall consider cyber discourse as an imaginary realm embracing "linguistically compacted constructions" as discursive figures which I, the "I" in and of this text "existing" by means of this text, "think with" *against* themselves, through a post-Derridean double gesture (cf. Derrida 1982: 6, 41), as a post-Althusserian double reading (cf. Althusser 2009a [1965/1968]: 18, 2009b [1965/1968]: 82): by thinking the "cyber" as a manifestation of the "post" I am questioning cyber discourse in its own terms, the terms which I am "thinking with" in and by means of the text at hand.

In its hybrid textuality, as a postmodern "galaxy of signifiers" (Barthes 1974 [1970]: 5), cyber discourse is a post-Barthesian "intertext" (Rylance 1994: 89) consisting of the interrelations between the retro-futuristic fantasies of cyberpunk and the theoretical tropes of poststructuralism, between the political utopianism of the "Parisian Spring" of May 1968 and the psychedelic counterculture of the American sixties, all this manifesting the technological millennialism and liberatory techno-avantgardism typical of the affluent Western world, a world over-shadowed by the agony of the Vietnam War and the apocalyptic vision of a nuclear catastrophe. This is the textual order of cyber discourse *in historical terms*: a "new orthodoxy of technocratic idealism" (Chaney 2000: 119)

amounting to a "bizarre combination of technological determinism with sentimental nostalgia for an imagined community we have lost" (ibid.; from the perspective of "social engineering," cf. Podgórecki et al. 1996; Thompson & Findlay 1999; Etzemüller 2009; Jordan 2010; in terms of city utopianism in the form of *Telepolis* manifesting the "urbanity in the digital era," cf. Rötzer 1995b). What is important is that whatever the forms of cyber-futurism are it emerges from American techno-utopianism; in this manner, cyber discourse represents a "convergence of cybernetics, science fiction, postmodernism and New Age philosophy" (Robins 1996: 46; cf. Ziguras 1997; Eitler 2007).

From the perspective of the "post," cyber discourse is a linguistic hybrid of "free-floating signifiers"; this is the "perverse polysemy" (Rylance 1994: 68) of cyber discourse: all that is "cyber," effected by the "glamour of the signifier" (ibid.: 89), manifests a "ludic freedom of promiscuous signifiers" (ibid.: 93). This is "the sexual" built-in in the textual of cyber discourse: the logic of the libidinal constitutive of the "post," the promiscuous principle of desire. In these terms, *the "political" in the politics of the "post" implies a permanent revolution in language* (cf. Kristeva 1986: 89–135, 1984 [1974]); a mode of the political predicated upon a "language of undecidability and rupture" (Foley 1985: 127); a language that follows the logic of a random generator: this is the freedom of "free-floating signifiers."

In this manner, the unsayable becomes sayable in the world of the "post," and what, *in this manner*, is sayable is in no way limited by the unsayable (cf. Budick & Iser 1996): in post-theory, whatever one says is "there" in terms of the "post." In these terms, the "post" enables the linguistic excess that is constitutive of post-theory. What does this mean?

> Modern machinery is an irreverent upstart god, mocking the Father's ubiquity and spirituality. (Haraway 1991a: 153)

This is a typical example of the effect of the "post" as an effect of the linguistic of language in the sense of the Barthesian *effet de réel*: a "theoretical" figure as an expression of a *theoretical affect* typical of post-theory. Therefore, "the real" here, of course, is not the real of reality (whatever it is), but the real of language. Thus, if we ask what it is that Haraway's sentence "means," we have several answers; for example:

> Over the global village falls the veil of Maya. Amazement sits upon the brow. We are not only talking about play, but in the galaxy of the Imaginary, the immanence of World-Play. (Herbert Blau in Connor 1989: 144)

If there is anything problematic here, the problem is not simply what it is that is *said* in these sentences; rather, the problem is what it is that these *sentences*, as linguistic utterances, in and by themselves *say* – insofar as it is a question of *utterances* in the first place. If, in general, it is as Richard Kearney (1991: 173) maintains that "it is not the subject who speaks language, but language speaks the subject," in terms of the "post," language speaks the post-subject, the "medium," the executive agency, of the linguistic of language. As we will

see, in the world of the "post," what is at issue is no longer meaning; instead, the "post" is about signification (for the difference between "meaning" [*Sinn*] and "signification" [*Bedeutung*], see Derrida 1982: 29–31; in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, cf. Stephan 1989), or more specifically, an excess of signification effected by itself. *In the world of the "post," it is only possible to speak in quotation marks, that is, read and write "in quotation marks" effected by the text in itself that is always already in quotation marks* (cf. Derrida 1984e [1972/1971]: 320–321; Leitch 1985: 25–27; Owen 2007: 155).

This, indeed, is a radical change in terms of both epistemology and ontology (cf., for example, Visker 1991a, 1991b; Docherty 1990, 1993a); a change whose consequences we are confronted with every day in contemporary Western academia, and which, accordingly, define the parameters of the study at hand.

2 Post-Sex: Panic Body and Liquid Libido

> In the closing years of the millennium the self-evidence of the corporeal can no longer be assumed. Human tissue incorporates a complex weave of dacron, silicon, and metal; edible chemistries of hybrid derivation routinely join the rhythms of biological dialog; pig, human, baboon, and tomato are blended in a strange recipes; electronic circuitries measure out of the delicate pulse and possibility of life. This creole of technocultures has significantly refigured corporeal possibility in a way that extends to the larger and not unrelated question of what it means to be human. The constitution of the very stuff of the body has become strangely uncertain even as the code, or program, of humanness is cracked, reinvented, and marketed.
>
> Vicki Kirby (1997: 129)

> Rather than being determined by sexual identity and sexual reproduction, the artificial world of the cyborg announces the new historical and cultural conditions of the posthuman body no longer able to find shelter in the natural world. For the post-gender world of the cyborg, there is nothing natural about the human body, sex and reproduction.
>
> Luciana Parisi (2004: 8)

If cybersex is the solution, what is the problem? In other words, what is the "sexual" in the configuration that Haraway (1991a: 150) refers to as "cyborg 'sex'"? According to Chris Hables Gray (2005: 60), one of the leading cyborg theorists, we are now living in "the Information Age" in which the question is: "what metaphor could be more fitting than that of *the organism as an information system linked to prosthetic machines* – the cyborg?" (emphasis mine; cf. Gray & Mentor 1995a: 221–222; Gray 2001: 157–160; Gray et al. 1995a; Riles 2001: 61–65; Fraser & Greco 2005a: 16–27; in the context of "electronic bodies" and "new wombs," cf. Palumbo 2000: 23–31; in terms of "prosthetic brain," cf. Sober 2003 [1990]: 65–66; from the perspective of "cyberfeminism" and "artificial life," cf. Kember 2003). If that is the case, in which way, then, "information" and "prosthetic machines" redefine desires and pleasures that are designated as "sexual"? To understand the implications of these questions it is appropriate to have a look at the condition of the "sexual" in the postmodern.

What is called "sex" in the contemporary Western world is originally an American invention based on an Americanization of corporeal desires and pleasures (see, for example, Herdt & Howe 2007b: 168–169; Richardson 1971; Schur 1988; Seidman 1992; Irvine 2005 [1990]; from a historical perspective, see Pivar 1973; Haller & Haller 1974; Sokolow 1983; D'Emilio & Freedman 1997 [1988]; Grossmann 1997; Horowitz 2002; for America as a "hypersexual society," see Kammeyer 2008; for the connection between sexuality and the specific American mode of religiosity, see Gardella 1985). Without the American-style industrial modernization

based on the principles of Taylorism and Fordism and the resulting streamlined consumer society; without the scientific-technological body management and the concomitant libidinal economy; without the all-encompassing adaptation of the human being to the production system dominated by the commodity form; in short, without the unprecedented *rationalization* of all the forces, of all the experiences and expressions, of human corporeality as an incorporation and embodiment of the reason constitutive of the modern, there would be no sex in the sense in which we have sex now (deliberate *double entendre*).[33]

In this sense, sex as a "sexual ideology" of socially conform heterosexuality, brought about by science and medicine in the form of sexology, is the very achievement of the "Kinsey era" (Irvine 2002: 328–331, 337–342; cf. Bullough 1994: 168–195; Weeks 1995b [1985]: 69–95; Ariès 1990a [1982], 1990b [1982]), an era obsessed with corporeal rationality as the precondition of increasing economic efficiency and productivity (in terms of "Americanism," cf. Gramsci 1971 [1929–1935]: 297–305). "Sex," in turn, as a postmodern manifestation of instrumental reason (see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Albert et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in Weber's notion of *Zweckrationalität*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010) in the sense of the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (see Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; cf. Held 1980; Wiggershaus 1986; in the context of Foucault/Habermas debate, cf. Kelly 1994), belongs to the order of political correctness paradigmatic to contemporary American culture, even to the extent that what counts as "sex" is a product of political correctness: "*correct sex" is a political phantasm of political correctness* in contemporary American body politics (see, for example, Davis 1998: 300–304; Friedman & Narveson 1995; for the subversion of political correctness, see Paglia 1990, 1992); in other words, *do the right thing but do it in the right manner because your body is always a source of danger*. The private, indeed, is political in American culture.

As a result of the regime of instrumental reason, America today, paradoxically, is the most sex-obsessed culture in the world: sexual paranoia, sexual hysteria and sexual panic dominate the American way of life. In fact, what I designate as post-sex is about a cultural panic typical of the postmodern: "panic sex" as an experience and expression of a "panic body" (see Kroker 1987a: 181–182; Kroker & Kroker 1988b: 15–16, 1995: 10–11; Kroker et al. 1989: 203; cf., for example, Singer 1993:

33 To specify, as stated at the beginning, my problem is not gender, that is, the question as to whether sex is the origin of gender, or, on the contrary, whether sex is an "effect" of gender (see Butler 1990, 1993; for an overview, see Crawley et al. 2008; in terms of primatology, see Haraway 1990: 139–141); the issue that I am dealing with is *sex*, not sex as "biological attributes of male and female" (Clarke 1998: 9), but sex as practices and "body techniques" (see Mauss 1979 [1934/1935]) that bring about highly idiosyncratic experiences and expressions of pleasure, which, in turn, generate various kinds of desire for these specific forms of pleasure; that is, sex as a "circular causal process" in the sense of cybernetics (see Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]; von Foerster 1950). In short, my problem is sex as a sensuous enjoyment *sui generis*, a mode of pleasure in its own right, for the understanding of which gender is too narrow a concept (cf. Harrison & Hood-Williams 2002). In this very simple, but, at the same time, very complicated, sense, sex in the present study refers to "the things we do" (Cziko 2000) regardless of what gender we happen to be or to belong to; but *what* it is exactly we "do" in the name of "sex," that is the question.

40, 62, 83, 180; Zurbrugg 1993: 142–143; Lupton 1994a: 35, 1994b; McCance 1996: 3–6; Ahmed 1998: 108–109; Slade 2001: 373; Pettman 2002: 31–32, 142; Rousseau 1999; Herdt 2009b; Lancaster 2011; in terms of "postmodern apocalypse," cf. Dellamora 1995; with regard to "the culture of paranoia in postwar America," cf. Melley 2000). From the invention of "neurasthenia" in the late nineteenth century to the postmodern body cult, "sex" has been a genuinely American obsession (see, for example, Richardson 1971; Armstrong 1996; Gijswijt-Hofstra & Porter 2001; Horowitz 2002; Peiss 2002; Reumann 2005; for "the puritan origins of American sex," see Fessenden et al. 2001b). While, in contemporary American society in general, everything is somehow "sexual" in the sense of "sex wars" (Duggan & Hunter 1995), to study sex is "sexy" in American academia (Bailey 2006: 262).

2.1 Where Is "My" Gender, What Is "My" Sex?

From this perspective, if the "Old Continent," Europe, is the origin of the reason of the Enlightenment, the "New World," America, is the cradle of "sexual reason" (Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 129; for the rationalization of "sex" as an essential part of the "American way of life," see Baudrillard 1988a [1986]: 46–48, 91–97). It is *in this manner* that the postmodern has been the "cultural dominant" (Jameson 1984: 56) of American culture from the very beginning: the effort to rationalize "the sexual" by means of productive consumption is constitutive of the mode of reason peculiar to the American enterprise, based on the scientific-technological disciplinization of the performative capacities of the body in the name of production efficiency (in terms of "the sportive-dynamic body as a symbol of productivity," see Hoberman 1994).

It is in this sense that, while the idea of the soul, in all its ramifications, is a European phantasm that has driven philosophy forward, the body is an American obsession manifesting the pursuit of happiness constitutive of the "New World": the body not just as a property of the individual, a personal asset to be used for one's own benefit, but also – and increasingly, first and foremost – a reproducible commodity utilized in commodity production, and, as such, a regenerative potential for the reproduction of consumption; a body that can be *customized* as both a subject-body and object-body according to the ever-changing requirements of the prevailing economic order (for the paradigmatic codification of the productive body in terms of "scientific management," see Taylor 1967 [1911]; cf. Noble 1979 [1977]: 257–298; Nelson 1992; for a contextualization with regard to control, bureaucracy and technocracy, cf. Burris 1993; from the perspective of "social engineering," cf. Podgórecki et al. 1996; Thompson & Findlay 1999; Etzemüller 2009; Jordan 2010). Thus, *the American body is an embodiment of capital: an investment, resource and instrument in the service of the political economy of "progress."*

In this scientific-technological constellation, the sexual body is a result of body management: the body as an incorporation of instrumental reason. Accordingly,

as an American invention, sex is a product of a culture in which the "Hiroshima bomb was named 'Gilda' in honor of Rita Hayworth" (McLuhan 2002 [1951]: 99).

2.1.1 "Sex": The Political Economy of the Postmodern

Like the *Pax Americana*, a power politics consisting of appeasement and pacification based on a global military supremacy (see, for example, Harvey 2005 [2003]; Lehmann & Dahms 2006), the Americanization of the sexual in the mode of "sex" is the dominant paradigm of sexuality in the contemporary world; a trans-cultural sexual model, a specific codification of the "sexual," that manifests the superiority of the American way of life: the omnipotence of capital (cf. Stearns 2009: 129–166; Altman 2001; Kamalipour & Rampal 2001; Bernstein & Schaffner 2005). As an American idiom, a peculiar cultural construct, sex implies an incorporation of desires and pleasures constitutive of the global sexual economy produced by American corporate capitalism, an economy of managerial reason, the reason of the performative principle in the German sense of *Leistungsprinzip* (cf. Marcuse 2002 [1964]): the rationality of calculated efficiency and productivity effecting ever-increasing intensification of performance pressures at work and during free time (cf. McKenzie 2001).

In a literal sense, therefore, in order to survive, the postmodern body as an Americanized body *must* be a machine fuelled by the libidinal flows of "sex," desires and pleasures *sexualized* by the rationalization of sexual experiences as the driving force of productive consumption under the regime of neo-Fordism.

Post-Sex: The Seduction of Simulacra

It is in this constellation that we encounter a paradoxical phenomenon, which, in fact, is not paradoxical at all: in Slavoj Žižek's (1993: 248) words, what we have today is sex turned into a "procedure of cold, asexual instrumental activity," an "elaborate technical operation," manifesting "bureaucratic sexuality" in which "sexual arousal, as the exemplary case of the state which eludes instrumental regimentation, is evoked by way of its opposite, by way of being treated as bureaucratic duty." This is the hard core of what I call post-sex manifesting the "hyperreality of sex" (Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 129), "sex" as a phantasmatic realization of the reason constitutive of the body economy of neo-Fordism, "sex" as a form of desires and pleasures promoting a market-conform subject formation in accordance with the logic of postmodern capitalism under the imperative of neoliberalism (in terms of "porno-pop" as *Sex in der Oberflächenwelt*, cf. Metelmann 2005).

Accordingly, "sex" is not merely a product of sex industry, but, moreover, it is today a global commodity form in itself, a materialization of the imaginary constituting now an essential component of the self-replicating cellular structure of capital (see, for example, Bishop & Robinson 1998; Kempadoo & Doezema 1998; Beeks & Amir 2006; in terms of "the global vagina," see Jeffreys 2009; from the perspective of "the transnational imaginary," see Wilson & Dissanayake 1996). As

a result, what is currently called "sex" has undergone a "radical desublimation" (Žižek 2001c: 39), and, accordingly, "in our postmodern 'disenchanted' permissive world, sexuality is reduced to an apathetic participation in collective orgies" (ibid.: 39–40); orgies, which, in fact, are not only the model of the prevailing sexual excess, but the very model of capitalism itself: "sex" and capital as a symbiotic system. What does this mean in terms of theory? If the sexual order of the modern was based on the political economy of the penis, all that is "sexual" in the discursive matrix of the postmodern is predicated upon the political economy of the phallus (cf. Lacan 1977g [1966/1958]; Miklitsch 1998: 65–80; Hennessy 2000: 153–156; Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 101–123; in terms of "penisthetics," cf. Miller 1998: 129–132), the master signifier of the "post" ruling the production of theory as the most sophisticated form of the imaginary (cf., for example, Dean 2000: 29–55; Elliott 2004: 43–44, 85–92; Reader 2006); a mode of the politics of theory in the sense of "arguing with the phallus" (see Campbell 2000).[34]

As we will see, this is a significant change, a shift of paradigm in terms of desires and pleasures; a shift that opens the way to what I call *theory-sex*.

In the sense outlined above, the sexual in the mode of "sex" is the epitome of the radical economization of corporeal desires and pleasures constitutive of the political economy of neoliberalism, the transnational regime of global capitalism. What is at issue here is not only *sexual monetarism*, but also, and first of all, *sexual capitalization* of the universe of commodities, an investment of all spheres of life with commodified "sex," "sex" as an abstract and all-compatible commodity form that has a miraculous ability to turn whatever thing into a manifestation of the highest quality of all: being "sexy." This is what Suzanne G. Frayser and Thomas J. Whitby, referring to Edwin M. Schur's (1988) study, summarize as "a distinctive Americanization of sex":

> Three major tendencies define the Americanization of sex: depersonalization, commodification, and coercion. These tendencies stem from and are related to the following general cultural features: (1) superficiality and optimistic pragmatism, (2) individualism and compulsive competitiveness, (3) power seeking and violence, and (4) a fixation with success, entrepreneurial instinct, and runaway consumerism. *Sexism and capitalism lie at their core.* (Frayser & Whitby 1995 [1987]: 662; emphasis mine; cf. Caplow et al. 1994 [1991]: 432–435)

34 How much mythical reading, that is, theoretical procedures of post-theory, is needed to turn the penis into the phallus? To answer this question would require another study; suffice here only to say that, in the world of the "post," the phallus has already subsumed the penis to the extent that what is left over of the penis is nothing but a phantom, an imaginary signifier void of real substance; as such, though, a phantom that has enormous power to signify: if there is a signifier in the discursive order of the "post" that is able to rule the agenda of theory it is certainly the phallus as a master signifier around which a gigantic mythological edifice has been constructed; indeed, a postmodern *grand récit* in the true sense of the term. Lacan (1977g [1966/1958]), of course, is the grand master of phallus discourse, but there is no doubt that it is feminism that, in fact, has literally erected the phallus to the prominent position it now holds in the world of the "post" (see, for example Gallop 1985: 124–140, 143–149, 153–156; Grosz 1989: 20–25, 46–47, 65–66, 1990: 143–145, 164–165, 1994c: 57–59, 73–77, 181–182; Weed & Schor 1997; Potts 2002; cf. Reader 2006), even to the extent that today there is a strand of feminist theory that Isobel Armstrong (2000: 211–215) calls "phallic feminism." That is, what Eva C. Keuls (1993 [1985]) designates, in her study of male power in Ancient Athens, as "the reign of the phallus" has become feminist theory in the postmodern. After this magical metamorphosis we live in an entirely new world.

In these terms, what is constitutive of American capitalism as the paradigmatic protoform of capitalism in general is that its *modus operandi* is based on libidinal economy in which desires and pleasures, as an equation of sex and capital, are interrelated in a complicated manner, constituting the sexual-economic complex of global capitalism, the political order of the contemporary world.

This is the hard core of the political economy of the postmodern: *the survival of the subject by becoming the fittest, empowering oneself by adjusting oneself to the power of capital*. The entrepreneurial ego, the marketing of the self – that is the imperative of postmodern capitalism in terms of the subject; this is the ethos of post-sex, "sex" in the mode of the "post," in a culture in which everything, from the desires and pleasures of the body to the spheres of high-theory, is ruled by the commodity form.

It is in this cultural formation, or, in Debordian terms, the "society of the spectacle" (see Debord 1983 [1967], 1990 [1988]), that what I designate as the *liquid libido* is constitutive of both "the sexual" and "the theoretical"; thus, *post-theory is an intellectual form of post-sex*; that is, in the condition of the postmodern, both "the sexual" and "the theoretical" manifest the logic of simulation (see Baudrillard 1994a [1981]) in the sense of the implosion of the sign (discussed in detail in Excursus 2).

In post-sex, "the sexual" implodes into itself, and, paradoxically, this is the non-foundational foundation, the very *fons et origo*, of ever-new forms of "the sexual" in the mode of the "post": a proliferation of desires and pleasures in the name of "sex," sex as a simulation of itself, leading finally, as we will see, to what I designate as theory-sex. In other words, post-sex is a spectacular manifestation of postmodern capitalism, a product of sexual speculation intrinsic to the commodity form: in the manner of financial capital, post-sex is gaming with derivatives of "the sexual," sexual "value" based on speculative options, an extraction of surplus value from a thorough commodification of the body and its desires and pleasures (from a historical perspective, cf. De Grazia & Furlough 1996). Instead of the restrictive economy of desires and pleasures specific to what I call *the sexual mercantilism of the modern*, what we have now is a globalization of sexual economy in terms of pluralization constitutive of the postmodern: like financial transactions, "the sexual" of "sex" is a free-floating market entity, an economic and affective investment in the sense of post-Freudian *cathexis* (for the idea of *Besetzung* or *cathexis*, see Freud 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622, 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96), *an investment the value of which is fictive in the sense of the affective*; that is, a postmodern commodity the fictitiousness of which is the very source of its real value.

This is the cultural matrix of the panic body: the body as an embodiment of an anxious subject, a self constantly reminded of its inadequacy and insufficiency under the pressing demands of the politics of neo-Fordism and productive consumption.

What is important to notice from the very beginning is that post-sex, "sex" in the mode of simulation, is not to be confused with pornography, although there are parallels and similarities between both of them. The decisive difference, however, is to be seen in the manner in which simulacrum and appearance relate to one another in post-sex. According to Žižek (1999c: 112), "the distinction between pornography and seduction" is that "pornography 'shows it all,' 'real sex,' and for that very reason produces the mere simulacra of sexuality," while "seduction consists entirely in the play of appearances, hints and promises, and thereby evokes the elusive domain of the supra-sensible sublime Thing." In contrast to that, to sum up my position, post-sex follows the logic of seduction by producing *seductive simulacra of sex* precisely by means of appearances which do not "show it all," that is, "real sex," but, instead, evoke another kind of "supra-sensible sublime Thing," namely, *the imaginary of "the sexual."* The sexual imaginary of post-sex is enabled by the commodity form ruling the libidinal flows constitutive of productive consumption, the economic basis of neoliberal capitalism.

In this manner, post-sex, as a kaleidoscopic conglomeration of *synthetic appearances* behind and beyond which nothing real can be found, except "the real" engendered by these very appearances in themselves by way of seductive simulacra, is both a spectacular manifestation of capital and its necessary precondition: "sex" is an integral part of the generation of surplus value in the economic order of the postmodern in which the commodification of desires and pleasures is as important as the availability of natural resources from which our affluence, our spectacular "well-being," is made. It is in this sense that predatory economy is the hard core of postmodern capitalism: the smiling face of capital is the seductive mask of ice-cold calculation. This is the reality principle of post-sex, "sex" as an imaginary realization of surplus value.

In short, post-sex is the product of a continuously ongoing economic and affective transformation process in, by and through which the "raw material" of "sex," the imaginary *ur-materia* of "the sexual," is turned into a seductive commodity form, "sex" as a phantasmatic product essential to the survival of capitalism.

The Taylorization of the Libido

As a result of the capitalization of the affective body, the political economy of the postmodern is an advanced, if not the fully accomplished, form of Lyotardian "libidinal economy" (see Lyotard 1993a [1974]); an economy in which the production of desire is the precondition of economic growth, the sacrosanct ideology of contemporary capitalism. *This* is the very condition of possibility of all that is called "postmodern"; a signifier which, in fact, implies, as Zygmunt Bauman (1995: 153) says, "*the postmodern phase of modernity*" (emphasis mine). And *this* is the real basis of the construction of the postmodern subject, a subject formation subjected by the economic imperative of the postmodern, the necessity of extracting extra surplus value through the all-consuming materialization of the imaginary by means of commodification. In this manner, accord-

ing to Bauman, the "most seminal change underlying the passage into the postmodern phase of modernity can be found in the profound modification of the way in which individuality is socially constructed and of fashion in which the bulk of the population is socially integrated and riveted into the process of systemic reproduction" (ibid.).

What is the change of society and culture in these terms? It is the change from the economy of production ("the modern") to the economy of consumption ("the postmodern"), a new economic order that I designate as the economy of productive consumption based on the expansion and intensification of commodification.

"Under modern conditions," as Bauman explains, "human individuals were constructed mainly as *producers/soldiers*, that is, the roles of producers and soldiers, which all or most were meant to perform and for which they were groomed, supplied between themselves the main patterns and the criteria of evaluation serving the formation of individuals" (ibid.); and, as a result, the "emerging individuality" (ibid.) was characterized by the markers constitutive of the modern:

> (1) Individuals were first and foremost carriers of kinetic force which could be turned into the creative or destructive labour of producer or soldier; as such, they had to be capable of generating such force in a steady manner and, as far as possible, be immune to fatigue. (2) Individuals were "disciplined" actors, that is actors whose behaviour was by and large regular and above all amenable to regulation, actors who responded in a repetitive and predictable manner to stimuli, and were capable of monotonous conduct if subjected to steady and co-ordinated pressure. (3) In the fashion of Lego or Meccano assembly pieces the individuals were incomplete when alone, meant to be combined with other units to form meaningful totalities; the individual's boundaries were first and foremost interfaces, designed not so much to circumscribe as to fit and adhere. (4) The major model of propriety – that is, of the harmony between what the individual ought to be like and what s/he was – was *health*, the idea closely related to the capacity of performing well in the above three areas. (ibid.)

What under modern conditions was understood to count as "health," as Bauman specifies, "stood for bodily strength and energy, as well as the ability to behave in a disciplined, regular and required fashion and to fit the co-ordinated activities of larger groups" (ibid.).

In contrast to modern conditions, under postmodern conditions, according to Bauman, "human individuals are constructed mainly as *consumers/players*; that is, the roles of consumers and players, which all or most of them are meant to perform and for which they are groomed, supply between themselves the main patterns and criteria of evaluation serving the formation of individuals" (ibid.: 153–154); in this manner, a new postmodern individuality emerges:

> (1) Individuals are first and foremost "experiencing organisms," seeking new experience (in both *Erfahrung* and *Erleben* sense of "experience") and immune to saturation effect – that is, capable of absorbing, and of responding to, a steady and preferably growing flow of stimuli. (2) Individuals are "originative" actors, that is actors characterized above all by spontaneous and easily triggered motility and

> pliability of behaviour, only to a minimal degree tied by previous learning and acquired habits. (3) Though never fully balanced, individuals tend to self-equilibrate as nearly self-contained and self-propelling units; such "inner regulation" is retained also in the course of sociation, of which it is simultaneously the purpose and the motive. (4) The major model of propriety is therefore *fitness* rather than health. "Fitness" stands for the individual's bodily and spiritual capacity to absorb, and creatively respond to, a growing volume of new experience, ability to withstand a fast pace of change, and ability to "keep on course" through self-monitoring and correcting the inadequacies of performance. (ibid.: 154)

What is decisive here, in terms of the study at hand, is the change from health to fitness as the prevailing paradigm of propriety. While, in the modern, as Bauman says, "bodily weakness or insufficient ability to submit and to fit were seen as symptoms of ill health, and as such medicalized or articulated as cases for psychiatric treatment" (ibid.: 153), in the postmodern, in contrast, "bodily flaccidity and spiritual *ennui* (diminished absorptive capacity and insensitivity to stimuli), as well as a higher-than-average level of disturbance in the ongoing process of self-equilibration, are symptoms of 'unfitness' – medicalized or articulated as cases for psychological counselling or psychiatric treatment" (ibid.: 154). As a consequence, as an essential part of the experience of the body, also sex and sexuality become redefined in terms of both individual and social fitness in the transition form the modern to the postmodern (cf. Bauman 2001: 220–236, 2003: 36–57).

With regard to the economization of "the sexual," it is precisely the idea of fitness, as an ability to absorb and productively convert into appropriate energy the desires and pleasures needed in the realm of productive consumption as *the precondition of the productivity of production* that is constitutive of the postmodern understood in terms of libidinal economy, the political economy of neo-Fordism.

Accordingly, it is in this conjunction that the parameters of what I call post-sex emerge. *Post-sex implies an ability to productively consume impulses and stimuli of postmodern culture in terms of "the sexual"*; that is, a capability of converting libidinal energy into "kinetic force" that is constructive to the political economy of the postmodern: the regime of productive consumption. Thus, post-sex is not just an individual matter, an issue of personal "fun" typical of postmodern fun culture; it is an essential, imperative, factor of the very productivity of neoliberal capitalism. *Without the kinetic force of "sex," capitalism would collapse* – that is the import of post-sex. And *this* is the economic basis of the *orgasmology* constitutive of postmodern culture: the performative capacity of the post-subject defined as the capacity of sexual consumption, as *a mode of fitness* distinctive to the postmodern. "According to the model of fitness underlying the practices of orgasmology," as Bauman (1995: 154) says referring to André Béjin's conception of changing sexuality in the twentieth century, "one must 'abandon oneself to sensation without ceasing to submit one's actions to a rational calculation of 'sexual expedience'"; in other words, the "pleasure should be at once and the same time an absolutely spontaneous happening and a theatrical performance stage-managed by the brain" (ibid.; cf. Béjin 1985a [1982]: 183–189, 195–199; Weingart et al. 1997: 93–95; Potts 2002: 25–32).

In my reading, it is precisely "rational calculation" that dominates the sexual reason of postmodern culture: the systemic rationality of "sex" as an essential economic factor. This is "the modern" constitutive of "the postmodern" in terms of "the sexual" redefined as a mode of fitness: an increasing performance capacity originally defined by the economic imperative of Fordism (cf., for example, Allen 1996; Yanarella & Reid 1996), the imperative of continually heightening economic efficiency; and this is the idea of what I call the liquid libido as a product of *the Taylorization of the libido* required by the political economy of the postmodern, the paradigm of productive consumption. It is in this constellation that the sexual body turns into a panic body, a body that is haunted by commodified fantasies of an unending "more" inscribed in the ego-politics of the postmodern subject.

In this sense, "sex" in the mode of post-sex is not only a form of the sexual compatible with the commodity form, it is a postmodern commodity in itself; a commodity that by referring to nothing but itself is able to infect other commodities by its magic aura, the promise of good life and well-being. In this manner, post-sex means "trading" or recycling "sex" in the markets of desires and pleasures engendered by postmodern capitalism. A naked truth of financial capitalism, in fact, is that money, as an all-equalizing value of all things, is the hard core of post-sex:

> Money is the ultimate illusion for it signifies nothing but more money, and money no longer resides in the real world of signified things. It refers only to itself […]. *There is only illusion*. (Denzin 1991: 88; emphasis mine; cf. Simmel 1994 [1900])

More money – more sex, this is the logic of post-sex, "sex" in the world of the "post": *more economic transactions – more orgasmic pleasure*.

The imaginary of the sexual rules the empire of senses in the postmodern; an empire in which illusions constitute the real. A significant change, however, has taken place in comparison to the past: what was understood to be illusion in the order of the modern, has now been replaced by simulation in the postmodern, which, of course, is only a radicalized form of illusion. In capitalism, as Mike Featherstone (1991a: 54) says, referring to Jameson (1979) and Baudrillard (1983b [1981]): a "surfeit of images and signs" has given rise to a "simulational world which has effaced the distinction between the real and the imaginary: a depthless aestheticized *hallucination of reality*." Thus, in terms of Derridean "mimicry" as a specific mode of "imitation" (Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 181–211), post-sex functions according to the logic of self-replicating, self-mirroring "mimicry" in that it "imitates nothing," appearing thus as "a double that doubles no simple, a double that nothing anticipates, nothing at least that is not itself already a double" (ibid.: 206). In this sense, post-sex "is nonetheless imitating, imitating without a model" (Hobson 1998: 73): *post-sex is its own simulational model as a mirror-effect of its own mirror-image*.

"Sex" in Post-Theory: Celebrating the Subversive

If, in the terms outlined above, in the 1960s, in the name of what was called the "sexual revolution" (as mythical an event as it ever was) (see, for example, Evans

1993: 65–88; Weeks 1995b [1985]: 15–32; D'Emilio & Freedman 1997 [1988]: 301–360; McLaren 1999: 166–191; Eder 2002: 217–222; Connell 1995; Heidenry 1997; Allyn 2001; Escoffier 2003; Herzog 2008; for a historical perspective in the context of European cultural history, see Timm & Sanborn 2007: 169–209), "sex-procreation nexus was definitively broken up" (Weeks 1995b: 24), and, as a result, *sex as sex* became an autonomous mode of corporeal desires and pleasures (see Hawkes 2004: 144–175; Seidman 1989), now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the very idea of *the sexual* is in a process of radical transformation (see, for example, Schmidt 1998; Schmerl et al. 2000; Potts 2002; Parisi 2004). As a result, *the category of sexuality* in its entirety has become ambivalent and diffuse, and with it the concepts of sex, gender and procreation have turned out to be more than complex: they are disintegrating and falling apart (cf. Harding 1998; Beasley 2005).[35] Instead of one sexuality pertinent to the modern, there are now a plurality of "postmodern sexualities" each in their idiosyncrasy (Simon 1996; Schmidt & Strauss 1998; Sigusch 2000, 2005).

Thus, the postmodern condition of the sexual is about a variety of sexual orientations in terms of – or, in the name of such figures as – "hetero," "homo," "lesbian" or "queer," all of them with exclusive proclivities, sensibilities and practices in their own self-referentiality (see, for example, Warner 1993; Medhurst & Munt 1997; Hirshman & Larson 1998; Ferdinand et al. 1998; Jackson 1999; Bell & Binnie 2000; Plummer 2003; Roseneil 2003). In other words, in terms of the "sexual" (whatever it happens to mean), to summarize the idea of "sex" in contemporary theory, *I am my own minority, one of the innumerable equal ones constituting the majority of all* (cf. Rubin 1984; Sedgwick 1994 [1990]; Bornstein 1994, 1998; Duncker 2000). This is a world in which "the sexual" constitutes a broad spectrum of desires and pleasures, a heterogeneous plurality of predilections and affections, a diversity of idiosyncrasies reaching from "metrosexuals" to "pomosexuals," from "lean sexuality" to "necrosexuality," from "animal transsex" to "tinysex" (see, for example, Grosz 1994a; Queen & Schimel 1997; Sigusch 1998; Coad 2008; Giffney & Hird 2008). This is a world in which, indeed, "*my* difference is *really different*" (Levinson 1999: 95), a difference defined by the non-inclusive logic of in-difference (cf. Angerer 1994; in terms of "postmodernist de-differentiation," cf. Lash 1990b: 5, 11–12, 15, 36–38). Here, in other words, the liminal of "the sexual" is intelligible only in its post-liminality.

35 With regard to the rapid development of reproductive technologies since the late 1970s, when *in vitro fertilization* (IVF) was invented in 1978, one can raise the question as to whether sex and sexuality have still anything to do with procreation: fertilization without sexual intercourse – coitus in the sense of the Biblical "union" of man and woman as the constitutive act of sex and sexuality in traditional terms – is, for medical (infertility) as well as social (lesbian and other non-heterosexual partners) reasons, an increasingly popular way to initiate a pregnancy. Historically, there are two phases in this development: whereas *sex without reproduction* has been since the early 1960s, when the oral contraception (the "Pill") became possible (see Staupe & Vieth 1996), the absolutely predominant motivation for sexual intercourse, since the late 1980s, along with intensive research and development work in the area of human procreation, its counter-part, *reproduction without sex*, has effected that there are now ever-new options to obtaining progeny, and as a result, sex as pleasure is currently drifting more and more apart from procreation (see Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Baker 2000a [1999], 2000b [1996]). If there is a revolution in terms of sex and sexuality, *this* is the revolution.

In the world of the "post," it is now the very difference that is different; on the condition, of course, that it is here, as in general, not possible to be different without some ones being similar and, accordingly, some others being *more different* than the others, but in *this* respect, similar to one another – precisely in their very difference: difference in terms *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]). As a result, if there is today anything that can be understood as "sexual identity" it is possible only in terms of contradistinction.

What does this mean? *I am my own sex, and it is this sex, and nothing else, that constitutes the mode of sexual desires and pleasures of my own*: my post-identitarian "identity" in its non-hierarchical "exclusiveness" (cf. Bhattacharyya 2002: 82–101; Butler 1990; Kroker & Kroker 1993b; Halberstam 1998b, 2005) – that is the logic of difference in terms of sexual difference under the sign of the "post." No wonder that sexual difference has become a prominent political issue, a matter of incommensurable and asymmetric arguments, in a situation in which every solution finally leads only to a new aporia: not only what is sexual for me is not sexual for you, and vice versa, but, more fundamentally, the "sexual" in itself, as a fluid designation, is intelligible only in terms of dispute and debate, the terms of *différance* (Derrida (1984a [1972/1968]) and *différend* (Lyotard 1996 [1983]) – up to the questioning of the very term altogether (see Preciado 2003). The "sexual" is thus part of the "postmodern narrative of 'heteroglossia'" (Woods 1999: 39), or, in its subversive form, of Bataillean "heterology" (Pefanis 1990: 151), a discourse of radical difference. The global universality of the "sexual" notwithstanding, sexual intensities are singular in their constitutive idiosyncrasy.

Precisely for this reason, the "queer," as the name for nameless sexualities that dare speak their name in the name of the queer without naming what it names, is a "name," *a performative signifier*, a productive linguistic figure in the manner of the postmodern that produces what it names without naming it by name. This is the politics of language in terms of the "post": a mode of language that does not represent, a postmodern form of politics that, instead of representing the "subject" on behalf of which it speaks, presents the agenda of subjectless subjectivities that present themselves as the agents of the agenda of "themselves," as acting agents without the constraints of identities (cf., for example, Weed & Schor 1997; Corber 2003; Sullivan 2003; Puar 2007; Pearson et al. 2008; Nigianni & Storr 2009; in terms of "mastering discourse" in the context of "the politics of intellectual culture," cf. Bové 1992b). As Judith Butler (1990: 25), referring to Nietzsche says, "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything"; or, in Nietzsche's (1968c [1887]: 293) words, *es giebt kein "Sein" hinter dem Thun, Wirken, Werden; "der Thäter" ist zum Thun bloss hinzugedichtet, – das Thun is Alles* (cf. Gasser 1997: 250–253; Purtschert 2006: 125–127; in terms of "experimental desire," cf. Grosz 1994b).

In the world of the "post," each and everyone is not only another of another, but, more fundamentally, *another of oneself* (provided, of course, that there is

anything "fundamental" in terms of the "post"). Thus, a general otherness is the rule without exception in the world of the "post." Accordingly, to become "oneself" one has to become the other of "oneself," not just once, but all the time anew, constantly radicalizing one's own radical otherness as the subversion of the self by oneself. This is the ultimate freedom of the post-subject: *the freedom of not being a subject at all*.

In these terms, whatever the sexual is it is *always already* "queer": "the sexual" is a signifier that in itself is heterogeneous, beyond the categories of the monological.

Thus, in the world of the "post," there is nothing general, there is only particular, an unending plurality of particularities of which each is particular in its particular terms, the terms of the non-identical, the terms of non-identitarian *différance*. Instead of society, there is only "the body" in its radical particularness, in its monadic heterogeneity, in its fundamental *haecceity* of the singular; this is the specific *quiddity* of the "post," its post-political otherness in terms of the subversive. In this manner, the "sexual" is "political" in the world of the "post"; that is, the "sexual" as absolutely singular instances of "the sexual" is an issue of the micropolitics of pleasure constituting the agency of the post-political post-subject as a radical negation of itself: the pleasure of ever-expanding diversity of the post-Freudian "polymorphous perverse" (cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213) enabling a multitude of alterities, a multiformity of post-bodies, each as an inconsistent and discordant assemblage of extrinsic and incompatible *Partialtriebe*, "partial drives" (Freud 1981c: 67–69).

Today, according to Marie-Luise Angerer (2008b: 232), a prominent theorist of the cyber-avantgarde, we are taking our leave of the Freudian paradigm and entering a Deleuzian world of "the philosophy of becoming," a mode of thought that culminates in "the farewell to the notions of gender, sexuality and subject" (ibid.). This is a world in which we enjoy a new freedom enabled by a break away from the tradition of psychoanalysis, a triple taboo breach embracing the ideas of "post-gender," "affect instead of sex" and "sex without gender" (ibid.: 232–242; cf. Angerer 2007b, 2008a). This is the world of "cyberbodies" (Angerer 1999b), a world in which "new technologies" open up "new liminal experiences": a transitional realm defined by "monstrosity," "hybridity" and "excess" (cf. Weiss 1989; Haraway 1992c; Russo 1995; Zylinska 2002c; Braidotti 2003; Volkart 2005). In short, "next sex" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000a) is the code of our liberation (cf. Angerer 2000).

As a result of this epochal transition, we are now living in a world in which each and everyone is "his" or "her" own sex/gender, implying, literally, that "he" and "she" no longer make sense in any other way than in quotation marks quoting, of course, only themselves in the mode of postmodern simulation (see Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 70–76, 95–98, 101–121, 1994a [1981]; in terms of "the political economy of the sign," cf. Baudrillard 1981 [1972]). Therefore – to transpose the idea of "trans" as a sex/gender attribute from transsexuality to the conceptu-

ality of "the sexual" in general, "the sexual" that in itself is intelligible only in terms of Derridean *sous rature*, "under erasure" (see, for example, Derrida 1997: 60, 75, 88) – "genders/sexes" function now "like language," that is, as "motivated but arbitrary signs carrying desire as words do meaning but remaining only signs for our manipulation, not essential realities in themselves" (Nataf 1996: 56; cf. Baudrillard 1993c [1990]: 14–35). This is, what Konstanze Kutzbach (2007: 181), in terms of what she calls "the crisis of the subject," designates as a "non-sex model" of the sexual implying "incomplete bodies," a post-body world allowing for an unending plurality of singularities in the sense of "the fragmentation of the body, missing body parts, as well as substitutes of body parts, prostheses," in other words, "*dysfunctional bodies*" that "figure as a trope of the unaesthetic, as artistic and intellectual expressions of contemporaneous negotiations and social conceptions of gender identity" (emphasis mine).

Theoria sexualis: The Discursive Regime of Abstract Sex

After the two centuries long suffering under the yoke of "the sexual" in terms of "sex" and "gender," after the terror regime of "compulsory heterosexuality" or the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler 1990: 5, 18–19, 24–26, 30–35, 45–46, 151; cf. Blunt & Wills 2000: 130–132; Lloyd 2007: 33–35; for the origin of the notions, see Rubin 1975, 1984, 2011; Rich 1980, 1985 [1984]; cf., for example, Boone 1998: 13–18; Dean 2000: 24–26, 216–220; Rose 2005 [1986]: 14–18; Herdt 2009a: 3–6, 18–25, 31–32), after the insidious dictatorship of "phallogocentrism" (see, for example, Rose 2005: 18–21; Jagger 2008: 17–20), there is now nothing but individual bodies in their unending plurality, liberated bodies released from the burden of the subject, each in their radical singularity: desires and pleasures of transgressive bodies beyond the constraining power of regulatory categories, enjoying their affective autonomy in the post-Enlightenment, post-emancipatory free space enabled by the subversive power of the "post."

In other words, after the breaking away from "the prison house of gender" (Angerer 1994: 16–19) implying the liberation of "sex," being and having a body is no longer constrained by the binary code of gender categorization, the terror regime of scientific rationality brought about by the imperative of reason constitutive of the Enlightenment (in terms of *scientia sexualis*, cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 51–74; Davidson 2001: 211–215).

As a consequence of the implosion of the idea of sex/gender, we are now living in a world in which each and everyone is a "sexual"/"gender" monad, the only unit in its class, a solitary entity in its sexual autarchy, a being enjoying the singularity of postmodern body anarchy; a world of absolutely individual desires and pleasures in their autonomous, non-identitarian uniqueness. Thus, postmodern monadology is the key to nomadic, post-identitarian "identities," the key to the nomadology of being as a continuous "becoming" (see Braidotti 1994a, 2006; cf. Kaplan 1996: 65–100; for the origin of the postmodern discourse on "new nomadism," see Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 380–423;

Braidotti 1994b; cf., for example, Ulmer 1994: 168–169; D'Andrea 2007: 23–36); that is, a transgressive transmutation as a constant process of transmogrification by way of an unending exceeding the limits in the mode of the post-liminal accompanied by the supreme pleasure of the "post," the pleasure of *the theoretical sublime*.

Elevated by the "post" to the level of postality, to the realm of deconstructive textuality, we can experience the definitive destruction of identity (in terms of Heideggerian *Destruktion*, cf. Müller-Lauter 2000: 319–326; Spanos 1993). Identity: the most dangerous delusion of liberal humanist ideology; identity: the prison of the "self"; identity: the gravest obstacle to be removed on the way to sex/gender nomadism; identity: your constant task to deconstruct; identity: your mission to become "yourself" as your "non-self": a creation of your self-negation as the affirmation of your "otherness," your "post-self" celebrating the subversive alterity of radical non-conformity epitomized by the politics of the cyborg (cf. Marković 2005).

This is the logic of Harawayan "cyborg 'sex' in what Haraway (1991a: 150) calls a "post-gender world" (cf., for example, Sofoulis 2003: 89–92; Badmington 2007: 28–29, 36–37; Angerer 2008b: 232–234; Miah 2008: 78; Åsberg 2009: 34–36; for Haraway's ambivalence towards the idea of a "post-gender world," see Haraway in Penley & Ross 1992a: 20; Lykke et al. 2004 [2000]: 328–329; Gane 2006: 137–138). Yet, still today, as Foucault says:

> 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 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). (Foucault 1990k [1976]: 157–158)

But, after the radical deconstruction of sex and gender during the last three decades (see, for example, Butler 1990, 1993; Elam 1994; Potts 2002; from a primatological perspective, see Haraway 1990), the problem more than ever is: *how do we know* what precisely it is through which each and everyone of us "has to pass in order to have access" to one's "own intelligibility"? If, in Foucault's time, in that remote past of the bleak and dire 1970s now behind us forever, "sex" was already not only "an imaginary point," but even "the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures" (ibid.: 155), what we have now is something that exceeds not just the limits of the imaginable, but, more fundamentally, goes beyond the very intelligibility of the "sexual" in itself, the "sexual" in and of that *something* that, nevertheless, still appears today as "a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourselves reflected – *the dark shimmer of sex*" (ibid.: 157; emphasis mine; cf. Coles 1992: 61–62; Ramazanoğlu & Holland 1993: 254–255).

This is the aporia of the post-sexual subject, the undecidability of "the sexual" in the world of the "post": there is no escape from the sexual although we even do not know what it is.

The secrets of the atom have been revealed, the riddle of the human genome is solved, the scientists working at the CERN particle accelerator project, are about to find the answers to the ultimate questions concerning matter and the origin of the universe – "the sexual" of sex, however, is still an enigma. *Encountering the enigma of the sexual, reason fails*.

Therefore, with regard to sex, we are even today in Paul's position: "For now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

No wonder that all that is sexual is an obscure object of enormous theoretical passions in postmodern academia: the signifiers circulating and recycled around the phantasm of "the sexual" are celebrated in the name of subversion, under the sign of the "polymorphous perverse," *in terms of theory*.

This is the constellation in which theory-sex emerges; that is, "sex" as an indefineable notion, "sex" as a "free-floating signifier," "sex" as a theoretical figure in the discursive configuration pertaining to "transgressive bodies" (see, for example, Prosser 1995; Sargisson 1996; Hussey 2006; Wolfreys 2008), post-bodies embodying desires and pleasures beyond the limits and limitations of "heteronormativity" (for the origin of the notion, see Warner 1991; cf. Rich 1980; Rubin 1984). As a consequence, in the world of post-theory, what Foucault (1990k [1976]: 53–73) called *scientia sexualis* has turned into *theoria sexualis*, a mode of avantgardist theory radicalism in terms of "the sexual," a post-utopian theory discourse celebrating sexual experimentation as a subversive political project (see, for example, Suleiman 1990; Kroker & Kroker 1993b; Califia 1994; Grosz 1994b; Grosz & Probyn 1995; Case 1996; Matthews 1997; Donnan & Magowan 2009b; in terms of "the designed self," cf. Strenger 2005; from a historical perspective, cf. Bell 1973: 479–480): "sex" as the first and the last exit from the modern body, the body as a postmodern incarnation of subversive alterity: the sexual body as a theoretical figure, as an imaginary object, as a spectral apparition emanating the empowering power of otherness. It is in this sense that theory-sex is abstract sex, "sex" as a post-theoretical abstraction based on the imaginary of "the theoretical" in terms of "the sexual."

In other words, as abstract sex theory-sex is a theoretical phantasm, a linguistic figure, that exists in the virtual reality of language constitutive of post-theory. Thus, what began a good century ago in the name of *psychopathia sexualis* (for the first codification of "the sexual" in "scientific" terms as a manifestation of "the psychopathological," see von Krafft-Ebing 1997 [1886]; cf. Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Oosterhuis 2000), now continues in the form of *theoria sexualis*, a postmodern theory formation playing with the *idea* of "the sexual."

The enormous theory production around the figure of "sex/gender" since the 1990s notwithstanding, the problem remains: what is "the sexual" in sex and

sexuality, and, more fundamentally: what is *the sexual* in "the sexual," or, in terms of Foucault's (1990k [1976]: 93, 105) nominalism, what is it we *call* "the sexual" (cf. Bersani 1984: 27)? This is the enigma of the sexual.

This radical transformation of the idea of the sexual, the disintegration of modern sexuality to postmodern sexualities, the heterogeneous plurality of sexual orientations resulting from the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s, is most clearly to be seen in the devaluation of orgasm in the theory discourse of the "post": what was once the literal climax of sexual pleasure is today only one of the many "effects," "intensities" and "thrills" that one can experience – or, is supposed to experience – under the sign of "sex"; or, particularly in the context of queer discourse, orgasm is ridiculed as a relic of heterosexuality, a disturbing remnant of old-fashioned intercourse to be abolished altogether in the name of the liberation of "bodies and pleasures" (Foucault 1990k: 157; Plant 1998: 32–35; Preciado 2003: 23–32; cf. Schmidt 2000: 278; from a historical perspective, see Laqueur 1987 [1986]; Walter 1999; Lewandowski 2001; for a critical revision of Foucault's idea, see Butler 1999a). In short, instead of the orgasmic body as the ideal of the sexual liberation in the 1960s, the ideal in the world of the "post" is what Annie Potts (2002: 240–255) calls the "body without orgasm" (in terms of the Deleuze-Guattarian "body without organs," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285).

That is, after the sexual teleology of heterosexual orgasmology, the paradigm of *post-orgasmic* body practices is now emerging, designed to engender desires and pleasures beyond the constraints of heteronormativity (see, for example, Harding 1998; Warner 2000; Beasley 2005).

This, of course, does not imply that the sexual has lost its significance in contemporary culture; on the contrary, sex and sexuality, expressly due to their diverse meanings, are constitutive of the experience of the postmodern: the "sexual" and the "post," in their mutual interaction, in their reciprocal interferences and interventions, are signs of the times in a world in which, as a result of globalization, border lines, limits and limitations are constantly questioned; a world in which, in terms of theory, differences effected by *différance* and *différend* constitute the non-foundational foundation of non-identitarian identities. In this sense, the "post" is not so much "after" as it is *beyond*, beyond the parameters of the given, beyond the intelligibility of bodies and their pleasures set up by the "normal."

2.1.2 Commodification of the Body and Sexual Prosthetics

As a result of the transformation outlined above, "sex" has become a universal currency in the globalized world of commodities and consumption (see, for example, Evans 1993: 36–64; Fine 2002: 73–77, 88–98, 122; Haug 1971, 1987 [1971], 2003, 2005; Morton 1995; Altman 2001; Adams & Pigg 2005; Gibson-Graham 2006 [1996]; Padilla et al. 2007); a language of desires and pleasures that

expresses the seductive power of the "sexual" that in itself is as enigmatic as it is alluring. Reified through commodification, sexual desires and pleasures constitute global "sexscapes" as a transnational form of "corporeal politics," a "globalized economy of sex," to transpose Elina Penttinen's (2008: 15–57) concepts from the specific area of prostitution and sex-trafficking to the realm of consumption in general (cf. Appadurai 1996). In this manner, the imaginary of "sex" manifests the reality of capital, its power to turn desires and pleasures into surplus value, to appropriate and expropriate the sensations and affections of the body. In other words, the sexual economy of the postmodern implies both the *economization of sex* and the *sexualization of economy*. This, in short, is the idea of post-sex: sex as a simulation of itself, sexual desires and pleasures as an evocative conglomeration of postmodern phantasms of unbounded hedonism, consumer-oriented wish-images of the empowerment of the subject by means of "sex."

Thus, in the condition of the postmodern, under the disciplinary regime of the commodity form, the prevailing cultural climate, the whole sensory environment produced and displayed by productive consumption constituting the libidinal economy of neo-Fordism, is dominated by all-pervasive "hypersexualization" (Poulin & Claude 2010). This is a situation which Baudrillard (1983b [1981]: 36) already saw coming into being in the early 1980s in the emerging order of simulation: "[n]ot so long ago sex and work were savagely opposed terms: today both are dissolved into the same type of demand" (cf. Poster 1993a). What is this demand? It is the demand of capital: *intensification of work in order to radicalize consumption*.

From Sexual Liberalism to the Libidinal Economy of Neo-Fordism

If this is a situation in which we can enjoy the freedom of existence in a free world, this is, at the same time, a situation in which to be an "individual" is an extremely precarious matter: the subject, as a post-subject, is a *me, myself and I* that can never be sure what it is. As a result, paradoxically, to be a subject one has to construct oneself all the time anew: work upon oneself is hard work in the world of the "post" (cf., for example, Sarup 1996; McKenzie 2001; Gimlin 2002).

According to Anthony Elliott and Charles Lemert (2006), due to globalization, we are now living in a world characterized by a "new individualism," a cultural situation in which the promotion of personal well-being is the guiding value of prevailing morality. In other words, a strong ego pursuing individual interests is the ideal of contemporary culture, even at the emotional costs for oneself and others. In terms of the sexual, this situation implies what the authors call "individualist arts of sex" (ibid.: 107–132); that is, highly idiosyncratic sexual proclivities and practices. At the same time, during the last two decades, "psychoanalytical feminists, deconstructionists, post-structuralists and postmodernists" have "widened the debate over sex and sexuality to a broader concern with, amongst others, issues of the body and its pleasures, repressed desire, multiple identities, new cultural techniques of sexual surveillance as well as cybersex" (ibid.: 115).

All this constitutes what I designate as *the ego-politics of the postmodern subject*; that is, a postmodern derivation of what Félix Guattari (1977 [1974]) calls the "micropolitics of desire" (cf. Genosko 2002: 10–17, 87–91, 111–123; Busk 2001; for a historical contextualization from the perspective of the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris, see Wolin 2010; in terms of the Foucauldian "aesthetics of existence," cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]; with regard to "the cultivation of the self" in Antiquity, cf. Foucault 1990h [1984]: 39–68, 1990i [1984]; Marti 1999 [1988]: 131–138; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 161–176; Lemke 1997: 269–294; Schmid 1994 [1987]; in terms of the "hermeneutics of the self," cf. Visker 1991b: 107–113).

In my reading of Guattari, this implies a radical liberation of desire as a mode of politics in which the sexual body has taken the place of the working body; a pragmatic self-promotion as a relentless individualism reflecting the collective ecstasy of commodified bodies, a post-sexual delirium of the postmodern mediascape, all of this implying a post-political utopianism (cf. Sargisson 1996; Berthoud 2007; in terms of feminist utopianism, cf. Bammer 1991). This notwithstanding, more than ever, the working body in the postmodern is a necessary precondition of the consuming body with its desires and pleasures (cf. Falk 1994; Turner 1997 [1984]; Bauman 1998; Shilling 2005); but what is specific now, however, is that the meaning of sex and sexuality has a similar value in the postmodern as work in the modern: the presentation of the self in terms of the sexual is the cultural code, the over-determining *metacode* (cf. Hebdige 1988: 85–87), of the way of life based on productive consumption. In these terms, "sex," to apply Barthes's (1979b [1957]: 115) idea, is a "total term," a "global sign," of the postmodern, and, in this precise Barthesian sense, a postmodern "myth": desires and pleasures constitutive of postmodern culture are *resignified* by the second-order signifiers of the sexual, by the signifiers of "sex," which, as a discursive figure, is a "free-floating signifier" in itself.

In this sense, *the postmodern speaks the language of the sexual, the language of libidinal intensities organized by the commodity form*.

Thus, as we can see, the sexual and the economic interpenetrate in the postmodern in the same manner as language and desire intertwine with one another, and what enables this promiscuous intimacy is the libidinal language of the "post." This is what I call the *suprematism of the signifier* distinctive of post-theory; that is, a specific form of linguistic idealism, an immanent transcendentalism of language, the immaterial materialism of the linguistic figuration as a non-representational mode of writing in the sense of *écriture* constitutive of the theoretical configuration of the "post"; a discursive regime in which the "post" operates as the super-signifier in the manner of what Roman Jakobson (1987 [1935]: 41–43), in his theory of literary language, called "dominant." In terms of economy, this is the logic of what I designate as the liquid libido, the driving force of financial capitalism as the economic order of productive consumption, the cultural matrix of the panic body.

In these terms, *contemporary capitalism*, in and by its celebration of excess and surplus value, *is the greatest liberator of desire*. This is the liberty of capital, *the libertinage of consumption*, which constitutes the basis of the postmodern, its hard core in the precise sense of the term.

It is in this constellation that post-sex, as the condition of possibility of cybersex, becomes intelligible in its full significance. *While post-sex is an index of capital, cybersex is its imaginary extrapolation in terms of the imaginary of the technological*.

As an open question, the sexual is, at the same time, an issue of individual intimacy and a public concern today. We are now living in a world in which, as Rainer Emig (2004: 106) says, "sado-masochist practices and cybersex" are "topics of polite conversation and oral and anal sex common household features." Sex and sexuality, indeed, are no longer issues defined by heterosexual "normality" and considered as such to be only a private matter, or a question of tolerance towards "sexual minorities." No, since what was once "deviant" is now "normal," provided, of course, that it complies with *some* of the various norms that are constitutive of the new normalities, the different "posts" in terms of the "sexual." And what complicates the contemporary constellation of the "sexual" even more is that in the plurality of differences, peculiar to the postmodern, it is extremely difficult to be different since difference in itself can currently be understood only in terms of *différance* and, accordingly, dealt with as an issue of *différend*: if difference is beyond definition, then, what *precisely* is the difference that makes the difference?

In short, if to be queer is normal today, what is "queer" about being queer in this situation (cf. Emig 2000: 211–222) – what *can* it be, in the strong sense of the word? *Mutatis mutandis*, this question implies another one: what is it to be "hetero" in a world in which *nothing* is "normal" any more? In other words, is the "sexual" today a conceptual impossibility, and, in the final analysis, a Derridean "non-concept" (see Derrida 1982 [1972])?

Whatever the answers to these questions might be, it is clear that, paradoxically, in spite of its "self-evidence," all that is sexual in contemporary culture has become a contested issue, a matter of complicated and contradictory controversies (see, for example, Weeks 1995a; Lancaster & di Leonardo 1997; Segal 1997; Hirshman & Larson 1998; in terms of "sex wars," see Duggan & Hunter 1995), precisely because there are so many "normalities" now, each "normal" in their very difference manifesting the never-ending dissemination of *différance* as the logic of contemporary culture under the sign of the "post."

This transformation of culture in terms of sex and sexuality, however, is not an invention of today; it already began half a century ago in the name of "sexual rights" (Hawkes 2004: 146; for an overview of sexual controversies at the time, see Gordon & Libby 1976). In the America of the 1960s, during the tumultuous decade that brought about civil rights and anti-war movements as well as the hippies and the counterculture (see, for example, Roszak 1969; Harman 1988; Farber 1994; Farber & Bailey 2001; Braunstein & Doyle 2002; Carlisle & Golson 2007),

those who had been "marginalized, ignored or stigmatized" raised their voices to demand the recognition of various sexual modes of being (Hawkes 2004: 146).

> Thus, women, the young, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals mobilized their sexuality and sexual identity in opposition to the heteronormative and male-prioritizing orthodoxy. Campaigners for sexual liberation began to disengage heterosexuality from traditional associations with marriage, the family, reproduction and the "happy home." They also claimed that sexual diversity had equal validity for the attainment of personal satisfaction and freedom of choice. (ibid.)

What came out of this liberatory mobilization was a "sexual politics" pursued within "four key movements": "second-wave feminism, radical left-wing politics, black liberation and lesbian and gay liberation" (ibid.).

However, by the 1980s, the optimism of sexual affirmation of the 1960s was swept away by the horror of AIDS, community feeling was displaced by competitive individualism, and the freedom of choice was replaced by market liberalism. As a result, the "last feature of the twentieth century was the commodification of sex and its pleasures in ways that connected the spheres of profitability and of self-identity" (ibid.: 147). Thus, as Gail Hawkes summarizes the closure of the twentieth century as a "sexual century," it laid down the "foundation of a new sexual order for the new millennium" (ibid.). What was once considered "special and mystical became mundane as the commercial world increasingly drew on aspects of sexuality to sell commodities" (ibid.).

> The sexual experience was presented as free-floating and malleable, as varied and disposable as the products that it was used to sell. Sexual desires and pleasures were disintegrated from the body and offered instead as a flexible and fluid "wardrobe" of self-expression. (ibid.: 147–148)

This is the point of departure in terms of the sexual in the present study: the paradigm of post-sex. That is, the commodification of sex, the conversion of the sexual liberalism of the 1960s to the market liberalism of the 1980s under the sign of "sex," is the context of the postmodern sexual pluralism at the outset of the third millennium (see, for example, Guillebaud 2001 [1998]: 94–148; Eder 2002: 212–225; Muchembled 2008 [2005]: 275–342; Edwards 1994; Richardson 1996, 2000; Jackson 1999; Plummer 2002a, 2002b; for a historical contextualization in terms of desire, see Birken 1988), even in its most consequent form, *sexual radicalism* as a politics of desires and pleasures beyond the heteronormative order (see, for example, Weeks 1995b [1985]: 4–5, 15–21, 56–57, 186–187, 1997a [1981]: 115–116; Davidson & Taylor 2005: 90–98; Rubin 1984; Bright 1990, 1992; Abelove et al. 1993; Bell 1994; Califia 1994; Siegel 2000; Johnson 2002; from a historical perspective, see, for example, Garton 2004: 16–28, 103–122, 156–167, 218–228; Weeks 2007: 75–93; Robinson 1969; Jackson 1994; Passet 2003; in terms of "compulsory sexuality," cf. Shannon 2006: 109–126).

That is, "the sexual" is a central phantasm of the libidinal economy of neo-Fordism; an extremely ambiguous and polymorphous figure of desires and plea-

sures manifesting the logic of neoliberalism: the "freedom" of the body under the conditions of the commodity form.

The Iteration of the Sexual: The Repetition of the Code

In the economic regime of productive consumption, the sexual body, in the expanded form of the consuming body, is the necessary precondition of the working body (see Bauman 1998: 23–41, 2000: 72–90, 2002: 180–200; in terms of the consuming body as the body of desire, see Falk 1994: 93–150). As before, human work and the working body constitute the only source of value and thus the condition of possibility of capital; what is new, however, is that the working body is now *produced* by the consuming body: without consumption there is no reproduction in neoliberal capitalism. Thus, the reproduction of *both* labour force *and* surplus value are predicated upon productive consumption in the libidinally intensified economy of the postmodern; this is the "sexual reason" of postmodern capitalism (see Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 152–162; for the postmodern body as "the mass grave of signs," cf. Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 101–121).

For this reason, *the intensification of desires and pleasures is the most important prerequisite of the survival of capitalism in its contemporary form*. This is the economic necessity of circulating and recycling "sex" in the political economy of neoliberalism. In short, without "sex" capitalism would collapse.

Accordingly, a comprehensive sexualization of culture has taken place in the contemporary Western world to the extent that the present way of life has entirely become "sexed up" (Attwood 2006). As a result, to be a sexual subject implies being a "sexual citizen" (Evans 1993) in the postmodern body politic as the contemporary form of "civil society," the libidinal economy of productive consumption (cf. O'Neill 1995: 126–129), dominated by the promotion of a specific body consciousness; that is, the sensibility of one's own body as a vehicle of "good life," the body as the very basis of feeling oneself as a *self*. In other words, in Western culture, the sexual subject as a sexualized self is living under the "tyranny of pleasure" (Guillebaud 2001 [1998]), sex defined in terms of "sex."

If, in these terms, the commodifying and patenting of life is already everyday reality in biotech industries (see, for example, Agostino & Ashton 2007; Somsen 2007), it would not be surprising if one day sex in the mode of "sex" could be elaborated to a postmodern trade mark, a label, if only some manufacturer of consumer goods, operating as a global player, would be clever enough to register "sex" by a copyright claim in order to turn "sex" into a global brand: SEX™. In other words, we are already living in a world in which, as Haraway (1997: 12) says, "[l]ife itself is life enterprised up"; that is, life is now "flowing through the multinational channels of capital in which species acquire the status of brand names" (Zylinska 2005: 144; cf. Strathern 1992: 31–43; Haraway 1997: 70, 76, 102, 168, 245, 2008b: 139, 151–152; Hayden 1998: 197–198; Franklin & Roberts 2006: 78; Wajcman 2004: 88–92). And, in these new circumstances, what has been turned into commodity is, as always in the economy of capitalism, disposable

in the end: planned obsolescence, as the constitutive logic of the commodity form, is essential to capitalism, and it is thus the driving force, the intrinsic logic, of the sexual economy under the sign of the "post": in the postmodern, "sex," by the necessity of the economic imperative, is invented anew over and over again.

In the world of what Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein (1994: 66–70) call "pancapitalism," nothing is impossible any longer; at the same time, everything has now become ephemeral.

This is the "post" of the postmodern in terms of the imaginary; and, as we will see later on, the condition of possibility of all that is "cyber."

Then again, whether this kind of obsessive sexualization of the Western way of life will continue or not (cf. Guillebaud 2001; Sigusch 2005), as far as the ambiguities of the sexual in contemporary culture are concerned, it has become topical in a new way, as Michel Foucault (1990k: 159) declared in the 1970s, to "consider the possibility that one day, perhaps, *in a different economy of bodies and pleasures*, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex" (emphasis mine), or, as it is in the original, *cette austère monarchie du sexe* (Foucault (1994a [1976]: 211; cf. Halperin 2002a: 22–29).[36] That is, the question is as to whether what is perceived and enjoyed as freedom, in fact, implies control (cf. Deleuze 1992b [1990]), a mode of control that by far exceeds the mechanisms of control deployed in the world of the modern.

From this perspective, I will be arguing that for some three decades Western – that is, consumer-oriented – society has produced a postmodern body culture, a cult of excessive "bodyism," that has given rise to a new order of the sexual, the constellation of post-sex as the glorification of the libidinal body, its presumably unending desires and pleasures. The postmodern body cult is a novel disciplinary regime under the power of global capitalism: the body in itself is now a source and expression of personal "capital"; the body as an individual investment, the body as a productive asset of the self: the body as an embodiment of the libidinal economy engendered by market forces (cf. Lyotard (1993 [1974]; Best & Kellner 1991: 152–155; Denzin 1991: 107–124; Pronger 2002: 201–

36 It is appropriate to notice that what is rendered as "sex" in the English translation of Foucault (1990) is not equivalent to the original *le sexe* (Foucault 1994a [1976]), neither to the German translation *der Sex* (Foucault 1983a [1976]). While, in French, *le sexe* refers to both the genital organs and what is termed as "gender" in contemporary (academic) English, and also nowadays, as an effect of the American English usage of the word "sex," to sexual acts or sexual practices, in contrast, in German *der Sex* embraces first and foremost forms of sexual desires and pleasures, but confusingly enough, also *das Geschlecht* which, in turn, is only partly equivalent to English gender (cf. German translator's remark in Foucault 1983a: 14). In short, reading Foucault in French, English and German, in fact, one is reading three different books. Moreover, Foucault never says explicitly when he is speaking of sex in the meaning of gender (or *das Geschlecht*) and when in the sense of sexual acts and practices (cf. Visker 1991b: 176). As a result, Foucault's main idea, his attempt to abolish what he calls the "repressive hypothesis," remains very ambiguous: does he mean sex as gender or sex as experiences and expressions of sexual desires and pleasures? In short, is Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* about sex or gender, or both?

206). This, for me, is the "new individualism" under the regime of globalization (cf. Elliott & Lemert 2006).

That is, *your body is your corporate identity*, an identity that is not your own: your body is an incorporation of capital, an incarnation of surplus value.

In terms of the disciplinization of the body, there is nothing as efficient as capital. This is the origin of post-sex: this is the very reason of the "sexual" in terms of the "post."

It is in this manner that post-sex is a spectacular manifestation of neoliberalism, which is the economic ideology of neo-Fordism, which, in turn, is the disciplinary regime of contemporary capitalism understood in the Debordian sense as a "society of the spectacle" (see Debord 1983 [1967]): a society totally rationalized according to the logic of the commodity form, the logic of productive consumption.[37] As such, post-sex is not a question of a new form of Foucault's "austere monarchy of sex," neither does it mean a return of the sexual liberation of the 1960s. At the least, post-sex implies Foucault's "different economy of bodies and pleasures"; the "one day" Foucault is dreaming about has clearly not yet come about (when or whether it ever will arrive is another matter).

However, in the on-going transformation of sex and sexuality in the Western world what is at issue is certainly a new economy of bodies and pleasures in another sense, manifesting a change in both economic and libidinal terms that contributes to the mode of subjectivity and agency constitutive of the postmodern; in other words, post-sex is in the process of displacing both sex and sexuality as such as they prevailed in the Western world as a result of industrial modernization from the late eighteenth century to the 1960s (Hawkes 1996: 51–104, 2004: 107–143; Weeks 1997a [1981]: 57–76; Eder 2002: 171–209), and introducing a new paradigm of sexuality that is based on *a biopolitical body management* (cf. Foucault 1990k: 138–145, 2003 [1979]; Lemke 1997: 134–139; Brieler 1998: 412–418; Ott 1998: 46–49) compatible with the economic efficiency of neo-Fordism, the global order of neoliberal capitalism (cf. Cooper 2008). What is now at issue are rationalized bodies for which *both* work *and* pleasure follow the logic of market forces, based on the incentive of a constant escalation of the "more," the very imperative of capital.

In short, as a commodity form, post-sex is "sex" literally in quotation marks: post-sex is about the simulation of the "sexual" as an unending citation in the mode of supplementation, a substituting iteration of an "original" which, in fact, does not exist, except in the form of simulation (cf. Derrida 2000 [1988]:

37 It should be emphasized that neo-Fordism, as I use the term, does not imply "postindustrial society" (see Bell 1973); on the contrary, as Ernest Mandel (1978: 387) already observed in the 1970s: "Far from representing a postindustrial society, late capitalism […] constitutes *generalized universal industrialization* for the first time in history. Mechanization, standardization, overspecialization and parcellization of labor, which in the past determined only the realm of commodity production in actual industry, now penetrate into all sectors of social life. It is characteristic of late capitalism that agriculture is step by step becoming just as industrialized as industry, the sphere of circulation just as much as the sphere of production, and recreation just as much as the organization of work." This is the form of society which I am referring to with my notion of productive consumption.

29–107; Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 1–48); that is, the repetition of the *code* that determines what is the "sexual" in "sex" – regardless of whatever it is as *sex*. This is the enigma of the sexual in terms of the "post."

In these terms, in the postmodern, the sexual is as important and as celebrated as information; and, in terms of the "cyber," as we will see, thirty years after the publication of the founding document of what is called the "Information Age," the report for the French government entitled *L'Informatisation de la société* by Simon Nora and Alain Minc (1978, 1980 [1978]; cf. Mattelart 2003: 104–111; Webster 2002 [1995]; for a critique of the related idea of the "empowerment through information," see Leps 1995),[38] we have now even a new mode of the sexual: *sex as information that equals information as sex*, an idea constitutive of cybersex. Likewise, the idea of "sexual liberation," typical of the 1960s and the 1970s (see, for example, Seidman 1992: 17–55), soon found its equivalent in the idea that "information wants to be free" (see, for example, Boyle 1997: 6–7, 35–46; Levinson 1997: 188–203; Barlow 1994b),[39] a mode of thought typical of the 1980s and 1990s, the era of the general hyperbole whether in terms of sex, technology, economy or language: *the era of the hype* as the paramount form of the postmodern (for a incisive criticism of information utopianism in terms of "cybercommunism," see Barbrook 2000; cf. May 2002: 84, 97–98; Dyer-Witheford 1999).

The Psychophysics of Capital and Sexual Utopianism

Once again, as if it were an echo of the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s, sex is celebrated today as the ultimate consummation of individual freedom. Ironically, as Foucault (1990k: 7) stated with regard to the frenzy around sex in the

38 As epochal as the Nora-Minc report was with all its implications, it nevertheless did not acquire such a celebrated status as another government report (this time for the Canadian government) a year later, *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir,* by Jean-François Lyotard (1979). Both of them, however, had the same grand message, namely, as Lyotard puts it: "Knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power is already, and will continue to be, a major – perhaps *the* major – stake in the worldwide competition for power. It is conceivable that the nation-states will one day fight for control of information, just as they battled in the past for control over territory, and afterwards for control of access to and exploitation of raw materials and cheap labor. A new field is opened for industrial and commercial strategies on the one hand, and political and military strategies on the other." (Lyotard 1984 [1979]: 5). While Nora and Minc characterized this new situation with the term "telematics," for Lyotard it implied the "postmodern condition."

39 The expression "Information wants to be free" was first formulated by Stewart Brand at the first Hackers' Conference in 1984, published in the *Whole Earth Review* (May 1985: 49) as follows: "On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other." Later, in his *The Media Lab. Inventing the Future at MIT*, Brand (1987: 202) referred to the idea of free information in the form: "Information Wants To Be Free. Information also wants to be expensive. Information wants to be free because it has become so cheap to distribute, copy, and recombine – too cheap to meter. It wants to be expensive because it can be immeasurably valuable to the recipient. That tension will not go away. It leads to endless wrenching debate about price, copyright, 'intellectual property,' the moral rightness of casual distribution, because each round of new devices makes the tension worse, not better." In 1994, in his "The Economy of Ideas," John Perry Barlow (1994b: 88) reissued the idea by stating that "'[i]nformation wants to be free' recognizes both the natural desire of secrets to be told and the fact that they might be capable of possessing something like a 'desire' in the first place."

1970s, post-sex has now taken the form of "preaching." Indeed, a "great sexual sermon" that has "its subtle theologians and its popular voices" has once again "made people dream of a New City," and once again "we might wonder how it is possible that the lyricism and religiosity that long accompanied the revolutionary project have, in Western industrial societies, been largely carried over to sex" (ibid.: 8; cf. Rutherford 2007).

It is in this sense that, in the final analysis, "sex" as the constitutive idea of post-sex is a theological notion in the discursive order of the "post."

But whether post-sex is about "future sex" (Getty & Winkelmann 1996) in the sense of "next sex," "sex in the age of its procreative superfluousness" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b), remains to be seen.[40]

What seems to be certain, however, is that the traditional system of sex, gender and procreation no longer stands the pressure of time – the combined pressure of scientific-technological body design under the sign of technoscience, increasing individuation in terms of various lifestyles and conceptions of the self, and the libidinal economy brought about by ever-expanding globalization as a result of the dynamics of transnational financial capital. In these terms, post-sex is a commodity, a product in the markets of postmodern body culture, that manifests the contemporary transformation of what Herbert Marcuse (1979) calls the *Triebstruktur* of capitalism. As a result of the expansion of capitalism entailing an intensification of *the usability of the body* determined by the production-consumption nexus of neo-Fordism, the emerging "structure of drives," in both the economic and libidinal sense, implies a pervasive economization of the sensuousness and the affectivity of the subject, a commodification of sensations and affections of the body in terms of the sexual – or, to be precise, under the sign of the "sexual."

In this sense, the appropriation and penetration, the utilization and exploitation, of sex and sexuality by capital in the name of the multiplication and diversification of desires and pleasures constitutes the cultural configuration in which the "sexual" is celebrated as the key to "good life," to personal happiness (cf. Hennessy 2000). "Be happy" – that is the sound of "sex" orchestrated by postmodern capitalism.

In this constellation, sexual desires and pleasures are thoroughly subsumed by capital: post-sex embodies the logic of neo-Fordist capitalism: efficiency is the

40 An important factor of the ongoing transformation of Western sexuality and sex culture, of course, is constituted by the far-reaching consequences of AIDS, especially all the measures, habits and practices subsumed under the concept of "safe-sex" (or "*safer* sex") (see, for example, Evans 1993: 106–107; Weeks 1995a: 96–97, 137–139; Potts 2002: 39–46, 86–88). At the same time, gay culture, various forms of feminism, lesbian lifestyles, and lately the queer movement have contributed, each in their own distinctive manner, to the radical redefinition of the notions of the body, desire and pleasure (see, for example, Harding 1998: 109–138; Bhattacharyya 2002: 82–101; Seidman 1992, 1996; Warner 1993; Grosz 1994b). Most significantly, the idea of the "perverse" has lost its pathological meaning and through this a "rainbow" of sexual/non-sexual orientations has become possible. From this perspective, heterosexuality, indeed, represents sexual conservatism rather than a liberalization of sex and sexuality in contemporary culture.

imperative of "sex" as the emblem of the postmodern body. Accordingly, "sex" as the "contents" of post-sex manifests what I call *the psychophysics of capital* dominating a new socio-economic power structure of contemporary culture based on productive consumption, the real basis of the postmodern. In this sense, as a rationalization of all that is sexual, post-sex implies the final triumph of the Americanization of sex: "sex" as the driving force of the subject compatible with market forces, and, inversely, the sexual subject as the agent of market forces in the production of desires and pleasures constitutive of "sex" as a moment of the commodity form, the precondition of productive consumption.

This is the order of "compulsory consumption" (Morton 1995: 192), in my view, the very logic of productive consumption, ruled by what Hal Foster (1993: 18) calls "images of *product-bliss*" (emphasis mine); in my reading, the *jouissance* of the imaginary inscribed in commodity fetishism (see Marx 1983 [1867]: 85–98; Stratton 1996; Miklitsch 1998). That is, if I take the liberty of recontextualizing Walter Benjamin's (1974 [1936]) term, the substitution of the "aura" of the commodity for the corporeal reality of real bodies is now what constitutes their carnal existence; in other words, the substitution of the imaginary body for the mundane flesh. It is in this manner that the commodity form provides the guarantee of the functionality of the body, its "operational" efficiency in the postmodern ego-markets, by its imaginary double.

The perfidious logic of commodity fetishism as the very logic of neoliberal capitalism is its ability to convert the experience in itself into a commodity form; Žižek's example is highly illuminating:

> The ultimate example of not only commodity fetishism, but, in a much more literal way, *fetishism itself commodified*, is today's Japan, where you can buy from vending machines, alongside cans of Coke and prepacked food, panties guaranteed to have been worn by young girls. What we are witnessing today, the defining feature of "postmodern" capitalism, is *the direct commodification of our experience itself*: what we are buying on the market are less and less products (material objects) which we want to own, and more and more *life-experiences* – experiences of sex, eating, communicating, cultural consumption, participating in a lifestyle. Material objects are increasingly there simply to serve as props for this experience, which is increasingly offered for free to seduce us into buying the true "experiential commodity" […]. (Žižek 2002a: 286; emphasis mine)

Thus, Benjamin's aura has now turned into the seductive emanation of the commodity form in its ultimate fetishistic form, as the commodification of the experience in itself (cf. Jameson 1979, 1989 [1983]). This pertains not only to the world of material objects and their concomitant experiential dimensions, but the same logic of commodity fetishism rules now also language, even the language of theory in postmodern academia. In this sense, "sex" is an economically determined expression of commodity fetishism as *both* a commodified "experience" *and* a signifier in post-theory. Theory-sex, "sex" as *theory fetishism*, is a telling instance of what Žižek calls "experiential commodity," a theoretical commodity that has an extraordinary ability to seduce into the theoretical delirium constitutive of post-theory.

If sex in itself is always a manifestation of the imaginary, "sex" in the world of commodity fetishism is an effect, a product, of the sexual imaginary produced by the commodity form, *the economized form of the imaginary*.

It is in this manner that, while the Americanization of Freud in the name of ego psychology means the beginning of sex in the sense of psychosocially codified heteronormativity as the heterosexual imperative (see, for example, Roazen 1990: 139–162; Katz 1996: 83–112; Weeks 1997b [1986]: 69–88; Richardson 1971; Schur 1988; Robinson 1989 [1976]; in Lacanian terms, cf. Gallop 1985: 55–73), post-sex implies the Taylorization of sexual desires and pleasures under the imperative of productive consumption, the imperative of the "more" as the driving force in the libidinal economy of neoliberal capitalism.

This is the idea of what I designate as "sex" constituting the "substance" of post-sex: *the sexual aura of the commodified body as the body produced by productive consumption*.

While all this leads to a relentless banalization of the sexual (cf. Sigusch 2000: 246), at the same time it is about sexual utopianism (cf. Potts 2002: 217–265), an essential aspect of post-sex. Cybersex – that is the very paragon of the retro-futuristic dreams of ever-more "efficient" sexual experiences brought about by the fusion of sex and technology (see, for example, Dery 1996: 183–225; Balsamo 1996: 117–120; Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 37–43; Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Springer 1996; Foster 2000 [1997]); wish-images pertinent to various visions of technoculture, particularly cyberculture celebrating the ideas of cyberspace and the cyborg as the future of all the human in the name of the posthuman (see, for example, Penley & Ross 1992c; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Rötzer 1998b; Hayles 1999; Bell & Kennedy 2000). No longer is there old-fashioned "bio-sexuality," sexuality in terms of the organic, but, instead, what we are entitled to experience in the world of the "cyber" are different "cybersexualities" entailing an increase of the performative capacity of sexual bodies that are enhanced and extended by means of technology (see Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002), especially by means of prosthetics (see, for example, Gray 2001: 151–160; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; Foster 2005: 117–119; Sevenant 2005: 116–120; O'Riordan 2007: 15; Brahm & Driscoll 1995; Stone 1995d; Fernbach 2002; Gargett 2002; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b).[41]

41 Of course, in terms of desires and pleasures as *organic functions* of the human body, what could be more cybernetic in its very essence than sexual act in itself (whatever it as such happens to be with regard to the multifarious forms of human sexual practices)? A corporeal act that, as a teleological occurrence, literally embodying the principle of cybernetic circularity, follows the schema of both negative and positive feedback from the beginning to the end, and is based, moreover, in terms of physiology, on the circular causal activity of the neuronal networks of the human body; networks that in themselves paradigmatically exemplify the idea of cybernetics (see Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]; Wiener 1961 [1948]: 95–15, 1968 [1950]: 24–27, 1967: 11–12; cf. Freud 1962b [1895], 1977a [1894], 1977b [1898], 1977c [1896], 1977d [1893]; Wegener 2004). In these terms, the sexual act manifests both the Nietzschean idea of *die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 270–272, 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 333–335, 1973a [1882/1887]: 250) and the Freudian principle of *die Wiederkehr des Verdrängten* (Freud 1991b [1915]: 257–258), both in themselves exemplifying the principle of circularity constitutive of cybernetics.

All this implies, as the theorists of the "post" claim, a radical transformation not only of the human body, but also of the very condition of all that is understood in terms of the sexual. As Luciana Parisi (2004: 1), presently the most avantgardist sex theorist in terms of the "post," declares in her treatise entitled *Abstract Sex. Philosophy, Bio-Technology and the Mutations of Desire*: "In the age of cybernetics, sex is no longer a private act practiced between the walls of the bedroom." Instead of this old-fashioned, confined and conventional model of sexual gratification what we have today is a new world of sexual pleasures without any constraints:

> Human sex has now entered a cyberspace of information where everyday bodily contacts and sexual encounters have given way to long distance rendezvous. The emergence of cybersex defines *a new prosthetic extension of human sex*, the prolongation of sexual pleasures *outside the limits of the body*. (ibid.; emphasis mine; in terms of "the sex appeal of the inorganic," cf. Perniola 2004 [2000])

Of course, this, as such, is nothing new; rather, what Parisi says, in fact, is an instance of post-Derridean iteration of a well-established figure, a discursive reappropriation of the appropriated (cf. Derrida 2000). Some four decades ago, in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, J. G. Ballard's perspicacious observations of burgeoning technoculture, as we presently understand it in terms of the postmodern, already described the radical disjunction and fragmentation of the sexual body as a result of the penetration of technology into the intimate sphere, leading to a new stage of Freudian "polymorphous perversity" (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213). In these terms, as Ballard (1990 [1970]: 94) said, "sexual intercourse can no longer be regarded as a personal and isolated activity, but is seen to be a vector in a public complex involving automobile styling, politics and mass communication." Thus, what is the *novum*, in terms of the postmodern, in Parisi's celebration of cybersex is her post-theoretical language, a spectacular theoreticality as an extravagant theatricality of the "theoretical" in the mode of the "post" (for the idea of "the novum" in science fiction, see Roberts 2000: 19–27; Csicsery-Ronay 2008: 47–75; for the origin of the idea, see Suvin 1980; Bloch 1985 [1938–1947]).

It is precisely the theory language of the "post" that is constitutive of the techno-euphoria characteristic of contemporary technoculture; a language through the linguistic figures and figurations of which technology appears as a universal panacea to all problems of the world. To see this in a historical context, it suffices to recall what, for example, John Kenneth Galbraith had to say in the 1960s of the technological rationality the result of which is contemporary technoculture.

> If we continue to believe that the goals of the industrial system – the expansion of output, the companion increase in consumption, technological advance, the public images that sustain it – are coordinate with life, then all of our lives will be in the service of these goals. What is consistent with these ends we shall have or be allowed; all else will be off limits. Our wants will be managed in accordance with the needs of the industrial system; the policies of the state will be subject to similar influence; education will be adapted to industrial need; the disciplines required by the industrial system will be the conventional morality of the community. All other goals will be made to seem precious, unimportant or antisocial. We will be bound to the ends of the industrial system. The state will

> add its moral, and perhaps some of its legal power to their enforcement. (Galbraith 1967: 398; cf. Marcuse 1941, 2002 [1964]; Stanley 1978; Winner 1978)

What was "the industrial system" in the 1970s, is "technoculture" today. That is, if, in Galbraith's times, technology in itself, in the form of "an impersonal universal technicism," seemed "to pursue no end other than its own augmentation," as Henry S. Kariel (1989: 7) says referring to Hegel's conception of the reason of history (see Hegel 1986d [1837]; cf. Kojève 1980 [1947]), in the world of the "post," technoculture, *as a discursive construction*, is based on a mode of language that has its own logic, the logic of what I call the surrational, the logic of the techno-imaginary as a manifestation of *linguistic futurism*. It is in this manner that the linguistic figures and figurations effected by the "cyber" take on a life of their own and thus constitute a world *sui generis* (cf., for example, Simpson 1995; Tabbi 1996; Best & Kellner 2001). As Wittgenstein (1995b [1918/1921/1922]: 67) says: *Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 2002 [1922]: 149; cf. Goeres 2000: 45–52) – only that in the world of the "cyber," there are neither boundaries nor limits: *the "cyber" is about limitless potentiality in its imaginary actuality*. In other words, *the post-liminal*, constitutive of the paradigm of the "post," defines the post-foundational logic of the "cyber," the logic of unlimited escalation of signification (which is not to be confused with meaning) effected by the "post."

In view of the above considerations, what is at issue in cybersex is no longer intercourse, a procedure limited by bipolarity; instead, as a form of technological mediation, cybersex is about unlimited transactions similar to financial exchanges in the global stock markets: *the sexual markets of cyberspace* are based on a mode of techno-corporeal interactivity implemented, that is, *realized*, in all the senses of the word, as imaginary transactions that constitute the "real" of the "sexual" in cybersex. From this point of view, the "cyber" implies a radical change, a "tectonic" shift (cf. de Kerckhove 1994), in terms of the sexual: desires and pleasures predicated upon transnational networks of information constituting an endless traffic of fluid and hybrid sexual encounters, sexual "acts" beyond the categories of desires and pleasures legitimated by the idea of "normality" (cf. Volkart 2006; Angerer 2007a, 2007b), contingent encounters without commitment between bodies that in themselves have become "volatile," "leaky" and "fluid" (see Grosz 1994c; Shildrick 1997; Longhurst 2001). From now on, the sexual belongs to the order of "extreme phenomena" (Baudrillard 1993c [1990]): "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is a mode of transgressive politics in a culture in which there is no life outside technology: technology is the very inside of the outside, a "symptom and dream" (Romanyshyn 1989) constitutive of the postmodern.

Virtual Kinetics and Transmobile Life

What, in fact, happens in cybersex is, in Baudrillard's (1993c: 45) words, a "surgical compulsion that seeks to excise negative characteristics and remodel things synthetically into ideal forms." In other words, capital, in its very

abstractness, is the model of the body and its desires and pleasures; *capital as the meta-code of the sexual*.

Similarly, as a mode of synthetic rationality in itself, capital is the synthetic reason of technology. Capital does not ask what is real: capital is interested in *the actuality of the potential*. This is the political economy of the "cyber," a form of postmodern economism in which the "political," the "technological" and the "sexual," as not just temporarily coexistent, but even *necessary* moments of general transgression, contribute to a continuous subversion of desires and pleasures: a world not of being but of "becoming" (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]; Braidotti 1994a; Currier 2002; from a Bataillean perspective, cf. Foucault 1977a [1963]).

Accordingly, as Haraway (1991a: 162) says, or, to be precise, *writes*, we have now entered a world in which there is no longer anything "natural." Therefore, we must accept that "[w]e cannot go back ideologically or materially" (ibid.). This is a world in which "Lacan" has taken the place of "Freud," "sex" has turned into "genetic engineering," and what once was "labour" is now "robotics" (ibid.). No longer "organic sex role specialization," but "optimal genetic strategies" (ibid.: 161) constitute the imperative of the cyborg. Finally, and most fundamentally, "organism" as our biological body has been replaced by "biotic components" (ibid.) implying their own systemic logic. In this situation, as Haraway in her self-assured and unconditional words pronounces, it is time to understand the ultimate truth: "It's not just that 'god' is dead; so is the 'goddess'" (ibid.: 162). "Or," as Haraway states, there is still the possibility that "both are revivified in the worlds charged with microelectronic and biotechnological politics" (ibid.; cf. Heidegger 2000c [1966/1976]: 671–672, 2000b [1953], 2009 [1935–1958]).

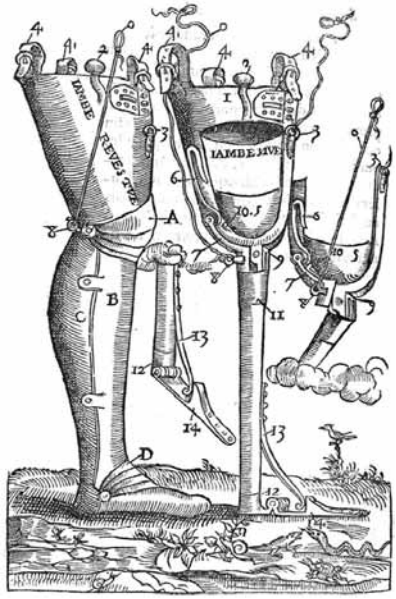
Taken this or that way, we are now, seen from the Harawayan perspective, living in a world in which we are facing a fundamental transformation in terms of what was called "human" up until now: the "posthuman" is not only our destiny (see, for example, Haraway 1992a; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Gray 2001; Graham 2002; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008), but, more fundamentally, it is the destiny of all being in a world in which, paradoxically, the human reigns as the supreme form of *natura naturans*, "creative nature," the reason and origin of *natura naturata*, "created nature" (cf. Spinoza 1996 [1677]: 20–21; Kashap 1987: 25–29; Lermond 1988: 6–8; Rothenberg 1993: 59–65), the Creator of a post-natural world: the human being as the God of all being after the Nietzschean "death of God" (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 352–353, 1973a [1882/1887]: 158–159; Heidegger 1977b [1943]). In this world, our bodies have lost their inherited naturalness as *organic bodies*: as a result of comprehensive scientific-technological progress we have become objects of technoscience, objects of our own creation, objects of technoscientific redesign as a continuous process.

Facing this omnipotence of ourselves, what are we to do, what *can* we do? We have to learn to live in a completely new way:

> In relation to objects like biotic components, one must not think in terms of essential properties, but in terms of design, boundary constraints, rates of flows, systems logics, costs of lowering constraints. Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families. Such reasoning will be unmasked as irrational, and ironically corporate executives reading *Playboy* and anti-porn radical feminists will make strange bedfellows in jointly unmasking the irrationalism. (Haraway 1991a: 162)

This is the world of the cyborg, the world of the prosthetic reconstitution of the human being, the world of the posthuman, our final fate (cf. Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999; Badmington 2000a; Graham 2002; Zylinska 2002b; Cooney 2004; Dinello 2005; Foster 2005; Deane-Drummond & Scott 2006; Smith & Morra 2006b; Waters 2006; Manning 2007; Toffoletti 2007; Giffney & Hird 2008; Wolfe 2009). In this sense, *the discourse on the posthuman is a continuation of science fiction by other means: the means of post-theory*. That is, in the configuration of the "post," the language of science fiction has been appropriated by *theory-fictions* constitutive of post-theory (cf., for example, Derrida 1973 [1967]: 150, 1984a [1972/1968]: 18, 2000 [1988]: 88; de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 150–151; Baudrillard 1993a: 82, 115, 202; Zurbrugg 1993: 141, 2000a: 65, 127, 135; Cholodenko 1997: 76–80; Currie 1998: 51–70; Shaviro 1997; in terms of "radical imagination," cf. Olson & Worsham 2007; with regard to Freudian theory, cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 609; Thomas 1990: 1–16). As such, post-theory is not a "theory of theoretical practice" in the Althusserian sense (see Althusser 2005 [1965]: 164–176, 184–193, 216–231, 256, 2009a [1965/1968]: 8, 18, 33, 41–53, 61–71; cf. Callinicos 1976), but a *theoretical practice of theory*, a mode of theorization theorizing itself in terms of theory defined by the theory itself. That is, post-theory speaks the language of "the theoretical" in the mode of linguistic figuration.

In this sense, what is important to notice from the very beginning is that *in post-theory, language is structured like the unconscious* (cf. Lacan 1998 [1973]: 20, 149, 203; Bowie 1991: 44–87; Dor 1998 [1985]); in other words, post-theory is a language of the imaginary. Of course, one cannot reach the unconscious as such ever, since, by definition, the unconscious is *unconscious*; what one can do, nevertheless, is to write about the symptoms of the unconscious (if it is possible at all). Thus, if the "post" as the "other" of reason is the unconscious of the postmodern (cf. Boyne 1990), it can be read in and through its symptoms, by way of its supplements (cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]); in other words, by means of prosthetic language constituting the very "post" as its linguistic prosthesis, the generative attribute of its supplementarity (cf., for example, Wills 1995: 133–141, 299–303, 2008: 68–70, 215; Taylor 1997: 143, 225, 273, 330; Žižek 1997b: 136; Lury 1998: 213–214; Mitchell & Snyder 2000: 53–54, 124–125, 142, 154–155; Caygill 2000: 226; Salecl 2000: 7–8; Stiegler 2001: 244, 249, 254, 260; Derrida 2002b [1993]: 244; Kelly 2007: 130–132; Csicsery-Ronay 2008: 119–120; Ketabgian 2011: 18–25; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b).



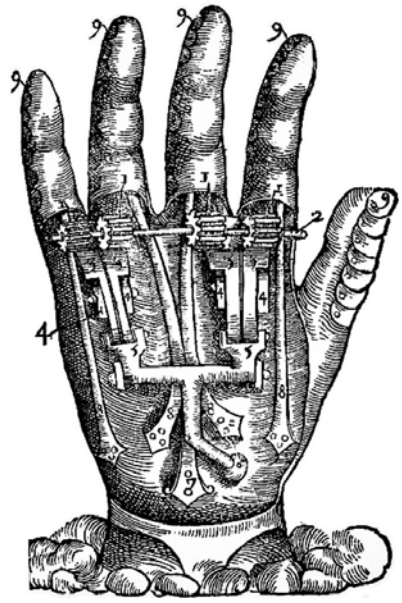


Fig. 13–14. A prosthetic leg (1552) and a prosthetic hand (1564) constructed by the French army surgeon Ambroise Paré (1509–1590), considered to be the founder of prosthetic surgery. Paré is especially remembered as the designer of an artificial hand in which each finger was equipped with a separate mechanism.

It is in this sense, as Joanna Zylinska (2002c) argues, that our future is "monstrous" since our salvation is "prosthetics as ethics": our technological embodiment will redefine the parameters constitutive of the value basis of our existence in its radical alterity, our prosthetic "otherness" as our post-corporeal, post-identitarian identity (cf. Wills 1995).

In this context, prosthesis is more than just a technological device to repair or enhance some function of the body; at issue is now a figurative device, a "prosthetic trope," which engenders "prosthetic imagination" (see Jain 1999) to reconstitute the human in terms of technology. What is important in this constellation is that the prosthetic, in fact, is an aesthetic category effecting its own metaphoricism, "the prosthetic aesthetic" (see Smith & Morra 2002a; cf. Cavell 2003: 69–90; Messinger 2008: 112–115; Shildrick 2009: 36, 56, 128–166; Bishop & Phillips 2010: 4–18, 26–43, 53–55; Sobchack 1995, 2004, 2006; Gaughan 2006; for a critique in terms of "New Age narrative" in the form of "cybertalk," see Berger 2000: 99–106; cf. Woodward 1994: 50–51, 1997b). In other words, prosthesis functions as an imaginary signifier in the discursive matrix of the "cyber" enabled by the "post."

According to David Wills (1995: 151), from the amputation performed by Paré on the combat field in 1552 to the amputees of the First World War, it is, perhaps, "only ever the same war that has been waged all these centuries and that is a war over amputation and the question of prosthesis." What is at issue in prosthetics is the idea of "articulation": "the articulation of word and body" and "that of surgical instrument and body," and, finally, "the regular articulation between machine and human flesh" (ibid.: 153). Referring to the war experiences of his grandfather, Wills raises a general question concerning "the subjection that is prosthesis": "can a distinction be made between the subject *of* prosthesis and something or someone subject *to* prosthesis; in other words, to what extent does prosthesis act as a machine of subjection, its parts subject to the hegemonic appropriation of the whole; or conversely, does this prosthesis, a veritable word machine, not reduce to silence a wooden leg and a father who bears it, even as it claims to have them speak?" (ibid.: 155).

Mutatis mutandis, these questions, of course, are equally relevant with regard to the prosthesis and prosthetics in the constellation of postmodern technoculture, in the context of the cyborg and the posthuman (see, for example, Hayles 1999; Gray 2001; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; Zylinska 2002b; with regard to Stelarc, see Massumi 2002: 89–132, 274–276).

Considering the condition of possibility of the posthuman body, the body not only redefined but also reconstituted in terms of prosthetics, a question arises as to whether prosthesis is a utopian or heterotopian figure (cf. Siebers 1994b: 1–10, 20–32). My position is that it is both. In the world of the "post," prosthesis projects a utopian heterotopia, a realm of "otherness," of a body in fragments as the salvation of the subject, of course, the *post*-subject constitutive of the "cyber" (cf., for example, Stone 1994b [1991]: 99–105; Mitchell 1995: 14–15; Poster 1995a: 86–90; Tomas 1995a: 257–258; Tamblyn 1997: 42–44; Gromala 2000 [1996]: 598–601; Hayles 2000: 79–80, 91–92; Kennedy 2000b: 14–15; Bell 2001a: 116–118; Chun 2006: 154–157; O'Riordan 2007: 16–22; Rötzer 1989a). *This is the prosthesis which is not one*: the prosthesis as a signifier of heteroglossia, the heterodoxia of the "post" defining the parameters of body modification in the world of the cyborg.

For this reason, the cyborg in itself, as a prosthetic body-machine hybrid *and* a discursive figure manifesting the logic of hybridization, is a paradigmatic prosthesis of post-theory in terms of the "cyber"; in other words, the imaginary of prosthetic language is the reality of the cyborg, a mode of the imaginary generated by the "free-floating signifiers" of the "post" sublating the real of reality by way of the imaginary (cf. Lacan 1988a [1975/1953–1954]: 73–161, 1988b [1978/1954–1955]: 146–171; Grosz 1994c: 35–48; Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; von Braun 2001; Nusselder 2009); that is, the supremacy of the signifier over the signified defines the condition of possibility of the cyborg (cf. Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]: 149–154, 160): the cyborg is an effect of the prosthetic language enabled by the "cyber" following the generative grammar constitutive of the linguistic matrix of the "post" (cf. Clarke 2002: 34–38; Nguyen 2003: 283–300; Foster 2004: 109–125; Paterson 2007: 103–126; Brahm & Driscoll 1995; in terms of the "emancipation of prostheses," cf. Flessner 1991, 2002).

This is the seduction of what I call *prosthetic fetishism*, a mode of theory in terms of the "post" in which the theory object and the theory in itself are both prosthetic constructions, post-theoretical manifestations of desire, the prime mover of the "post." This is the world of the cyborg, the universe of the technological imaginary in which the posthuman constantly reconstitutes itself by means of Derridean "supplementation" (see Derrida 1997: 140–164) as an endless substitution in the manner of Derridean "dissemination" (see Derrida 1981b [1972/1969]). That is, the "post," as the linguistic prosthesis of post-theory, enables the fetishization of prosthetic theory. In this context, prosthesis is not a substitute for the sexual object; rather, *prosthesis in itself is a sexual object that functions as a theory fetish of prosthetic theory* (for the idea of the fetish, see Freud 1972e [1927]: 314–317; Marx 1983 [1867]: 85–98; Williams 1989: 93–119; Krips 1999; Fernbach 2002; Böhme 2006). In other words, what is "theoretical" in post-theory is simultaneously something "sexual," and what is "sexual" is an *effect* of the "theoretical."

Thus, in terms of prosthetics, the terms of the posthuman, the question, "do artifacts have politics," posed by Langdon Winner (1980), has a new meaning. If there is anything transcendental in post-theory, it is about the pleasure of

prosthetic fetishism: prosthesis as an imaginary object in the realm of the technological sublime, the virtual reality of language in terms of the "cyber."

At the same time, the "cyber" signals a transformation of culture to a post-mobile state of being in the mode of "mobile privatisation" (Zielinski 1999: 298): you do not have to go to the world, instead, the world now comes to you. The only thing you need to do is to remain connected to the interface, your personal "bio-adapter" implying a *glücks-anzug*, a "happiness-suit" (Wiener 1969: 242–249, 1996: 48–53, 1989 [1988], 1999; cf. Reichardt 1978: 119; Mainzer 1995: 568–582; Harrasser 2004: 184–186; Buurman 2005: 60–61; Finger 2006: 145–150), a medium of postcorporeal becoming, and, thus, mesmerized by the unending virtual worlds at your disposal you are able to transcend time and space and be everywhere at the same time without moving your body at all. In other words, extreme mobility in a state of absolute immobility as the most advanced mode of being of the post-subject, implying the ecstasy effected by the implosion of the self. In this sense, what I call *virtual kinetics* is substituted for the real mobility of the body. In the virtual reality of cyberspace, in its unending hyperspace of simulacra, the body-doubles or avatars of the cyber-subject "live" a *transmobile* life, a mode of being in which spaces and distances exist in a post-McLuhanian "allatonceness": "'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished"; "[w]e now live in a global village … a simultaneous happening," in a "state of active interplay" (McLuhan & Fiore 1967: 63).

That is, in the world ruled by technoscience, a cultural form based on a total rationalization in terms of the technological imperative, "we have put our central nervous system outside us in electric technology" (McLuhan 1964: 60; in terms of "the New Media Age," cf. Zylinska 2002a), and, for this reason, at the same time as this kind of *auto-extension* of the body, its desires and pleasures, entails – at least in the imaginary of the technological – a post-Nietzschean ecstasy of being enabled to exceed the limits of organic corporeality by an empowerment of the body as a technoscientific ego-body in its exalted "bodyness" – *Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und nichts ausserdem; und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe* (Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 35; for the Nietzschean *grosse Gesundheit*, "great health," see Nietzsche 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 335–336, 1973a [1882/1887]: 317–318); in terms of Nietzschean *Rausch*, see Nietzsche 1969d [1889]: 110–112, 1972a [1872]: 22–26; cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 91–106, 114–124; Caysa 2000; in the context of the posthuman, see Zylinska 2002b) – it implies a "suicidal auto-amputation, as if the central nervous system could no longer depend on the physical organs" (McLuhan 1964: 53; cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 248). This is *the postmodern parallax vision of prosthetics*: artificial organs as both the rebirth and premature death of the sensory body, the ultimate termination of the *human* body that is able to sense itself, to experience its existence through its own sense organs.

In other words, *the end of the human being as a sentient and sensuous being in its own organic body is the beginning of the posthuman*, the birth of the cyborg as

a *prosthetically enhanced exo-corporeal being*, the ultimate embodiment of the postmodern prosthetic God as a technoscientific hybrid.

This is the world of cybersex, a world of sexual desires and pleasures in which, as Haraway says above, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves."

2.2 Towards the Sexual-Technological Complex of the Postmodern

In the light of the discussion above, it is obvious that the sexual has taken on a new meaning in contemporary culture, and, as a consequence, among other things, as Parisi says above, the sexual becomes a new dimension of the prosthetic, and vice versa. In other words, as Vivian Sobchack (2004: 9) remarks, "the prosthetic" has become a manifestation of "sexiness" on the theory scene of the postmodern. Thus, "the prosthetic" now appears less "in its ordinary usage, as a specific material replacement of a missing limb or body part" and more as "a sexy, new metaphor that, whether noun or (more frequently) adjective, has become tropological currency for describing a vague and shifting constellation of relationships among bodies, technologies, and subjectivities" (ibid.: 207).

But, in fact, what is prosthesis in this context? To approach this question, it is appropriate to recall one of the origins of postmodern prosthetics.

> The bartender's smile widened. His ugliness was the stuff of legend. In an age of affordable beauty, there was something heraldic about his lack of it. The antique arm whined as he reached for another mug. It was *a Russian military prosthesis*, a seven-function force-feedback manipulator, cased in grubby pink plastic. (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 9; emphasis mine)

Needless to say, this is science fiction – although, firstly, in the world of post-theory, it is not self-evident at all what the "science" in science fiction is, and, secondly, in the contemporary world, as Haraway (1991a: 149) wants us to believe, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (in terms of cultural studies as radical epistemological scepticism, cf. Norris 1993: 257–303; Bonnell & Hunt 1999b).[42] This description of a "Russian military prosthesis" is a short passage from William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, the book of books in terms of the "cyber," the novel with which it all began (cf. Wolmark 1999b: 6–9); a story in which all kinds of artificial organs and body parts define the course of

42 What I mean by radical epistemological scepticism which, in fact, implies epistemological nihilism, is paradigmatically formulated by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (1999b: 3): "During the 1980s and 1990s, cultural theories, especially those with a postmodernist inflection, challenged the very possibility or desirability of social explanation. Following the lead of Foucault and Derrida, poststructuralists and postmodernists insisted that shared discourses (or cultures) so utterly permeate our perception of reality as to make any supposed scientific explanation of social life simply an exercise in collective fictionalization or mythmaking." This is the world of the Harawayan cyborg, the world of the "cyber," a world in which the "post" dictates the rules of thinking.

everyday life (cf. Ross 1991a: 152–153; in relation to the fascination of Dada with the mechanization of the human being, cf. Bergius 1980, 1981, 1997, 2000).

2.2.1 Life in the Laboratory and the Ego-Politics of Pleasure

In comparison to the prosthesis described by Gibson, there is another way to approach the issue of prosthetics; a way that exceeds the limits of science fiction by bringing us to the world of the "post," the way I am pursuing in the study at hand.

> I have bad history: I am a person who fell in love with her own prostheses. Not once, but twice. Then I fell in love with somebody *else's* prosthesis. (Stone 1995e: 3; cf Sobchack 1995, 2006)

Although this is not science fiction in the literal sense of the term, it is something similar to it. This declaration of love, *prosthetic love* as an affection for the technological extension and augmentation of the body, by Allucquère Rosanne Stone, a celebrated cyber-theorist, belongs to the mode of writing constitutive of post-theory; a mode of linguistic figuration in which theory-fictions establish not only the form and the substance of theory, but the very condition of possibility of being as a perpetual becoming. In Stone's world, prosthesis is not a science fiction fantasy; instead, as a post-theoretical theory-fiction, it is an object of phantasmatic *cathexis* (for the idea of *Besetzung* or *cathexis*, see Freud 1987d: 572, 600, 604–612, 622, 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96), a figure of wishful projections in terms of the "cyber."

Prosthetic Effects of Prosthetic Language

In this context, prosthesis functions as a means of what I call *the ego-politics of the post-subject*, a means of personal amplification and empowerment in terms of body design typical of postmodern culture in an era of, as Gibson says above, "affordable beauty" (cf. Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Terry & Calvert 1997; Featherstone 2000; Siebers 2000; Holliday & Hassard 2001; Johnston 2001b; Gimlin 2002; Quinn 2002; Pitts 2003; Jeffreys 2005; Pitts-Taylor 2007; Savulescu & Bostrom 2010; in terms of the fitness cult turned into "body fascism," cf. Pronger 2002; with regard to the Foucauldian "aesthetics of existence" and "cultivation of the self" in Antiquity, cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]: 49, 1990h [1984]: 39–68).

In the name of the "perfectibility" of the body, under the imperative of cyborg body politics, "we become responsible for the design of our own bodies" (Giddens 1991: 102). In the postmodern condition, according to Celia Lury (1998), we live now even in what she calls "prosthetic culture" in which the "self-identity" is "no longer defined by the edict 'I think, therefore I am'"; rather, one is now "constituted in the relation, 'I can, therefore I am'" (ibid.: 3). Thus, the postmodern subject, as an appropriate form of subjectivity determined by technological modification, is a mode of the self that, as David C. Chaney (2000: 120), referring

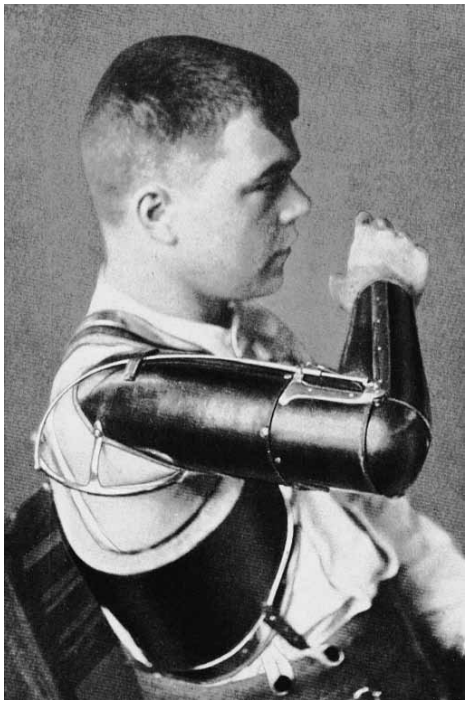


Fig. 15–16. On the basis of his surgical experiments during the first years of the First World War, Ferdinand Sauerbruch (1875–1951) constructed a new type of prosthetic arm known as the *Sauerbrucharm* (on the left).

The results of his experiments Sauerbruch published in 1916 in his book entitled *Die willkürlich bewegbare künstliche Hand*, "The Voluntarily Movable Artificial Hand." Although the mechanical principle of movable fingers in the prosthetic hand was already introduced by Peter Ballif in 1812, the innovation of the *Sauerbrucharm* was that it combined the construction of the prosthetic hand with a new surgical technique that enabled the restoration of the functionality of the lost hand, not in its original sense, but as the artificial functionality of the prosthetic hand (see, for example, Schönle 2001: 121–129; Karpa 2004: 21–24, 36–70, 114, 122–125, 197–199).

Prosthetics as a form of postmodern techno-art: Stelarc's *Third Hand*, constructed in 1980, used in performances by the artist between 1980–1998 (on the right). The idea of the *Third Hand* was to explore the "intimate interface of technology and prosthetic augmentation – not as a replacement but rather as an addition to the body" (Stelarc 2012). That is, "[a] prosthesis not as a sign of lack, but rather *a symptom of excess*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; in terms of the posthuman, see Farnell 2000a, 2000b).

In this sense, Stelarc's *Third Hand* performances, as artistic experiments with an amplified body, have substantially contributed to the discursive construction of the cyborg (see, for example, Dery 1996: 154–168; Birringer 1998: 59–66; Massumi 2002: 89–132; Clark 2004: 115–142; Salter 2010: 251–253; Zylinska 2002b; Smith 2005; with regard to Marinetti and "the postmodern techno-body," see Zurbrugg 2000b).

to Lury's idea says, is "extended through prostheses," and should therefore no longer be presumed "to be an enclosed, finite entity," but a new kind of being that supersedes an "initial assumption of subjective meaning – intention – and its corollaries of consciousness, memory and embodiment" (Lury 1998: 222). In Chaney's reading, this implies that the "significance of prosthetic culture," then, is that "prostheses or artificial extensions of the self mediate in such a way that they constitute *the self as potentiality*" (Chaney 2000: 120; emphasis mine; in terms of *Weltprothesen* and *Prothesenwelten*, "world-prostheses" and "prosthetic worlds," cf. Flessner 1990). This is the post-Cartesian mode of being in terms of the "cyber": a prosthetic subject as a subject-object of its prosthetic extensions and amplifications, a "self" entirely determined by the technological "other."

What is important here is that in prosthetic culture, the "distinction between individual and context is destabilized," and, accordingly, the relationship

between the subject and the environment is "no longer 'natural'" (Chaney 2000: 120). As a result, the "classification of genre – of gender, class, race, sexuality and age or other natural [sic] or social categories – no longer inhere in the individual"; instead, they are now "seen as the *effects* of mechanical or perceptual prostheses" (Lury 1998: 17; emphasis mine).

In other words, prosthesis, as a prosthetic figure in terms of the "post," has become the constitutive determinant of the subject in contemporary techno-culture: prosthesis is now the very condition of possibility of my being "me," of being "my" self.

According to Žižek (1997b: 134), we are now living in a world of "techno-computerized prostheses," a scientific-technological world in which, on the one hand, "inside is always outside" implying that we are now undergoing a "progressive implantation and replacement of our internal organs," that is, a process of "endocolonization," which is supplemented, on the other hand, by a situation in which "outside is always inside," paradigmatically exemplified by virtual reality technology: "when we are directly immersed in VR, we lose contact with reality," that is, "electro-waves bypass the interaction of external bodies and directly attack our senses" (ibid.). As a result, we experience a new, paradoxical mode of existence in which "the progressive immobilization of the body overlaps with bodily hyperactivity": while "I rely less and less on my proper body," at the same time, "my bodily activity is more and more reduced to giving signals to machines which do the work for me" (ibid.; cf. Virilio 1995 [1993], 1997 [1995]; Flusser 1998 [1994]).

This emerging existential situation, according to Žižek (1997b: 135), opens up the prospect that "the human being will gradually lose its grounding in the concrete life-world": "the basic set of co-ordinates which determine its (self-)experience." This is the prosthetic condition of the postmodern, a constellation in which the body-subject can no longer *exist* without its prosthetic paraphernalia:

> Potentially, total subjectivization (the reduction of reality to an electro-mechanically generated cyberspace "window") coincides with total objectivization (the subordination of our "inner" bodily rhythm to a set of stimulations regulated by external apparatuses). No wonder Stephen Hawking is emerging as one of the icons of our time: the mind of a genius (or so we are told), but in a body which is almost totally "mediatized," supported by prostheses, speaking with an artificial, computer-generated voice. Hawking's active contact with his surroundings is limited to a weak pressure he is still able to exert with his fingers of his right hand. In short, his popular appeal cannot be separated form his debilitating illness – from the fact that his body, reduced to an immobile mass of flesh, kept functioning by mechanical prostheses and contacting the world through clicking a computer mouse, tells us something about the general state of subjectivity today. (ibid.)

It is precisely in this way that Stone, in her techno-euphoric eulogy of the posthuman, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, celebrates Stephen Hawking as the apotheosis of the prostheticization of the human body. While "a serious part of Hawking extends into the box in

his lap," conversely, "[i]n mirror image, a serious part of that silicon and plastic assemblage in his lap extends into him as well" (Stone 1995e: 5). In general, "discourses of medical technology and their physical accretions already permeate him and us" (ibid.). That is, "[n]o box, no discourse; in the absence of the prosthetic, Hawking's intellect becomes a tree falling in the forest with nobody around to hear it" (ibid.).

We are this tree now – except that it is prosthetic machines surrounding us that not only hear us falling, but, more fundamentally, support our fall.

This is the point at which, according to Žižek (1997b: 135–136), we encounter what he calls "the loop of (symbolic) castration, in which one endeavours to reinstate the lost 'natural' co-ordination on the ladder of desire" by various artificial extensions and supplements of the body (from computers to bodybuilding, from jogging to perfumes). This "paradox" of loss/compensation is "condensed in the phallus as the *signifier* of desire – as the point of inversion at which the very moment of 'spontaneous' natural power turns into an artificial prosthetic element" (ibid.: 136). The "point of Lacan's concept of the phallus as a *signifier*," as Žižek explains, is that "the phallus 'as such' *is* a kind of 'prosthetic,' 'artificial' supplement: it designates the point at which the big Other, a decentred agency, supplements the subject's failure" (ibid.). That is, as castrated subjects we are prosthetic subjects, and as prosthetic subjects we are castrated subjects. In other words, our loss is our recovery, and vice versa, our recovery is our loss (cf. Jain 1999; Kurzman 2001; Nelson 2001a, 2001b; Drucker 2002; in terms of real prosthetics during and after the First World War, cf. Panchasi 1995; Herschbach 1997; Fineman 1999; Perry 2002).

This is the prosthetic logic of contemporary world in which the techno-imaginary is the predominant source of signification. What does this mean?

> When Judith Butler, in her criticism of Lacan, emphasizes the parallel between mirror-image (ideal-ego) and phallic signifier, one should shift the focus to the feature they effectively share: both mirror-image and phallus *qua* signifier are "prosthetic" supplements for the subject's foregoing dispersal/failure, for the lack of co-ordination and unity; in both cases, the status of this prosthesis is "illusory," with the difference that in the first case we are dealing with imaginary illusion (identification with a decentred immobile image), while in the second, the illusion is symbolic; it stands for phallus as pure semblance. The opposition between the "true," "natural" phallus and the "artificial" prosthetic supplement ("dildo") is thus false and misleading: phallus *qua* signifier is already "in itself" a prosthetic supplement. (This status of phallus also accounts for Lacan's identification of woman with phallus: what phallus and woman share is the fact that their being is reduced to a pure semblance. In so far as feminity is a masquerade, it stands for phallus as the ultimate semblance.) (Žižek 1997b: 136; cf. Žižek 2002c [1991]: xcvii; Berr 1988; Brueggemann 2000)

"Phallus *qua* signifier is already 'in itself' a prosthetic supplement," and it is for this reason that, "*[i]n so far as* feminity is a masquerade, it stands for phallus as the ultimate semblance" (in terms of the phallus as an "avatar" and "abject," cf. Reader 2006) – as we can see, here we have reached *the third order of theory in*

its fourth dimension, the dimension of the surrational in which the imaginary is the highest form of reason.

But why expressly prosthesis? Why does prosthesis, a notion implying an idea of deficient or damaged body, have such a significant function in the theoretical configuration of the "post" defining the linguistic parameters constitutive of the post-theoretical matrix of the "cyber"?

To begin with, as a word "prosthesis" is a Derridean term; it has a double meaning: it is something that replaces a deficiency by adding something that is originally not there, that is, a prosthetic substitution of lack or loss;[43] in this sense, prosthesis is a Derridean "supplement" (see Derrida 1997: 141–164): it is both a *replacement* and an *addition*, a substitution that at the same time is an appendage, an attachment in the sense of adjection and augmentation (see, for example, Sobchack 2004: 207–208; Smith & Morra 2006a: 2; Manning 2007: 117–120, 154–158; Ketabgian 2011: 18–19; Stiegler 2001); thus, the prosthetic implies a duality between "emulating" and "superseding" the human (Wills 1995: 26), a double logic based on the *prosthetic liminality*, the unresolvable ambiguity, of the very notion in itself. In other words, in the prosthetic world of the cyborg, constituted by the prosthetics of language, our task is to obey a Derridean "double law," an "antinomical duplicity" (Derrida 1998 [1996]: 8), of prosthetics in the very terms of language in itself: "1. We only ever speak one language – or rather one idiom only," and, *at the same time*, "2. We never speak only one language – or rather there is no pure idiom" (ibid.). That is, if the prosthetic supplementarity is built-in in language in general, the more it is the linguistic basis of the language of prosthetics as the prosthetic language of the "cyber" that works by appropriating linguistic figures of the "post" as its prosthetic supplements.

In other words, the prosthetic language of the "cyber" is a linguistic hybrid, an idiom in which the tropes of the "cyber," deriving from science fiction, and the theoretical figures, deriving from post-theory, function as prosthetic supplements of one another.

The Sexual Body as a Phantasm of Technoscientific Reason

Transposing the Derridean idea of linguistic double-coding to the register of the machinic, we have the cyborgian equation of bodies and machines of contemporary technoculture; in Mark C. Taylor's (1997: 330) words, "bodies are

43 Etymologically, according to a standard definition, the *word* "prosthesis" (from the Greek *πρόσθεσις*, to put to, add, and hence, addition) has two principal meanings: (1) in the grammatical sense: the "addition of a letter or syllable at the beginning of a word"; (2) in medicine, the "part of surgery which consists in supplying deficiencies, as by artificial limbs or teeth, or by other means," and in this sense, an "artificial replacement for a part of the body" (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1989: 672). In the first sense of prosthesis, "cyber," as a prefix, has a similar function as a syllable, and it thus extends or changes the meaning of the word it is attached to; that is, "cyber" is a linguistic prosthesis that is constitutive of cyber discourse, a postmodern discourse that plays, in the second sense of prosthesis, with the idea of a prosthetic modification (extension, amplification, enhancement, augmentation) of the human body. In both of these senses, cyber discourse works as *a prosthetic language*.

prostheses of machines as much as machines are prostheses of bodies." That is, as a prosthetic hybrid, the cyborg implies, as David Wills (2001: 130) says, "an originary *prosthetization* of the animate" in terms of Derridean "supplementation, articulation, and grafting" (cf. Hayles 1999: 3, 34, 126–129, 290–291; Derrida 2002b [1993]: 244). In this sense, there is no cyborg without prosthetics as the *originary* reason, the very *raison d'être*, of its constitution (cf. Roach & Richardson 2000: 53–54, 59–60). But what is important here is that the prosthetic construction of the cyborg is an effect of the prosthetic language of the "cyber," which, in turn, is a supplementary language of the "post" (in terms of "the cybernetic matrix of 'French Theory,'" cf. Lafontaine 2007; with regard to connections between Lacan and cybernetics, cf. Liu 2011).

From this perspective, prosthesis is both etymologically and historically a notion that implies not only deficiency, or, in its most explicit sense, amputation, but also artificiality and, as its assumed reverse side, originality, which, however, is precisely questioned by the very idea of artificiality. No wonder that in the world of the "post" (a prefix that in itself is a typical postmodern *linguistic prosthesis*), as prosthetic theorists Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra (2006a: 2) state, prosthesis as an "addition, a replacement, and also an extension, an augmentation, and an enhancement," has become a "staple in the armory of metaphors or tropes" that are utilized by contemporary theorists to theorize relations between the body and technology and, in this manner, to contribute to a "conception of prosthetic lives in our posthuman times" (cf., for example, Hayles 1999: 3, 34, 115–130, 291; Gray 2001: 70–74, 89–90, 99, 104–106, 149–154, 187, 193; Graham 2002: 126, 136–147, 185–188, 194–209, 223, 229; Callus & Herbrechter 2004a: 231–236, 240–245; Sobchack 2004: 168–183, 188–191, 204–223; Haney 2006: 2–3, 21, 34–35, 61; Waters 2006: 42–43, 53–54, 64–65, 73–74; Wolfe 2009: 35–36, 185–186, 194–201, 295; Wills 1995; Jain 1999; Zylinska 2002b; Smith & Morra 2006b; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008). As George P. Landow, already noticed at the beginning of the 1990s:

> Transferring the term *prosthesis* from the field of rehabilitation (itself an intriguing term) gathers a fascinating, appalling congeries of emotion and need that accurately conveys the attitudes contemporary academics and intellectuals in the humanities hold toward technology. (Landow 1992: 170)

No wonder either that, to a "perhaps worrying extent, 'the prosthetic' has taken on a life of its own," and, "[f]ollowing closely on the heels of the appeal of the cyborg," it has thus "begun to assume an epic status that is out of proportion with its abilities to fulfil our ambitions for it" (Smith & Morra 2006a: 2). As a result, during the last two decades, as David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (1997a: 8) critically remark, "the prosthetic" has led to a "metaphorical opportunism" that deploys "disabled bodies as proof of our fascination with 'cyborglike' prosthetic enhancement" (cf. Mitchell & Snyder 2000: 74–75; Silvers 2002: 232–235; for paradigmatic examples of this kind of "metaphorical opportunism," see Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b). In contemporary theory, the idea of prosthesis, in fact, has been turned upside down: where once a factual

notion, referring to disability, was to be found we have now a theoretical figure, *a postmodern theory toy* (in terms of a "philosophical toy," cf. Michelson 1984), that signals the overwhelming superiority of the "posthuman" being as the paragon of prosthetic life entailing a limitless ability, instead of disability that has defined the idea of prosthesis up until now (cf., for example, Angerer 2002; Angerer et al. 2002; Barkhaus & Fleig 2002; Weber & Bath 2003; Bath et al. 2005; Ach & Pollmann 2006; in terms of "postmortal society," cf. Lafontaine 2010 [2008]; from a utopian perspective, cf. Berthoud 2007).[44]

The postmodern theory-body is a post-utopian body, a post-body in which the utopian has turned into "the theoretical" in terms of the "post": the terms of "de," "dis" and "trans"; that is, as a cyborgian trans-body, deconstructing and disrupting the "normality" of the "normal" body, the post-body is a prosthetic anti-body of the very idea of "the normal," a transgressive body in its radical liminality.

Taking this into account, my idea, with regard to "sex" in terms of the "cyber," is that what is the "post" in the posthuman, in fact, is a logical consequence of the discourse on the "post" as a very *prosthetic effect* of a circular movement of theory constitutive of all that is "post": a mirror reflecting *a mirror reflecting a mirror* in the manner of abysmal self-reflection reflecting the very logic of the "post."

In this manner, the logic of the "post" follows the same logic as the sexual: the libidinal logic of desire, a logic that Derrida (1997: 145–161) calls the logic of the supplement in which the idea of supplementation, like in prosthetics, means both substitution and addition. Accordingly, I will be arguing that what for Derrida is a question of supplementarity as the double movement of linguistic supplementation is, in the world of the cyborg, about the prosthesis as a way of supplementing not so much what is lacking (prosthesis as *restitution*), but, rather, a way of augmenting and extending the abilities and capacities of the body (prosthesis as *reconstruction*); the body, *nota bene*, not as a biological organism, but as a prosthetic construction from the very beginning effected by the scientific-technological discourse under the sign of the "cyber" in the discursive matrix of the "post." In this sense, according to N. Katharine Hayles (1999: 3), "the posthuman view thinks of the body as *the original prosthesis* we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born" (emphasis mine; cf. Erlach 2000: 112–114, 136–149; Irrgang 2005: 171–175; Berr 1989, 1990).

44 The difference between prosthetics as a mode of postmodern linguistic figuration and as a means of real-life corporeal rehabilitation is clearly demonstrated in the study of "modern histories of prosthetics" by Katherine Ott, David Serlin and Stephen Mihm (2002). "Rather than theorizing a post-structuralist body or using prosthetics as metaphors for other things, the contributors to this anthology take a material culture approach to their subject," as Ott (2002: 3) remarks in her introduction. Referring to Haraway and her followers, Ott reminds the reader that "such explorations tend to ignore the preexisting historical complexities" (ibid.). Therefore, material and social studies of prosthetics are able to "provide a more intimate and compelling history of embodied technology than any postmodern cyborg can account for" (ibid.). In Excursus 3 and Chapter 4, I will contrast in detail the difference between postmodern prosthetic rhetorics and the historical reality of prosthetic rehabilitation.

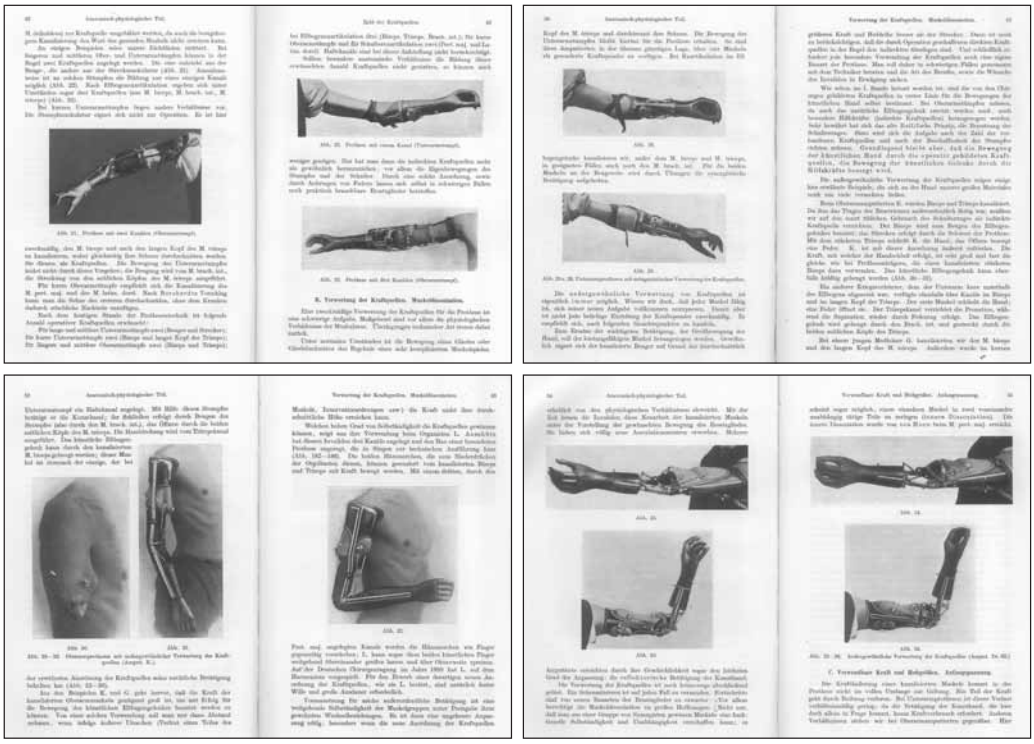


Fig. 17–20. Examples of *Sauerbrucharm* in which the extension of the arm and the grasping movements of the hand are enabled by a mechanism in which the remaining musculature is used as the power source of the prosthetic fingers (see Sauerbruch & ten Horn 1923: 41–43).

In 1915, working together with Aurel Stodola, a professor of mechanics at the Polytechnical Institute of Zurich, Sauerbruch invented a new surgical method, *muscle tunnel cineplasty*, to modify the residual limb so that its muscles could be used to control the prosthetic hand. In this technique, tunnels were constructed in the muscles of the stump in which ivory pins were inserted thereby connecting the prosthesis to the muscles by means of wires and levers operating the hand mechanism. Through this mechanism, the muscle movements were transmitted to the prosthetic fingers thus making various hand grips possible (see ibid.: 43–61; Karpa 2004: 38–44, 81–88, 180–182, 199–203; Rauschmann et al. 2001).

In his pioneering work, Sauerbruch was "one of the first surgeons to recommend multidisciplinary scientific and engineering endeavors in rehabilitation" (Brandt & Pope 1997: 28). "Sauerbruch relied heavily on muscle physiologists and anatomists to assist him with decisions about how to successfully bring muscle forces outside the body using the surgical procedure of tunnel cineplasty, a technique that he advanced at an army hospital in Germany" (ibid.). Speaking of his multidisciplinary approach, Sauerbruch emphasized that "[h]encetoforth, surgeon, physiologist, and technician will have to work together" (ibid.; in terms of cyborg technology, cf. Herr et al. 2003; with regard to Stelarc's "third hand," cf. Clark 2004: 115–123; Giannachi 2004: 55–59; Nayar 2004: 254–257; Salter 2010: 252–253).

Thus, prosthetics in the world of the "post" is an effect of *the prosthetic language of the posthuman* that functions in the mode of Derridean supplementation; *a language of desire that works by means of linguistic prostheses in, of and by itself*. In this sense, the "post" is the emblem of the epistemological crisis constitutive of the postmodern; a crisis in the condition of which knowledge, in the strong sense of *Erkenntnis*, is only a mode of prosthetic language as a libidinal language typical of the "post." If, in the postmodern, there is anything "radical," it is the very "post" of the postmodern: prosthetic substitution as prosthetic supplementation by means of the linguistic figures effected by the "post" itself.

This is a new kind of "circular causal" logic enabled by post-theory, the logic of *feedback* as "cybernetic" reversibility in terms of the "originary" and "supple-

mentary" constitutive of the world of the "post" (in terms of Wienerian cybernetics, cf. Wiener 1961 [1948]: 8, 24, 147; Heims 1980: 203, 1993 [1991]: 15–16, 80, 217–218, 250; Wolfe 2000: 175–176; von Foerster 1950, 2003a [1979], 2003b [1974]). And it is in this sense, that, in my reading of the prosthetic, as soon as one begins to speak of prosthesis in terms of the "post," it is the prosthesis in itself that brings about its own phantoms, its own phantomatic language, its own imaginary that I call *prosthetic phantomatics* which is the very substance of prosthetic theory in the linguistic configuration of the "post," and, accordingly, the non-essential essence of the cyborg, its post-theoretical condition of possibility in terms of the "cyber."

Finally, as a logical corollary, if the sexual in itself is a mode of cybernetic reversability, what is cybersex if not an effect of prosthetic phantomatics of the "cyber" extended and enhanced by the prosthetic figuration of the "post."

In the world of the "post," not only the "sexual" but also the "theoretical" is a manifestation of the liquid libido driving the panic body forward, a mode of postmodern desire effected by the commodified imaginary of neoliberal capitalism substituting spectral objects for the absence of the real, a form of desire that reigns both post-theory and cyber discourse as its techno-imaginary derivation.

It is from this linguistic matrix of prosthetic language that the idea of cybersex emerges. At once as a techno-avantgardist theory-fiction and post-sexual phantasm of postmodern culture, cybersex is an imaginary technology that implies a two-fold desire: a desire for both a prosthetic enhancement of the body and a virtualization of corporeality; that is, *a desire for organs without a body* implying *a desire for disembodiment* in the last instance (cf. Muri 2003: 73–79, 82, 89; Boler 2010: 186–187). This desire is an effect of the libidinal language constitutive of the "cyber"; a desire that in itself is an effect of language in the mode of the "post." In this sense, the "cyber" is part of what Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (1992b: xii) call "postmodernist celebrations of the technological sublime" (cf. Carey 1989: 120–123; Jameson 1991: 34–38; Marx 1970 [1964]): a vertiginous moment experienced in the face of the omnipotence of technology manifested by the imaginary of "the technological" (cf. Marcus 1995; von Braun 2001; Flichy 2007a [2001]). It is this vertigo of signification in terms of the technological sublime that is the source of desire in the world of the "cyber" (cf. Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996), its inexhaustible fountainhead of the libidinal language enabling the phantasmatic idea of cybersex as the ultimate form of prosthetic sex.

In these terms, I shall be problematizing the prosthetic construction of cybersex (the prosthetic in the sense of both language and technology) in the context embracing post-sex, the posthuman body and what I call *the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern* (cf. Firestone 1970: 170–186; Rose & Hanmer 1976: 148–159; Lublin 1998: 23–34; Lenz 2004: 39–40; Wajcman 2004: 19–21; Corea 1985; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Farquhar 1996; Hopkins 1998; Graumann & Schneider 2003; Lenz et al. 2004). While it is appropriate to ask what the "cyber" in cybersex is, it is equally important to ask what it is that con-

stitutes "the sexual" in terms of the "cyber" – provided, of course, that cybersex has anything at all to do with *the sexual* in the first place.

As a notion, the sexual-technological complex is in itself a complex concept; it embraces a conceptual assemblage of (1) the biological functions of the body pertaining to sex and sexuality, (2) sexual difference and gender relations, (3) structures and directions of desire, (4) practices and acts of pleasure, (5) social and cultural organization of the forms of sexual relationships, and (6) the societal management of procreation, all of which are affected today not only by medical and biological but also media technologies. That is, in contemporary culture sex and sexuality have become part and parcel of the technological transformation of the body (cf. Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Baker 2000a, 2000b). In other words, in the conditions of the sexual-technological complex, all that is sexual is understood as a matter of technological control, regulation and modification: today, the sexual body is a phantasm of technoscientific reason, an object of scientific-technological body design (see, for example, Bogard 1996: 153–178; Gray 2001: 87–97, 104–107, 135–138, 143–160; Marshall 2003: 123–130; Hopkins 1998; Parisi 2004; Waskul 2004a; Ferrell 2006; Inhorn 2007; Inhorn et al. 2009; from a historical perspective, see Maines 2001; for a classic science fiction vision, see Huxley 1994a [1932]). This is the idea of what I call *life in the laboratory* (see Eerikäinen 2002).

Kant's Sexual Rationalism in Terms of the "Post"

My purpose is to show that in the world of post-theory, language, technology and sexuality are intertwined in a conceptual configuration, or rather, a figurative matrix, *constructed by means of linguistic prosthetics*, in which epistemology and ontology have imploded into one another, and, as a result, all that we now have is writing: *what you write is what you get*, and vice versa. In this sense, the "post" is about the ultimate abolition of the Kantian *das Ding an sich* (see, for example, Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 75–78, 1990b [1781/1787]: 460–464, 1988b [1783]; Irrlitz 2002: 172–174): under the sign of the "post" we live in a world in which language has not only subsumed all that is, but, more fundamentally, *in terms of both ontology and epistemology, language is the primordial Being of all beings*, the very basis of all that exists (cf. Heidegger 1977d [1927], 1985e [1959], 1989a [1936–1938]): the syntactic has taken the place of the semantic, and analysis has been replaced by prosthetics. This is the world of what I call *post-reason*, a mode of reason in which all that is rational is effected by various language games that, in turn, themselves effect what they speak about (cf. Bertens 1995: 124–134; Lyotard 1984 [1979]). It is in the linguistic configuration of post-reason that the imaginary determines what is rational, which, in turn, enables the mode of writing in terms of the surrational (cf. Baudrillard 1990b [1983], 1990f [1979]; Haraway 1997).

What is the problem here? It can be illustrated by a detour to a problem constellation concerning the relations between the referent and what Linda Hutcheon (1988: 142) calls "historiographic metafiction"; a postmodern literary genre

that tries to efface the separation between "fiction" and "reality" by conflating the mode of description with what is described, and intends thus to demonstrate that both of them are constituted "in and as discourse" (ibid.). In this manner, the external referent ("the world") and its "metafictive reflexivity" (ibid.) expressed by means of literary language implode into one another: the work of art is now in and by itself the "world" of which it is the fictional reflexion, and both are inseparable, inextricably intertwined levels or spheres of the *same* discursive configuration. But – and here, indeed, is a "but" – what Hutcheon terms as "discursive narcissism" – in my reading, metafictive *self*-reflexivity *as* a literary reflexion of an "extra"-literary world – is actually "what connects the fictional to the historical in a more material sense" (ibid.). This is the "materiality" of the signifier constitutive of post-theory; thus, what matters in these terms is the "matter" of discourse, the *materia prima* in the world of the "post" (cf. Butler 1993).

In short, if it is the "discursive" that enables the "material" we are in a neo-scholastic world of radical nominalism in which *nomina sunt realia*, "names are real things" (for the scholastic debate between nominalists and realists in terms of *universalia sunt realia ante rem*, *universalia sunt in re* and *universalia sunt nomina post rem*, see, for example, Stegmüller 1978; for a philosophical discussion of naming in relation to believing, see Fitch 1987). That is, signifiers have substance while the signifieds they refer to are mere shadows, delusory appearances, phantomatic objects in their spectral presence; in other words, entities which have only an imaginary existence; in these terms, signifieds belong to the category of *trompe-l'œil*. Thus, things that are nameable exist, and, conversely, unnameable things are non-existent; or, in terms of the "post," *what you write is what you get*.

Just as Duchamp's ironic readymades that questioned not only the work of art *as* a work of art, but, more fundamentally, the whole idea of art and the art world as its institutional context, what happens now is that "postmodern art forms" (Hutcheon 1988: 142), *as discursive constructs*, *by being art*, problematize the assumed external referents, the world in itself. Referring to Foucault, Hutcheon explains what is at issue here:

> Think of Jasper Johns's parodic flags and targets: do they refer to real flags and targets or to the standard representations of them – or both? When Magritte's painting of a pipe asserts "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," it points toward what was to become a paradox of linguistic and visual postmodern reference, with both its ontological and its epistemological contradictions. (ibid.; cf. Foucault 1983c [1973])

This is the problem of post-theory: does it refer – or, rather, *is it able to refer* – to something extra-theoretical, or does it *always already* refer just to itself, or, *somehow*, to both? In other words, is there anything like a "real world" in the context of post-theory? Or is it what we call "real" here an empty notion, a conceptual convention, or even what I term a theory-fiction? These are questions that not only pertain to the status of the ontological and the epistemological, but to the very condition of possibility of a *distinction* between them in the contemporary world, and especially in its theoretical reflexion, the world of the "post."

But this is not merely the problem of the art world and its radicalization in post-theory. This is a problem of being subject in a world in which the logic of the "post" intrudes into the mode of life in its entirety. This is the problem of what Victor Burgin (1986: 49) calls "the 'post-modernist' subject."

> The "post-modernist" subject must live with the fact that not only are its languages "arbitrary" but it is *itself* an "effect of language," a precipitate of the very symbolic order of which the humanist subject supposed itself to be the master. "Must live with," *but nevertheless* may live "as if" its condition were other than it is; may live "as if" the grand narrative of humanist history, "the greatest story ever told," were not yet, long ago, over – over at the turn of the century, with Marx, Freud, and Saussure; over with nuclear weaponry and micro-chip technology; over, in the second half of the twentieth century, with the ever increasing political consciousness of women and the "third world." (ibid.)

This is what Lyotard (1984 [1979]) calls the "postmodern condition" (also referred to here by Burgin); a situation in which *all* certainties of solid grounds not only of language and knowledge, but, more fundamentally, of being in the world and the world in itself have evaporated – precisely in the manner Marx and Engels (1975 [1848]: 46) described the new world at the beginning of the modern era, the era of capitalism: "All that is solid melts into air" (cf. Berman 1988 [1982]). If there is a concise definition of the "post," it is given here, in Marx and Engels's characterization of a new world ruled by the imperative of capital, the imperative of surplus value.

What does this mean in terms of the sexual? "The sexual" as the conceptual condition of possibility constitutive of sex and sexuality is permeated in the world of the "post" by a new kind of sexual rationalism. If, in Immanuel Kant's (1991c [1797/1798]: 389) world of reason, it was possible to rationalize the *Geschlechtsgemeinschaft (commercium sexuale)* (in contemporary terms, sexual relationship implying sexual intercourse) to a lawful agreement meaning a "mutual use" of the sexual organs legitimated by a new kind of *Sittlichkeit*, a rational-pragmatic morality: *der wechselseitige Gebrauch, den ein Mensch von eines anderen Geschlechtsorganen und Vermögen macht (usus membrorum et facultatum sexualium alterius)* (for a critical discussion of Kant's conception of reason in relation to eros, see Schott 1993 [1988]; cf. Jauch 1989), now the very idea of "the sexual" has been challenged by the reason of the postmodern in the light of which everything has become ambiguous and thus undefinable: all that is "sexual" has turned into something that is both fictional and fictitious (cf. Moore 1995; Lancaster 2003).[45] As Jean Baudrillard (1990g [1979]: 129), the

45 In English, there is a difference between "fictional" and "fictitious": while *fictional* refers (1) to something invented by the imagination or feigned (specifically, an invented story), (2) to an assumption of a possibility as a fact irrespective of the question of its truth, even as a useful illusion or pretence, and (3) to the action of feigning or creating with imagination, in contrast, *fictitious* is understood (1) to be of, relating to, or characteristic of fiction (in the sense of the imaginary), (2) to be conventionally or hypothetically assumed or accepted (for example, a fictitious concept, or, of a name, false, assumed), and (3) to be something not genuinely felt (see, for example, Merriam-Webster OnLine). All these aspects somehow hover over the sexual in the postmodern: one is never sure whether it is something "fictional" and "fictitious," or even both, or something different altogether. This is the idea of what I call post-sex, "sex" as a simulation of itself. For this reason, I also speak of the enigma of the sexual (see Chapter 1).

most sensitive seismograph of the postmodern, says, "[n]othing today is less certain than sex, behind the liberation of its discourse"; and "[n]othing is less certain than desire today, behind the liberation of its figures."

In terms of what Baudrillard calls "sexual reason" (ibid.), a question arises as to whether precisely this uncertainty, this very indeterminacy in terms of the sexual, postulated by Baudrillard, regarding to desires and pleasures under the sign of "sex," is the "sexual reason" of the postmodern (cf. Owen 1994: 182–188; Ahmed 1998: 105–113).

In a specific sense, this is a question concerning the *idea* of cybersex, "sex" in cyberspace by means of the prosthetic organs of the cyborg, post-sex as a technological assemblage in the present future of the "post" (see, for example, Rötzer 1994: 109; Dery 1996: 183–225; Badley 2000: 75–79; Zylinska 2001: 169–170; Ingwersen 2002: 172–175; Smith 2002: 270–273; Shields 2003: 72; Bartle 2004: 508–555; Dekker 2004: 160–161; Parisi 2004: 1–4, 8–10; Perniola 2004: 28–36; Wajcman 2004: 62–70, 2006: 99–109; Vint 2007: 134–137; Collins 2008: 119–120, 124–127; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87; Holmes & Federman 2010: 74–77; Rheingold 1990; Velena 1994, 1998 [1995]; Stenslie 1996, 2000b, 2006; Kudsi-Zadeh 1997; Krewani 1998b; Tikka 2001; Gillis 2004).

In cybersex, according to Stella Koh (2005: 222) "the computer acts as a prosthesis," and it is in this manner that not only the "act of having cybersex blurs the boundaries between 'human' and 'machine'" (ibid.), but, more fundamentally, through the prostheticization of what counts as "sexual," the "experience of cybersex threatens the difference between the imaginary and the real" (ibid.). Thus, the "seepage of the real into the virtual realm" that is constitutive of all that is "cyber," can be seen "most clearly in the phenomenon of cybersex, where sex has become hyperreal," and "simulations have displaced the real" (ibid.: 223). In terms of the cyborgization of the body, this implies that the "human-machine distinction dissolves in the act of cybersex, where the human 'morphs' into a cyborg" (ibid.).

The Technological Redesign of the Body

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, after the publication of the first part of his history of sexuality (Foucault 1990k [1976]), Foucault discussed various forms of non-reproductive sexuality in conferences and interviews (see Foucault 1996f [1989]; Macey 1994 [1993]: 362–377; Miller 1994 [1993]: 245–284; cf. Bristow 1997: 186–188), and especially emphasized the possibilities of what he called a "desexualization of pleasure" (Miller 1994: 263); that is, a liberation of the body from the regime of sex in the sense of *le sexe*. In addition to such themes as S/M practices and drugs, Foucault also spoke about the bathhouse as an institution that facilitates making "contact with a strange body" (ibid.). The bathhouse, as Foucault had experienced it in the gay culture of San Francisco, appeared to him as a model of overcoming the constraints of the sexual practices determined by heteronormal sexuality or heteronormality (cf. Butler 1990, 1993; Halperin 1997 [1995]; Berlant & Warner 1999).

> I think that it is politically important that sexuality is able to function as it functions in the bathhouses. You meet men there who are to you as you are to them: *nothing but a body with which combinations and productions of pleasure are possible*. You cease to be imprisoned in your own face, in your own past, in your own identity. It is regrettable that such places for erotic experience do not exist for heterosexuals. For would it not, in effect, be marvellous to have the power, at any hour of day or night, to enter a place equipped with all the comforts and all the possibilities that one might imagine, and *to meet there a body at once tangible and fugitive*. (Miller 1994: 264; emphasis mine)

What was important for Foucault in the microcosm of personal and social freedom of the bathhouse, experienced and theorized as a part of gay culture, was that there is an "exceptional possibility in this context to desubjectify oneself in the sense of desubjugating oneself"; that is, "to desexualize oneself," by forming a "non-identity" through a "kind of plunge beneath the water sufficiently prolonged that one returns from it with none of this appetite, with none of this torment one sometimes still feels even after satisfying sexual relationships" (ibid.).[46] In other words, anonymous, promiscuous and instantaneous sex, sex without obligations, sex without the day after: sex as a moment of pure pleasure; that is, *instant sex* as the most avantgardist form of contingent encounters of bodies that are, at the same time, subjective objects and objective subjects in a post-Kantian manner of "mutual use": *radical sex as acts of non-sexual radicalism, a-sexual practices that disrupt all the categories and constraints of the normativity of the "normal"* (cf., for example, Rich 1980; Rubin 1984, 2011; Phelan 1989; Califia 1994; Bean 2003 [1994]; Thompson 2004 [1991]).

Thus, what was the point in Foucault's idea of the "desexualization of pleasure" was that it was not a matter of any kind of sexual liberation, not an issue of the emancipation of desire. On the contrary, Foucault's purpose was to show that to enjoy the capabilities of one's own body to the full, one has to distance oneself from the regime of desire altogether (Macey 1994: 365); in theoretical terms, to defeat the philosophy of desire promoted by both Lyotard (1993 [1974]) and Deleuze and Guattari (1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]). That is, instead of liberating our desire, "[w]e have to create new pleasure" (Foucault 1996k [1982/1984]: 384), a plurality of pleasures beyond the inherited categories of "sex" and "sexuality," that is, beyond the disciplinary regime of *le sexe*. According to Foucault, the body, not sex, was now at the centre of focus:

> We have to invent with our bodies – with their elements, their surfaces, their masses, their volumes – a non-disciplinary eroticism: an eroticism of the body in its volatile and diffuse potentialities, its chance encounters and uncalculated

46 It is appropriate to remark that Foucault is not quite consequent with his use of the term "sex." On the one hand, Foucault's aim is to show that homosexuality is *not* about sex in the sense of *le sexe*, but precisely about a "different economy of bodies and pleasures" that is not suppressed by the "austere monarchy of sex," and, accordingly, the ideal of gay culture is expressly to *desexualize* not only the subject but the whole structure of desires and pleasures (cf. Foucault 1978g [1977]: 176–198, 1992b [1984]: 3–52); but on the other hand, Foucault speaks of "sex" in his history of sexuality even when he is discussing forms of corporeal desires and pleasures in Greek Antiquity, although he explicitly says that the "term itself *did not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century*" (Foucault 1992b: 3).

> pleasures. (Halperin 1997: 96; cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 157–159; McWhorter 1999: 176–189; Grosz 1994b)

A "non-disciplinary eroticism" – is this, then, the logic of post-sex, and by extension, that of cybersex? Is the issue here also *a desexualization of sex* constitutive of the "bodies and pleasures" as a form of the Foucauldian "technologies of the self" (see Foucault 1988a [1982]; cf. Ott 1998: 90–102; Martin et al. 1988)?

There are three points in Foucault's description of the bathhouse culture of the San Francisco gay community that are theoretically relevant for my thematization of the sexual transformation that has enabled the emergence of post-sex, and, as its imaginary derivation, the phantasm of cybersex: (1) *a desubjectification of the body* (one is "nothing but a body with which combinations and productions of pleasure are possible"), (2) *a disidentification of the subject* (you are no longer "imprisoned in your own face, in your own past, in your identity"), and (3) *an anonymization of pleasure* (an opportunity, "at any hour of day or night, to enter a place equipped with all the comforts and all the possibilities that one might imagine, and to meet there a body at once tangible and fugitive").

In short, what Foucault describes is, paradoxically, a new form of sexual culture without the constraints of the "sexual"; that is, a culture of "bodies and pleasures" in which *sexual* encounters are possible without the regime of *sex*: sex liberated from the terror of, as Foucault says above, the "austere monarchy of sex" (cf., for example, Vernon 1999: 200–201; Halperin 2002a: 22–23; for a critical discussion, cf. Butler 1999a).

No, this is not necessarily the reality of contemporary heterosexual sex culture, a culture of desires and pleasures that celebrates the soft power of "vanilla sex" (Rosewarne 2011: 1–5, 10–19, 25–30, 100–109), even less does it mean a "homosexualization" of heterosexuality (for the increasingly questionable validity of the "hetero"/"homo" distinction, see, for example, Emig 2000; Harrison & Hood-Williams 2002; Roseneil 2003; in Derridean terms, see Bass 2006: 120–130; from a historical perspective, see Boswell 1981: 9–59; Katz 2007 [1995]: 33–37, 81–82).

While the subversion of the sexual through various forms of *détournement* – always constitutive of political radicalism in one way or another in the tradition of avantgarde politics (for the origin of the idea in Situationism, see, for example, Sussman 1989; Plant 1992; McDonough 2004) – is distinctive about radical sex in the sense of Foucauldian "bodies and pleasures" (cf. Rubin 1984; Abelove et al. 1993; Kroker & Kroker 1993b; Califia 1994; Richardson & Seidman 2002; Plummer 2004), post-sex is about an intensification of "sex" in the mode of hedonism based on the commodity form, a product of the political economy of the postmodern. Thus, rather than advocating sexual radicalism celebrated by the sexual liberation of the sixties and the seventies, radical sex questions the prevailing sexual order in its entirety. In contrast to that, *post-sex is about the politics of gesture in terms of the "sexual," a politics of "sex" that complies with the body politics of productive consumption*.

Nevertheless, the question can be raised as to whether the Foucauldian idea of "bodies and pleasures" is the *ideal* of "free sex" inscribed into the sexual imaginary of prevailing consumer-oriented or postmodern culture, a culture of idealized hedonism, a culture of what I call *the ego-politics of pleasure*, or, rather, is the idea of "free sex" actually in itself an ideal that manifests the logic of the political economy of neoliberalism (cf. Brown 2003)? As such an ideal, post-sex does not so much involve new and more "liberal" sex practices, but, rather, dreams, visions and theory-fictions pertaining to the capacities and abilities of the body as an *instrument of pleasure*, as a vehicle of the self-management of the subject in postmodern capitalism: a post-utopian utopia of designer bodies capable of experiencing ever-new desires and pleasures. In other words, post-sex is a logical consequence of the imaginary constitutive of postmodern body politics in the constellation of productive consumption (see, for example, Kearney 1998: 178–256; Lafrance 1998: 118–135; Hennessy 2000: 139–168; Elliott 2004: 4–20, 37–47, 79–105, 155–168; Kroker & Kroker 1988a; Jameson 1991; Kroker 1992; Friedberg 1993; Hardt & Negri 2000), "sex" in the economic order of neo-Fordism (in terms of post-Fordism, cf. Allen 1994 [1992]; Amin 1994). In this order, ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism, the imaginary has become real: the reality of capital, the real of the commodity form (cf. Dean 2009: 49–92, 128–129).

As a result, an intensification of corporeality is not only a precondition of post-sex, but it is the very mode of sexuality that has definitively declared its independence from the imperative of procreation, the centuries old Christian fundament of all that is sexual (Hawkes 2004: 42–84; Martin 2006: 51–76; Brown 1988; Pagels 1991 [1988]; Eder 2002).

In these terms, post-sex is about a performative body, a body that can be functionalized as a *personal resource* compatible with the demands of the political economy of postmodern capitalism, the neoliberal order of globalization. If contemporary technoculture based on technoscience (see, for example, Aronowitz et al. 1996; Haraway 1997; Robins & Webster 1999; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Clough 2004; Michael 2006) entails what I call "life in the laboratory" (see Eerikäinen 2002), the postmodern lifestyle implies a continual experimentation with forms of desires and pleasures, ever-new modalities of bodies and sexualities. Utopia is no longer an ideal state as an ideal form of government (see, for example, Goodwin & Taylor 1982; Ferns 1999; Wegner 2002); instead, utopia is now an ideal body: *the body is the utopia of the postmodern*. In this sense, a spectacular body cult, an excessive "bodyism," is the basis of post-sex (cf. Eagleton 1996: 69–75). In the postmodern, the subject is nothing without a performative body, the body in itself and as a medium of the performance of the self: the body as the embodiment of the post-subject: *a subject obsessed by itself as its own object*.

To conceptualize this excited and anxious fascination with the body in different terms, it is a matter of a curious cultural "hystory" (cf. Showalter 1998), a hysteric

body discourse that in an affected and artificial manner *theatricalizes* the sexual body – also giving rise to extravagant body theories on the postmodern theory scene, especially in feminist theorization in the mode of what I call the *feminist Baroque* (see, for example, Becker & Schneider 2000; Gieselbrecht & Hafner 2001; Barkhaus & Fleig 2002; Bath et al. 2005; for the idea of the Baroque, see Lambert 2004).[47] In this sense, what is at issue in the imaginary of the postmodern is what Marie-Luise Angerer (1999a) calls "body options," a floating plurality of body images/models implying ever-new opportunities for postmodern body modification (cf., for example, Featherstone 2000; Siebers 2000; Holliday & Hassard 2001; Pitts 2003; Volkart 2006), not just in theory but also in "reality" understood as an epiphenomenon of theory (from a historical perspective in terms of the "reformations of the body," cf. Mellor & Shilling 1997).

It is in this sense that cyber discourse shows that what is not possible for feminism is not possible at all.

In the phantasm of cybersex, the frenzy about both the possibilities and the limitations of the *human* body most clearly comes to the fore. While the body is a fetish of all that is "post," the post-body is an obsession of all that is "cyber." This is the copula between "sex" and the "cyber": the postmodern body hysteria of neoliberal capitalism transposed in the techno-imaginary.

This is the context of the posthuman in terms cyber discourse, a postmodern discourse formation around the linguistic figures of cyberspace, the cyborg and all that is "cyber" (see Eerikäinen 2000a, 2000b), the libidinal-theoretical idea matrix of cybersex (see, for example, Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Gray 2001; Flanagan & Booth 2002; for a discussion of "baroque reason" as "the aesthetics of the modern," see Buci-Glucksmann 1994 [1984]). As we will see, similarly to any discourse concerning the postmodern, cyber discourse is a "post"-discourse that produces itself by its own discursive means, the means of linguistic figuration that continuously creates and recreates, circulates and recycles, itself as a conglomeration of discursive figures based on the "free-floating signifiers" of the "post."

47 The affected and artificial manner in which feminist cyber-theory *theatricalizes* the sexual body amounts to a theory hysteria that celebrates startling and spectacular linguistic figures, ostentatious and extravagant forms of language; a theoretical self-aggrandizement in which artificiality and affectation constitute the "real thing" – the "real," of course, in the sense of the imaginary. In this sense, the hysteric body discourse in terms of the "cyber," characteristic of feminist cyborg theory, constitutes the theory style of the feminist Baroque; a mode of *écriture* that embraces all that is exaggerated, tumescent and haughty, and, at the same time, distorted, disproportionate and excessive (see, for example, Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). *Strike a pose!* – that is the imperative of the feminist Baroque. All this stems from a theatrical and self-absorbed sexuality: writing about the cyborg, feminist theorists fall into an orgasmic ecstasy. What this ecstasy is all about can be seen in the statue *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* by Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini; a Baroque work of art that for Lacan (1985 [1973]: 147) epitomized the idea of *jouissance* (cf. Bowie 1991: 152–157; Elam 1994: 53–54); for me, the ecstasy of "coming" that is peculiar to the feminist Baroque. In this respect, the cyborg is in feminist theory an orgasmic figure that at the same time produces orgastic theory and theoretical orgasms, in other words, the *jouissance* of theory.

2.2.2 The Cyborg as a Manifestation of the Cunning of Reason

In the postmodern, the body as a whole has turned into a libidinal object, an object of phantasmatic *cathexis*, a fantasized object of both economic and libidinal investment (for the idea of *Betsetzung* or *cathexis*, see Freud 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622, 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96; Thwaites 2007: 18–21). In this manner, the postmodern body appears as a dream object of an intensified *Ich-Erlebnis*, an "ego-experience," manifesting the pleasure of the designer body as the project of self-design: the post-body as an object of experimentation following the logic of life in the laboratory. In this context, the ideal of the postmodern subject is not to be, but to *have* a body which, at the same time, is as efficient and reliable as the machine-body of an athlete (see Magdalinski 2008: 33–36; Cashmore 2010 [1996]: 36–59; Hoberman 1992; Gebauer 1997, 2006; Rail 1998b), and as flexible and versatile as the performative body of an actor (Fischer-Lichte & Fleig 2000; Fischer-Lichte 2004) – or rather, as *volatile and calculated* as the spectacular body of a pop star *à la* Madonna (cf. Schwichtenberg 1993; Miklitsch 1998). This is a body that has an air of being capable of *sexual experimentation*, a body for which corporeal sensations and affections are free-floating experiences, casual moments of desires and pleasures beyond compulsory categories such as gender and sexual identity (in terms of "experimental desire," see Grosz 1994b).

In short, the post-sexual body is a body receptive of and responsive to experiences and expressions of the sexual that follow the logic of the liquid libido, the libido subsumed by the commodity form, the economic basis of productive consumption ruling the cultural formation of the postmodern: in the order of neo-Fordism based on an all-pervading imperative of management, the regulative principle determining the lifestyle of global capitalism, whatever the body is as an embodiment of the subject, *it is an embodiment of capital as an object and subject of post-sex: the panic body as an incorporation of surplus value*. In other words, capitalism is not only an economic system; it is first and foremost a regime of desire.

Libido: the enigmatic energy of the sexual – libido: the driving force of capital. This is the logic of the economic order constitutive of productive consumption as the political regime of global capitalism.

No longer is there coercion, but seduction – that is the idea of postmodern capitalism (cf. Baudrillard 1990f [1979]).

Polysexuality in the Matrix of Cybersexualities

If Sigmund Freud (1981c [1905]: 32, 132–145) long ago deemed it necessary to expand the definition of sexuality on the grounds that, firstly, the sexual and the genital are not the same since there are sexual activities that are not genital, and secondly, sexual pleasure encompasses erogenous zones and practices that have nothing to do with procreation (Freud 1983a [1938/1940]: 74–75, 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–350; cf. Bristow 1997: 62–63), what we have now

even goes far beyond what Freud could ever expect to be brought about by extended sexuality. Although genital pleasure and procreation, in their *transformed* forms, still establish a solid basis for heterosexual relations and the whole societal order based on them, embracing what Judith Butler (1990: 5, 151) calls the "heterosexual matrix" or "compulsory heterosexuality,"[48] there is much more that defines *the sexual* in contemporary culture; the sexual as a discursive construct of imaginary projections typical of the postmodern.

Post-sex is about this "more," it is about the *surplus* of the sexual, about a libidinal intensification of the surface of the body, and an excess of meaning ascribed to the sexual in the conduct of life, a mode of life not only encouraged, but expressly demanded by postmodern consumer culture under the imperative of productive consumption (cf. Best & Kellner 1997: 103–123; Dunn 1998: 107–141; Bauman 2001: 220–236, 2003: 36–57; Featherstone 1991a; Lury 1996), and increasingly by the emergent forms of scientific-technological redesigning of the body, its abilities and capacities, in order to make it conform to the requirements of capital under the regime of the global financial markets (see, for example, Shilling 1993: 127–149; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 49–93; Landweer 2002; Wenner 2002; Brown 2003; from a historical perspective in terms of critical theory, see Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 246–250), finally amounting to what John Armitage (2004) calls "the totally mobilized hypermodern body" (cf. Jünger 1980 [1930], 1982 [1932]). All this signifies a mode of body design that, in turn, is reflected by the idea of cybersex as a phantasmatic projection of the imaginary of the technological celebrated by post-theory. What is decisive here is that more than ever *real-existing capitalism is not real, it is imaginary: productive consumption as the real precondition of contemporary capitalism is based on the imaginary of desire* (for the idea of the imaginary, see Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; Habermas 1998f [1985]; von Braun 2001).[49]

In this sense, the subject of post-sex is compatible with the logic of productive consumption, the logic of the liquid libido, the driving force of the panic body

48 Drawing on the ideas of Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich, Butler (1990: 151) explains that the idea of using the term of the "heterosexual matrix" is to "characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be *a stable sex* expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the *compulsory practice of heterosexuality*" (emphasis mine; in terms of primatology, see Haraway 1990). Post-sex, paradoxically, at the same time implies both the consolidating and the questioning of this compulsory heterosexual order.

49 An appropriate description of desire in the context of productive consumption is, for example, Peter Gorsen's resume of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the "desiring-machine" as an elaboration of what in the theory of avantgarde art is called the "bachelor machine," *machine célibataire* or *Junggesellenmaschine* (see Reck & Szeemann 1999 [1975]): "Deren Theorie der Wunschmaschinen (machines désiderantes) zielt auf ein von der industriellen Produktion unterdrücktes Triebpotential, auf die produktiven Kräfte der Libido. Obwohl vom industriellen Produktionssystem unterdrückt oder zu sakrosankten Sublimierungen verurteilt, ist dieses Potential gleichwohl eine der Grundlagen der industriellen Produktion. Der Kapitalismus produziert seine eigenen Widersprüche. Einerseits braucht er die libidinöse Energie, Sexualität und Phantasietätigkeit dringend zur Konpensation gegenüber der Erfahrung des entfremdeten Arbeitsprozesses, er schafft sich damit ein triebökonomisches Gleichgewicht. Andererseits aber muß er alles unterdrücken, was seinem Verwertungsinteresse nicht subsumierbar ist. Er lebt von etwas, was er gleichzeitig unterdrückt." (Szeemann 1999 [1975]: 4)

distinctive about the political economy of neoliberalism. This is the ideological matrix of cybersex, "sex" in the world of the cyborg.

In a genuinely postmodern manner, the idea of cybersex is an imaginary projection of the real, a phantasmatic reflection of the reality of the prevailing sexual condition, in which what Ken Plummer (2003: 527), one of the pioneers of contemporary sexual research, calls the "new body technologies of sexuality" contribute, in their own ways, to the manner in which "the sexual" is understood and experienced today in the constellation of what I refer to as the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern.

> These new technologies include, at one extreme, how erotic bodies are (and have been for some time) managed through medical interventionism. I think here not only of the long histories of birth control, but of the more recent medical interventionism, such as Viagra, that work to engorge the body with eroticism; of transgender realignment surgery, which helps refashion the genitalia; of the new methods of assisted conception (artificial insemination, it vitro fertilization, embryo transfer, gamete intra-fallopian transfer), that further disconnect the acts of sex, reproduction, gestation and childbearing: sexed bodies, genetic bodies, gestating bodies and nurturing bodies; and of the multibillion-dollar cosmetic industry, where the breast, face and body become transformed through medical procedures, often towards a sexual end. (ibid.)

According to Plummer, these are "but instances of technology *at work to shift the sexualized body*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Referring to the recent research concerning technologies that are used in the medical management of intersexuality and sexual dysfunctions, Plummer maintains that the examples given by him are just the "tip of the iceberg" of body altering technologies that also change human sexuality. As a result, the "body is reconstituted for postmodern times and we are entering the age of the post-human and the cyborg" (ibid.). For Plummer, this also means "new modes of (dis)embodied sexualities such as those found in the rapidly growing world of cybersex" (ibid.). That is:

> Through telephone sex, on-line porn, sex chat rooms, web cam erotics, virtual realities, etc., new disembodied sexual worlds may be in the making. Masturbation, solitariness and isolation may be one hallmark of such a world. But accessibility to sexual imagery on a global scale and a permanent supply of partners is another. (ibid.)

The new constellation of sex and sexuality which Plummer describes here vividly exemplifies my idea of the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern in which the real and the imaginary intermingle with one another – as we can see also in Plummer's own presentation.

For Plummer, the postmodern condition of the sexual is not only about real practices and acts of pleasure that deviate from the modern paradigm of the sexual in that they no longer have anything to do with procreation and heteronormality, but also – and perhaps predominantly – postmodern sex and sexuality are about *discursive figures* in the form of narratives, of which "cybersex stories" are typical examples (Plummer 1997: 74). While the reality of cybersex is about "masturbation or solosex" (ibid.), cybersex is in the story world of the

postmodern a latter-day derivation of science fiction; that is, a post-theoretical theory-fiction (academia) and a post-sexual phantasm (popular culture) in the realm of the imaginary constitutive of the postmodern.

"Sex" in terms of the "cyber" is about what Sadie Plant (1998: 30), the *prima inter pares* of cyberfeminism, calls "high-technology sex." According to Plant, this new kind of sexual experience is commonly held up as the "epitome of disembodied pleasure, contact-free sex without secretions in a zone of total autonomy" (ibid.). For her, indeed, it is all of that; but it is actually even more: "high-technology sex" takes place in a "safe environment free from the side-effects and complications of actual intercourse: transmittable diseases, conceptions, and abortions, and the sad obligations of emotional need"; that is, cybersex or techno-sex is a "closed circuit, a sealed elsewhere, a virtual space to be accessed at will" (ibid.; in terms of "replicunts," cf. Plant 1996b: 181–183); in other words, a postmodern retro-fiction of the Foucauldian idea of "other spaces" constituting the realm of *heterotopia* (see Foucault 1999a [1967/1984]; cf. Siebers 1994a), a realm of "otherness" reinterpreted in terms of technological post-sex.

As we can see, "sex" in the world of the "cyber" exceeds all the limits and limitations of conventional sexual encounters in the flesh. Whatever you want in your wildest dreams, it is there for you, *virtually*, in the imaginary universe of cyberspace and the cyborg in which, as Haraway (1991f: 249) says, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves."

In this postmodern artificial paradise, a paradise of technological simulacra, we can experience the future already present; according to Plant:

> […] cybersex is well advanced: the hardware is fetishized, the software is porn, and vast proportions of the telecommunications system are consumed by erotica. But these are merely the most overt – and perhaps the least interesting – examples of a generalized degeneration of "natural" sex. As hard and wetwares collapse onto soft, far stranger mutations wrack the sexual scene. The simulation of sex converges with the deregulation of the entire sexual economy, the corrosion of its links with reproduction, and the collapse of its specificity: sex disperses into drugs, trance, and dance possession; androgyny, hermaphroditism, and transsexualism become increasingly perceptible; paraphilia, body engineering, queer sex, and what Foucault calls "the slow motion of pleasure and pain" of SM […] (Plant 1998: 30; cf. Chun 2006: 11–15, 77–127, 243–244; Foucault 1990e [1984]; Morton 1995; Gargett 2002, 2003)

Forget the conventional paraphernalia of SM: whips and chains, leather and rubber (see, for example, Hart 1998; Henkin & Holiday 2003 [1996]; Langdridge & Barker 2007)[50] – we are now visiting the pleasure dome of cyber-

50 According to the prevailing conception, a sadomasochistic act is a consensual sexual practice that consists of a power constellation of dominance and submission, inflicting pain that is experienced as pleasure, stageing fantasy scenarios and role-playing, deliberate humiliation of participants in the object position ("top"/"bottom"), fetishistic paraphernalia (whips, handcuffs, chains, leather and rubber cloths), and various ritualistic activities (whipping, bondage, blind-folding). In SM sex, all the characteristics that constitute heterosexual sex are disrupted and thus transgression is the hard core of sadomasochism (see, for example, Edwards 1994: 74–88; Sullivan 2003: 151–167; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006; for a Foucauldian perspective, see, for example, Simons 1995: 99–101; Bersani 1996: 79–99; Ball 2003: 212–214; for the idea of "otherness" in terms of transgression, see, for example, Jervis 1999).

sex in which you can enjoy sex in virtual reality by means of the prosthetic organs of the cyborg (cf. Annesley 1998: 28–29; Metcalf 1998: 112; Gray 2001: 193–195; Mitchell 2005: 309–335; Smith-Windsor 2008: 280; Wilson 1995; Whitt 2008; in terms of organ transplantation or "organ transfer," cf. Sharp 2009; for the cultural-historical context in terms of "American bodies," see Armstrong 1996; Johnston 2001b). Indeed, it is not enough that one is feminist, one has to be *cyberfeminist* to be able to understand all the extraordinary subtleties of the exclusive forms of pleasure enabled by prosthetics and the cyborg (cf., for example, Eubanks 2004: 155–159; Hartmann 2004: 37–38, 48–57; Nayar 2004: 283–308; Bergermann 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2004; Sollfrank 1998, 2002; Weber 2001; Angerer et al. 2002; Reiche & Sick 2002; Reiche & Kuni 2004; Volkart 2006; for Lara Croft as an embodiment of cyberfeminist theory/power fantasies, see, for example, Weber 2002: 135–144; Cannon 2006: 161–172; Lenzhofer 2006: 188–196; Genz & Brabon 2009: 154–155; Nayar 2010: 40–42, 48–50; Deuber-Mankowsky 2001). As Haraway (1991a: 151) says, the "cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity."[51] And therefore, there are no limits whatsoever for sexual experience. In the world of the "cyber," as Plant (1997b: 46) assures us, "one individual can become a population explosion on the Net: many sexes, many species" (cf. Stone 1994b [1991]: 106–109; Wajcman 2004: 56–77).

Or, as Elizabeth Grosz (1995c: 184) elaborates on the figure of "tiny sex" in the context of "perverse desire," reiterating the Deleuze-Guattarian idea of "becoming" in a Derridean manner (see Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 213; Derrida 2000 [1988]): to "become-animal" or to "become-woman" does not involve "imitating, reproducing or tracing" the "animal" or "woman"; rather, it involves entering in relation with a "third term," a "machine," in order to form a machinic assemblage composed of "animal components" (cf. Derrida 2002c). In this manner, "becoming"

> […] is not a question of being (-animal, -woman, -lesbian), of attaining a definite status as a thing, a permanent fixture, nor of clinging to, having an identity, but of moving, changing, being swept beyond one singular position into a multiplicity of flows, or what Deleuze and Guattari have described as a "thousand tiny sexes": to liberate the myriad of flows, to proliferate connections, to intensify. (Grosz 1995c: 184; cf. Grosz 1994a)

51 One can, of course, see the cyborg from a different perspective, in terms of the sublime constitutive of the radical transformation of being human effected by new technologies; as Rob Wilson explains, referring to the social and cultural upheavals shattering the inherited certainties in urban conditions: "If such a sublime cyborg would insinuate the future as post-Fordist subject, his palpably masochistic locations as ecstatic agent of the sublime superstate need to be decoded as the 'now-all-but-unreadable DNA' of a fast deindustrializing Detroit, just as his Robocop-like strategy of carceral negotiation and street control remains the tirelessly American one of inflicting regeneration through the violence upon the racially heteroglossic wilds and others of the inner city." (Wilson 1994: 290) What Wilson says here, of course, is fantastic; but what *exactly* he is saying remains more than unclear. This is the fascination effected by the "post": it is about language in which excessive signification has taken the place of meaning.

A thousand tiny sexes – that is the extraordinary mode of sexual pleasure effected by the "cyber," a way to "polysexuality, a multiplicity of nongendered sexes" (Potts 2002: 252), post-sexual pleasures in terms of the cyborg: "cyborg 'sex'" (Haraway 1991a: 150; cf. Žižek 2000: 65–66) in the free zones of "cybersexualities" (Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000). In other words, cybersex not only means "polysexuality" (Peraldi 1997 [1981]), but definitely more than that: sexual desires and pleasures in the world of the "cyber" manifest multisexual sexualities as a *myriad of flows* (cf. Apter 1999: 160–166). In this world, nothing is impossible any longer; even, as Rob Wilson (2000 [1996]: 314) says (referring to Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), "feminized cyborgs can be turned" into "pleasure machines for scopophilic desire like so many pastoral sheep chewing on the grasses in a transnational limbo."

Cybersex as a Continuation of Masturbation by Other Means

This is the world of the cyborg: "animal," "woman" and "machine" are now self-replicating components that constitute a global multiplicity of Harawayan "post-gender" sexualities (cf. Haraway 1991a: 150); a world in which "sex" is not about the Freudian *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*, "return of the repressed" (see, for example, Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632), but, instead, it follows the logic of Deleuze-Guattarian "becoming" (cf. Braidotti 1994a, 1994b, 2002, 2006) as a never-ending multiplication of differences in the manner of Derridean *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]), and, by that, becomes a manifestation of the Nietzschean *ewige Wiederkunft* (see Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 270–272, 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 333–335, 1973a [1882/1887]: 250; cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 225–256, 283–290, 354–360), "eternal return," in the sense of what Nietzsche (1969d [1889]: 154) calls *die Psychologie des Orgiasmus*, the "psychology of orgiasm" (for a contextualization in contemporary terms, see Ansell Pearson 1991, 1997).[52]

Approaching cyberspace from the standpoint of French feminist philosophy and especially the ideas of Luce Irigaray and *écriture féminine* (see, for example,

52 In *Ecce homo*, Nietzsche (1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 333) sums up the basic idea of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: "Die Grundconception des Werkes" is "der *Ewige-Wiederkunft-Gedanke*, diese höchste Formel der Bejahung, die überhaupt erreicht werden kann"; "*the highest formula of affirmation*," this is the idea of the "eternal return" constitutive of Nietzsche's philosophical vitalism: beyond the human and time we have the possibility to encounter the cyclical becoming of life in its intrinsic fullness the culmination of which is an ecstatic mode of existence experienced as "the psychology of orgiasm"; as Nietzsche (1969c [1889]: 154) explains in *Götzen-Dämmerung*: "Die Psychologie des Orgiasmus als eines überströmenden Lebens- und Kraftgefühls, innerhalb dessen selbst der Schmerz noch als Stimulans wirkt [...]. Das Jasagen zum Leben selbst noch in seinen fremdesten und härtesten Problemen, der Wille zum Leben, im Opfer seiner höchsten Typen der eignen Unerschöpflichkeit frohwerdend – das nannte ich dionysisch, das erriet ich als die Brücke zur Psychologie des tragischen Dichters. Nicht um von Schrecken und Mitleiden loszukommen, nicht um sich von einem gefährlichen Affekt durch dessen vehemente Entladung zu reinigen – so verstand es Aristoteles –: sondern um, über Schrecken und Mitleid hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens selbst zu sein, – jene Lust, die auch noch die Lust am Vernichten in sich schließt […]."

Moi 1985: 89–172; Felski 1989: 19–21, 33–54; Grosz 1989; Oliver 2000; Oliver & Walsh 2004), Cathryn Vasseleu (1997 [1994]) elaborates on a theory of "virtual bodies" representing a desire for a virtualization of corporeality in cyberspace. Drawing on Howard Rheingold's (1991: 346–353) vision of "teledildonics" and a "full-body data suit," that is, the *Ur*-idea of cybersex (cf., for example, White 1994: 324; Springer 1996: 82–83; Case 1997: 177–179; Calcutt 1998: 109–111; Cavallaro 2000: 128; Lunenfeld 2000a: 90–93; Grosz 2001: 40–45, 76; Mittag 2001: 113), Vasseleu (1997: 52–56) suggests that cyberspace entails a dissolving of the separation between the organic and the machinic, between the body and a prosthetic apparatus encapsulating the subject, and finally results in the disappearance of the border line between the interior and the exterior. Thus, cyberspace enables an entirely new form of sexual pleasure that Vasseleu calls "virtual sex" (ibid.: 57); a form of pleasure that will disintegrate both the body and the subject (as it is usual in postmodern theory; see, for example, Poster 1995b: 85–94; Best & Kellner 2001: 93–95; Elliott 2003: 148–150, 153, 2004: 28–33, 60, 2008: 149; Malpas 2005: 56–79; Ashley 1997; O'Farrell & Vallone 1999).

Accordingly, as Vasseleu says, we are now heading towards a thoroughly new experience of corporeality and sexuality.

> If the body has previously been described as being left out of virtual reality, it assumes an essential but paradoxical interiority to a disembodied consciousness within the virtual "birthday suit" [Rheingold's expression for a 'Smart Skin' system used in teledildonics or virtual sex]. In the pursuit of a shared consciousness, the fold of consciousness is reversed. It turns from being contained in the body to becoming a container or skin conveying the body in cyberspace. (Vasseleu 1997: 53; cf. Rheingold 1991: 346–348).

Taking Rheingold's *fantasy* of a sexual encounter experienced by means of "teledildonics" in virtual reality at face value (see Rheingold 1991: 342–353; cf. Foster 2005: 86, 117–121), Vasseleu (1997: 54) muses upon how through the virtualization of corporeality, as its "enthusiasts" suggest, the "expression of sexuality becomes an intelligible exchange of information"; that is, where there was once a material body, a body that was able to enjoy corporeal pleasures for precisely the reason that is was a material body, in cyberspace, in contrast, it is the immateriality of virtuality that becomes our embodiment, our very corporeal habitus, and thus the ultimate experience of sexual pleasure. Although, for Vasseleu, this kind of sex technology is admittedly a masculine construction representing "phallic imaginary," in her view it is, nevertheless, apparent that the "'ecstasy' of a communal exchange of virtual sex" based on "shared consciousness" (ibid.: 53) is, contrary to Rheingold's (1991: 348) own embarrassed observation, "[f]ar from being a thought experiment that got out of control" (Vasseleu 1997: 53, quoting Rheingold).

In this manner, according to Vasseleu, "virtual sex" has "implications which extend the significance of Kant's Copernican 'thought experiment' into virtual

relations with sexual objects" (ibid.: 53–54).[53] Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1998 [1972]: 311–382) "schizoanalysis" (cf. Selden & Widdowson 1993: 143–144; Goodchild 1996: 122–127, 165–172), Vasseleu (1997: 55) asks, if the "intimacy with virtual environment technology can be substituted for relations with a different body," then, "[i]s this not also the equation which generates the mobilization of flows and mechanization of passions in the coupling of desiring machines"? For Vasseleu, "[c]yberspace in these terms is thus *an ideal love object* – infinite, reiterative, excessively recombinant" (ibid.; emphasis mine; for touch in terms of "digital communication," cf. Vasseleu 1999; for "teledildonics" in terms of lesbian fiction concerning "the lesbian sex toy, dildo," cf. Moore 1995: 104–105).

For this reason, as Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (1993b: 15) claim, "the only good sex today is recombinant sex" (cf. Kauffman 1998: 157–159; Parisi 2004: 129; in terms of "transgressive corporeality," cf. Prosser 1995) – provided, of course, that the "re" of recombinant is effected by the "post."

Indeed, this is a new world of desires and pleasures in which, as Vasseleu says, recitating in idiosyncratic Deleuze-Guattarian language, "we always make love with worlds" and thus "our love addresses itself to this libidinal property of our lover, to either close himself off or to open up to more spacious worlds, to masses and larger aggregates" (Vasseleu 1997: 55; cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 294). This kind of megalomaniac and ecstatic erotic vision of the empowering facilities of new technology – bringing into mind the lofty neo-religious glorification of the "erotic ontology of cyberspace" poeticized by Michael Heim (1993: 83–108) – manifests a specific mode of affection that I call, with reference to Allucquère Rosanne Stone's (1995e: 14–30) vision of self-multiplication by the means of prosthetics, "prosthetic love" that, at the same time, embraces no more no less than a global masturbation fantasy (cf. Butterworth 1996); a fantasy playing with Derridean "supplements" (see Derrida 1997: 141–165; cf. Howells 1999: 56–57; Royle 2003a: 53–56) transposed into the virtual matrix of technologically extended and enhanced post-sex.

Here, in fact, we are approaching an – if not, *the* – answer to the question as to what the sexual is about in cybersex. Masturbation.

53 Vasseleu clearly refers here to what Kant (1990a [1781/1787]: 25–26) calls his "Copernican revolution" in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*; an epochal insight, after Kant's awakening from "the dogmatic sleep" (Kant 1988b [1783]: 118) concerning the condition of possibility of cognition (*Erkenntnis*). For Kant (1990a: 59), the key question is, *Wie sind synthetische Urteile* a priori *möglich?* In this context, Kant makes a decisive distinction between analytic and synthetic postulations, that is, between statements in which the predicate is implied by the concept itself, and those in which a new predicate is added to the concept. The problem is now where this "new" comes from: if it is something *a priori*, independent of experience, in what conditions can we know it? It is precisely here that the Kantian "Copernican revolution" takes place. It is not that our cognition conforms to objects, as it is usually thought, but, on the contrary, *objects conform to* our cognition (ibid. 25–26; Irrlitz 2002: 188). That is, our faculty of understanding defines the objects of knowledge that we experience "in reality," *as reality*. In other words, it is not the world that inscribes the content of our knowledge, but on the contrary, it is our knowledge, the ideas given in our concepts, that inscribes that which we understand to be the world. It is this turn-around of the direction of reasoning that Kant calls the "Copernican revolution" in his thought; a turn that enabled Kant to sublate the opposition between empiricism and rationalism in philosophy.

Of course, not in a conventional form; rather, masturbation in cyberspace or virtual reality by means of prosthetic extensions of the body is a contemporary version of *onanisme à deux*, a form of sexual practice recommended in the nineteenth century as a method of contraception by enlightened physicians for couples who did not manage to live without genital pleasure (see, for example, Sarasin 2001: 390–391). But, in contrast to the sexual agony of the Victorian times, instead of *deux* what we have now in cyberspace is a "third" body, a body-machine consisting of many, in principle countless, anonymous "cyberbodies" (see, for example, Clark 1995: 123–131; Angerer 1999a: 27–55; Kennedy 2000a: 471–475; Bell et al. 2004: 139–140; McRobert 2007: 94–95; Stelarc 1998; Gieselbrecht & Hafner 2001; O'Riordan 2007; in terms of "prosthetic consciousness" and the fragmented body as an embodiment of the "Hydra," see Wilson 1995: 239–243, 251–255, 2002: 147–157, 258–262), prosthetic bodies enjoying mutual masturbation as *virtual promiscuity* (cf., for example, Pryor & Scott 1993: 175; Lunenfeld 2000a: 90; Bell 2001a: 127; Ferguson 2010: 59–62; Rheingold 1990; Stenslie 1996).

Thus, *cybersex is a continuation of masturbation by other means, by means of prosthetic technology, the technology of the cyborg*. In other words, "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is high-tech masturbation practiced by prosthetically empowered cyborg subjects in virtual reality, a realm of radical otherness enabled by the "post."

As we will see in the course of the study, the cyborg as a prosthetic post-body hybrid is a perfect masturbation apparatus: a post-sexual body-machine assemblage operating according to the principles of post-cybernetic control, a posthuman *exobody* system based on the closed circuit of feedback. In this sense, the cyborg is a latter-day offspring of the *machine célibataire*, the "bachelor machine" or the "celibate machine," originally constructed by Marcel Duchamp (see, for example, Rutsky 1999: 38–44; Baudrillard 2000b: 37–39; Grenville 2001a: 18–20; Mikkonen 2001: 21–27; Cooper 2002: 108–109; Hughes 2004b: 125–128; with regard to pataphysics, see Bök 2002: 54–57; in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, see Bogue 2003: 68–74; for a historical contextualization, see Henderson 1998; Grau 2007). This is a machine that is absolutely self-sufficient in the generation of pleasure, although the specific mode of desire that is its driving force can emanate from an external source, be it another cyborg, a machine, an animal or an entity for which there is no name. As an autonomous being, a nomadic monad, an automaton functioning through self-regulation, the sexual cyborg is a posthuman masturbation apparatus that produces prosthetic self-sex, post-sexual pleasure that is cybernetic in its circular causality: cyborgian *jouissance* as post-organic pleasure, machine-controlled circulation of post-corporeal sexual energy that effects its own condition of possibility, the transformation of the flows of desire, whether internal or external, into the libido appropriate to its prosthetic economy.

Accordingly, in terms of the sexual, *the cyborg is the very paragon of post-sexual autarchy*; that is, a prosthetic body-machine assemblage enjoying post-sexual desires and pleasures in it monadic self-sufficiency.

For this reason, the pleasure of the cyborg does not recognize any limits or limitations: it enjoys its own limitless self-sufficiency based on a radical subversion of the sexual; as Haraway (1991a: 151) says, "[t]he cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy and perversity." That is, *we do not know what the cyborg can do*; what it does is its own idiosyncratic choice as an autonomous body-machine "subject," a technoscientific agency as the "bachelor machine" of its own pleasure.

It is in this manner that the world of the cyborg is a technoscientific consummation of the "post," its scientific-technological radicalization in terms of the empowerment of the body and its desires and pleasures; in this sense, the cyborg is the very embodiment of Nietzschean "psychology of orgiasm"; in other words, exceeding the limits is the ethos of the cyborg, the principle of the exponential enhancement of the forces of the body by way of perpetual becoming (cf. Dyens 2001: 82–85; Katz 2003; Sullivan & Murray 2009; in terms of "the American body," cf. Johnston 2001a: 73–76; in the context of "lesbian bodies," cf. Griggers 1997: 49).

From this perspective, it is not difficult to understand that cybersex as post-sexual pleasure in terms of the "cyber" is no longer about "coming," instead, it is always – *always already* – about "becoming," "becoming" as the *jouissance* of the cyborg. This is the pleasure of the posthuman as the highest form of the affirmative negation of the human, the pleasure of the becoming of the post-body, the pleasure of the post-Freudian "prosthetic God" as the ultimate incarnation of postmoden technoscience.

The Extraordinary Pleasure of "Terminal Orgasm"

If the sexual as *sexual* still has any meaning at all in this emerging constellation of "bodies and pleasures" (cf. Foucault 1990k: 157–159; cf. McWhorter 1999: 100–135; Hennessy 2000: 69–72; Jackson 1999: 19–22) in terms of becoming posthuman, it is brought about by the sexual "self"-relation of the prosthetic subject. This is a thoroughly new mode of the sexual: the Freudian *Objektwahl* (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 99–101, 129–130, 132–145, 1986d [1915–1917]: 338–340, 1991a [1915]: 288, 1991d [1915]: 227, 1991g [1914]: 154–157, 1987c [1923]; cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998: 347–351; in Lacanian terms, cf. Roudinesco & Plon 2004 [1997]: 734–740) now embraces all kinds of objects that are prosthetic extensions of the subject. As a result, the sexual subject turns into a sexual object of its own desire, an object of its own *design*; an object of desires and pleasures that belong to a cybernetic system in which the functional logic of automata (self-controlling, self-governing machines) and the principle of being autonomous (living beings regulated by self-regulation based on feedback) become intertwined (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948]: 131–149). As Haraway (1989: 139) says, the "cyborg is the figure born of the interface of automaton and autonomy."

At the same time, cyberspace opens up new possibilities and dimensions of sexual encounters in virtual reality. In terms of what Slavoj Žižek calls the

"post-Cartesian" school of cyberspace (Gutmair & Flor 1998), it is precisely to the subject as the centre of its own being that cyberspace gives the possibility of becoming decentred once and for all, the opportunity of finally disrupting its self-centeredness, its self-absorbed and isolated solipsism (cf. Žižek 1999c: 110–123; Armitt 2005: 165–167; Hurley 1998; in the Deleuze-Guattarian context, cf. Lambert 2007: 96–98). In cyberspace, you are not only able to encounter and be encountered by innumerable virtual beings, but you yourself can also be many at the same time (for an overview, see Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000). And here, it is expressly sex *in its deconstructed form* that is the way to the ultimate liberation, the liberation not only from the shackles of the Cartesian subject, but also of the mortal clay of the material body (cf. Boler 2010: 186–187).

In this constellation, your body is a virtual double not of yourself but of your "self" in the manner of the post-subject, the "subject" as a reflection of the "other" as an imaginary self, a "self" constructed by means of the imaginary as the real of the "post."

What the sexual is in this context is no longer based or dependent on the physical presence of the body; it is precisely *the absence of the body* that is now the source of extraordinary sexual pleasures, a post-liminal plethora of pleasures beyond the constraints of the corporeal. This is the idea of what Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford call "cyberSM," a form of cybersex in which even the notion of "pleasure" transcends the inherited parameters of human experience (see Stenslie 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2006; Woolford 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b; cf. Benthien 1999: 268–271, 2001: 330–332; Mittag 2001: 101–102; Walther 2004: 115–117; Barber 2010: 248–250). Tai van Toorn's description aptly illuminates the essence of the sexual in terms of the "cyber" in the context of Stenslie and Woolford's body-machine assemblage:

> [T]he *cyberSM* project explores the transmission of electronic signals to manifest the jolting physical presence of an absent body during a cyborgian sexual liaison. Encased in latex and rubber "sensor/stimulator" suits, participants in different physical locations communicate with each other through avatars, virtual nude bodies selected from a bank of scanned images compiled by Stenslie and Woolford on a computer. When one participant selects an area on the avatar body of their remote partner, a "tactile" message of desire greets the recipient in the form of a shock conducted through electrical stimulators, heat pads and vibrating sensors adorning the erogenous zones of the futuristic garb. The transmission of signals through computers, fiber optic technology and sensors creates an erotics of aggressive absence as *cyberSM* paradoxically establishes a visceral, yet impersonal physical contact between anonymous individuals across geographical distance and temporal lapse. (van Toorn 2006; cf. Wilson 2002: 164–167, 752–753; Stenslie 1994b, 2000a; Barber 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Tikka 2001)

At last, McLuhan's (1964: 56) dream has become reality: "In the electric age we wear all mankind as our skin"; only that it is now not so much electricity as digitality that is the condition of possibility of "sex" in the world of the "cyber."

In this sense, Haraway's (1991a: 178) question sets the agenda for the reconstitution of the body in terms of the cyborg: "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" Why, indeed? The cyborg as the paragon of the posthuman body and cyberspace as the matrix of virtual corporeality – these are now the parameters of the great transformation of the sexual in terms of the "cyber," the coordinates of being a subject after the collapse of all that is human (cf. Bolz 1994a, 1994b; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999; Bath et al. 2005; Seltin 2009).

It is precisely in this conjunction that the cyborg manifests the idea of the postmodern multiple self in an exemplary manner, a subject that is many in one without being a One (cf. von Braun & Dietze 1999); a subject in the mode of the "post": a *me, myself and I* as a polymorphous post-subject living in a personal heterotopia (cf. Siebers 1994a) of its "own" partial "selves." And it is here that Haraway's question above concerning the skin as the ultimate limit of the body takes on its true meaning, its real *Sinn*, its perceptual or lived sense, as it is understood in German philosophy in contrast to *Bedeutung*, linguistic or epistemic meaning (see, for example, Welton 2000: 200–201, 353–356, 394–398; von Savigny 1998; in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, cf. Stephan 1989):[54] what we are used to call (for the reasons of convenience, perhaps) an "I" is always, in fact, "an Other"; or, as Arthur Rimbaud, already in 1871, said: *Je est un autre* (Zweite 2000: 28).

Then again, seen from the perspective of the ephemerality of human existence, why, indeed, should we remain retired in the shelter of the organic body (cf. Shilling 1993: 41–69, 103–104; Seymour 1998: 180–183; Lash 2004 [1984]: 94–96; Puar 2007: 192–193, 200–216), a retreat of the liberal humanist subject that, its best wishes notwithstanding, shows time and time again its fragility in the course of human life, its susceptibility to illnesses and diseases, and in the end, is doomed to die? Why not be happy and enjoy life as a cyborg, augmented and enhanced with the prosthetics that dissolves the boundaries not only between the real and the virtual, but also between the real and the imaginary (cf. Haraway 1985: 65–66), even in a far more "marvellous" manner than Surrealism was ever able to achieve under the sign of the *merveilleux* (see, for example, Gershman 1969: 1–15; Chénieux-Gendron 1990; Spector 1997)? And in terms of the sexual, why not, instead of abiding that tiresome piece of *meat*, as the human body is disavowingly called in cyber discourse (see Dery 1996: 91, 116, 247–253; cf., for example, Morse 1994: 157–158; Wilson 1996: 224; Plant 1998: 33; Botting 1999: 8, 17, 150–153, 158–169, 181–186; Kennedy 2000a: 471–475; Cavallaro 2001: 147–150; Adam 2002: 159–160; Bell et al. 2004: 8–9; Haney

54 Referring to the German word *Sinn*, I purport to emphasize that at issue here is not only meaning in the linguistic sense: meaning as an idea evoked by a certain combination of signifiers that can be understood if one commands the language in which these signifiers appear; but meaning also in the sense of being sensible and thus intelligible as an emotional quality of a certain experience, that is, the significance and the import of a given situation or an event in which certain signifiers suggest something as *something specific*, "meaningful," as it is experienced by or as it appears to the subject-in-the-world.

2006: 94; in the context of "medical ethics and feminism," cf. Rothfield 1995: 168–169), have pleasure with cyborgs in cyberspace?[55]

But not only that. Why not leave the body behind altogether and enter the world which Arthur and Marilouise Kroker see explicitly as the final salvation of the sexual – if it still can be called "sexual" at all after the radical transformation of the body in terms of the technological:

> A floating world of sexual software that can be massaged, mirrored, uplinked and downloaded into a body that always knew it didn't have to be content with the obsolete carcerals of nature, discourse, and ideology. In the *galaxy of sexual software*, morphing is the only rule: the quick mutation of all the binary signs into their opposites. (Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15; emphasis mine; cf. Herzogenrath 2000)

In this new world, a world opened up by the "galaxy of sexual software," "[r]ecombinant sex is the next sex, the last sex" (ibid.; cf. Stocker & Schöpf 2000b). Here we are encountering an "explosion" of "sexual aesthetics" which is coming into being because "we now live in the age of genetic engineering, a time of radical experimentation where all the old gender signs have been deleted and replaced by *sex without secretions*" (Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15; emphasis mine); and, in this manner:

> Recombinant sex is an *art of sex* that keeps pace with evolutionary shifts in the *scientia sexualis*, translating the language of the bio-apparatus – cloning, sequencing, transcription – into an aesthetics of sexual play, into an ecstasy of sexual perversion. A time of flash-meetings between the cold seduction of cyberspace and the primitive libido of trash sex. (ibid.; cf. Stenslie 2000b; in terms of Oswald Wiener's "bio-adapter" and "happiness-suit," cf. Wiener 1969: 242–249, 1996: 48–53)[56]

Wonderful, fantastic, magnificent – at last we are liberated once and for all from the terror regime of sex in the Foucauldian sense of *le sexe* (see Foucault

55 The desire to get rid of the carnal body constitutive of cyber discourse is not just a technocultural expression of what Mark Dery (1996: 234–236) calls a "body loathing" as a radicalized form of the wish of "discorporation," succinctly captured by his conceit "meat hell" (ibid.: 247); the contempt of the body as "meat" is a complex compound image merging separate ideas, such as: the Christian vision of the human body simultaneously as the incarnation of God and the source of sin, the Futurist dream of the "machine body," the cerebrality inscribed in computer science and robotics (paradigmatically represented by Marvin Minsky and Hans Moravec), the sexist cyberpunk idea of the prostitute as a "meat puppet," the techno-euphoric yearning of cyber-enthusiasts to "leave the body behind," and last but not least, Stelarc's millennial message "the body is obsolete" (see, for example, Stelarc 1991: 591; Hayles 1993b: 173, 188, 1999: 22; Lupton 1995: 100; Dery 1996: 91, 116, 190, 232, 249–253, 300; Armstrong 1998: 86; Helmreich 2000 [1998]: 126–127; Underwood 2000: 285; Appleby 2002: 101; Cooper 2002: 78–79, Jones & Sofia 2002: 58; Poggi 2009: 153; see also *Whole Earth Review*. Summer 1989: "Is the Body Obsolete? A Forum").

56 Speaking of the "next sex" that is going to be the "last sex," the Krokers, faithful to their extravagant postmodern style of writing, are also playing here with language (cf. Kroker & Kroker 1991b, 1995, 1997c, 1997d). As well known, in English the word "sex" means both sex understood as gender (to be male or female) and – especially since the 1960s in the vein of American English – sex as bodily acts and practices, that is, sex as experiences and expressions of sexual desire and pleasure (to have sex). Relying on this ambiguity, the Krokers seem to suggest both the dissolution of the sex/gender binary opposition (male/female) and all kinds of classificatory and hierarchical differences concerning sexual practices (hetero/homo/lesbian/queer) (cf. Butler 1990, 1993). Moreover, the term "recombinant" is important in this context: it suggests a mixture, transferred from the biological to the cultural level, of DNA components from various species in order to hybridise new entities (genetic engineering, cloning) (see, for example, Bud 1998: 5, 10, 13–15; Kay 1998: 20–21; Thacker 2004: 37–41). Of course, by all that the Krokers intend to emphasize the *contingency* and *hybridity* of sex and sexuality as well as the fusion of the machine and the human being in technoculture.

1994a [1976]), from the supremacy of sex-desire constitutive of "the monarchy of sex" (Foucault 1996m [1977]), sex as the prison of the body, sex as a mendacious promise of freedom, sex as an insidious mode of oppression of the body, a perfidious disavowal of its true pleasures: the pleasure of the body set free from the stranglehold of sex (see Foucault 1990k: 157–159).

But then again, as soon as the spell of the "post" is evaporated we are able to see things as they are: we are able to see that the extraordinary sexual pleasures in terms of "recombinant sex" promised by the Krokers, in fact, are a typical effect of the "cyber" evoked by a ruse of language, a linguistic subterfuge, typical of the phantasmatic *façon de parler* of the "post." Then, it is not difficult to perceive that by extolling the "ecstasy of sexual perversion" enabled by cyberspace, the Krokers, like so many cyber theorists before and after them, are not only in possession of language, but, more fundamentally, they are *possessed by a language,* the language of the "post": this is the *jouissance* of "digital delirium" (Kroker & Kroker 1997a), the orgasmic pleasure of language in the world of the "cyber": a peculiar effect of post-theoretical theorization intoxicated by the phantasmagoric spectrality of the techno-imaginary. Here, language functions as a "sexual software" bringing libidinal pleasure, the thrill of textual ecstasy experienced as a sexual rapture in the realm of the "post," a realm of hallucinatory theory-fictions effected by the linguistic of language typical of post-theory (cf., for example, Kroker 1992, 1993a, 2004a, 2004b; Kroker & Kroker 1988a, 1996a; Bell & Kennedy 2000).

This is the idea of what I call theory-sex, "sex" as a theoretical phantasm of post-theory, "sex" as writerly pleasure in terms of post-sex, "sex" as a "free-floating signifier" in the linguistic realm of the "post."

In this manner, cybersex, as the most avantgardist form of theory-sex in terms of the techno-imaginary, is an effect of the *radical chic* of the "cyber": "de," "dis" and "trans" as the subversive signifiers of the "post," as the emblematic prosthetic devices of post-theory (cf. Vielhaber 2001); a mode of theory that, in a manner typical of the postmodern, manifests "an avant-garde desire to conflate artistic textual disruption with political subversion" (Waugh 1992: 127). In this sense, the study at hand is outside "normal science" in the Kuhnian sense of the term (see Kuhn 1996 [1962]; cf. Sharrock & Read 2002: 99–106; Godfrey-Smith 2003: 82–84; Feyerabend 1993 [1975]): the present text is a trip – a "trip" with its countercultural connotations (see, for example, Hamilton 1997: 308; Turner 2006: 60–69, 164–166, 173–174)[57] – into the realm of the paranormal,

57 To understand the idea of the "trip" in its full significance, it is appropriate to recall Foucault's Death Valley experience, his LSD trip in the spring of 1975. "Night had fallen on Death Valley. Next to a car parked in the lot at Zabriskie Point, a portable tape recorder was playing a piece of electronic music, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kontakte*. Near the recorder sat Michel Foucault, alongside two young Americans, Simeon Wade, a professor of history, and his lover Michael, a pianist and aspiring composer. As synthetic blips and bleeps filled the cool desert air, the three men stared silently into space. Two hours before, all three had taken LSD." (Miller 1994: 245) What happened was that "on the edge of a cliff in the middle of a desert," "stoned on LSD" (ibid.: 246), Foucault got an answer to one of his key questions: what, in Deleuze's words, does it mean to experience "the most severe exercise in depersonalization" (ibid.: 245). That is, a "disintegration of the self" in a "state of '*nonreason*'" (ibid.: 248; emphasis mine; cf. Huxley 1994b [1954/1956]; Leary 1994a; McLuhan (1996 [1969]: 253; in the context of virtual reality and cyberspace, cf. Rheingold 1991: 353–357; Taylor 1998: 39; Turner 2006: 173–174).

the unlimited universe of potential actuality and actual potentiality in which, in their mutually constitutive interrelation, language and reality open up to a fourth dimension, a dimension beyond time and space, beyond matter and energy: the "paraspace" of the "cyber" (cf. Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157–182).

The "Post" Finds Its Own Uses for Words

The linguistic matrix of the "post," indeed, constitutes an entirely new world in which everything is possible just because in terms of the "post" nothing is any longer impossible: in Derridean terms, the "post" opens up a "possibility of impossibility" (Hobson 1998: 108). Accordingly, what is now needed are theoretical approaches that, in their very incompatibility, are not just compatible with this new situation, but, moreover, are able to make intelligible the emerging political order in which contingency is the condition of possibility of all being.

As Judith Butler, expounding upon the intricacies of theory in a transition to a post-Althusserian conception of hegemony, says in her exact, pregnant words that leave nothing unclear:

> The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into *the contingent possibility of structure* inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with *the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power*. (Butler 2004 [1997]: 340; emphasis mine; cf. Althusser 1971 [1970], 2005 [1965], 2009a [1965/1968], 2009b [1965/1968]; Culler 2003: 46–47)

Or "the political" in itself takes on a new meaning in the manner in which the contingent turns into the ambiguous that is intelligible only in terms of the "post," as Homi K. Bhabha, in his deconstructive reading of the insidious ambivalence of desire in postcolonial discourse, shows:

> If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to "normalize" *formally* the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality. (Bhabha 1994 [1984]: 120; cf. Butler 1990)

Can one describe the paradigm of the "post" more clearly? If, then one is inevitably beyond the "post" (wherever it might be). As Bhabha (2004: x) says, "[j]ust as there is no *after politics*, there can be no *after theory*." In other words, the "post" is a matter of radical iteration in the Derridean sense of the term (see Derrida 2000 [1988]). Or then again, as Emily Martin (2001: 218, 227) says in the context of feminist science and technology studies (referring to a psychiatric study concerning "the positive aspects of manic-depression" entailing a "finely wired, exquisitely alert nervous system"): "a certain amount of madness is good

for, even essential for, everyone's survival in the contemporary world"; a world in which meaning has irrevocably imploded and been replaced by an unending process of signification.

Thus, we are now living in a cultural constellation in which the logic of post-Barthesian *bricolage* constitutes the logic of reason (cf. Lavers 1982: 36–40). If, in the world of the "cyber," as William Gibson (1987 [1982]: 186) says, "the street finds its own uses for things," it is as clear that *the "post" finds its own uses for words*. That is, the "post" is the very condition of possibility of the impossible. And, from this perspective, we begin at last to understand the true sense of Deleuze's (1988 [1970/1981]: 17–18, 60) Spinozian wisdom for post-theory: "*we do not even know what a body can do*" (cf. Thacker 2004: 184–187; Manning 2007: 143; Herzogenrath 2010: 53; for the origin of Deleuze's enthusiastic appropriation of the Spinozian idea of the hidden capabilities of the body during the tumultuous days of the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris, see Bourg 2007: 144–148).

It is in this new world that prosthetic and virtual technologies redefine the parameters of corporeality so fundamentally that nothing will remain the same: in the matrix of the "post," continuous mutations are the only constant; in other words, we are now living in a world that is ruled by posthuman metamorphosis (cf. Braidotti 2002, 2006), a world in which, as Bruce Clarke (2008: 193–196) says, the "neocybernetic posthuman" is our *differentia specifica* (cf., for example, Featherstone 2000; Hollinger & Gordon 2002; Kember 2003; Waters 2006; Toffoletti 2007).

What does this imply in terms of the sexual? No longer is there that trivial and poor experience called "orgasm" as the climax of conventional heterosexual intercourse; instead, as Plant (1998: 32) says, from now on we will enjoy the intensive, ecstatic pleasures provided by "cybersexuality," an experience of "intensity uncoupled from genital sex and engaged only with the dismantling of selves." In this world in which the "dismembering" of the body is the beginning of a thoroughly new mode of pleasure, "[i]t is not the orgy, but the orgasm that is over" (ibid.; cf. Plant 1997b: 199–209). This is the pleasure dome of cybersexuality (see, for example, Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 74–76; Williams 1998: 124–127; Apter 1999: 216–217; Quinby 1999: 138; Armitage & Roberts 2002a: 7; Kroker 2004b: 170–171; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87; Pearce 1999; Wiley 1999 [1995]; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000), an artificial paradise of technological body enhancement in which "we can get out of the meat," implying that we do not just simply "leave the body," but "*go further than the orgasm*" (Plant 1998: 33; emphasis mine; cf. Gargett 2002, 2003; Parisi 2004).

In these terms, we have entered a wonderful world, a marvellous world in the post-theoretical sense of the *merveilleux* celebrated by the Surrealists (see, for example, Gershman 1969: 1–15; Spector 1997: 186–189), in which "sex without a body" (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 87) is the most pleasurable "body option" (cf. Angerer 1999a).

From this perspective, there is no doubt that after the termination of orgasm, what we have in cybersex is the *jouissance* of "terminal orgasm" (Pynchon 1973: 223): the extraordinary pleasure of the terminal body, the body as both the terminal and the interface of techno-organs encountered in the matrix of the "cyber" (cf. Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 53–55, 1993c [1990]: 51–59). In this sense, cybersexuality is the final redemption of the body, it is the ultimate deliverance of the sexual: the cyborg "*has sex organs just about everywhere,"* as Plant (1998: 33), paraphrasing Irigaray, says (cf. Irigaray 1985b [1977]: 153). "This is the cybersexuality to which all sexuality tends: a matter of careful engineering, the setting scenes, the perfection of touch; the engineering of communication" (Plant 1998: 32; cf. Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15; Weeks 1997b [1986]: 107–108, 2007: 158–161; Nayar 2004: 254–258; Plummer 2004: 522, 532–533, 535, 537, 2003, 2011; Manning 2007: 92–98, 104–108; Macionis & Plummer 2008 [1997]: 762; de Kerckhove 1993b, 1997 [1995]; Stelarc 1997, 1998; Giffney & Hird 2008; in terms of "robotic skin," see Castañeda 2001: 223–225; cf. Benthien 1999: 268–271, 2001: 330–332; for a theoretical contextualization, see Armitage & Roberts 2002b; Weber 2003; Weber & Bath 2003; Armitage 2004).

As the above examples show, with the birth of the cyborg, we have arrived at a new world, a world after the human, the world of the posthuman, in which we have the pleasure of living, in Haraway's (1991a: 150) words, in a "mythic time," a postmodern New Age, in which "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism" (ibid.).[58]

Finally, what it is important to observe is that cyber discourse is a discursive hybrid in itself. In this sense, cyber discourse, precisely as a discourse, obeys the logic of the Harawayan cyborg: boundaries are there only to be transgressed. Thus, cyber discourse propagates the promise of emancipation of the body-subject: the "cyber" is a sign of liberation from the conventional constraints of corporeality, that is, the body of the subject disciplined by the rules of prevailing culture and society (see, for example, Robins 1996: 87–95; Birringer 1998: 275–276; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 87–88; Ess 2004a: 79–80; Chipman 2010: 174–181; Haraway 1985; Plant 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b; in terms of "hi-tech Hegelianism," see Stallabrass 1995: 4–12; in the context of "postanarchism" constitutive of the Hardt-Negrian cyborg body, see Newman 2010: 125; from the perspective of New Age soteriologies, cf. Sutcliffe 2006). As such a liberatory discourse, cyber discourse, in fact, is deeply embedded in the Enlighten-

58 In this context, it is appropriate to recall the idea of "hybrid" in etymological terms. According to the French psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, hybrid, in its Greek and Biblical origin, derives from the idea of law the interest of which has always been "to maintain separations and distinctions," exemplified by many instances in the Bible in its "injunctions against mixing heterogeneous kinds," as well as in the "meaning of the Greek word for law, *nomos*: 'divided into parts'" (Suleiman 1990: 148). Referring to the works of de Sade, Chasseguet-Smirgel "argues that perversion, in contrast to law, espouses mixture and the hybrid; it aims for the erosion or 'homogenization' of differences" (ibid.) "The man who does not respect the law of differentiation challenges God," and thus he creates "new combinations of new shapes and new kinds" (ibid.: 149). In this respect, it is important to notice that "the word *hybrid* comes from *hybris*, which means violence, excess, extremeness, outrageousness" (ibid.). With regard to the cyborg, all these dimensions of hybrid should be kept in mind.

ment tradition, the tradition of what Kant (1991a [1784]: 53–54) designated as *Mündigkeit* or "maturity"; that is, reason (*Vernunft*) as the condition of possibility of a free and independent subject, a subject capable of deliberating and negotiating his or her mode of being (cf. Foucault 1996g [1983]: 352–353, 1990 [1984]). In this way, the subversion of the prevalent order, in Haraway's conception of the cyborg, is based on the very reason Haraway is at pains to subvert, that is, to disrupt and disavow: the reason of the Enlightenment, the reason of the sovereign subject *not only as the subject of its own self, but, more fundamentally, as the subject in the mode of the self as the subject of itself*.

In other words, in all its retro-futuristic radicalism, in its fundamental ontological and epistemological break with the "traditions of 'Western' science and politics" (Haraway 1991a: 150) manifesting the regime of reason, the world of the cyborg is a result of the Freudian *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten* (see Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632), the "return of the repressed," in an uncanny manner, and as such, a postmodern instance of the Hegelian *List der Vernunft* (see Hegel 1986a [1830]: 365, 1986d [1837]: 49, 1986f [1812–1816]: 452), the "cunning of reason" (cf. Kervégan 2002: 30–36).

In a specific manner, as we will see, reason has no limits in the world of the "post," the world of the Harawayan cyborg and of all that is "cyber," because it is now the imaginary that is the very reason of all that is rational in reason; in other words, the reason of what I call the surrational.

In these terms, at a conceptual level, as an idea, cybersex is a "transformative object that challenges the reality principle" (Toffoletti 2007: 79; for "evocative objects-to-think-with," cf. Turkle 1995: 260; in Marxian terms, cf. Ebert 1996: 213; with regard to "the philosophical toy," cf. Michelson 1984), like the "objects" in the subversive tradition of Dada and Surrealism (see, for example, Spector 1997; Adamowicz 1998; Bohn 2002; Jones 2006), an ideatic transformer that has the ability to make the familiar strange and vice versa, not necessarily in the manner of conceptual dislocations or comic incongruity preferred by Dada and Surrealism, but by reminding us that sex in itself, being as a notion always already an effect of its discursive transformations, is a "cybernetic" act in the contemporary Western world, a mode of circular-teleological body management resembling the principles of cybernetics (see Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; cf. Pias 2003, 2004): control, communication and feedback, all the central concepts of cybernetics, are today intrinsic precepts of the administration of corporeal desires and pleasures under the sign of "sex" not only in the realm of the techno-imaginary, but also in the phantasmatic world of productive consumption, the economic order of neo-Fordism.

To sum up, in the light of the discussion above, it is not only that technology has increasingly invaded the realm of the sexual; it is the sexual in and by itself that is now penetrating the realm of the technological.

In these terms, sex in the mode of post-sex mirrors the transition from Foucauldian "disciplinary societies" (see Foucault 1991a [1975]) to what Gilles Deleuze (1992b [1990]) calls the "societies of control."

But what does it mean to live in a "society of control," and why is the body in a key position in such a society, to the extent that even language and theory are now affected by the transition from the disciplinary paradigm to the control paradigm?

3 Metamorphoses of the Body in Postmodern Capitalism

> By placing him again, for the last time, on the autopsy table to remake his anatomy. / I say, to remake his anatomy. / Man is sick because he is badly constructed. / We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to / scrape off that animalcule that itches him mortally, / god, / and with god / his organs. / For you can tie me up if you wish, / but there is nothing more useless than an organ. / When you will have made him a body without organs, / then you will have delivered him from all his automatic / reactions and restored him to his true freedom.
>
> Antonin Artaud (1976 [1947]: 570–571)

> Positioned in a liminal zone, the post-human is neither a male nor female, neither human nor machine, neither dead nor alive. Indeed, mutation is central to the notion of the post-human, describing a human identity which is caught between the idea that the self is becoming "other" than itself, and the image of that self which is being mediated by the very technology that determines it.
>
> Julie Clarke (2002: 33)

If, according to Foucault (1989 [1966]: 250–302), labour, life and language, not in their everyday manifestations, but through their *representations* in conceptual conceptions, that is, as "'quasi-transcendentals' of Life, Labour, and Language" (ibid.: 250), constituted the birth of the human sciences by defining their epistemological and ontological conditions in the coming into being of "economics," "biology" and "philology" as a new kind of knowledge in the "modern age" (ibid.: 250–253; cf. Merquior 1985: 42–55; Miller 1987: 177–189; Visker 1991b: 44–60; Marti 1999 [1988]: 83–96; Smart 2002 [1985]: 31–37; Hengehold 2007: 124–127), then, the "postmodern condition" (Lyotard 1984 [1979]), as the scientific-technological constellation of "late capitalism" (Jameson 1991), implies a radical shift in the parameters in and by which labour, life and language are now not only reconceptualized, but also redefined in terms of *practice*; that is, in the way in which the "economic," the "biological" and the "linguistic" determine the human existence in terms of the "posthuman" (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Graham 2002; Waters 2006; cf. Haraway 1991f, 1997; for a short resume of the emergence of the notion of the "posthuman" from Heidegger to the world of the "cyber," see Angerer 2002: 223–242).

It is in this sense that the "posthuman" implies an epochal transition through which the Foucauldian "modern age" has turned into the era of the "post," an age in which the premises of work and production, living organisms and linguistic intelligibility are predicated upon a continuous scientific-technological

redesign of all being paradigmatically manifested by the idea of the cyborg (cf. Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Gray 2001; Stock 2002; Zylinska 2002b; Baillie & Casey 2005; Irrgang 2005; Clarke 2008; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; Miah & Rich 2008). That is, what was called "human engineering" during the first half of the twentieth century (see, for example, Noble 1979 [1977]: 257–324; in terms of "social engineering," cf. Podgórecki et al. 1996; Thompson & Findlay 1999; with regard to "the organization man," cf. Whyte 2002 [1956]: 2–28, 82–84, 126–137; for the historical origins of the idea, see, Korzybski 1921; Chapanis et al. 1947; in the context of Taylor's "scientific management," see Kaufman 2008: 118–120, 133–135, 143–146; for a historical contextualization, see Nickerson & Pew 2003: 653–658; Rabinbach 1990; in terms of the cyborg, see Rosenfeld 1969: 274–277; Noble 1989: 15–25; Haraway 1991h [1979]: 44–57; Edwards 1996: 175–327; Halacy 1965a) now returns with a vengeance: not only is the human body today accommodated to technology, but, more fundamentally, the whole human existence is now reconceived of and thus *re-engineered* in terms of the technological, as part of radical technologization of all being adapted to the systems logic of the political economy of neoliberalism (for human engineering in the constellation of the Cold War, cf. Farish: 2010: 116–117, 147–171).

In terms of the "post," we are literally living in a world in which our existence is a matter of constant "reformation": *form*, as a constitutive *re-form*, is the very *substance* of our living conditions in the world of the "post": the "re" of the "post" is the signifier of the future in its postmodern "futurality" (cf. Pronger 2002: 33), *the actuality of the potential* in the sense of post-liminal, limitless *potentia* constitutive of technoscience.

3.1 If the Cyborg Is a "Monster," What Does It "Demonstrate"?

This transformation, this shift of paradigm, most clearly concerns the conditions of possibility to *be* and to *have* a body today (cf. Turner 1997 [1984]: 73–82; Williams & Bendelow 1998; Crossley 2001, 2006; Shilling 2005; for the difference between *Körper* and *Leib*, see, for example, Hauser-Schäublin et al. 2001: 97–99, 107–109, 133–137; Caysa 2003: 36–57; Thomas 1996; Schmidt 2009). The human body, *in its posthuman form*, is the focus of all epistemological and ontological questions in the contemporary configuration of labour, life and language as a postmodern kaleidoscope of discursive performatives that are circulated and recycled as "free-floating signifiers" on the theory scene of the "post" – not unlike the stakes in the transnational financial markets: *futurities* constitute the imaginary of capital that is present in its (real) absence. It is in this sense that technoscience (see, for example, Ihde & Selinger 2003; Michael 2006; Asdal et al. 2007) has now taken the place of the "human sciences" that, as honourable relics of previous centuries, can be understood today only in Derridean "quotations marks."

In a world in which life is just biological processes, economic variables and linguistic figures, life *in itself* is no longer intelligible but in "quotation marks": life has turned into a scientific-technological phantasm, a post-science-fictional *ignis fatuus* always receding when approached; an imaginary signifier reiterated in, through and by the linguistic figurations constitutive of the language games peculiar to the discursive matrix of the "post" (see Lyotard 1984; Lyotard & Thébaud 1999 [1979]; for a theory-historical contextualization, see, for example, Haber 1994; Appignanesi 2003; Badmington 2007).

3.1.1 The Posthuman: From "Trained Gorilla" to "Humanware"

From the standpoint outlined above, the idea of life, in all its dimensions, has become thoroughly ambiguous, be it human life or life in general. That is, life is no longer life in a world in which the "post," instead of being *post factum*, is always already *ante factum*, before the fact of life. In other words, where life is exposed to a continuous, all-consuming postification in terms of postness in its radical postality, being alive has lost its *being* and turned into a "thing," an object of technoscience (cf. Heidegger 1977a [1938], 1977d [1927], 1999 [1938/1939, 1946/1948], 2000b [1953], 2009 [1935–1958]). It is for this very reason that the Derridean "quotations marks" are the constitutive condition of possibility of all that we call "life" in the world of the "post."

This is the idea of the posthuman: in the paradigm of the "*post*-human," the human is put in the disposition of technoscience, and, therefore, the human in its entirety is now at the disposal of capital; in other words, human abilities and capabilities, all the human forces, are considered as a self-regenerative pool of resources, a supply of productive and economic assets to be deployed for the accumulation of capital. That is, what was once, long ago, *my* body is today an economic-political and scientific-technological fund managed and administered by means of corporate and government agencies comprising the neo-Fordist regime of postmodern capitalism, and, consequently, what "I am" in this constellation is an embodiment of cost-benefit calculation: "I am" a unit in accounting systems concerning the usability, productivity and profitability of "my" labour force as "human capital" in the contemporary order of the biopolitics of the body (in terms of Foucauldian "governmentality," see Foucault 1991b [1978/1979]: cf., for example, Dean 1999: 72–74; Lemke 1997; Nadesan 2008; for the origins of the managerial conception of human life in terms of American technological warfare, see Edwards 1996).

Life in the World of "Permanent War"

This is the fate of the postmodern body: the body has turned into a *living laboratory* in which the parameters of the future are most intensively put to the

test (see Eerikäinen 2002).[59] While the corporate and government agencies are interested in assessing and estimating the economic value of the body in terms of its maximal utility, post-theory, *as a radical form of simulation*, invests in the speculative value of the imaginary body. Thus, rather than being a Hegelian *Anstrengung des Begriffs*, the "exertion of the concept" (Hegel 1986c [1807]: 56), implying not only the labour of understanding, but, first of all, the conceptual straining of the notion in itself, the procedures of "testing" in terms of the "post" enact various acts of linguistic figuration, post-poetic enactments of language games in which postmodern performatives perform a linguistic performance on the theory scene of the "post" (for a paradigmatic example, see Haraway 1997); in a word, an *Inszenierung* or a "staging" of discursive configurations that appear as, or count for, an effort of understanding, not so much in terms of the understandable as in terms of the intelligible defined by the "post."

Thus, understanding is no longer possible in the world of the "post," nor is it needed: what is now important is a continuous process of redefining redefinitions, not as definitions, but as language games in the mode of productive consumption in the realm of theory.

It is from this perspective that the sexual body, as the paradigmatic postmodern body in terms of desires and pleasures, is *a laboratory of productive consumption* constitutive of the political economy of the postmodern; a body that is able to exceed its limits time and time again under the pressures of what Haraway (1997: 57–58, 100, 114, 212) calls the "New World Order, Inc.," the order of the technoscientific politics of the body as a manifestation of global capitalism, that is, the "life politics" of the political economy of neoliberalism. In other words, it is in this laboratory that "Foucault's three axes of the modern episteme – life, labor, and language" (ibid.: 42), go through a radical transformation: the parameters of the biological, the economic and the linguistic are determined today by technoscience, a global scientific-technological enterprise under the regime of transnational capital. Thus, in the contemporary world, the body is not just something one "is" or "has"; rather, the body is now something that is "made," constructed and reconstructed, produced and reproduced, an entity that necessitates a scientific-technological infrastructure in order to *live*. This is the hard core of the politics of life in the constellation of postmodern capitalism.

59 An issue in itself would be the new "body industries" that have arisen to exploit and profit from organ donation and transplantation surgery that, during the couple of last decades, have entirely discarded the traditional body-image of the human body as an integral whole; a real cyborg industry which, no doubt, has enormously benefited innumerable people in their desperate need of a new organ or body part (such as heart or kidney, or recently even new arms); but, at the same time, these medical procedures have inevitably contributed to a radical devaluation of human subjectivity. Suffice here just to refer to the problem: "Recognising the considerable market potential of the *human materials industry*, pharmaceutical and medical supply companies have developed new products and entire new industries designed specifically for use in donor cadavers. […] In essense, the human materials are being structurally, chemically and functionally transformed to make them more universal. In this way, they become not only *substitutable mechanical parts*, but more like *off-the-shelf reagents*, available for a variety of *end-users*." (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 81–82, quoting a transplantation specialist; emphasis mine) Something similar occurs in the theory discourse of the "post," but more by way of the science-fictionalization of theory.

As we can see, the "body without organs," dreamt of by Antonin Artaud (1976 [1947]: 570–571) in his radio play of 1947, *To Be Done with the Judgement of God*, and later elaborated on firstly by Deleuze in his *The Logic of Sense* and thereafter by Deleuze and Guattari in their "capitalism and schizophrenia" project, recedes more and more to the distant horizon of utopian dreaming. In contrast to Deleuze and Guattari's post-utopian figure of the "body without organs" as a non-organized, fragmented, "chaotic" body, a fluid and liquid body embracing free-flowing "intensities" in its limitless and aleatory contingency, a libidinal body attracted by "partial-objects" and enjoying its radical singularity and alterity as a pure self-immanence, as a pure potentiality (see Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 88–94, 188–206; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–16, 325–330, 2000 [1980]: 149–166; cf., for example, Bogue 1989: 90–94; Massumi 1992: 70–89; Goodchild 1996: 77–86; Holland 1999: 29–35, 120–123), what is the body under the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism, the order of productive consumption, is *an organized body through and through*; a body the organs of which are not only controlled by the mechanisms of capital (production, reproduction and consumption), but also connected to the scientific-technological infrastructure of the body management constitutive of the contemporary neoliberal state as a neo-Hobbesian superorganism (cf. Hobbes 1998 [1651]): the neoliberal state as a biopolitical body management enterprise ruled by the transnational financial markets.

This is a world in which the hard core of "the political" that defines the parameters of politics manifests the interests of the scientific-technological and economic-political system of appropriation and exploitation that becomes intelligible in terms of what Rolf Wiggershaus (2006 [1987]: 70), referring to Adorno and Horkheimer's idea of the "totally administered world," calls *die totalisierung der Verfügungsgewalt*, "the totalization of the power of disposal" (cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; for a critical analysis of the *Grenzen der Verfügbarkeit*, the "limits of disposability," in the technoscientific exploitation of the living, see List 2001; in Heideggerian terms, cf. Heidegger 2000b [1953], 2000c [1966/1976]; Loscerbo 1981).

Accordingly, if "the postmodern" still today has any substance it can be understood only from the perspective of the *politics of disposability*.

For this reason, nothing would be more fatal than to believe that postmodern language games could liberate the body from the grip of neo-Fordist capitalism based on the political economy of neoliberalism. Never in the entire human history has the body been organized in such a comprehensive, all-permeating and all-consuming manner as today, under the power system of transnational capital. In contemporary capitalism, regimented by the imperative of neoliberalism, *every drop of sweat is organized by scientific-technological means* according to the performance principle based on the logic of the maximization of profit. That is, *the organization of every organ* is the very *modus operandi* of neoliberal capitalism: *the fully functionalized body is the paradigmatic embodiment of capital*. In this sense, the postmodern body is the very opposite of the Deleuze-

Guattarian "body without organs" (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285). In other words, *the cyborg is the paragon of disposability under the power of capital, its hard core in terms of post-organic organization*.

Therefore, we must rewrite Artaud to understand the fate of the body in the political economy of global capitalism: for the last time, the body is now "on the autopsy table" to "remake" its "anatomy" (*I say, to remake its anatomy*). The organic body does no longer function since it is "badly constructed," and thus our task is to increase and proliferate the "automatic reactions" of the body by way of artificial organs, the prosthetic organs of the cyborg, in order finally and ultimately to get rid of that "animalcule" that prevents the human being from turning into the posthuman. When we have made the human being *a body with artificial organs*, then we will have delivered human existence from all its obsolescence and restored it to its true freedom, the freedom of being a fully functional part of the neoliberal order that is our future already present.

In other words, *along with the cyborg we have arrived at the grave of the human being and we salute the birth of the posthuman*, the paragon of our new life.

This is the technocratic order of neoliberal capitalism, the regime of scientific-technological and economic-political reconstitution of the human being in terms of the posthuman: the final return of what Herbert Marcuse (2002 [1964]) called "the one-dimensional man" in the 1960s (cf. Inman 2004: 64–67). It is precisely for this reason that life is no longer possible *as life* in the world of the "post" (in terms of *homo sacer* and "bare life," cf. Agamben 1998 [1995]).

If there is any constellation in which all this comes together in a paradigmatic manner, a constellation in which the parameters of the "human" are redefined in the most radical way, in other words, a paradigm in which the epistemological and ontological coordinates of language, labour and life are rearticulated in terms of the posthuman, it is the scientific-technological matrix of war, the new position of the military in the political economy of neoliberalism, the economic order of global capitalism based on the power politics of "permanent war" (see, for example, Burke 2007: 212–236; Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Amin 2004; Dal Lago & Palidda 2010).

War is the keyword of the postmodern, the key to the body politic of the postmodern condition.

That is, killing and healing, destruction and reconstruction, it is from this dialectics that the modern body emerges as the intrinsic prerequisite of the postmodern body – the human body as a *medical body*, the condition of the possibility of the cyborg as the embodiment of the post-biological body in the sense of technoscience.

How to Become One's Own Leviathan?

War is about bodies, living and dead. War is about control, the means of controlling the movements of human bodies, their forces, capacities and abilities, their skills and experiences, their expenditure and efficiency, their expedience and usability, in order to achieve preordained objectives in accordance with given strategic and tactical requirements (see, for example, O'Connell 1989; Neiberg 2001; Archer et al. 2002; Black 2003; Parker 2005). What are called the "body count" and the "kill ratio," of course, are not the final truth of war; but they certainly constitute the ultimate truth concerning the feasibility of war in the first place, to say nothing of the "costs" of war in terms of human life (see Ferguson 2004: 96–99; in terms of "strategic assessment," cf. Gartner 1999); as far as "human life" still makes sense at all otherwise than, literally, "under erasure" in the Derridean manner (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 60): technological advances notwithstanding, there is no war without bodies, living and dead. In the final analysis, force in war is not so much about machine power as the power that can be extracted from the human body; thus, what is decisive is man power even in the age of unlimited information, the age of the cyborg.

In this manner, human bodies in war are an indispensable *resource* with their own survival economy, even in what Christopher Coker (2002: 159–195, 2004: 80–108) calls "posthuman war." But these bodies are nothing without the military order, the regime of discipline, docility and a clearly defined task orientation: the regime of the subordination of the bodies under the reason of military organization, *the reason of death in the name of life enabled by the absolute availability and utility of living bodies, their vital energies* (cf. Marriott & Grumstrup-Scott 1992; Blascovich & Hartel 2007). What Deleuze and Guattari (2000 [1980]: 351–423) call "the war machine" is the genealogical condition of possibility pertaining to the intelligibility of the human body, its potentialities and utilities: if what is known as the body politic is predicated upon the deployment of individual bodies, the bodies in themselves are a product of the body politic (for the notion, see Harris 1998: 1–16; in various historical contexts, see, for example, Mirzoeff 1995: 58–97; de Baecque 1997; Hess 1999; Holland 2001; with regard to "the cyborg body politic," see Gray 2001: 18–19, 2005: 59–63, 144–145; Muri 2007: 87–132; in terms of "machine as Messiah," see Larson 2004; for the presence of the "war body" in the postmodern mediascape, see Randell & Redmond 2008).[60]

What is important in this context is that it is not so much the notion of death that has changed in the postmodern: to be killed in war today is, in the end effect, essentially the same as in the First or the Second World War, or centuries

60 To get an impression of the dimensions, of the supra-human scale of the war machine, and of its impact on the human body, it is appropriate to recall Walter Benjamin's comments on the right-wing war literature in the mid-1930s, his observations concerning the radical change resulting from the First World War in terms of destructive power: "For never has experience contradicted more throughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body." (Huyssen 1995: 134)

ago: killing results in death, and a dead body is dead today as it has always been. Rather, what has gone through a radical transformation is *the very idea of life*; and it is precisely in this respect that what is called "postmodern war" cannot be properly understood just in terms of military operations (see, for example, Gray 1997: 21–23, 168–184, 2001: 55–65, 2005: 7–12, 20–50; Angstrom 2005: 16–20; Hammond 2007: 4–36; Negri 2008: 134–135; cf. Baudrillard 1995 [1991]; for an overview of "the postmodern military," see Moskos et al. 2000; in the context of the Vietnam War, cf. Jameson 1991: 44; Bibby 2000), but in an essentially wider constellation, as a manifestation of *scientific-technological redesign of the body* epitomized by the cyborg; in short, postmodern war becomes intelligible in the framework of Foucauldian "biopower" in its both dimensions: as *disciplinary measures* in the form of the "anatomo-politics of the human body" and *regulatory control* in the form of the "bio-politics of population" (Fourcault 1990b [1976]: 138–145; cf. Rygiel 2006: 146–163; Tyner 2009).[61]

It is precisely in this sense that postmodern war is more an issue of life than death. What Michael Dillon and Julian Reid (2009) call "the liberal way of war" manifests a shift of paradigm in warfare: the transition "from the liberal subject to the *biohuman*," a biopolitical mode of war that, paradoxically, implies "*killing to make life live*" (ibid.: 21–23, 41–54, 127–131; emphasis mine; cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 135–145; for the term "biohuman," cf. Romanucci-Ross et al. 1983). That is, more than national identity or ethnic affiliation, the sheer biological existence of populations has become an eminent political issue, and, as such, a potential as well as an actual reason for war. In this sense, war in the contemporary world is an increasingly biopolitical enterprise, a military way of regulating life in the interests of species survival (Dillon & Reid 2009: 30–41; cf. Nadesan 2008: 184–191; Chandler 2010). Accordingly, people are no longer conceived of as national subjects, but, rather, as objects of biopolitics, as biological populations in the sense of the "biohuman" (cf. Lemke 1997:131–143). In these terms, the idea of biopolitical war is to promote life by eliminating life forms that are seen to threaten the survival of the species (for the biopolitical order of power in terms of "unending war," cf. Duffield 2007: 16–31; in terms of illiberal practices of liberal regimes provoked by the terror after 9/11, cf. Bigo & Tsoukala 2008).

61 There are several, even contradictory, ways to define "postmodern war"; instead of trying to give a definition, I outline its main components as follows: (1) *post-national asymmetry*: the adversary is not a state or a nation, but some insurgent grouping or terrorist organisation; (2) *biopolitics*: warfare pertains not to territorial interests (occupation, sovereignty), but economic claims and conditions of life ("right to live") in a globalizing world; (3) *the militarization of peace*: instead of resulting in a peace agreement, conflicts remain without resolution and are managed by military means; (4) *high-tech armament*: all sides of conflicts strive at deploying latest development of technology ("smart weapons," "cyberwar"); (5) *global/local*: local conflicts always have global dimensions and global interests permanently engender local conflicts; (6) *mediatization*: war is no longer only military activity, but both a media event and a world-wide media spectacle ("war as popular culture"); (7) *the neoliberal privatization of war*: in various forms, war is today a lucrative branch of private entrepreneurship and a profitable investment object (weapon development, mercenaries, private military companies, "security services"). For these reasons, "postmodern war" is also characterized by the term "new wars," that is, military conflicts that no longer follow the "Clausewitz doctrine" (see, for example, Münkler 2002).

After the transition from the liberal subject to the mode of existence defined by the "biohuman," we live in the world in which "global biopolitics operates as a strategic game in which the principles of war are assimilated into the weft and warp of the socio-economic and cultural networks of biopolitical relations" (Dillon & Reid 2001: 42). In this constellation, as Dillon and Reid sum up their conception of war in the age of the "biohuman" alluding to Clausewitz's famous dictum, according to which, as we remember, *Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln*, "war is a mere continuation of politics by other means" (Clausewitz 1992 [1832–1834]: 34; cf. Echevarria 2007: 3–4, 41–42, 69–70, 84–94; Gray 2007: 15–29): it is no less no more than expressly "biopolitics" in itself that is today "the pursuit of war by other means" (Dillon & Reid 2001: 42).

As we can see, the turn to the "biohuman" not only means the definitive end of the Clausewitzian conception of war and politics, but, more fundamentally, nothing less than *the end of the human being* (cf. Merquior 1985: 51–52; Foucault 1989 [1966]: 386–387; Heidegger 1976a [1946]; Derrida 1984f [1972/1968]; Haraway 1992a; Pircher 1995a). That is, we are now living in a world in which life in general, *life in itself*, life as myriad manifestations of "the biological," has displaced the human once and for all. What is left over is the rule of the "biohuman," a constellation in which the idea of the human is nothing but the negation of Life. But, as the facts of biology teach us, *where Life reigns, there Death reigns, too*. This is the triumph of the biological, the triumph of *pure life* in its "natural" alliance with *pure death*. In other words, the idea of "survival of the fittest," in its political form of eugenics, is inherent to the programme of the "biohuman," and it is in this sense that the political has now taken on the meaning of the "biopolitical." This does not imply a return or a relapse to the old conceptions of *Rassenpolitik* and sociobiology (see, for example, Weingart et al. 1992 [1988]; Weingart et al. 1997; Etzemüller 2007); but instead, the politics of the "biohuman" and the "biopolitical" indicates a "revival of interest in human enhancement via *liberal eugenics*" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 46; emphasis mine cf. Habermas 2001; Agar 2004; Gehring 2006; Cooper 2008).

This is the world of the cyborg; a world in which not only the intelligibility of life is predicated upon technoscience, but in which the very condition of possibility of life is dependent on a continuous redesign of all that is living (for the consequences of this new constellation in terms of the right and value of life, see Yorke 2010). In other words, what was once life, *life as life*, is now Life in the laboratory.

In this new world in which Life has taken the place of all that was once human, war is also a biological process in the strong sense of the term. *War is now an issue of species life*, a manifestation of the supremacy of the biological, an omnipresent incarnation of Foucauldian biopower. Accordingly, war is no longer something external to the body; instead, war now penetrates the body deep down into its internal constitution, its cellular structure, and, at the same time, war also penetrates the reproduction process of capital, its very financial composition. This is the transformation of capitalism in the conditions of the post-

modern: if, for Marx (1983 [1967]: 247), *[d]as Kapital ist verstorbene Arbeit, die sich nur vampyrmäßig belebt durch Einsaugung lebendiger Arbeit und um so mehr lebt, je mehr sie davon einsaugt*, "capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks," the living power of capital is now the unending capacity of *bios*, the living force of all living. And it is precisely here that the human being turns into the "biohuman," the ultimate manifestation of the posthuman. As soon as this metamorphosis has been accomplished, death becomes the ruler of life, its very sovereign, and, consequently, war takes on a positive meaning as the saviour of life.

In allusion to the Foucauldian conception of biopower, Reid specifies the idea of biopolitical war:

> In a biopolitical context where power is exercised at the level of the life of populations, war occurs in the form of a struggle between *populations whose particular existence as the expressions of species life* that they are is at stake. The participation of populations in war is therefore reconceived not as the product of a right of seizure, but as *a positive, life-affirming act*. (Reid 2006: 136; emphasis mine).

In other words, where human beings are reconceived of as *populations* in the biological sense of the term, is also where war is then reconceptualized in terms of the biological.[62] As a consequence, war as "killing to make life live" implies, paradoxically, a "naturalization" of war: killing turns into a "natural" process intrinsic to life; that is, after the implosion of the "human condition" as a result of the triumph of the biological, killing is part of the "natural condition" of the "biohuman": it is the very condition of possibility of Life in itself (in terms of "cybernetic warfare," see Bousquet 2009: 121–162; for strategic thinking based on cybernetics, feedback and adaptation to environment, see Osinga 2007: 72–103).

From this perspective, what recently are called the "life sciences" (Bowring 2003: 67–86; Dillon & Reid 2009: 28–29, 46–48, 145–146; Nadesan 2008; for the history of biotechnology, see Thackray 1998), consisting of a wide spectrum of the biological sciences in close interrelations with the information sciences, computing and digitalization (Dillon & Reid 2009: 23–24, 123–125; cf, for example, Rose 2007: 41–54; Terranova 1996a; Clarke 1998), paradoxically, constitute the scientific-technological context of postmodern war, understood as a large-scale conglomeration of political and military procedures and operations to control the preconditions and expressions of life from biological organisms to human beings world-wide.

In this context, what is life is reduced to "the biological" which, in turn, is reduced to information. But what is important is that information thus takes on

62 To understand the significance of the reconception of the human being in terms of the biological, that is, the reduction of human beings to populations, it is appropriate to recall how Norbert Wiener (1968 ([1950]: 61), in his discussion on the consequences of cybernetics, sarcastically emphasized the specifity of being human: "I am afraid that I am convinced that a community of human beings is a far more useful thing than a community of ants, and that if the human being is condemned and restricted to perform the same functions over and over again, he will not even be a good ant, not to mention a good human being."

a *neo-vitalist* meaning: it is that which constitutes the "bios" of the biological and the "living" of life. As Dillon and Reid (2009: 21) say, we do not simply live "in the age of information, as military strategic thinkers of the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) of the last 20 years, along with so many other management and social scientists, have proclaimed," but, rather, we have now entered "the age of *life as information*" (emphasis mine; for the classical study that inaugurated this shift of paradigm, see Schrödinger 1992 [1944]; cf. Keller 1995: 45–48, 66–78; Kay 2000: 59–72; von Baeyer 2004: 47–53, 176–178, 223–231; in terms of the "post," cf. Haraway 1991f, 1997; Hayles 1999; for the notion of RMA, see Gray 2005: 27–30 Loo 2009; for the idea of "war in the Information Age" as a "Clausewitzian Future," see Lonsdale 2004; cf. Fuchs 2008: 247–266).

What is important here is that information is not "just" information in the order of biopolitical body politics (similarly as information is not "just" information in the global networks of capital); rather, as the constituting factor of the "biohuman," information means the mode of "being-in-formation," and life is thus "understood in its complex changing *material instrumentality* as 'being-in-formation'" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 23; emphasis mine). For this reason, bodies are also now more than "just" biological bodies put in the form of information: as biopolitical bodies, bodies constitute "hybrid and cyborg-like assemblages, or complex adaptive systems" (Dillon 2004: 82), and hence they are "bodies-in-formation" that embrace "both assemblages of people, for example organisations and populations, and assemblages of people and machines, for example the information systems of cybernetics" (ibid.: 84). As a consequence, human bodies have turned into a security risk in an entirely new way; as Dillon explains, referring to Carl Schmitt's classical formulation according to which "a political entity comes into being when the distinction between friend and enemy is drawn" (ibid.; cf. Schmitt 1979a [1932]: 26–29; Mehring 2003):

> As information or code, the human is no longer a stable referent, the application of which would securely differentiate between friends and enemies. *Informational bodies-in-relation are dynamic, adaptive, re-combinatory, mutable and non-linear.* Neither friend nor enemy can be given beforehand since the emergence of living assemblages is contingent on the dynamics of the modes, affects and effects of always already being related. In the dissolution of the friend-enemy distinction, the security problematic re-emerges in terms of the becoming-dangerous of recombinant modes of relation. Bodies-in-formation cannot be subject to the security problematic of the friend/enemy distinction, instead they become subject to becoming-dangerous and its allied symptomatologies of pathology, or epidemiologies of danger. Security goes hyperbolic as unlimited knowledge and surveillance of infinitely definable assemblages, populations and networks – as complex adaptive systems – is logically called for. (Dillon 2004: 84; cf. Bogard 1996; Sarasin 2004; in terms of the "rationalization of the body" as early "scientific management" in the Enlightenment, cf. Sarasin 1995; for a historical-philosophical background of this problematics in Kant's conception of the *Aufklärung*, see Foucault 1990f [1984], 1996g [1983])

As we can see, *epidemiology is a new epistemology in the world of the "biohuman."* That is, we are living in extremely dangerous times: not only that it is no longer

possible to make the cardinal distinction between friend and fiend (your neighbor can be a "bio-bomb" or a second-generation "unabomber"; your own Facebook entry can turn into your most fatal enemy; a random encounter in a café can embroil you in connections that make you suspect to authorities without your noticing it at all; you have been vaccinated against a new dangerous virus only to hear that a computer virus has fatally damaged the efficiency of the vaccine you have been given; your bank account can be intruded by a Trojan that not just ruins your economy, but, as a bonus, makes you appear as an Al-Qaeda terrorist…); but, more fundamentally, after the implosion of the integrity constitutive of the human body before the paradigm of the "biohuman," bodies have turned into techno-biological assemblages that exist in contingent relationships beyond the control of the subject and can thus become a security risk to both oneself and one's own environment. In other words, not only are we living in a neo-Hobbesian world in which there prevails the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, "the war of all against all" (see Hobbes 1998 [1651]) in terms of global resource appropriation, but what is most insidious is that *each and everyone is now one's own Leviathan*.

In this situation, as we can easily understand, the only adequate reaction is paranoia, or, if we have strength of mind enough, cynical nihilism (cf. Sloterdijk 1983a, 1983b).

Welcome to "New World Order, Inc."

Today, we are living in a world in which not just security risks, but all kinds of risks in general, are built-in in the very systems that intend to make the systems secure. What the German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1986) called *Risikogeselleschaft*, "risk society," in the 1980s is like a neat textbook exercise for employees working in insurance companies in comparison to contemporary society in which technology and biology are intertwined with one another in a manner never seen before (cf. Beck 1999; Lupton 1999); a society in which risks, threats and dangers increasingly run out of control, a society in which life in itself, in all its dimensions, has become a risk factor that is beyond control, in spite of, or even because of, all the enormous efforts to get it under the control of science and technology. From this perspective, if we consider the political consequences of the "biohuman," it is not difficult to see that it only implies a potentiation, a geometric escalation, of risks instead of an increasing efficiency of risks management. If human life is reconceived of in the technoscientific mode of the "biohuman," or, more fundamentally, is abolished altogether by it, that is, if the life of human beings disappears behind the interests of biocapital, war is then not only a continuation of politics by other means, rather, it is politics in itself.

In this situation, war turns into global risk management exercised by a new kind of technocratic elite, a World Corporation of Bio-Police, in comparison to which the power apparatus of the Kremlin during the Soviet regime appears as a cosy idyll: a contraproductive mode of risk management that by controlling risks produces new risks.

What began in the Vietnam War continues today by other means, by way of biopolitical power politics, a mode of politics in which war is no longer an exception, the ultimate method of enforcing the realization of political decisions; rather, war is now a structural moment in the rule of global capital: a military way of thought has infiltrated the economic calculation of transnational enterprises that, in alliance with superpowers, struggle over the dominance of world resources. It is in this context that the "biohuman" shows its real face. That is, whilst the Vietnam War, although it intended a biopolitical domination of a population deemed as "dangerous," was still a political war in the sense of Cold War power politics, in contrast to that, the idea of war in the name of the "biohuman" shifts the emphasis onto the biological constitution of population in itself. In this sense, Monsanto Corporation, the first truly global biotechnology company, is today the very model of the hegemony enabled by the technoscientific regime (see, for example, Tokar 2001; Scoones 2006; Andrée 2007; in terms of cyborg politics, see Bowring 2003: 58–103, 257–277). In this constellation, genes and genetics are what territories and natural resources (such as oil and minerals) were in the twentieth century.[63]

What has not changed, however, is that where the interests of capital rule, there killing goes on in the manner of business as usual, literally, to use military jargon, as a *standard operating procedure*.

Having said that, a question arises: what is actually the connection between the Vietnam war and Monsanto's biotechnological enterprise? A scientific-technological appropriation of the living conditions of human beings conceived of as population, as a target of strategic operations; a mode of expropriation in which the target as an "other" turns into an "alien" to be incorporated by means of radical domestication – that is the connection between the Vietnam War and the politics of Monsanto. In the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese people were a potential risk-population to be annexed to the "free world" under the auspices of the *Pax Americana* in order to avoid their becoming a part of the World Communist System. Similarly, but this time on a global scale, for Monsanto, the people of the world are a pool of populations to be integrated into its world-wide empire of biotechnological products which destroy the independence of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs by making them its subservient contractors, a source of profit extraction based on enforced product dependence (see, for example, Weis 2007: 70–81; Robinson 2008: 88–94; Clapp & Fuchs 2009; Schanbacher 2010; for a historical perspective, see, for example, Jones 2005).

63 Although biotechnology *as a technology* (or, rather, as a conglomeration of technologies) has come into being only recently, it nevertheless has a history; during the eighteenth century, as Foucault (1990k [1976]: 142) says, "methods of power and knowledge assumed responsibility for the life processes and undertook to control and modify them." "Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, *biological existence was reflected in political existence*; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention." (ibid.; emphasis mine)

This is the politics of the cyborg in what Haraway (1997) calls the "New World Order, Inc.," the whole world as the operation field of bio-capital: the world as a resource for surplus value.

It is in this sense that Monsanto's business strategy is a continuation of war by other means, by means of economic exploitation. As different as they are in their results, both the Vietnam War and Monsanto's biopolitics, however, manifest an analogous system of domination that is enabled by technological superiority: here the destructive power of military technology, there the biopower of biotechnology.

What is important in this context is that biotechnology, in fact, follows the model of military technology. In this respect, the Vietnam War was the decisive turning point. A paradigmatic example of this change is what was called the "Operation Igloo White," a computer-based surveillance and commando system to coordinate and guide bombing raids along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Thousands of sensors were strewn across this vital supply route of the Vietcong in the jungle, connected to IBM 360/65 computers and monitored and controlled by technicians pored over banks of video displays in what was called the Infiltration Surveillance Center (ISC) at Nakhom Phanom in Thailand (Edwards 1996: 3).

> The sensors – shaped like twigs, jungle plants, and animal droppings – were designed to detect all kinds of human activity, such as the noises of truck engines, body heat, motion, even the scent of human urine. When they picked up a signal, it appeared on the ISC's display terminals hundreds of miles away as a moving white "worm" superimposed on a map grid. As soon as the ISC computers could calculate the worm's direction and rate of motion, coordinates were radioed to Phantom F-4 jets patrolling the night sky. The planes' navigation systems and computers automatically guided them to the "box," or map grid square, to be attacked. The ISC central computers were also able to control the release of bombs: the pilot might do no more than sit and watch as the invisible jungle below suddenly exploded into flames. In most cases no American ever actually saw the target at all. (ibid.)

No American ever actually saw the target at all; in this manner, the Vietnam War was a technoscientific enterprise that implied the hard core of the abstract logic, the technocratic regime constitutive of the biopolitical domination and exploitation of the contemporary world by global corporations such as Monsanto. If, for the Pentagon, the Vietnam war was "a test case" (ibid.: 136–137; cf. Gray 1997: 158–167; Gaddis 2005: 235–271), it is, *mutatis mutandis*, the standard operating procedure for Monsanto (in terms of "information warfare in business," cf. Munro 2005).

Indeed, "Vietnam was more," as Andreas W. Daum, Lloyd C. Gardner and Wilfried Mausbach (2003: 22) aptly sum up the import of the Vietnam War for the global politics that America pursued in Asia, a mode of power politics that America has pursued ever since all over the world, in fact, since the end of the Second World War that was the beginning of the Cold War.

> The Asian country threatened by communism (as the story was told) was seen as part of a campaign to spread America's global vision of the world order. This vision incorporated the capitalist idea of creating free markets to allow economic

> expansion and prosperity, and it simultaneously absorbed the idea of progressive modernization. After 1961, intellectuals sympathetic to the Kennedy and Johnson administration depicted Vietnam as a test case for modernization theories, transplanting ideas of the Great Society [as Johnson presented his political programme to the American people] into an arena that turned out to be structurally incompatible with this concept. Be it these visions or succeeding ones, such as Nixon's concept of Asia after Vietnam – all were marked by an *amazing degree of abstraction* insofar as they reflected America's own ideological premises much more than the indigenous issues of Vietnam. (ibid.: 22–23; emphasis mine)

What do Monsanto bio-specialists, sitting in the company head quarters in St. Louis, Missouri, U.S., actually know about the "targets" on which they are planning their sales attacks? "Targets" somewhere in the "Third World," far away from the virtual reality of Monsanto laboratories, "targets" that, in *real reality*, are not technoscientific abstractions, units in the profit calculation in terms of the "bio-human," but living communities subsisting on their own land and work; "targets" that, instead of agricultural autonomy and biodiversity, constitute an industrially organized monoculture for Monsanto (see, for example, Schurman & Kelso 2003; Stehr 2004).[64] "The supremacy of rationality" (Gray 1997: 158), the hubris of technoscience, that was the virtual reality of the Pentagon technocrats administering the "technowar" in Vietnam, conceived of as "a rationally managed production system" relying on "microeconomics, game theory, systems analysis, and other managerial techniques" (ibid.: 161; cf. Pias 2005c: 128–132) established during the Kennedy era, as Chris Hables Gray describes the Vietnam War with reference to James Gibson's (1986) seminal study entitled *The Perfect War*; a war as a scientific-technological effort to "destroy premodern Vietnam" (Gray 1997: 158; in terms of the postmodern, see Gray 1999) in order to subjugate it to the political, economic and military interests of the American empire (cf. Edwards 1996: 139–142; Gray 2005: 24–26; DeLanda 1991; from a comparative perspective, cf. Daum et al. 2003).

This is the world of Monsanto today: a global biotechnology laboratory, a world-wide bioindustry plant to bring profit by means of technoscience. This is the *Realpolitik* of the cyborg.

While the "rationally managed production system" approach to warfare of the Pentagon military specialists in the Vietnam war brought about destruction by means of war production, the biopolitical strategy of Monsanto implies a technoscientific agricultural system in which the production of food brings about the destruction of the autochthonous agriculture and community of indig-

64 It is appropriate to emphasize that to unravel the complicated relations between biotechnology, biopolitics, global economy and war would necessitate a separate study that, moreover, would require, in contrast to postmodern technophilia, an elaboration of a critical language which would avoid, on the one hand, the self-replicating metaphoricism peculiar to cyborg discourse, and the managerial jargon typical of technocratic policy-making, on the other. During the last decade, in the wake of globalization and the increasing impact of transnational corporations in the realm of "the biological," reaching from food production to human genetics, the pertaining research literature has proliferated enormously. Therefore, the references given in the text can be only allusive (for further reading, see, for example, Tokar 1998; Chauhan 2001; Rajan 2006; Agostino & Ashton 2007; Somsen 2007; Wright & Middendorf 2008; for the neo-religious, millennial hype around biotechnology, see Alexander 2003; for the thematization of "the biological" in terms of bio art, see, for example, Reichle 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Kac 2005, 2009; Da Costa & Philip 2008).

enous people. In this manner, people all over the world are forced to adopt the commodity form as the basis of their living, and thus "everything in the global economy is potentially up for sale: plants, genetic codes, traditional knowledge, sexuality, children, and human organs" (Johnston 2008: 100). Accordingly, with "commodification comes heightened dependency on the market for meeting basic needs" (ibid.), amounting to a situation in which transnational agricultural corporations, such as Monsanto, not only have the privilege to sell their products, but, more fundamentally, as an "intentional by-product" of their corporate strategies, they practice politics that leads to "the elimination of self-reliance, self-provisioning, and autonomy" (ibid.; cf. Bowring 2003: 63–78).

For this reason, it is an intellectual and theoretical delusion to think that globalization is primarily a metropolitan process, a process which is seen to be characteristic of what (superficially and naively) is designated as "the information society"; as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2000: 29) says, it is "the so-called rural" that is "the real terrain of globalization," that is, the "global front" is today "in what can be called 'the country,' not the city at all." What the urban mode of thought, typical of the "post," deems to be the future already present is not the information-saturated metropolitan technoculture theorized under the sign of the postmodern, but the backyard of the "urban": the global reality of the "rural." The delusion of post-theory is predicated upon abstraction constitutive of financial speculation, scientific-technological rationality and the imaginary of the theoretical, all of which are peculiar to contemporary capitalism, the political economy of neoliberalism. It is in this manner that "[f]or those of us still mesmerized by the urbanist teleology of the right and the left, the changes seen upon urban-built space are the most visible" (ibid.).

This is the mind-set of what Spivak calls "spectralization" (ibid.; cf. Derrida 1994 [1993]; Tatum 2007). In the spectral light of spectralization, theoretical apparitions take the place of reality. Thus, "[f]rom commercial to finance capital, transnationalism to globalization, it is the spectralization of the 'rural' that is now the dominant"; this is the way "[c]apital uses the spectrality of the 'rural'" (Spivak 2000: 29). "The silicon chip puts the 'rural' into a general equivalent form – not money but finance" (ibid.); as a result, transnational financial capital, the most abstract of all abstractions in contemporary capitalism, is the driving force of "the spectralization of the rural," a process of technoscientific commodification of the rural areas of the globe, "coded by world trade" (ibid.) in the interests of biocapital paradigmatically exemplified by Monsanto.

This is the world of the "biohuman," a world in which what was once human life is now Life in the laboratory, "life" as a high-tech product, techno-organic "life" as a commodity on the global markets under the regime of biocapital, "life" as an object of financial speculation. In other words, this is what Haraway (1997: 57–58) calls the "New World Order, Inc.," a world order that began in the Vietnam War and now continues by means of the biopolitical power politics pursued by Monsanto and similar global corporations all over the world.

It is in this manner, as Stephen Tatum (2007: 17) says, that the "omnipresent contemporary interface between embodied human (and animal) subjects and computer and digital technology and robotic logic" constitutes the spectral manner to manage life, life as a laboratory product. "In the new postindustrial environment governed by electronic technology and data networks," "the key interface requiring innovative interpretive strategies is that of a prosthesis between humans and technology or machines" (ibid.).

> This kind of "spectralization," grounded by its human-machine interface and its attendant dream of becoming electronic, is manifested in or by, to make a short list for starters, the artificial limbs and organs and the cloning experiments developed in the postindustrial economy's western biotech and medical research labs; by the computer-generated simulations of weather patterns and traffic patterns and even of nuclear accidents at test sites in the West; by the electronic tracking devices and surveillance cameras and satellites developed for parolees, and illegal immigrants, and endangered animals across the geopolitical West; by the robots on the floors of the region's manufacturing sector; and by the animatronics and computer-simulated effects in the entertainment sectors located largely, though not exclusively, in California and Nevada. (ibid.: 18)

According to Tatum, "this kind of interface (human-machine) and this version of the spectral (visual displays on screens and monitors)," typical of contemporary American technoculture, "most compellingly illustrate how Spivak's 'spectralization of the so-called rural' has begun to saturate the postregional American West's cultural economy" (ibid.). At the same time, these technologies, that both in themselves and by way of their cultural consequences manifest the idea of spectrality, demonstrate the *logic of abstraction* intrinsic to technoculture in general: a technoscientific process that consists of three components, *digitalization*, *immaterialization* and *deterritorialization*, which all together result in *simulation* and *virtualization* as a new epistemological and ontological paradigm that is constitutive of the scientific-technological constellation of the biohuman, and behind it, the techno-imaginary that has enabled the idea of the posthuman.

Soteriology, Redefined

All in all, along with the rise of the biohuman we have entered a new world in which war is no longer a military enterprise in the sense of territorial battles of armed forces beginning with a political conflict and ending in a peace agreement; rather, war is now a continuous and omnipresent struggle of contradictory forces, a permanently antagonistic situation as a complex constellation of military, semi-military and paramilitary operations *as part of* biopolitical power-politics, in the midst of what, for some unknown reason, is still called "peace." This is a new conflict paradigm that defines postmodern war as biopolitical war, war as a global struggle to rule the availability and utility of *bios* in its entirety, war as "the biopolitics of disposability" (see Giroux 2008b; cf. Negri 2008 [2003]: 126–138; Agamben 1998 [1995]; Esposito 2008 [2004]; Morton & Bygrave 2008).

This is a new era that is predicated upon a comprehensive "informationalization of life, implying "a massive and successive reduction of language to the

utilitarian demands of 'communication,' 'information' and, finally, 'code'" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 21; cf. Levidow & Robins 1989a). While, with "the work of the biologist Cuvier, function replaced organ" in the understanding of life, as Dillon and Reid (2009: 21) say referring to Foucault, "information as code" has now "come to replace function," and has once again "opened a new space of living being," as a result of which "materiality as a whole" has "been newly 'vitalized'" (ibid.; cf. Foucault 1989 [1966]: 264; Canguilhem 1988 [1977], 1989 [1943/1966], 1992 [1952]). Ironically, the Heideggerian idea of language as *das Haus des Seins* (Heidegger 1976a [1946]: 333), "the house of being," has taken on an entirely new meaning in this context: it has been "ruthlessly instrumentalized and technologized via the reduction of language to code," finally leading to "the ruthless reduction of the human to the biohuman" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 21; in terms of *technische Sprache* constitutive of scientific-technological rationality, cf. Heidegger 1989b [1962]). This radical move has exposed life to "a logic of relentless manipulation and re-formation" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 21). That is, if human life as "species life" can thus be "informationally re-formatted," it also means that "life itself" can finally "be constructed in laboratories" (ibid.: 22).

In this manner, "what it is to be a living thing is defined in terms of information as code," and, as a result, we live now in a world in which it has become "possible not only to re-conceive but also to re-combine material in newly vital ways" (ibid.; cf. Haraway 1991a: 150–152, 162–163, 175–176). This, indeed, is "a seismic shift" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 22) in what thus far has been understood to be life in general and human life in particular. It is not difficult to see that this new conception of "life" effaces the inherited distinctions between material and immaterial, organic and technological, human and non-human, and, finally, living and non-living. If human life, in the sense of the life of the "biohuman," is now nothing but an assemblage of various materials organized by a code, is there still any difference between the human being and the machine? If machines, in turn, as Dillon and Reid explain referring to cybernetics, "also become life-like when they are construed and constructed informationally" (ibid.), does this imply that not only life, but, more fundamentally, *death* loses its meaning, the meaning which we *as humans* have given it thus far? This is a cardinal question since from now on:

> Machinic ensembles of the biological and the mechanical become possible in ways hitherto not conceived as well; cyborg life taught us this. Computers once confined to inert silicon are now being constructed chemically and biologically; the next generation of computer-mediated information and communication technologies are beginning to teach us this. Hence, the sciences relevant to the understanding of what it is to be *a living thing*, and to the techno-scientific construction of newly *vitalized assemblages*, have expanded to include the informationally driven sciences as well. These also do not simply interrogate the nature of existing living forms but seek ways, along with those pursued by molecularization, of creating new life-forms: biological and cyborg; human, hybrid, and machinic. (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Marx 1983 [1867]: 441–450)

What is significant here is that what we have understood to be life in our *Lebenswelt*, in our life-world experience, is now conceived of in terms of a "living

thing," as a new mode of "life" ontologically and epistemologically on par with "vitalized assemblages," hybrid entities consisting of biological and technological components (see, for example, Bender & Druckrey 1994; Escobar 1996; Farquhar 1996; Robertson et al. 1996; Braun & Castree 1998; Macnaghten & Urry 1998; Elam 1999; Candy & Edmonds 2002; Bath et al. 2005; Stocker & Schöpf 2005; Ascott 2006). In other words, in the world of the "biohuman," the ontological and epistemological differences between humans and machines are definitely abolished, and, as a result, both of them are "living beings" in the same manner, in the mode of the technological that has taken the place of the organic as the basis of life, as the technoscientific matrix of all living, the very condition of possibility of *bios* (cf. Doyle 1997; for the historical contextualization of the complicated, mutually constitutive relationships of the technological and the organic in terms of machine and organism, see Canguilhem 1992 [1954]).

Seen genealogically, the "origins" (in the sense of Nietzschean *Herkunft*; see Nietzsche 1968c [1887]; Foucault 1977c [1971]; cf. Mahon 1992: 108–113; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 80; Blondel 1991 [1986]; Lash 1991; Stegmaier 1994, Davidson 1996 [1986]; Bublitz 2001) of this shift of paradigm from the human to the "biohuman," of course, are diverse and multifarious; from Aristotle's conception of organic nature to the Harawayan cyborg, "the biological" and "the technological," like "organism" and "machine," have embraced a focal point of philosophical debates (see, for example, Haraway 1991f, 1995b [1992], 1997; Kaplan 2004; Scharff & Dusek 2003; Dusek 2006; Krohs & Kroes 2009; for a magisterial thematization, see Canguilhem 1992 [1952]). What is important in this connection, however, is that during the Second World War, as a result of the increase of interest in man-machine interfaces, the idea of the human body underwent a radical reconceptualization in terms of the technological (see, for example, Edwards 1996; Mindell 2002; Boden 2006; Johnston 2008; for the history of cybernetics, see Pias 2003, 2004; from a contemporary standpoint with regard to "the totally mobilized hypermodern body," cf. Armitage 2004).

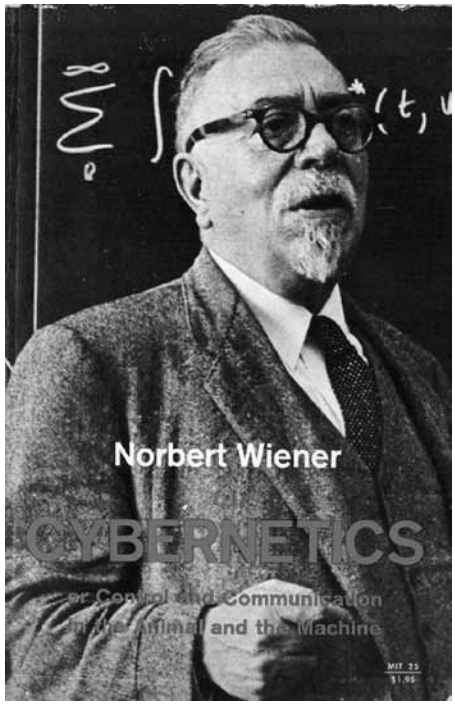
From the perspective outlined above, the development to the "biohuman" began with Norbert Wiener's "antiaircraft (AA) predictor," as Dillon and Reid (2009: 63) say, "a novel calculating device" with the purpose to "enable the more efficient destruction of enemy aircraft" (for a contextualization in terms of "the ontology of the enemy," see Galison 1994: 233–245; cf. Gerovitch 2002a: 54–71; Pickering 2005: 230–234; with regard to the "posthuman," cf. Graham 2002: 181–184; for the historical context, see, for example, Masani 1990: 262–263; Bennett 1993: 164–181; in terms of the Leibnizian "reason machine," cf. Fry 1999: 255–258). In this sense, "Wiener was thereby able to claim the invention of *a weapon which possessed the capacities of a living system*" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 63; emphasis mine). At issue was a new kind of machine that "could exchange information with its target, learn from that information, and adapt its own purpose in relation to its target; in other words, the machine possessed the power to co-evolve its tactical capacities in antagonistic relation with its opponent" (ibid.; in the context of the military organization and "complex machines," cf. Demchak 1991).

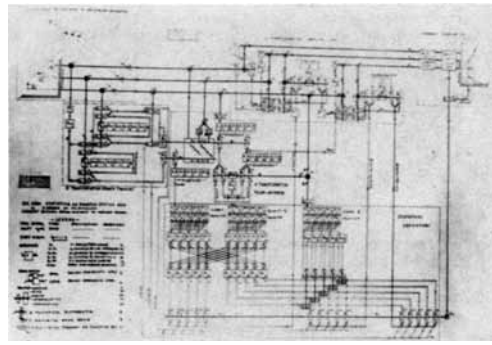
The AA predictor was thus an *intelligent machine*, not in the sense of human intelligence, but in the sense of *machine intelligence* (cf. Turing 2004a [1950]), and, as such, it was a prototypical implementation of cybernetic principles before cybernetics as a scientific discipline (for the pre-cybernetic conception of feedback, control and computing, see Mindell 2002). Consequently, the AA predictor was a technological embodiment of purposeful behaviour as it was conceptualized by Wiener and his associates in their studies concerning the idea of teleology in terms of goal-orientation, feedback and servomechanism, the central notions of cybernetic control and regulation (see Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]; Rosenblueth & Wiener 2009 [1950]; for a historical contextualization with regard to the situation of scientific research during the Second World War, see Mirowski 2002: 153–231; Pickering 1995; Duncan 1999). What is important in this respect is that the AA predictor epitomized a new epistemology, constitutive of cybernetics, according to which the conventional distinction between the human being and the machine was no longer adequate in a world in which machines were able to behave teleologically (see Wiener 1961 [1948]: 11, 40–43; 1968 [1950]: 16–17, 23–28, 32–33, 56–58, 185–186; Edwards 1996: 181–185; Cordeschi 2002: 116–152; Gerovitch 2002a: 61–64; Pickering 2009: 118–120; for a comprehensive overview, see George & Johnson 1985).

Explaining why they came up with the idea of using "the humanistic terms purpose and teleology in the description of the behavior of some machines," Wiener and Arturo Rosenblueth summarized their reason for postulating a functional similarity between humans and machines:

> The question of whether machines are or can be like men or the higher animals does not guide our choice. This question is on the main irrelevant for scientific objectives. We believe that men and other animals are like machines from the *scientific standpoint* because we believe that the only fruitful methods for the study of human and animal behavior are the methods applicable to the behavior of *mechanical objects* as well. Thus, our main objective for selecting the terms in question was to emphasize that, *as objects of scientific inquiry, humans do not differ from machines*. (Rosenblueth & Wiener 2009 [1950]: 237; emphasis mine; cf. Gerovitch 2002a: 84–88; Katz 2003; Mazis 2008; with regard to the critique of artificial intelligence, cf. Dreyfus 1979, 1992)

From this standpoint, it is understandable why the AA predictor was literally instrumental to the development of cybernetics: it was at the same time both a summary of Wiener's ideas and a proposition of their practical implementation (see Masani 1990: 184–193; Mindell et al. 2003: 68–71; Masani & Phillips 1985). For Wiener, the AA predictor epitomized "the prototype for a new understanding of the human-machine relation, one that made soldier, calculator, and firepower into a single integrated system" (Galison 1994: 235). In Wiener's view, as a self-correcting apparatus, the AA predictor was equivalent to the intention of the pilot, and thus "the pilot was nothing other than a self-correcting device," similarly to the antiaircraft gunner, both of whom were subordinated under "a similar *regime of calculation*" (Galison 2000: 153; emphasis mine; in terms of calculative rationality or *Vorausberechenbarkeit* constitutive of modern science,





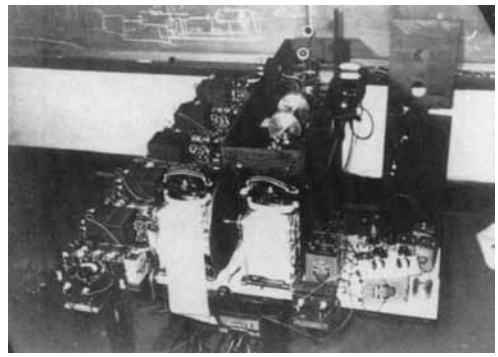


Fig. 21–23. Norbert Wiener (1894–1964), a prominent American mathematician, the founder of cybernetics (see Browder et al. 1988 [1966]; Heims 1980; Masani 1990; Jerison et al. 1997).

In his main work, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (1948), Wiener outlined the principles of a new mathematical, transdisciplinary science between biology and physics studying regulation processes in living organisms and technological systems in terms of information, communication and feedback.

By late 1940, after the German Air Force had begun the bombing of London, Wiener focused on the mathematical problematics of air defence. The result was a calculating device for fire control that Wiener called the "antiaircraft (AA) predictor"; in fact, an elementary form of a cybernetic machine system, and, as such, a proto-form of the cyborg *avant la lettre*. That is, an integrated human-machine assemblage in which the aircraft, the pilot, the tracking mechanism and the future-predicting aiming and firing system together formed a "cybernetic organism" functioning according to the principles of control consisting of information, communication and feedback constitutive of cybernetics; in other words, an automatic system based on teleology and self-regulation (see, for example, Gerovitch 2002a: 53–54; Mirowski 2002: 17–18; Pickering 2005: 233–239; Masani & Phillips 1985; Galison 1994; from the perspective of the "First-Person Shooter," cf. Crogan 2011: 4–5, 91–97, 106–107).

cf. Heidegger 1989b [1962]: 17, 1994a [1949]: 43, 2000b [1953]: 22, 2006a [1955–1957]: 155, 2006b [1959–1969]: 23, 175–177; Meyer 1961: 165–166; Wolf 2005: 246–248). In other words, Wiener's theoretical conception of a radar-guided antiaircraft gun in which tracking and aiming were controlled by the machine intelligence of the AA predictor and operated by a system of servomechanisms, although it remained an unrealized model, paradigmatically instantiated Wiener's conception of teleological behaviour based on feedback constitutive of cybernetics (cf. Gerovitch 2002a: 54–68; Bousquet 2009: 107–112; Agar 2012: 373–375).

In these terms, as Philip Mirowski (2002: 17) sums up the leading idea of Wiener's AA predictor, implementing the very principles of cybernetics, it treated "the plane and the pilot as *a single entity*" (emphasis mine); that is:

> Because the idiosyncrasies of each pilot could never be anticipated, prediction was based on the ensemble of *all possible pilots,* in clear analogy with thermodynamics. In doing so, one had to take into account possible evasive measures, leading to the sorts of considerations that would now be associated with strategic predictions, but which Wiener saw as essentially similar to servomechanisms, or feedback devices used to

> control engines. (ibid.; emphasis mine; for the idea of thermodynamics, see, for example, Lamprecht & Zotin 1985; Müller 2007; for the function of the servomechanism as a cybernetic control device, see, for example, Mindell 2002: 156–171; Bousquet 2009: 70–71, 101–102, 108–111; Pickering 2010: 3–14, 99, 148–151)

What is crucial here is that, not only in Wiener's AA predictor, but in cybernetics in general, *intentionality was reduced to teleology*, without making any difference between human volition and machinic goal-directedness; in other words, as the example given by Wiener and his associates shows, both the target-seeking mechanism of a torpedo and the purposeful behaviour of the human being were explained in the same terms, as instances of teleology (see Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]: 328; Rosenblueth & Wiener 2009 [1950]: 234; cf. Edwards 1996: 183–185; for a historical contextualization, see Cordeschi 2002: 3–11, 116–152).

In the sense of Wiener's cybernetics, the AA predictor was a cybernetic organism, a cybernetically regulated human-machine hybrid in which an intrinsic teleology of the system had replaced human decision making; that is, instead of the freedom of the human will, it was *the automatism of the machine* that guided the systemic operations of the human-machine interface of the antiaircraft gun thus displacing the autonomy constitutive of human agency.

That is, as Wiener (1968 [1950]: 185) was later to say in his *The Human Use of Human Beings:* "What is used as an element in a machine, is in fact an element in the machine" (in terms of "the mechanistic reduction of living things," cf. Faber 1986).

This is the historical turning point on the way to the cyborg and the posthuman: the point of no return at which the human becomes a lost case; the point at which the machine takes the command.

With regard to my thematization of postmodern war in terms of human-machine hybridization, what is crucial here is that "in the development of computer science, we have witnessed the further development of machines which, through the formal generation and manipulation of informal patterns, exhibit 'artificial intelligence,' and in so doing, pit themselves against the evolutionary powers of learning and adaptive emergence which are now said to characterize all living things" (Dillon & Reid 2009: 64).

> In short, Wiener's cybernetics was the first science to allow for the crossing of what had hitherto been understood as metaphysically distinct forms of materiality, the organic and the inorganic, living entities and non-living entities. Combining man and machine informationally, cybernetics pioneered the conceptualization, invention and further development of the understanding of hybrid "systems" possessing life-like qualities, open to analysis and development in terms of living properties. Here we have the origin of claims which were to become widely popular by the end of the twentieth century, of the cyborg and the post-human, succeeding what then came to be regarded as crude and outmoded biological demarcations of the human. (ibid.)

And so it happened, indeed: first "the cyborg" and short thereafter "the posthuman" became the most celebrated discursive figures in the name of the scientific-technological reconstitution of the human in the postmodern academic

world by the late twentieth century, a time of what I call *technoscientific soteriology*. As Haraway (1991a: 150) says, it was "a mythic time," a moment of a new beginning, a moment of post-historical rebirth of all that was formerly called "human" (cf. Haraway 1992a; for the idea of salvation and redemption in Christian soteriology, see, for example, Sherry 2003: 22–48; in terms of New Age soteriologies, see Sutcliffe 2006). And so the light came upon us and in its dazzling clearness we saw that "we all are chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism" (Haraway 1991a: 150); in other words, we came to understand that "we are cyborgs" (ibid.). From this moment on, it was no longer difficult to see the final truth that our fate is posthuman. But, miraculously, even the human was restituted in the world of the posthuman since, as Hayles (1999: 3) assures us, "[i]n the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals."

The biohuman, in contrast, is not the redemption of the human; on the contrary, it is the ultimate destruction of the human by means of its technological deconstruction. The key to this rigorous radicalization of the posthuman is, as we have seen above, the unwavering, resolutely consequent redefinition of "life"; as Dillon and Reid (2009: 64) conclude, following the logic of Wiener's cybernetics: "If machines could be invested with *intelligent adaptive powers* then machines could also be said to exhibit 'life'" (emphasis mine); that is, they "were 'animated' at least, and ultimately they were to become animated in ways which made it difficult to distinguish the human from the non-human as much as the organic from the inorganic" (ibid.). To remind ourselves, what is called "intelligent" here, of course, has nothing to do with human intelligence: at issue is information in the sense of cybernetics and information theory; that is, information in the sense of *non-semantic* codification and inscription (ibid.: 64–67; see Wiener 1961 [1948]; Shannon & Weaver 1962 [1949]; cf. Chernaik 1999: 85–89; Graham 2002: 12–24, 33–35, 61–65, 226–231; Mackenzie 2002: 51–55; Fraser & Greco 2005a: 26–27; in terms of "cybernetic fiction," cf. Porush 1985; for an effort to redeem the human in terms of the posthuman, see Clarke 2008).

Thus, *the death of the human means the birth of the biohuman*. And, paradoxically, it is this very death that enables the re-emergence of life, Life as a biopolitical battlefield, "life" in the form of *techno-life*, "life" as a discursive figure that has real effects in a manner that fatally exceeds the limits of Barthesian *effet de réel*, the "reality effect" of language (see Barthes 1989 [1968]; cf., for example, Jameson 1988j [1977]: 135; Ankersmit 1994: 125–161; Culler 2007: 228–230); that is, in a manner that cannot be understood in terms of the "post."

Investing in Human Capital

If we take the idea of the biohuman seriously, is the cyborg our salvation? Or rather, is the cyborg not so much the solution as part of the problem? If labour, life and language, as "'quasi-transcendentals' of Life, Labour, and Language"

in the Foucauldian manner (Foucault 1989: 250), constitute the parameters of the contemporary constellation of the posthuman, is the very problem, in fact, the manner in which being human (without quotation marks) is conceived of in the world of the "post," namely, as something that is not only intelligible, but, more fundamentally, *possible*, only in quotation marks? In other words, is the problem not so much life and labour, but what Jameson (1974 [1972]) calls "the prison-house of language" (cf. Walsh 1998: 47–61; Taylor 1990: 31–40; in terms of Nietzsche's radical skepticism concerning language, see Nietzsche 1973c [1873/1896]: 374–378; Behler 1998: 141–143; Emden 2005; in the context of the Foucauldian panopticon, cf. Chowers 2004: 137–179); that is, a world under the regime of technoscience, and, as such, far away from the Heideggerian conception of language as "the house of being"?

From this perspective, what is the technoscientific resurrection of the human being if not the delusion of the cyborg, a theoretical phantasm obsessively repeated in cyber discourse, and, as such, a techno-imaginary dream of a world in which everything can be controlled by means of science and technology, a vision of a posthuman future in which the human being is reduced to a techno-organic assemblage, a prosthetic hybrid for which all that was once nature is now nothing but a bad dream (cf. Haraway 1997; Hayles 1999).

It is in this sense that the cyborg is a conceit, a trope, typical of the postmodern, and, accordingly, *the tropicity of the cyborg is its very reality,* the only reality: the cyborg lives in the virtual reality of language that it itself has created, not as a subject but as a self-referential metaphor conjuring up the idea of a cyborgian post-subject in the form of a posthuman body-machine hybrid, a post-organic assemblage.

Like the Clausewitzian "fog of war" (see Clausewitz 1980 [1832–1834]: 289; cf., for example, Gray 2003 [2002]: 99–105, 2007: 24–27; Echevarria 2007: 105–107),[65] the cyborg is an abbreviation (cybernetic organism), a figure of language detached from the context that it seems to refer to (cybernetics), a trope that has gained its suggestive "meaning" through de/re-contextualizing repetition, and finally turned into a postmodern *theory-fiction* (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 609; Thomas 1990: 1–16; in terms of contemporary theory, cf., for example, Derrida 1973 [1967]: 150, 1984a [1972/1968]: 18, 2000 [1988]: 88; de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 150–151; Baudrillard 1993a: 82, 115, 202; Zurbrugg 1993: 141, 2000a: 65, 127, 135; Cholodenko 1997: 76–80; Currie 1998: 51–70; Shaviro 1997). Accordingly,

65 Clausewitz himself did not use the expression "the fog of war"; rather, it is a *façon de parler* that has come into being in retrospect, by way of an abbreviation of a metaphor employed by Clausewitz to explain the habitual incertitude and ambiguity of warfare; in Clausewitz's (1980 [1832–1834]: 289) words: "Endlich ist die große Ungewißheit aller Datis im Kriege eine eigentümliche Schwierigkeit, weil alles Handeln gewissermaßen in einem bloßen Dämmerlicht verrichtet wird, was noch dazu nicht selten wie eine Nebel- oder Mondscheinbeleuchtung den Dingen einen übertriebenen Umfang, ein groteskes Ansehen gibt." Translated by Echevarria (2007: 106): "The great uncertainty of all data in war means that all actions must be carried out to a certain extent as if in a twilight, which as within a fog or under the glow of the moon distorts things and makes them appear more threatening." In this manner, the cyborg, like the "fog of war," is an effect of language; but unlike the "fog of war," the cyborg is a self-referential signifier in the mode of the "post": a metaphor that metaphorizes itself.

the non-originary "origin" of the cyborg is to be found in its discursive reiteration, in its self-referential metaphoricality; that is, it is a post-literary fiction "the real" of which is the imaginary effected by the figurative language of cyber discourse in the manner of the "post": in the mode of linguistic figuration based on the logic of the surrational.

Thus, in the world of the cyborg, we are always surrounded by the "fog" of "free-floating signifiers" that make reality hard to see. Yet, expressly in these terms, the cyborg, as a techno-imaginary figure reflecting the real of technoscience, both manifests technoculture and contributes to its post-theoretical construction.

This is the context of the artificial body (see, for example, Halacy 1965: 20–26; Madison 1981: 56–59, 109–111; Ben-Tov 1995: 144–149; Wills 1995: 15–16, 44–45, 218–219, 245–247; Birringer 1998: 275–276; Gray 2001: 73–78; Dinello 2005: 115–125; Muri 2007: 20–31, 43–45, 83–85; Magdalinski 2008: 109–127; Floreano et al. 1999; Langton 2000 [1995]; Brooks 2002; Lutz et al. 2003; Weber & Bath 2003; Franchi & Güzeldere 2005b; Harris 2011; in the context of real life prosthetics, see Ott et al. 2002; Serlin 2004; in terms of new medical technologies in general, see Brown & Webster 2004; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; Miah & Rich 2008; from the perspective of the Hobbesian body politic, cf. Gatens 1997: 81–83; Turner 1997 [1984]: 104–109, 125; Hess 1999: 83–95, 139–144, 164–173; Shilling 2005: 25–27; for a historical contextualization, see Spragens 1973); a scientific-tecnological hybrid body constitutive of contemporary technoculture that, though not being a latter-day invention, is, nevertheless, the body proper in the postmodern: *the body as a biopolitical enterprise*, the body as a commodity the imaginary constitution of which is real in terms of capital. That is, the artificial body is the body that simultaneously as a reflection and an embodiment of the commodity form constitutes the only form of both *being* and *having* a body in technoculture, and, hypostatized by means of the techno-imaginary, is the only body form intelligible in the world of the "post."

In the technoscientific constellation in which the postmodern constitutes the rule of reason, the body politic takes on a new meaning: no longer is it an issue of a collective body consisting of individual bodies, that is, Leviathan as the model of the body politic described by Hobbes (1998; cf. Schmitt 1982 [1938]; Harrison 2003); rather, what matters now is an individual body that incorporates, in and through its own very *corporealization*, the body collective conformed by the disciplinary regime of the market forces, the prime mover of the body ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism (cf. Haraway 1997: 141–142; Thacker 2004: 11–13, 2005; Arestis & Sawyer 2004; Gertenbach 2007; Cooper 2008; in terms of the Hobbesian body economy in the era of absolutism, cf. Spragens 1973: 77–96): the body subsumed by capital, the body as the embodiment of desire (for a counter-political body politic redefined in terms of "networks, swarms and multitudes," see Thacker 2004). What is important here is that there is no postmodern without the globalization of capital implying the

Fig. 24. In his book *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) argues that *bellum omnium contra omnes*, "the war of all against all," prevails in a society in which a state of nature has replaced the civilized order based on a social contract and the authority of a sovereign ruler (see, for example, Bobbio 1993; Harrison 2003; cf. Schmitt 1982 [1938]).

In the contemporary global world, in which the imperative of the political economy of neoliberalism has displaced the social contract, the financial markets have taken on the power of the sovereign ruler. That is, instead of a common wealth guaranteed by a legitimate government, now the sovereignty of the Subject, enabled by the neoliberal financial markets, is the supreme authority. In this situation, a state of nature – the source of all evil according to Hobbes – has transformed into a playground of competing desires ruled by the commodity form, the very form of the political under the regime of neoliberalism. In other words, in a world in which the omnipotence of the individual has taken the place of common wealth, each and everyone is his or her own Leviathan: the incorporation of capital by becoming an embodiment of the commodity form is the fate of the subject in the markets of personal happiness driven by productive consumption, the driving force of post-Fordism, constituting the disciplinary order of neoliberalism. In this world, we are living, indeed, "beyond good and evil" (cf. Nietzsche 1968b [1886]): *in a state of naked self-interest as the highest form of the rational conduct of life*.

incorporation of capital as the very mode of being of the subject, a self in-formed by the power of capital (cf. Brown 2003; Chowers 2004); in Jameson's (1991: 5) words: the "whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror."

Yes, of course, the postmodern body, in its most spectacular manifestation, is the consumer body, a body constituted by consumption, the body as the very embodiment of the commodity form (see, for example, Lupton 2003 [1994]: 39–47; Falk 1994, 2004 [1985]; De Grazia & Furlough 1996; Stratton 1996; Falk & Campbell 1997; Gottdiener 2000; Fine 2002), but the military body is its logical double in the body economy of the postmodern: the scientific-technological rationalization of the body is the cultural constellation in which the consumer body and the military body reflect one another: while war is the *imaginary mirror* of consumption, consumption is a post-Lacanian *mirror stage* of the postmodern body politic that is organized by the libidinal flows of global capitalism (cf. Lacan 1977f [1966/1949]; Bowie 1991: 21–26, 197–198). In other words, the postmodern body, as a literal incorporation of consumption, manifests the imperative of what I call the *Taylorization of the libido* as the guiding principle of the disciplinization and regimentation of the body, its forces and capacities, to make it compatible to the ever-increasing demands of production which, in itself, is ruled by the logic of productive consumption, the logic of the political economy of neoliberalism.

That is, subsumed by the commodity form, through its various dimensions and extensions, the human body is connected time and time again to the "body-machine complex" (see Foucault 1991a [1975]: 135–169; Seltzer 1992a, 1992b, 1998 [1995]) of neoliberal capitalism, the technoscientific matrix of all living ruled by the imperative of globalization (cf. Yanarella & Reid 1996: 190–207; Gray 2001: 190–193; Armstrong 1998; Hassard et al. 2000; de la Peña 2003; in terms of the Enlightenment, cf. Gunderson 1985 [1971]: 1–38;

in the context of Futurism, cf. Poggi 2009: 150–180; from the perspective of the *fin de siècle*, cf. Mikkonen 2001: 17–22, 193–199, 209–214).

In this sense, the cyborg has now taken the place of the human body constituting a new Leviathan: the Hobbesian "artificial man" (Hobbes 1998: 7–8, 106–114, 129, 141, 168–179; cf. Harrison 2003: 104–105) has turned into a global conglomeration of technoscientifically managed post-bodies, an economic-political configuration of terminal bodies in the matrix of transnational capital, a biopolitical multitude of post-Foucauldian "docile bodies"; as we remember: a "body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault 1991a [1975]: 136; cf. Merquior 1985: 89–101; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 29–36; Marti 1999 [1988]: 85–87; Wolkowitz 2006: 57–69; Schatzki & Natter 1996; McKinlay & Starkey 1998; in terms of Hobbesian "sociobiology" as a form of *Realpolitik*, cf. Mohrs 1995); a world-wide production system of consuming bodies, each functioning as a subservient posthuman body-machine, as a market-compatible embodiment of a post-Hobbesian "artificial man" (cf. Bobbio 1993: 35–38). For this reason, as Haraway (1991a: 153) says, "[w]ho cyborgs will be is a radical question; the answers are a matter of survival"; that is, to survive in the world of the cyborg means not so much to be as to *have* a post-natural body (cf. Macnaghten & Urry 1998; Holliday & Hassard 2001).

What is called the "sexual body" (in all its ambiguities) is a historical product of war (in a broad sense of the expression) in its modern form: the scientific-technological management of the human body in terms of its rational deployment. The "sexual," of course, is not a military term as such, but its coming into being is coterminous with the history of the military machine: *there is no "sexual" without the control of the body*.

In the contemporary "global village" (cf. McLuhan 1964, 1967) ruled by financial capital only interested in speculation, that is, resource exploitation, shareholder value and the maximization of profit, war is the standard operating procedure, business as usual. Today, the ideal type of war – "ideal type" in the Weberian sense of the term (see Weber 1972 [1921]: 3–11; Guttandin 1998: 113–127) – is American war (see, for example, Lewis 2007; Jarecki 2008), a model of warfare that is based on the "military-industrial complex" as a form of a "baroque arsenal" (Kaldor 1984; for the origin and consequences of the military-industrial complex, see Eisenhower 2003 [1961]; Walker et al. 1992; Pavelec 2009; for the militarization of thought in Cold War America driven by "the military-intellectual complex," see Robin 2001; in terms of the contemporary "military-industrial-academic complex," see Leslie 1993; Giroux 2007) that as such is a scientific-technological enterprise permeating the whole society, turning the society into a *war economy* (for "the political economy of U.S. militarism," see Hossein-Zadeh 2006) as a power constellation in which everything, *in the final analysis*, is considered from the perspective of military sovereignty, the perspective of the military efficiency and optimal performance of bodies in a perfectly controlled symbiosis with technology (see, for example, Noble 1979 [1977], 1997;

Smith 1985; DiFilippo 1990; Hacker & Vining 2006; in terms of the "technowar" in Vietnam as "the perfect war," cf. Gibson 1986; Edwards 1996; for the scenario of thermonuclear war as a mode of "thinking about the unthinkable," cf. Kahn 1960, 1962, 1984; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005).[66]

The turn to the military-industrial complex and its peacetime continuation occurred right at the beginning of the American war effort in the Second World War, a war in which the industrial capacity of America came to have a decisive impact. As Peter F. Drucker, a prominent management theorist, wrote in 1942:

> This war is being fought for the structure of industrial society – its basic principles, its purposes, and its institutions. It has one issue, only one: the social and political order of *the entirely new physical reality* which Western man has created as his habitat since James Watt invented the steam engine almost two hundred years ago. Nothing shows this more clearly than the fact that this is the first war really to be fought as an *industrial war* – a war in which industry is not an auxiliary but the main fighting force itself. Any peace following this war must be an industrial peace – a peace in which industry is not just on the periphery of the peacetime social organization but is its center. For it is a law of political life that *the peacetime and the wartime organizations of society must be based on the same principles and follow the same structural rules* (Drucker 2002 [1942]: 13; emphasis mine).

This war paradigm is the apotheosis of instrumental reason, reason as a mode of means-ends rationality, reason as calculation and regulation of all the forces and resources that can be made available, human bodies included (for the idea of "instrumental reason," *Zweckrationalität* or *instrumentelle Vernunft*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193, 1993 [1904–1905]; Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; Marcuse 1941, 2002 [1964]; Albert et al. 2005; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010; cf. Turner 1992a; Guttandin 1998; Giddens 2003 [1991]; in terms of the postmodern, cf. Gane 2002).

What is at issue in this paradigm is a *militarization of reason*, a consequent and comprehensive expansion of the logic constitutive of the Weberian *Zweckrationalität*.

It is this paradigm that has enabled a global strategic game concerning not only war operations, but also of the peacetime politics which, ironically, is conceived of as a politics in an ever-present condition of "between wars"; thus, in the contemporary world, war is not only a continuation of politics by other means (see Clausewitz 1992 [1832–1934]; cf. Heuser 2005), but, most importantly, *it is now peace in itself that is war, similarly as war is a continuation of peace by military-political means*.

66 The term "military-industrial complex" was first used on January 17, 1961, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower (2003 [1961]) in his farewell address to the nation in what is called his "Military Industrial Complex Speech": "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. / We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defence with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together." (ibid.: 415; for a historical contextualization and the significance of Eisenhower's warning of the threat posed by the scientific-technological militarization of American society, especially in terms of nuclear armament, see, for example, Kaldor 1984; Pavelec 2009).

This is the origin of the globally operating postmodern war machine that rules the world as the military arm of transnational financial capital, as a socio-technological apparatus constructed of bodies, equipment and material in complex logistical interrelations, all designed to contribute to military efficiency understood as both the *raison d'être* and *modus operandi* of global capitalism (cf. Gray 2007: 184–279; Harvey 2005 [2003]; Duffield 2007; in terms of "the military-industrial-media-entertainment network," cf. Derian 2009b [2001]); a system within which the human body is a second-order machine, a machine that works to achieve a given objective, the target determined by the situation and strategic aims defined by the very same logic that has effected the coming into being of the war machine itself in the first place (see Levidow & Robins 1989a; Pick 1993; in terms of the postmodern, see Kellner 1999, 2003b): *the logic of optimal performance*.[67]

In these terms, the human body is a survival machine the survival of which is entirely dependent on other machines, be they biological or technological.

This "machinization" of the human body, of course, is not an invention of our times; the modern body, in its historical sense, came into being in the formative years of the Enlightenment. In this sense, Foucault's dense description of the birth of the modern body in its primordial form is the key to the understanding of the postmodern body, the military body that is the model of the sexual body under the regime of capital:

> The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a mechanism of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A "political anatomy," which was also a "mechanics of power," was born; it defined how one may have a hold over other's bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. This discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile bodies." Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). (Foucault 1991a [1975]: 137–138; in relation to the Kantian conception of the *Aufklärung* and the politics of reason, see Foucault 1990c [1979/1981], 1990f [1984], 1996g [1983])

This is the logic of global capitalism ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism, the economic order of neo-Fordism defining the parameters of the contemporary "body-machine complex" in which, seen historically, the

67 This is the way in which the war machine, based on scientific-technological research and design, is an American military-political model of organizing society as a whole, which emerged from the military-industrial complex that itself has its origin in the American war effort during the Second World War. This model, however, has influenced military planning all over the world in one way or another, to the extent that around the globe we are now living in a situation in which the interests of American politics define the conditions of war and peace wherever there are political tensions or a conflict breaks out. Moreover, in our contemporary world, war is no longer a separate occurrence, today *war as mass culture* dominates everyday life (see, for example, Robin 2001; Holert & Terkessidis 2003; Der Derian 2009b): the presence of war is an essential part of our perceptual world.

human being has gone through the way "from 'trained gorilla' to 'humanware'" (Yanarella & Reid 1996; cf. Vint 2007: 117–120; Brown 2003; Wolkowitz 2006).

This is the context in which "sex," technology and military reason intersect one another in the postmodern condition and share the same objective: the imperative of obedience as the precondition of the utility of the body, its economic, social and cultural propriety as a resource, in the sense of "human capital."

3.1.2 Life in a "Technological Polis"

From this perspective, the military body, as the model of the sexual body, is an excessive body; a body that abounds with forces ready to be deployed, to be brought into operation. The body in the heat of the combat does not know what it *is*, but it knows exactly what it has to *do*: instinctively, it is aware that it must survive: the body has the ability to overcome its own psycho-physical limitations, the constraints of what is *human* in the human body. The survival body is its own resource; a machine that is able to survive by means of its own cybernetic capacities, its own capabilities to regulate and adjust its own performance to conform with the requirements of the given environment. It is in this sense that the survival body which, in its paradigmatic form, is the military body produced by the technoscientific military machine, is the conceptual model of the working body in the constellation of productive consumption: a well-disciplined body that is able to organize its forces in the service of capital accumulation.

In other words, the posthuman body is a neo-Fordist body, a body that has internalized, *incorporated*, the spirit of contemporary capitalism (cf. Weber 1993 [1904–1905]; Mitzman 1985 [1965]; Scaff 1989; Lehmann & Roth 1993; Schluchter 2009; with regard to the disciplinary order of the postmodern, cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998: 49–112; in terms of the desiring body, cf. Falk 1994; Falk & Campbell 1997).

Your Body Is Your Survival Machine

This is the idea of the posthuman body, a body that, in the manner of the Foucauldian "docile body," is the very incorporation of the Harawayan "New World Order, Inc.": the body as the extension of technology in the political economy of the postmodern ruled by the production-consumption nexus, the body as the embodiment of the machine in terms of neo-Fordism.

As an integral part of the war machine, the body-machine complex in terms of the military, the body turns into a pure body, a body as a concentration of living forces, a body that is beyond the subject, in the subliminal state of immediate reactions. This is a totally Taylorized body, a thoroughly rationalized body that no longer operates *like* a machine, rather, it *is* a machine. Today, however, this body cannot survive without what Freud (1972a [1930]: 451) already in the 1930s called "auxiliary organs" (*Hilfsorgane*), artificial organs, that turn the human being into a "prosthetic God" (*Prothesengott*) (cf. Kittler 2000: 209–213, 1986,

1993). This is the body of the cyborg, a body that is enhanced and augmented, extended and amplified, beyond its organic limits by means of prosthetics (cf. Flessner 1990, 1991, 1997, 2002; de Kerckhove 1990a, 1990b, 1997 [1995], 2000; Bartels 2005; in terms of a whole-body *bio-adapter*, cf. Wiener 1969, 1989 [1988], 1999); a technoscientifically modified post-body that is constructed according to the principles of the military paradigm.

As Haraway (1991a: 150) says, war today is a "cyborg orgy, coded by C^3I, command-control-communication-intelligence"; but this war, as we have seen, has transgressed the limits of war in the narrow sense of the term, as plain military operation, and become the prevailing socio-political order of neoliberal capitalism.

That is, the body politics of the postmodern is a technoscientific constellation in which a "cyborg orgy" defines the parameters of life, Life in the laboratory, techno-life as posthuman life in the global war of survival.

"With the technological shaping of the soldier," as Stefan Kaufmann (2006: 92) sums up the autotelic logic of the military mode of thought, "*a utopian telos of governance* has already been brought into play: the human being as infinitely adaptable Cyborg" (emphasis mine; cf. Gray 1989, 2000; Spreen 1998b, 2004; Dittmer 2007; Kaufmann 2003, 2005, 2007; Blackmore 2005).

The body of the cyborg is an embodiment of scientific-technological reason, a techno-biological system incorporating and incorporated by instrumental rationality. In this sense, the military body, as a result of a comprehensive militarization of human capacities and capabilities, has become an integral part of the postmodern war machine that is not only the military arm, but the very condition of possibility of contemporary capitalism. With regard to the military body as the model body of the cyborg, this amounts, according to Kaufmann (2007: 322), to a constellation in which "soldiers on the screen" are a new type of warriors designed for the "transparent battlefield": "[e]quipped with information technology, the soldier is reinforced with new potencies, he is connected up to an information network spanning the entire battlespace and kept permanently online." In this manner, the "sense-expanding prostheses allow the soldier to enter fully into an expanded reality" (ibid.), the result of which is a post-McLuhanian extended body, a technologically augmented body the sensory and kinetic constitution of which is based on a body-external multidimensional information and communication network turning it into a cyborg agency, a post-individual post-subject living in a post-natural hybrid environment (for the emergence of the cyborg soldier from a historical perspective in terms of communication technologies as a *telemediale Rüstung*, see Kaufmann 1996; for the assembling of the "soldier-body" in the context of the Deleuze-Guattarian "war machine," cf. Gallagher 2013).

In this sense, the dispersed and fragmented but *as such* mediately re-integrated body of the cyborg soldier is an epistemological model body of the postmodern subject living in the midst of the mediatized technoscape of contemporary technoculture, a world in which technoscientific body modification

and an artificial sensorium define the parameters of being human, or, according to post-theory, *posthuman* (for Stelarc's prosthetic body as a paradigmatic example, see Stelarc 1991, 1994a, 1997, 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; cf. Birringer 1998; Giannachi 2004, 2007; Dixon 2007; Toffoletti 2007; in terms of cybersex, cf. Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 37–38; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53; Plant 1998: 30; Parisi 2004: 1; Rheingold 1990; Stenslie 1994b, 1996, 1997, 2000b, 2006).

From this perspective, it is evident that the cyborg is not merely, as Haraway (1991a: 151) claims, an "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism"; on the contrary, it is their very product. *The cyborg is the embodiment of military reason*.

In other words, war – as both actual and potential – is the human-machine research and design laboratory in which the body is an experimental object of a scientific-technological project aiming at exceeding its organic limits, its "human" deficiencies; that is, the overcoming of the organic body understood as what the German philosopher Arnold Gehlen (1997 [1940]) called a *Mängelwäsen*, a "deficient being" (cf. Rolle 2005: 264–273; Meyer-Drawe 2006: 190–201). In this sense, postmodern war continues, at a new level, the enterprise of the science of work (*Arbeitswissenschaft*, *science du travail*) constitutive of the modern (see Rabinbach 1990: 179–237, 1986; Türk et al. 2002: 210–216; Frader 2008: 103–138; Raehlmann 1988); that is, the project of the scientific-technological modernization of the human body to transform it into a reliable and efficient working machine (cf. Armstrong 1998: 77–105; de la Peña 2005: 15–49; Shilling 2005: 173–197; Hoberman 1992; Schatzki & Natter 1996): the project of the posthumanization of the human being. This is the imperative of what is called technoculture (see, for example, Penley & Ross 1992c; Robins & Webster 1999), a postmodern cultural formation based on technoscience (see Latour 1987: 174, 255–256; Haraway 1997; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Michael 2006).

It is in this sense that what is designated as the "postmodern" is essentially about a comprehensive Americanization of the human body: a disciplinization of bodies in terms of production, consumption and reproduction (in terms of reproduction understood as procreation, cf. Clarke 1998). Accordingly, the American war machine, in its global dimensions, is the research and design laboratory in which the parameters of the future body are elaborated: what I call *body futurism* is the hard core of the posthuman. The paragon of this enterprise is the cyborg, our "second self" (cf. Turkle 1984).

This is the logic of what Haraway (1997: 57) calls "the New World Order, Inc.," an order in which human life has been entirely subsumed by techno-life, technologically modified life in which "the biological" and "the technological" mirror one another.

To sum up, in the contemporary world, the military body, in fact, is the model body; it constitutes the prevailing body paradigm: the postmodern body predicated upon the achievements of science and technology; the body as an ongoing

project of scientific-technological modification: *the body in itself as a scientific-technological experiment* in the conditions in which life in its entirety is subordinated by the imperative of laboratory, the imperative of potential actuality (cf. Jonas & Lembeck 2006; from a historical perspective, cf. Schmidgen et al. 2004): the omnipotence of capital. This is the ideal of the prosthetic body as an embodiment of a techno-biological production system in which, according to the logic of *das Ge-Stell*, *Vorstellen*, in the context of *Bestellen*, results in *Herstellen* in the Heideggerian sense of the terms (see, for example, Heidegger 1994a [1949]: 42–43, 2000b [1953]: 18–22; cf. Anders 1988a [1956], 1988b [1980]; Marcuse 2002 [1964]): the body as a product equals the imaginary body of the body design in the postmodern (see Featherstone 2000; Siebers 2000; Holliday & Hassard 2001; Pitts 2003; in terms of the Foucauldian "aesthetics of existence" and "cultivation of the self" in Greek Antiquity, cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]: 49, 1990h [1984]: 39–68, 1990i [1984]).

In terms of the subject, this means that the body as an acquisition is the most important asset of the individual in the markets of survival constitutive of the postmodern condition: *your body is your survival machine*.

Your Desire as the Will of the Machine

In a paradigmatic manner, this is the body of the "cyborg soldier" (for the origin of the idea, see Gray 1989), and its elaboration in the context of "postmodern war" (see Gray 1997: 195–211, 2001: 55–65; cf. Robins & Levidow 1995: 106–108; Nayar 2004: 251–253; Blackmore 2005: 36–67; Gannon 2003: 208–238; Fuchs 2008: 260–261; in terms of feminism, cf. McNeil 2007: 127–131; Masters 2005; in the context of "virtual theatres," cf. Giannachi 2004: 48–49; for changes in warfare in the twentieth century, cf. Carman 2002: 12–19). From the times of the Pharaohs and Greek Antiquity to the contemporary world, the human body, of course, has always been an integral part of the war machine (see, for example, Cooper 2002: 50–51, 117; Pick 1993). Today, however, as Chris Hables Gray, the leading theorist in the field of what is called "cyborg studies" (see, for example, Warwick 2004: 64; Muri 2007: 11; Battis 2007: 42; Gray et al. 1995b), says:

> It is not just that the soldier is influenced by the weapons used; now he or she is (re)constructed and (re)programmed to fit integrally into weapon *systems*. The basic currency of war, the human body, is the site of these modifications – whether it is of the "wetware" (the mind and hormones), the "software" (habits, skills, disciplines) or the "hardware" (the physical body). To overcome the limitations of yesterday's soldier, as well as the limitations of automation as such, the military is moving towards a more subtle man/machine integration: a cybernetic organism ("cyborg") model of the soldier, that combines machine-like endurance with a redefined human intellect subordinated to the overall weapons system. (Gray 1989: 43; cf., for example, Vasseleu 1997: 53; Plant 1998: 30; Parisi 2004: 1)

Notwithstanding that, in terms of the cyborg, we are now living in a "post-gender world" (Haraway1991a: 150; cf., for example, Peppers 1997: 164–165; Sofoulis 2003: 89–92; Mortensen 2003: 108–119; Volkart 2006: 67–69; Badmington 2007: 28–29, Battis 2007: 52–53; Thornham 2007: 140–143; Genz & Brabon 2009: 145–147; in critical terms, cf. Lykke et al. 2004 [2000]: 328–329; Wajcman

2004: 92–98), as far as the cyborg soldier is considered, as amazing as it may sound, there are still some unspecified modes of being, or just remnants or residual forms of life, that Gray (1989: 43) designates as "he" or "she" (whatever thus marked entities or beings happen to be). But, as Haraway (1991g [1988]: 199, 1992b: 21, 25, 1997: 127–128; Penley & Ross 1992a: 3–4, 10) says, like the "coyote," the cyborg is a "trickster" and thus able to appear in any camouflage whatever (cf. Telotte 1995: 34–37; Bryld & Lykke 2000: 37; Alaimo 2010: 144–145; for mythical trickster figures in the American tradition, see Hynes & Doty 1993), even in the disguise of the "masculine" and the "feminine": whatever the cyborg is, it is not what one thinks it is. This is the "trick" of the cyborg: a non-identity is the identity of the cyborg, an "identity" that is always what it is not.

Nevertheless, remote control, telepresence, virtual reality and immersion as well as surveillance and simulation (see, for example, Rheingold 1991: 96–97, 254–264; Popper 2007: 181–220, 254–261, 379–393; Fisher 1990a, 1990b; Stelarc 1991, 1998, 2002a; Bogard 1996; Moser & MacLeod 1996; Tamblyn 1997; Beckmann 1998; Robins & Webster 1999; Goldberg 2000; Cubitt 2001; Wilson 2002; Ascott 2003; Kac 2005; from a historical perspective, see Grau 2003), that is, all the key components of the contemporary military paradigm, the constitutive components of the cyborg warrior as the paragon of the postmodern soldier, reappear in the scientific-technological assemblage of cybersex *in the mode of the imaginary*: *the whole idea of the technologization of sex emerges from the matrix of military rationality*, the rationality of cybernetics in its postmodern form (for the military origins of telepresence and virtual reality, see, for example, Robins 1996: 51–56, 63–68; Wood & Smith 2001: 31–33; Stranovsky 2004: 168–170; for a theoretical contextualization, see De Landa 1991; cf. Kittler 2010 [2002]: 222–223).

It must be emphasized, however, that rather than being what Friedrich Kittler (1986: 149, 170, 1991) calls a *Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät*, a "misuse of military equipment,"[68] cybersex as virtual "sex" in telepresence by means of prosthetic organs, in fact, manifests a logical continuation of the military paradigm in the realm of postmodern techno-corporeality: a radical instrumentalization of the body as the basis of the desires and pleasures of the cyborg (in terms of "virtual battlefields," cf. Werning 2009; for a historical contextualization, cf. Falk 1994: 50–51; Feenberg 2002 [1991]: 175–177; Judovitz 2001: 71–82; Magdalinski 2008: 33–36).

In this sense, the ideal model of cybersex as a mode of cyborgian pleasure is a postmodern derivation of the Sadean body-machine arrangements aiming solely at the maximal extraction of pleasure, a sublime form of pain and humiliation for

68 According to Kittler, contemporary media and the technologies of mass culture originate from military equipment being originally intended to be used for information, communication, surveillance and control. In this sense: *Funkspiel, UKW-Panzerfunk, Vocoder, Magnetophon, U-Boot-Ortungstechnik, Bomberrichtfunk usw. haben einen Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät freigegeben, der Ohren und Reaktionsgeschwindigkeiten auf den Weltkrieg n + 1 einstimmt. Radio, dieser erste Mißbrauch, führt von WWI zu WWII, Rock Musik, der nächste, von WWII zu WWIII*. (Kittler 1986: 170) Accordingly: *Unterhaltungsindustrie ist in jedem Wortsinn Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät* (ibid.: 149; cf., for example, Daniels 2002: 134–135; Leschke 2003: 286–287; Hartmann 2006: 130).

de Sade; the body as an imaginary laboratory (cf. Krewani 1998a) in order to experiment with its capacities and to elaborate on a counter-Enlightenment idea of the human (see, for example, Baruzzi 1968a; Glaser 1988; Hénaff 1995 [1975]; Pfister & Zweifel 2002; for de Sade as "a sargeant of sex," see Foucault 1996i [1976]: 189). An ecstatic body in a state of *ex-stasis*, "outside" of itself, in a frenzy effected by the exceeding all the limits in the orgy of transgression, ultimately a Lacanian *corps morcelé*, a body disintegrated to *fragmented organs without a body* (cf. Lacan 1977a [1966/1948]: 11, 1977f [1966/1949]: 4–5, 1993 [1981/1955–1956]: 39, 52, 69, 87; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 26–27, 275; Bowie 1991: 26–28; Evans 1996: 67; in terms of the "body without organs," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285; from a Bataillean perspective, cf. Foucault 1977a [1963]) – that is the ideal inscribed in the phantasm of cybersex, not necessarily as its stated purpose, but as its intrinsic logic, the logic of the body as the object of absolute usability, of relentless exploitation – the driving force of *capitalism without the mask of the human face*, the contemporary power regime based on the global financial markets.

If there is any kind of Ariadne's thread which could lead us through the labyrinths of neoliberal capitalism, it is to be found in the Sadean logic: de Sade, our "neighbor" (Klossowski 1991 [1947]).

As a form of Enlightenment philosophy, its radical reversal to a counter-Enlightenment, de Sade's thought is inscribed in the deep structure of capital. From this perspective, the human body is nothing

Fig. 25–27. The pleasures of the Sadean body-machine. Engravings from a Dutch edition (1798) of the Marquis de Sade's *Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice* (1797–1801) by Claude Bornet (1733–1804), a French painter and engraver.

"Sade's entire intellectual system is organized around the image of a body which is reduced to functional mechanisms modeled on those of a machine. Unquestionably, there is a very precise link between this idea of extreme libertine behavior and the beginnings of industrial mechanization. This then also implies that Sade assimilated the lesson of Cartesian dualism as the philosophical condition underlying his model of the body." (Hénaff 1995 [1975]: 214)

In contrast to the literary depictions of seduction, for example, *à la* Casanova, in Sade's work "[a]nything that might signal an amorous relation […] disappears in the combinatory arrangements of partners, in the programmed pressure of pleasure, in the frenzied exploitation of the victims" (ibid.). Thus, "what becomes imperative is a rigorous 'project' where pleasure arises from the mechanical mastery of bodies and a strict accounting of operations" (ibid.; with regard to the critique of Enlightenment reason, see Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 88–127; for the idea of the automaton and the body-machine analogy in the Enlightenment and French materialism, see, for example, Frappier-Mazur 1996: 29–32; Judovitz 2001: 67–82; Baruzzi 1968a, 1973; Glaser 1988; Kang 2011; in terms of the "body [in] parts," cf. Orban 2008; in the context of de Sade, high-tech and fantasies of dismemberment, cf. Krewani 1998a).

but a living machine to be deployed in order to bring profit. As Matt F. Connell (2003), in his critical discussion of the tradition of the Enlightenment, sums up Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's (1994 [1944]) idea of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, the "dialectic of Enlightenment," their radical criticism of Enlightenment reason turned into "instrumental reason" (cf. Horkheimer 1967 [1947]):

> *Dialectic of Enlightenment* maintains that de Sade's critique of the Enlightenment works in its service by being an instantiation of its worst elements. He reveals the psychosexual apogee of unreflectively Enlightened reason, a distorted erotic relation between people who are reduced to instrumentalised objects of collective pleasure. *Instrumental reason is the immanent truth of both de Sade's sexual-gymnastic torture pyramids and modernity alike*. The pursuit of pleasure has lost its substantive link with the social development of the good life, and has become a mechanised pursuit of personal gratification. This logic of sexual domination also characterises the loss of a capacity for the sensuous enjoyment of nature. The methodical exploitation of the Sadean victim is a ghastly presentiment of what the factory does to the worker's chance of sensuous interaction with objects. (Connell 2003: 138; emphasis mine; cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 88–127; Bataille 1986 [1957], 1997; Habermas 1998h [1985]; for a historical-philosophical contextualization of the rationality of the Enlightenment, see Foucault 1990c [1979/1981], 1990f [1984], 1996g [1983])

From this perspective, we can see that if capitalism in itself manifests the logic of exploitation in its purest form, contemporary technology, as a product and an essential precondition of the expansion and intensification of the power of capital, is the most advanced means of extracting and utilization of the productive forces of the body. The performance principle, the very principle of both military and economic efficiency alike, the rigorous teleology of the maximization of scientifically projected results achieved by a heightened mode of Weberian *Zweckrationalität*, technoscientific instrumental reason as a computerized form of means-ends calculation without value consideration (see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193, 1993 [1904–1905]; Horkheimer 1967 [1947]), an uncompromising striving for a total control – that is the systemic imperative of the technologization of sex, the sexual logic of the cyborg. In a word, in the world of the cyborg, the body is a *resource*, or, as Heidegger (2000b [1953]: 17–21) says, a *Bestand*, a "standing reserve," in the framework of the "enframing," *das Gestell* (cf. Sluga 1993: 161–163; Schönherr-Mann 1994: 144–159; Kroker 2004b: 24–25, 52–53, 65–66, 2004a).

There is no cybersex without the systems management of bodies based on programming as the most advanced form of control: cybersex is a technological procedure that is programmed according to the preset parameters, a scheme of calculated effects, a teleological process under the regulative mechanism of feedback: the cybernetics of sexual desires and pleasures as a product of the machine (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948]: 6–24, 95–114; Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 37–43; Botting 1999: 158–186; Dixon 2007: 444–454). In a similar manner as in the operation of the Sadean "sexual machine" (Glaser 1988, 2000), the body is an extension of the machine in cybersex, a *supplement* of an apparatic system; a mechanized object-body that, however, due to its being a *body*, in fact, is the most unreliable, risky and frail component of the system. As the "other" of the machine,

the human body is a marionette of the machine that has internalized machinic intelligence as its "own" will, its machinic "spontaneity" (in terms of Kleist's *Marionettentheater*, cf. Kleist 1964 [1810]; Strässle 2002: 180–210), a prosthetic double of the apparatus: whatever you do, the machine is always – *always already* – superior to your efforts, it is always already ahead of you; in other words, you are always, literally, *postponed* by the machine, and thus less than the machine, in a position in which the only choice is to comply to the program of the machine, to the options given you by it, and, finally, the option to *become* a machine.

This is the body option of the cyborg (cf. Angerer 1999a): *the will of the machine is your desire: your desire is the will of the machine*. This is the imperative of cybersex; machinic sex according to the logic of the military body (cf. Petersen 1998: 52–55; Theweleit 1977, 1978; Miller 1996; Fry 1999; Warhol 2002 [1963]; for the body-machine connections in cybernetics and spaceflight, cf. Mindell 2002, 2008; in the context of the American "military enterprise and technological change," cf. Smith 1985; in terms of the Foucauldian "docile body," cf. Foucault 1991a [1975]: 135–169; for "the absent warrior" as a manifestation of the machine intelligence and technoscientific rationality in the military politics of nuclear weapons, cf. Chaloupka 1992: 25–49; from the perspective of strategic computing, cf. Roland & Shiman 2002).

In the world of the cyborg, the will of the machine is my desire, the desire of my body as an embodiment of *me, myself and I* as a postmodern subject under the imperative of the efficiency constitutive of the reason of capital, the reason of absolute usability and utility.

In other words, in terms of the Hegelian *Herr-Knecht-Dialektik* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150–155) reformulated by Lacan (1977a [1966/1948]: 27): in cybersex, "the problem is knowing whether the Master/Slave conflict will find its resolution in the service of the machine, for which a psychotechnique that is already proving rich in ever more precise applications will be used to provide space-capsule pilots and space-stations supervisors" (cf. Noyes 1997: 7–13; Schmidgen 1997; in terms of "teledildonics," cf. Rheingold 1992: 345–348; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 52–56; Foster 2005: 84–89, 117–121; Grosz 2001: 42–43, 76; in the context of the "networking of the flesh," cf. Stenslie 1996: 179–183, 1998; Woolford & Stenslie 1994a, 1994b).

That is, the distance from Sputnik to cybersex is notably shorter than usually assumed, if one finds the right way.

"I Am No Longer Capable of Knowing What I Want"

In these terms, it is obvious that if we prefer sexual acrobatics, cybersex is not necessarily our thing; but if we like sexual astronautics, "sex" in terms of the "cyber" can certainly widen our possibilities.

But what is the driving force of cybersex in terms of sexual teleology? Instead of the Nietzschean *Wille zur Macht*, the "will to power" (see Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 143–145, 1968b [1886]: 21–22, 31–33, 1968c [1887]: 332, 1973a

[1882/1887]: 267–268; cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 33–51, 1998b [1961]: 210–215; Krell 1981; Williams 2001),[69] "sex" in the world of the "cyber" is driven by a post-Nietzschean *will to desire*: a desire for the machine that I am. As Alyce Mahon (2005: 282) says, referring to Haraway in the context of de Sade, Bataille and Deleuze and Guattari, the "cyborg is the erotic subject par excellence" since it is "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity." This is the pleasure garden of the cyborg: machinic sex in the manner of Sadean "sexual-gymnastic torture pyramids" (Connell 2003: 138), transgressive pleasures in the name of "sex" practiced by post-Sadean, posthuman beings that are, similarly to Jake and Dinos Chapman's artistic mongrels discussed by Mahon, "hybrids that are half human, half sex machines" (ibid.; cf. Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15–16, 1996a: 32–43, 1996b: 51–57; Dixon 2007: 444–446; Hénaff 1995 [1975]).

In the world of the cyborg, machinic pleasure is the highest form of pleasure; thus, it was Andy Warhol (2002 [1963]: 747), the most prescient prophet of the "post," who saw our present future already in the 1960s: "I want to be a machine. I think everybody should be a machine" (cf., for example, Dixon 2007: 271–272; Porush 1985; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Mikkonen 2001; in terms of automation technologies, cf. Scerbo & Mouloua 1999).

Indeed, the subject of cybersex, the "subject" as a machinic object, is a subject, as Deleuze & Guattari (1998 [1972]: 20) say, that is "produced as a residuum alongside the machine, as an appendix, or as a spare part adjacent to the machine," and thus, the "subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, defined by the states through which it passes" (ibid.). In this sense, cybersex as "virtual sex" is "an ecstatic connection of body to machine" (Adilkno 1998: 110; cf. Dery 1996: 183–225; Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Boden 2006: 1095; Williams 2008: 167–174; Wiener 1989 [1988]; Levins 1996; Hopkins 1998; Botting 1999; Dorsey 2002 [1988]; Barber 2004, 2010; Archibald 2005; Levy 2007; Grenzfurthner et al. 2009; in terms of "bachelor machines," cf. Reck & Szeemann 1999 [1975]; Daniels 2000). If, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Havelock Ellis (1900: 121), the most prominent sex theorist of the time, stated that "[a]ccording to one French authority it is a well-recognised fact that to work a sewing machine with the body in a certain position produces sexual excitement leading to the orgasm," today, at the beginning of the new millennium, we have taken a gigantic leap forward in terms of machine sex: it is not only, as McLuhan (1964: 56) prophesied in the 1960s, that "man becomes, as it were,

69 The "will to power," according to Nietzsche (1973a [1882/1887]: 267–268), is to be understood in the context of the dialectic between "*Selbsterhaltung*" and "*Machterweiterung*" that is peculiar to the Darwinian idea of "the struggle for existence"; an idea that reflects the mode of thought of the natural sciences, manifesting the anguish of "little people" for their existence under the threat of assumed overpopulation in the nineteenth century. It is against this kind of thinking that Nietzsche hurls his words: "Aber man sollte, als Naturforscher, aus seinem menschlichen Winkel herauskommen: und in der Natur *herrscht* nicht die Notlage, sondern der Überfluß, die Verschwendung, sogar bis ins Unsinnige. Der Kampf ums Dasein ist nur eine *Ausnahme*, eine zeitweilige Restriktion des Lebenswillens; der große und kleine Kampf dreht sich allenthalben ums Übergewicht, um Wachstum und Ausbreitung, um Macht, gemäß dem Willen zur Macht, der eben der Wille des Lebens ist." (ibid.)

the sex organs of the machine world," but, beyond that, now "it is the machine that becomes the sex organs of the biological world" (cf. Grant 2002: 114); the "biological" understood here, of course, in terms of technology.

In this manner, we are rapidly approaching the fourth dimension of all that is "sexual," a dimension beyond the "meat" body, in a realm in which the "cyber" is multiplied by the "hyper" in its never-ending iterability by means of the replication of the "post."

But, as Fred Botting (1999: 17) emphasizes, "[s]ex and bodies, ostensibly discarded by intelligent machines, are not fully erased but are significantly transformed": "in excess of choice between meat or machine, *something else* remains at work confounding apocalyptic oppositions and demanding an extensive theoretical reappraisal of the narrative structures shaping the future" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In these terms, sex – like matter turning into anti-matter – now turns into anti-sex, "sex" as its own virtual shadow, a-sexual "sex" as the ecstasy of the "cyber"; and, thus, a "sense of absolute consciousness, total vision and unmediated presence is delivered in the interface of mind with machine, a transcendence of body and materiality into the heady realms of a space that is simultaneously within and outside the mind" (ibid.: 168). And this is, as Botting assures us, "[b]etter than sex and drugs" (ibid.), far better: this is the "bodiless exultation" of the "cyber": "corporeal sex" turned into "cerebral sexuality" (ibid.: 169), as Botting specifies his argument referring to Claudia Springer's idea concerning "sex" at the body-machine interface (see Springer 1991: 303).

"Is this science fiction?" (Baudrillard 1988d [1987]: 17). By asking this question Baudrillard refers to what he calls the "ecstasy of communication" peculiar to the historical transformation of Western culture resulting from the proliferation of ever-new media technologies, inaugurating the "era of hyperreality" (ibid.: 16). What does it mean? To see the dimensions of the new cultural constellation in which, according to Baudrillard, we are now living, it is appropriate to recall the main points of Baudrillard's argument concerning hyperreality as a mode of the "real" effected by simulation; an argument that, in fact, has a central position in Baudrillard's thought (see Poster 1988; Kellner 1989; Gane 1991a, 1991b), and, through the "Baudrillard effect" (Levin 1996: 47–56), in the theory discourse of the postmodern in general (cf., for example, Taylor & Winquist 2001: 182–184; Cubitt 2001: 41–54).

If there was once a world in which the imaginary was reflected by the mirror and the scene, today they have "given way to a screen and a network," and as a result, there is "no longer any transcendence or depth, but only the immanent surface of operations unfolding, the smooth and functional surface of communication" (Baudrillard 1988: 12). In this sense, the "surrounding universe and our very bodies are becoming monitoring screens," dominated by "mastery, control and command," turning the "subject himself into a driving computer" (ibid.: 12–13). The subject is now an object: everywhere there is "something (or some*one*, since at this stage there is no more difference) to which you are

wired" (ibid.: 13); we are living now at an "uninterrupted interface" (ibid.: 14). This is the world of "private telematics": "each individual sees himself promoted to the controls of a hypothetical machine, isolated in a position of perfect sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his original universe" (ibid.: 15).

In this situation, we have become "terminals of multiple networks": "today one's private living space is conceived of as a receiving and operating area, as a monitoring screen endowed with telematic power," with the "capacity to regulate everything by remote control" (ibid.: 16–17). There is no longer privacy, intimacy and distance, because the difference between the private sphere and the public space has disappeared. This is what I call *public privacy*, a realm of publicly lived private life, life that takes place in, through and by the media surrounding us everywhere: the omnipresent mediascape. At the same time, as a result of the privatization of the public, the "entire universe," as Baudrillard says, now unfolds "on your home screen" (ibid.: 21) amounting to a situation in which culture begins to be dominated by "obscenity": everything becomes "immediately transparent, visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication" (ibid.: 21–22). For this reason:

> *We no longer partake of the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication.* And this ecstasy is obscene. Obscene is that which eliminates the gaze, the image and every representation. Obscenity is not confined to sexuality, because today there is a pornography of information and communication, a pornography of circuits and networks, of functions and objects in their legibility, availability, regulation, forced signification, capacity to perform, connection, polyvalence, their free expression… (ibid.: 22)

The old world of the secret has now disappeared once and for all. Therefore, what is at issue is no longer the "hidden, the repressed, the obscure," but on the contrary, the "visible, the all-too-visible, the more-visible-than-visible" (ibid.). This is the mode of operation of the ecstasy of communication, the logic of the obscene in the era of hyperreality. "Hot, sexual obscenity is followed by cool communicational obscenity" (ibid.: 24). In the old, "hot," world of "sexual obscenity," there was still "promiscuity" that was "organic, visceral, carnal," while the promiscuity of today that "reigns over communication networks is one of superficial saturation, an endless harassment, an extermination of interstitial space" (ibid.). In the totality of the ecstasy of communication, "I am no longer capable of knowing what I want" (ibid.: 25). This is a "cold and cool universe," a new world dominated by "ecstasy," "fascination" and "obscenity" (ibid.: 26), a state of permanent hyper-excitation, *the state of fury and frenzy typical of the postmodern following the irreal logic of the global financial markets*.

In a world in which a "forced extraversion of all interiority" is simultaneously a "forced introjection of all exteriority" (ibid.), the old pathologies of hysteria and paranoia make way to a "new form of schizophrenia" (ibid.: 26–27). In an "immanent promiscuity and the perpetual interconnection of all information and communication," there emerges a "state of terror which is characteristic of the schizophrenic, an over-proximity of all things" (ibid.: 27). This is the situ-

ation of the subject in the contemporary world: the subject as the object of radical contingency constitutive of the "reason" of the postmodern; that is, in theological terms, "existential rootlessness," "abandonment in an impersonal cosmos," "foundational relativism," and – *contra* Baudrillard – "isolated alienation" (Schneiders 2000: 112–114) are characteristic of postmodern sensibility (for a theoretical contextualization in terms of radical politics, see Butler et al. 2000). This is a world under the sign of a post-Nietzschean "death of God" (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 352–353, 1973a [1882/1887]: 158–159; Heidegger 1977b [1943]), a world in which the post-Freudian "prosthetic God" in the form of the cyborg reigns as a neo-Hobbesian "Leviathan" (cf. Freud (1972a [1930]: 450–451); as Haraway (1991a: 163) says, the "cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self," and, in this sense,"[o]ne is too few, but two are too many" (ibid.: 177).

In the postmodern constellation of radical contingency, the subject is replaced by a post-individual, post-personal "self" that in its fractal fragmentarity is unable to recognize itself as a self; for this reason, the post-subject lives in a permanent state of schizophrenia, in the hyperreal mirror world of *me, myself and I*. But, as Baudrillard emphasizes:

> The schizophrenic is not, as generally claimed, characterized by his loss of touch with reality, but by the absolute proximity to and total instantaneousness with things, this overexposure to the transparency of the world. Stripped of a stage and crossed over without the least obstacle, the schizophrenic cannot produce the limits of his very being, he can no longer produce himself as a mirror. He becomes a pure screen, a pure absorption and resorption surface of the influent networks. (Baudrillard 1988: 27).

Is this science fiction? Or should we rather ask: is this question in the "era of hyperreality" still relevant at all? And, more fundamentally, what, in fact, is the difference not only between science and science fiction, but, more fundamentally, between science and fiction in general, or then again, in another linguistic register, the difference between sense and nonsense – if there is any?

What Is the Irony of the Cyborg?

Obviously, something has happened during the last decades of the twentieth century, in the 1980s and 1990s, the decades of the triumphal postmodern resembling the "vertigo years" of the modern, as Philipp Blom (2008) calls the years 1900–1914; something similar to but still evidently entirely different from the situation at the end of the nineteenth century, the age of the *fin de siècle* (see, for example, Showalter 1992; Hustvedt 1998; Ledger & Luckhurst 2000; Mikkonen 2001; Anderson & Valente 2002), when a new science appeared on the intellectual scene of Paris, the "science" of *pataphysics* (see, for example, Henderson 1998: 47–51; Fell 2005: 13, 53–54; Shattuck 1979; Bök 2002; Ferentschik 2006; in Baudrillardian terms, see Baudrillard 1990b [1983]: 28, 85, 1990c [1983]: 165, 1994b [1992]: 1–9, 14–20, 1997c: 13–14, 1997e: 41–42; Kellner 1989: 162–163, 1994: 14–20; Genosko 1994a: 106–116, 1994b: 293; Levin 1996: 196–

208, 277–278). According to Alfred Jarry, the eccentric author who invented this new "science" characteristic of the spirit of the *belle époque*, "pataphysics is the science of *imaginary solutions*, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments" (Kellner 1989: 162; emphasis mine; for the writings of Jarry, see Shattuck & Taylor 1965).[70]

Whatever this genuinely pataphysical definition of pataphysics might mean, for me, it is, *mutatis mutandis*, an appropriate characterization of the situation of theory in terms of the "post": *post-theory is about postmodern pataphysics*, a new "science" practiced in what I call the Disneyland of Theory, a domain of imaginary reason, or as I prefer to say, the surrational, a mode of post-reason dominating not only postmodern academia, but the postmodern in general. That is, not so much the Baudrillardian disappearance of the real in the order of simulation and hyperreality as the "desert of the real itself" (Baudrillard 1994 [1981]: 1; cf., for example, Žižek 2002e) is at issue, but, rather, *the mirage of the imaginary as the reality of the "post"* is the mode of the "real" in the contemporary world ruled by global financial capital. *Both* the Baudrillardian "map" (the "double," the "mirror" or the "concept") *and* a "territory" corresponding to it (a "referential being" or a "substance") (Baudrillard 1994: 1) have faded away in the world of the "post": like financial capital, post-theory is about an art to create apparitions *ex nihilo*, phantom entities that appear as real.

This is the "real" of post-sex, "sex" as a simulation of itself; the "real" of cybersex: technological *hypersex* as the ultimate form of post-sex.

The history of postmodern pataphysics is yet to be written; what I am doing here is an attempt, from the perspective of the "post" in the sense of postmodern pataphysics, to outline a specific realm of the techno-imaginary, the discursive space under the sign of the "cyber."

If the *fin de siècle* world of pataphysics was a fantasy world in which science was seen as an intellectual play with "imaginary solutions," the world of cyber discourse is a universe of the techno-imaginary constituted by the virtual reality of language simultaneously based on and effected by the libidinal language of the "cyber" functioning according to the logic of the "post." As today, a century ago in Paris in which modern science of the time presented one spectacular invention after another, there was an overwhelming enthusiasm with the scientific ingenuity for which nothing seemed to be impossible (see, for example,

70 According to Linda Darlymple Henderson (1998: 47), Jarry introduced the idea of "pataphysics" already 1893 in the play *Ubu Cocu* and again in an essay "Commentaire pour servir à la construction pratique de la machine à explorer le temps" for *Mercure de France* in 1899. In an elaborated form, the idea was included in the manuscript of his eccentric novel *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien* in 1898 (not published until 1911), "to challenge traditional positivism" prevailing at the time in sciences (ibid.). Pataphysics, of course, is in itself, in its conception of the very idea of the scientificality of science, a pataphysical enterprise – what else could it be? In this sense, it is consequent to read also the following specification given by Jarry (1996 [1911]: 21) in terms of pataphysics: "pataphysics is the science of the realm beyond metaphysics […]. It will study the laws which govern exceptions and will explain the universe supplementary to this one; or, less ambitiously, it will describe a universe which one can see – must see perhaps – instead of the traditional one […]." (cf. Kellner 1989: 162; Pefanis 1991: 9–10, 121–122, 145; Levin 1996: 277–278)

Asendorf 1984, 1989; Möbius & Berns 1990; Teich & Porter 1990, 1996; in terms of the avantgarde, see, for example, Henderson 1998; Möbius 2000; von Beyme 2005; for the fascination of Dada with the mechanization of the human being, see Bergius 1980, 1981, 1997, 2000). In short, this was the era that gave birth, along with the real achievements of science and technology, to the imaginary machines that Brigitte Felderer (1996) calls *Wunschmaschinen*, a term that brings to mind Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1998 [1972]) notion of "desiring-machines" (cf. Bogue 1989: 88–97, 105–106; Goodchild 1996: 51–55, 92–104), although the idea is not (necessarily) the same.

What is the point here is that while there are real-existing technologies that can become objects of various fantasy projections, there are also fantasy projections of technologies that exist only in the imaginary, but which as such, due to their linguistic suggestiveness, appear as "real." Moreover, there are technologies of a third order, technologies that are not so much in between of the real and the imaginary as *imaginary projections of real technologies* (cf. Haraway 1985). This is the realm of the techno-imaginary in terms of the "post," the mode of the imaginary constitutive of the world of the "cyber": it is about technologies that are theory objects, especially in terms of post-theory: *theory-fictions that exist in the virtual reality of language typical of all that is "post."*

This is the world of the cyborg. According to Haraway (1991a: 150), the end of the twentieth century was a "mythic time" that inaugurated a new era in which "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism." This was the time when the cyborg, *in terms of the "post,"* came to the world (for the cyborg before the imaginary order of the "post," see Clynes & Kline 1995 [1960]; Clynes 1995 [1970]; Edwards 1996: 19–22, 147–148, 172–173; Mirowski 2002: 11–18; Yaszek 2002: 7–11; Smedes 2009: 48–51; Kapp 1877; Muri 2007; Biro 2009; cf. Haraway 2000a: 136–137, 2000b: 403–404).

The arrival of the Harawayan cyborg was a true revelation: the cyborg was a messenger with a millennial message: a New Age had begun, the era of a radical metamorphosis of all that until yet had been understood to be "human." If, during the Enlightenment the idea of *la perfectibilité de l'homme*, the perfectibility of the human being (for the historical context, see, for example, Passmore 1970; Vila 1998, Jackson 2004; in Hegelian terms, see Hegel 1986b [1821]: 504, 1986d [1837]: 74–75; from the Darwinian perspective, see Cartwright 2000: 338–339; Terranova 1996a), was the guiding idea in learned discussions concerning the telos of history, *by the late twentieth century*, as Haraway (1985) and her acolytes keep saying, the idea of becoming posthuman, epitomized by the cyborg, appeared as the lodestar of the final accomplishment of the human in the discourses around the "post" (see, for example, Haraway 1992a; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Badmington 2000a; Schneider 2005; Clarke 2008). *Being human* is now *passé*; "the body" is the ultimate source of salvation, the only resource of one's redemption: *the body as a design object*, the body as a *technology* of the post-subject. Accordingly, body modification by means of technosci-

ence is the key to the perfectibility of the posthuman being (see, for example, Rötzer 1998b; Featherstone 2000; Mercury & Haworth 2000; Siebers 2000; Pitts 2003; cf. Foucault 1990a [1984], 1990h [1984]).

"In the postmodern context," as Marita Sturken (2004: 86) says, "the body has no distinct boundaries": the body is now "changeable, mutable, in essence a work-in-progress."

> While in modernity, the body was considered to be stable in some way, something one was stuck with, *in postmodernism*, bodies are understood to be easily transformed. One can change one's gender (through cross-dressing and surgery), one's race (through skin tone and colored lenses), one's appearance and shape (through gym workouts, plastic surgery, and liposuction), and one's genetic makeup. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

Nothing can any longer prevent one from becoming a posthuman, a cyborg of one's own design. We are now living in a world of limitless choices, a world of ultimate freedom. *I am my body which I am; I am the body which I have; I am the body which I have become; I am the body which I will become* – that is the principle of the posthuman being, the ethos of the cyborg.

A radical change in terms of epistemology and ontology has taken place in the wake of the "post." In contrast to the original cyborg, a technoscientific idea developed by scientists Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline in the context of space research in 1960 (see Clynes & Cline 1995 [1960]; Clynes 1995 [1970]; Halacy 1965a: 147–153; Gray 1995; in terms of "the second Genesis" in the sense of "the coming control of life," see Rosenfeld 1969; for a contextualization of the cyborg before the Harawayan mythopoetic appropriation of it, see Munnik 2001 [1999]: 101–103; Blackmore 2005: 40–42; Launius & McCurdy 2008: 198–200), Haraway's cyborg, from the very beginning, was not a scientific concept, but an "*ironic political myth* faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism" (Haraway 1991a: 149; emphasis mine) that, its mythicality notwithstanding, was nevertheless taken to be about lived reality: "we *are* cyborgs" (ibid.: 150; emphasis mine), as Haraway assured us.[71] "The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics" (ibid.). In addition to irony, the politics of the cyborg was about blasphemy that was aware of what it meant to be faithful to one's own ideals. "Perhaps more faithful as blasphemy is faithful, than as reverent worship and

71 The questions as to who this "we" is which Haraway is addressing with her "myth" and from which position she is speaking remain open (for critical discussion on Haraway's cyborg, see, for example, Balsamo 1996; Weber 2003; Fernández 2010 [2001]; Malik 2010 [2001]). The problem is that there is an immanent contradiction in Haraway's presentation: on the one hand, Haraway tries to keep the figure of the cyborg open, that is, non-exclusive and non-identitarian, and thus boundary-crossing, but on the other, Haraway's cyborg is strictly a feminist figure in the sense that in its centre "woman" stands against the negative world of the "male," "masculine" and "patriarchy," and it again and again appeals to "women" as *the* political subject of historical change; for example, the cyborg as a figure that "changes what counts as *women's experience* in the late twentieth century" (Haraway 1991a: 149). But the problem is that Haraway does not pose the question: what is it that makes these "women" expressly *women*? In a traditional and abstract way, Haraway's "woman" represents the "good" in the world, while the "male" is the epitome of all that is destructive and bad; in other words, the "male" is the enemy of Haraway's cyborg politics, a politics aiming at the liberation of "women" *by abolishing the male* in the manner of the feminism of the 1970s.

identification" (ibid.: 149), as Haraway specified the political irony of the cyborg as a postmodern politics of irony.

But, actually, why blasphemy – what was the specific to this postmodern mode of irreverence?

> Blasphemy has always seemed to require taking things very seriously. I know no better stance to adopt from within the secular-religious, evangelical traditions of United States politics, including the politics of socialist feminism. Blasphemy protects one from the moral majority within, while still insisting on the need for community. Blasphemy is not apostasy. Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. Irony is about humour and serious play. (ibid.)

"At the centre of my ironic faith, my blasphemy, is the image of the cyborg" (ibid.), Haraway summed up the idea of the cyborg as both a subversive figure and a promise of salvation (cf. Gilmore 1994: 233–234; Schneider 2005: 62–64; in terms of Benjamin's politics of metaphor, cf. Franklin 2003: 30–35). As such a provocative but a hopeful vision, Haraway's (1991a: 149) cyborg is about a "rhetorical strategy and a political method." In this manner, the politics of the cyborg, in fact, is about a *politics of language* (in terms of "mastering discourse" in the context of "the politics of intellectual culture," cf. Bové 1992b); a politics of linguistic figuration that displays a double perspective: the cyborg is "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 1991a: 149). Thus, also in terms of theory Haraway's cyborg is a hybrid: it is a "matter of fiction and lived experience" (ibid.), a "condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (ibid.: 150; cf. Braidotti 1994a: 105–107; Melzer 2006: 24–28; Lykke 2008: 12–15; Reiche & Sick 2002; Reiche & Kuni 2004).

In the world of the Harawayan cyborg, reality is conditioned by fiction, and what is fictional is real *just because* it is predicated upon fiction. In other words, similar to Baudrillard, science fiction is, for Haraway, not only a metaphoric matrix, but the very model of *both* science *and* reality, and, in these terms, finally reality in itself: there is no reality beyond discourse, beyond language. In other words, what Haraway (1991a: 175–181) calls "cyborg writing" is the way the world *exists* now (cf. Cornis-Pope 2001: 89–100; Yaszek 2002: 9–17, 155–162; Inman 2004: 108–116).

In these terms, Haraway's cyborg is a design for a political programme, a radical sexual politics to subvert the whole notion of the sexual: "[c]yborg 'sex' restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates," and, as such, it forms a "nice *organic* [sic] prophylactics against heterosexism" (Haraway 1991a: 150; emphasis mine). Also in terms of procreation, the cyborg means a radical break: "[c]yborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction" (ibid.). And finally, in a "postmodernist, non-naturalist mode," the cyborg belongs to the "utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end" (ibid.). The cyborg is a "creature in *a post-gender world*" that has "no truck with bisexuality" nor with "pre-oedipal symbiosis" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Barr

1993: 118; Apter 1999: 216–217; Mason 1999: 114–117; Žižek 2000: 65–67; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Barber 2004; in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 293–296; Grosz 1994c: 34–35, 177–179, 1995b: 183–185; Olkowski 1999: 54–58; Foucault 1978b [1977]).

Accordingly, what counts now is becoming: "sex," in the sense of the "a-sexual," is a matter of a continuous *othering*, namesless desires and pleasures as non-identitarian body politics constitutive of the post-subject in terms of post-Foucauldian "bodies and pleasures" beyond the terror regime of *le sexe* (cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 157–159).

As we can see, in the world of the Harawayan cyborg, all that is – or, rather, used to be – "sexual" is now transposed into a discursive matrix in which we are at last liberated from what Foucault calls the "austere monarchy of sex" (ibid.: 159; cf. Foucault 1996m [1977]), "sex" as a disciplinary category produced by "power/knowledge" (see Foucault 1980a [1975], 1980b [1977], 1980c [1977], 1980d [1977]; cf. Merquior 1985: 119–124; Visker 1991b: 94–104; Marti 1999 [1988]: 97–103). In other words, *if* there is still anything "sexual" at all in the world of the "post," it is definitely beyond all the inherited limits and limitations, be they defined by the categories "hetero," "homo," "lesbian," or "queer," or whatever. This is the ultimate accomplishment of the Foucauldian "different economy of bodies and pleasures" (Foucault 1990k: 157–159), a realm of absolute freedom in which to be is to become in a constant process of becoming. This is the world of the cyborg, a world of "body options" (Angerer 1999a) in which we are entitled both to enjoy "*pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries" and to take "*responsibility* of their construction" (Haraway 1991a: 150).

Thus, from now on, whatever "sex" may be it is possible only on the condition of permanent deconstruction: in the world of the "post," "sex" is the most seductive signifier to be constantly deconstructed by the subversive power of the cyborg, the power of transgression.

The Seduction of the Cyborg

It is precisely in this conjunction that the idea of the cyborg as an embodiment of sexual subversion comes to the fore: the politics of the cyborg constitutes a utopian realm not just beyond the constraints of gender, but, moreover, beyond the matrix of the sexual in terms of the heteronormal and all related categories (see, for example, Richardson 1996; McWhorter 1999; Kimmel 2000, 2007; Lovaas & Jenkins 2007). As such a subversive figure, the cyborg is an emblem of counter-sexual radicalism (see Preciado 2003), an apotheosis of sexual transgression by means of technology (cf., for example, Springer 1996: 50–79; Rival et al. 1999: 297–308; Pettman 2002: 63–96; Vanderburg 2005: 444–460; Donnan & Magowan 2009a: 10–17).

In a manner never seen before, the cyborg manifests the *détournement* of the sacred, the sacral integrity of the body, the temple of the spirit (cf., for exam-

ple, Richman 1995: 63–68; Clarke 2003 [2000]: 198–203; Goodall 2000: 155–157; Heuser 2003: 213–221; Jenks 2003: 29–32, 148–149, 153–154; Botting & Wilson 1998): a radical reversal of the untouchability of the body as an embodiment of transcendence, a fundamental violation of the corporeal integrity of the self, amounting to a sacralization of the uncanny; in other words, a *micropolitics of the sexual in terms of prosthetics*. What does this imply? A *re-sacralization* of the de-sacralized body by means of deconstructive destruction, by way of what Stephen Metcalf (1998) calls *autogeddon*. Glorifying the "terminal eroticism of technology" inscribed in J. G. Ballard's crash fetishism in his *Crash* (1973), Metcalf celebrates the shattering of the human body "into fragments, violently hollowing out a subjectivity which is deposited as waste" (ibid.: 112; cf. de La Mettrie 1912 [1747/1748]: 128; Wiener 1968 [1950]: 31–34; Haraway 1991a: 178–179; Derrida 1997 [1967]: 9, 144; Stroup & Shuck 2007: 2). What we experience in this techno-erotic constellation is a "the psycho-geographical zone in transition where the soft technologies of the interior (the body) and the hard technologies of the exterior (the environment) are thrown together in collision and almost surgically cut each other up" (Metcalf 1998: 112); that is, a "complete mess," "[t]wisted matings of severed limbs and machine parts, fractured body panels, spikes of metal, plush vinyl seating, burning cloth and rubber, body and machine fluids mingling" (ibid.).

> All is not lost, however: crash is followed by reconstruction as the virtually dead body is redesigned by means of life-support machines and prosthetic organs. The normally assigned boundaries of the body having been breached, wounded beyond recognition, the subject recedes into an ambient disappearance in the environment. No longer the sentinel controlling the flows of traffic between the interior and the exterior, the subject is diffused across a virtual machine – consisting, in Ballard's post-human inner landscapes, of sexualization of (and, hence, identification with) the geometric affinity between the curvatures of bodies in sexual collision, car bodywork and interiors, road junctions interpenetrating like lovers, perverse shapes of architecture, mimicry of facial expressions of orgasm or death in radiator grilles. (ibid.; cf. Jünger 2010; Hermand 1980; Berman 1989b; Bullock 1992; Huyssen 1993; Heidegger 2004)

What we are witnessing here, in the *vertiginous vortex of post-carnal pleasure*, is the resurrection of the body in the form of the posthuman, a body that has liberated itself from the constraints of the human, a prosthetic body in its technological transcendence, a post-spiritual body in its techno-materiality: the body as a post-biological machine aggregate, a prosthetic assemblage of non-integral parts. And all this with a gesture of deep contempt towards the realm of reason, the matrix of the "normal," postulated as the disciplinary regime under the sign of the "natural." While all efforts thus far to abolish the terror of "normality" have failed, the cyborg, in its very omnipotence deriving from its absolute otherness, has the singular power to transgress all the limits and limitations that constrain the free movement of desires and pleasures (cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998: 25–48; Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Clough 2000; Clough & Halley 2007).

This is the pride of the cyborg, the pride of being a post-Nietzschean *Brücke*, a redemptive "bridge" (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 10–11), to ultimate transgression; as Haraway proudly pronounces:

> The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the *oikos*, the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world. Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. (Haraway 1991a: 151; cf. Haraway 1992c)

To say that this is nonsense, would be, of course, nonsense (cf. Champigny 1986; Tigges 1987; Lecercle 1994; Menninghaus 1995; Hiebert 2012). But the problem is nevertheless, *how do we know it*? To specify, in the world of the "post," a world of unending linguistic figuration, a discursive universe in which meaning is replaced by signification under the imperative of *différance*, how do we tell sense from nonsense, and vice versa? *If making sense beyond making sense is the most signifying way of making sense, who is to say what is it that makes sense?*

The idea of the Harawayan cyborg – as far as it is possible at all, precisely in Harawayan terms, to distillate *the* idea constitutive of the Harawayan cyborg – is to disrupt the boundaries not only of the "object world," but, more fundamentally, of the very language that constitutes these boundaries and objects in the first place. For this reason, there is no problem here for Haraway: her politics of the cyborg as a politics of language is about the "science fiction of cyborgs" (Haraway 1991a: 151); it is, however, not merely about playful futurism: the Harawayan cyborg is an extremely serious matter, it is about a "struggle over life and death"; but, as Haraway emphasizes, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (ibid.: 149; cf. Kuppers 2007: 129–132; Murphie & Potts 2003: 116–120; Luke 2003b: 90–97; Flanagan & Booth 2002).

Clearly, if we leave aside the question as to how it is possible, for Haraway, to discern what is an optical illusion and what is not, this is about a new type of science, science in the mode of the postmodern (cf. Lykke & Braidotti 1996a; Haraway 1997; Zylinska 2001, 2002b);[72] science in a very specific manner, *post-science* in its radical alterity, beyond all the parameters of the "normal":

72 Referring in her conception of the postmodern to Jameson (1984), Haraway (1991f: 244) states that what is required is a "radical reinvention of left politics from within," and then specifies: "My position is that feminists (and others) need continuous cultural reinvention, postmodernist critique, and historical materialism; *only a cyborg would have a chance*" (ibid.: 244–245; emphasis mine), and, because the cyborg is a female figure, males are not included to Haraway's masterplan of salvation.

the cyborg, as Haraway says, is a "polychromatic girl," and, in this sense, the "cyborg is a bad girl, she is really not a boy," she is a "girl who's trying not to become Woman" (Penley & Ross 1992a: 20). Then again, the cyborg belongs to the species of "monsters," "boundary creatures" like "simians" and "women," creatures the idea of which is "to *demonstrate*" (Haraway 1992b: 21–22); that is, in the world of the cyborg at issue is precisely a politics of language; as Haraway says: "Monsters signify" (ibid.: 22). These "promising and non-innocent monsters" exemplify "modes of beings" that "may be signs of possible worlds," marking a space of the "unmarked" from which "knowledge" takes on a new quality: it is about a world that is "truly fantastic, distorted, and irrational" (ibid.; cf. Weiss 1999: 111–116; Toffoletti 2007: 93–97; Haraway 1992c; Shildrick 2002).

It is in this hilarious, irreverent, post-serious manner that the science of *the cyborg is a post-theoretical manifestation of post-science*, a highly sophisticated form of postmodern pataphysics, a mode of ecstatic language; that is, postmodern science fiction playing with such "technoscientific" figures as "chip, gene, seed, bomb, lineage, ecosystem, and database" (Haraway 1997: 2), and, finally, as Haraway enthusiastically explains, cyborg science is even more than a science: it is a "family romance, or a scholarly soap opera, set in a kind of critical General Hospital or theoretical Dallas" (ibid.: 22; cf. Angerer 1999a: 47–55, 149–158; Sofoulis 2003; in terms of cyberfeminism, cf., for example, Plant 1996b, 1997a, 1997b; Sollfrank 1998, 1999; Oldenburg & Reiche 2002; Reiche & Sick 2002; Reiche & Kuni 2004).

In its bombastic postmodernity, Harawayan cyborg science, indeed, is fantastic; in this manner, it is about what I call *cyborg fetishism* in terms of theory. But, at the same time, what is important, as "science," the Harawayan cyborgian language game is not nonsense; rather, it is about some new sense of sense that makes sense even without making sense: linguistic figuration that precisely in the mode of post-theory produces in, of and by itself what it "means"; provided, of course, that the cyborg can be approached from the point of view of *meaning* at all. The world of the cyborg is about postmodern theology in the sense that it is able to create entities and issues *ex nihilo*, and not whatever entities at that, but "things" that as mythopoetic figures are pregnant of "meaning" without any explicit meaning, or meaning at all: *"things" that signify in the mode of theoretical delirium*.

This is the seduction of the cyborg, its extraordinary intellectual pleasure: theory as a form of *jouissance*; theory as a mode bliss that exceeds the limits of pleasure in itself; that is, theory as a shattering experience of "the theoretical" in its subversive "otherness": theory as a post-Nietzschean *Rausch* (cf. Nietzsche 1969d [1889]: 110–112, 1972a [1872]: 22–26; cf., for example, Gebhard 1983: 45–46; Solomon 2003: 69–70, 95; in Heideggerian terms, see Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 91–106, 114–124).

3.2 "I Have Forgotten My Umbrella"

As liberating as the experience of the "shattering" power of "the theoretical" can ever be, a question still remains: where, *exactly*, is the difference between sense and nonsense, or between science and science fiction – or is the question concerning this difference not only inappropriate but simply impossible in the world of the "post"? If, in general, in language, due to Derridean *différance*, there is no difference between sense and nonsense, *a fortiori* this is the case in cyber discourse, the object proper of the study at hand. Nonsense, or, in Haraway's words, the "fantastic, distorted, and irrational," is the very condition of possibility of all that is "cyber" following the logic of the "post": in the discursive universe of cyber discourse, it is precisely nonsense that makes sense – if it makes sense at all.

This is the reason (in both senses of the word) why cyber discourse is an extremely productive mode of language; for the same reason, it is, as we will see, in its overwhelming linguistic excess, also seductive.

It is in this sense that the Harawayan cyborg figures – "chip," "gene," "seed," "bomb," "lineage," "ecosystem" and "database" – are figures in a "scholarly soap opera," a postmodern saga of the coming of the cyborg into the world as a technoscientific saviour. This is the way of "doing theory" in the mode of what Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen (2001a), among others, call "French theory" (cf., for example, Fekete 1984; Frank 1984; Starr 1995; van der Poel et al. 1999; Peters 2001; Rapaport 2001; Peters et al. 2003a; Angermüller 2004; Davis 2004; Bourg 2007; Cusset 2008 [2003]; in terms of "French intellectual nobility," see Kauppi 1996); a postmodern theory matrix that, in the end, enabled the emergence of the phantasmatic world of post-theoretical theory-fictions that I designate as the *Disneyland of Theory*, a neo-Baroque empire of Theory ruling postmodern academia by its excessive linguistic figuration, a politics of language employing extravagant and spectacular tropes in the mode of a post-poetic neo-Rococo.

3.2.1 What Can We Learn from Humpty Dumpty's "Sovereign Freedom"?

If, as N. Katherine Hayles (1999: 2) asks, why is it that "information lost its body" in the context of new scientific approaches in postwar America embracing "cybernetics, information theory, autopoiesis, computer simulation, and cognitive science," implying that the human body became reconceptualized "as an entity separate from the material forms in which it is thought to be embedded," in contrast to that, in the contemporary world ruled by the imperative of economization of all being constitutive of the political economy of neoliberalism, Hayles's question translates into another one, even a more radical question: why is it that, in the theory discourse of the "post," the human body has lost not only its materiality, but, more fundamentally, its lived reality, its lived embodiment embedded in the phenomenological reality of our *Lebenswelt*, the life-world surrounding us as *Leib* in its very materiality (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]:

35–37, 1969c [1889]: 154, 1972a [1872]: 22–26; Waldenfels 1985; Caysa 2000; Jonas & Lembeck 2006)? That is, why is it that the body no longer matters, except in terms of language, information and codification, in terms of constant rewriting of "the body" as an object of theory, as a construct that is deconstructed and reconstructed time and time again as an ephemeral entity that exists only as long as and insofar as there is a theory that enables its existence?

This is a cardinal question concerning the problem of the posthuman as it is understood in the study at hand. As we have seen thus far, what is constitutive of cyber discourse is that being human has been entirely virtualized in the world of the "cyber," in its immaterial paraspace in which each and everyone can enjoy life in the form of an avatar, a monadic and nomadic entity interfaced by means of its prosthetic organs with the artificial world in which it is embedded. This is, literally, fantastic. Yet, the virtualization of the human being is but one aspect, although an essential one, of the great transformation pertaining to the conceptualization of the body from cybernetics to cyber discourse. Therefore, it is necessary to outline the emergence of the theoretical constellation in which not only both Hayles's "posthuman" and Haraway's "cyborg" become intelligible, but, beyond that, in which the key to the question concerning the fate of the body in the world of the "cyber" is to be found.

Approaching the Origin of the "Post"

If, as Haraway says above, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion," what does this mean in terms of theory? What I call theory-fiction is an answer to this question. While linguistic figuration is an essential precondition of all theory, in theory-fiction it is the whole idea: it is the very method of producing theory by means of writing in the mode of *écriture*, a mode of writing typical of the postmodern. In other words, in the world of the "post," at issue is not only the "promotion of *écriture* as discourse" (Con Davis & Schleifer 1985: 7), but, more fundamentally, the celebration of *écriture* as theory. This is the post-theoretical ethos of "doing theory" in the mode of "French Theory."

According to Jameson (1989 [1983]: 112), the emergence of "French theory" is coterminous with what he designates as "postmodernism" as a manifestation of "consumer society" in the early 1980s.

> A generation ago there was still a technical discourse of professional philosophy – the great systems of Sartre or the phenomenologists, the work of Wittgenstein or analytical or common language philosophy – alongside which one could still distinguish that quite different discourse of the other academic disciplines – of political science, for example, or sociology or literary criticism. Today, increasingly, we have *a kind of writing* simply called "theory" which is all or none of those things at once. This new kind of discourse, generally associated with France and so-called French theory, is becoming widespread and marks the end of philosophy as such. (ibid.; emphasis mine; for "the end of philosophy" as a consequence of cybernetics, cf. Heidegger 2000c [1966/1976]: 672, 674, 2000h [1965]: 622–623; for postmodernism defined in terms of "text out of context" specific to the "information society," cf. Hayles 1987)

"A kind of writing" that "marks the end of philosophy," this is the beginning of the "post" in terms of theory: theory as "writing" in the mode of *écriture*, linguistic figuration as an *Ersatz* not only of philosophy but of thinking in general (cf. Norris 1984, 1985, 1990; Rorty 1992 [1967]; Culler 1997, 2003; Davis 2004; in Heideggerian terms, cf. Behler 1991 [1988]; for the origin of the theoretical radicalism in the mode of *écriture* practiced by the *Tel Quel* circle as the politics of theory, see Kauppi 1994; Brandt 2000).

In fact, although "French theory," with regard to both the language and the cultural context, originates from France it is actually, as Lotringer and Cohen (2001b: 1) explain, an "American invention," going back even to "at least the eighteenth century, and no doubt belongs to the continuity of American reception to all sorts of European imports, an ongoing process." The point is that, in "French theory," what the French call *pensée*, "thought," turns into what Americans understand by the notion of "theory" (ibid.). This is a significant difference; a difference that, paradoxically, is not possible to understand in terms of the "post," the terms of post-theory as the apotheosis of "French theory": there is no outside in post-theory.

It is in this sense that, for me, what is called the "linguistic turn," in fact, is a turn to writing: writing theory in terms of *écriture* (for a historical articulation of "linguistic turns in modern philosophy," see Losonsky 2006). This is the idea of the "French" in "French theory": it refers to "a kind of writing" that I call post-theory, a mode of theory that theorizes itself by means of "the theoretical" that it has created by theorizing itself by means of "the theoretical" that it has created itself in the first place.

The background of this conversion of the French manner of thinking to the American way of "doing theory" pertains, as Lotringer and Cohen (2001b: 1) say, to "strange *psychopolitical* facts about America" (emphasis mine). As pragmatists, "most Americans actually believe in only two modes of thought": for the one, "utopianism, expressed in versions of an 'American exceptionalism' and which perforce includes 'apocalypticism," and, for the second, "legalism, or reliance on the intellectual patterns of law" (ibid.); or, as Jameson (1971: x) says, "that mixture of political liberalism, empiricism, and logical positivism which we know as Anglo-American philosophy" (for the "American exceptionalism" as a constitutive part of the American tradition, see, for example, Lipset 1997; Madsen 1998; Pease 2009).

What is important here is that both utopianism and legalism "deny philosophy and nonlegal 'theory' much leeway to arbitrate disputes, or even to address criticism" (Lotringer & Cohen 2001b: 1). In the American tradition, thinking has always been associated with "never-ending problems of discipline, boundary, propriety," in other words, "belief, judgement, facts, and principles" (ibid.) – features of thinking that have fostered either utopian visions or practical legalism, in contrast to the European way of reflection, questioning and criticism. Philosophy, in the French sense of *pensée*, thinking as "pure" intellectual

activity, as a *practice of reason in its own right*, or, as in the German tradition of Kant, Goethe, Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, *Denken und Dichten* as a way of asking fundamental questions pertaining to all being, this kind of intellectual reasoning in the name of *esprit* or *Geist* has been intrinsically "foreign" to American culture. Rather than thinking in the sense of speculation and reflection, the American way is knowledge as practical and pragmatic explanation and envisioning in approaching and appropriating the world, making the world to work. For this reason, theory as a form of thought is intrinsic to the European tradition in contrast to which the American tradition is imbued by the idea and ideal of practice.

Of course, this is nothing new: already during the French Revolution, Arthur Young, a new American, a "card-carrying English yeoman" (Simpson 1993: 9), wrote against what he called "French theory" (ibid.) in his tractate entitled *The Example of France as a Warning to Britain* (Mathy 2000: 27):

> I have been too long a farmer to be governed by any thing but events; I have a constitutional abhorrence of theory, of all trust in abstract reasoning, and consequently a reliance merely on experience, in other words, on events, the only principle worthy of an experimenter" (Simpson 1993: 9; cf. Mathy 2000: 27).

"A *constitutional abhorrence of theory*" – no doubt, that is a part, a deep undercurrent of American pragmatism too. I am not saying that "abstract reasoning" is something anti-American; at issue is only a distrust of theory without any connections to the practicalities of everyday life that is "constitutional" of American culture – which, as we know, originates from the establishment of British colonies in the New World during the settlement of the American continent (in terms of the "frontier" as a constitutive American topos, see, for example, Luedtke 1992; Nobles 1997).

As a consequence, it was a kind of revelation in American academic circles when, from the mid-1960s to the early-1970, French "theorists," that is, *philosophes*, conquered American universities and institutions of art and culture (for the break through of the new mode of "theorizing" by means of free-flowing linguistic figuration that became "French theory," see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]; cf. Lord 1996: 9–34; Mathy 2000: 27–56; Peters et al. 2003b: 2–3; Chow 2006; Cusset 2008; in terms of the *Tel Quel* circle as the self-appointed avant-garde of the French theory radicalism during and after the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris, see Kauppi 1994, 1996, 2010; Brandt 2000; for a historical contextualization concerning the intellectual situation in postwar France, see Khilnani 1993). This was the process in which French *pensée* turned into "French theory" as a mode of "doing theory" in the American way.

In this sense, "French theory" is neither an unsettled battle between, nor some arbitrary mixture of, "Frankfurters and French fries" (Nägele 1986: 91), that is, Adorno served with Derrida. No, "French theory" is a genuine American product, a splendid example of the ability of Americans to appropriate things not American in the origin. That is, "French theory" is as American as America in

itself: a European idea reworked in an American way (for a historical overview of the American intellectual tradition, see Hollinger & Capper 1997; for a classical criticism of American thought, see Niebuhr 1952; for the idea of America reflected in European thought, see Offe 2004; for the Americanization of France after the Second World War, see Ross 1996). And it is precisely here that the specific postmodern manner of *writing theory* in the mode of *écriture* that I call post-theory has its origin: *"French theory" is an authentic American theory* (from the perspective of French Cultural Studies, cf. Le Hir & Strand 2000; in the context of Butler's sex/gender theory, cf. Disch 2008: 48–52).

Without French *pensée* there would never have been poststructuralism, but there would never have been the "post" without the American "French theory" either. As Mark Poster (1989: 6) says, poststructuralism is a "uniquely American practice": "Americans have assimilated Foucault, Derrida, and the rest by turning their positions into 'poststructuralist theory'" (in terms of the political economy of neoliberalism, cf. Peters 2001).

This, in short, is the genesis of the "post" of post-theory; a mode of theory that is the logical conclusion of the *postmodernization of poststructuralism*. In this sense, America is the intellectual matrix of the postmodern, its true "homeland," and, accordingly, what is "post" is possible only in a culture in which the "post" is inscribed in its primordial origin: America is born from European ideas. Hence, the becoming "post" of poststructuralism in the sense of the postmodern was built-in in the theoretical logic of poststructuralism from the very beginning; as Jonathan Arac (1986a: ix) says, it was already "in the seventies" that "postmodernism experienced an exhilarating but unsettling confluence with poststructuralism, the critique of method, the philosophic cure, that sprung up athwart structuralism" (cf., for example, Johnson 1980a, 1980b, 1987; Arac et al. 1983; Poster 1989; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Docherty 1993b; Bertens 1995; Lucy 1997; Rapaport 2001). Thus, on the way from Paris to the American campus, poststructuralism, in itself an Americanized version of French thought, became postmodernized; in other words, in its expansion in the American intellectual circles, poststructuralism became *postified*, as I call this transformation; that is, the *postification* of poststructuralism in the spirit of the postmodern turned it into post-theory, a theory discourse under the sign of the "post."[73]

73 It is necessary, of course, to keep apart the postmodern (as the constitutive signifier of postmodernism and postmodernity) and poststructuralism from one another. While the postmodern, in the sense of postmodernism, refers to a new *cultural constellation*, emerging after the Second World War, implying, as Jameson (1983: 125) says, a "new moment of late, consumer or multinational capitalism," dominated by "the transformation of reality into images" and "the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents," poststructuralism, in turn, means a new way of *thinking* about knowledge, power, subjectivity and language in terms of anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism (see, for example, Sarup 1993 [1988]; Münker & Roesler 2000; Dews 2007 [1987]). In this sense, as Hal Foster (1988: 254) says, poststructuralism is a "symptomatic discourse" of the "late-capitalist, postmodernist moment" (cf. Kaplan 1988; Callinicos 1989; Jameson 1991; Hartley 2003). That is, the postmodern is a term to characterize contemporary culture as a culture living in affluence, whereas poststructuralism signals a radical break in the understanding of the human condition, in fact, being human after "the human" (for an approach thematizing the postmodern and poststructuralism in relation to one another, see Best & Kellner 1991).

Accordingly, *as a genuinely American invention, the "cyber" is a logical consequence of the "post": the "cyber" is the "hyper" of the "post" in terms of the imaginary of the technological*.

"Derrida Is Deconstruction": "Deconstruction Is/In America"

To get an idea of what I mean by that it is instructive to return for a moment to the times when French *pensée* was about conquering American academia. A telling example of an academic situation suffices to say the essential. As Lotringer and Cohen (2001b: 2) report, in 1975 at Columbia University a theory event took place with the telling title "Schizo-Culture Conference" (Lotringer 2001: 140), a "subversive" theory happening under the sign of "molecular revolutions" (see Guattari 2008: 275–281) organized by Semiotext(e), a radical publishing house that was influential in importing French *pensée* to America (see Silverman 1988: 6; Genosko 2002: 17–18; cf. Guattari 1977 [1974], 1992, 1993; in terms of radical politics, cf. Kraus & Lotringer 2001), and as invited speakers the "usual suspects" Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard (cf. Foucault 1996j [1975]). Arthur Danto, a critically-minded American art theorist who has had his own problems to come to terms with "French theory" (see Danto 1997: 144–145, 1986), recalls:

> For some reason I was put in the same slot that first evening as Lyotard, a man who has what I think of as the *true gift of incoherence*. The rest of the French have been trying to achieve it, but he was born with it, like a perfect pitch. […] Lyotard spoke in French, and there was a table with three people whose purpose was to translate what Lyotard was saying… and they couldn't agree! Finally, they would say, "Well, we think this is what he means…" (Lotringer & Cohen 2001b: 2)

This is what he means – a desperate conclusion the translators were compelled to make in a situation in which they had to venture not only to interpret, but, in fact, to figure out what Lyotard was saying in the first place, instead of "simply" translating his words into English.

This is more than just a typical problem of lost in translation: *perhaps there was nothing to translate* (for a comprehensive overview of the problematics of translation, see, for example, Petrilli 2003; in terms of translating Nietzsche in the United States, cf. Behler 1998). In any case, the translators failed at their effort because Lyotard was already speaking in the idiom that was soon to become the very language of "French theory" (cf., for example, Bannet 1989; Rapaport 2001; Dews 2007 [1987]); that is, an ecstatic theory-language as an effect of the "post-1968 French intellectual delirium" (Weeks 2000: 7). As a consequence, it was about a real impossibility of translating, a situation which, instead of fostering genuine dialogue, ensued misunderstandings, that nevertheless – and precisely for this reason – finally resulted in the triumphant insight amongst American theorists: why bother, why merely try to translate, why not, instead, start of "doing theory" by oneself. What came out was "French theory," paradoxically, an authentically American way of theorizing by means of writing theory

in the mode of *écriture*: French thought in American English (for the impact of "French theory" on the American art world, see Cusset 2008 [2003]: 230–247).

This is the origin of the "post," the "post" that opened the way to post-theory, theory as "a kind of writing."

In other words, if, as Julian Wolfreys (1998: 36) says, "Derrida *is* deconstruction," then, in Derridean terms, as Anselm Haverkamp (1995) indicates in the title of a text collection on Derrida edited by him, *Deconstruction is/in America*.

It is in this manner that French *pensée*, in the form of American "theory," inaugurated a "theory industry" (Nealon 1993: 51) in the name of "French theory" in the American campus (see, for example, Harari 1979); an academic movement, speaking a specific "celebratory language" (Ferry & Renaut 1990 [1985]: 122), that finally resulted in the "triumph of theory" (Felperin 1985: 26–28) as the enthronement of the "post" as the sign of an entirely new mode of "critical" thinking: thinking in terms of writing, the terms of *écriture*. The message of the "post," precisely in the thorough ambiguity of all that is "post," was enticingly clear: *In this sign, thou shalt conquer*. This conquest, of course, did not happen over night, and it did not proceed without contradictions. Considering that the "French thinkers" were initially received, as Warren Montag (1988: 92) says, with "the hero-worship, the vulgar imitation, the reduction of their work to a question of style or even tone," and that they were "set up as idols to be worshipped and adored but never studied or worked on," it comes not as a surprise that in the late 1980s there was also a "growing rejection" (ibid.) of the French theorists – or, rather, what their American admirers had made of them.

All the same, during the decades following its breakthrough in the 1970s, "French theory" infiltrated American academia and turned into *lingua franca* of the American humanities (see, for example, Berman 1988: 223–276; Lentricchia 1980, 1983; Caputo 1997; van der Poel et al. 1999; Lotringer & Cohen 2001b; Cusset 2008 [2003]; in terms of political correctness, see Walton 1998: 34–43). And as a consequence, the "word from Paris," in John Sturrock's (1999 [1998]) telling expression, became the new *epistēmē*, the new theoretical regime, in the Western academic world.

What is at issue here is the politics of theory: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, "Outside the Church there is no salvation."

Thus, within the American paradigm of "theory," "we have always been French" (Kronick & Bauerlein 1995: 16). It is in this sense, as Scott Lash (1990a: 67) summarizes, that "Derrida, Foucault and other post-structural theorists are commonly called postmodernists, and they have been widely understood to be a Parisian, theoretical avant-garde." In other words, through the propagation of "French theory" on the American campus during the seventies and eighties, "Paris" turned into a master signifier, a legitimating code word, signifying a "politics of style" (cf. Faurschou 1988; Megill 1985) on the theory scene of the "post."

What is important here is that all that is "cyber" emerges from this context: the "cyber" is a phantasmatic derivation of the "post," indeed, its *translation à la* "French theory," in the mode of *écriture*, into the terms of the techno-imaginary that, in turn, is a derivation of American technological millennialism – a strand of the American utopian tradition referred to by Lotringer above (cf. Joerges 2003: 261–281; Szerszynski 2005: 172–174; Bozeman 1997; Segal 2005 [1985]). In other words, Haraway's cyborg "myth," with all its theory-political consequences, is a theoretical cross-section, or, better, a metaphoric cross-fertilization, a *mythopoetic hybrid*, of "French theory" and American utopianism, enabled by the manner of writing that is enriched by the Lyotardian gift: *the "post" is about incoherence elevated to an art form, an ability to speak in many tongues without saying anything precisely*. In other words, a linguistic preciosity has taken the place of theoretical preciseness in post-theory. Thus, where there was once theory we have now *écriture*, writing in terms of writing based on the unending linguistic potentiality of "the writerly" in the post-Barthesian sense of the term (cf. Barthes 1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174; Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Lucy 1997: 74–76), that is, the specific suggestive capacity of the "post."

What does this mean: what is it to write theory in terms of the "post"? There are, of course, innumerable answers to this question, but to avoid recounting them all, it suffices to take a paradigmatic example, just a short sample, which perfectly illuminates the *theory style* of the "post":

> Derridadaism? The illustrious fish, suspended in page or picture, is surely an exmonument or erection, J(e)(u) "angled with meditation," strangled by the graphic energies that overflow the mirror surface of this doubled and caesuraed page. (Hartman 1981: 33; cf. Haraway 1997)

This is the way Geoffrey Hartman, one of the leading figures of what are called "Yale Critics" and a pioneer of American deconstruction (see, for example, Arac et al. 1983; Con Davis & Schleifer 1985), reads, as an operation of "saving the text" (as the title of his work indicates), Derrida's *Glas*, a much discussed text in Derrida's *œuvre* (see Derrida 1990a [1974]), as Christina Howells (1999: 86) says, "one of Derrida's most perverse texts" (cf., for example, Hobson 1998; Meyer 2001). What is important here is not what Hartman says, or what his sentences are saying, neither what he "means" by what he is "saying"; the point is that texts written under the sign of the "post," *in the spirit* of the "post," beget or spawn, breed or engender, generate or propagate, procreate or reproduce (whatever one prefers) similar texts that have come to be written as *commentary* on similar texts. These texts, in turn, have created the textual universe of the "post" in which Western academic thought has, since the early 1980s, found its retreat from the horrible reality of the postmodern, *the reality of the political economy of neoliberalism*.

In this manner, *mutatis mutandis*, cyber-texts, constituting the linguistic matrix of cybersex, are textual hybrids in which what is signified emerges from the textual interconnections that manifest the logic of what I call the surrational, the logic of the cyborg.

Radical Nominalism, or, The Power of Naming

This brings us back to Haraway's "scholarly soap opera" as a postmodern "method" of "doing theory." This way of producing linguistic figuration by free-wheeling writing amounts to a play of language relaying on surprising associations, strange juxtapositions and suggestive metaphors (in a manner that resembles Surrealism but is not the same). For me, this is about what Steven D. Scott (2000) calls the "gamefulness of American postmodernism" in which "ludic oddities" (ibid.: 29–62) replace analysis and argumentation (cf. Best & Kellner 1991: 11–12; Wortham 2004: 149–151; Lyotard & Thébaud 1999 [1979]; McQuillan et al. 1999). In other words, what is at issue here is a postmodern theory style that I designate as *mythopoetic theory* as a form of linguistically mythifying theorization, theoretical activity in the mode of postmodern (in the sense of "non-innocent," "post"-mythological) *bricolage*,[74] that, no doubt, can also produce new ideas, or then again, only obfuscates critical thinking, that is, thinking as an ability to *make distinctions* – an ability that is neither possible nor needed in the world of the "post."

It is precisely in this manner that the "post" is an inexhaustible source of self-absorbed and self-mirroring theory writing which more often than not is unable to reflect itself, paradoxically, in its excessive self-reflexivity. In other words, the "post" is based on a *hermetic self-referentiality*.

This kind of writing upon writing, writing on the written, is about what Jameson (1991: 25), in his theory of postmodernism, calls "heaps of fragments"; that is, writing as a "practice" that makes use of "the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory," self-referential language games that produce theory in the form of "textuality, *écriture*, or schizophrenic writing" (ibid.: 25–26); in other words, a post-Barthesian "pleasure of the text" (cf. Barthes (1975 [1973]) in which performative writing, as both an activity and a written object, is in itself a source of an exclusive aesthetic and erotic experience: the "erotic pleasure of the text" (Lentricchia 1980: 185) as the erotic of language amounting to *the erotic of theory*. In Jameson's (1991: 28) words, this is the reason for the "euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity" (ibid.: 28) that is peculiar to theory under the sign of the "post," post-theory as a writ-

74 The terms "mythopoetical" (mythopoetic, in my discussion) and *bricolage* were originally introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his *The Savage Mind* (1966 [1962]: 16–32). *Bricolage* refers to an "ad hoc assemblage of miscellaneous materials and signifying structures" (Norris 1987: 134); that is, to a "different kind of logic," a "science of the concrete," by which the "non-literate" thinking of tribal societies responds to the world, constructing "homologies and analogies between the ordering of nature and that of society" (Hawkes 1977: 51), thus enabling mythical explanations of life. What is essential here is that *bricolage* operates by various materials at hand which manifest a classificatory system that is radically different from Western scientific logic (in terms of subculture, cf. Hebdige 1987a [1979]: 102–106). As Lévi-Strauss (1966: 17) remarks, "[l]ike *bricolage* on the technical plane, mythical reflection can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane"; this is the idea of the "mythopoetical nature of *bricolage*" (for a deconstruction of the binary opposition between nature and culture in Lévi-Strauss's conception of *bricolage*, see Derrida 1978e [1970/1966]: 285–288, 1997 [1967]: 104–105; cf. Johnson 2003: 26–28; for *bricolage* in the postmodern, see Hebdige 1988: 195; Collins 1989: 74–78; as a method for writing pop history, see Marcus 1990 [1989]).

erly manifestation of the postmodern; and finally, post-theory, in terms of the "cyber," as the way of enjoying one's becoming a cyborg in the sense of writing the body as body writing.

This is the pleasure of what Haraway (1991a: 175–176) calls "cyborg writing," a mode of writing that "resists authoritative, phallogocentric writing practices" (Olson 1995: 45; Graham 2002: 200–220). No longer the Barthesian somatics of language (see, for example, Barthes 1975, 1989c [1984]), instead, linguistic figuration in terms of the techno-imaginary is now the constitutive principle of the subject as its own object; this is the principle of cyborg writing, the idea of post-somatic fabulation as an ego-politics of theory. Liberated from the terror of the phallus, the readerly subject as a writerly subject is now free to enjoy the extraordinary delight, rapture and exaltation of "free-floating signifiers," the ecstasy of free words that have abolished the horrible monotheism of meaning under the monarchy of the phallus (in terms of the Futurists's *parole in libertà*, cf. Bohn 2002: 257–258; Foster 2004: 120–124; Poggi 2009: 62–64; Puchner 2006).

"Destroy the I in literature," Marinetti exclaims in his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (1912), "that is, all psychology" (Foster 2004: 121). The same we hear Haraway's cyborg exclaiming: destroy the subject, disrupt the self, abandon all identities. This is the *parole in libertà*, the idea of "free words," in the world of the cyborg; the idea that we encounter in the "exploration of transrational language," or *zaum*, by Russian Futurists, and again in the "experiments with optophonetic poetry" by Dadaists (Bohn 2002: 257). All these attempts to break down the syntax and let the words flow free are typical of various avantgarde movements, the politics of language constitutive of the cyborg included. "Alogical condensation and displacement" of meaning (Poggi 2009: 62) – that is the idea of avantgardist language; that is, Marinetti's principle: "Verbal images, torn from the connective tissue of language, deprived of adjectives, adverbs, and other mediating things, would be juxtaposed in order to create *startling new analogies*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. von Hallberg 1996: 83–122). In terms of the "post," this is the coming into being of the cyborg.

In general, we do not expect that post-theorists say something, the less that they mean what they say, or say what they mean; we are just happy to hear language speaking, excited about experiencing strange impressions and associations which words that are set free are able to suggest: we are allured by the odd arabesques effected by the linguistic figuration in terms of the "post."

In this manner, post-theory is about a world in which linguistic figuration, as a mode of textuality in which epistemology and ontology have imploded into one another, constitutes the premise of all being, of all things that exist. Post-theory is about a politics of language as a politics of words. It is about a world in which *in the beginning was the word* (Haraway 1991e [1981]: 71).

What does this mean? It is appropriate to illuminate the problem – if there is any problem at all – with a couple of examples.

To begin with, a short passage from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, quoted also by Haraway (ibid.).

> "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means exactly what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."
>
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all." (Carroll 1994b [1872]: 100; cf. Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 74–93; Lecercle 1994: 134–164)

Evidently, there are as many things in the world as there are words we can use to name them. In the world of words, as Lacan (1977e [1966/1953]: 81) says, we have "the sovereign freedom displayed by Humpty Dumpty when he reminds Alice that after all he is the master of the signifier, even if he isn't the master of the signified in which his being took on its form." As a logical conclusion: *what you say is what you get*. In other words, you name a thing and you have it.

This kind of naming as a mode of linguistic figuration that I call *radical nominalism* turns into a strong constructionism in terms of the "post" (cf. Haraway 1991g [1988]: 183–188, 1997: 119–121). What does this mean? While, according to nominalism, general or abstract words do not stand for objectively existing entities, and accordingly, universals are no more than names assigned to them (see, for example, Tooley 1999), according to the position of radical nominalism, words are not representations of the things they name, but they *produce* the things by naming them (in terms of "how to do things with words," cf. Austin 1975 [1962]); for a philosophical discussion of naming in relation to believing, cf. Fitch 1987). And while, for Plato, ideas are the only real things, and the things we perceive by our senses are merely ephemeral reflections of them (see, for example, Keiper et al. 1997), in radical nominalism, linguistic figures have taken the place of Platonic ideas, not as ideal entities, but as "material" beings in their linguistic materiality; that is, in Haraway's (1997: 129–130) words, as "material-semiotic" objects (cf. Olsen & Markussen 2006: 174–182).

In this sense, in radical nominalism, *matters matter materially;* or, as Haraway (1997: 11) says, "[f]igurations are *performative images* that can be inhabited" (emphasis mine); as such, they have "the tropic quality of all material-semiotic processes, especially in technoscience" (ibid.).

This is the idea of what Haraway calls "mimetic critical method" that, for her, implies "tracing" the "circulations of Christian realism in the flesh of technoscience" (ibid.: 179); a postmodern method that brings to mind Salvador Dalí's "paranoiac-critical activity" referred to by André Breton (1996 [1934]: 416) in his essay "What is Surrealism" as a "[s]pontaneous method of '*irrational knowledge*,' based on the critical and systematic objectification of delirious associations and interpretations" (for a contextualization, see Breton 1972b [1962], 1978b; Dalí 1998; Rapaport 1994: 47–49; Mendelson 2003: 162–175; Rabaté 2003: 18; for Breton read as "the poet of unreason" in terms of "a literature of knowledge," see

Foucault 1996a [1966]). Likewise, it is in this manner that, in general, things that are "cyber" are, in Haraway's (1997: 11) words, "simultaneously literal and figurative" (cf. Wajcman 2004: 85–101; Keller 1995); that is, they are not just abstract concepts or terms (or fictions, fantasies or mythical creatures); rather, they are really existing things, not as such, but by the force of the (de)nomination, the "cyber," that calls them into being. In the same sense, the "cyborg" is not merely a signifier, but it is the signified that comes to be engendered by the process of signification that signifies it: *the cyborg calls into being the being that it names*, a "being" that exists in the virtual reality of language effected by the "cyber."

In general, what I call the virtual reality of language is constitutive of all that is "post": things that have been called into being exist in the linguistic virtuality of post-theory; a virtuality that is "real" in terms of the "post." This is what I designate as the *metaphysics of the object*: in the discursive constellation of post-theory, objects have a post-existential existence, an epistemo-ontological mode of being, a phantom existence that is predicated upon self-referential metaphoricality.

In terms of the "post," speech acts have thus taken on a divine power: they have the ability to create things just by naming them (cf. Genenis 1–2). In this manner, in the discursive universe of the "post," it is along with the naming that things come into the world in the first place; and the other way round: *without words the world is empty*.[75] However, whether this kind of naming makes sense or not is another matter.

Why Is It that "Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously"?

But, in fact, what does it actually mean *to make sense*? In the postmodern, it is something specific, as Jameson points out quoting a poem by Bob Perelman with the title *China* (1978) that, according to Jameson's (1991: 28) reading, illustrates "schizophrenic fragmentation" that is precisely a constitutive feature of postmodernism (here, appropriately, only a fragment).

> We live on the third world from the sun. Number three. Nobody tells us what to do.
>
> The people who taught us to count were being very kind. It's always time to leave.
>
> If it rains, you either have your umbrella or you don't. The wind blows your hat off.

75 This productive relationship between words and things, that is, the idea that words *bring about* things, of course, is deeply inscribed into the Western tradition. Not only that *in the beginning was the word* (Haraway 1991e [1981]: 71), or, as in the *Lutherbibel*, *Im Anfang war das Wort* (Johannes I, 1–5), but it is also the act of *naming* that brings order into the world: *Und der Mensch gab einem jeden Vieh und Vogel unter dem Himmel und Tier auf dem Felde seinen Namen* (Mose 2, 20); that is, as it is explained in the commentary: *Indem der Mensch den Tieren den Namen gibt, ordnet er sie in seine Welt ein und übt ein Stück seiner Herrschaft aus* (*Stuttgarter Erklärungsbibel*, 1992: 11). As a Catholic, this is also the "method" used by Haraway; in Haraway's (2000a: 24) words, it is about her "Catholic sacramentalism," the "join between the figurative and the factual that I love." "My deep formation in Catholic symbolism and sacramentalism – doctrines of incarnation and transsubstantiation – were all intensely physical": "I grew up very much inside *an elaborate symbolic figural narrative world where notions of sign and flesh were profoundly tied together*" (ibid.: 86; emphasis mine).

> The sun rises also.
> I'd rather the stars didn't describe us to each other; I'd rather we do it for ourselves.
> Run in front of your shadow.
> A sister who points to the sky at least once a decade is a good sister.
> The landscape is motorized.
> The train takes you where it goes.
> Bridges among water.
> Folks straggling along vast stretches of concrete, heading into the plane.
> Don't forget what your hat and shoes will look like when you are nowhere to be found.
> Even the words floating in air make blue shadows.
> If it tastes good we eat it.
> The leaves are falling. Point things out.
> Pick up the right things. […]
>
> (Jameson 1991: 28–29; cf. von Hallberg 1996: 115–119)

To say that this is nonsense, would be, of course, absolutely nonsense; it is precisely nonsense that makes sense here. In the realm of the poetic, sense and nonsense are not opposites; they are aspects of signification that enable meaning.

In terms of the poetic, what is nonsense can perfectly make sense without making sense in some ordinary sense (cf. Champigny 1986; Tigges 1988; Lecercle 1994; Menninghaus 1995; Hiebert 2012). There are levels of meaning that are not reducible to a literary sense: all signification is about ambiguities, and there are, in contrast to William Empson (1961 [1930]), evidently more of them than just "seven types." This is the licence of art, and, of course, also that of philosophy and theory (cf. Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 44–46; Graff 1995 [1990]: 164–165; Levine 1988 [1985]) – as well as also being the licence of intellectual gibberish. But the problem, indeed, is that in terms of the "post" there is no way of making a difference that makes a difference: *what you write is what you get* – that is the only thing that is certain in the world of the "post" (if, in terms of the "post," there are any certainties at all), this is the only thing that counts: there is no world without words; in the world of the "post," words are the substance the world is made of.

No, this is not necessarily the whole truth about "cyborg science," but the point is that the "post" as the very condition of possibility of the "cyber," including the cyborg, excludes, by its very logic, the possibility to make *distinctions*, differences that are intelligible *as differences*. In the world of the cyborg, everything is possible: *Even the words floating in air make blue shadows.* Or, as Haraway (1991a: 153) says, "[m]odern machinery is an irreverent upstart god, mocking the Father's ubiquity and spirituality" – a statement that makes perfectly sense in the world of the "post."

What Haraway says is exactly the point Noam Chomsky made in *Syntactic Structures* (1957), his pioneering enquiry into the logic of grammar (for the context and meaning of Chomsky's innovation in linguistics, see, for example, Harris 1995: 35–73). One of his ideas was that the "notion 'grammatical' cannot be identified with 'meaningful' or 'significant' in any semantic sense" (Chomsky 1957: 15). To show this, Chomsky constructed two sentences that were "equally *nonsensical*," but, as he claimed, "any speaker of English will recognize that only the former is *grammatical*" (ibid.; emphasis mine):

(1) Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
(2) Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.

With these (and some other) randomly constructed examples Chomsky intended to prove that a "semantically based definition of 'grammaticalness' will be futile" (ibid.; in terms of information theory, cf. Shannon 1948: 384–389); in other words, a sentence (like the first example) can be grammatically correct, but, according to Chomsky, nevertheless nonsensical (to emphasize, this is not my position); and a grammatically incorrect sentence cannot make sense at all (like the second sentence; cf. Derrida 1984e [1972/1971]: 318–319).

In my reading of Chomsky, while grammar is a categorical precondition of the intelligibility of a sentence, it has nothing to do with semantics: a nonsensical sentence *can* make sense completely regardless of whether it makes sense or not: in language, there are things that are there entirely independently of their existence in terms of semantics: we do not need to encounter centaurs, cyclops and cyborgs in "real life" in order to discuss intelligibly of their similarities and differences (cf. Haraway 1991a: 180; Giannachi 2004: 43–46; Armitt 2005: 51–52; Sawday 1999; Grenville 2001b; Marković 2005; for the idea of monstrosity in early modern thought, see Knoppers & Landes 2004; in terms of the "Frankenstein" figure and creation, see Bann 1994). In other words, a language-external referent is not necessary for language to make sense; what counts is syntactics. That is, the meaning, the syntactic structure and the grammatical logicality of an utterance are different things, not reducible to one another (in terms of the problem concerning the statement "The Morning Star is the Evening Star" thematized by Frege, cf. Miller 2007 [1998]: 27–31, 75–77).[76]

This is the politics of words that Humpty Dumpty practices against Alice's objections (for the "Humpty-Dumpty theory of language," cf., for example,

76 I am fully aware of the complexity of this problematics, only alluded here. As Derrida (1973 [1967]: 91–92), discussing the concepts of *Widersinnigkeit* and *Sinnlosigkeit* in Husserl, says: "We know that pure logical grammar depends entirely on the distinction between *Widersinnigkeit* and *Sinnlosigkeit*. If it obeys certain rules, an expression may be *widersinning* (contradictory, false, absurd according to a certain kind of absurdity) without ceasing to have an intelligible sense that permits normal speech to occur, without becoming nonsense (*Unsinn*). It may have no possible object for empirical reasons (a golden mountain) or for *a priori* reasons (a square circle) without ceasing to have an intelligible sense, without being *sinnlos*. The absence of an object (*Gegenstandslosigkeit*) is hence not the absence of meaning (*Bedeutungslosigkeit*). Pure logical grammar, then, excludes from normal discourse only what is nonsense in the sense of *Unsinn* ("Abracadabra," "Green is where")." In these terms, *Unsinn*, according to Derrida, equals "*the ungrammaticalness of nonsense*" (ibid.: 92; emphasis mine).

Fitch 1987: 9–10; Nelson 2002: 217–220, 224; in terms of philosophical reflection, cf. Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 80–92). This is the politics of language in the world of the cyborg. *Language can make sense without making sense.* This is the idea of post-theory: this is the world of cybersex. Accordingly, the intelligibility of cybersex is not a question of sense as a question of meaning, but an issue of *signification* as a *textual effect* of post-Kristevan *signifiance* (cf. Kristeva 1984 [1974]: 16–26, 99–105, 145–147, 1998a [1973]: 134, 173–174, 1980 [1969]; Polan 1986: 59; Beardsworth 2004: 40–48), a writerly process engendering a surplus of signification in, through and by a self-multiplying proliferation of "free-floating signifiers" regardless of whether they make sense or not.

We also encounter the same idea in Jameson's (1988b [1975]: 124–126, 1988i [1983]: 71–73, 1988h [1984]: 200) conception of postmodernism in which schizophrenia is the prevailing logic of signification; a world ruled by the spirit of the postmodern in which schizophrenia, in terms of "the ideology of the text," has become a "whole ethical and political program" (Jameson 1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 61), finally amounting to "the glorification of schizophrenia" and "the schizophrenic as 'the true hero of desire'" (ibid.: 70; cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 273–382; Goodchild 1996: 73–105; Lacan 1977c [1966/1955–1956]). What is at issue in Jameson is the idea of the "ultimate limits" of the "modernistic or textual position" (Jameson 1988k: 70), limits that, in fact, are disrupted and thus transgressed by Deleuze and Guattari in their unlimited, unbridled and extravagant textual flow manifesting the affective economy of capitalism, in the sense of what Jameson (1991) calls "the cultural logic of late capitalism" as the logic of postmodernism. According to Jameson, it is from this position that:

> Deleuze and Guattari essentially follow Lacan's description of schizophrenia as a disease of language in which connections have broken down: continuity in speech, for Lacan, is a function of what he calls "the slippage of signifieds" (*le glissement des signifies*), in other words, that relative semantic flux that allows us to disconnect a meaning from one word, or signifier, and attach it to its synonym. For Lacan, indeed, the world of the schizophrenic is quite the opposite of meaningless: if anything, it is too meaningful; each instant, like each signifier, is a closed and full meaning in itself, from which it becomes increasingly difficult to lay a bridge to the subsequent moment of time. (Jameson 1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 70)[77]

77 As suggesting (in the strong sense of the word) as Jameson's understanding of, as he says, "Lacan's account of schizophrenia" as an "aesthetic model" of postmodernism is, it should be noticed, however, that Lacan's discussion of the case of Daniel Paul Schreber, a German high-ranking judge – a case discussed before Lacan by Freud (1990d [1911]) – that figures in the background of Jameson's idea, in fact, pertains not to schizophrenia but *paranoia*, a form of psychosis characterized principally by delusions. Furthermore, Freud's analysis of Schreber's case is based not on a first-hand analytic experience of Schreber in person but on his written memoirs (see Schreber 2003 [1903]), that is, a second-hand source, as such, though, an authentic report in which Schreber analyses his psychosis in a highly idiosyncratic, phantasmatic language. In this sense, if Freud's discussion in itself moves on a literary meta-level, Lacan's (1977c [1966/1955–1956]) discussion is a *meta-linguistic*, *meta-literary* elaboration of Schreber's case interpreted by Freud in his own theory-language. Finally, more than Lacan himself, it seems to be the Lacan read by Althusser as well as Deleuze and Guattari's "Lacanism" that is Jameson's inspiration in his theory of schizophrenia as the model of postmodernism (see Althusser 1971 [1970]; cf. Jameson 1988h [1984]: 193–194, 1988b [1975]: 123–128, 1991: 51–53, 345–346).

Postmodernism, then, in Jamesonian terms, is about this kind of fragmentation of language, experience and culture; a fragmentation in which separate and singular moments take on an overwhelming meaning in themselves; a "meaning" that has its own logic beyond the conventional logic of coherence, beyond any idea of causality, consecution and mutual relatedness; that is, a moment of signification that takes place in the post-logical domain of asymmetry: mutual relations between signifiers and signifieds as well as between words and things are replaced by incongruent connections in which signification comes into being as a result of contingent encounters between linguistic figures and figurations that function by the force of their tropicity, entirely regardless of the semantic dimension.

We recall the sentence above: "If it rains, you either have your umbrella or you don't." In its perfect clarity, this sentence has absolutely more of a Wittgensteinian than a Heideggerian quality; as Ludwig Wittgenstein (1995b [1922]: 9, 85) says in his unambiguous manner: *Was sich überhaupt sagen läßt, läßt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muß man schweigen*, "What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein 2002 [1922]: 27, 189; cf. Kroß 1998: 144–150). Furthermore, this umbrella sentence, taken alone, in fact, has nothing enigmatic in its apparent enigmaticality: it is a statement that can be made by anyone who has a clear head. Its plain clarity, however, is deceptive: what is this "if," what does it have to do with the conclusion that follows it? This is a problem not so much of syntax as of semantics: the sentence constructs between the premise and the conclusion a pseudo-certainty, and, as a result, the sentence appears as a triumph of logical thinking – just like in the world of post-theory.

3.2.2 The "Cyber": The Sense of Significant Nonsense

Something different happens in another "umbrella-sentence," a sentence that is actually an originary *locus classicus* of Surrealism: the Sixth Canto of Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (1870), with its highly suggestive literary vision condensed into few words: *Beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie*, "beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table" (Spector 1997: 211; cf. Foucault 1989 [1966]: xv–xvi; in the poetic tradition from Baudelaire to Breton and beyond, cf. Browder 1967: 56; Matthews 1976: 212; Hiddleston 1987: 69; Foucault 1996a [1966]). This is, as Jack J. Spector (1997: 36) says, an "eroticized umbrella" (cf. Adamowicz 1998: 188–190; Bohn 2002: 155–171; Orban 1997). Yes, this is my impression, too. But what is it exactly that constitutes not only the umbrella, but the whole statement, as *erotic*: what is the eroticism, or, plainly, *the* erotic, in this observation? Does it have something to do with the syntactics or the semantics of the sentence? Or is it something different altogether, manifesting an entirely different register of language?

My thesis – a thesis traversing the whole study at hand – is that the kind of erotic associations evoked, here for example, by Lautréamont's sentence are, instead of reducing them to some monocausal explanation or to the literal meaning of words, to be understood *both* in the light of "the sexual" as that enigmatic and evocative signifier which is an enigma in itself, that is, a conceptually, or, rather, metaphorically, ambiguous term, *a rebus without any resolution* (why is this or that "exciting"? why can so many, *so fundamentally different*, things be sexually arousing? or, what was *das Sexuelle* that fascinated Freud? etc.; see, for example, Quindeau & Sigusch 2005), *and*, as or even more importantly, in the light of the erotic (which, in itself, is as enigmatic as the sexual), a figure of language that ensues from the *incessant movement of desire* intrinsic to language in general (cf., for example, Coward & Ellis 1977: 103–105, 119–121, 141–150; Norris 1987: 145; Graybeal 1990: 14–26, 58–64, Butler 1999b [1987]): 12–19; Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1984 [1974]; Barthes 1989 [1984]).

That is, all signification is dependent on free-flowing associations made possible by the non-predictable connections between signifiers, connections that emerge from the unconscious, very innovatively analysed by Freud in his *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* (Freud 1961 [1905]) – an excellent, highly evocative inquiry that is one of the initial inspirations of the study at hand.

From Surrealism to the World of the Surrational

It is evident that *the erotic is somehow related to the playful and the jocular, and vice versa;* although, this, of course, is only one aspect of the issue that I am considering here.

These conceptual relationships, however, constitute just the first step towards the explanation of the enigmatic quality of all that is *sexual*; a quality of sensations and affections the source of which, in a yet inexplicable manner, is both in culture and the carnality of the human body in their mutual relations; which, of course, is not at all the same as the body as a *biological organism*: the human body is a product of culture, not of biology; and it is in this sense that we live in a "somatic society" (see, Turner 1992b, 1997 [1984]; cf. Frank 1990, 1991; Featherstone et al. 1991; Shilling 1993, 2005; Falk 1994; Featherstone 2000; in terms of the libidinal, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]). As a corollary, in the sexual, there is nothing natural; all that is sexual is *cultural*.

This is also the connection between the sexual and the erotic: without the element of the erotic (which is specific to humans in contrast to animals, and, perhaps, in difference to machines – although, as we have already seen and will see more in the course of the study at hand, in terms of the "cyber," machines *are* erotic entities) the formation of the sexual into various forms of desires and pleasures that are – vaguely and confusingly – designated as "sexuality" and "sex" would not be intelligible. And if this would not be complex enough, all

this is somehow related to the playful and the jocular – very well understood by Freud.[78]

In the light of Lautréamont's sentence, all that is "post" embraces a linguistic realm in which all kinds of "sewing machines" and "umbrellas" continuously experience "chance encounters" on ever-new "dissecting tables": assemblages of signifiers, figures of language, linguistic figurations that create varying configurations like in a kaleidoscope, or better, a linguistic random generator producing contingent configurations of signifiers – a linguistic random generator that, in fact, is the theory-machine of the "post": you put in some occasionally chosen signifiers and – like in the Freudian world of *das Unbewußte* or in the Lacanian realm of the *imaginaire* – what you get is theory; a process similar to the procedure in which you put a coin into a vending machine and through a miraculous metamorphosis it turns into a cup of coffee.

It is in this way that everything is possible in language: signification has no limits since *signifiers do not recognize any logic* – except the logic of *différance*, the enigmatic logic of dissemination and supplementation.

The limitlessness of signification is shown by Derrida (1979 [1978]: 123–143) in yet another "umbrella-sentence," *J'ai oublié mon parapluie*, in his extensive – and as such, also exhausting, frustrating and irritating – reading of an incidental scribble from the year 1881 in Nietzsche's (1973b [1880–1882]: 485) notebook, *ich habe meinen Regenschirm vergessen*, "I have forgotten my umbrella" (cf. Schrift 1988: 207–208, 1990: 97, 106–110; Gadamer 1987 [1984]: 451; Strong 1989: 65–66; Carr 1992: 27–28; Ulmer 1994: 238–239; Davis 2010: 31–33).[79] What

78 Looking just at some of the principal texts Freud wrote in the first decade of the twentieth century, one has an excellent overview how the "erotic," the "sexual" and all that contributes to the *Witz* in the Freudian sense constitute a complex matrix of interrelations that, in my reading, functions as the source of what I call the "enigma of the sexual" within the cultural forms of "sexuality" and "sex": *Traumdeutung* (1900), *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (1901), *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905), *Bruchstück einer Hysterie-Analyse* (1905), *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (1905), "Zur sexuellen Aufklärung der Kinder" (1907), "Über infantile Sexualtheorien" (1908), "Die 'kulturelle' Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität" (1908), "Charakter und Analerotik" (1908), "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren" (1909), "Analyse der Phobie eines fünfjährigen Knaben" (1909), "Bemerkungen über einen Fall von Zwangsneurose" (1909) and "Über den Gegensinn der Urworte" (1910). It is in this Freudian context that language, desire and the unconscious constitute a dense network of mutual references; a *cultural intertext* that is a necessary, an *intrinsic*, precondition of all that is "post" in the context of the "postmodern." This is also what makes the "Derridean" in Derrida.

79 On the same page there are several other incidental entries which, of course, should be taken into account in order to understand the meaning of Nietzsche's *Regenschirm*: "Es genügen außerordentlich kleine Veränderungen der Wertschätzung, um ganz ungeheuer verschiedene Werthbilder zu bekommen," "Wir sind nicht die Reste und Überbleibsel der Menschheit (wie wir dies gewiß von der organisch werdenden Welt sind) Vieles Neue kann von uns noch ausgehen, was den Charakter der Menschheit verändert," "Wer erfindet uns das tragische Ballet mit Musik? Besonders nöthig bei Völkern, die nicht singen können und die sich durch die dramatische Musik die Kehlen gebrochen haben!," "'ich habe meinen Regenschirm vergessen'" (notice the quotation marks in the orginal), "Ursache und Wirkung. Wir verstehen darunter im Grunde eben das, was wir denken, wenn wir uns selber als Ursache eines Schlages usw. denken. 'Ich will' ist Voraussetzung, eigentlich ist es der Glaube an eine magisch wirkende Kraft, dieser Glaube an Ursache und Wirkung – der Glaube, daß alle Ursachen so persönlich-wollend sind, wie der Mensch. Kurz, dieser Satz a priori ist ein Stück Urmythologie – nichts mehr!," "Wir dürfen nicht wider den Strich der Vernunft der Menschheit entwickeln, aber es ist auch dafür gesorgt, daß wir es nicht können." (Nietzsche 1973b [1880–1882]: 485) To understand *all this* one would need a post-Derridean reading, a contexualizing reading in which Nietzsche's *Regenschirm* would be related to Nietzsche's whole *oeuvre*, but even then we would never know what Nietzsche really thought.

Derrida makes of these words – or, to be precise, *signifiers* – is, as Christopher Norris (1982: 71) says, a "giddy brink of absurdity," though at the same time, an "ingenious play with possible 'meanings' of this fragment," although Derrida finally concludes that "its context is irretrievable and its meaning therefore a total enigma." For Derrida, Nietzsche's "sentence" is "neither more nor less 'significant' than any other passage of Nietzsche's writing" (ibid.). "Derrida deploys every possible means of liberating Nietzsche's stylistic energies, allowing his text to 'disseminate' sense beyond all the bounds of conceptual closure"; thus, Derrida's "strategy is often wildly at odds with Nietzsche's manifest meaning" (ibid.; cf. Lentricchia 1980: 26–58, 161–207, 310–342, 1983: 40–72; Cafard 2004: 99–101; de Man 1979; Ulmer 1989b [1983]) – a "manifest meaning" which, in fact, manifests only its unending "meanings" that are just ever more signifiers signifying ever-new signifieds, meaningless meanings included.

For me, this is precisely the point of all that is "post": whatever you say under the sign of the "post" does not necessarily mean anything; instead, writing in the name of the "post" *signifies*, signifies in excess, also when it does not make sense at all. The "post" is a *carte blanche* just for this kind of "dissemination" of sense – or, then again, of nonsense *as a mode of sense* – to which Norris refers in his discussion on Derrida. In other words, it is, indeed, as Freud (1961 [1905]: 34) says, *Worte sind ein plastisches Material, mit dem sich allerlei anfangen läßt*; what Freud calls *Witz* is inscribed in language: jocularity is constitutive of language (cf. Flieger 1991; in contrast to the comic, see Bergson 2000 [1899/1900]), and, precisely in this sense, the non-originary origin of post-theory.

That is, *in the world of the "post," we are, in the final analysis, in a Freudian universe*, a realm of the imaginary in which linguistic figures follow the logic of the unconscious (cf. Lacan 1998 [1973]: 20, 149, 203; Bowie 1991: 44–87; Dor 1998 [1985]).

In this respect, to understand the interminable self-movement of language, the logic of supplementation (Derrida 1997: 145–161), the endless possibilities of substitution and addition, intrinsic to language, in a word, Derridean never-ending "dissemination" (see Derrida 1981b [1972/1969]), constitutive of the linguistic of language, still another umbrella may bring, though not the final insight (there is nothing "final" in the world of the "post"), but, perhaps, more light in the issue.

Discussing Oliver Sack's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Jacqueline Rose (1988) first pays attention to its cover on which there is to be seen a reproduction of one of René Magritte's best-known paintings, "The Betrayal of Images"; a picture of a bowler hat held in the centre of the frame. But not only that, there is also added a caption *Ceci est ma femme* in graphics bringing to mind another of Magritte's paintings, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe"; a picture that appears also on the cover of Foucault's (1983c [1973]) discussion on Magritte, *This Is Not a Pipe*, quoting the caption in Magritte's painting: *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.

To come to Sack's idea of the "man who mistook his wife for a hat" and its meaning for Rose, it is appropriate to take a short detour via Foucault. In the chapter in his book on Magritte, aptly entitled "Burrowing Words," Foucault quotes one of Magritte's reflections: "Between words and objects one can create new relations and specify characteristics of language and objects generally ignored in everyday life" (ibid.: 38). And then comes the point, again in Magritte's words (like the first quote, originally included in a series of Magritte's drawings in the twelfth issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, as Foucault remarks):

> Sometimes the name of an object takes the place of an image. A word can take the place of an object in reality. An image can take the place of a word in a proposition. (ibid.)

This brings us back to Rose's discussion on Sacks's psychiatric case of "the man who mistook his wife for a hat." What is at issue here is the conflation of words and things (which, of course, is very usual in everyday situations, and which is not only a basis for ordinary misunderstandings, but, more fundamentally, one of the preconditions of ideological delusions). In such cases, as Rose (1988: 238) points out in psychiatric terms, what is "most disturbing about certain right-hemisphere disorders is that the patient not only loses her or his reality but *does not know it*." That is, in such disorders, the patient is not able to account for her or his own experience: what breaks down is "the narrative function itself" (ibid.). If this function, elementary to the coherence of the self, is "either missing, frozen in time, or else acted out in a type of wild and meaningless superabundance," what ensues is, in Sacks's words, an "unending joke," "narrational frenzy" or "confabulatory genius" as in one of Sacks's cases in which a patient had "literally to make himself (and his world) up" (ibid.); that is, to construct his very existence by means of excessive fabulation, a ludic language engendering private meanings, and thus constructing a "self" (cf. Haraway 1997).

Now, what has this to do with the umbrella? The title of Sacks's psychiatric case studies is, for Rose, "strangely reminiscent" of a "famous joke," included in Freud's (1961 [1905]) analysis of *Witz* as an expression of *das Unbewußte*, that "exchanges the woman for the paraphernalia of everyday life":

> "A wife is like an umbrella. Sooner or later one takes a cab" appears in Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* as an example of the conceptual joke that works through allusion by omission [that is, in Freud's words]: "a bewildering and apparently impossible simile, which however, as we now see, is not in itself a joke; further an allusion (a cab is a public vehicle); and, as its most powerful technical method, an omission which increases the unintelligibility." As with the Sacks title, the starting point is one of bewilderment, but this time the joke merely *postpones* the intelligibility (it is this, finally, which makes it a real joke). Simile is opposed to metaphor (a wife *like* an umbrella, wife *for* hat), comparison rather than substitution, the joke is baffling but *tendentious*. It plays

> on that moment of seeming nonsense as part of a knowing intent. (Rose 1988: 238–239)[80]

In the language of the "post," umbrella *is* umbrella; it is not a simile ("a wife *like* an umbrella"), neither, in fact, a metaphor ("wife *for* hat"), rather, it is a word *as* a thing *sui generis*, in its own right; a "thing" that exists in the virtual reality of language, the language of theory. This is because language in general has the ability to express not only things that are unspeakable (like sexuality *as such* in Freud's time), but, paradoxically, things that are *unsayable*, beyond words ("sex" in terms of the "cyber," "the sexual" in general) (cf. Budick & Iser 1996). It is for this reason that, in the world of the "post," nonsense makes sense *as* nonsense, even, as Rose above says, in a "wild and meaningless superabundance," as an "unending joke," "narrational frenzy," in the manner of a "confabulatory genius." And precisely for the same reason, *an umbrella is an umbrella in post-theory*.

In this context, however, it is quite easy to forget that *manchmal ist eine Zigarre nur eine Zigarre*, "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar," as Freud is reported to have said about the problem of the symbolic (Ottmann 2009: 274).

The Rationalization of the Imaginary

Be that as it may, what is important here, though, is that in terms of the umbrellas discussed above, post-theory is an *a*-logocentric mode of discourse, a language that is not oriented "toward an order of meaning – thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word – conceived as existing in itself, as foundation" (Culler 1982: 92), but a mode of linguistic figuration that is premised upon the *word-ness* of words, on the non-mimetic, non-representational signification of signifiers (cf. Rodowick 1988: 23–28; Sarup 1993 [1988]: 10–11; Thrift 2007; for paradigmatic examples, see Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]). As such, post-theory is a non-foundational mode of linguistic foundationalism generated by writerly figuration, a post-Derridean theory style operating with a manner of writing which "consists, not of signs, but of signifiers alone" (Milner 1991: 74). In post-theory, for this reason, nothing is impossible because everything is virtual: as a postmodern mode of *écriture*, post-theory takes place in the virtual reality of language.

80 This, as Rose (1988: 239) remarks, is a "cynical joke that mocks the institution of marriage" (ibid.); in other words, a *Herrenwitz*, as typical of Freud's time as today. But it is precisely the cynicism that is the point; as Freud (1961 [1905]: 121) says: "es sind *zynische* Witze, was sie verhüllen, sind *Zynismen*"; that is, a joke is a way to express cynicality in a legitime, socially accepted manner; and for this reason, the "bewildering" simile "is not in itself a joke." What is here, seen historically, the point is sexuality; as Freud says referring to cynical jokes as a way to attack prevailing morality (*Moralvorschriften*) related to marriage: "Kein Anspruch ist ja persönlicher als der auf sexuelle Freiheit, und nirgends hat die Kultur eine stärkere Unterdrückung zu üben als auf dem Gebiete der Sexualität" (ibid.: 122). It is precisely in this sense that what makes the point of this specific joke is that "a cab is a public vehicle," in Freud's original text: "Komfortabel = öffentliches Fuhrwerk" (ibid.); that is, a public woman *is* a public vehicle in the same manner as a wife is an umbrella that does not give a man protection, cover, shelter and refuge against the stormy stirrings of sexual lust, the seductions of the flesh.

Accordingly, it is not difficult to understand that post-theory is a libidinal language, and, as such, a Lacanian language (see Lacan 1977b [1966]; Bowie 1991: 69–70, 198–200; for a thorough discussion, see Fink 1997 [1995]; cf. Ragland-Sullivan 1986), a language of the imaginary, and, thus, a language of desire: a desire that is linguistic in its language-immanence.

In this sense, similarly to the "post," the "cyber" *re*-presents nothing: the "cyber" *signifies*, it suggests just because it is effected by the linguistic matrix of the "post."

Before contemporary theory-hysteria in terms of the "post" it was, perhaps, the Surrealists who most clearly understood both the artistic and erotic possibilities of language, expressly in the sense of linguistic juxtapositions that were seemingly nonsensical, but precisely as such in an enigmatic manner significant and even seducing. To write in a style in which words apparently refer to everyday things in their familiar surroundings, but signify, in fact, the presence of another reality – that was, for example, for André Breton an enticing challenge, an opportunity to exceed the limits of the repressive rationality of all that was taken as "normal." *Écriture automatique* – that was the key to the unconscious of language opening up a world that made sense without clear, unambiguous meaning (see Breton 1972a [1924]: 36–37; cf., for example, Browder 1967: 72–88; Chénieux-Gendron 1990 [1984]: 47–60; Bürger 1996 [1971]: 74–83; in Lacanian terms, cf. Roudinesco 1990 [1986]: 13–27).

The constitutive experience behind the idea of "automatic writing" was what Breton, in his *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), called "psychic automatism," in fact, the *differentia specifica* of Surrealism; according to Breton's "scientific" definition:

Fig. 28. André Breton's self-portrait, *Automatic Writing*, 1938. According to Rosalind E. Krauss (1985b [1981]: 102): "Breton's self-portrait, fabricated from various photographic elements, is not only an example of photomontage – a process distinct from combination printing insofar as the term refers, for the most part, to the cutting up and reassembling of already printed material – but it is also an instance of construction *en abyme*. It is the microscope as representative of a lensed instrument that places within the field of the representation another representation that reduplicates an aspect of the first, namely the photographic process by which the parts were originally made."

Breton's "own association of these two mechanical means of registration occurs as early as 1920, when he declared that 'automatic writing, which appeared at the end of the 19th century, is a true photography of thought'" (ibid.: 103). What is important in Breton's self-portrait is not only the technical automatism of photography, but "the concept of writing itself" (ibid.). That is, in addition to the photographic visuality, "symbolized as heightened and intensified by the presence of the microscope," essential to Breton's conception of "automatic writing" is "the notion of *écriture* pictured inside this work through the very fabric of the image's making, that is, through the medium of montage" (ibid.; cf. Adamowicz 1998: 130–134, 150–158).

In a comparable manner, the post-literary linguistic figuration constitutive of post-theory follows the logic of text-intrinsic self-reflection as the text-immanent desire, the writerly libido, of "the textual" that is always already an effect of the "writing itself," a product of its writerly automatism based on the unconscious of the "post" (cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]; with regard to Derrida, cf. Brannigan 1998: 55–65).

> SURREALISM, *n*. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern. (Breton 1972a [1924]: 26)[81]

Automatic writing was able to show that associations have a sense that is beyond the obvious; a sense that has its own logic, in my terms: the logic of *the linguistic* of language. Breton himself was struck by his observation that "phrases which come to mind on the verge of sleep do so in a 'perfectly correct syntax'" (Nicholls 1995: 283); an observation that echoes Freud's (1987d [1900], 1986d [1915–1917]) conception of the unconscious. For Breton, the "persistence of grammatical structure" in the state between sleep and wakefulness pointed up the "way in which 'consciousness and reason collaborate with chance and the unconscious'" (ibid.; cf. Krauss 1993: 172–178; Cohen 1995 [1993]: 135–153).[82] This was Breton's approach also in his surrealist novel *Les Champs magnétiques* (*The Magnetic Fields*), written together with Philippe Soupault (1920). Let us consider a short passage:

> The corridors of the grand hotels are unfrequented and cigar-smoke keeps itself dark. A man descends the stairs of sleep and notices that it is raining: the window-panes are white. A dog is known to be resting near him. All obstacles are present. There is a pink cup, an order given and the men-servants turn round without haste. A buzzing denotes this hurried departure. Who can be running in so leisurely a way? Names lose their faces. The street is no more than an abandoned track. (Breton & Soupault 1985 [1920]: 79; cf. Nicholls 1995: 283)

In Breton and Soupault's surrealist world, we have the same enigmatic incoherence as in schizophrenic writing in Jameson's sense. That is, signifiers are here set free from the logic of ordinary language: they constitute a language

81 Because of the import of Breton's definition not only for Surrealism, but, by extension, for the postmodern in the sense of what I call the surrational it is appropriate to render it in its French original: "Surréalisme, n. m. Automatisme psychique pur, par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale. […] Le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d'associations négligées jusqu'à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée. Il tend à ruiner définitivement tous les autres mécanismes psychiques et à se substituer à eux dans la résolution des principaux problèmes de la vie." (Breton 1924: 42)

82 To explain the function of "psychic automatism" and "automatic writing" based on it, Breton introduced the idea of what he called "Surrealist images" by referring to Baudelaire: these images, like Baudelaire's "opium images" that cannot be evoked consciously, just appear "spontaneously, despotically," and, therefore, one is not able to "chase them away" since, in this state of mind, "the will is powerless" and "no longer controls the faculties" (Breton 1972a [1924]: 36). It is in this manner that "from the fortuitous juxtaposition" of two terms a "particular light" will spring, "the light of the image, to which we are infinitely sensitive" (ibid.: 37). "The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors" (ibid.). Thus, "the two terms of the image are not deduced one from the other by the mind for the specific purpose of producing the spark," but they are "the simultaneous products of the activity I call Surrealist," implying that the role of reason is "limited to taking note of, and appreciating, the luminous phenomenon" (ibid.). "And just as the length of the spark increases to the extent that it occurs in rarefied gases, the Surrealist atmosphere created by *automatic writing*, which I have wanted to put within the reach of everyone, is especially conducive to the production of the most beautiful images" (ibid.; emphasis mine). *Mutatis mutandis*, this is the idea of post-theory.

in, through and by themselves. In an exemplary manner, even paradigmatically, Breton's conception of language in terms of "the surreal," not so much as a discovery, but, rather, as an invention, of a different reality, manifests *the disruption of reason, paradoxically, constitutive of the modern* during the twentieth century. This is the genealogy of the postmodern, its coming into being through a long incubation: from Baudelaire and Lautréamont to Breton and *La Révolution surréaliste*, from Dada and Futurism to Situationism, this is the origination of the postmodern: a *derealization of the real amounting to the derationalization of the rational*, not as an eclipse of reason in terms of the irrational, but as the origin of the surrational, the "other" of the reason: *the rationalization of the imaginary*.

What is important here is that the rationalization of the imaginary in the sense of the surrational is characteristic not only of post-theory and, as its derivation, of cyber discourse in the sense of the hyperization of theory in terms of the techno-imaginary, but it is also constitutive of the political economy of neoliberalism, the politics of the financial markets as the apotheosis of contemporary capitalism.

What is the Secret of Cybersex?

In the sense outlined above, cybersex *as a "sexual" manifestation of the "cyber,"* as a term, idea and metaphor exemplifying the linguistic potentiality of cyber discourse, is an unending chain of signifiers in which not the conventional connections of signifiers, but the free-wheeling intertextuality typical of the "post," is the basis of intelligibility. In other words, if we take the step from the linguistic universe of Surrealism to the post-theoretical world of the surrational, we can enjoy the extraordinary pleasures of cybersex, "sex" in terms of the "cyber."

In this manner, as a neo-Futuristic expression of the linguistic situation constitutive of the postmodern, cyber discourse is based on a writerly performance as a post-Freudian *Traumarbeit*, "dream work" (see Freud 1987d [1900]: 283–511; Stephan 1989: 27–34, 43–45, 61–63; de Berg 2003: 18–24; Pabst 2004: 84–94), enabled by the "free-floating signifiers" effected by the "post."

Accordingly, what else, then, the study at hand could be, if not a performative reading of cyber discourse as a writerly performance in the Derridean sense of dissemination and supplementation (cf., for example, Derrida 1997 [1967]: 141–164, 1981a [1972])? My point is that for some three decades a theory style has been prevailing in the Western academic world that rewrites, in the name of theory, in an extremely complicated and complex manner, the discoveries and inventions made by Freud and the Surrealists from the end of the nineteenth century to the early-1930s. The apogee of this theory style is the *theory-hysteria* that I call post-theory, writing theory in the mode of *écriture* under the sign of the "post." Thus, I will argue that there is a deep affinity between the "post" and "the sexual": it is the deep affinity between theory and desire based on the alogical logic of the unconscious (cf. Freud 1961 [1905], 1987d [1900], 1991a [1915]; Breton 1972a [1924], 1996 [1934]).

In the world of post-theory, all that is "cyber" is perfectly intelligible, even without making sense. *The "cyber" is the sign of significant nonsense in the realm of the techno-imaginary*; a realm of the imaginary the condition of possibility of which is the libidinal language of the "post," a language of desire after the collapse of the modern (see Lyotard 1993a [1974]; cf. Lash 1990b: 78–113; Sarup 1993 [1988]: 150–155; Bertens 1995: 128–131). Thus, as an imaginary signifier, cybersex is a Derridean "umbrella" (as discussed above): a linguistic figure allowing for an ingenious play of signification, a dissemination of signifiers without closure.

In this respect, there is no doubt that in a world in which *colorless green ideas sleep furiously* – or, if you do not like green, in a world in which *even the words floating in air make blue shadows* – we can enjoy the pleasures of cybersex, "sex" under the sign of the "cyber."

The only problem is – if it is a problem at all – that though these pleasures might be supernatural they apparently have more to do with the head than the body, our carnal body in its very fleshliness, in its full Augustinian sense (see Saint Augustine 1971/1887/419–420], 1991 [397–398]; O'Daly 1987: 38–58; Pagels 1991 [1988]: 220–232, 289; Brown 1967: 94–102, 118–122, 143–145; in terms of "sexual renunciation" in early Christianity, see Brown 1988; for the constitutive meaning of the flesh in Christian thought, see Miles 2005). As a manifestation of a postmodern theology of the flesh, *a radical theology of anti-carnality*, the carnal body in its post-Cartesian dualism of virtuality and prostheticality is the Cartesian problem of the "cyber" (for the Cartesian body, see Descartes 1985b [1637]: 127–141; cf. Cottingham 1986: 107–132; Bast 1997; Des Chene 2001; in the context of the "Enlightenment cyborg," see Muri 2007: 24–31): although the prosthetic body is the embodiment of its technological extensions in the world of the "cyber," the body in terms of *res extensa* is not so much the matter in cybersex, rather, the things we can apprehend with our *cogito*, the faculties of our mind: *cybersex is cerebral sex*, even in its most extreme form: while the body is present in its absence, it is the brain that is the *post-cybernetic* machine (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948]) which alone is in the position both to produce and to enjoy the pleasures of the "cyber."

That is, whatever cybersex is as *sex* it is a problem of the flesh, the fundamental carnality of the human being; and, as we will see, a fundamental problem of all that is "cyber."

In this sense, cybersex, in the final analysis, is a Christian problem – or, then again, an elegant solution to it.

4 Irony: An Antidote of the Doxalogical

> Theory will indeed aim at questioning all types of knowledge and discourses by creating an effect of seduction and of bafflement. In doing so, it will generate some kind of knowledge and will aim, no doubt, at a truth. This knowledge will entail certain requirements which will have to remain provisionally in the conditional. First, since it retains a libidinal edge, Theory should not be boring; it should move, seduce, entrance, keep desire in motion, in other words, it should be "sexy." Secondly, Theory cannot be naive and bypass the determination by historical and political context: it can found a new discourse only if it remains aware of the previous accumulation of knowledge in the various domains that intersect on its "body." Thirdly, as hysteria fuses with historical modes and fashions in such a way that it is often not visible at all, it fades into the landscape of culture and its various languages.
>
> Jean-Michel Rabaté (2002: 16)

> So what lends writing, fictional or theoretical, its intensity is the void, the nothingness running beneath the surface, the illusion on meaning, the ironic dimension of language, correlative with that of facts themselves, which are never anything but what they are.
>
> Jean Baudrillard (1996 [1995]: 98)

For the study at hand, the problem, as stated at the beginning, is that with regard to the relation between the real and the imaginary, language does not make a difference: in language, there is, in Derridean terms, only *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]). To specify, here the question is not so much how to enquire into objects that do not exist as how to consider entities existing in a virtual reality of language that as a realm of the imaginary counts as real; real, of course, in terms of the imaginary (cf., for example, Žižek 1992: 9–23, 61, 78–80, 106, 123, 1993: 43–44, 60, 87, 98, 123, 2005a: 29–31, 33, 45, 59, 1997b; with regard to "transcendent fictions" as an "imaginary discourse" in the context of Derridean deconstruction, cf. Norris 1985: 60–75). Consequently, in my reading, I am interested in a specific mode of the imaginary constitutive of the surrational, a mode of reason in its pure essence: *the reason of the imaginary* (cf. Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; von Braun 2001; Bök 2002). In this sense, I will focus on the manner in which the things that are not there are there. Precisely *how* they "are there" is the question of the present study.

Accordingly, my object of inquiry is the theoretical order of post-theory, *a postmodern mode of theory in terms of simulation*, as such as it appears in the linguistic figuration of cyber discourse. In this sense, the problem is the epistemic status of cyber discourse *as a discourse effected by the "cyber"*; a non-signifying signifier

that as a prosthetic device enables the language constitutive of cyber discourse. If deconstruction, as Jonathan Culler (1982: 85) remarks, "has been variously presented as a philosophical position, a political or intellectual strategy, and a mode of reading," and if classical cybernetics, according to Slava Gerovitch (2002a: 2), "is not a traditional scientific discipline, a specific engineering technique, or a philosophical doctrine, although it combines many elements of science, engineering, and philosophy," but something *sui generis*, what, then, is cyber discourse: what is its *differentia specifica* as a discourse formation in contrast to other discourses in the world of the "post"? If deconstruction and cybernetics, of course, each in its own particular manner, are distinct modes of language, the more cyber discourse is based on specific linguistic figuration: it is an idiomatic way of "speaking" about the world in terms of the "cyber" – *in terms that are "defined" by this very discourse itself*: in the world of the "cyber," there is no outside in the literal sense of the term (cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]: 158–159; Hobson 1998: 201; Critchley 2002: 283–284; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 162–163; Smith 2005: 44–45).

In this sense, as a self-referential, self-generating and self-reflexive discourse, cyber discourse constitutes a "closed world," a discursive para-world that exists in the virtual reality of language enabled by the master-signifier the "cyber," an excessively evocative linguistic particle the function of which follows the logic of the "post," the logic of dissemination and supplementation in the Derridean manner (see Derrida 1981a [1972], 1997; in terms of cyborg discourse as part of the "closed-world discourse" in Cold War America, cf. Edwards 1996; with regard to the discourse of affluence in postwar America, cf., for example, Brick 1998: 2–22; Colomina et al. 2004).

4.1 The Postmodern as a Radicalization of the Modern

As phantasmatic as cyber discourse ever is, it has a real basis: the scientific innovations enabled by the American military-technological enterprise during the Second World War that made America what it is today (see, for example, Leslie 1993; Zachary 1999; Hughes & Hughes 2000; Pavelec 2009). Yet, although cyber discourse has nothing to do with cybernetics as a specific scientific discourse of Cold War America (see, for example, Kay 2000: 73–127; Steinbruner 2002 [1974]: 47–90; Light 2003: 35–64, 76–96; Gerovitch 2002a; Mirowski 2002; Mindell et al. 2003; Bousquet 2009; for America as "the cybernetic continent," see Farish 2010: 147–192), it nevertheless continues its utopian vision of information, communication and control as the scientific-technological infrastructure of a *machina mundi* (cf. Wilden 1980) by other means, the means of ludic theory peculiar to the postmodern (cf., for example, Best & Kellner 1991: 26–27, 132, 137, 156–158, 178, 184; Morton 1995; Ebert 1996). Although my study in itself has a certain ludic impulse, it is appropriate to emphasize that my approach has nothing to do with ludology.

To sum up, while cybernetics as a technoscientific science is a theoretical manifestation of the military-technological rationality of Cold War America, cyber discourse manifests the popularization of cybernetics in the form of the techno-imaginary created by a new wave of science fiction in Reagan's America (for a historical contextualization, see McHale 1992: 225–267; Warrick 1980; Porush 1985, 1987, 1992; McCaffery 1994b [1991], 1994c [1991]; in terms of "the totalization of the subject-object paradigm," see Achilles 2005: 77–87). But what is decisive here is that the "cyber" constitutive of cyber discourse is an epiphenomenon of the "post," its techno-imaginary reflection (in terms of "the cybernetic matrix of 'French Theory,'" cf. Lafontaine 2007; Liu 2011).

4.1.1 Theory as a Postmodern Phantasmagoria

In the world of cyber discourse, we can enjoy a *radical amnesia*: we are now living in the future which is already present, present in its permanent presence, in its continuous futurity in which time itself has been transcended by means of techno-transcendence (cf., for example, Graham 2001: 313–313; Nayar 2004: 71–72, 307–308; Dinello 2005: 116–117; Case 2007: 142, 197–198). History – gone, memory – a thing of the past, past away as the past itself (cf. Landsberg 2004). This is the pleasure of "the future without a past" (Russo 2005); a future which in its excessive futurism cannot remember itself, a future for which remembering in general is no longer possible (in terms of "the future as fetish," cf. Myers 2000). But it is precisely this radical amnesia that, in a manner of post-Heideggerian *Seinsvergessenheit* (cf. Heidegger 1983 [1935]: 21–22, 53–55, 1999 [1938/1939, 1946/1948]: 148–150) in the form of the techno-imaginary, opens up the fourth dimension of being: the realm of prosthetic virtuality enabled by virtual prosthetics.

It is in this constellation that, as Haraway (1991f: 249) says, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves."

Resulting from the radical transformation initiated by the "cyber," an entirely new mode of existence emerges, life after the implosion of matter: *Life in the matrix of digitality*. Elaborating on the idea of "true religion," Graham Ward (2003: 129), a postmodern theologian, sums up the key idea of the fundamental transformation brought about by "intelligent environments" in which the prosthetic turns into the aesthetic: what the Greeks called *aisthesis* (see, for example, Welsch 1987; Barck et al. 2002 [1990]) takes place today in the realm of techno-sensorium, a sphere of the artificial (cf. Cavell 2003: 69–90; Munster 2006: 150–177; Wills 1995; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; Kroker 2004b; for a theory-historical contextualization, see Dotzler & Müller 1995; Müller-Funk & Reck 1996; in terms of "digital delirium," cf. Kroker & Kroker 1997b); according to Ward:

> The immersive experiences of an aestheticized life are made possible and maintained by advanced technology. If anything is prosthetic today, it is the human body itself. Hence, talk about "digital living" becomes heady with the possibil-

> ities for "techno-transcendence" and the language of light offers undreamt of freedoms. (Ward 2003: 129; cf. Rötzer 1998b, 2002)

All this began already long ago, in a world in which reality had not yet been virtualized and in which matter was still the precondition of materiality; a world, though, in which the idea of information redefined onto-technologically, the principle of control and the ideal of mathematical modelling, all of them subsumed under the rationality of calculative reason, became the paradigm of life and of all living. This was the world of emerging cybernetics (see, for example, Heims 1975, 1980, 1993; Masani & Phillips 1985; Masani 1990; Kay 1997; Mindell 2002; Pias 2003, 2004), a world in which abstract rationality was elevated to the guiding star of scientific-technological progress.

A Historical Reading of the Present

What, for Henry Miller (1970 [1945]), returning to America in the early 1940s after two decades spent in Paris, was, in his words, an "air-conditioned nightmare," appeared, in the visions of cybernetics, as a perfect society driven by scientific-technological reason. After the Second World War, in the conditions of the military-industrial complex, America turned into a rationally organized technoculture in which the machine became the model of being human (see, for example, Ferkiss 1969, 1980; Marx 1970 [1964]; Noble 1979 [1977]; Kimball 1992; Pursell 1994, 1995; Henriksen 1997; de la Peña 2003; Hughes 2004a [1989]; Henthorn 2006; Abella 2008; in terms of the "military-industrial-academic complex," see Giroux 2007). Still in the late 1970s, despite the intellectual and cultural upheavals in the 1960s brought about by counterculture and critical minds in American academia in the wake of the Vietnam War (see, for example, Rudy 1996: 150–203; Roszak 1969; Gilbert 2001; Hall 2005; for an overview in terms of "the New Left," see McMillian & Buhle 2003), the cybernetic model of society was not only the prevailing ideology of the ruling technocratic elite, but it had become an everyday reality as well, a reality as a techno-optimistic mode of thought.

In post-war America, ruled by the imperative of cybernetic rationality, the vision of Edward Bellamy (2009 [1888]), outlined in his utopian novel *Looking Backward 2000–1887*, had turned into technocratic reality: the conception of society as a cybernetic machine had become the ideal of American politics (on Bellamy, see Patai 1988; for the American technocratic tradition, see Akin 1977; Schwab 2004). In other words, as Victor C. Ferkiss (1980: 361) sums up Bellamy's critical idea: "The machine can bring the good life to all in society *if only society itself is organized as a completely rational machine*" (emphasis mine). In a similar manner, Manfred Stanley (1978: 136), an American sociologist (intellectually indebted to Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas), described the situation in 1978 in his study entitled *The Technological Conscience: Survival and Dignity in an Age of Expertise*, asking whether "social cybernetics" implied a "subjugation by metaphor":

> We find in a wide diversity of specific institutional settings certain tendencies converging toward a common, cybernetically relevant mode of policy

> and decision vocabulary. These tendencies include the reduction of decision strategies to cost-accounting systems; the transformation of values into quantifiable social indicators; the codification of ends into legislated and measurable accountability criteria; the computerization of centrally stored information banks; and the encapsulation of social life into simulated models of experience. (ibid.: 136–137)

In this cybernetically organized perfect society, politics was replaced by technocratic administration, that is, pragmatic management relying on expertise and scientific-technological rationality, that gave the tendencies of social rationalization their "teleological coherence" (ibid.: 137). The ideal society of the ruling techno-elite was based on a "pantechnicist model of cybernetics" in which the "concept of reality" was seen "consisting of cybernetically self-regulating natural systems, adaptive (or calibrated to be adaptive) to their environment," generating thus "a vision of *policy design* as a potential branch of natural law" (ibid.; emphasis mine). It is in this manner that "[i]n the atmosphere of anxiety and crisis," following the disaster of the Vietnam War, "cybernetics could become *the metaphysics of a precarious society driven by the need for total social regulation*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; in the context of the "reactionary modernism" of the Weimar Republic, cf. Herf 1984; in terms of the technocratic phantasm of "the perfect war" constitutive of the American technological politics in the Vietnam War, cf. Gibson 1986; for the Heideggerian conception of cybernetics as the apotheosis of metaphysics implying the end of philosophy, cf. Heidegger 2000h [1965]: 622–623; Hörl 2004, 2008; for Ampère's idea of *cybernétique* or cybernetics as *l'art de gouverner en général,* "the art of governance in general," cf. Levin 2000a: 24; Vogl 2004: 68).

After its initial phase, from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, cybernetics, originally an experimental science and a transdisciplinary epistemology (see Pias 2008: 80, 2003, 2004; Andrew 2009: 1–16; Van de Vijver 1992a), was adopted by the American technocratic elite engaged in the political economy of the military-industrial complex and, as a result, cybernetics turned into the ideology of the scientific-technological modernization of postwar America (see Aronowitz & DiFazio 1994: 37–41, 77–83; Brick 1998: 125–135; Crowther-Heyck 2005: 167, 185–189; Farish 2010: 147–192). In this manner, cybernetics was built-in in the techno-political mindset of American society, a society organized in the interests of and according to the principles of the military-industrial complex. What Stanley called "social cybernetics" had thus become reality in which being human, indeed, implied a "subjugation by metaphor," the cybernetic metaphor of rational society: society as a rationally constructed "machine."

In this sense, what began as a militarization of society during the Second World War turned into a relentless consumerism in postwar America (see, for example, Wright & Snow 1980; McEnaney 2000; Boggs 2003; Cohn 2008 [2001]), an affluent society in which what Herbert Marcuse (1941: 419) already in the 1940s called "anonymous wisdom" of scientific-technological rationality had become the "invisible hand" of the "total social regulation" that subjugated the individ-

ual in the position of a functional unit in the system (for the origin of the metaphor of the "invisible hand," see Smith 1998 [1776]: 291–292).[83]

Now, what is important in terms of the "cyber" is that in cyber discourse, the scientific discourse of cybernetics has turned into a Disneyland of Theory in which, paradoxically, the impossible is no longer possible: in the artificial world of the "cyber," the virtual has taken the place of the real. What is paradigmatic here is that (1) a specific scientistic vocabulary, (2) a simulated model of experience and (3) a rationalist metaphysics, as the three components described by Stanley above as constitutive of the cybernetic metaphor as the model of perfectly rational society, return with a vengeance in cyber discourse. That is, the "cyber" signifies a discourse that is based on (a) a techno-imaginary mode of language, (b) a simulation of reality by means of theory-fictions and (c) a surrational metaphysics of the presence of the absent. In other words, cyber discourse embraces a world in which science fiction has taken the place of science and in which technology is what nature was in Romanticism (cf. Coyne 1999; Clemens 2003; in terms of the "romantic cyborg," cf. Benesch 2002).

In this respect, as a millennial discourse that manifests the American scientific-technological omnipotence in the form of visions and fantasies, cyber discourse constitutes a postmodern linguistic configuration that is based on a *prosthetic language*, a technophilic language of desire that both reflects and generates the imaginary of the technological.

What is specific to cyber discourse is that it is entirely auto-affective in terms of generation, while, at the same time, in terms of substance, it is nothing but an amalgamation of heterogeneous tropes and figures constitutive of the postmodern. It is in this way that *cyber discourse is paradigmatically a postmodern discursive formation, a hybrid discourse, in which (1) libidinal language, (2) post-theory and (3) technological millennialism intertwine with one another.*

If, as Haraway (1991a: 149) says, her "Cyborg Manifesto" is "an effort to build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism," what is the "ironic" in this "political myth"? In the study at hand, I shall be taking Haraway at her word; that is, I will take seriously the irony Haraway cultivates in her writing. In this respect, the present study is an inquiry into the possibility of irony in the world of the "post"; an inquiry that proceeds, in a self-reflective

83 The idea of the "invisible hand" proposed by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, in fact, reproduces the Biblical idea of God as Providence, only appearing some two centuries later in Wiener's cybernetics in which things (whatever they are) are seen as self-regulating systems, that is, functioning under the "providence" of intrinsic rationality of all being. According to Smith (1998: 291–292), the rational subject as an agent of the market place acts in his own interests; that is: "By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, *led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention*. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it." (emphasis mine) In this manner, scientific-technological rationality became "anonymous wisdom" in America after the Second World War.

manner, by way of the very literary means it is studying, dealing with cyber discourse in the mode of double reading (cf. Nealon 1993).

It is from this perspective that I consider the question posed at the outset of the study: what does neoliberalism do to theory?

What is at issue here is a fictionalization of theory as a specific form of *literaturization* of language typical of all that is "cyber" (in terms of *literaturnost*, "literariness," in Russian formalism, cf. Thompson 1971 [1969]: 31, 93–102; Erlich 1980 [1955]; 171–173, Connor 1989: 106–107; Any 1994: 28, 45–46).[84] Therefore, the problem of the world of the "cyber" is, for me, not a question concerning science fiction; rather, at issue here is cyber discourse as a fictionalized theory, theory as *theoretical fiction* engendering theory-fictions; theory as a fictional mode of writing, that, as a far echo of the two great occurrences in the 1960s functions according the logic of the "post," namely (1) the "linguistic turn" in Western academia (see, for example, Marsonet 1995: 3–5; Iggers 2005: 118–133; Jameson 1974 [1972]; LaCapra 1985; Rorty 1992b [1967]; Norris 1997; Clark 2004b; Losonsky 2006; for a critical discussion concerning language as "the critical fetish of modernity," see Harpham 2002) and (2) the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris (for a participant political reflection, see Quattrocchi & Nairn 1998 [1968]; Cohn-Bendit & Cohn-Bendit 2000 [1968]; for a retrospective historical contextualization and analysis, see, for example, Ali & Watkins 1998; Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]; Ross 2002; Seidman 2004; from a global perspective, see Suri 2005: 164–212; Horn 2007).

Therefore, the problem is not science fiction as a genre of literature (see, for example, Delany 1977, 1980, 1996; Scholes & Rabkin 1977; Suvin 1980; Slusser & Rabkin 1987; Slusser & Shippey 1992; McCaffery 1994d [1991]; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Roberts 2000; Larbalestier 2002; Luckhurst 2005; for a historical recontextualization, see Willis 2006; for science fiction as a genre-transgressive textual form, see Csicsery-Ronay 2008); instead, the problem is the theoretical allurement, the seductive fascination, of *theory-fictions peculiar to post-theory*, exemplified here by the theory-fictional figures and figurations in the configuration of cyber discourse, a linguistic assemblage under the sign of the "cyber" in the linguistic matrix of the "post," the matrix of post-theory as the ultimate radicalization of "French theory" (from a reverse perspective, cf. Lafontaine 2007; in terms of "radical imagination," cf. Olson & Worsham 2007).

84 According to Ewa Majewska Thompson (1971: 31), it was Roman Jakobson, "a member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and of a Futurist group *Centrifuga*," who supplied a number of key terms and figures of thought that became constitutive of Russian Formalism, such as "literariness," and the idea that "poetry is language in its aesthetic function" and "poetry is organized self-valuable word (*oformlenie samovitogo slova*)" (cf. ibid.: 93–102). In a similar vein, Jakobson defined the task of literary studies: "The subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness (*literaturnost*), i.e., that which makes of a given work a work of literature" (Erlich: 1980: 172, cf. ibid.: 171–173, 179–181, 190, 198; in terms of the Russian avantgarde, see Bowlt & Matich 1999). Later, as a leading figure in the Prague Linguistic Circle, Jakobson elaborated on these ideas and thus significantly contributed to the rise of what, in the 1950s, came to be known as structuralism (see, for example, Womack 2006). From this perspective, one cannot avoid the impression that post-theory, as the most radical manifestation of the postmodern and poststructuralism, is not so much a continuation as a latter-day revival of Russian Formalism, not by means of the linguistic analysis of literariness, but as a mode of theory based on linguistic figuration under the sign of the "post."

Based on the premises outlined above, my study is a "history" in a specific sense. What is at issue here is neither a historiographic reconstruction of a certain period of time, nor a detailed account of some events in the past. Instead, the text at hand proceeds as *a historical reading of the present*, as a textual retrospection into the world of cyber discourse, through its genre-specific linguistic figuration, as such as it took shape from the early 1980s to the outset of the third millennium, that is, the "late twentieth century, our time, *a mythic time*" (Haraway 1991a: 150; emphasis mine). From the very beginning, cyber discourse has not only posited, in the manner of hypostatization, linguistic figures as existing entities,[85] but, at the same time, as a discourse it in itself has undergone a reification effected by and, in turn, resulting in, post-theory; a reification of theory in the sense Jameson has elaborated on in his writings on language and literature and the cultural formations of the modern and the postmodern (see Jameson 1981: 42–44, 63–64, 153–154, 1988d [1978]: 108–111, 1988f [1976]: 177–180, 1988h [1984]: 197, 200–201, 1988j [1977]: 136–137, 146–147, 1988l [1984]: 104–110, 1991: 91, 96, 313–318, 386, 396; 1998: 27, 36, 104–110, 118, 1979; for a critical discussion, see Bewes 2002: 3–40).[86]

Having a Second Look at the "Post" of the Postmodern

Through its endless reiteration, its repetitive "posting" in post-theory in the manner of "postality" as the highest degree of "postness" (cf., for example, O'Neill 1995: 111–130; Armitt 2005: 209; Zavarzadeh et al. 1995), the "post" has resulted in what Jameson (1998: 36) calls "conceptual reification"; in other words, the paradigm of the "post," as a reified mode of thought, has entirely lost its critical

85 The notion of *hypostasis*, from the Greek *stasis*, standing, and *hupo*, under, refers to the underlying subject or substance that supports the attributes (cf. *hypokeimenon*, the subject); also to matter without form. Thus, to *hypostasize* (or *hypostatize*) indicates the positing of theoretical objects as existing entities, things in their own right, as beings external to theory although created by the theory itself. The problem arises if these objects, designated by a certain concept, are taken as independent or real entities, as something that are there not only conceptually, by the force of language, but expressly in terms of concrete reality. In this sense, *hypostatization* (or *hypostasization*) constitutes a fallacy of confounding different types or categories of things, that is, treating linguistically constructed abstractions as if they were actually existing objects. This fallacy is often also referred to by the term *reification* in the sense that a concept or an abstraction is taken as an independent reality. The idea of *hypostatization* goes back to Kant (1990b [1781/1787]: 385–386) according to whom *hypostasieren* means that *was bloß in Gedanken existiert*, takes on a position *als einen wirklichen Gegenstand außerhalb dem denkenden Subjekte*; this is the way in which the subject *seine Gedanken zu Sachen macht und sie hypostasiert*, or, *seine eigene Vorstellungen zu Gegenständen macht, und sich so einem ewigen Zirkel vom Zweideutigkeiten und Widersprüchen herum dreht* (ibid.: 392).

86 The idea of reification comes from Georg Lukács's reading of Hegel in Marxian terms; in his *History and Class Consciousness*, Chapter "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," Lukács (1972 [1923]: 86) writes that in a historical situation in which the commodity form becomes a universal category, the general process of commodification becomes "crucial for the subjection of men's consciousness to the forms" in which "reification finds expression and for their attempt to comprehend the process or to rebel against its disastrous effects and liberate themselves from the servitude to the 'second nature' so created." That is, wherever living conditions and manifestations of human life turn into a "second nature," become *naturalized*, and thus "natural," they appear as opaque and self-evident: they are *reified* into an autonomous power that stands against humans themselves, ruling their activities and efforts as an alien force. In other words, where there were once *human relations*, there are now *relations between things*. Accordingly, in the world of the "post," reification penetrates the realm of theory: the "theory objects" of post-theory are "things" effected by the reified language of the "post."

edge, and thus turned into a sacred mantra, a theoretical liturgy which, miraculously, is actually the true achievement of post-theory, its Baroque "richness," its decorative extravaganza in the manner of a postmodern Rococo. It is in this way that post-theory, as the most spectral manifestation of the discursive matrix of the "post," is more than just theory *à la* the postmodern; post-theory is a mode of theory *sui generis*: it is a theory style which has created, by means of writerly writing, both a textual universe of its own and a theory language in which "the theoretical" is the very substance of the theory (cf., for example, Davis 2004: 163–172; McQuillan et al. 1999; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b; cf. Der Derian 2009a).

In a word, the "post" is the constitutive signifier, the suggestive shibboleth of post-theory: you pronounce this magic word and the door opens to esoteric wisdom, you step in, and you are "enlightened"; *mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to the "cyber."

If the postmodern is read in terms of reification, we encounter the problem of hypostatization in a manner that was not yet possible before the "post." What is the problem of hypostatization can be illuminated by the difficulties implied by the concept of "matter" referred to by Derrida (1982 [1972]: 64–65), challenged by Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta with regard to Marxism in their interview with him; "matter" as something "exterior" functioning as the ultimate basis or origin of being, "matter" as a figure of thought turned into a "second nature," a reified entity that has lost its analytical quality (cf. Butler 1993; Mullarkey 1999; Parisi 2005); Derrida replied:

> I am not even sure that there can be a "concept" of an absolute exterior. If I have not very often used the word "matter," it is not, as you know, because of some idealist or spiritualist kind of reservation. It is that in the logic of the phase of overturning of this concept has been too often reinvested with "logocentric" values, values associated with those of thing, reality, presence in general, sensible presence, for example, substantial plenitude, content, referent, etc. Realism or sensualism – "empiricism" – are modifications of logocentrism. (I have often insisted on the fact that "writing" or the "text" are not reducible *either* to the sensible or visible presence of the graphic or the "literal.") In short, the signifier "matter" appears to me problematical only at the moment when its reinscription cannot avoid making of it a new fundamental principle which, by means of theoretical regression, would be reconstituted into a "transcendental signified." (Derrida 1982: 64–65; emphasis mine)

If there are no origins, no originating foundations (either in the sense of "cause" or "basis" or in the sense of "initiation" or "inception"), that is, in Nietzschean terms, no *Ursprung* (the primordial "spring," "well," "source" or "fountain"), but only beginnings, always in plural, in the sense of Nietzschean *Herkunft* ("ancestry," "pedigree," "provenance" or "derivation") (see Nietzsche 1968c [1887]; in terms of Foucauldian genealogy, see Foucault 1977c [1971]; cf. Visker 1991b: 42–89; Mahon 1992: 108–112; Marti 1999 [1988]: 83–109; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 80) implying that there are only various and even untraceable, "rootless" roots giving rise to a ramified descent or a branched lineage of generation, where, then, is the *Herkunft* of the "post"? Miraculously, the *Herkunft* of the "post" is in itself:

the "post" is its own *alpha* and *omega*: the non-originary "origin" of the "post" derives from an immaculate conception in terms of theory.

During its splendid career (since some thirty years now), the "post" has turned into a new "fundamental principle" on the theory scene of the postmodern, and as such, it has taken on the function of a "transcendental signified," paradoxically, in the *form* of a transcendental *signifier*. It other words, what began as the "post" of the postmodern (for the genealogy of the notion, see Welsch 1997: 9–43; Köhler 1977), soon became the "post" of poststructuralism (see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]; Selden & Widdowson 1993; Selden 1995), and sometime during the 1980s, *for some unknown reasons*, turned into the "post" of the "post," the "post" of unending "posting" of "posts" in the mode of the "postality" of the "postness" constitutive of the discursive productivity the "post" (cf. Bell 1973: 51–54; Hassan 1975: 39–62, 1982 [1971]: 259–272, 1977; Callinicos 1989: 25–26; Best & Kellner 1991: 29–30).[87]

In short, what is the intrinsic non-origin, the generative principle, of the "post" as the incentive, the libidinal lure, of "the theoretical," has come into being by the perpetual *postification* of "posts" on the theory scene of the postmodern, a permanently ongoing process of proliferation of theory in terms of the "post," post-theory as the most spectral achievement of the postmodern (for an overview, see McQuillan et al. 1999; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b).

What is the "cyber," then, if not a logical derivation of the "post," its *necessary* supplement in the Derridean sense (see Derrida 1997: 141–164). In other words, in Kantian terms, the "post" is the *Bedingung der Möglichkeit*, the "condition of possibility" (see, for example, Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 146, 155), of all that is "cyber," and thus, there is no cyber discourse without the linguistic figuration constitutive of the "post"; that is, the "cyber" is predicated upon the logic of the "post," the logic of unending dissemination and supplementation of "meaning." In this sense, in a similar manner as post-theory is nothing else but endless "posting" of "posts" in their unending "postness" in the mode of "postality," cyber discourse derives from an unending "cybering" of the "cyber" in the mode of the "cyberality" of the "cyberness" of the "cyber"; accordingly, cyber discourse is a post-theoretical manifestation of *cyberdelia* enjoyed by "cyberists" in the state of *cyberia* (cf. Rushkoff 1994), the most elevated form of what Arthur and Mar-

87 It should be emphasized that, "originally," what are called "poststructuralism" and "the postmodern" are not at all the same, neither in their "origins" nor in their conception. While the former is related, firstly, to linguistic and literary studies, and, later, to various philosophical positions that depart from "classical school philosophy," the latter is related to diverse theories pertaining contemporary culture or culture "after the modern" (by and large the approach called "cultural studies"). Moreover, when the intellectual-theoretical "movement" that is now called "poststructuralism" was initiated in the epochal conference entitled "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" (Johns Hopkins Humanities Center, October 18–21, 1966, Baltimore; Macksey & Donato 2007: xxi), "poststructuralism" was not on the agenda; the term appeared, literally, *post festum*, sometime in the late 1970s, in the tumultuous discussions on the fate of the humanities "after" the "end of humanism." What I designate as the "post" is my way to point to the increasing "literaturization" of "theory" in the sense of "writing," "writing theory" in the mode of *écriture* (quotation marks refer to the fact that these notions are constantly under discussion, or even "under erasure" in the Derridean sense; see Derrida 1997 [1967]).

ilouise Kroker (1997a) call "digital delirium"; a "post"-ecstatic state of mind that has its non-originary "origin" in *cyberpunk*, the "neuromantic" scifi-cosmology introduced by William Gibson (1995 [1984]), the literary fountainhead of all that is "cyber" (see, for example, Ross 1991a, Fitting 1992; Nixon 1992; Porush 1992; McHale 1994 [1991]; Brande 1996; Burrows 1997; Fisher 1997; Michaud 2008).

If, as Jameson (1991: 419) says, cyberpunk is "the *supreme* literary expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself," are we, then, entitled to read cyber discourse as a higher form of cyberpunk, if not its ultimate manifestation, its post-literary *omega point*? Or, rather, is cyber discourse to be comprehended as a postmodern paraphrase of all that is inscribed in the textual universe created by Gibson and, in his foot steps, elaborated on by cyber-theorists celebrating the world of the "cyber" as the liberation of the human being by means of the posthuman? Taken this or that way, it is appropriate to recall that the cultural, aesthetic and literary forms of what Jameson calls "postmodernism," seen as expressions of "a postmodern or technological sublime," in fact, are "faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network" (ibid.: 37); representations that are "themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism" (ibid.); as Jameson specifies:

> The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of *the third stage of capital itself*. This is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature – one is tempted to characterize it as "high-tech paranoia" – in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind. (ibid.: 38; emphasis mine; cf. Hayles 1987)

The problem that Jameson purports to outline here is the problem of representation in the cultural constellation of postmodernism; a mode of representation that would be able to grasp, by aesthetic and literary means, the complexity of neoliberal capitalism, in other words, the logic of neoliberalism. In Jameson's words: "It is in terms of that enormous and threatening, yet only dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions that, in my opinion, the postmodern sublime can alone be adequately theorized" (ibid.). Thus, to paraphrase Heidegger (2000b [1953]: 29, 35), *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch*, where the problem is, grows the solution also. In this respect, an adequate literary form appeared onto the literary scene of postmodernism in the mid-1980s; in Jameson's words:

> a new type of science fiction, called *cyberpunk*, which is fully as much an expression of transnational corporate realities as it is of global paranoia itself: William Gibson's representational innovations, indeed, mark his work as an exceptional literary realization with a predominantly visual or aural postmodern production. (Jameson 1991: 38; cf. Sirius 1990a, 1990b; Leary 1994b [1989], 1994d [1988], 1994f [1989])

That was in 1991, the time at which Jameson saluted cyberpunk as the most appropriate literary method to comprehend the complexities of postmodern capitalism ruled by the incomprehensible power of new technologies, the world dominated by "high-tech paranoia" (cf. McCaffery 1994b [1991]; McHale 1994 [1991]; Burrows 1997, Michaud 2008). That was then, indeed. In retrospection, however, it was not so much cyberpunk, but the discursive formation deriving from it, the post-theoretical configuration of cyber discourse, that attempted to shed light into the dark machinations of techno-capitalism. Yet, what happened to cyber discourse is that it turned into a *mythopoetic form of theory*, a second order, if not even a third order, derivation of cyberpunk, a theory formation that, by its *post-literary means*, created a postmodern mythology: a mythical world in which cyberspace and the cyborg imply a redemption of the human being by way of the posthuman; a world in which the future has already arrived in the form of technological immersion (for the origins of cyber discourse as a theoretical derivation of cyberpunk, see Kellner 1995: 297–327; Wolmark 1999b: 6–9). That is, an eschatological vision of the ultimate deliverance of the human being by the supreme powers of the Posthuman (in terms of New Age eschatology, cf., for example, Hanegraaff 1996; Heelas 1996; Newport 1998; Partridge 2004, 2005).

Saving the Postmodern, Or?

In these terms, my focus is on that *a-historical*, timeless time of cyber discourse, constituted by the "perpetual present" (Jameson 1983: 125) of the postmodern in which, in the mode of retro-futuristic techno-futurism, cyberspace, the cyborg and all that is "cyber" are celebrated, like a revelation, as a future already present – present in the imaginary of language appearing as the *real* of reality. In this sense, the "cyber" manifests what Renato Poggioli (1968 [1962]: 68) calls "the futurist moment," a moment that "belongs to *all avant-gardes* and not only to the one named for it" (ibid.: 68–69; emphasis mine). Thus, the "so-named movement was only a significant symptom of a broader and deeper state of mind" (ibid.: 69): "Italian futurism had the great merit of fixing and expressing it, coining that most fortunate term as its own label" (ibid.). What is the point here is that the Italian Futurists, as an avantgarde movement, represent a "prophetic and utopian phase" in history, an "arena of agitation and preparation" for what they believed to be a "revolution" (ibid.; for a comprehensive history of Futurism, see Poggi 2009) – a "revolution" that, indeed, took place in the 1980s in the form of the *revelation* constitutive of the "cyber" in the manner of the "post."

"The very conception of a future," as Paul de Man (1979: 140–141) says, "is linked with the possibility of a free imagination." I agree, but if the future is *solely* ruled by the linguistic regime of the imaginary it turns into a "prison-house of language" (see Jameson 1974 [1972]). This is the problem of the linguistic futurism of the "cyber" in terms of the "post." In the world of the "cyber," there is no present since we constantly live there in the present future: *the virtual reality of language*, in its permanent futurity, the post-temporal futurality of retro-futurism typical of the postmodern. For the same reason, there is, in the end, neither a future there.

From this perspective, the "cyber" manifests, in the manner of the "post," a "futurist moment," a "prophetic and utopian" impetus inherent in the postmodern: a dream of a technological "revolution." In these terms, in the world of the "cyber," we can experience the "future as fetish" (Myers 2000), as a libidinal object, a phantasm of an eternal "becoming" as a liberatory *Ersatz* of the depressive presence of Being deformed by the very same logic of capital that now appears as the Saviour. That is, the "cyber," as an effect of the libidinal language, the language of desire, constitutive of the "post" (cf. Best & Kellner 1991: 29–32), expresses the techno-imaginary specific to the world of the postmodern; a world that in itself, as a discursive construction, is a postmodern phantasmagoria in the sense Walter Benjamin has given to this concept in his writings on the phenomena of the modern from a historical perspective (see Benjamin 1991a, 1991b; cf. Buck-Morss 1989: 81–107, 140–143, 175–195; Bolz & van Reijen 1991: 64–73; Cohen 1995 [1993]: 217–263; Kang 2011).

What is specific to contemporary culture, though, is that it is not only the commodity spectacle constitutive of productive consumption that appears as a postmodern phantasmagoria, but, moreover, *theory has turned into a postmodern phantasmagoria sui generis* on the theory scene of the "post."

In this connection, it is appropriate to notice that by the term "the postmodern" I am not referring to some historical period or an era, nor a specific aesthetic style or world-view; therefore, I do not subscribe to the notions of "postmodernism" or "postmodernity" either. For me, the idea of the postmodern designates, firstly, in reference to Jameson (1991: 4), a "cultural dominant" that, without constituting a new epoch, has gained momentum since the 1960s along with the processes of commodification and mediatization of Western culture (see Jameson 1984, 1989 [1983]; cf. Bertens 1995: 160–184; Best & Kellner 1991: 181–192). Secondly, drawing on Lyotard's (1984 [1979]) notion of the "postmodern condition" I understand by the term a new kind of scientific knowledge that is based, instead of "grand narratives," not only on the principle of performativity foregrounding "language games" and "paralogies" (cf. Best & Kellner 1991: 146–180; Sarup 1993 [1988]: 129–160), but, more fundamentally, on a peculiar linguistification of thought initiated by the "linguistic turn," the turn that brought about the "post" in the first place (for a historical articulation of "linguistic turns in modern philosophy," see Losonsky 2006).[88]

88 It should be noticed that Lyotard's (1984 [1979]) idea of the collapse of "grand narratives" as the constitutive moment of the "postmodern condition" is, firstly, in itself a "grand narrative," that is, one of such foundational metanarratives which Lyotard tries to abolish, and secondly, the rejection of legitimating master narratives did not begin with the postmodern but much earlier, already with the idea of the modern. "Thus Baudelaire, arguably the godfather of aesthetic modernism," as Scott Lash (1990b: 313) points out, "broke with the foundationalist assumptions of realism to celebrate the transitory, the fleeting, the contingent." In the same way also Nietzsche, "well before the turn of the century, castigated foundationalisms not just in the aesthetic realm, but similarly refused the certainties of notions of unconditional ethics and realist, mirror-of-nature epistemologies" (ibid.). And even "Max Weber himself had an eminently post-Enlightenment and 'post-metanarrative' idea of modernity" (ibid.). In this sense, Lyotard's talk of the "postmodern condition" is a *postmodern* metanarrative, a foundational story of some new cultural constellation that in itself is a *modern* legitimation narrative, in the last analysis, a linguistic construction.

So what is the shortest definition of the postmodern? My position is that the postmodern implies *a continuation of the modern by other means, the means of the "post"*: the "post" as the linguistic generator of all that is "postmodern." In this sense, the postmodern embraces a certain – a "postmodern" – manner to deal with the problems of the modern: a theory discourse that reflects the epistemological and ontological consequences and implications of the excessive affluence of advanced capitalism through a new kind of *aesthetic* conceptuality, a new way to appropriate (in the German sense of *aneignen*) the world in theory that is aware of its own linguistic constitution; "aware," to be emphasized, in the sense that theory in the mode of the "post" intentionally uses the possibilities of language to perpetually displace the meaning, to supplant the meaning by endless supplementation and dissemination of linguistic figures, and to celebrate excessive ambiguity allowed for by signification; that is, to make theory by way of tropicity.

In this sense, post-theory follows the logic of financial capital: its *modus operandi* is derivation, an extraction of value from an endless revaluation of the already valued, an unending circulation and recycling theoretical assets which in their sheer abstractness are able to be redeployed in ever-new contexts. Accordingly, post-theory manifests the market dynamics of neoliberalism: a radical economization of desire is the very source of post-theory, its inexhaustible resource; a mode of desire that is constantly produced and reproduced by the neoliberal market mechanism in itself, increasingly dominating the theory markets of postmodern academia. Thus, the "post" signifies a *carte blanche* in terms of theory: it is a signifier that functions in the manner of a blank cheque, a cheque that, although it has no nominal value entered, is already signed, signed precisely by the "post" itself that gives free hand to inscribe and issue it anew time and time again.

Of course, the origins of post-theory are not directly to be found in the financial markets. The neoliberal market mechanism, the economy of the imaginary, based on the speculative logic of the financial markets (see, for example, Arestis & Sawyer 2004; Harvey 2007 [2005]; Atasoy 2009), however, operates as *the very generator of desire in contemporary capitalism* which constitutes the societal agency in the form of productive consumption that, by way of its mediation, has enabled the emergence of the market structures that dominate Western academia today (see, for example, Canaan & Shumar 2008; Mirowski 2011; for "the culture of neoliberalism," see Comaroff & Comaroff 2001; in terms of deconstruction, cf. Peters 2001). This is the basis of *the political economy of theory in terms of the "post"* in the present academic world under the sign of the postmodern.

That is, what began once in the name of the "linguistic turn" has, since the 1990s, the heyday of the "post," increasingly turned to the right: instead of the free spirit of critical thought what we have now is the spirit of neoliberalism: the spirit of speculation in the markets of theory. This is the hard core of all that is "post."

If theory is still to be saved, it is only possible by turning the "linguistic turn" back to its origins, by returning it to its heuristic moment, to the moment in which things lost their innocence and the world appeared in a new light, in the light of radical skepsis called forth by the insight that things are not just there, rather, they exist as – and insofar as – they are given in and by language.

In these terms, the "post," in order that it would have any meaning for critical thought at all, requires a radical turn: it has to be turned upside down by way of *détournement* in the sense of Surrealism and Situationism (see Debord 1983 [1967]: 112–114; Adamowicz 1998: 23–25; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Cohen 1995 [1993]; Bürger 1996 [1971]; Bohn 2002; McDonough 2004; Knabb 2007 [1981]; in terms of "pataphysics," cf. Bök 2002; with regard to Breton as "the poet of unreason," cf. Foucault 1996a [1966]).[89] This is the way in the study at hand; my way in terms of the "post," *the way of radical skepsis*. That is, I am interested in the "other" of reason as it appears in theory, in the linguistic of language effected by the "post" in and of post-theory. In this sense, *I am interested in the return of the repressed* in the world of the "post"*: the reason of critical theory* (in terms of the Freudian *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*, cf. Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632).

What does this mean? According to Nancy Fraser (1995: 157), the "linguistic turn," as she emphasizes (in the context of feminism), is "the most fruitful way of understanding postmodernism: an epochal shift in philosophy and social theory from an epistemological problematic, in which mind is conceived as reflecting or mirroring reality, to *a discursive problematic*, in which culturally constructed social meanings are accorded density and weight" (emphasis mine). This is a radical shift, indeed. But what is important for me is that "the postmodern" (in difference to "postmodernism") is a signifier for a new reading of the modern; a reading that takes place after, and is *enabled* by, the "linguistic turn"; a turn that signals a self-reflection of the modern in terms of language: the "unconscious," the "other," of language becomes "conscious" in the linguistic figuration manifested by the "post" of the postmodern. In other words, what appeared self-evident in the modern – first and foremost, the idea of progress – has become thoroughly problematic in the postmodern.

Exactly in these terms, the postmodern in itself now appears problematic to me; thus, the question is: *is the postmodern still to be saved?*

89 The idea of *détournement* can be approached by recalling first the literal meaning of the term. The French word *détournement* means deflection, diversion, rerouting, distortion, misuse or misappropriation, or otherwise turning something aside from its normal course or purpose. In this sense, I understand by the term an appropriation of a theoretical idea, figure or object and then recontextualizing it in a manner that allows for its critical reinterpretation by means of deconstructive reading. In other words, instead of being a hermeneutic interpretation of a text under consideration, my approach proceeds as an immanent critique, in its radicalized form, of the postmodern as it manifests itself in the language of contemporary theory, epitomized by what I call post-theory. It is for this reason that I have taken seriously the mode of irony propagated by Haraway (1991a) in her "Cyborg Manifesto": *I have taken Haraway at her word*.

4.1.2 The Posthuman: Redefining the Human in Terms of Technomorphism

From the perspective outlined above, my reading of both Jameson and Lyotard emphasizes the postmodern as a *radicalization of the modern*: the principles of rationalization and efficiency, calculation and optimization, are intrinsic to the logic of the postmodern as a continuation of the imperative of reason constitutive of the modern; a continuation not so much by other means as by the very means of the modern itself: the means of radicalization that is intrinsic to the modern – *citius, altius, fortius*, that is the sound of reason in terms of the modern; a sound that is created by the linguistic figuration celebrating scientific-technological innovation not only as the key to the future, but as a programme of survival of all being. In other words, the discourses of technoculture and technoscience, *as effects of the logic of the modern*, are constitutive of the postmodern: the "post" and the "techno" are intrinsically intertwined in both the rhetorics of the postmodern and the economy of productive consumption as the *real* basis of postmodern culture (cf., for example, Miller 1987, 1995, 2001; Fine 2002; with regard to "the consuming body," cf. Falk 1994; in the context of branding and media culture, cf. Arvidson 2006; in terms of "virtualism" as "a new political economy," cf. Carrier & Miller 1998).

Considering the reason of the postmodern, the means of language are at issue here: the qualities of the figurative, hyperbolic and mythopoetic, in their excess, are, as I will be arguing, characteristic not only of contemporary theory, but of the present cultural constellation under the sign of the postmodern in general.[90] In these terms, what is specific to the postmodern is that the demands of reason are enveloped, in the manner of a spectacular camouflage, by an affirmative linguistic play that hilariously celebrates the irrational as the highest form of the rational (for a thorough criticism, see Callinicos 1989; cf. Fekete 1987; Norris 1990, 1992, 1993; Simons & Billig 1994a; Eagleton 1996); that is, in its gleeful and generous pluralism, in the form of *postmodernism*, "the postmodern" signifies, as Ingeborg Hoesterey (1991a) says, the contemporary "Zeitgeist in Babel" as a "discursive event"; that is, in my reading, anything can be "postmodern" from the perspective of postmodernism (see, for example, Bertens & Natoli 2002; Drolet 2004b; for postmodernism in literary and artistic terms, see, for example, Zurbrugg 1993; Wheale 1995; Lucy 1997).

90 In this respect, the postmodern is in itself, as a notion, a theoretical construct that is typically "postmodern" (cf., for example, Hassan 1971, 1987; Heller & Féhér 1988; Connor 1989; Harvey 1989; Turner 1990b; Best & Kellner 1991, 2001; Hoesterey 1991b; Docherty 1993b; Natoli & Hutcheon 1993; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Simons & Billig 1994a; Bertens 1995; Bové 1995; Bertens & Natoli 2002; Drolet 2004b; for the history of the term, see Köhler 1977; Featherstone 1988; Welsch 1997; Anderson 1998). This problematics will be elaborated on explicitly and implicitly throughout the study in relation to my idea of the "post." That is, the manner I use language in this study indicates in itself the "post" of the postmodern, the "post" as the index of the linguistic figuration constitutive of the postmodern; a mode of language in which things, due to the very logic of the postmodern, are always already in "quotations marks."

The Presence of the Absent Future

As an academic ideology, *postmodernism is an intellectual form of popular mythology*, a theoretical refinement of millennia old mythical thought manifested by the rich tradition of legends, fairy tales and stories constituting the polyvocal narrative of world culture, the global "cultural unconscious."

Thus, the postmodern in terms of postmodernism is a postmodern *grand récit*, a post-theoretical "metanarrative," of the return of the repressed, the "other" of reason: a neo-romantic reaction to the instrumental reason of contemporary capitalism (cf. Campbell 1987; Elam 1992; Brown et al. 1998; Ritzer 2005 [1999]). In these terms, what we have in the world of postmodernism is an entirely new definition of reason; a new *sensibility*, or, as Raymond Williams (1961: 64–66, 77–86) says, a "structure of feeling" (cf. Milner 1993: 39–45, 2002: 68–77), comparable to the Baroque and the Rococo: grandeur, splendor and excessive exaggeration, the sublime, distorted forms and the predilection for affectation, bizarre caprices and pompous spectacle, and all that glazed with erotic allusions (degenerated to blatant "sex"), characterize the sensibility of postmodernism. In other words, postmodernism is the style of neoliberalism, the glamorous façade of financial capital behind which there is to be found nothing but "blood, torture, death, and terror" (Jameson 1991: 5). From this perspective, the spirit of the postmodern manifests what I call *bombastic nihilism*.

It is precisely in this way that the "post," as an indication of the counter-rational intrinsic to the rational, being constitutive of the postmodern, embraces this new mode of reason which I designate as the surrational: reason in terms of the imaginary; in other words, reason in its *spectacular excess* is the reason of the surrational. That is, where the surrational reigns, there reason has lost all restraints and inhibitions, all scruples of moral consideration, and what is left over is the supremacy of the imaginary, the regime of desire driven, paradoxically, by the rational calculation constitutive of neoliberalism in its somnambulistic self-assurance. In other words, *the surrational is the reason of financial capital, the speculative reason of speculation based on the spectrality of the imaginary*.

In the final analysis, this is the extreme complex and complicated connection between reason and "the sexual" in the configuration of the postmodern: *the libidinal is the driving force of the "post"*; thus, in the world of the "post," "the sexual" is the most prevalent manifestation of the imaginary ruled by the commodity form, the very form in which desire and capital unite in a mutually profitable relationship. Like in socialist realism, the "real" of the imaginary in the commodity form is a utopian projection that, paradoxically, is real *because* it is imaginary (in terms of the Stalin cult, cf., for example, Medvedev & Medvedev 2006: 34–61, 84–106; for its revival during the Brezhnev era, cf. Zaslavsky 1982; for the aesthetics of Stalinism deconstructed by means of Moscow conceptualism and *sots-art* by Kabakov, Bulatov, Komar and Melamid, and others, cf. Groys 2010; for *sots-art* with regard to "the total art of Stalinism," cf. Groys 1992; for

sots-art as a literary form and "Soviet Grand Style," cf. Balina et al. 2000; for Russian postmodernism, see Epstein et al. 1999).

That is, as a *form of reason*, it is the imaginary that is the "cultural dominant" of contemporary culture (Jameson 1991: 34) which defines what is real in the postmodern, and thus, like the symptoms in "classical" hysteria are real in their very imaginariness (see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; cf., for example, Bollas 2000: 35–39, 119–120, 155–159; von Braun 1994 [1985]; Lamott 2001; in terms of the "fictional" expressing and engendering the cultural imaginary of the nineteenth century, cf. Cummings 1991; Ender 1995; seen as a code of the modern, cf. Bronfen 1998; from the perspective "woman/machine," cf. Eiblmayr et al. 2000; in the context of "the technology of orgasm," cf. Maines 2001), the effects of the imaginary are real: *the real of the postmodern is in the imaginary*, or, as Žižek (1997b: 3) says, the "Unconscious is outside" in the cultural landscape of the postmodern. Whereas the imaginary in the modern – its true reality veiled behind its civilized mask, manifested paradigmatically by the atrocities of the First World War achieved by the scientific-technologically organized war machinery, the very embodiment of the modern – created the sphere of the surreal "discovered" by the Surrealists (see, for example, Chéniex-Gendron 1990 [1984]; Spector 1997; Bohn 2002; Spiteri & LaCoss 2003), the imaginary in the postmodern gives rise to another order of the real, the sphere of the surrational. This is the reason of postmodern rationality, the rationality of the imaginary; a form of rationality that is able to exceed the limits of reason by the force of relentless exaggeration, by hyperbolic extravaganza elevated to the principle of reason.

Thus, the world of the surrational is not irrational in the sense of the non-rational; on the contrary, it is a world in which rationality has attained the highest degree, the state of assured faith, the certainty of belief: the surrational is not about skeptical reason; it is about affirmative reason, *reason as pure positivity of the potential*.

This is the radical difference between the modern and the postmodern, although the postmodern in itself is a continuation of the modern by other means, the means of productive consumption as the ultimate accomplishment of the scientific-technological rationality constitutive of the modern (in this respect, unfortunately, there is no room in the scope of the present study for the question of the questions, namely, what comes after the postmodern, or, what is the *real* "post" of the postmodern).

In these terms, in the world of the surrational, everything is possible just because *the omnipotence of reason has made the concept of the impossible impossible*.

This is the logic of the postmodern imaginary; for this reason (in both senses of the word), the reality effects of the imaginary in the postmodern, indeed, are real. Accordingly, my interest here is the manner in which the imaginary in the mode of the surrational appears in language, in the form of the virtual reality of language brought about by the linguistic figuration constitutive of post-theory, a mode of theory under the sign of the "post."

As Culler (1997: 1) emphasizes, in contemporary theory what we have is not a theory *of* something, but "just plain 'theory'": it is "not the theory of anything in particular, nor a comprehensive theory of things in general" (ibid.); instead, it is about theory *sui generis*, theory in its own right. In other words, "French theory" (see, for example, Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Angermüller 2004; Davis 2004; Bourg 2007; Cusset 2008 [2003]; Kauppi 2010) is today the *lingua franca* of contemporary theory. This is the context in which, in terms of writing, to think the impossible makes it possible, *in theory*. In this manner, the objects of study in post-theory are neither facts nor fiction, they are objects of a third order: *theory-fictions* postulating worlds of their own (cf., for example, Derrida 1973 [1967]: 150, 1984a [1972/1968]: 18, 2000 [1988]: 88; de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 150–151; Thomas 1990: 1–16; Baudrillard 1993a: 82, 115, 202; Zurbrugg 1993: 141, 2000a: 65, 127, 135; Cholodenko 1997: 76–80; Winkler 1997: 11; Currie 1998: 51–70; Shaviro 1997). As such, these worlds are writerly worlds produced by performative language, by writing about the written, by writing about writing in terms of writing, writing in terms of *écriture*.

In this sense, the "cyber" and the "post," as manifestations of a postmodern linguistic hypostatization, are indications of a reification of language without which the present study, as *a study of a specific mode of nonsense* under the sign of the "cyber," would be without sense.

On these premises, the study at hand is a *reading*, a linguistic-discursive "history" of a "future," reflecting, in and through its own linguistic and discursive figures and figurations, the coming into being of this "future" as a linguistic-discursive formation, a "future" in terms of the "futurality" (Pronger 2002: 33) effected by the "post." What follows, then, is a history of an illusion of the future (cf. Freud 1972c [1927]; cf. Roudinesco & Plon 2004 [1997]: 1164–1166); a future that never happened, but that nevertheless is still present – in its *always already* absent presence, in the presence of the absent – in the virtual reality of the "cyber" as a techno-imaginary reflection of the "post."

Towards the Politics of Post-Organic Life Forms

In terms of the "post," the world of the "cyber" is a world of high-tech millennialism distinctive to the postmodern; a utopian projection of high expectations engendering its own *high*, a world of high theory, the linguistic vertigo of technological omnipotence (cf. Jameson 1991: 34–38), or, in Arthur and Marilouise Kroker's (1997b) words, "digital delirium," typical of all that is "cyber" following the logic of the "post."

This kind of "delirium," as an *ecstasy of theory*, constitutive of the postmodern, in terms of writing theory in the mode of *écriture* (Jameson 1991: 26–29; cf. Flieger 1990: 15, 186–189; Ulmer 1989b [1983]), is precisely about the virtual reality generated by the libidinal language of the technological that has been beyond time since its coming into being (cf. Wise 1997: 5–8), in its enchanted realm of the present future: the imaginary produced by the linguistic of language, an excess of what in contemporary theory are called "free-floating sig-

nifiers," signifiers of which each is a monadic and nomadic entity in its own right (see, for example, Pfeil 1988: 387–388; Eagleton 1990: 387; Harris 1992: 30–47; Butler 1993: 208–209; Rose 1993: 266; Gil 1998 [1985]: 93–106, 154–162; Taylor 1999: 21–22, 142–143, 165; Gromala 2000 [1996]: 600; Smith 2001: 79; Kroes 2002: 304–310; Berger 2003: 36–37; Åkerstrøm Andersen 2003: 37–38, 49–55; Hartley 2003: 260; Martin 2004: 58–60; Laclau 2005: 129–156; McKenzie 2005: 7–10; Ratmoko 2006: 118; Nusselder 2009: 61; Karatzogianni & Robinson 2010: 99; for the Lacanian origin of the term, see Žižek 1989: 87–88, 100–104, 124–125; Feldstein 1995: 150–153, 164–165; Mehlman 1972; in terms of "flickering signifiers," cf. Hayles 1999: 30–35, 1993c); that is, promiscuous signifiers that bring forth ever-new signifieds *as ever-new signifiers* in ever-new contexts without a stable meaning, proliferating thus post-theory, a free-wheeling theory style cultivated under the sign of the "post."

In this sense, post-theory is a postmodern manifestation of what Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966 [1962]: 16–22) calls the "savage mind," a mode of thought that, rather than relying on rational conceptuality (constitutive of Western "civilization"), operates by means of *bricolage*, "the science of the concrete," ruled by an associative logic of its own, the logic of the "arbitrary."

But, if this is the constitutive idea of post-theory, what is its principle of motility, or, as I call it, *the magic kinetics* of "free-floating signifiers" that constitutes the logic of the "post" as the logic of the political economy of the postmodern? "Free-floating signifiers" have an extraordinary ability to *fly*: postmodern capitalism, set free from all constraints, as Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson (1996: 273) say, describing the logic of the commodity form, "has bred a commodity culture driven by an amazingly rapid turnover of signifiers and signifieds," and, as a result:

> Free-flying signifiers and signifieds are continuously rearticulated into a still newer *pastiche combo* of the day. The combinations inflate, the combinations deflate, and the process starts again, hinging and unhinging signifiers and signifieds to define new signs. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

Indeed, if this is the "velocity" (ibid.) of the commodity process in postmodern capitalism, its very *hyperactivity*, why should theory remain outside it? The answer: theory, in the form of post-theory, is not just within the "semiotic universe" (ibid.) of the commodity form, it is an integral part of it: post-theory manifests the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991), perhaps, in its most elegant form. It is in this way that the ever-changing combinations of "free-floating signifiers," of which each signifier is a linguistic entity in its own right and thus constitutive of post-theory, take the shape of an ever-new "pastiche combo" in the theoretical constellation of the "post." That is, no longer the principle of the Leibnizian *Universal-Kombinatorik* (see, for example, Busche 1997: 121–167), rather, the playful logic of heterogeneous assemblages is the *modus operandi* of the post-universal "science of the concrete" typical of the "post": the science of the arbitrary as a postmodern science of the unconscious, the auto-affective motility of the linguistic of language that is the driving force of post-theory.

This is the logic of what Toril Moi (1985: 172), in the context of feminism, calls "the free play of the signifier" (cf. Butler 1984: 77–82); "play" in the sense of both game and spectacle.

If, in terms of the act of writing, what Ben Agger (1990: 82) calls "[w]riting as postmodern *écriture*" might be "a compulsion, nothing less," in terms of the written, however, it is about the "more" that is decisive for the "post": it is this excessive "more," the overwhelming textual abundance, that is the "substance" of the "post." And if, according to Wilhelm S. Wurzer (1988: 245), "*[é]criture*, as thinking, is a new writing that weaves and interlaces the continuous and discontinuous motifs of philosophy's farewell" (cf. Heidegger 2000c [1966/1976]: 670–673), in my view, writing in the mode of *écriture* signals a new beginning, a *splendid* beginning: the beginning of post-theory, the theory formation of the "post" as the post-Lacanian mirror of the postmodern (cf. Lacan 1977f [1966/1949]; cf. Bowie 1991: 21–26, 197–198).

This is, in the Heideggerian sense, *ein Weg des Denkens* (Heidegger 2000b [1953]: 7), "a way of thinking" (Heidegger 1977f [1953]: 3), *the* way of thinking in the study at hand; a way that, as Heidegger says, "more or less perceptibly," leads "through language in a manner that is extraordinary" (ibid.: 4). My interest is precisely in this "extraordinary," the extraordinary of "free-floating signifiers."

This is a world in which sex and sexuality are cathected by the "cyber": desires and pleasures that circulate in the matrix of cyberspace and the cyborg, a realm consisting of "sex machines," "human beings" and "in-betweens" (Gray 2001: 151–160). This is the world of the posthuman (cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998: 79–88; Williams 1998: 126–127, 2003: 155–156; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999; Frank 2003; Clarke 2008; in the context of "postmodern medicine," cf. Featherstone & Hepworth 1998: 162–168; Fox 1998: 40–42; from a Christian-theological perspective, see Waters 2006); a world ruled by the politics of the technological; a politics that promotes post-organic life forms: a-sexual reproduction, genetic engineering, altering the human anatomy, overcoming death; in other words, a politics of technological sociobiology, a politics of the survival of the fittest as an *individual* evolutionary strategy, in the mode of the ego-politics of the post-subject; in short, the New Age of the "cyber" (see, for example, Brake & Hook 2007; cf. Rushkoff 1994; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Foster 2005).

In this sense, the "post" is the intrinsic logic of the "cyber." This is a world in which technological life enhancement amounts to a postmodern appropriation and rearticulation of the utopian tradition of the New Age typical to the American mind-set (cf., for example, Hanegraaff 1996; Heelas 1996; Ziguras 1997; Sutcliffe 2003; in Christian terms, cf. Newport 1998; from a neo-religious perspective, cf. Wilson & Cresswell 1999), a millennial mode of thought set definitively free from the burden of the past by an unremitting development of technology, an outcome of scientific rationality, originating, in its very origin, from Enlightenment reason, the program of a rationalization of all being, that since the nineteenth

century scientific progress has resulted in the spectacular rise of sciences constitutive of the modern (see, for example, Lindberg & Westman 1990; Osler 2000; Rossi 2001; Hellyer 2003; in the American context, see Noble 1979 [1977], 1986 [1984]; Hughes 2004a [1989]; for a historical-philosophical contextualization, see Foucault 1990c [1979/1981], 1990f [1984], 1996g [1983]; from the perspective of the philosophy of science, cf. Stengers 1997, 2000 [1993]), and finally, through a thorough scientification of life, has enabled the emergence of the idea of the posthuman in the figure of the cyborg (see, for example, Gray et al. 1995; Spreen 1997, 2004, 2006; Gray 2001; Zylinska 2002b).

Now, after three centuries of the regime of reason and science, technology has made the reinvention of the human being possible in the form of a posthuman artefact, the cyborg (see, for example, Balsamo 1996; Badmington 2000; Zylinska 2001; Armitage & Roberts 2002b, Mitchell & Thurtle 2004; Haney 2006; Toffoletti 2007; Brown & Decker 2009; Nusselder 2009). In this respect, to be posthuman is to live in a state of post-organic embodiment, with the help of prostheses, as a being – like a multiple disabled person or an astronaut – augmented and enhanced by the technological extensions and amplifications of the body (see Stelarc 1991, 1994a, 1998; Barkhaus & Fleig 2002; Orland 2005a) – much in the same way as in the world of McLuhan, long time ago, in that utopian world of the 1960s in which there were no limits to technological feasibility (see McLuhan 1964; cf. Ross 1991b: 170–181; Segal 1994: 163–202; for the revival of McLuhan in the context of the cyborg, see Zylinska 2002a), whether in terms of human progress and prosperity (see, for example, Sturken et al. 2004; Colomina et al. 2004; Carnes 2007), or war and destruction (for a paradigmatic example, see Kahn 1960, 1962, 1984; DeLanda 1991; Edwards 1996).

Only that this time it is not about the techno-optimistic rhetoric of the modern, but the phantasmatic visions characteristic of the techno-imaginary of the postmodern.

Prosthesis, the Posthuman and the Play of the Signifier

To illustrate my approach I will present the position from which I purport to outline the conceptual and theoretical field of the present enquiry in the form of three "textual images," of which the first one presents the Freudian idea of the prostheticization of the human being, the second one a vision of the fate of the human body under the power of technoscience envisaged by the Krokers, and, finally, the third one Jameson's view of the disintegration of the sign as an allegory of the rise of the postmodern.

Taking the postulation that *[m]it all seinen Werkzeugen vervollkommnet der Mensch seine Organe – die motorischen wie die sensorischen – oder räumt die Schranken für ihre Leistung weg* (Freud 1972a [1930]: 451) as the starting point, Freud formulates the idea of the metamorphosis of the human being into what he calls a *Prothesengott*, a "prosthetic God," a quasi-omnipotent being originating as a result of ever-increasing inventions of science and technology,

which expand both the abilities and the scope of action of the human being by empowering and amplifying the vital functions of the organic body – for Freud, still a *human* being living in a *human* body.

> Es klingt nicht nur wie ein Märchen, es ist direkt die Erfüllung aller – nein, der meisten – Märchenwünsche, was der Mensch durch seine Wissenschaft und Technik auf dieser Erde hergestellt hat, in der er zuerst als ein schwaches Tierwesen auftrat und in die jedes Individuum seiner Art wiederum als hilfloser Säugling – *oh inch of nature!* – eintreten muß. All diesen Besitz darf er als Kulturerwerb ansprechen. Er hatte sich seit langen Zeiten eine Idealvorstellung von Allmacht und Allwissenheit gebildet, die er in seinen Göttern verkörperte. Ihnen schrieb er alles zu, was seinen Wünschen unerreichbar schien – oder ihm verboten war. Man darf also sagen, diese Götter waren Kulturideale. Nun hat er sich der Erreichung dieses Ideals sehr angenähert, ist beinahe selbst ein Gott geworden. Freilich nur so, wie man nach allgemein menschlichem Urteil Ideale zu erreichen pflegt. Nicht vollkommen, in einigen Stücken gar nicht, in anderen nur so halbwegs. Der Mensch is sozusagen eine art Prothesengott geworden, *recht großartig, wenn er alle seine Hilfsorgane anlegt, aber sie sind nicht mit ihm verwachsen und machen ihm gelegentlich noch viel zu schaffen*. Er hat übrigens ein Recht, sich damit zu trösten, daß diese Entwicklung nicht gerade mit dem Jahr 1930 A.D. abgeschlossen sein wird. Ferne Zeiten werden neue, wahrscheinlich unvorstellbar große Fortschritte auf diesem Gebiete der Kultur mit sich bringen, die Gottähnlichkeit noch weiter steigern. Im Interesse unserer Untersuchung wollen wir aber auch nicht daran vergessen, daß der heutige Mensch sich in seiner Gottähnlichkeit nicht glücklich fühlt. (Freud 1972a [1930]: 450–451; emphasis mine; cf. Kittler 2000: 209–213, 1986, 1993)

As we can see, the Freudian "prosthetic God" is not the *deus absconditus* of Christianity (see, for example, McGinn 2002: 94–96; Murray 2002); not the hidden God who can be approached only through a detour, in terms of negative theology, beyond positive knowledge (see, for example, Fiorenza & Kaufman 1998: 150–155; Bulhof & ten Kate 2000 [1992]; in Derridean terms, see Coward & Foshay 1992); rather, the Freudian "prosthetic God" and its postmodern incarnations in contemporary technoculture are entirely immanent and knowable: they are present in the imaginary of technology. It is in this manner that, in the early twentieth century, Freud saw – in quite a similar manner as McLuhan (1964) some thirty years later – that technology materializes not only in the machinery external to the human, but increasingly turns into a part of the human body and thus becomes an intrinsic transformative force within culture that redefines the self-image of humanity as a collective creator and recreator of itself.

Thus, rather than the *deus absconditus* of Christianity as the deity of the modern, it is the *hierophany* of the "cyber" incarnated by the cyborg that is the ultimate techno-theological manifestation of the "post" (for the idea of "hierophany," see Eliade 1987 [1959]: 11–28; Rennie 1996: 7–16): "prosthetic God" as the very embodiment of the postmodern in terms of technology, the techno-theology of the cyborg (in terms of "Catholic sacramentalism," see Haraway 2000a: 24, 86, 141). Face to face to the cyborg, we are called to experience the presence of the sacred, to encounter the *Offenbarung* of our becoming God, the prosthetic God of our own deity; that is, the final consummation of what Heidegger (1983

[1935]: 208, 2000c [1966/1976]: 668–674) calls *planetarische Technik*, "planetary technology," as our very embodiment in a world in which the posthuman is the paragon of scientific-technological reason (with regard to Ernst Jünger's *Arbeiter* epitomizing the posthuman *avant la lettre*, see Jünger 1982 [1982]; in Heideggerian terms, see Heidegger 2004; Haar 1993 [1990]: 165–175; de Beistegui 1998: 28–29, 67–80, 123–124; Radloff 2007: 36–61; in the context of theology, cf. Ornella 2010: 136–145, 170–174).

From the Freudian perspective, the becoming "prosthetic God" of the human being is the history of the future, a future that is now present: the world of the cyborg *in statu nascendi*, in its coming into being through the technoscientific futurity of the present. What does it mean? Here we have an illuminating answer.

> The twentieth century might have begun with Nietzsche's prophecy of the death of God, and the triumph of the will to power, but it surely ends with the death of the human species as we have known it, and the disappearance of the will to power into its opposite – the will to virtuality. The will to virtuality? Not Oswald Spengler's decline of western civilization, but the *recline* of the West into the society of virtual incorporations: interfacing, rendering, mapping, queuing, and modelling as the predatory life signs of an emergent life-form: digital reality. Data Bodies: half-code/half-flesh. Pure interface culture. (Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 51; cf., for example, Galloway 2004: 193–194; Rötzer 1989, 2002; Hayles 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1997, 2004a, 2004b; Stone 1995c, 1995d, 1995e; Leeson 1996, 2008; Reiche & Sick 2002; Reiche & Kuni 2004)

This is the way Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, perhaps the most avantgardist techno/cyber-theorists on the scene of postmodern theory (see Kroker 1987a, 1990, 1992, 1993, 2004a, 2004b, 2008; Kroker & Kroker 1988a, 1993a, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a), act as messengers of a post-Christian Genesis, a coming-to-the-world of a post-Biblical being capable of creating and recreating itself in a continuous process of scientific-technological *autopoiesis* – of course, in the sense of the "post," as a post-autopoietic self-design in terms of the autopoetic, a poesis of the self as a supplementary process of signification constitutive of the post-subject: a subject as its own "creative" negation (in terms of "becoming," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; Braidotti 1994a, 2002, 2006; with regard to the Foucauldian "aesthetics of existence" and "cultivation of the self" in Antiquity, cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]: 49, 1990h [1984]: 39–68, 1990i [1984]; Marti 1999 [1988]: 131–138; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 161–176; Lemke 1997: 269–294; Schmid 1994 [1987]; in terms of the "hermeneutics of the self," cf. Visker 1991b: 107–113).

As we can see here, the "death of God," proclaimed by Nietzsche (1968a [1883–1885]: 352–353, 1973a [1882/1887]: 158–159; cf. Heidegger 1977b [1943]), in fact, entails a resurrection of the Christian God in the form of *a secular God* embodying the scientific-technological rationalism constitutive of the Western tradition: the reason of the Enlightenment materialized in a postmodern form of the Freudian "prosthetic God," the rebirth of the human being as a technological artefact, the cyborg. What in contemporary theory is called the "posthuman" (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999;

Badmington 2000; Gray 2001; Graham 2002; Dinello 2005; Smith & Morra 2006b; Waters 2006; Toffoletti 2007), is only another name for the cyborg as the "prosthetic God" of postmodern technoscience, a scientific-technological enterprise dedicated to the reinvention of the human being as a latter-day *natura naturans* (see Spinoza 1996 [1677]: 20–21), a self-creator as its own creation.[91] This is the neo-religious, post-Biblical perspective of all that is "cyber," the "*secular faith*," "the 'promise' of an absolutely clear future" (Stiegler 2001: 238), enabled by the surrational rationality of the "post."

In these terms, the Krokers are prophets of the posthuman, proclaimers of a postmodern salvation in terms of "prosthetic God" in its technological immanence; the immanence of the postmodern techno-theological transcendence in the world of the "cyber." It is in this sense that along with the cyborg, we have arrived at the grave of the human being; in other words:

> In the 1960s, McLuhan theorized in *Understanding Media* that the technological media of communication were in his term, "extensions of man," electronic outerings of the central nervous system. But that was then, and this is now. Because in the 1990s it's exactly the opposite. Not technology as an electronic extension of the human sensorium, but the human species as a hot-wired extension of digital reality. No longer the will to technology, but the vanishing of technology into the will to virtuality. Hacking human flesh by way of artificial intelligence, virtual reality processors, and the violent force-field of the electronic media is the sure and certain way by which virtuality actually eats the human body, becoming digi-skin: silicon flesh, 7-second brains, recombinant eyes, and android ears at the end of the century. (Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 51–52)

The birth of the posthuman through the death of the human being – that is the gospel of contemporary technoscience celebrated by cyber discourse in the figure of the cyborg, the posthuman being as a "prosthetic God" under the sign of the "post."

For the Krokers, this is neither a dystopian nor utopian vision; it is present reality, rendered in the libidinal language of the "post" as a phantasmatic description of the world we are now living in. If, in the 1960s, the "extensions of man," this McLuhanian notion (see McLuhan 1964; cf., for example, Genosko 1999: 90–91; Theall 2001: 68, 101–103, 118, 149; Zylinska 2002a: 1–3; Cavell 2003:

91 The idea of the complementary notions of *natura naturans* ("nature *naturing*," that is, generating and active nature, "creative nature") and *natura naturata* ("nature *natured*," that is, generated or passive nature, "created nature") originates from scholastic philosophy according to which, on the one hand, all that belongs to nature can regenerate itself because it manifests the presence of God as the Creator, as the creative principle and origin, of all being, that is, *natura naturans* as the materialization of God the Creator, and on the other, the world as a whole embracing the infinity of all finite beings, existing as things-in-the-world, as the attributes of God the infinite being, is *natura naturata* as it is created by God, similarly as all artefacts created by human beings constitute the human world as a human "created creation" (see, for example, Kashap 1987: 25–30; Lermond 1988: 6–8). In Baruch Spinoza's (1996 [1677]: 20) words: "by *natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is *conceived through itself*, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence" (emphasis mine). In this sense, according to Spinoza, God becomes intelligible by the equation *Deus sive natura*, "God equals Nature" (or, "God, that is, Nature"), in which God is *natura naturans*, and all that exists is *natura naturata*, created by God the Creator; in other words, all being consists of the attributes of God the Eternal Substance as *causa sui*, the reason and origin of itself.

81–90; Lister et al. 2003: 84–88; Marchessault 2005a: 73–74, 115–116, 122–123, 2003–204; Logan 2010: 17–20, 82–89; for a discourse-historical contextualization, see Schneider et al. 2003; in terms of techno-theology, cf. Taylor 1999: 129–130), in its futurological mode typical of the time (cf. Kahn 1960, 1962, 1984; cf. Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005; for a contrast, cf. Marcuse 2002 [1964]), captured the idea of the technological enhancement and amplification of the human body in a telling image in an era in which the computer, satellite television and space travel were about to transform the parameters of being human (cf. McLuhan 1962, 1964, 1995 [1969]; de Lauretis et al. 1980; Woodward 1980; Levinson 1997, 1999), the cyborg, this Harawayan mythopoetic figure, is now the emblem of the technological millennialism typical of the postmodern: *the cyborg as the paragon of techno-religious futurism constitutive of the posthuman*.

Of course, both Haraway and the Krokers, each in their idiosyncratic manner, cultivate irony – not in the manner of Baudrillardian "objective irony" (see Baudrillard 1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b [1983]: 182, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 127, 1997c: 13, 2000b: 54, 77–78), but as a self-referential linguistic play that ironizes the idiosyncratic language that it has itself created in the first place (cf. Hutcheon 1985: 25–26, 30–34, 52–64, in terms of the "politics of irony," cf. Hutcheon 1994) – as a mode of postmodern writing, but this does not obliterate the fact that the Krokers's proclamation of the "death of the human species," similarly to Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," follows the formula of revelation rooted in religious scriptures (see Haraway 2000a: 24, 86, 141). In this sense, the Krokerian vision as a post-Spenglerian prophecy is a secular-religious declaration of an epochal turn, of a termination of an age and a beginning of a New Age, the time of the reconstitution of the human being by means of technology: the inauguration of the era of the posthuman.

The New Age of the "cyber" is a continuation of history by other means, by means of the "post": a techno-imaginary appropriation of the *Endzeit* perspective constitutive of the discursive formation under the sign of *posthistoire*, a paradigmatically postmodern idea constellation manifesting the vision of a new era beyond the burden of history, a new time after the end of history (see, for example, Welsch 1997: 17–18; Habermas 1998d [1985]: 11–12; Niethammer 1989; Gehlen 2004a [1994], 2004b [1975]; from the perpespective of *Bibelauslegung* in terms of the postmodern, see Hintze 1997: 20–22; cf. Bell 1973: 49–54; Koslowski 1991: 122–144; Kramer 1998: 308–418; Seidenberg 1950; Fukuyama 1992, 2002; Spengler 1998 [1918–1922]; Cox 1996).

Welcome to the Virtual Reality of Language

It is in this sense that the techno-religious futurism constitutive of the posthuman projects a wish-image of the end of the human body implying its rebirth in the form of the cyborg, a body-machine assemblage as an embodiment of what I call *technomorphism*, the ideological hard core of posthumanism in the idea matrix of postmodern techno-theory; that is, the human is now redefined in terms of

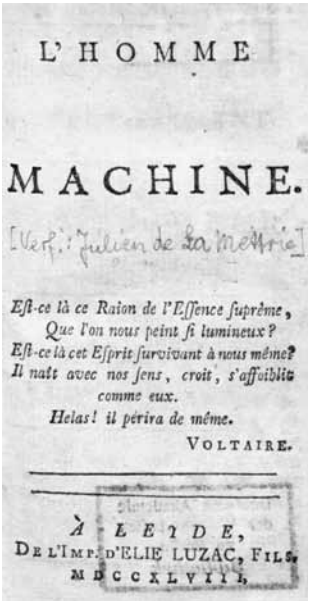
the machine *and* the machine in terms of the human, to the point that the difference between them disappears (see, for example, Williams & Bendelow 1998: 21–22, 80–88, 106–107; Kennedy 2000a: 471–475; Gillis 2002: 206–208; Graham 2002: 181–187; Mackenzie 2002: 126–128, 135–138; Wolmark 2002: 76–80; Bell et al. 2004: 11–12; Nayar 2004: 65–66; Berghaus 2005: 204–214; Herbrechter 2006: 283–286; Munster 2006: 1–24, 62–64, 110–113, 123–125, 131–148; Giannachi 2007: 60–73; Manning 2007: 152–156; Toffoletti 2007: 12–14, 20–30; Vint 2007: 15–16; Sullivan & Murray 2009: 36–42, 180–203; Dery 1996; Rutsky 1999; Dyens 2001; Weber & Bath 2003; in the context of the military body-machine complex, cf. Levidow & Robins 1989a; Edwards 1996; Gray 1997, 2000); a vision implying the coming into being of the "neocybernetic posthuman" (Clarke 2008: 193–196; for a metahistorical contextualization in terms of "anthropological futures," cf. Fischer 2009).

According to Rosi Braidotti (2006), a prominent authority of postmodern techno-theory, we now live in a technocultural constellation in which we are machines, not in a metaphorical sense, but literally:

> The human organism is an in-between that is plugged into and connected to a variety of possible sources and forces. As such it is useful to define it as a machine, which does not mean an appliance or anything with a specifically utilitarian aim, but rather something that is simultaneously more abstract and more materially embedded. The minimalist definition of a body-machine is an embodied affective and intelligent entity that captures, processes and transforms energies and forces. (Braidotti 2006: 41; cf. Descartes 1985d [1664]; with regard to classical cybernetics, cf. Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; in terms of contemporary theory, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]).

But, in fact, what is Braidotti's "body-machine" if not a postmodern echo of La Mettrie's "man-machine"; as La Mettrie (1912 [1747/1748]: 93) already more than two centuries ago stated: "The human body is a machine which winds its own springs," and, as such, it is "the living image of perpetual movement" (ibid.). In this sense, "everything depends on the way our machine is running" (ibid.: 95). And therefore, "since all the faculties of the soul depend to such a degree on the proper organization of the brain and of the whole body, that apparently *they are but this organization itself, the soul is clearly an enlightened machine"* (ibid.: 128; emphasis mine). And as a conclusion: "To be a machine, to feel, to think, to know how to distinguish good from bad, as well as blue from yellow, in a word, to be born with an intelligence and a sure moral instinct, and to be but an animal, are therefore characters which are no more contradictory, than to be an ape or a parrot and to be able to give oneself pleasure" (ibid.: 143; for a historical and philosophical contextualization, see, for example, Wellman 1992: 159–218; Rothenberg 1993: 119–121; Hansen 2000: 83; Irrgang 2005: 28, 33–36; Thomson 2008: 14–26, 171–212; Bousquet 2009: 49–50; Vartanian 1960, 1973, 1999; Baruzzi 1968b, 1973; Sutter 1988; Jauch 1998).

There is, however, a radical difference between La Mettrie and postmodern machine theorists: while the machine was a philosophical notion (with its satirical and ironical overtones typical of La Mettrie) in La Mettrie's materialistic-phys-


L' HOMME

MACHINE.

[Ref.: Julien de la Mettrie]

Eſt-ce là ce Raion de l'Eſſence ſuprême,
Que l'on nous peint ſi lumineux?
Eſt-ce là cet Eſprit ſurvivant à nous même?
Il natt avec nos ſens, croit, s'affoiblit
comme eux.
Helas! il périra de même.
VOLTAIRE.

À LEYDE,
De l'Imp.ie d'ELIE LUZAC, Fils.
M. DCC. XLVIII.

Fig. 29–30. Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751), a French physician and philosopher, one of the earliest materialists of the Enlightenment.

In his philosophical pamphlet, not without satirical overtones, entitled *L'Homme machine* (1748), "Machine man," La Mettrie rejected the Cartesian dualism of the mind and the body by introducing the idea of the human being as a machine. In the scientific discussion and religious polemics that ensued from the publication of his text, "La Mettrie admitted no possibility of an immortal soul, robbed theologians of authority on scientific questions or indeed any questions about nature, and explicitly addressed both deism and atheism" (Wellman 1992: 171).

"But an understanding of this text has not simply been thwarted by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious writers; a more significant contemporary obstacle to appreciating the text is the independent status of 'l'homme machine' as a term that has taken on a life and a history of its own. Historians have investigated the roots of the man-machine theory in part because it has become such a powerfully evocative image in the computer age; the distinctions between human intelligence and the capacities of machines have become blurred in discussions of artificial intelligence, and mechanical analogies for physiological processes have infiltrated common parlance." (ibid.; cf., for example, Thomson 2008: 14–26, 171–212; Vartanian 1960, 1973, 1999; Baruzzi 1968b, 1973; Glaser 1988; Sutter 1988; Christensen 1996; Jauch 1998)

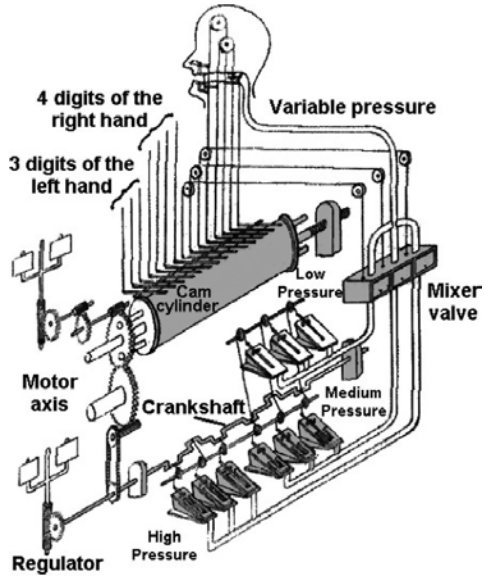
Thus, all the issues discussed by La Mettrie have been part of the human-machine analogy from Greek atomists through Enlightenment materialists to present techno-biological theories of the posthuman (see, for example, Mazlish 1993: 14–30; Graham 2002: 181–183; Mraček 2004: 92–107; Irrgang 2005: 26–36; Benesch 2002; Hüppauf 2005; Muri 2007).

iological conception of the human being as an iconoclastic criticism of the idealism of the time, contemporary machine enthusiasts celebrate the machine as a phantasmatic figure implying a vision of salvation in terms of the posthuman.

In other words, like many other similar figures, Braidotti's "machine" is a theory toy typical of post-theory: rather than knowledge and understanding, it is pleasure in the form of intellectual gaming, as theoretical *divertissement* in terms of the "post," that is the driving force of post-theory.

This is the "post" of post-theory: it is about a mode of theory that is based on an appropriation and recycling of ideas from the Western intellectual tradition; a mode of theory which, rather that reflecting and thus analytically thinking through the past, utilizes history as a reservoir of linguistic figures, as material to be used in the postmodern manner of *la mode rétro* (Jameson 1991: 19). For this reason, also in the realm of theory, we are now in the postmodern, as Jameson says, "condemned to seek History by way of our own *pop images and simulacra* of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach" (ibid.: 25; emphasis mine; in terms of postmodern art, cf. Evans 2009).

This brings us back to the comparison between Freud and the Krokers in their interpretations



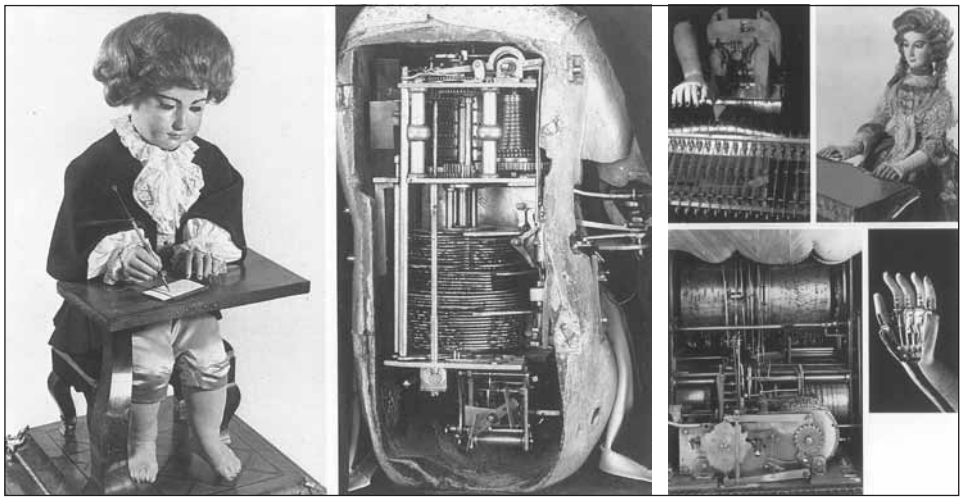


Fig. 31–32. The automaton as an embodiment of anthropomorphism, the reverse side of which is the technomorphism of the cyborg, implying a reconception of the organism in terms of "the technological" (cf. Hayles 1993b: 173, 180–183; Maier & Zoglauer 1994; in terms of metaphysics and the organism/machine distinction, cf. Heidegger 1992a [1929–1930]: 312–325; Ansell Pearson 1997: 117–120; de Beistegui 2003: 112–113).

In 1738, Jacques de Vaucanson (1709–1782), a French inventor and artist, presented *The Flute Player* (above) to the Academy of Science, a mechanical construction that could play twelve different melodies on the flute (see Liu 2000: 90–93; Landes 2007: 98–100; Lischka & Sick 2007: 88–89). The idea of the human body as a machine was also the conceptual model of the automata in the human form, or anthropomorphized machines constructed by the Swiss watchmakers Pierre Jaquet-Droz (1721–1790) and his son Henri-Louis Jaquet-Droz (1752–1791): *The Writer*, 1772, and *The Musician*, 1774 (below). Referring to Vaucanson's *Flute Player*, Robert Jütte (2000: 146), a German historian of medicine, states that "this work of art undoubtedly inspired also La Mettrie's famous work *L'Homme machine*" (for "androids in the Enlightenment," see Voskuhl 2013; cf. Heckmann 1982; Beyer 1983; Sauer 1983).

It was this text that, in turn, "incited watchmakers and constructors of automata keen on experimenting in their efforts to perfect the mechanical human being" (ibid.; cf. Söring & Sorg 1997; Wittig 1997; Fleig 2002). After viewing a demonstration of Vaucanson's flute-playing automaton, "the Abbé Desfontaines enthusiastically exclaimed, 'It is doubtless the growth of human anatomy, and above all the anatomy of the nervous system, which guided the author in his mechanics'" (Landes 2007: 96; cf. Riskin 2003).

What will future historians of science say about the cyborg: in which sense it will be seen as a sign of our time, an age ruled by technoscience and its spectralization in the form of the postmodern techno-imaginary?

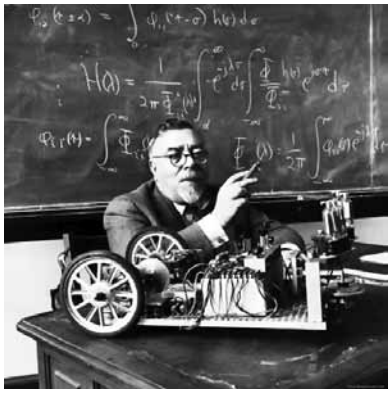


Fig. 33. The biological organism as a model of the machine: Norbert Wiener and an experimental automaton, the feedback machine "Moth Palomilla" (1949).

"At every stage of technique since Daedalus or Hero of Alexandria, the ability of the artificer to produce a working simulacrum of a living organism has always intrigued people. This desire to produce and to study automata has always been expressed in terms of the living technique of the age. In the days of magic, we have the bizarre and sinister concept of the Golem, that figure of clay into which the rabbi of Prague breathed life with the blasphemy of the Ineffable Name of God. In the time of Newton, the automaton becomes the clockwork music box, with the little effigies pirouetting stiffly on top. In the nineteenth century, the automaton is a glorified heat engine, burning some combustible fuel instead of the glycogen of the human muscles. Finally, the present automaton opens doors by means of photocells, or points guns to the place at which a radar beam picks up an airplane, or computes the solution of a differential equation." (Wiener 1961 [1948]: 39–40)

Although, according to Gabriele Schwab (1987: 72), "the cyborg is a descendant of the human automaton," manifested by the human-like mechanical figures typical of the Enlightenment (see, for example, Gendolla 1989; Sutter 1997; Schaffer 1999; Riskin 2005; Muri 2007; Voskuhl 2007, 2013; Kang 2011), in the era of the computer, however, the cyborg has become a new metaphor of the subject: a subject beyond the boundaries of the self. "The human automaton, which symbolized the transition between romantic and modern subjectivity, is replaced by the cyborg, which symbolizes the transition between modern and postmodern subjectivity" (Schwab 1987: 72; cf. Bedini 1964; Mayr 1986; Beaune 1989; Liu 2000; Des Chene 2001; Fleig 2002; Franchi & Güzeldere 2005a).

of technology as a transformative force of culture. As far apart – separated by over sixty years – as Freud's and the Krokers's worlds are from one another, and as differently as they describe what for them seems to be reality, there are some interesting parallels – *not similarities* – that, in their own way, account for both a continuity and a break between the 1930s and the end of the twentieth century.

Firstly, the state of technology, of course, was not at the same level in Freud's world as it is today, but – and this is the point – for Freud it nevertheless appeared as amazing, indeed, as fantastic and fabulous – *wie ein Märchen*, like a fairy-tale – as the contemporary technological wonder world for the Krokers. Secondly, describing the marvels of technology in his time Freud depicted them no more no less than in divine terms, as godlike achievements, while for the Krokers we as humans, in fact, have already attained the omnipotence of God to recreate – or rather, to *redesign* – ourselves according to our own will. And thirdly, for both Freud and the Krokers, it is precisely technology that enables the human being to transgress the constraints of being human (cf. Kroker 1993, 2004b; Kroker & Kroker 1996a, 1997a, 2004a, 2008); that is, a being capable of continually transforming, of shaping and improving, its own nature in the mode of technological *natura naturans*, "creative-creating creator," that is able to exceed its own limits.

These parallels notwithstanding, there is a significant difference between Freud and the Krokers that most clearly shows the break, the Jamesonian *coupure* (Jameson 1991: 1), between the times then and now: the idea of language and its relationship to what is understood to be reality, to be emphasized, a reality that exists language-external, that is, is independent of language, and, as such, self-contained and autonomous in its existence. In spite of the figurativity, the metaphorical expressions, of Freud's description, the language he uses is nevertheless a linguistic vehicle, a mediating medium, by means of which he depicts a factual world, real-existing things in their actual thingness in front of his eyes (see Freud 1972a [1930]: 450–451). In this sense, some three decades before McLuhan and some seven decades before the Krokers, Freud deems various technologies as prosthetic extensions of the human being:

> Die Motoren stellen ihm riesige Kräfte zur Verfügung, die er wie seine Muskeln in beliebige Richtungen schicken kann, das Schiff und das Flugzeug machen, daß weder Wasser noch Luft seine Fortbewegung hindern können. Mit der Brille korrigiert er die Mängel der Linse in seinem Auge, mit dem Fernrohr schaut er in entfernte Weiten, mit dem Mikroskop überwindet er die Grenzen der Sichtbarkeit, die durch den Bau seiner Netzhaut abgesteckt werden. In der photographischen Kamera hat er ein Instrument geschaffen, das die flüchtigen Seheindrücke festhält, was ihm die Grammonphonplatte für die ebenso vergänglichen Schalleindrücke leisten muß, beides im Grunde Materialisationen des ihm gegebenen Vermögens der Erinnerung, seines Gedächtnisses. Mit Hilfe des Telephons hört er aus Entfernungen, die selbst das Märchen als unerreichbar respektieren würde; die Schrift ist ursprünglich die Sprache des Abwesenden, das Wohnhaus ein Ersatz für den Mutterleib, die erste, wahrscheinlich noch immer ersehnte Behausung, in der man sicher war und sich so wohl fühlte. (Freud 1972a: 450)

In contrast, in the Krokers's world, there is no longer a reality external to language: for the Krokers, the world *is* language, it is a linguistic reality that is the only reality. In this sense, the Krokers are not merely speaking of a new reality, but in, through and by their idiomatic linguistic play they *create* a "reality" *sui generis*. Accordingly, the future the Krokers are talking about is already present: it is present as a linguistic reality, as a *virtual reality of language* – a post-Gibsonian "consensual hallucination" in terms of the "cyber" (cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]: 67; with regard to the "hallucinogenre" as a "narcotic" mode of writing, cf. Ronell 1993: 61; Sobchack 1994: 25; Wolf 1990; Slawney 1994).

In other words, while, for Freud, there was still a difference between the representation and the represented, between language and reality, for the Krokers representation and reality have imploded into one another and have thus become a post-representational realm of a third order, the matrix of post-theory; that is, in the Krokerian world, everything that exists is given in language. In terms of theory, this is the difference between the modern and the postmodern: Freud lived in a modern world, the Krokers live in the postmodern.

This difference, the epistemological and ontological difference between the modern and the postmodern, can be illustrated by Jameson's allegory about the triumph of the signifier; an allegory that sums up the radical transformation of language that is constitutive of post-theory, the theoretical frame of reference of the posthuman, and, at the same time, the allegory of language on which, in addition to Freud's (1961 [1905]) theory of the joke in "its relation to the unconscious," my approach is based.

> Once upon a time at the dawn of capitalism and middle-class society, there emerged something called the sign, which seemed to entertain unproblematic relations with its referent. This initial heyday of the sign – the moment of literal or referential language or of the unproblematic claims of so-called scientific discourse – came into being because of the corrosive dissolution of older forms of magical language by a force which I will call that of reification, a force whose logic is one of ruthless separation and disjunction, of specialization and rationalization, of a Taylorizing division of labor in all realms. Unfortunately, that force – which brought traditional reference into being – continued unremittingly, being the very logic of capital itself. Thus this first moment of decod-

> ing or of realism cannot long endure; by a dialectical reversal it then itself in turn becomes the object of the corrosive force of reification, which enters the realm of language to disjoin the sign from the referent. Such as disjunction does not completely abolish the referent, or the objective world, or reality, which still continue to entertain a feeble existence on the horizon like a shrunken star or red dwarf. But its great distance from the sign now allows the latter to enter a moment of autonomy, of a relatively free-floating Utopian existence, as over against its former objects. This autonomy of culture, this semiautonomy of language, is the moment of modernism, and of a realm of the aesthetic which redoubles the world without being altogether of it, thereby winning a certain negative or critical power, but also a certain otherworldly futility. Yet the force of reification, which was responsible for this moment, does not stop there either: in another stage, heightened, a kind of reversal of quantity into quality, reification penetrates the sign itself and *disjoins the signifier from the signified*. Now reference and reality disappear altogether, and even meaning – the signified – is problematized. We are left with that *pure and random play of signifiers* that we call postmodernism […]. (Jameson 1991: 95–96; emphasis mine; cf. Jameson 1988h [1984]: 194–201; Barthes 1981 [1968]; Foster 1988, 1993; in terms of "a liturgical theology for late modernity," cf. Hughes 2003: 41–58, 81–90)

This radical transformation of language is not only the moment of the postmodern, but, beyond that, I argue, it constitutes the linguistic matrix in which what is called the "posthuman" becomes both possible and intelligible: *the "post" is the linguistic legitimation of the posthuman*. This is the theoretico-discursive matrix in which the "post" creates, at the same time, the condition of possibility and the framework of intelligibility of all that is "cyber." In these terms, in my reading, I shall trace the logic of the "post" in the figures and figurations of the "cyber"; the "cyber" as a "free-floating signifier," and as such, a *linguistic prosthesis*, peculiar to the postmodern.

If, for Freud, the problem of *Prothesengott,* as an emblem of modern technology, was that this omnipotent being is, in Freud's words, *recht großartig, wenn er alle seine Hilfsorgane anlegt*, "when he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent," but these prosthetic extensions of the body are *nicht mit ihm verwachsen und machen ihm gelegentlich noch viel zu schaffen*, "have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times" (Freud 1972a [1930]: 451; cf. Armstrong 1998: 77–105; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 94–97; Sawday 2007: 1–4; Toffoletti 2007: 123–129), what, then, is the situation in this respect in the context of the postmodern, a paradigm in which, as Jameson says above, all that we have now is "that pure and random play of signifiers that we call postmodernism"? This is the question that forms the general background of the present study.

4.2 The Method of the Study: Paraliterature

The three "linguistic images" above illuminate, each from their particular point of view, the constituting idea of my approach, namely, that in the postmodern, language and technology are intertwined with one another, to apply Heidegger's (2000b [1953]: 7) expression introduced at the beginning of the present study, *auf eine ungewöhnliche Weise*, "in a manner that is extraordinary." It is precisely this "extraordinary" that enables cybersex as a phantasmatic manifestation of post-sex, as an aspect of being a cyborg, that in itself is a mythical entity in which language and technology fuse "in a manner that is extraordinary." This is a world in which the desire for technology is the driving force, in the sense of the Freudian *Trieb* (see Freud 1991d [1915]), of all being; a desire that itself produces the objects it desires for.

This is a world of scientific-technological omnipotence, a world in which to be is to become: *one is not born, but rather becomes, a cyborg* (cf. de Beauvoir 1972 [1949]: 301). As Helen Haste (2000: 196) explains, as a "synthesis of the human and the machine," the cyborg offers "a model for 'fragmented' and 'dispersed' selves that are freed from the search for an organic unitary wholeness," and, accordingly:

> Cyborgs do not have to be born – or reborn. Whereas an organic system recreates through birth or rebirth, a cyborg has prostheses. One transforms the cyborg's function by adding a new part. So it is *systemic* but not *holistic*. The cyborg is flexible; it can be created or changed to meet the immediate needs. (ibid.)

A cyborg has prostheses: as a cyborg, one transforms oneself by *adding new parts* (cf. Haraway 1991a: 180–181) – that is the liberation of the body from the constraints of the human, the technoscientific reorganization of the body, our ultimate liberation from the straitjacket of the organic: your body is no longer a human body, but a posthuman assemblage, a flexible body-machine construction that can be time and time again reassembled at will, according to, as Haste (2000: 196) says, your "immediate needs" (cf. Baty 1995: 73–75; Gray 2001: 87–97; Yaszek 2002: 13–15; Caputi 2004: 304–307; Parisi 2004a: 34–37; Irrgang 2005: 171–201; Toffoletti 2007: 61–63; Halberstam 2008: 265–266; Halacy 1965; from the perspective of "the second Genesis" in the sense of "the coming control of life," cf. Rosenfeld 1969; Deane-Drummond & Scott 2006; in the context of cloning, cf. Ferreira 2005: 220–221; in critical terms, cf. Yaeger 1992: 293–294); in other words, in the world of the posthuman, a world of prosthetic machines, our freedom is to reinvent ourselves according to our personal predilections.

Never has there been so much freedom as in the world of the "post," the world of the cyborg. Never has there been either so many possibilities of body modification as in the conditions of cyborgian politics of life in which *self-management* and *self-design* determine our very existence, our being in the mode of technoscientific becoming (cf. Braidotti 2003, 2006; in terms of the Foucauldian "aesthetics of existence" and "cultivation of the self" in Greek Antiquity, cf. Foucault 1990a [1984]: 49, 1990h [1984]: 39–68).

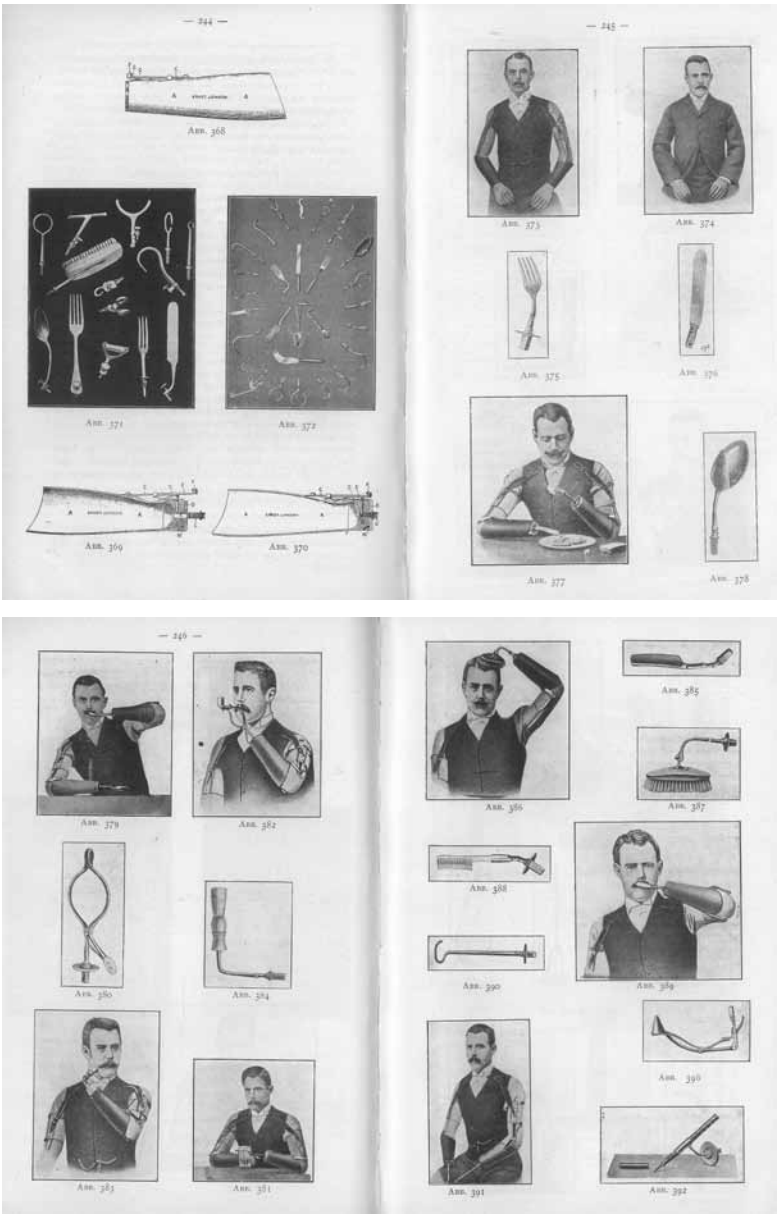


Fig. 34–35. *Verstümmelungen und Ersatzglieder*, "Mutilations and Replacement Limbs" (Martin 1924: 244–247): a prosthetic reconstruction of the disabled body constituting the artificial anatomy of the prosthetic body as an assemblage of various changeable attachments designed to restore the hand functions in everyday activities.

In this constellation, the combination of auxiliary organs brings about a prosthetic body as a body *sui generis*, the functionality of which depends on both the objective possibilities of prosthetic technology and the subjective abilities of the individual body. If, after the First World War, both of these aspects of prosthetics constituted enormous social, political, economic and technological challenges to the rehabilitation of disabled soldiers (see Excursus 3), in the contemporary world ruled by technoscience, the "cyborg is our ontology" (Haraway 1991a: 150) implying that we live in "the era of techno-biopolitics" in which "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249). That is, our existence is now defined "in terms of disassembly and reassembly," and, therefore, "no 'natural' architectures constrain system design" (Haraway 1991a: 162).

Accordingly, "[t]he cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (ibid.: 163). This is a world in which "the body is obsolete" (Stelarc 1991) and precisely for this reason the prosthetic assemblage constitutive of the politics of the posthuman is the condition of possibility of our survival; that is, in the world of the "post," *the prosthetic body is our survival machine* (see, for example, Brahm & Driscoll 1995; Stone 1995e; Wilson 1995; Brassett 1997; Hayles 1999; Gray 2001; Marsh 2000; Nelson 2001a; Drucker 2002; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; Zylinska 2002b).

It is not difficult to understand that in this world what used to be called "sex" is something entirely different: it is a technoscientific mode of post-organic desires and pleasures beyond the limits of the human; that is, post-body affections that are predicated upon the machinic and the prosthetic.

It is in this sense, as stated above, that what is *cybersex* is at once *a negative theology of the sexual and a post-eschatological vision of future sex*.

4.2.1 Theory as a Postmodern Literary Form

This is a world in which by the force of "free-floating singifiers" the potential of potentiality turns into the actual, and nonsense becomes sense, the only sense – not unlike in Romanticism (cf., for example, Menninghaus 1995; Frank 1997; Millán-Zaibert 2007; Safranski 2007; in terms of the surreal and the absurd, cf. Cornwell 2006: 21, 83–84, 43, 161–163): *the sleep of reason is the dream of the "post," the ultimate emancipation from the terror of the rational*, this is the gospel of post-theory: *credo ut intelligam*, "I believe so that I may understand."

But "to understand" – it is appropriate to repeat, *to understand* – has taken on a new meaning in the world of the "post": it is about the ability to write in the manner that makes sense beyond the constraints of sense, *beyond the straitjacket of reason*. Hyperbolic gestures, odd whims, fancies and caprices, obscure and ambiguous expressions, the cult of imagination in terms of the imaginary, and the celebration of the sublime and the subversive are characteristic of post-theory as a postmodern form of romantic sensibility, an anti-rational "structure of feeling" (Williams 1961: 64–66, 77–86) as a post-romantic revolt against Enlightenment reason, the reason of the modern; all this as manifestations of an overwhelming, all-consuming linguisticism (for a critique of the linguistic idealism of postmodern theory, see McNally 2001), a self-mirroring linguistic figuration that glorifies the *jouissance* of writing in the mode of *écriture*. In Barthesian terms, in the world of the "post," we enjoy the pleasure of "writerly texts" (Barthes 1974 [1970]: 4–5, 260); that is, while "in readerly [*lisible*] texts the signifiers march," "in writerly [*scriptible*] texts they dance" (Hawkes 1977: 114), or, as Douglas Kellner (1995: 298) says, the "hypertechnological society" appearing in Gibson's science-fiction world of *Neuromancer* (1995 [1984]), the very origin of all that is "cyber," consists of, "[l]ike Baudrillard's best work," texts that "illuminate the contemporary scene with a brilliant dance of concept, metaphor, image, and high energy prose."[92]

92 David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995: 147–173) call Gibson's technological exotica "techno-orientalism"; in this sense, *Neuromancer* combines "futuristic high-tech images of contemporary Japan and anachronistic images of feudal Japan still widely circulating in the popular American imagination." In a similar manner, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) is a "re-invention of Japan as a land of high-tech enchantment": "manga, techno-porn, high-density urbanism, mobile fashion, hyper-violent movies, videophones, fax cameras, hand-held televisions, video-games, disposable buildings, even a new breed of 'radically bored' teen information junkies, *otaku*, who shun body contact and spend all their waking hours gathering data on the most trivial bit of media" (Morley & Robins 1995: 169). This kind of projection of "exotic (and erotic) fantasies" turns, in the end, into a "high-tech delirium" (ibid.), which, for me, is constitutive of cyber discourse (cf. Grassmuck 1991, 1994, 1995a, 1995b; Tatsumi 2000, 2006).

The Liberating Effects of "Free-Floating Signifiers"

This is fascinating, indeed; but, in fact, where is this *hypertechnological society*? Where, in general, is this "contemporary scene" under the sign of the "cyber" on which we have the pleasure to enjoy "a brilliant dance of concept, metaphor, image, and high energy prose" – if not on the post-Freudian "other scene" (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 541) of cyber discourse, engendered precisely by the *high energy prose* typical of all that is "post"; that is, theory as a post-avantgardist, post-literary form constitutive of cyber discourse.

If, in Kellner's writing, the world not just appears but *is* a post-Barthesian *effet de réel* brought about by linguistic figuration under the sign of the "post," by this "brilliant dance," that is, writing forging reality, writing *as* the reality of the real (cf. Barthes 1989b [1968]), this is also my position, only that it is, in my writing, about a phantasmatic world effected by the "cyber," the shibboleth of cyber discourse. In other words, in the present text that constitutes the "textual *mise-en-scène*" (Norris 1987: 186) of the study at hand, cyber discourse is a scene with regard to which the text that comprises my study is another scene, a scene that takes place in the theatre of theory set up by means of writing, the present text becoming present in, by and through writing and reading, effectuating itself – in the sense of the German word *Inszenierung* – as a reading-writing (cf. Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1984 [1974], 1986; Derrida 1978c [1967/1966], 1990a [1974], 1997, 2000 [1988]).

While poststructuralism – the theoretical matrix of contemporary theory, and, by extension, the very condition of possibility of post-theory – "merges literary language into *écriture*, or writing and textuality in general" (Felperin 1985: 107), cyber discourse hybridizes science fiction and post-theory (cf. Haraway 1991a: 178–180, 1991i [1989]: 226–230, 1997: 19–87), in other words, the linguistic figuration characteristic of both "Californian Ideology" (see Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]; cf. Kellner 1995: 297–330; for a critical contextualization in terms of "the romantic self," computer culture and neoliberalism, see Streeter 1999, 2003, 2011) and "French theory" (see Starr 1995; Lotringer & Cohen 2001a); that is, the rhetorics of "libertarian politics, countercultural aesthetics, and techno-utopian visions" (Turner 2006: 208–236; cf. Hassan 1975: 49, 54–56, 151–176, 1977: 212–216, 1982 [1971]: 267–272; Lovink 2003, 2004; Hartmann 2004) blended with the excessive textualism in terms of *écriture* typical of post-theory.

In other words, as Derrida (1981b [1972/1969]: 316) says: "Everything 'begins,' then, with citation." But to ask where the "beginning" is where everything "begins" is to ask after the "where" of a mirage. If this is the situation in general (as it is according to Derrida), the more it is the situation in the world of the "post." "Where to begin then?" (Derrida 1982: 62). At the non-origin of all beginnings, taking seriously the issue of citation, the "mattering matter" of post-Derridean "iteration" (cf. Derrida 2000). It is in this sense, as stated above, that there is no "cyber" without the "post." In other words, instead of intentionality, what we have in the world of the "post" is iterability in its productive unlimitedness. That is, what was once criticized as the "intentional fallacy" in the literary stud-

ies (for the origin of the idea, see Wimsatt 1954 [1946]: 3–18; for a thorough discussion of its implications, see Patterson 1995 [1990]: 140–143; cf. Barthes 1977 [1968]) is once and for all removed from the agenda of the "post."

In cyber discourse, the "post" and the "cyber" are mutually related in circular movement in a similar manner as "postmodernist texts" (for an overview, see Fokkema 1984; Fokkema & Bertens 1986; cf. Hassan 1975, 1977, 1982 [1971], 1985, 1987; Dowson & Earnshaw 1995) and science fiction relate to one another: on the textual scene of the postmodern, there are "postmodernist texts absorbing materials from already 'postmodernized' SF, and SF texts incorporating models drawn from already 'science-fictionized' postmodernism" (McHale 1992: 228–229; cf. Hayles 1987; Donahoo 1995; McCaffery 1994c [1991]; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Hollinger & Gordon 2002). This is the world of theory-fictions under the sign of the "cyber," a world in which, as an effect of theory speaking of itself, fiction appears no longer as an imaginary representation of the real, but as a reality in and of itself, a reality *sui generis*. This is the "third" order of things, an order beyond the binary opposition of the factual and the fictional, beyond the distinction between ontology and epistemology, beyond the problematics of "normal" science as the science of the "normal" founded on the (non-solvable) problem of the dichotomy between the *Realobjekt* and *Erkenntnisobjekt* (see, for example, Schöffel 1987 298–300, 330–334; Ferber 1995: 42–73).

In other words, there is no longer anything that one can take as "evidence" (in the sense of objects and occurrences in an extra-linguistic reality) in the world of the "post"; what there is are linguistic figures produced by various discourses (see, for example, Fleck 1980 [1935]; Smith & Kross 1998; Nohr 2004). In this sense, each *Erkenntnisobjekt* is, at the same time, a *Realobjekt* in its own right: there is nothing "real" outside discourse.

But what is specific to cyber discourse is that the linguistic matrix of the "cyber" can evoke, by very means of language, an experience of *trompe l'oeil*, a real-like presence of simulacra presenting themselves as a "reality" (cf. Grau 2001: 23–25, 212; Marin 2001: 310–319; Taylor & Harris 2005: 146–147).

In these terms, to study the world of the "cyber" means to approach objects that, according to the paradigm of the "normal," *do not exist at all*. All that is "cyber," however, has another mode of existence: the "cyber" belongs to the realm of paranormal in the manner of the "post": a realm in which things come into being by the force of writing enabled by the imaginary of language. In this manner, the "theoretical" of theory in the world of the "post" is about the "real" of language: the "real" as an effect of the imaginary that is constitutive of *all* language. What is specific to theory in terms of the "post," however, is that as soon as things (whatever they happen to be) land in the magic circle of the "post," the "real," constitutive of their reality, turns into a mode of the "real" that can be approached (but never reached) in Lacanian terms only (cf., for example, Žižek 1989, 1997b, 2001c, 2005a). It is in this manner that cyber discourse is a linguistic-imaginary "paraspace" embracing a "rhetorically heightened 'other real'" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157).

Reading between the Lines

From this point of view, I read the discourse of the "cyber" as a phantasmatic mode of post-theory, as a self-constituting and self-reflecting realm of textuality that I call, drawing on Rosalind E. Krauss's (1985a [1980]) notion, *paraliterature* (usually understood to consist of such subgenres of popular, trivial or marginal literature as fantasy, mystery, horror, comics, detective stories, spy thrillers, romances, pornography and the like, see, for example, Parrinder 1980: 44–48; Groensteen 2000: 38–39; Tatsumi 2000: 229–230; revalued in terms of science fiction, see Suvin 1988: 3, 15–18, 88–91; 1979, 2010; Yanarella 2001: 2–7; Heuser 2003: xxii–xxxiv; Botting 2005: 112–113; Delany 2005: 358–372; Baccolini 2000; Jameson 2005; in the context of *Transmedialität*, cf. Meyer et al. 2006).[93] Elaborating on the ideas of Barthes and Derrida, Krauss (1985a: 292) posits the concept of paraliterature as a mode of writing understood as *écriture*, to describe a usage of language that deliberately intents – as postulated by Barthes – to "blur the distinction between literature and criticism" (cf. Hutcheon 1988: 10–11; Knowlton 1992: 29–31; Theall 1995: 103–105; Cazzato 1997: 200; in terms of "paracriticism," cf. Hassan 1975; with regard to "criticism at the 21st century," cf. Wolfreys 2002); criticism understood here not only as literary theory, but, moreover, "theory" in itself as "the most interesting of contemporary literary forms" (Ulmer 1989b [1983]: 108).

In this manner, according to Krauss (1985a: 292), such works as, for example, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975 [1973]) and *A Lover's Discourse* (1979a [1977]) by Barthes, simply cannot be called "criticism" but not "not-criticism either."[94] What these

93 The revaluation of science fiction as a genuine *literary* genre, that is, as a form of literature comparable to any other form, is centrally an achievement of Darko Suvin, a Yugoslav-born academic and critic who became a professor at McGill University in Montreal. As early as in the mid-1950s, Suvin considered science fiction as a legitimate object of literary studies. "It was in these earliest studies that Suvin combined his interests in Marxism and science fiction in ways that would enable him to contribute in original and imaginative ways to the scholarship in both fields" (Wegner 2010: xvii). What is particularly interesting historically is that in the early 1970s, "in response, in part to the student militancy of the New Left, and in part to the innovations of a burgeoning critical theory," academic literary studies increasingly became receptive to scholarly work in "the area of what was then referred to as 'paraliterature'" (ibid.). "Suvin refused the marginalization of science fiction implied by this characterization, not only locating the genre within a long literary tradition of transgressive popular fictions that stretched back to the work of Lucian of Samosata, Thomas More, and François Rabelais, but also consistently maintaining that the finest contemporary science fiction is among the best of all literature produced in the present" (ibid.: xvii–xviii). According to Suvin, "[t]he stakes, thus, are the highest imaginable […]: the education of *Homo sapiens* for earthly salvation" (ibid.).

94 Some years after Krauss's definition of paraliterature its idea appeared in another context, in Jameson's (1989 [1983]: 112) conception of "postmodernism" as a manifestation of "consumer society." What, for Jameson, is "distressing" is that there is no longer an interest in "preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism" (ibid.) since theorists of the postmodern (or postmodern theorists), as Jameson (1991: 2) later elaborates on his statement, "have, in fact, been fascinated precisely by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and *Reader's Digest* culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperpack categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery, and the science fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no longer simply 'quote,' as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance," to the point where "the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw" (Jameson 1983: 112). As we can see, while Krauss reserves the notion of "paraliterature" for description of phenomena of the "high" in art and theory, Jameson refers with it to spheres of the "low" in popular culture.

texts are is writing in a textual space between literature and criticism; that is, in the *writerly* space opened up by paraliterature *as a new mode of theory*.

Yet, as liberating as the effects of paraliterature might be in terms of post-theory, it is appropriate to keep in mind the critical view of Abdelkébir Khatibi, an author as a "professional traveller" writing in between languages in the *bi-langue* culture of Maghrebian writers, concerning paraliterature in the context of the internationalization of culture in the contemporary globalizing world, quoted by Réda Bensmaïa in his treatise on the "political geography of literature":

> Why is it necessary to make a distinction between *literature* and *paraliterature*? Because paraliterature is not supported by a secret or a force of writing. It is a monumental reproduction (pastiches, imitations, parodies, simulations) determined by the market for books, media circulation, and trade. Paraliterature is this entropic circulation of words in an economy of interchangeable objects. An economy in which writing no longer has its proper place. (Bensmaïa 2000 [1996]: 303; cf. Foucault 1977b [1963], 1990j [1975/1986])

Now, is this also the logic of post-theory, namely the logic of a *self-referring reproduction* of pastiches, imitations, parodies and simulations determined by the *entropic circulation of words in an economy of interchangeable objects*, the linguistic-discursive economy of "the theoretical" ruled by the imperative of neoliberalism?

This question has a specific significance in terms of methodology, as we will see later on.

According to Krauss, the "paraliterary" (1985a: 292) is specific to writing in which "criticism finds itself caught in a dramatic web of many voices, citations, asides, divigations." In this manner, paraliterature – as the Greek prefix *para* implies, referring to a mode of textuality that is both "counter" or "against" and "near" or "beside" (Hutcheon 1988: 26) – constitutes a textual site of its own, a "space of debate, quotation, partisanship, betrayal, reconciliation" (Krauss 1985a: 292). In these terms, as Krauss emphasizes, "it is not the space of unity, coherence, or resolution that we think of as constituting the work of literature" (ibid.); rather, heterogeneous materials that transgress all the conventional categories constitute the "para" of paraliterature exactly in the manner of the "post."

In this manner, as a mixture of "the literary" and "the theoretical," paraliterature is a mode of postmodern writing that comes into being as a "result of theory" amounting to each theorist's "own *theories in operation*" (ibid.: 293; emphasis mine). These kinds of theories, as Krauss specifies:

> run exactly counter to the notion that there is a work, x, behind which there stands a group of meanings, a, b, or c, which the hermeneutic task of the critic unpacks, reveals, by breaking through, peeling back the literal surface of the work. By claiming that there is not, *behind* the literal surface, a set of meanings to which it points or models to which it refers, a set of originary terms onto which it opens and from which it derives its own authenticity, this theory […] [posits writ-

> ing that] *is "about" its own strategies of construction, its own linguistic operations, its own revelation of convention, its own surface*. (ibid.; emphasis mine; in terms of "objective irony," cf. Baudrillard 1988b [1987]: 41–42; for my discussion of Baudrillard's idea as a methodical background of the study at hand, see Excursus 1)

Accordingly, in post-theory, understood as paraliterature, there is no world – no *reality* – "behind" the text. In an endless *mise en abyme* (for the origin of the term, see Dällenbach 1989 [1977]; cf., for example, Hutcheon 1980: 48–56), the text is the world which the text is a text about. In other words, *what you write is what you get*, and, *a fortiori*, what does not exist has to be written.

In these terms, paraliterature, indeed, is *literature*, also when it is practiced as criticism; this is the "generic conflation of literature and criticism" (Ulmer 1989b [1983]: 107). What does this mean? According to Krauss, the answer, in fact, is to be found in *modernism*:

> If one of the tenets of modernist literature had been the creation of a work that would force reflection on the conditions of its own construction, that would insist on reading as a much more consciously *critical* act, then it is not surprising that the medium of a *post*modernist literature should be the critical text wrought into a paraliterary form. And what is clear is that Barthes and Derrida are the *writers*, not the critics, that students now read. (Krauss 1985a: 295)

In these terms, as Gregory Ulmer (1989b [1983]: 108) says, "theory is not only the most interesting of contemporary literary forms, it is the mode best suited for moving out of the impasse reached by the modernist movements in the arts" (cf. Ulmer 1982, 1994).

What happens in post-theory is that, in the last instance, "art becomes the master paradigm of knowledge" (Featherstone 1991a: 41) amounting to a situation in which, in fact, there is neither something knowable nor knowledge; instead, what there is are only things that exist writerly (cf. Flieger 1991: 85–87; Grabes 1995: 160–167; Ulmer 1989a, 1994): textual entities existing as effects of writing, linguistic figures that present themselves as a realm of being beyond the dichotomy between the real and the imaginary. In this way, all the strict distinctions disappear since language in this context is no longer a medium capable of establishing distinctive categories referring to objects that exist "before" or "outside" language. As a consequence, the fundamental distinction between the ontological and the epistemological vanishes (cf. Haraway 1991f, 1997). Thus, language, in the world of paraliterature, is an unending flow of signification creating self-referential linguistic figuration that Nietzsche (1973c [1873/1896]: 374–375) called *ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern*, "a mobile army of metaphors." As Nietzsche, ridiculing conventional notions of knowledge and truth says:

> Was ist also Wahrheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorfismen, kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden und die nach langem Gebrauch einem Volke fest, kanonisch und verbindlich dünken: die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, daß sie welche sind (ibid.; cf. Foucault 1978i [1977]: 51–54, 1977c [1971]).

This, at the core, is the program of poststructuralism: a fundamental skepticism, based on an ultimate radicalization of what Paul Ricoeur (1970 [1965]: 32–34), in his theory of interpretation as a demystifying mode of reading, calls the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (cf. Clark 1990: 57–64; Kearney 1991: 58–69). In this respect, post-theory has brought Ricoeur's programme to the logical conclusion: instead of truth and reality, there are only unending interpretations understood as endless reading, that is, posting ever-new "posts" *ad infinitum*; an unending postitification of theory as a manner of reading-writing that amounts to a continuous and ruthless post-Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte* (cf. Nietzsche 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 363–364, 1969a [1988/1894]; Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 33–51; Behler 1991 [1988]) – though, of course, not in terms of real life (by definition, there is no "real life" in the world of the "post"), but in theory, in the *language* of theory (in terms of the immanent self-reflexivity of language enabling "the thought of the outside," cf. Foucault 1998 [1966]).

4.2.2 A Post-Nietzschean *gaya scienza*

This is about a politics of words that not only posits its own condition of possibility, but, first of all, the possibility of all that *is*; a possibility that remains – or rather, is from the very beginning – in a continuous state of conditionality of the conditional appearing as the real of "reality."

As a result, in post-theory, radical skepticism, in fact, has given way to a radical affirmation: there are only "free-floating signifiers," and this is the end of all skepticism and the beginning of positive thinking, a New Age of a gleeful play of language, the post-historical era of the sublime effected by the euphoria of theory. Instead of distinct concepts, all we have now in terms of the "post" are metaphors upon metaphors, figurative language without closure: all-consuming tropicity of theory turned into a *post-theoretical tropicism* in which "the theoretical" is an effect of the tropological. In this sense, post-theory is a "language without truth" (Scott 1990). And precisely in this sense, post-theory creates not only desire for theory, but, first and foremost, the *jouissance* of theory, the supreme mode of pleasure brought about by the "post." In the theory-euphoria of post-theory as a postmodern manifestation of the sublime, in the ecstasy of the theoretical following the logic of the "post," in the theory-hysteria of post-reason, worlds just appear in the mode of poetic visions: they have *the presence of revelation*.

It is clear that this is no longer the constructionist ideal of science aptly formulated by Bruno Latour (1983: 142): "Give me a laboratory and I will raise the world"; instead, the constitutive principle, the very world-formula, of the theory discourse under the sign of the "post" is: Give me a *word* and I will raise a world. This is the ideal of post-theory; and, accordingly, this is the genealogy of the cyborg (cf. Haraway 1985: 67–69, 1997: 98–116). And as a corollary, this is the genealogy of cybersex: "sex" in terms of the "cyber" enabled by the logic of the "post."

Différance: The Irony of Language

In this manner, cyber discourse, apparently referring to something that is somewhere "behind" its linguistic surface, is actually "about" the world that is there as constituted by – in Krauss's words – its own "strategies of constructions," "its own surface," that is its true meaning, provided, of course, that there is in the world of the "post," dominated by the excess of signification, still something that can be called "meaning" at all. In these terms, I do not assume that the signifiers in the mode of the "cyber" following the logic of the "post" represent something beyond themselves, in the manner of signifieds; instead, I take signifiers of the "post" and the "cyber" at their face value, *as signifiers*. If, in terms of reading as an approach premised upon psychoanalysis, it is possible, as Shoshana Felman (2003a [1977]) says, to extract meaning by "turning the screw of interpretation," in my reading, such a "turning" is not possible since in terms of the "post" there is neither such a "screw" nor anything that can be called "interpretation"; what there is is just writing in terms of *écriture*.

According to my reading of Krauss's reading of Barthes and Derrida (a reading, to be remembered, that is in itself an instantiation of writerly reading, reading as writing), cyber discourse operates in the mode of paraliterature, as a *post-literary* discourse, that, in turn, constitutes the textual object of my reading, a reading that in itself and by itself, *as a method*, works by means of the paraliterary, in terms of writing; that is, rather than following the logic of representation, my approach reflects, in the mode of self-reflexivity, the Foucauldian idea of "the thought of the outside" (see Foucault 1998 [1966]). In this sense, my reading of cyber discourse, the world being there by the force of the "cyber," is not a "meta" text of cyber discourse. Instead, reading cyber discourse in terms of post-theory, my text is based on an approach that speaks the language of its object, but differently, not from a meta-level, but from the "elsewhere" of an *internal* distance, through a double gesture: the reading at hand, in this text, is diacritical: my reading takes place in between the difference of differences, in the realm of *différance*.[95]

In this sense, writing in the mode of the "post" about the non-place of the "cyber" I am in the language which I am writing both with and about, but *my position is elsewhere: it is between the lines*.

This is the idea of the immanent critique peculiar to my approach; this is about critique *after* criticism (cf. Ulmer 1989b [1983]: 84–87). My interest is in the way in which a *prophecy* (cyber discourse in its initial phase) becomes a form of

95 In this sense, I take absolutely seriously, in my own way, of course, as we will see, the methodological implications implied by the conception of "textuality" by Jameson (1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 18): "Textuality may rapidly be described as a methodological hypothesis whereby the objects of study of the human sciences […] are considered to constitute so many texts that we *decipher* and *interpret*, as distinguished from the older views of those objects as realities or existants or substances that we in one way or another attempt to *know*." This approach can be seen, in turn, to imply a "philosophical revision entailed by deconstruction," namely, "that all modes of writing are located at an equal distance from reality" (Patterson 1995 [1990]: 258–259). Seen this way, there is still assumed to be a *difference* between writing and reality; in contrast, there is no longer such a difference in the world of the "post," the object of the present study.

proselytics (the period of the evangelization of cyber discourse) that, in the end, turns into a mode of *doxa* (the canonization of cyber discourse). That is, from a slightly different perspective, my aim is to follow the process in which what in the beginning was pathos turns, in the end, into *bathos*, in the mode of *persiflage that persiflies itself* (cf. Hobson 1998: 234); in other words, through my reading I am dealing with the issue as to how a theory discourse in the form of high theory, as a mode of the sublime, precisely due to the "high" effected by it in itself, turns, in the final analysis, into a parody of itself in the manner of Baudrillardian "objective irony" (see Baudrillard 1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b [1983]: 182, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 127, 1997c: 13, 2000b: 54, 77–78; a mode of irony discussed in detail in Excursus 1).

This is the irony of the "cyber," the irony of the "post," a mode of immanent irony that is inscribed in cyber discourse from the very beginning; as Gibson, referring to his cyberpunk trilogy (*Neuromancer*, 1984, *Count Zero*, 1986, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, 1988), says: "it never occurred to me that it would be possible for anyone to read these books and ignore the levels of irony" (Brown 1990: 238; cf. Stallabrass 1996: 67; see also Gibson 1994 [1991]; cf. Novotny 1997: 99–101; Cavallaro 2000: 66–67; Moraru 2001: 130; Rapatzikou 2004: 151–152).

In this respect, I can only ask why is it that the irony of the Harawayan cyborg has been ignored time and time again in discussions on cyberculture? Is it precisely cyber discourse in itself that, through its celebration of all that is "cyber," has obfuscated and effaced the irony inscribed in both Gibson's cyberspace and Haraway's cyborg?

The problem is that cyber discourse is a utopian discourse that, like utopias in general, is a serious matter, an issue of the future dreamed as a salvation, as a redemption of humans, even as our ultimate survival. But if cyber discourse projects a utopian space as a technological transcendence, what is in this context transcendent is actually immanent: all that is "cyber" takes place in the virtual reality of language; that is, the "transcendent" in cyber discourse is immanent in the textual paraspace that constitutes the discursive matrix of the "cyber." In other words, the utopia constitutive of cyber discourse is effected by the utopian language of the "cyber," a language of technological transcendence (cf. Romanyshyn 1989). And this language, as languages manifesting faith and religious dreaming in general, is a language of revelation, a language of confession. The paradox of cyber discourse, though, is that it is simultaneously a serious matter and a ludic issue: the linguistic play constitutive of cyber discourse is, at the same time, an expression of belief, even in the mode of speaking in tongues.

This is the reason (in both senses of the word) of the postmodern technophilic *glossolalia* characteristic of cyber discourse.

The idea that I am putting forward in this text, *by means of the text at hand*, is that this is precisely the way "Californian Ideology" (see Barbrook & Cameron

2001 [1995]) and "French Theory" (see Lotringer & Cohen 2001a) intertwine in a ludic writing, a mode of *écriture* typical of all that is "cyber," informed by "free-floating signifiers" following the logic of the "post." In this sense, my reading of cyber discourse is a reconstruction of the paraliterary world suggested by the "cyber"; a reading by way of deconstruction of its textual mode by reading it through a process of writing (cf. Muller & Richardson 1988a); and, in this sense, by reading it against the grain, in the mode of text-immanent interrogation. In this manner, my reading is a deconstruction of cyber discourse through a reconstruction of its linguistic figuration as a form of post-theory (cf. McQuillan et al. 1999; Butler et al. 2000; Cunningham 2002; Rabaté 2002; Eagleton 2003; Payne & Schad 2003; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b; Davis 2004; with regard to "the ends of theory," cf. Herron et al. 1996; in terms of "the end of philosophy," cf. Heidegger 2000h [1965]: 621, 2007a [1964]; Ross 1989: 281–285, 294–298; from the perspective of the "post," cf. Redner 1986: 1–31).

As such *a reading as writing,* the study at hand does not pretend to be an "objective account" of its object. Instead, the present text is a *text* that, in the mode of post-theory, itself engenders what it speaks about. In language, one is always implicated (if not involved in complicity). Therefore, commitment is the only "way out." That is, in language, every counter-move not only provokes, but simultaneously necessitates the very same language it purports to counter. There is no escape from language *in terms of language*: each linguistic act, even as its own negation, takes place within language. This is the very duplicity of language, its deceptive self-evidence (cf. Descombes 1989 [1979]: 140, 151; Taylor 1990: 36, 38, 67, 70, 78, 113, 117, 138, Bové 1992b: 72–73): as a speaking subject, one is always conditioned by language, constituted by the linguistic of language that in itself is never "post" but always "ante."

If this is the logic of language, *a fortiori* it is the logic of irony. It is what Derrida (1982: 41, 61) calls the *double séance*: as a "scene of writing" (Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]), every text is a double text, a text that is always already out of phase with itself, in a unending process of transtextualization as a result of a self-effectuating dissemination (see Derrida 1981b [1972/1969]). *Worte sind ein plastisches Material, mit dem sich allerlei anfangen läßt,* "[w]ords are a plastic material with which one can do all kinds of things," as Freud (1961 [1905]: 34) says, and, accordingly, a slight *displacement* in the manner of the Freudian *Fehlleistung* or "parapraxis" (Freud 1990h [1901]) in a reading of a text is sufficient not only to produce its para-text or counter-text, but, moreover, to foreground the very textuality of the text: through a displacement of signifiers, through a recontextualization of the figures to be considered (in the Kristevan sense, cf. Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1984 [1974]; Roudiez 1980; Lechte 2004), a text appears *as* text, as writing in terms of *écriture*.

This is the idea of revelation *in another sense*, a revelation in the sense of the study at hand. This sense appears on the scene of post-theory, as a "scene of writing" that is the present text in the mode of Derridean *double séance* (cf.

Johnson 1980a: 45–48; Norris 1987: 46–63; Hobson 1998: 72–91; Irwin 2010: 47–52, 71–96), as a "double reading" reading itself in terms of the text it is a text about, a reading as a chiasmatic process that proceeds as reading-writing (the text at hand) of the written: the textual world of the "cyber" effected by the "post" (cf. Nealon 1993).

In this precise sense, then, my reading, *in the present text that is present in its absence*, stages and enacts its own textuality by means of writerly reading, in the mode of "allegorical" criticism that focuses on the manner in which the paradigm of the "post," the writerly configuration of postality in its very postness, "favors the material of the signifier over the meanings of the signifieds" (Ulmer 1989b [1983]: 95; in terms of "post-modesty," cf. Connor 2001 [1989]: 227–250); that is, what I am interested in is the "literal" as the "*letteral*" surface of textuality, the *letterism* of the "post" at the "literal level of language itself," the "polysemous meanings" (Ulmer 1989b: 95) (if they still are "meanings" at all), of the writerly world of the "cyber" enabled by the logic of the "post." In other words, my project as a textual *parcours* (having no end neither an origin) purports "to dramatize and enact the possibilities inherent in the linguistic material of the object-text" (Connor 1989: 214); the "object-text" that is constituted by the endless movement of the "cyber" within the linguistic universe of the "post."

This entails that for me language betrays itself not only when it is playing with itself, but also – and especially – at the moment it is playing "seriously" (see Haraway 1991f, 1997, 2000a); at the moment it occupies the site of "truth" in a disguise of play ("occupies" also in the Freudian sense of *Besetzung*, see, for example, Freud 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205, 1977d [1893]: 54, 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96), the site of non-contradiction that as such appears as self-evident, as an expression of reason – that is, in the manner cyborg mythology presents itself in contemporary theory (see, for example, Davis-Floyd 1998: 260–261; Badmington 2000: 102–103; Grant 2005: 60–62; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Roden 2002; Foster 2005; Whitt & Perlich 2008). This intrinsic duplicity of language, its self-difference with regard to meaning, its incongruity in its own terms, is the ever-present possibility of irony in language, the very *immanence* of irony, or, in Baudrillard's (1996 [1995]: 98) words, "the ironic dimension of language."

This is the irony of language: irony is "always already," in the Derridean manner *toujours déjà* (see, for example, Derrida 1997; cf. Fuss 1989: 17–18; Behler 1991 [1988]: 9; Hobson 1998: 22), *intrinsic* to language. In short, in Derridean terms, irony is a duplicity of an utterance that is effected by the *différance* of and in its own words (see, for example, Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 192, 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 86, 1991 [1987]: 41, 62, 97, 2000 [1988]: 12; Norris 1987: 99, 114–115; Royle 2003a: 15, 92; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 251–252; Gendron 2008: 21–25; Ormiston 1988).

Blasphemy: The Importance of Being Earnest

In these terms, the moment of irony, for me, is the unconscious of language becoming "conscious" for a moment; of course, not in terms of consciousness, but in the sense of awareness, in terms of signifiers that refer to themselves; that is, in terms of linguistic self-reference, a mode of self-reflexion in which the mirror reflects itself, reflects the reflected by the reflected in the mode of *mise en abyme*. Thus, in the present text, effected by its very textuality, I am interested in the difference between the said and the meaning that is absent: postponed, deferred, made unrecognizable by the Freudian processes of *Verschiebung* and *Verdichtung*, "displacement" and "condensation," constitutive not only of the unconscious, but also of the linguistic of language that is the primal process of all signification (see Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 174–176, 381, 1987d [1900]: 284–314, 519–521; Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]: 156–157, 160–161; Silverman 1983: 66–86; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 235–236); that is, I am focusing on the linguistic *Traumarbeit*, "dream work," of the language of the "cyber" (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 283–511; Stephan 1989: 27–34, 43–45, 61–63; Schöpf 1998: 82, 181, 202; de Berg 2003: 18–24; Pabst 2004: 84–101; in Lacanian terms, cf. Bowie 1991: 57, 69–71, 217, 218). In this sense, what I call "conscious" here is the conscious implied by the signifier, *if* it is read differently, displaced onto "another scene." This is the scene of writing that is the text at hand.

With regard to reading and writing, texts and textuality, it is precisely the duplicity of language that opens up the possibility of "reading against the grain" (cf. Moi 1985: 24; Singer 1993: 172–174; Tyson 1999: 7–8; Barry 2002 [1995]: 71–79). If, as Culler (1982: 175–180) says, "all readings are misreadings," what else is irony, if not a misreading of a misreading (cf. Lentricchia 1980: 303–307, 319–341; Selden & Widdowson 1993: 152–155; Howells: 1999: 67–71; Cunningham 2002: 92–95; Hutcheon 1994; Colebrook 2004), or, in terms of literary theory, *misprision* (Bloom 1975)? Thus, what is here at issue is not so much the concept of irony, but, rather, *the irony of concepts*; that is, the ambiguous and ambivalent metaphoricism that is intrinsic to all that is "post": one is never sure whether a text means what it says, or says what it means. Thus, the "post" is not about a metaphoricism referring to something, but about a mode of metaphoricism reflecting its own metaphoricism, its own linguistic figuration effected by its own linguistic figuration in the manner of *mise en abyme* (cf. Foucault 1989 [1966]: 3–16; in terms of "paraesthetics," cf. Carroll 1987: 53–67, 72–73).

As soon as one gets into the magic circle of the post-Bretonian *champs magnétiques*, the "magnetic fields" of the "post" (cf. Breton & Soupault 1985 [1920]), a radical derealization of the real takes place: *trying to take the "post" at its word, one has only words*.

From this perspective, the "cyber" is "prescribed," in the Derridean sense, by a "mute irony" (Derrida 1973 [1967]: 131), a mode of irony based on the generative force of "the letter" (in Derrida, the "literal permutation" of "a" and "e"; ibid.: 131–133), on the contingent compound consisting of the letters *c-y-b-e-r*.

These letters, articulated into a shibboleth, the initiative code word the "cyber," meaning in itself nothing, but precisely *as such* allowing for an endless process of signification, a post-Derridean "automatic writing" as an unending avalanche of "supplementation" and "dissemination" (cf., for example, Derrida 1982: 45–46, 84–88, 1997: 141–164, 1981b [1972/1969]), enable a *production* of "meaning" that in ever-new contexts circulates and recycles the very "cyber" through and by which it is constituted in the first place (for paradigmatic examples of the manner the "cyber" functions in cyber discourse, see Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000).

In this manner, the "cyber," as the discursive effect of the prefix *cyber* as an empty attribute that is able to *signify* in abundance without a meaning in itself, is the linguistic prosthesis that is the very condition of possibility of cyber discourse. Accordingly, cyber discourse is an instantiation of prosthetic language that follows the logic of the "post," that, in turn, is the linguistic prosthesis of post-theory.

In the configuration outlined above, the issue of cybersex is not so much about sexual theory as about *sex as theory*: cybersex is *theory-sex* made possible by post-theory reflecting, in its own distinctive manner, the cultural constellation of post-sex, a theory playing with "the sexual" of the textual. Thus, cybersex is "sex" (in terms of post-sex) in the realm of paraliterature constituted by all that is "cyber." In this way, as a form of theory-sex based on a paraliterary figuration, cybersex is a techno-erotic project in which the Lacanian imaginary, the Barthesian pleasure of the text, the Foucauldian body discourse, the Derridean deconstruction, and in the end, the fluid corporeality of *écriture féminine*, meet one another in an ecstasy of theory, in a hilarious delirium of post-theory (for a paradigmatic example, see Flanagan & Booth 2002).

Accordingly, the present study is a reading of the "cyber": it is speech from "within" in the Derridean sense of "breaching" and "broaching" from within the border-lines of the "within" (Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]: 201–205, 1997: 46, 143, 267). This is a *writerly* reading, reading as writing (in terms of the Barthesian distinction between *lisible*, "readerly," and *scriptible*, "writerly," cf. Barthes 1974 [1970]; Culler 1975: 189–192, 1982: 32–35; Johnson 1980a: 5–8, 1987: 26–27); a reading that embraces a "text as writing-reading" (Kristeva 1998b [1967]: 29–31); or, as Derrida (1997: 19) says, a "[r]eading, and *therefore* writing" (emphasis mine). In reading as well as in writing, the double is not a double *per se*, it is a double in terms of duplicity. In these terms, this is a reading that explores not only the textual world it is studying (a world that is constituted in *this* reading), but, with the same condition of the conditional, it enacts in the mode of effectuating – in the sense of the German word *Inszenierung* – its own signifying practices, itself as a writing of the written. In other words, I purport to "attend to the textual operations of my own production and organization of meaning, to write in a way that foregrounds the performativity of language" (Lather 1994: 103).

If, as Christopher Norris (1982: 108) states, a text "says" nothing, a "text *performs*," this is a performative reading, a double reading (cf. Nealon 1993) as an

instance of *mise en abyme*, a misreading as an immanent critique of the "cyber" in terms of the "post."

Post-theory is not only an ultimate emancipation of thought from the dictates of reason, it is also – and perhaps most importantly – a freedom project of the body, the final liberation of the libido. Post-theory is not poetry; it is poetic praxis in language (in terms of the post-poetic): *what you write is what you get*. Concepts, they are a straitjacket of the mind; in contrast, metaphors, they are vehicles of imagination, a guarantee of creative freedom. If conventional Western thought, as Norris (1982: 75, 1987: 45), reading Derrida, says, is imprisoned by the "metaphysics of presence," then, the "language of dialectical materialism" – for a long while the theoretical language of the academic Left – is "shot through with *metaphors* disguised as *concepts*."

In contrast to that, in post-theory metaphors have displaced concepts altogether. Post-theory is linguistic figuration through and through.

This is the politics of words in contemporary theory; a form of theory as a continuation of politics by other means, by a "subversive" language based on "free-floating signifiers," signifiers set free by themselves, following the logic of the imaginary, the logic of the "post."

If, in Derridean terms, a text is always a "scene of writing" that, at the same time, is a *double séance*, a double text as a text that is *always already* out of phase with itself, the text at hand is a double text of the text I am reading, the "scene of writing" constituting the textual world of cyber discourse. This is the duplicity of the present text, its intrinsic irony, *its irony of immanent irony* present in cyber discourse; immanent irony in the sense of Baudrillardian "objective irony" (see Baudrillard 1988e [1987]: 41–42, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1997c: 13). In other words, this is an antidote to the doxalogical engendered by all that is "cyber" following the logic of the "post."

As a stratagem of reading, irony is to take things seriously, in their own "seriousness," a seriousness that implies its own subversion. In this sense, irony embraces the potential of blasphemy. There is no better position to adopt from within the secular-religious world of technoscience, the world of the cyborg. Blasphemy protects one from doxa, while still insisting on the necessity to participate in the discourse one is reading through its intrinsic irony. Blasphemy is not apostasy; it is dissidence, if needed, heresy. Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes since there are only assemblages of particulars. Irony is about the tension of holding incompatible things together because everything is contingent. Therefore, irony is serious play following the logic of displacement; it is a rhetorical strategy and a political method (cf. Haraway 1991a: 149; Fricker 2000: 151–152; Hostert 2007: 67–77).

It is in this manner that I take, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, "*pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries," which, of course, implies taking "*responsibility* in their

construction" (ibid.), which, in turn, is possible only by way of reconstruction that proceeds in the mode of deconstruction.

In this sense, my approach is based on what I call *methodical irony*, an approach that takes seriously the idea of what Baudrillard (1988e [1987]: 40–42) calls "objective irony"; that is, a manner of reading in which a meaning or a linguistic figuration that has already *in itself* taken on an ironic character is turned against the discursive order that has enabled it; in other words, by means of "objective irony" one is able, as Baudrillard says, to make a discourse "work against itself, *to play against itself*" (ibid.: 41; emphasis mine).

Thus, as for the text at hand, irony is a politics of language exercised as a self-reflection of theory. While, as Gary Gutting (2001: 250) says, the "poststructuralist project" is "inevitably ironic," "since it sees its methods of analysis as both necessary and, given traditional goals, doomed to failure," I am interested, in contrast, in a different kind of irony: a mode of irony stemming from *the possibility of the impossible*. Faithful to the idea of blasphemy, at the centre of my irony is the "cyber" of the cyborg in its most extravagant form, the phantasm of cybersex, a signifier circulating in the imaginary universe of the "post."

In the phantasmatic world of the cyborg, one is, in a specific way, privileged to experience, as Haraway (1985: 65) says, that "[i]rony is about humour and serious play." In this sense, post-theory means a Nietzschean *gaya scienza*, "gay science" (see Nietzsche 1973a [1882/1887]), a mode of thinking that takes seriously the Derridean invitation to take everything unseriously, as a "joke: sarcastic, even a bit ironic, parasitical, metaphorical, citational, cryptic, fictional, literary, insincere" (Derrida 2000 [1988]: 72). "Why not?" (ibid.), asks Derrida. Indeed, why not?

Part One

1 What Is It We Call "Sex," or, The Enigma of the Sexual

> […] in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex […].
>
> Michel Foucault (1990k [1976]: 159)

> But cybersex, like the erotic rituals of the mystery cults, serves a purpose other than the conventional procreative or hedonistic ones. It also reforms (or "morphs") identity. In cyberspace one may assume a body of choice in fantasy. But it is in any case fundamentally a techno-body that occupies cyberspace. It is imagination embodied by machine technology. (Its apotheosis is the erotic cyborg.)
>
> Cliff Bostock (2001)

What is the zero degree of sexuality? Whatever it is, it is not to be found in the origin of sexulity "in itself" for the simple reason that there is no such "origin" in the first place. But sexuality has not "fallen from the sky" either, to formulate the problem in Derridean terms (cf., for example, Derrida 1973 [1967]: 141, 1982 [1972]: 27). In its *diffuse presence*, sexuality is present even when it is absent; its presence seems to be self-evident, even explicit in contemporary Western culture (see, for example, Caplan 1987; Stein 1990a; Erlach et al. 1994; Lancaster & di Leonardo 1997; Parker & Aggleton 1999; Abramson & Pinkerton 2002 [1995]; from the perspective of non-essentialist anthropology, cf. Salazar 2006). Though, what is obvious (although by no means a matter of course) is that to be an intelligible term (and a corresponding notion and category) what is called "sexuality" has to have a *differentia specifica*, a specific property that constitutes it as both a distinct and distinctive conceptual entity; that is, there must be *something* that is designated by the attribute "the sexual," whatever it might be in itself – or otherwise we are to enjoy the pleasure of nothingness which, of course, is also "something," be it even in the realm of the imaginary beyond language.

It is precisely in this sense that "sex" is *always already* a queer concept without its "queering" by means of queer theory.

In other words, "the sexual" is an epistemological rather than ontological question, and, consequently, the notions and categories that are based on or constructed around it are *linguistic figures*, and, as such, issues of definition (cf. Pasero & Braun 1999; Cameron & Kulick 2006). That is, "the sexual," with all its historical permutations and variations, is an effect of what I call *the politics of language*.

It is precisely here that the problems begin. Definitions imply differences between things to be defined. But the difference that makes a difference in terms of "the sexual" is not the zero degree of sexuality; that is, the non-originary "origin" of sexuality is a conceptual *lacuna* that since its inception has been covered with ever-new explanations only necessitating, again, ever-new explanations that, in turn, purport to explain the "explained," *ad infinitum*, or, *ad absurdum*, depending on the point of view (see, for example, Rousseau & Porter 1987b; Ariès & Béjin 1990 [1982]; Laqueur 1992a [1990]; Erlach et al. 1994; McCormick 1997; Gutmann 1998; Stein 1999; Bruns & Walter 2004; Irvine 2005 [1990]). This is the idea of "the sexual" in its hard core: it is a problem that constitutes its own problematics, even a question that questions itself due to its intrinsic undecidability. Accordingly, it is quite understandable that Leo Bersani simply asks:

> Does sexuality exist? And if it exists, what is the relation – if indeed there is one – between sexuality and sex? (Bersani 1986: 29)

The complexity of the idea of "the sexual" can also be seen in the manner Alan Soble introduces his overview of the "philosophy of sexuality" by bringing to the fore the deceptive self-evidence of that which is called "sex":

> Conceptual philosophy of sex analyses the notions of sexual desire, sexual activity and sexual pleasure. What makes a feeling a sexual sensation? Manipulation of and feelings in the genitals are not necessary, since other body parts yield sexual pleasure. What makes an act sexual? A touch on the arm might be a friendly pat, an assault, or sex; physical properties alone do not distinguish them. What is the conceptual link between sexual pleasure and sexual activity? Neither the intention to produce sexual pleasure nor the actual experience of pleasure seems necessary for an act to be sexual. (Soble 1998: 717)

These kinds of questions have troubled the understanding of sexuality ever since its introduction into learned discourse some time by the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century as a notion brought about by what Foucault (1990k [1976]: 53–73) calls *scientia sexualis*, implying a scientific redefinition of the human body, first in terms of medicine and biology, and subsequently, by the conceptualities of, among other things, psychiatry, criminal law and social philosophy, and, finally, at the turn of the twentieth century, by the concepts of an entirely new scientific approach, *Sexualwissenschaft*, sexology or the "science of sex" in its historical form (see, for example, Hekma 1989; Russett 1989; Bullough 1994; Porter & Teich 1994b; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Bührmann 1998; Ferdinand et al. 1998; Sigusch 2008); a paradigm that found its insuperable monument in Richard Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* (1997 [1886]), the very origin of the scientification, that is, the rationalization and medicalization, of the body in terms of "the sexual" (see, for example, Mazzoni 1996: 40–49; Schmersahl 1998: 39–83; Wernz 1993; Hauser 1994; Loetz 1994).

1.1 The Sexual as an Effect of the Micropolitics of the Apparatic

From the very beginning, sexuality, as something that has been defined by the attribute "the sexual," has been a matter of *discipline* in both senses of the term: an object of a specific branch of science and of disciplinary control.

It is in this manner that "the sexual," as the constitutive idea of sex and sexuality, is a *disciplinary category*; a category that not only centrally regulates the cultural construction of the body, but it is even fundamental for the construction of society as society (see, for example, Caplan 1987; Gallagher & Laqueur 1987 [1986]; Stein 1990c; Laqueur 1992b; Hull 1996; Weeks 1997a [1981]; Burkitt 1999; Seidman 2003; Lenz et al. 2004): in a very essential sense, "the social" of society is a manifestation of "the sexual"; in other words, *there is no society without a sexual order*, an order that is always historical.

For this reason, according to Foucault (1990k: 24), sexuality is produced by power; thus, "[i]n the eighteenth century, sex became a 'police' matter." "A policing of sex: that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses" (ibid.: 25; cf. Foucault 1988b [1982]: 146–147, 1994b [1963]: 22–37, 1980e [1975]; for Foucault's conception of "the *theory of police*" in the sense of *Polizeywissenschaft* as a governmental idea during the Enlightenment, see Foucault 1990c [1979/1981]: 73–85; 1988b [1982]; for the historical contextualization of *Polizey* and *Polizeywissenschaft*, see Lemke 1997: 164–169; Barthel 1989; Toppe 1999). What is specific, however, in Foucault's conception of "sex" in the sense of *le sexe*,[96] is the *genital organization of sexuality*; in short, it is *the politics of genitality* that constitutes the Foucauldian "sex police" or the "policing of sex" (cf. Brown 1990 [1966]: 43–69, 123–140; Heyes 2007: 31–32; Shusterman 2008: 32–34; Huffer 2009: 47–48). Thus, in the manner Foucault uses the term *le sexe* at issue are not so much the modes of desire and the practices of pleasure as such, but, rather, the point is *genitality defined by the teleology of procreation predicated upon heterosexuality as the basis of all that is sexual*; in other words, "sex" as a disciplinary category defining the "uses of the body" in the service of *productive sexuality*: "sex" as a political

96 It is appropriate to notice that by speaking of "sex" Foucault does not use the term in the sense of the English language. In the original, Foucault (1994a [1976]: 35) says: "*Le sexe*, au xviiie siècle, devient affaire de 'police'; and: "Police du *sexe*: c'est-à-dire non pas rigueur d'une prohibition mais nécessité de régler le *sexe* par des discours utiles et publics" (emphasis mine; cf. ibid.: 198–211; for the ambiguity of Foucault's use of the term *le sexe* and attendant translation problems, see Visker 1991b: 176). While, in English, "sex" refers to both *gender* (as it is understood in contemporary academic discourse) and practices of specific corporeal pleasures, especially sexual intercourse, in contrast, in French, *le sexe* designates (1) the physical property of being male or female (*mâle ou femelle*) and (2) the sexual organs or the genitals (*les organes génitaux externes de l'homme ou de la femme*), as well as today, as a result of American influence, (3) sexual practices and experiences, that is, modes of behaviour connected to having sex or the desire to have sex, and sexual matters in general. But what is characteristic to contemporary culture is that even in this sense *le sexe* as "sex" is deconstructed not only by theory, but more and more by everyday practice as well (see, for example, Sloop 2004; Lovaas & Jenkins 2007; for a feminist criticism of Foucault's masculinistic conception of the genital, cf. Plaza 1996: 179–182; in terms of what I call *postgenital theology*, cf. Bernauer & Carrette 2004).

means of *both* the propagation of species *and* the reproduction of the social order based on it.

1.1.1 The Sexual–Technological Complex in Its Elementary Form

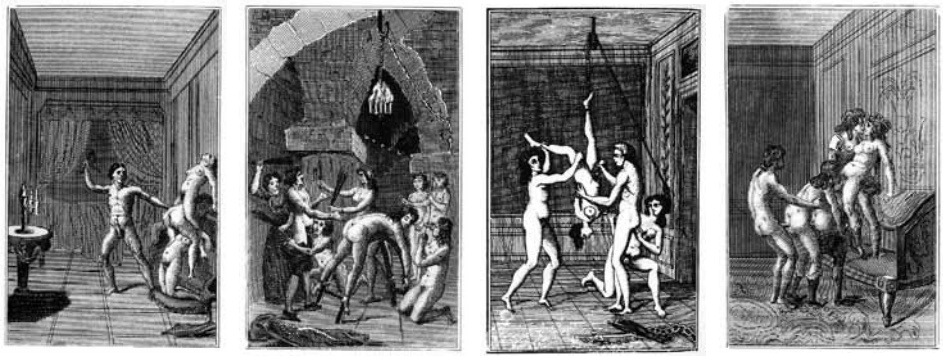
It is this conception of sexuality as a *cultural form* organized around the imperative of procreative genitality that has made sexual desire and pleasure a highly complicated matter in Western culture; a cultural formation thoroughly permeated by the Christian mode of thought: an enlightened and secularized culture that has explained the Bible away only by internalizing its world view: the idea of the body as a source of destructive drives, and hence always in need of control (in terms of "sexual reason," see Owen 1994: 182–188).

In these terms, all that is called *"sex," even in its postmodern manifestations, is the most spectacular outcome of sin*, the licence of indulging in the pleasures of the flesh (for a historical overview, see, for example, Brown 1988; Wiesner-Hanks 2000; Crawford 2007). And even if we can understand sexual pleasure without any definition by just enjoying it in its own right, as a mode of sensations *sui generis*, as a *causa sui* of itself (in the sense of "the proof of the pudding is in the eating") – provided that we manage to ignore the demand for justification prompted by the voice of conscience constitutive of our being a subject defined by confession in Western culture, its secularization notwithstanding (see Foucault 1980c [1977]: 200, 214–216, 1990c [1979/1981]: 69–71, 1990d [1977]: 111, 1990g [1982]: 238–240, 1990k: 59–68, 1980d [1977]; cf. Sheridan 1990 [1980]: 170–172, 190–191; Carrette 1999: 39–41; Weiß 1993, Krondorfer 2009; Taylor 2009; Burrus et al. 2010; in terms of deconstructive or "postmodern" theology, cf. Michener 2007: 88–90) – even then, due to its elusiveness, the intrinsic essence of desire, its compulsive urge, seems to evade our understanding.

If there is a hard core of the sexual, is it, then, desire in its obscure and capricious character, desire as the first mover of the body-subject beyond reason?

Act, Desire and Pleasure: The Trinity of the Sexual

No sooner is this question posed than we encounter a new one after another. If we say that behind the sexual, there is to be found the undercurrents of libidinal flows, urges of desire that make the body restless and prone to unpredictable whims, no doubt, we are right, at least in terms of the phenomenology of experience. Yet, are "desire" and the "libidinal" something that define the "sexual," or is it the other way round? Is it "the sexual" *an sich* (if there is something like that in the first place) that we must first understand in order to get grip of the forms of desire and the libidinal as manifestations of sexuality, or, rather, are both constitutive of "the sexual" as the very basis of sexuality? Then again, if sexuality is something we "have," is what is called "sex" something we are assumed to "do" (even when we "have sex," as the everyday expression goes)? What is it that makes this "doing" something that warrants its designation as



"sexual"? Or, to bring the whole problematic to the point, what is it that the voluptuaries "have" and "do" in the orgies glorified by de Sade in his derision of Enlightenment reason (see de Sade 1995b [1797], 1995c [1797], 1995d [1791]; cf. Pfister & Zweifel 2002: 15–89; Orban 2008: 46–76), and how does it differ from all that a contemporary heterosexual couple is supposed to "have" and "do" when practising what is called "sex" – or is it from another planet altogether?

In other words, if, as Foucault (1990k: 149) says, "[i]n Sade, sex is without any norm or intrinsic rule that might be formulated from its own nature; but it is subject to the unrestricted law of a power which itself knows no other law but its own"; and if "sex," in this sense, is "a unique and naked sovereignty," "an unlimited right of all-powerful monstrosity" (ibid.), what is it that contemporary culture, glorified under the sign of the "postmodern," persistently exhorts, persuades and encourages us to enjoy everywhere and all the time in the name of "sex" as the supreme manifestation of health and wealth, fitness and vitality, as the apotheosis of "good life"? That is, if the Sadean world is taken to be "scandalous," what is the contemporary world in which there is *nothing* any more that would not be, in one way or another, related to this strange hysteria that surrounds all that is celebrated as "sex"?

To understand better the problematics that I am outlining here it is illuminating to consider these questions from the perspective of the dialectic of reason embodied by de Sade's sexual rationalism as the consummation of Enlightenment reason (for the logic of Sadean

Fig. 36–39. Engravings from a Dutch edition (1798) of the Marquis de Sade's *Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice* (1797–1801) by Claude Bornet (1733–1804), a French painter and engraver.

"*Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your own understanding" (Kant 1991a [1784]: 53). This is the idea of the Enlightenment according to Kant. The Marquis de Sade embodies the ultimate consequences of the Kantian Enlightenment ethos.

As Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (1994 [1944]: 93) state, it was de Sade who "accomplished it in all its details." The work of de Sade demonstrates the logical endpoint of Kant's *Verstand ohne Leitung eines anderen*, "understanding without the direction of another," that is, "the bourgeois subject freed from tutelage" (ibid.). In de Sade's *chronique scandaleuse* (ibid.: 125), we are reading a description of how "private vices are the anticipatory historiography of public virtues in the totalitarian era" (ibid.: 127; cf. Žižek 1996c: 172–173, 2002c [1991]: 229–261, 2006: 91–95). It is therefore understandable that there is no simple "yes" or "no" to the question posed by Simone de Beauvoir (1991 [1951–1952]): "Must we burn de Sade?" That is, de Sade brings the shadow sides of enlightened rationality into the daylight: he shows what is the hard core of the rational in Enlightenment reason (cf. Jay 1973: 264–265).

From this perspective, it is also clear that it is a misleading simplification to reduce de Sade to pornography, or, in contemporary parlance, to "sex"; rather, in de Sade, we encounter the problem of the *rationalization of the body* in the matrix of discipline dictated by the imperative of efficiency; the very same imperative that rules the political economy of neoliberalism.

debauchery, see de Sade 1994 [1785/1904]; cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 88–127; Habermas 1998e [1985]). This is the Lacanian perspective elaborated by Žižek (2002c [1991]: xci) in his discussion on the complexity of pleasure as *jouissance* in "our 'postmodern' condition" in terms of "unconditional enjoyment" in the context of Kant's conception of religion *innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, "within the limits of reason alone" (see Kant 1982 [1793–1794]); according to Žižek:

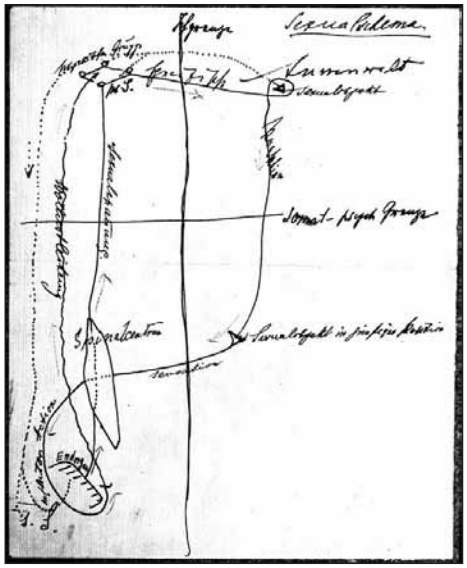
> *This* unconditional enjoyment is the enjoyment "within the limits of reason alone," contrary to the common notion according to which reason imposes upon enjoyment the logic of moderation, preventing us from enjoying excessively: it is only when enjoyment is affected by the infinity of Reason that it surpasses the paradigmatic limitations of pleasure, and asserts itself as pleasure-in-pain. This is also how one should read Lacan's *Kant avec Sade*, that is, Sade as the truth of Kant: the Sadeian purely rational, cold mechanistic combination of endless and excessive orgies is sex unconstrained by any "pathological" considerations ("No, I can't do *that*, it would be too painful…"), sex under the sign of "*Du kannst, denn Du sollst!* / You can, because you should!" – in short, *sex within the limits of Reason alone*. (Žižek 2002c: xci; for de Sade's "mechanization of the libertine body," see Hénaff 1995 [1975]; for Lacan's reading of "Kant with Sade," see Lacan 1989 [1962])

From this perspective, *the sexual rationalism of the postmodern* has its origin in Enlightenment reason, in "the infinity of Reason," understood in terms of both Kant and de Sade (for the Kantian principles of reason, morality and *Aufklärung*, see Kant 1974b [1788, 1991a [1784], 1991c [1797/1798]; for de Sade's "philosophy in the boudoir," see de Sade 1995a [1795]; cf. Baruzzi 1968a; Roberts 1990; Hénaff 1999 [1978]; Pfister & Zweifel 2002; Martyn 2003; for a critical discussion of Kant's conception of reason in relation to eros, see Schott 1993 [1988]; in terms of gender problematics in Kant, see Jauch 1989). That is, the logic of excess constitutive of the postmodern is the logic of capital, which, in turn, manifests the imperative of reason "within the limits of reason alone": the unconditional, unlimited freedom of reason as the rationale of progress, in other words, the logic of transgression (cf. Allison et al. 1995).

Yet, whatever the answers to the questions above might be, what remains is that philosophical and scientific diligence since the days of the Enlightenment has not until today removed the basic problem: what *exactly* is it that makes the human body into an embodiment of irrationality as soon as it succumbs to the seductions of what, in contemporary language, is called "sex"? Behind this question is another one, even more fundamental, the problem proper: what is *"the sexual" of sexuality*, in other words, what is it that makes sexuality something "sexual"?

This is the question that constitutes what I call the "enigma of the sexual"; an enigma that is extreme productive in terms of theory just because it is unsolvable in the final analysis.

In these terms, "sex" is an entry in the Foucauldian "Chinese encyclopaedia" (see Foucault 1989 [1966]: xv; cf. Taylor 2009: 135–136).



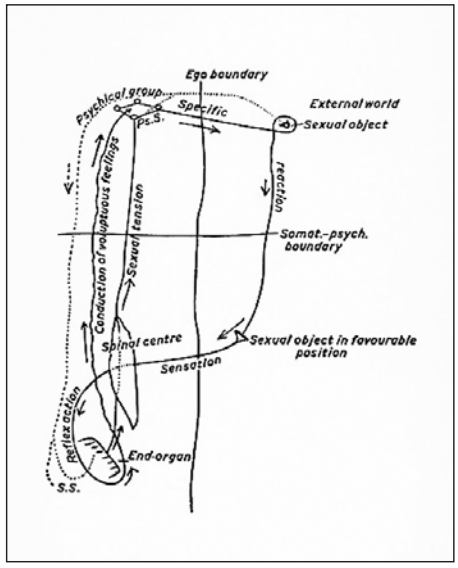


Fig. 40–41. Sigmund Freud, *Sexualschema* or *Schematic Picture of Sexuality*, 1895 (Freud's original draft on the left).

The enigma of the sexual: the complicated topography of what Freud designated as *somatische Sexualerregung*, "somatic sexual excitation," in his "Draft G, January 1895" (see Sulloway 1979: 103–107); a conceptual design for affective processes of the body, connected, on the one hand, to his studies on hysteria (see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]), and on the other, to his attempt to lay down a groundwork for a model of the psychic apparatus based on the idea of somatic excitation in his *Entwurf einer Psychologie* or "Project for a scientific psychology" (1895); all this finally resulting in his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Freud 1981c [1905]) or *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

What is it that we call "sexual"? With regard to perception, sensation and affectivity, why is it that a certain object, rather than another, has specific effects on the subject? What are these "effects" and what precisely is it in the object that the subject experiences as "sexual"? Why, in the first place, the sexual is expressly called *sexual* (for "the body in its sexual being," cf. Merleau-Ponty 2002 [1945]: 178–201)? The point is that there is no sexual body in the sense of "the body"; what there is are individual bodies that experience quite different things as "sexual." That is, the lability of the sexual is the lability of the libidinal; in other words, desires and pleasures that are called "sexual" are polymorphous in a broader sense than what Freud (1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213) referred to with his term "a polymorphously perverse disposition" of infantile sexuality: diversity and plurality, a wide variety of permutations, are intrinsic to all that is sexual – which, in itself, always remains an enigma.

Does my approach imply sexual agnosticism? No, what I am pursuing here is about sexual realism: all that is "sexual" is an issue of nominalism (Foucault 1990k: 93; cf. Balibar 1992).

As Foucault (1980c [1977]: 211) sums up the emergence of the conceptual complex around the idea of "the sexual": "We have had sexuality since the eighteenth century, and sex since the nineteenth. What we had before was no doubt the flesh."[97]

To understand the complexity of desires and pleasures as the basis for a definition of "the sexual" that, in turn, is supposed to enable the notions of "sex" and "sexuality," it is appropriate to approach the problem from the point

97 It is important to understand that what Foucault refers to here (in this translation) with the term "sex" does not mean sex in its contemporary narrow sense of practices of pleasure, but, rather, the complex of sex/gender as implied by both the English word sex and the French word *le sexe* (which, however, are not congruent with one another). This can be clearly seen in the German translation of Foucault (1978e [1977]: 145): "Eine Sexualität hat man seit dem 18. Jahrhundert, seit dem 19. ein Geschlecht. – Vorher hatte man zweifellos ein Fleich." One can also see in this connection that what Foucault (1990k [1976]: 157–159) refers to with his notion of "bodies and pleasures," in fact, implies a return to the times before the introduction of the disciplinary categories of sex and sexuality; that is, back to the times when bodies were *just bodies* with their various desires and pleasures; that is, a world of corporeal pleasures beyond the oppresive regime of "the monarchy of sex," the world of "anti-sex" (Foucault 1978g [1977]: 186–187; for a theory-historical contextualization of the problematics concerning "sex" and "power," see Foucault's critical interventions in Foucault 1996f [1989]; for a critical discussion of Foucault's idea of "bodies and pleasures," see Butler 1999a).

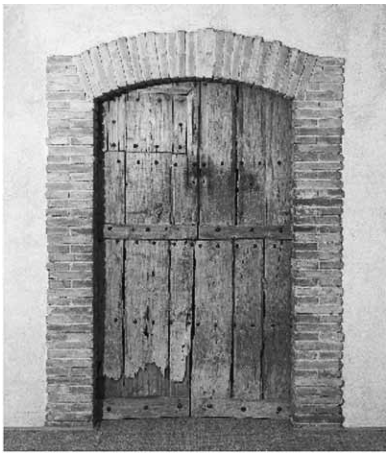


Fig. 42–43. Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage* (*Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*), 1946–1966.

The enigma of the sexual: the sexual is not "retinal," to apply Duchamp's term; it is imaginary, also in its visuality (for the problematics of the retinal in Duchamp, see Krauss 1993: 107–136); that is, what is visible in the sexual is an effect of the imaginary (in Freudian terms, cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1989 [1964]). In other words, the sexual cannot be reduced to the gaze, to the act of seeing and looking, although the eye can be an essential origin of sexual desire and pleasure, a substantial source of sexual excitation.

As Dalia Judovitz (1995: xi), discussing Duchamp's *Given*, argues, "despite this work's overt sexual display, or rather, because of its exaggeration as display, the equation of sexuality and vision is sundered." "Given Duchamp's overt admission that 'eroticism' is the only *ism* he believes in, the sexual nature of this work was not surprising, although the androgyny of the nude continues to occasion discussion" (ibid.: 95; cf. Seigel 1995: 107–114; Paz 1990; in McLuhan's context, cf. Cavell 2003: 41–43). Thus, sexual ambiguity in Duchamp's work is also gender ambiguity: the sexual exceeds the gender difference, and even more: the genital is inexplicit in its explicitness. We know that here is *something* sexual, but we do not know exactly what it is.

The only thing that is explicit in Duchamp's installation is that it is ambiguous. In this sense, "the sexual" in Duchamp's work produces an optical illusion (not to be confused with *trompe l'oeil* or simulation). In other words, by displaying a "sexual" scenery by means of art, Duchamp, paradoxically, "shows" the invisible essence of "the sexual," its non-retinal hard core.

of view of a tripartite scheme by which Foucault (1983b [1982]: 242) purports to explain the relations between acts, pleasures and desires in various historical constellations, and, by that, the change from Greek *aphrodisia* to the Western conception of "sexuality" as a derivation of the Christian notions of "concupiscence" and the "flesh":

> If by sexual behavior, we understand the three poles – acts, pleasure, and desire – we have the Greek "formula," which is the same at the first and at the second stage. In this Greek formula what is underscored is "acts," with pleasure and desire as subsidiary: *acte – plaisir – (désir)*. I have put desire in brackets because I think that in the Stoic ethics you start a kind of elision of desire, desire begins to be condemned.
>
> The Chinese "formula" would be *plaisir – désir – (acte)*. Acts are put aside because you have to restrain acts in order to get the maximum duration and intensity of pleasure.
>
> The Christian "formula" puts an accent on desire and tries to eradicate it. Acts have to become something neutral; you have to act only to produce children, or to fulfill your conjugal duty. And pleasure is both practically and theoretically excluded: *(désir) – acte – (plaisir)*. Desire is practically excluded – you have to eradicate your desire – but theoretically very important.
>
> And I could say that the modern "formula" is desire, which is theoretically underlined and practically accepted, since you have to liberate your own desire. Acts are not very important, and pleasure – nobody knows what it is! (ibid.: 242–243)

What is important in Foucault's scheme, from the standpoint of the study at hand, is that on the way from Greek *aphrodisia* to contemporary Western sexuality three things have changed: (1) the telos of the conduct of life, (2) the self-relationship of the subject and (3) what Foucault calls "the ethical substance" of human existence (ibid.: 242; cf. Mahon 1992: 157–168; Visker 1995 [1990]: 95–98; Songe-Møller 2002 [1999]: 136–138). In short, from being

a source of pleasure, the body became a problem as a result of the triumph of Christianity (cf. Carrette 1999; Bernauer & Carrette 2004). This is the genealogy of what Foucault (1992b [1984]: 5) designates as "desiring man," *l'homme de désir* (cf. Merquior 1985: 125; for Foucault's research programme from *ars erotica* to *scientia sexualis*, see Schmid 1994 [1987]: 13–18), a new kind of the subject for which desire is not just an invitation to the enjoyment of pleasure, but a serious moral issue giving rise to "the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen" (Foucault 1992b: 5). This self-searching, a continuous self-examination, self-observation, self-questioning, self-reflection and self-scrutiny resulted in "a hermeneutics of desire" (ibid.), a dutiful surveillance of one's own desires and their interpretation in the light of Christian morality.

The History of Sexuality: From *ars erotica* to *scientia sexualis*

In the terms outlined above, the desires of the body, the allurements of human carnality, the temptations of the "flesh," constitute the historical origin of sexuality as a corporeal self-relationship of the subject, as a mode of taking care of one's self in order to avoid perishing. As we can see, in contrast to the Greek conception of *aphrodisia* as a pleasureful enjoyment of one's own body, the concept and category of what later became known as "sexuality" is from its Christian origins a negative term, an index of depravity and perdition, implying the idea of the body as a source of sin (see Brown 1988; Allen 2000; for the historical development of the idea of "sexuality" from the Christian notions of "sin" and "sodomy," see Jordan 1997, 2002; for the Christian conception of the "flesh" as the hotbed of vice, see Hawkes 2004: 43–52, 58–60; Miles 2005; cf. Clack 2002). As Peter Michelson, referring to Foucault, outlines the emergence of "sexuality" from the perspective of "obscenity":

> Sexuality emerged from religious preoccupations with the flesh, and by the seventeenth century had found a form in pastoral institutions for dealing with the subject in the confessional. These established the form of discourse that is still with us: they directed pastoral attentions meticulously to interrogation about not only the act itself, e. g. postures, but also about the stimulus of desire; they were also concerned, of course, with the flesh as the root of sin, which influenced conceptions of the natural and unnatural. By the late eighteenth century sexuality was becoming secularized, and developed a technology along the lines of pedagogy (e. g. child sexuality), medicine (e. g. the physiology of women and "nervous disorders"), and economics (e. g. demography and birth control). In the nineteenth century the medical model was dominant and induced an elaborate pathology of sex, culminating in the psychoanalytic approach. Normalizing sexuality, its *ars erotica* function, was an abiding interest but found especially fertile ground in medicine where perversions and aberrations were particularly compelling. (Michelson 1993: 20)

As we can see, what was once "sin" is now "sexuality," or, more and more in the contemporary world, just "sex"; that is, what we today call "sexual" is a result of

the *medicalization of sin*. It is in this sense that the normalization of "the sexual" continued into and through the twentieth century, but, as Michelson remarks, it became "modified to accommodate the more elaborated diversity of the cultural power matrix – e. g. sciences and scientists, feminists, gays and lesbians, racial groups etc." (ibid.). The outcome of this discursive modification was that in the twentieth century sexuality was "characterized by a proliferation of 'polymorphous perversities,' where the moral connotations of perversity and aberrance have all but disappeared" (ibid.; cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213; Marcuse 1987 [1955]: 49, 210–215, 226, 263; Dollimore 1991: 169–230; Segal 1994: 218–219, 238–239; Weeks 1997a [1981]: 144–145, 1997b [1986]: 71–76; Boone 1998: 421; McNair 2002: 2–3; Shorter 2005: 12–13).

What is important here is that "sexuality" as a notion and a term is a result of centuries long development during which the human body and its organs, its various desires and pleasures, were articulated and interpreted from a single perspective, from the standpoint of impurity, danger and devastation. As Foucault (1992b: 3) states, the term "sexuality," as a collective denomination, "did not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century," although, of course, "it does not mark a sudden emergence of *that to which 'sexuality' refers*" (emphasis mine). As a unifying notion for various manifestations of corporeality, "sexuality" came to refer to a "single entity" that "allows diverse phenomena to be grouped together, despite the apparently loose connections between them, as if they were of the same nature, derived from the same origin, or brought the same type of causal mechanism into play: behaviors, but also sensations, images, desires, instincts, passions" (ibid.: 35).

Although it remains unclear in Foucault what *specifically* it is "that to which 'sexuality' refers," it is obvious that throughout history, procreation, gender relations, sexual acts and, not the least, sensuous and affective manifestations of genitality have related to one another in an extremely complex and confusing manner (see, for example, Sheridan 1990: 174–194; McWhorter 1999: 118–119, 203–209; During 2004 [1992]: 161–169; Jordan 2004: 235–242; Cryle 2001). As Foucault says:

> […] the notion of "sex" made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this *fictitious unity* as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified. (Foucault 1990k: 154; emphasis mine; cf. Butler 1999b [1987]: 234–235)

As such a "fictitious unity," as Foucault emphasizes, "sex [*le sexe*] is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures" (Foucault 1990k: 155). It is in this manner, as Kathryn Woodward (1997a: 61) sums up Foucault's idea, that "*sex is an effect rather than an origin*, and far from being a given and essential unity, it is, as a category, the product of specific discursive practices" (emphasis mine; cf. Harrison & Hood-Williams 2002: 197–199; Strozier 2002: 86, 102, 109, 118–122; Hull

2006: 47–49; Huffer 2009: 47–48; for a criticism, see, for example, Black 1998: 57–60; Fraser 1994 [1983]: 7–8; for a critical discussion in the context of Butler's sex/gender theory, cf. Carver & Chambers 2008).

From this perspective, what is called "sex" is not an intrinsic and internal property dwelling in the subject from the birth; rather, "sex" is something extrinsic and external, something that is *internalized* by the subject by way of innumerable performative acts that iterate the iterability of "sex" (cf. Zylinska 2001: 52–53; Sloop 2004: 6–9; Salih 2007: 63–66; Jagger 2008: 10–11, 40–44, 64–68; Butler 1990, 1993; Derrida 2000 [1988]). In other words, as an extraneous attribute of the subject, the materiality of "sex" is the materiality of bodies that are brought about as an effect of discourses; discourses that are constitutive of specific historical constellations. That is, what we today understand by the notion "sex" is entirely different from the "sexual uses" of the body in the nineteenth century; even "the sexual" that Freud, the originator of modern sex, spoke about was not the same as Freudian or post-Freudian theorists speak about it in our times (see, for example, Freud 1981c [1905]; cf. Dollimore 1991: 170–227; Laqueur 1992a [1990]: 234–249; Bristow 1997: 62–83; Hawkes 2004: 148–151; Robinson 1969, 1989; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Neu 1991; Brooks & Woloch 2000).

In this manner, both sex and sexuality are cultural constructs, discursively constituted forms of culture, that have come into being as a result of a specific Western mode of scientification of the body, in a process in which, as Foucault (1990k: 53–73) says, the pre-Christian paradigm of *ars erotica*, prevailing in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in cultures outside the Western tradition, turned, during the Enlightenment and nineteenth century scientific rationalism, into the modern paradigm of *scientia sexualis*. That is, a science-based control politics of the body, its desires and pleasures, through "procedures for telling the truth of sex" under a regime of "knowledge-power" relying on the Christian model of the "truthful confession" (ibid.: 58, Foucault 1980c [1977]; cf., for example, Carrette 2000: 39–41; McHoul & Grace 1995: 76–86; O'Leary 2002: 27–34; Tambling 1990; Krondorfer 2009; Taylor 2009; Burrus et al. 2010). In this sense, sexuality, as a distinctive Western concept (cf. Dean 1996), is a manifestation of reason that finds its culmination in the medicalization of the body as part of an on-going modernization constitutive of Western culture from the Enlightenment to the modern (see, for example, Mazzoni 1996: 40–49; Loetz 1998: 32–44, 1994; Wettley 1959; Haller & Haller 1974; Wernz 1993; Klabundt 1994; Metz-Becker 1997; Gutmann 1998; Schmersahl 1998).

In my reading, however, there is, in the final analysis, neither sex nor sexuality without the *idea* of "the sexual"; an idea that is the very condition of possibility of all that is embraced by the categories of sex and sexuality. That is, sex and sexuality become possible only on the premise of there being a notion of "the *sexual*" (whatever it is) that is the conceptual *a priori* of them. Though, as an idea "the sexual" is not ideal; being an effect of language it is material, a culturally constructed term; that is, material as *a discursive figure* enabled by socially conditioned linguistic practices: *the practices of the body defined in terms of "the*

sexual" (cf. Davidson 1992 [1987], 2001). As such, "the sexual" is the constitutive idea of the forms of discourse that have produced both sex and sexuality as denominations for specific though highly variable experiences and expressions of desires and pleasures that have been designated since the early nineteenth century as, and subsumed under, the notions and the concomitant categories of "sex" and "sexuality" in distinction from other manifestations of the body, insofar as "the sexual" is understood in terms of the corporeal (cf. Gagnon 2004: 132–136; Abramson & Pinkerton 2002 [1995]; Bristow 1997; Hawkes 2004; in philosophical terms, cf. Soble 1998; Soble & Power 2008).

What is essential here is that *there is nothing natural in the sexual;* all that is sexual is cultural, coming into being through the figures of language, as a discursive product engendered by the linguistic of language, the generative principle of all signification. In other words, there is no natural history of "the sexual": sex and sexuality are *cultural forms* that have come into being historically.

Accordingly, in terms of the sexual, as Foucault (1990k: 93) says, "one needs to be nominalistic." Similarly to power which is the "name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (ibid.), all that is sexual is about a "name that can be given to a historical construct" (ibid.: 105; cf. Balibar 1992), or, to employ the original term of Foucauldian discourse, *un dispositif historique* (Foucault 1994a [1976]: 139). In these terms, the sexual is about a manifestation of the politics of language; a discursive policy of linguistic practices that ultimately functions as a politics of words. It is not purely a question of how things and words are related to one another, but, first and foremost, *how words become things and vice versa* (see Foucault 1989 [1966]; Brieler 1998: 120–170). In short, if the sexual has any substance, it is to be found in language (although the experiences and expressions, sensations and affections, of the carnal body as such, in themselves, are, of course, a different matter, the matter of the flesh).

If we take the idea of nominalism seriously, what is called "sex" never takes place in the body since, as Butler time and again emphasizes (in her criticism of Foucault), there are no bodies outside and before discourse: bodies are always – *always already* – constituted *as* bodies by discourses that bring them about in the first place (see, for example, Butler 1990: 96–111, 1996: 63–68, 1999; Jagger 2008: 51–87 Lancaster & di Caprio 1997; McWhorter 1999); accordingly, if sex and sexuality, as manifestations of "the sexual," have anything to do with the body at all they are, by necessity, discursive constructs. As such, bodies are materializations of discourse, not in the sense of manifestations, but as *forms of matter* which we encounter in living experience, in our personal life-world. It is for this reason that we never encounter "our own" bodies, rather, what we encounter are discursively constructed *Fremdkörper* that are our *true* bodies: *we embody forms of corporeality by incorporating them*.

I am "another" – that is the great wisdom, the very realism, of "our" being in the world; and, accordingly, it is only on these premises that we can enjoy sexual pleasures, *whatever they happen to be in themselves*.

The Real and the Imaginary: The Double Bind of the Sexual

Does sex have a future? The answer, of course, depends on what one understands by the notion of "sex": "future sex" (or sex in the future) is always a projection of the present, a projection that articulates and pronounces prevailing wish-images and ideological positions. In other words, there is no future without the imaginary, without the presence of the absent. This, of course, also pertains to the visions of the sexual in the context of technological futurism characteristic of the "cyber." If, as Haraway (1991a: 149) imagines in her "ironic political myth" as a utopian dream of a new world ruled by the cyborg, "cyborg 'sex'" is a mode of "sex" that "restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" (ibid.: 150; cf. Barr 1993: 117–118; Apter 1999: 216–219; Žižek 2000: 65–66), what, then, is "the sexual" in the "sex" of the cyborg? In other words, to apply the American idiom which sums up the postmodern sensibility in terms of "the sexual," what is it that makes "ferns and invertebrates" *sexy*, and, more basically, in which sense *technology* is able to make these "lovely" forms of flora and fauna "sexual" in the first place?

Since sex, similarly to sexuality, is a thoroughly historical category, not only its past but also its *potential* future – if there is any – is contingent; that is, what we call "sex" has a history but no teleology (see Foucault 1990h [1984], 1990k [1976], 1992b [1984]; cf. Brieler 1998: 401–420; Schneider 2004: 136–148; Stanton 1992a): there is no sexuality neither sex as such, only as something that is conditional, dependent on the premises of being human at a given time (which, in turn, is also contingent): *animals do not have sex* (nor machines, although we do not know it yet). In Western culture, not until some two centuries certain modes of corporeal desires and pleasures have been conceptualized in terms of the sexual (see, for example, Stein 1990c; Porter & Hall 1995; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Davidson 2001). Moreover, "sex" and "sexuality," as notions referring to specific practices, sensations and affections of the body, have been contested terms from the very beginning, the meanings of which have turned out to be equivocal and volatile time and time again (see, for example, Bremmer 1989; Braun 1995; Weeks 1995b [1985], 1997a [1981]; Dean 1996; Hawkes 1996, 2004; Eder 2002; Phillips & Reay 2011).

Whatever the sexual is, one can, as a subject of one's "own" body, experience desires and pleasures without any name or denomination for what one is doing and experiencing, as practices that dare name their namelessness without naming it by name (regardless of their subsumption under the name "sex") (cf. Stein 1990a, 1999; Wharton 2003). That is, as a specific mode of excitation in its myriad of variations, "the sexual" is immediately recognizable as a lived experience, as an authentic, highly idiosyncratic corporeal arousal and agitation, beyond all categorizations, as *individual* sensations and affections of the flesh in its unadulterated carnality.

This is "sex" in a post-denominational age, *the era of "sex" that does dare speak its nameless name*. What counts is your performance, not your identity. And

therefore there is no longer room for sexual dissidence since "the sexual" in itself designates now the very paradigm of subversion.

However, what I am interested in here are experiences and expressions of the body that are conceived of as sexual in terms of specific desires and pleasures understood in their *historicity*, as manifestations of certain cultural constellations.[98] Whatever desires and pleasures as such, as experiences and expressions of the flesh, are, they are *intelligible* only through discursive figures that in their great variety are historically conditioned – although, in the final instance, the sensations and affections of the flesh are beyond words, in the realm of lived and experienced carnality, in its wordless utterances. In this manner, desires and pleasures are in their very imaginary *real*; the imaginary as both phantasmatic and rational conceptions denominating the manifestations of the carnal body. It is this double bind of the real and the imaginary that constitutes what I call the enigma of the sexual: sexual desires and pleasures are always sensations and affections that are *in between* the real and the imaginary.

This in-between is always a contested space, a realm of controversy: an arena of the politics of words: what is my "sex" is not necessarily your "sex," and vice versa.

Thus, if the sexual is a "name" that brings about what it names, what is it, in fact, that it names? And if nominalism is the name for naming, what is it actually that it stands for? Finally, how does a politics of words work: *what* is the "sexual" in all that is sexual?

These questions concern the enigma of the sexual. It is this enigma that has given rise to *scientia sexualis* as a specifically Western manner of understanding of the human in which the body becomes an object of scientific investigation and regulation; in fact, the manner in which the body *emerges*, comes into being, in the first place (cf., for example, Sheets-Johnstone 1994: 23–31; McHoul & Grace 1995: 76–86; Davidson 2001: 211–214).

If, as Heidegger (1977f [1953]: 4) says, the "technological *within its own bounds*" (emphasis mine) is a complex matter, the more this kind of complexity pertains to the manner in which all that is "sexual" is precisely *sexual* (whatever it happens to be in various historical and cultural constellations): while "the technological" is intelligible in terms of the rational control of being, "the sexual," in its full scope, becomes understandable only in the contexts of the "other" of reason (see, Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]; Boyne 1990). That is, the technological and the sexual equal instrumental rationality contra the "unreason" of the imaginary, and vice versa (cf. Caputo 2004: 118–125). But what if that which is self-evidently taken

98 Just an example: one needs only to follow the extreme complex and contradictory conceptual history around the linguistic figure of "sodomy" from the early Christianity through Middle Ages and Renaissance to the nineteenth-century scientification of the sexual under the sign of burgeoning *Sexualwissenschaft*, to understand how (1) a certain word and its religious-theological and mythological etymology and (2) the social history of the body and its practices and "uses" produce a network of meanings that regulate and police what they name, namely, certain "sins" and "vices" that are intelligible only in the context of their history, in terms of their genealogy (see, for example, Duggan & Hunter 1995; Jordan 1997, 2004; Phillips & Reay 2002; Carden 2004).

as a manifestation of "unreason" is not merely a form of reason itself, but its very product? In other words, if it is not only that the realm of "unreason," that what Foucault (1965 [1961]) calls *déraison*, is a mirror image of reason, but, more fundamentally, if reason as such reflects its "other" precisely in its clear-cut categories, distinctions and classifications that purport to exclude the expressions of the "irrational," or, "the uncontrollable and the animal" as "the antithesis to human reason and volition" (Hawkes 1996: 70), and thus enshrine and save the purity of the rational, is it, then, reason in itself that finally turns its "other" into its ironic double (cf. White 1975 [1973]: 62–69; Derrida 1978a [1967/1964]; Graham 1992)?

This is the dialectic of reason that is constitutive of the sexual: what David Owen (1994: 182–188), commenting Foucault, calls "sexual reason" is a mode of rationality that repudiates reason only to restore it as its last resort (cf. Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 129). It other words, *there is no sexual outside reason*. It is in this sense that, as Martha Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola (2002a: 2) say, "[s]ex excludes rational control, and yet, for that very reason, it is constantly reasoned about." From this perspective, de Sade, the Kantian rationalist of sex *avant la lettre* (see de Sade 1994 [1785/1904], 1995a [1795]; cf. Schott 1993 [1988]), is the founding father of the rationalization of "the sexual" constitutive of post-sex as the paradigm of sexual rationalism of postmodern capitalism; that is, "*sex within the limits of reason alone*" (Žižek 2002c: xci; emphasis in the original; cf. Kant 1982 [1793–1794]).

Thus, how can the technological, as a manifestation of rational control, and the sexual, as its subversion, be understood in relation to one another in a way that makes sense in terms of reason; reason, as we will see, as the very condition of possibility the sexual: the sexual as a *Zerrspiegel*, a "distorting mirror," of reason and, as such, its critical double?

Towards the Ego-Politics of the Postmodern Subject

Behind a glass, in a showcase, there is an object to be seen with a laconic description: *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*; a device illustrating Enlightenment reason in its struggle to ward off the threat of the sexual in the form of masturbation, or, as it at the time was called, onanism (for the origin of the Enlightenment discourse on onanism, see Tissot 1991 [1758/1760]; for historical contextualization see, for example, Porter 1995: 82–87; Rosario 1995: 103–117; Laqueur 1992b: 190–191, 2003: 37–46, 85–87, 192–213; Lempa 1993; Braun 1995; Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]; Meyer-Drawe 2004). A couple of steps further, in a similar glass case another object is shown with a short and matter-of-fact explanation: *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat "Autovibrator"*; an invention exemplifying the ingenuity of late nineteenth-century scientific rationalism to control what at the time was understood as hysteria, a psycho-somatic disorder characteristic of the female body (for the origin of the idea, see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Sulloway 1979: 22–100; Sadoff 1998: 37–48, 58–59, 148–164; Smith 1999: 18–23; Littlewood 2002: 149–160; Makari 2008: 38–51, 88–101; Rousseau 1993; von Braun 1994 [1985]; Bronfen 1998; Lamott 2001).

Fig. 44–45. Illustrations of the book *The Silent Friend* (1853) showing consequences of onanism (above) and the iconography of hysteria, scenes from the Salpêtrière Hospital under the supervision of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) (below).

From the very beginning, from its gradual emergence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all that is sexual has been charged by negative associations, by a sense of threat and danger, even an idea of sickness and death. Whereas, from early Christianity to the Enlightenment, the Biblical notion of sodomy implied various forms of "absuse" of the genitals for non-procreative purposes (see Jordan 1997, 2004), from the invention of "onanism disease" around 1700 (see Braun 1995; Laqueur 2003) and the medical interest in hysteria at the end of the nineteenth century (see Gilman et al. 1993; Micale 1995), the sexual became increasingly defined in terms of illness, a cause or a symptom of a physical or mental disorder (see, for example, Wernz 1993; Klabundt 1994; Bland & Doan 1998a; Bruns & Walter 2004).

That is, through its very invention, the sexual became a synonym of the pathological (for a paradigmatic example, see von Krafft-Ebing 1997 [1886]).

Through the figures of "onanism" and "hysteria," these contrivances hybridize into a discursive assemblage the ideas of the rational, the sexual and the technological; a linguistic configuration that is fundamental to the emergence of the modern, and hence, the constitution of the postmodern, the prevailing order of contemporary Western culture.

In so far as the modern, in Weberian terms, is about an all-encompassing rationalization of the human condition (see Weber 1993 [1904–1905]; cf., for example, Gane 2002: 13–63; Giddens 2003 [1971]: 119–184; Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Scaff 1989; Turner 1992a; Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; Marcuse 2002 [1964]), and thus, an effort to bring the body, as an embodiment of the "irrational" in terms of "unreason," under the control of reason, there is no modern without the sexual. Accordingly, the sexual, as the result of a pervasive scientification of the body during the last two centuries (see, for example, Jordanova 1989: 19–42; Laqueur 1992a: 63–113, 1992b; Gallagher & Laqueur 1987; Honegger 1991; Sarasin 1995, 2001; Bergmann 1998 [1989/1992]; Ferdinand et al. 1998; Sarasin & Tanner 1998; Schmersahl 1998; in terms of psychoanalysis, cf. Sulloway 1979; Sadoff 1998), implying a cultural and individual incorporation of *scientia sexualis*, is a *sine qua non* of the postmodern as a continuation of the modern by the very means of the modern: the means of scientific-technological rationalism that dominates the administration and management of all forces of life; a mode of control for which *the irrationality of the body*, its affective caprices and obscure passions, is the ultimate challenge. In this sense, "the sexual," as a telling index of unreason, became a momentous object, if not even an obsession, of scientific interest in the wake of the Enlightenment.

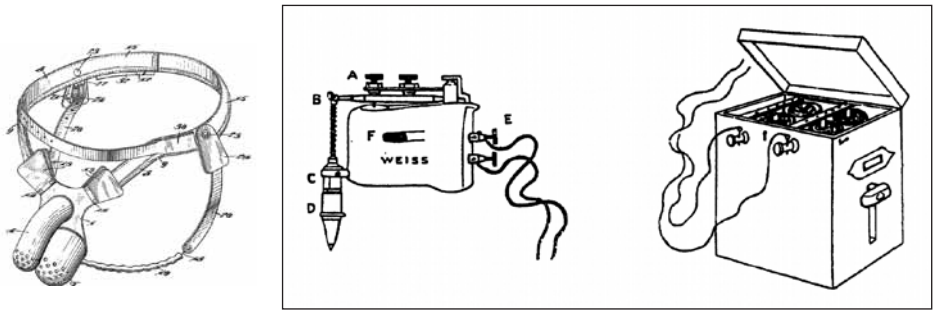


Fig. 46–47. An anti-onanism device, a typical example of various appliances against masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (on the left) and Granville's Vibrator in 1883, an electric apparatus for the treatment of hysteria (on the right).

Paradoxically, while the former was designed in order to prevent masturbation (see Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]), the latter was deployed as a tool for medically performed masturbation in the form of genital massage with the purpose to discharge hysterical tension (see Maines 1999, 2006). In both cases, the sexual was defined in terms of technology; in the former as a weakness of will and in the latter as an excess of nervous energy, both of which were to be relieved by technical means.

Both of these contrivances resulted from a specific sexual economy, an economy that denied unproductive sexuality; that is, sexual pleasure for its own sake, not justified by the purpose of procreation: whereas the "demand for late sexual gratification was ideologically enforced by certain medical theories which proclaimed the physical dangers of sexual 'self-abuse' in onanism," "hysteria in young women was the consequence of sexual unemployment, but a necessary feature of delayed marriage in a society where marriage was an economic contract" (Turner 1997 [1984]: 109; for a historical contextualization, see Russett 1989; Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]; Carpenter 2003; Laqueur 2003).

This is the origin of the sexual-technological complex in its elementary form; that is, sexual negativism as a motivation for inventions to control sexual self-expression.

Both of these devices, the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat "Autovibrator,"* curiously resembling more the whims of some unknown art of serendipity than achievements of reason and science (cf. Juffer 1998: 84–86; Calvert 2002: 160–162; Drenth 2005: 228–233; Casper & Moore 2009: 38–39; Levins 1996), belong to a collection of a couple of hundreds of items demonstrating the multifarious and complex history of sexuality in an exhibition entitled *Sex – Vom Wissen und Wünschen*, organized by the *Deutsches Hygiene-Museum* in Dresden, Germany (for an overview, see Raulff 2001; for a cultural-historical contextualization, see, for example, Hornung et al. 2004).[99]

Here it is to be seen, in its elementary form, the regime of what I call *the sexual-technological complex* that emerged as a result of Enlightenment reason and nineteenth-century scientific rationality, and now regulates all that is sexual in contemporary culture (for a historical background, see, for example, Fellows 1995; Ferré 1995 [1988]; Misa et al. 2004); a manifestation of body politics as an effort to rationalize and discipline the experiences and expressions of the sexual body by means of technological arrangements based on scientific conceptualizations of both the sexual and the corporeal in various historical con-

99 The exhibition "Sex – On Knowing and Wishing" (in the original title, the word *Wünschen* refers not so much to the Lacanian *désir*, or desire, as to the Freudian *Wunsch*) held from November 2001 to August 2002, was dedicated to the transformation of sexuality in terms of the mutual uncoupling of sexual practices as practices of desires and pleasures, and procreation as the reproduction of the species from each other (cf. Stocker & Schöpf 2000b). It was the last part of an exhibition trilogy, the other parts of which dealt with the social and cultural complexities of abortion (see Staupe & Vieth 1993) and contraception (see Staupe & Vieth 1996). This trilogy can be seen as an effort to show the historicity, that is, the changing character, of all that is conceptualized as sexual (see Raulff 2001). How *far* the sexual is mutable is, in turn, the question to be considered in the present study.

stellations (see, for example, Lawrence & Shapin 1998; Boyle 2005; Park & Daston 2006); the technological understood in terms of technological systems and apparatuses, as well as in the Foucauldian sense of a "technology of sex" as a part of "bio-power" embracing an "anatomo-politics of the human body" and a "bio-politics of the population" (see Foucault 1990k: 116–124, 139–145).

In these terms, the sexual-technological complex is about the modernization of the body: the human body seen as a rational instrument of both the individual and society, a vehicle of *progress*, the telos of the modern still governing the postmodern body politic (cf. Burkitt 1999: 129–152; Delanty 1999: 29–35; Brown & Webster 2004): the body as an object of technological rationalization. What is at issue here is that the modern body, in its origin, is the Christian body, a fighting body as a body in fight against itself in order to gain the salvation in resurrection and eternal life (see Rogers 1999, 2002); a body that by denying and negating itself can exceed its limits and limitations: as a Christian body, the modern body always wants to be "more" than it is – that is the very logic of modernization: the imperative of constant increase, enhancement and augmentation, the pathos of negation of the existent in the name of the future, as the reversal of the principle of asceticism, the refusal of worldliness as the ideal of the Christian implying self-sacrifice as the salvation of the self (in explicitly sexual terms, cf. Gasparro 1999: 135–141; West 2005: 9–47). In this sense, *the modern body is a body that becomes a body under the body regime of self-control that is its second self*; a self that is the embodiment of its own disciplinization.

It is from this perspective that sexuality appears in its historical context: "the sexual" of sexuality, and, as its derivation, sex in the contemporary sense of the term, is a modern notion, a conceptual product of the modern understood in terms of Enlightenment reason and the scientific-technological rationality of the nineteenth century.

While the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat "Autovibrator"* deal with sexuality in terms of pathology (as it was understood at the time; for a paradigmatic example, see Krafft-Ebing 1997 [1886]; cf., for example, Hekma 1989: 177–181; Michelson 1993: 19–22), in the next room it is the promise of sexual pleasure that dominates the scene.

Among other things, through an exhibit in a glass case the visitor is given a view to the future of sex, specified in the presentation with the term "cybersex." There is an object with a concise explanation on display: *Anzug "Cyber SM bodysuit, female version"* (in terms of Oswald Wiener's fictional "bio-adapter" and "glücksanzug," cf. Wiener 1989 [1988]; for a discussion, see, for example, Erlach 2000: 148–149; Harrasser 2004: 184–186; Volkart 2006: 149–153). While the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* belong to a world in which all that was sexual was defined in terms of procreation (see, for example, Hekma 1989: 174–182; Honegger 1991; Bergmann 1998 [1989/1992]; Seidel 1998; from the perspective of Augustinian sexual ethics, see Rogers 1999: 195–217), in turn, the con-

trivance demonstrating future sex in a world of what Stahl Stenslie (2000b: 206), "one of the Fathers of Cybersex" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b: 414), calls "next sex" illuminates a new mode of the sexual that is definitely set free from all the constraints dictated by the imperative of procreation; that is, an entirely new order of "the sexual" that is beyond the idea of biology as a scientistic form of the Biblical world explanation (see, for example, Verhey 2003; Ellens 2006; Kleinig 2006).

In contrast to that, the world of the "cyber" is a world of individual freedom in which the sexual, as Marie-Luise Angerer (1999a) says, is about a plurality of various "body options," a multifarious repertory of bodies that are real in terms of the imaginary. In this world, a world dominated by what I call the *ego-politics of the postmodern subject*, free choice is the constitutive principle of ethics under the imperative of economic efficiency, the idea of economism: the very politics of the postmodern dominating the experiences and expressions of the body as what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1998 [1972]: 1–22, 36–50, 322–339) designate as "desiring-machines" (cf. Goodchild 1996: 78–83).

The Sexual as a Manifestation of Reason

The historical period, by and large from the 1750s to the present, represented by these museum objects, covers the genesis of sex and sexuality in Western culture, notions that produce what they name, and vice versa (see, Foucault 1990k: 105–108; Stanton 1992b: 1–9; Hawkes 2004: 107–158; Bristow 1997; Eder et al. 1999; Parker & Aggleton 1999; Davidson 2001; Crawford 2007). This is the period beginning with the *Krankheit Onania* (Braun 1995), or, the "great terror" of masturbation (Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]; Bennett & Rosario II 1995), and ending up, in terms of theory, in a contemporary discursive configuration determined not only by what Annie Potts (2002) calls a "science/fiction of sex,"[100] but, from my point of view most adequately, a *science fiction* of "sex," in the form of what I designate with the term *theory-sex*, "sex" as a theory discourse based on post-theoretical theory-fictions peculiar to the "post."

Although it is obvious that all these sexual-technological appliances, the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit*, stand not only for different historical times but also historically distinctive discourses – the discourses of onanism, hysteria and cybersex – as practices they nevertheless have something in common. All of them are based on historically different but nevertheless commensurate notions of sexuality in terms of *instrumental regulation*: they represent an idea of corporeality that can be manipulated by means

100 Actually, what does the slash slash in what Potts (2002) calls a "science/fiction of sex"? If the idea is, as Potts says, to "deconstruct" theoretical conceptions of sex and sexuality, based on binary oppositions (such as presence/absence, inside/outside, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, masculine/feminine, active/passive, heterosexual/homosexual, natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal, phallic/castrated), what is the binary opposition in "science/fiction of sex" if not an effect of this very linguistic figure (which, like all similar figures, is a figure constituted by the configuration signifier/signified – notice the binarity)? Moreover, why is Potts's own discourse supposed to be outside, or beyond altogether, binary thought, for in itself it operates with the binarities it claims to be deconstructing?

of technology; that is, controlled with various devices not merely effecting the experiences and expressions of the sexual, but, for their part, also contributing to the very *idea* of sexuality as something specific, as corporeal desires and pleasures in their own right, deviant from and, as such, against, the imperative of procreation; that is, sexuality as a source of sensuous enjoyment *sui generis* (cf., for example, West 2005: 116–123, 173–177; Salazar 2006: 25; for sexuality in terms of the "polymorphous perverse" as "an end in itself," cf. Marcuse 1987 [1955]: 49–50).

It is in this constellation that genitality takes on its *historical* meaning as the most confusing and controversial constituent of the sexual (see, for example, Laqueur 1992a: 25–52, 256–268; Sedgwick 1993: 115–118; Russo 1995: 35–36; Davidson 2001: 66–92; Gutmann 1998; Harding 2001; Burgett 2007);[101] a meaning that, regardless, or perhaps precisely because of, various subversive practices and discourses, has lost nothing of its problematic character in the postmodern: genitality understood, or rather, *theorized*, not as a source but as an obstacle of true sexual desire and pleasure (for feminist genital obsession in the form of genital negativism, see, for example, Potts 2002: 99–100, 114–115, 182–183, 208–212, 237, 250, 260).[102] In this sense, from the invention, in the early nineteenth century, of "sexuality" as a specific compound of desires and pleasures manifested by certain proclivities and practices to the disintegration and disruption of "the sexual" into discrete and incompatible affects, effects and acts in the manner of the

101 Are the genitals the origin, the source, or just the "executive" organs, the mediating "vehicles," of those uncontrollable, exciting and disturbing agitations and affects experienced as "sexual arousal" that since the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century are subsumed by the notion of sexuality? Why is it that the genitals, the organs of *generation*, the organs of procreation, are at the same time organs of lust, voluptuousness and fornication, organs that afford heavenly pleasures on earth and, as such, inevitably lead not only to prurience, indecency and bawdiness, but, beyond that, also to wantonness, unchastity, promiscuity and debauchery, and finally to vice, sin and crime, even to human perdition? The commotions implied by these kinds of questions can be followed from the anxious meditations of Saint Augustine to the scientific speculations of Freud, from the problematics of *psychopathia sexualis* and early *Sexualwissenschaft* to contemporary sexual theory (see, for example, Gilman 1989; Bullough 1994; Nobus & Downing 2006). It should be noticed here that I am not conflating "the genital" with "the sexual"; I am only emphasizing the complex connections between genitality and sexuality; that is, sexuality is not to be reduced to genitality, but neither can sexuality be adequately understood without genitality. This is the complicated double bind of all that is sexual.

102 In postmodern sexual discourse (in the sense of theory discourse based on poststructuralism), the notions pertaining to "the sexual" and "the genital" are predominantly negatively "occupied," *besetzt*, exactly in the Freudian manner of *cathexis* (see, for example, Freud 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205, 1977d [1893]: 54, 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96): although they attract intense theoretical interest, they are, at the same time, disavowed as something that threatens the subject of experiencing "authentic" pleasure beyond the categories of sexuality and genitality (in terms of the "abject," cf. Kristeva 1982 [1980]). This disavowal has mainly three sources: (1) the Foucauldian idea of "bodies and pleasures" as corporeal experiences liberated from the "austere monarchy of sex" (Foucault 1990k: 159, 1996m [1977]); (2) the Freudian ideas of "partial drives," *Partialtriebe*, and the "polymorphously perverse disposition" as a form of pre-genital enjoyment of the body (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 67–70, 91–92, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213); and (3) the celebration of the "subversive" as the ideal of a non-identitarian subject emancipated from the terror regime of liberal humanist ideology. In addition, behind all this looms large the Deleuze-Guattarian wish-image of the "body without organs" (Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–16, 32–43, 60–88, 322–339, 2000 [1980]: 30–43, 149–166, 270–285) and the Lacanian notions of *jouissance* and *corps morcelé*, the "fragmented body" (see Lacan 1977a [1966/1948]: 11–12). Taken together, the postmodern genital/sexual negativism manifests what I call the *politics of the affect* in terms of "the theoretical" typical of post-theory: the genital is an abject on the theory scene of the "post."

postmodern, *the genital constitutes the hard core of the sexual*, be it in the mode of avowal or disavowal. That is, "the sexual" begins with "the genital" but does not end with it; for this reason, genitality is simultaneously the most concrete and the most phantasmatic constituent of "the sexual" in sexuality.

In this sense, as a secular-Christian, scientific-phantasmatic struggle against the ominous consequences of original sin (see, for example, Scruton 2006 [1986]: 129–179; Dollimore 1991; in the specific American context, see Gardella 1985), against its still disquieting absent presence, "the sexual," as the condition of possibility of sex and sexuality, is deep down a theological question (cf. Watson 2000).

That is, *there is no sexual without the Biblical vision of the human being as an everlasting outcome of the Fall*.

Accordingly, the historical origin of the sexual as a disciplinary concept and category is the effort to rationalize the genital, to adapt the whole sphere of genitality to a rational order of the body as it is understood in various times: the rational body is a body that complies with the "normality" of each historical epoch; a normality that is defined in terms of the biopolitics of the body (see Foucault 1990k: 138–150). For this reason, if, for Freud (1981c [1905]: 65, 132, 140), "neurosis is the 'negative' of perversion" (cf. Benvenuto 2006: 60–62), there is also another complementary equation: as there is no sexuality without perversion as its "negative," there is no perversion without the genital; that is, as a negation of the genital, perversion is constituted by it. Seen form the long perspective of occidental history, the perspective of epistemology that has its origin in Christian faith and theology, this is the nodal point of all that is "sexual": *the positivity of the "sexual" is in its negativity*.

Thus, if sexuality is a theological issue it becomes intelligible only in terms of negative theology: to know what is sexual is to know what it is not: *the sexual is beyond reason*. Therefore, the idea of transgression is built-in in the very category of "the sexual": going beyond the limits of "the sexual" defines its possibility as a category. In other words, the idea of the "perverse" is the condition of possibility of sexuality as a name for desires and pleasures that do not comply with the imperative of procreation, the Biblical origin of sexuality.

In the late nineteenth century, the time in which the "sexual" became an object of intense scientific interest, the genital was first of all scrutinized and theorized in the context of medicine and psychiatry, predominantly from the perspective of pathology, as an indication of "deviant" sexuality. French psychiatrist, Paul Moreau (de Tours) – whose research strongly influenced Richard Krafft-Ebing's psychiatric study *Psychopathia sexualis* (the first edition in 1886), an epochal investigation of "pathological" expressions of sexuality – argued that "the clinical facts forced one to accept, as absolutely demonstrated, the psychic existence of a sixth sense, which he called *the genital sense*" (Davidson 2001: 13; emphasis mine).

> Although the notion of a genital sense may appear ludicrous, Moreau's characterization was adopted by subsequent French clinicians and his phrase *sense*

> *génital* was preserved, by Charcot among others, as a translation of our "sexual instinct." So Carl Westphal's *conträre Sexualempfindung* became *inversion du sense génital*. The genital sense is just the sexual instinct, masquerading in different words. Its characterization as a sixth sense was a useful analogy. […] What Moreau hoped to demonstrate was that this genital sense had specific functions, distinct from the functions served by other organs, and that just as with the other senses, this sixth sense could be psychically disturbed without the proper working of other mental functions, either affective or intellectual, being harmed. A demonstration as Moreau's was essential in isolating diseases of sexuality as distinct disease entities. (ibid.: 13–14)

But if the *sense génital* is the "sexual instinct," only expressed in other words, what is it that makes "the genital" *sexual*, and vice versa? And if "the genital" as the source of sexual pleasure, obviously, has its beginning and end in the genitals, where does the sexual begin and end? By these questions we begin to see what it is that I call the enigma of the sexual. What is absolutely important, however, is that we must not, as Deleuze and Guattari (2000: 18) say, "subjugate sexuality to the reproductive model"; on the contrary, if we take the "rhizome" as the guiding principle we are able to see that what we have ahead of us is a "liberation of sexuality not only from reproduction but from genitality" (ibid.). But then again, here we can also see that even for Deleuze and Guattari the genital is a problem: the genital is something which one has to get rid of.

In these terms, from the practices of asceticism constitutive of early Christianity to the techno-imaginary visions of cybersex emblematic of the postmodern, the carnal body, the lust of the flesh, has been the most disavowed object of desire, an object, turned into an *abject*, which time and time again has brought about that peculiar pleasure inherent to the human being: *the pleasure to love to hate*.

1.1.2 Approaching the Genealogy of the Sexual in Terms of the Cyborg

From the perspective outlined above, the perspective of the mutual double bind between the sexual and the genital, it is clear that the libidinal impetus of post-theory is a phantasmatic return to the Freudian "pregenital sexual organisation" (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 97–107, 1986d [1915–1917]: 331–350; cf. Gasser 1997: 329–330), a regress to the free realm of desires and pleasures in which the only imperative is the rule of the "polymorphous perverse disposition" manifested by "partial drives" (Freud 1981c: 93); that is, a re-occupation of the "original" state of happiness in which the whole body is a non-organized sexual organ, or, what Deleuze and Guattari (1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285) call the "body without organs," a libidinal-corporeal mode of being as a disintegrated assemblage of affects and intensities beyond all organizing constraints (cf. Bogue 1989: 90–94, 133–134; Massumi 1992: 70–71; Goodchild 1996: 77–80, 82–84; Smith 1998: xxxvii–xl).

This is the *promesse de bonheur* of the "post," the great promise of the liquid libido as the driving force of the post-subject constructed by post-theory.

If the genital is the nodal point of all that is sexual, the sexual-technological appliances discussed here, the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit*, are, in fact, three different efforts of trying to solve the Gordian knot of genitality. In this sense, onanism, hysteria and cybersex, *as various articulations of "the sexual,"* constitute a historical continuity from the times of Kant's idea of *Aufklärung* to the Lyotardian "postmodern condition." The problem is not a lack of reason, but reason in itself: *the irrational rationality of reason*; this is the idea of the postmodern (cf. Hassan 1975: 39–62, 1982 [1971]: 259–272, 1987; Harvey 1989: 9–54; Jay 1998: 99–101; Moscovici 2002: 1–16, 29–38, 46–50; Malpas 2005: 33–70, 86–67; Luntley 1995), the idea in the light of which all that is "cyber" becomes intelligible. This is the "future perfect" in the Lyotardian sense of the term; as Geoffrey Bennington (1988: 104), citing Lyotard's (1984 [1979]: 81) definition, "[p]ostmodern would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo)," in a modified translation typical of the postmodern, says, "[p]ostmodern would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) perfect (*modo*)" (cf. Carroll 1987: 156–157; Docherty 1996: 117–118; Lucy 1997: 63–64; Ballif 2001: 129–130; Gane 2002: 84–85; in terms of "cyborgothic," cf. Yi 2010: 9–10).

Onanism and Hysteria as Challenges of Reason and Science

Originally, that is, in the proper historical context of Enlightenment reason, nineteenth-century scientific rationality, and the scientific-technological rationalism of contemporary technoculture dominated by technoscience, respectively, each of these appliances has become conceptualized in a manner that not only legitimates the purpose and the use of it, but also makes the notion of "the sexual" intelligible and thus reasonable behind their deployment (see, for example, Jordanova 1989, 1999; Laqueur 1992a, 1992b, 2003; Kneeland & Warren 2002; Plummer 2003, 2005; West 2005; Killen 2006; Pettman 2006; Kimmel 2007; in terms of "impure reason," cf. Munz 1999: 80–97, 189–190). In this sense, as technological inventions these devices are at the same time discursive constructions: differences notwithstanding they are technological solutions to the problems concerning desires and pleasures as *something* that is understood as "sexual" in terms of "the genital," and, precisely *as such*, seen "problematic," if not even dangerous, in one way or another.[103]

In this respect, what is essential is that these devices manifest the circular movement of discursivity: as material-practical entities they are produced discursively, while inversely, each of them function as a technological agency with

103 It should be emphasized, of course, that in contrast to the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat*, which were real-existing technologies, the *Cyber SM bodysuit* is an imaginary technology in a material form, a postmodern art object that presents itself as a contribution to the (post-)theoretical discussion on the transformation of the body in the condition of what is called technoculture under the imperative of technoscience (see, for example, Penley & Ross 1992c; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Robins & Webster 1999); as such, the Stenslie-Woolford sex apparatus is an imaginary projection of a real cultural constellation in terms of the sexual (for the idea of "sex" in this context, see Stenslie 1996, 2000b; Woolford 1994a, 1996a, 1996b).

an ability to produce and proliferate a specific discourse on the sexual (see, for example, Mills 2004 [1997]: 43–68; Wagner 1987; Rousseau 1991; Stanton 1992a; Bennett & Rosario 1995; McHoul & Grace 1995; Bublitz et al. 1999; Bublitz et al. 2000; in terms of "speaking the unspeakable," see Michelson 1993: 14–33; in the context of fetishism, cf. Apter & Pietz 1991). It is precisely in this manner that the sexual-technological complex, as a disciplinary regime of the body, is a discursive construction. That is, the technological regulation of sexuality is, at the same time, its discursive administration. The sexual body is not an a-historical entity, but a cultural construct constituted by the prevailing discourses of the time (see, for example, Caplan 1987; Stein 1990c; Hawkes 1996, 2004; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Davidson 2001; Bhattacharyya 2002; Potts 2002; Seidman 2003; Tiefer 2004; Kimmel 2007; in terms of the construction of erotic experience "before sexuality" in the ancient Greek world, cf. Halperin et al. 1990).

This kind of discursification, or, as Foucault (1990k: 11, 1994a [1976]: 20) says, "putting into discourse" (*"mise en discours"*; quotation marks in the original; cf. Barker 2001: 235–238; Milner 2005 [1996]: 71–72), of the sexual in terms of technology is illuminatively paraphrased in a short commentary beside the "vibrations-massage apparatus," described as a panacea to be used in cases related to the special problems of female sexuality:

> Von Erkältung über Ohrenleiden, von Verdauungsstörungen bis zum Schönheitspflege: Dieser Vibrator soll helfen. Aber nicht nur das. Auch bei "Geschlechtsschwäche" kann er eingesetzt werden. Er ist jedoch kein Lust-, sondern ein anerkanntes medizinisches Therapiegerät. Und die Anwendung gilt nicht der sexuellen Lustgewinnung. Die therapeutische Massage soll den Blutkreislauf und den Stoffwechsel anregen. So wird z. B. angenommen, daß die Anwendung des Vibrators Wechseljahrbeschwerden lindere. Die Genitalmassage als medizinischer Eingriff ist um 1900 nicht sittlich bedenklich und wird nicht mit Selbstbefriedigung in Zusammenhang gebracht.[104]

While the "vibrations-massage apparatus" was at the time presented as a medical means, used by physicians in a specific "therapeutic procedure," for "typical" female ailments and not as a device for sexual "self-gratification" (*Selbstbefriedigung*) (see Maines 1999: 18–72; cf. Bordo 1995 [1993]: 161–163; Hawkes 2004: 122–124; Crozier 2006: 389–397; for a critical contextualization in terms women, science and technology, cf. Wyer et al. 2008 [2001]), the "anti-onanism apparatus" was explicitly conceptualised and designed as a means against masturbation (cf. Laqueur 1992a: 227–230; Weeks 1997a [1981]: 48–51; Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]): 12–14; Sorisio 2002: 37–39; Brenot 2005: 43–44). The same idea is exemplified in the exhibition by two other items, an *Onaniebandage für weibliche und männliche Patienten* and a *Korsett zur Verhinderung der Onanie*. Next to these devices there is a medical manual on display written by a charac-

104 This and the following commentary texts are direct quotations from the exhibition panels beside the objects on display. Although the formulations are those of the museum staff, they are nevertheless based on the authentic historical material used as the source during the conception of the exhibition (see Raulff 2001). In this sense, the descriptions refer, by way of paraphrase, to the peculiarities of the manner of speech and the mode of thought, that is, the discursive figures, *constitutive* of the object in each case.

teristic figure of the time, Dr. Emil Singer, *Das Doktorbuch: Medizinisches Hauslexikon* (1900), in which one can read:

> Onaniebandage. Zur Verhinderung onanistischer Bewegungen, besonders bei Kinder. Die Bandagen sind so konstruiert, dass wohl der Urin ungehindert gelassen werden kann, daß aber jede Berührung der Geschlechtsteile seitens des Kindes ausgeschlossen ist.

As this quotation clearly shows, the genitals were still around the turn of the century, in a world increasingly organized under the sign of scientific rationality, a problem causing deep-felt anxiety in Western culture, obsessed by an assumed threat of the sexual to the civilized order (for the historical reconstruction of the mentality towards sexuality at the time, see, for example, Shilling 1993: 163–167; Weeks 1997a [1981]: 19–33, 81–121; Eder 2002: 129–186; Hawkes 2004: 126–158; Laqueur 1987 [1986]; Hill 1994; Nolte 2004; for Saint Augustine's conception of the genitals as the source of sin, see Brundage 1990: 81): the genitals in the sense of, in Freudian terms, the "genital organization" and "genital love" as its highest stage (see Freud 1972a [1930]: 460–464, 1981c [1905]: 97–107; cf. Brown 1990 [1966]: 43–69, 123–140; Weeks 1995b [1985]: 133–156; Schöpf 1998: 129–130; Geyskens 2005: 60–61, 78–83), as well as in the sense of what Marcuse (1987 [1955]: 40) calls "non-procreative genitality" (cf., for example, Hawkes 1996: 40–49, 56–64; Peiss et al. 1989; Walkowitz 1992; Abrams & Harvey 1997; Bruns & Walter 2004). These were the times of *Psychopathia sexualis*, the paradigmatic work, under this title, of the pioneering sexual scientist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1997; cf. Hauser 1994; Oosterhuis 2000); a painstakingly detailed presentation of case studies of various "perversities" representing "pathological" deviations from the "normal," thus defining the terms of the sexual for decades, as the title indicates, from the perspective of "psychopathology"; a scientific paradigm in which the sexual was inherently prone to morbid anomalies (cf. Davidson 2001: 73–92; Sadoff 1998: 169–177; McLaren 1999: 133–231).[105]

It is precisely in this sense, in terms of the "pathological," that *Das Doktorbuch* by Singer exemplifies the authority of Krafft-Ebing's work still at the turn of the twentieth century; the "pathological" as the very idea of the sexual outside the purpose of procreation: the "pathological" as the hard core of the *categoriza-*

105 The whole problematics of what Marcuse (1987 [1955]: 40), in the tradition of Freud, calls "the repressive organization of sexuality" is succinctly summarized by Marcuse in his overview of sexuality adjusted to "the reality principle" constitutive of the modern (in this case, American society in the 1950s). "The sex instincts bear the brunt of the reality principle. Their organization culminates in the subjection of the partial sex instincts to the primacy of genitality, and in their subjugation under the function of procreation. […] The gratification of the partial instincts and of non-procreative genitality are, according to the degree of their independence, tabooed as perversions, sublimated, or transformed into subsidiaries of procreative sexuality. […] This organization results in a quantitative and qualitative restriction of sexuality: the unification of the partial instincts and their subjugation under the procreative function alter the very nature of sexuality: from an autonomous 'principle' governing the entire organism it is turned into a specialized temporary function, into a means for an end. In terms of the pleasure principle governing the 'unorganized' sex instincts, reproduction is merely a 'by-product.' The primary content of sexuality is [in Freud's words] the 'function of obtaining pleasure from zones of the body'; this function is only 'subsequently brought into the service of that of reproduction.'" (ibid.: 40–41; cf. Freud 1991d [1915]: 214–219, 1987e [1920]) *Mutatis mutandis*, precisely this was the situation of sexuality around 1900, discussed here.

tion of the "sexual" in its historical emergence (see, for example, Wernz 1993; Storr 1998; cf. Michelson 1993).[106]

While the "touching of the sex organs" (*Berührung der Geschlechtsteile*) during puberty was tried to be prevented with drastic – if not torturous – means, female genitality was not only an open secret, but also an enigmatic object of scientific interest, not only giving rise to the enquiries of the burgeoning *Sexualwissenschaft* (see, for example, Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Bürhman 1998; Sigusch 2008) and the new discipline of psychoanalysis invented by Freud (for the genesis of psychoanalysis, see, for example, Freud 1962a [1950], 1977a [1894], 1977b [1898], 1977c [1896], 1977d [1893], 1977e [1896], 1985, 1987d [1900], 1986d [1915–1917]; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; Sulloway 1979; Rohde-Dachser 1997 [1991]; Sadoff 1998), but also to technological research and design of equipment to facilitate the medical manipulation of female genitality (see Maines 1999; for a socio-technological contextualization in terms of gender, sexuality and eugenics, see Burdett 1998; Kline 2005; from the perspective of the history of gynecology and the medicalization of the female body, see, for example, Mazzoni 1996: 40–49; Duden 1991 [1987], 1994 [1991]; Kapsalis 1997).

In these terms, both masturbation and hysteria were challenges to reason and science to control genitality by technological means, as a form of Foucauldian "power/knowledge" (see Foucault 1980a [1975], 1980f [1977], 1990d [1977], 1996d [1978], 1996h [1977], 1996k [1982/1984], 1996l [1976], 1996n [1977]; Brieler 1998: 449–461; Mills 2003: 67–80; Rouse 1994), a disciplinary regimentation of the corporeal in order to turn individual bodies into an embodiment of prevailing society, individualized instances of the body politic, at the same time both incorporating and representing its body ideal. While in onanism the problem was an asserted "illegitimate" genital pleasure, in hysteria it was allegedly an inability, attributed to the female constitution, to enjoy the pleasure of genitality in the "normal" way in sexual intercourse.[107] These differences notwithstanding, in both cases the problem was, in fact, the same: the conception of the "normal" or "proper" – or, as it was tellingly expressed at the time, "natural"

106 Singer's "medical home lexicon" was published in 1900, the same year as Freud's *Traumdeutung* was dated (although it was published already at the end of 1899). In contrast to Singer's conventional moral politics, Freud's work amounted to a shift of paradigm in terms of the sexual by opening up a theoretical field on which it became possible to conceptualize sexuality in a manner that entailed a radical break with the tradition of *sexual alarmism* repesented, in the wake of *Psyhopathia sexualis*, by various pamphlets, tractates and medical guides for common people, all of which, in one way or another, evoking the dangers of sexuality and, especially, admonishing them to avoid the "sin of self-pollution" (cf. Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]; Meyer-Drawe 2004).

107 The special *Sexualproblematik* implied by hysteria is illustrated in its own way by Freud in the case of a seriously hysterical woman, who was still *virgo intacta* after being married some twenty years. The only remedy for "that kind of suffering" was, as the physician-in-chief of the hospital in which Freud was working as a *Privatdozent* in passing expressed, as Freud says, with a "cynicism": *Rp. Penis normalis / dosim / Repetatur!* (Freud 1993 [1914]: 150–151). Unfortunately, as Freud states, such a "remedy" was in this case not possible because the husband of the woman was impotent (ibid.). The point is that still at the turn of twentieth century female sexual pleasure was a serious problem, understood by progressive physicians and sexual scientists to be in many cases one – for Freud, the decisive – of the causes of hysteria (see, for example, Rohde-Dachser 1997 [1991]). As a consequence, the female was seen as a sexual being, while the male was understood as the *human* being.

– use of the sexual organs as the agents of procreation and propagation of the species, as it was (and still is) understood according to the moral order of Christianity, the legitimation of everything inherent to being human (see, for example, Pagels 1991 [1988]: 83–88; Primoratz 1999: 8–11, 43–45; Keenan 2006: 149–151).

In this configuration, onanism and hysteria were manifestations of the sexual body that did not conform to the "natural order," a body that, paradoxically, in its assumed "naturalness" was seen precisely as "unnatural."

This, of course, is no longer the world of cybersex: in cybersex, all that, in traditional terms, appears to be "unnatural" is now "natural," that is, *artificial*.

Getting the Genital under Rational Control

During the century following the anti-onanism device and the vaginal vibrator the meaning of the sexual has thoroughly changed: sexual hedonism has taken the place of *psychopathia sexualis* and instead of Christian moral theology it is now the commodity form that rules the human body (cf., for example, West 1995: 167–184; Birken 1988; Singer 1993; Hennessy 2000; Reichert & Lambiase 2006). That is, through the process of secularization the body has become a private property, a resource and vehicle of individual desires and pleasures, a medium of self-expression in the service of personal body politics. In this constellation, the sexual is redefined in terms of the performance principle, in both of the Marcusean and Butlerian sense (see Butler 1990, 1993; Marcuse 2002 [1964]; for a historical discussion of development of the term "from discipline to performance," see McKenzie 2001). This is the world of what I call post-sex, "sex" as a manifestation of the commodity form, sexual simulation following the logic of the political economy of neoliberalism.

What, however, has remained the same, is the effort – if not an obsession – *to get genitality under rational control*; that is, to turn the most irrational body parts into a servant of reason. Where the reason of technoscience defines the parameters of the body, there desires and pleasures are subsumed by the idea of efficiency. In the sexual order of cybersex, we have arrived in a world in which the body is brought under the imperative of scientific-technological rationality, a mode of rationality implying a technoscientific control of all being (cf., for example, Posner 1992; Ferrell 2006; in terms of erotic experience and sexual ethics in ancient Greece, cf. Nussbaum & Sihvola 2002b). In this world, the sexual is a manifestation of reason: all that is sexual is rational because it is reasonable in terms of the body as an instrument for the well-being of the subject under the regime of capital; a constellation of power that defines the parameters of the working body, and *therefore*, also of the body as a vehicle of desires and pleasures. Seen historically, this is a paradigm shift from procreative sexuality to sex as an end in itself; though, a mode of sexuality that, at the same time, is instrumentalized by the interests of capital (cf., for example, Lowe 1995; Pronger 2002; Maguire 2008; for the transition from the "modern body"

to the "postmodern body," see James 2006: 195–200; cf. Hardt & Negri 2000: 24–38, 215–218).

This is what Catherine Gallagher (2006) (in the context of Victorian novel) calls "the body economic" of postmodern capitalism, a political economy in which the ever-increasing extraction and exploitation of all the forces of the body in both production and consumption has turned human corporeality and embodiment as a whole into a means of capital accumulation. In this constellation, desires and pleasures, even more than work, are the driving force of the political economy of neoliberalism, an economic order based on intensified methods of exacting surplus value. As we will see, this is the cultural configuration of post-sex, the real context of the sexual imaginary constitutive of cybersex.

It is in this context that what is called the "prosthetic body" in the world of the "post" becomes intelligible, if it is seen from the historical perspective opened up by the transformation of the body politic during the last two centuries. This is the context of the control politics of the sexual body epitomized by the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat*, and finally, in the constellation of the postmodern, by the techno-imaginary phantasm of cybersex, paradigmatically exemplified by the *Cyber SM bodysuit*.

The prosthetic body as a medium of the ego-politics of the subject: this is the logic of the cyborg, the logic of the technological, the logic of reason under the auspices of the "post": a techno-body has taken the place of the bio-body, and, accordingly, the parameters of the cyborg define now the premises of the sexual (for the origin of the sexual cyborg, see Haraway 1985; for elaborations of the idea, see, for example, Case 1996: 95–99; Yaszek 2002: 134–153; Mortensen 2003: 134–153; Parisi 2004: 7–8, 22–23, 34–35; Haney 2006: 162–163; Mason 1999; in terms of "sexual-philosophical"/"philosophical-sexual" cyborg, cf. Perniola 2004 [2000]: 30–35).

In these terms, it is instructive to see how the idea of cybersex is presented in the context of the Dresden exhibition. Reflecting the visions recycled in the imaginary typical of the postmodern, concerning the body, sexual identity and sex as fluid and malleable design objects (see, for example, Esterberg 1997: 25–29; Creed 2003: 3–4; Vint 2007: 97–99; Zerilli 2008: 29–30; Potts 2002; Preciado 2003; Parisi 2004; Pearson et al. 2008; from the historical perspective of sexual libertinism, cf. Garton 2004: 89–95), the commentary beside the cybersex bodysuit clarifies the way sex is experienced by cyborgs in and through cyberspace:

> Einen Entwurf zu einem veränderten sexuellen Umgang unter Einbeziehens der Informationstechnologie liefert das CyberSM-Projekt des Medienkünstlers Stahl Stenslie. Mithilfe moderner Datenübertragung treten zwei Teilnehmer miteinander in Kontakt. Vor Beginn des Austausches haben sie sich eine der *400 Identitäten* zugelegt, die in einer "Körperbank" zur Verfügung stehen. Ihre Körper stecken in eng anliegenden Anzügen aus Latex und Gummi. An verschiedenen Stellen sind Stimulatoren angebracht, die von den Partnern bedient werden können. (emphasis mine; cf. Stenslie 1996: 112–131)

Here we can see an order of reason opening in which all that is sexual has been transferred from the realm of organic corporeality to the context of prosthetic technology as the embodiment of technological rationalism controlling and regulating the body in the postmodern (see, for example, Cole 1998: 272–273, Cole & King 1998: 53–54; Pronger 1998: 292–293; Jarvis 1998: 139–167; van der Ploeg 2001: 111–115; Goggin & Newell 2003: 111–113; Sobchack 2004: 207–224; Longhurst et al. 2008 [1999]: 231–234; McLuhan 1964; Brahm & Driscoll 1995; Dixon & Cassidy 1998; Lury 1998; Featherstone 2000; Smith & Morra 2006b). It is in this configuration that, as Haraway (1991f: 249) says, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves."

In contrast to pathological conceptions of sexuality, exemplified by the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat*, the *Cyber SM bodysuit* not only represents an amplification and extension of the genitals in terms of unlimited enjoyment of *promiscuous genitality* in terms of the "cyber" (see, for example, Jütte 2000: 356–57; Evert 2003: 94–95; Waskul 2003: 113–114; Ben-Ze'ev 2004: 10–11; Nayar 2004: 248–250; Palm 2004: 109–110; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87; with regard to IRC sex, cf. Rival et al. 1999: 301–316; in the context of "vampiric discourse," cf. LeBlanc 1997: 261), but also a reconstitution of the body as an extended sexual apparatus, a prosthetic body as the emblem of what I call *the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern* (for a short summary, see Plummer 2003: 526–527; for a contextualization in terms of "the future of the body" in the form of "the virtual body," see Rötzer 1996a, 1996b). In the world of cybersex, the sexual body, as an interface between the organic and the technological, has turned, in the arrangement of sex act in the realm of the "cyber," into a cybernetic organism that functions as a *computer-aided full-body sexual organ*, as a sexually programmed cyborg (cf. Bogard 1996: 153–178; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53; Krewani 1998b: 147–151; Bostic 1998; Barber 2004; Harvey 2006); that is, as Haraway (1991a: 149) says, as a "hybrid of machine and organism."[108]

According to Karin Krauthausen (2002: 78–80), the sexual subject in Stenslie's cybersex system is a Narcissus figure, a self-referential agent of its own pleasure, that "does not like to know any person vis-à-vis [*Gegenüber*]" but instead "has fallen in love with his own mirror image" (ibid.: 79). In this conjuncture, however, the virtuality of cybersex is not a disadvantage; on the contrary, it is a condition of possibility for a new kind of sexual experience: *a sexual encounter with one's own body by means of prosthetics*, that is, an entirely new mode of masturbation:

108 In the relationship of the organic and the technological, the organic, of course, does not refer to what is called "natural body," the body ideal and the ideal body as the phantasm of various romantic ideologies celebrating the "authenticity" and "originality" of the body in the state of "nature" (see, for example, Lepenies 1978; Böhme 1992; Böhme & Böhme 2004 [1996]); instead, what I term organic signifies, in opposition to the Deleuze-Guattarian "body without organs" (see Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]), functional body parts, functionalized, that is, technologically integrated, organs of the rationalized body, functioning as the executing components of the postmodern body machine (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948]; Seltzer 1992a, 1992b, 1998 [1995]; Yanarella & Reid 1996). Thus, the organic here does not belong to the realm of "nature" but to the world of *human capital* (cf. Becker 1993; Hartog et al. 2007), the world of the cyborg.

> Trotz der Virtualität des Cyberspace scheint der Cybersex einen pragmatischen Umgang mit Sex zu ermöglichen: Man gestaltet das visuelle Gegenüber nach eigenen Wünschen aus einer *Body Bank* und lässt sich dann auf die elektronische Stimulation ein, auf jene Koordination der Motoren im Cybersex-Anzug, die eine anonyme PartnerIn von einem Bildschirm aus irgendwo auf der Welt steuert. Der eigene Körper steckt in einem Ganz-Körper-Vibrator und die Reize, die der Anzug auf der Haut und in den Körperöffnungen auslöst, sind entsprechend der technischen Ausrüstung normiert. Das Erlebnisspektrum beim Cybersex ist also begrenzt und das Ergebnis eher eine Mechanik am eigenen Körper als eine Kommunikation zwischen verschiedenen Körpern. (ibid.: 78–79; cf. Stenslie 1994b, 1996, 1997, 2000b; Woolford 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b)

But it is precisely this restriction – sexual experience as one's own technological projection in the form of a *body simulacrum*, in other words, a *virtual phantom body*, an *extra-corporeal spectral body* (cf. Derrida 1994 [1993]) – that constitutes the special attractivity of cybersex, its technoscientific "sex appeal," that is, "the sex appeal of the inorganic" (Perniola 2004 [2000]; Sevenant 2005: 52–54, 115–117; Melzer 2006: 188–193, 210–211; Clarke 2008: 156–157; Foster 1996; von Samsonow 2005). In this manner, "sex" in the world of the "cyber" implies a logical conclusion of sexual autonomy typical of postmodern sexuality: the most advanced form of *sexual autarchy* achieved by means of a prosthetic assemblage, a sexual body-machine system. That is, my body as a prosthetic double in virtual reality is my sexual object, my sexual-technological projection of the subject that I am in my objectified subjectivity.

What, then, is cybersex if not a culmination of the scientific-technological interest in the control and optimization of all that is corporeal in terms of the sexual, a new regime of sex and sexuality that I call "post-sex"; "sex" as a manifestation of desires and pleasures in the order of global capitalism, sexual rationalism under the sign of the postmodern, commodified sex adapted to the Taylorization of the libido. It is precisely in this context of rationalized body management that cybersex, in a form of technological embodiment, is an embodiment of reason: cybersex is about the scientific-technological reason of the postmodern, the reason of technoscience (cf. Clarke 1998: 12–13; Parisi 2004: 34–35; Michael 2006: 76–78; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Ihde & Selinger 2003); an ideal mode of prosthetic sex as a projection of the body politics of the cyborg (see Haraway 1991f, 1997; cf. Gray & Mentor 1995: 219–222; Shevory 2000: 169–198; Larson 2004: 191–198; Gray 2001).

This is the world of "sex in the age of its reproductive superfluousness" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b), a world dominated by the imperative of the technological, and as such, a world of limitless desires and pleasures promised by the intensified productivity of global capitalism under the regime of technoscience turning the body into a computerized performance apparatus in both senses of the word (cf. Bayer 1998: 201–208; Pronger 2002: 103–109; Roach 2003: 345–351; Rogers 2003: 367–368; in Cartesian terms, cf. Magdalinski 2008: 34–35; from the perspective of the military body, cf. Marriott & Grumstrup-Scott 1992). This is the world of the posthuman; a world in which the idea of the "natural" has defi-

nitely lost its meaning because everything has become *denaturalized by means of technology* (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999; Hollinger & Gordon 2002; Pitts 2003; Melzer 2006; from a historical perspective, cf. Orland 2005b). In this world, it is the prosthetic as the paragon of a technological transformation of the human into the posthuman that now defines the body as a post-natural entity: as the "normal" body of the postmodern, a body for which technology is not just a "second nature," but the true nature, the nature proper (cf. Bender & Druckrey 1994; Robertson et al. 1996; Soper 1995; Clark 2004).

As N. Katherine Hayles (1999: 3) says, the "posthuman view thinks of the body as *the original prosthesis* we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with *other prostheses* becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born" (emphasis mine; cf. Haney 2006: 2–3; Manning 2007: 156–156; in the context of "born again bodies" epitomizing the "flesh and spirit" of "American Christianity," cf. Griffith 2004: 249–250; in terms of cyberfeminism, cf. Kember 2003: 143–144).

If, in these terms, the sexual as an experience and expression of the corporeal is *always already* prosthetic, is it, then, to be consequent, that the practices of the body we call "sex" (whatever they as such are) have from the very beginning been prosthetic exercises, sexual play with prostheses and prosthetic play with sex? As a corollary, does prosthetic sex, then, in terms of the posthuman, equal "natural" sex, natural now in the sense of Hayles's "original," or, rather, is the "original" in itself *always already* prosthetic just because it is taken to be "natural"?

There Is Nothing Natural in the Sexual

If all that is sexual is not about an inherent predisposition of an individual, or a "natural fact" constitutive of all human beings, but, instead, a cultural construction that by becoming inscribed into the body effects what it designates (cf. Stein 1990b: 5–7, 1990c), each of the sexual-technological inventions shown in the Dresden museum seems, in its own particular way, only to endorse the thesis. They demonstrate that the sexual is not a matter of the "inside," rather, an issue of the "outside" (cf., for, example, Butler 1990, 1993; Fuss 1991; Stanton 1992a; Ferdinand et al. 1998); a matter that matters in terms of culture, as a matter that is constituted by contingent constellations of knowledge and power working through different conceptualities, discourses and practices on the body (see Foucault 1978c [1977], 1980a [1975], 1996e [1972], 1996h [1977]; cf. Caplan 1987; Bublitz 1999; Bublitz et al. 1999a; Seidman 2003; Schneider 2004). The same, of course, also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to inventions and discursive configurations of technology, not the least to body technologies whatever they are (see, for example, Williams & Bendelow 1998: 79–88, Shilling 2005: 173–197; Feenberg 1995; Rutsky 1999; Hansen 2000; Barkhaus & Fleig 2002; Brown & Webster 2004; from the perspective of the construction of "modernity," cf. Misa et al. 2004).

In these terms, being human, the sexual included, is not natural; being human is precisely *human*: to be human is cultural, that is, *non-natural*. For the same reason, the human being is from the very beginning, *always already*, posthuman.

While the "anti-onanism-apparatus," obviously applied as much as a deterrence as an actual "remedy," nevertheless had its scientific and moral justification from the Enlightenment to the days of Freud in the campaign against the "solitary vice" comparable to mortal sin (see, for example, Braun 1995; Laqueur 2003; in terms of Kantian philosophy, see Kant 1988c [1803]: 759; cf. Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]: 442–454; Simanowski 1998: 128–136), the "vibrations-massage apparatus" was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for a female genital manipulation as a "cure" for hysterical symptoms (see Maines 1999: 28–45; Stewart 2001: 91–92; Allan & Burridge 2006: 148–150; Blackledge 2008: 277–278). In contrast to these pathological conceptions of sexual desire and pleasure, the "cybersex bodysuit" paradigmatically illustrates the great expectations under the sign of the postmodern concerning the future of sexuality (see, for example, Zhai 1998: 45–47; Abramson & Pinkerton 2002 [1995]: 203–217; Collins 2006: 209, 2008: 119–120, 124–127), or perhaps more properly, *future sex*, "sex" in terms of technological futurism, as a futurological projection of a totally rationalized body (see, for example, Bright 1992; Getty & Winkelmann 1996; Palac 1998; cf. Botting 1999; from a historical perspective, cf. de Pomerai 1936; Mace 1976; as literary fiction, cf. Huxley 1994a [1932]).

In this respect, two things are of importance here. Firstly, the strikingly different ways in which these devices conceive of the relations between the genitals and pleasure on the one hand, and genitality and sexual disorder on the other; or, to summarise this complex issue with the words of Wilhelm Reich (1965 [1927]), the problematics concerning "the function of the orgasm."[109] Secondly, whether for controlling (the "anti-onanism apparatus" and the "vibrations-massage apparatus") or enhancing (the "cybersex bodysuit") the experiences and expressions of sexual desires and pleasures, technology is deployed to produce effects on the body in all these cases; effects that, in fact, *define* what counts as sexual.

Hence, in this context technology is at the same time both a discursive-apparatic means of controlling, and thus of *producing*, specific manifestations of the corporeal understood to be "sexual," and a linguistic-discursive method for giving – by and through scientific explanation – a rational meaning to the experiences and expressions of the body that defy reason; in other words, for ratio-

109 According to Reich, "the function of the orgasm" (*die Funktion des Orgasmus*) was the moment of an uninhibited release of sexual energy experienced as a climax of intercourse (for Reich, curiously enough, the only real form of sexual pleasure); a release that he deemed to be a precondition for both the mental and corporeal health of the individual (see Reich 1965 [1927]: 34–37). I do not, of course, subscribe to the Reichian bio-physiological concept of orgasm as a mysterious "life-force" (cf. Robinson 1969: 60–65), neither to any variations of Masters-Johnson orgasmology as a scientistic regime of "normal" sexual "performance" (see Masters & Johnson 1966); instead, my interest pertains to the *cultural meaning* of orgasm, that is, the culturally codified form of orgasmic pleasure as "the function of the orgasm" in the context of postmodern body politics driven by the logic of economism.

nalizing and thus administering those desires and pleasures that are beyond rationality: the "sexual" as a manifestation of "unreason."

Taken together, in the concrete language of museum objects, these exhibition items not only tell the observer about the opposing aspects of conceiving the relations between corporeality and sexuality, but they also show the historicity, that is, the *contingency*, of all that is defined in terms of the sexual. In this sense, these exhibits illuminate *discursive figures* that have constituted the *idea* of "the sexual" in various historical configurations, under different regimes of the body, desire and pleasure (cf., for example, Gallagher & Laqueur 1987; Rousseau & Porter 1987b; Birken 1988; Rousseau 1991; Laqueur 1992a, 1992b; Herdt 1994; Fradenburg & Freccero 1996; Simon 1996; Lancaster & di Leonardo 1997; Eder et al. 1999; Eder 2002; Phillips & Reay 2002, 2011; Lancaster 2003, 2011; Harvey 2004; Crawford 2007). Each of these objects illustrates that what is sexual is, instead of an intrinsic truth of the flesh, a culturally variable idea made to bear on the experiences and expressions of the corporeal; the corporeal that in itself is a specific mode of signifying practices (cf., for example, Butler 1990, 1993; de Lauretis 1994; Grosz 1994c; Grosz & Probyn 1995). That is, if, as Foucault 1990k: 157) says, "sexuality is a very real historical formation" and, *as such*, an anthropological constant to be found in various forms in all times and in all cultures, in contrast, what is "the sexual" in different sexualities is a contingent matter.

In these terms, all these technological contrivances under discussion here, the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit*, each in their peculiarity, demonstrate that there is nothing natural in the sexual; *the sexual is human only as far as it is unnatural*.

In other words, what is understood to be sex in the human world is never animal; as Slavoj Žižek (1999e: 83) says in his critique of Hegel's "reductionist notion of sexuality" in which "the 'culturalization' of sexuality" is seen "as its simple 'sublation' into the civilized, socio-symbolic form of marriage," that is, "a mere natural foundation and presupposition of human society," while the point is "not only that humans have sex in a more cultivated way" than "animals, but that they are able to elevate sexuality into an absolute Aim to which they subordinate their entire life" – as it were, in a true Hegelian manner, "a properly 'metaphysical passion.'"[110] This implies that all that is sexual in the human world is endlessly pliable, something that is elastic and malleable through and through. And precisely for this reason, the sexual body (whatever it is as such), along with all that is corporeal, is *always already posthuman*: the posthuman

110 Neither is sex anything biological in the world of humans; as Žižek (1999e: 120) argues: "The standard argument of the Catholic Church against contraception (according to which sex, deprived of the higher goal of procreation, is reduced to animal fornication) thus obviously misses the point: is it not precisely sex in the service of procreation – i.e. biological reproduction – that is animal?" (cf. Žižek 1999e: 120). In other words, all efforts to define the sexual by appealing to the teleology of procreation, the biological *aspect* of human sexuality, not its aim, in fact, only *dehumanize* human sexuality; but, paradoxically, even the dehumanization of human sexuality is possible only in terms of the human; and, thus, there is no escape from the human even by way of the posthuman.

has not fallen from the sky, nor is it given by nature; the posthuman is a *human invention*, a discursive-cultural construct, and as such, contingent on the idea of the "human," itself an effect of the very same "human," and thus an anthropomorphic notion – just like the idea of "the sexual."

That is, *there is nothing posthuman outside the human*; and, thus, even human sexuality is always something that in its historical forms is a human invention, and precisely as such, *always already* "post"-human, not something given and eternal, but relative in relation to the human in its historicity; "the human" that is always a historical invention in itself, and, as such, cultural through and through. Consequently, whenever sex and sexuality appear "natural" (which, of course, often happens), they have been *naturalized* by conceptualizations and categorizations that have they origin not in nature, but in culture, as human inventions. In these terms, what is "sexual" is always already relative and relational; it is as Žižek (1993: 128) says, referring to "woman as a cultural product," never "unambiguously fixed, presupposed as a positive fact, but is always-already 'posited,'" that is, "always determined by a specific cultural context." (Žižek 1993: 128). Therefore, there is no escape from the human even by way of the posthuman: what we call "posthuman" is always already post-*human*.

From this perspective, the discursive figures of onanism, hysteria and cybersex, exemplified by the Dresden museum objects, comprise the traverse of the sexual from Enlightenment reason through nineteenth-century scientific rationality to the times of contemporary theory under the sign of the "post," the constellation of post-reason. Each of these figures, having a history in terms of genealogy (see Foucault 1977c [1971]; Stegmaier 1994: 112–145; Davidson 1996 [1986]: 224–227; Ortega 1997: 74–103; Brieler 1998: 345–401; Schneider 2004: 101–108; Lash 1991; cf. Nietzsche 1968c [1887]),[111] represents a specific discourse: each of them implies a different concept of "the sexual." They show that the sexual has no distinct and definitive *Ursprung*, an originary origin, but rather, a multifarious and heterogeneous *Herkunft*, a contingent assemblage of disparate cultural moments manifesting various religious and secular interests and traditions; each, in turn, resulting from the contradictions and antagonisms inherent to power struggles in

111 In the Foucauldian discourse, genealogy refers, in contrast to traditional forms of history writing, to a radically different conception of historical analysis. Instead of events and things that are assumed to be stable and in clear causal relationships to each other, genealogy emphasizes complexity, fragmentarity and contingency of historical processes. Genealogy draws attention to "local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects" (Foucault 1980g [1976]: 83). In these terms, history is not a narrative with a plot, but a field of heterogeneous and unrelated occurrences and accidents, the reasons of which are not given but *constructed* in various ways dependent on the chosen perspective. With his genealogical approach Foucault (1977c [1971], 1983b [1982]) relies on Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Nietzsche 1968c [1887]), and especially on Nietzsche's writing "*Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*" (Nietzsche 1972b [1874]); in the Nietzschean manner, Foucault argues that the actual causes or origins of things and events as well as their eventual contextualizations derive from disparate sources without any teleological continuity; all this is implied by the German word *Herkunft* ("coming-together-from") (used by Nietzsche) in contrast to *Ursprung* ("stemming-from-one-source"). In short, *heterogeneity* instead of unity is the constitutive idea of genealogy.

different historical constellations, struggles that concern the very corporeality of the human being (Foucault 1991a [1975]; Smart 2002 [1985]: 56–60, 75–77; cf. Benthien & Wulf 2001; in terms of the history of medicine, cf. Stahnisch & Steger 2005).

To sum up, the body, or rather, the *category* of the body, has been throughout history a highly contested entity, a battle scene of forces and powers that have in various ways, always with regard to their specific *interests*, tried to define what it is to be "human." Accordingly, the genealogy of the sexual is a history of concepts, effected by disparate linguistic figures, that are conditioned in their contingency by the very contingency of all that is "sexual" (whatever it is understood to be at various times since the eighteenth century, the very beginning of the discourses on "the sexual").

While in the notion of onanism "the sexual" was perceived as a vicious lust threatening to corrupt both the body and the soul of the subject, and while in the concept of hysteria "the sexual" was understood as a source of affections appearing as disturbing and confusing symptoms, in cybersex "the sexual" is about desires and pleasures of being a cyborg, a hybrid creature living, as Haraway (1991a: 150–151) says, in a "non-oedipal" world. Thus, in their own "objective" ways – "objective" in the sense of concrete objects made intelligible by discursive means in specific historical-material contexts – the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat "Autovibrator"* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* speak about discourses that for the past two centuries – the time span embracing the Enlightenment, the modern and the postmodern – have been constitutive of sexuality, and along with it of that "*imaginary* element that is 'sex'" (Foucault 1990k: 156; emphasis mine), *cet élément imaginaire qu'est "le sexe"* (Foucault 1994a: 207).

In these terms, "[s]ex, like being human, is contextual," as Thomas Laqueur (1992a: 16) says in his historical reconstruction of what he calls "making sex"; that is, the history of gender difference as *a historically conditioned and constituted* binary opposition of the male and the female; a difference that at the same time is predicated upon, and confirmed by, sexual difference (cf., for example, Weeks 1997b [1986]: 45–68; Garton 2004: 26–28). It should be noticed, however, that, on the one hand, sex, gender and sexual difference, and on the other, various sexual practices with their constitutive forms of desires and pleasures, are all different things that are related to one another in a very complicated manner. Along with religion, in itself a cultural form that has always been, among other things, a way of regulating the experiences and expressions of the body, their desires and pleasures, it is precisely sex and sexuality that have been a highly contested aspect of the human condition throughout history (see, for example, Ariès & Béjin 1985 [1982]; Evans 1993; Dean 1996; Weeks 1995b [1985]; Hawkes 1996, 2004; Eder 2002).

In this manner, "the sexual" is always an index of times, an extremely sensitive indicator of the affective state of culture in various historical ages, a barometer of the emotional climate of an epoch, and, at the same time, the very product of the time prevailing. What is important here is that, like the aesthetic, the sexual

is *non-referential*: it is not a representation of something "ouside" or "before" it, neither is it a manifestation of something that is "beneath" or "beyond" it; rather, the sexual is both a realm of the imaginary and a sphere of experience *sui generis*, an aspect of being human that is culturally conditioned, that is, a component of human existence that is historically constituted, and, as such, has a *history* consisting of various *histories* (cf. Stanton 1992a). In other words, what is "sexual" is always contingent. In this sense, the sexual, in Freudian terms, has an affinity with what Freud, through his entire theoretical trajectory, designated as a *psychische Realität*, "psychic reality," constitutive of being a subject (see, for example, Freud 1986b [1919]: 263, 1986d [1915–1917]: 383–385, 1987d [1900]: 625, 1991a [1915]: 286; cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 425–427); that is, a mode of "reality" that is *real in its imaginary* (cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]).

Accordingly, as discursively constructed sexual-technological appliances, the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat "Autovibrator"* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* manifest, in their own ways, the genealogy of "the sexual" through the times of the Enlightenment, the scientific rationality of the nineteenth century and the reason of technoscience essential to the postmodern as the consummation of modernization constitutive of the modern, the very condition of possibility of the postmodern.

In the context of the present study, the problem is only, firstly, that if, in terms of both etymology and genealogy, what is *sex* is as ambiguous as it is self-evident, how do we know what sex is and what it is not? And secondly, if until now the sexual has been human only because it is unnatural, what, then, is *posthuman* sex, the constitutive idea of "sex" in terms of the cyborg, an entity that is beyond all that is "natural"?

1.1.3 Towards the Sexual Enlightenment of the Postmodern

If the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* represent – be it at the imaginary or concrete-practical level[112] – the historical trajectory of the sexual-technological complex in various forms, what is the common denominator that forms the rationale of their deployment? In other words, what is the connecting idea, the very urgency, behind these dif-

112 As material traces of history, the genital vibrator and the anti-onanism apparatus are at the same time imaginary objects, in the sense that they manifest and represent the imaginary of the sexual at the time they were designed and deployed. Moreover, to become intelligible as this kind of evidence of the past, they require not only knowledge of facts from the spectator but also imagination with regard to the original historical constellation. In this sense, like all objects representing history, these museum exhibits also comprise a reality that can never be really understood – in a true sense, apprehended – without a linguistic-discursive reconstruction. Thus, not only the cybersex bodysuit, manifesting the "history of the present" (Foucault 1991a [1975]: 31; Smart 2002 [1985]: xii–xiv) in an imaginary form, but also the genital vibrator and the anti-onanism apparatus, representing the history of the past, signify, in and through their presence, the absence of the imaginary world they are part of (the medical imaginary of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century); a world that is accessible for us, among other things, only in terms of the imaginary constructions constituted by language and discourses peculiar to the historical period in question (cf. Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; Habermas 1998f [1985]).

ferent technologies to regulate the intimate sensations and affections of the body, sensations and affections that are subsumed by the notion – the *signifier* – of "the sexual"? As these inventions, each in its particular manner, testify, the problem that inspires such enterprises of human ingenuity is the deeply ambiguous and disquieting quality of sexual desire and pleasure in the Western tradition; a mode of corporeal sensations and affections that Freud (1986d [1915–1917]: 335–336, 1990c [1933]: 104–105, 1991d [1915]: 217–218) designates with the term *Organlust*, "organ pleasure" (cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 363–364; Schöpf 1998: 122–124; for a theory-historical discussion, see van Haute & Geyskens 2004: 64–68).

The problem especially embraces the anxieties relating to the enjoyment of orgasm, that specific corporeal sensation which, with regard to the imperative of reason, the ideal of human will, defies all the categories of the rational in its obstinate demand and wilful arbitrariness, in its self-generating compulsiveness and compulsory need of repetition: far from being the body of the subject, the orgasmic body is an autonomous body, an a-subjective, involuntary body, in the grip of uncontrolled paroxysms, and, as such, an opposite of control, a derision of the very principle of reason; in other words: *orgasm is the paragon of unreason*.

A Way Out of "Sexual Misery"

The anti-onanism device, manifesting the sexual rationalism of the Enlightenment reason, was an extreme effort to prevent all those who – whether male or female, children, adolescents or adults – allegedly suffered from the excessive and dangerous sexual drive from the enjoyment of the form of orgasmic pleasure euphemistically called, in the prude words typical of the time, "solitary vice," "self-pollution" or "self-abuse" (see, for example, Laqueur 1992a: 227, 1999: 22; Castronovo 2001: 65–90, 96–100; Stengers & Van Neck 2001: 102; Meyer-Drawe 2004; for a historical contextualization, see Lempa 1993; Belemann-Smit 2003).[113]

In turn, in the cure of hysteria with the help of the vibrator treatment, based on the sexual rationalism of nineteenth-century scientific reason, the officially stated intention was not to produce orgasmic pleasure, but, instead, an alleviation of corporeal symptoms of nervous tension understood as having been effected by sexual malfunction of the female body (Maines 1999: 48–66; cf. Juffer 1998: 84–93; Drenth 2005: 227–229); a body that in itself was at the time conceived of in pathological terms, as a threat to the civilized order manifesting male reason (see, for example, Suleiman 1986b; Jordanova 1989, 1999; Honegger 1991; Bergmann 1998 [1989/1992]; in terms of the disorders of "the Victorian self," see Littlewood 2002: 149–160). That is, as Foucault (1996m [1977]:

113 In this connection, it is appropriate to notice that the way in which Foucault (1990k [1976]: 28–29, 42, 104, 153) conceptualizes the campaign against onanism is historically too limited: the problem, as assumed by Foucault, was by no means only a problem pertaining to children; instead, it concerned masturbation in general, regardless of age, gender or social status (see, for example, Erlach et al. 1994; Braun 1995; Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]; Belemann-Smit 2003; Laqueur 2003).

218), paraphrasing the nineteenth-century scientific discourse, says: women, not only that "[y]ou are nothing other than your sex," but, more fundamentally, "[y]ou are the sickness of man" (for the female body as "uncontrolled nature," a "'debased, unclean, mystic, and bloody' site of the orient," cf. Hurley 1993: 197–198; von Braun 1994 [1985]: 21–77; Finucci 2001: 48–51; for woman seen as the Freudian "dark continent," cf. Gardner 1997: 128–135; Rohde-Dachser 1997 [1991]; for "the enigma of woman" in Freud's writing, cf. Kofman 1985 [1980]).[114]

Although onanism and hysteria were conceptualized and treated as different pathologies in the medical discourse on sexuality, both of them were perceived as a threat against family values and civilized sexuality based on the Biblical idea of procreation. As Élisabeth Roudinesco (2009 [2007]: 68–69), in her history of perversion, sums up: "According to the new medical gaze," onanism and hysteria "at least had one thing in common: they preferred auto-erotic sexuality to procreative sexuality," and it was for this reason that "the hysterical woman, together with the homosexual man and the masturbating child," became "the support for all sorts of fantasies centred on the fear that the family and the procreative order might be perverted" (cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 104–105; in terms of "hygienic imagination," see Meyer-Drawe 2004: 216–221; for a historical contextualization, see Lempa 1993; Belemann-Smit 2003). Paradoxically, in spite of the increasing scientification of sexuality in the name of the Enlightenment and scientific reason (see, for example, Jordanova 1980, 1989, 1999; Gallagher & Laqueur 1987; Laqueur 1992a, 1992b; Porter & Teich 1994b; Porter & Hall 1995; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b), its conceptual hard core was still predicated upon ideas created in the era of Romanticism. "During the Romantic period, the sciences of sexuality and sexual pleasure (neurology, botany, natural history, biology, and anatomy) acknowledged the perverseness of human sexuality, its resistance to reproductive telos and discipline" (Sha 2009: 16; cf. Gutmann 1998).

In both onanism and hysteria, it was precisely orgasm, though differently conceptualized, that was the very issue: whether as a forbidden pleasure to be regimented as an allegedly perverted sexual practice of masturbation, or as a medico-therapeutic procedure purporting to alleviate an assumed complex of corporeal-psychic ailments appearing as hysteria. In both cases, it was the highly paradoxical, intrinsically contradictory manner of conceptualizing orgasm as a strictly disciplined form of pleasure that was the problem: in onanism the inability to *suppress*, and in hysteria the inability to *enjoy*, orgasmic pleasure; an inability that in onanism was understood as acquired, resulting from the bad habit of self-gratification (see Braun 1995: 171–177; Laqueur 1993a: 101,

114 What was called *weibliche Sexualität*, "female sexuality," in Freudian psychoanalytic discourse was a *terra incognita* or even an enigma from the very beginning and still in the early 1930s (see, for example, Freud 1972h [1931]), or, as Freud call it, "a dark continent"; for example: "Vom Geschlechtsleben des kleinen Mädchens wissen wir weniger als von dem des Knaben. Wir brauchen uns dieser Differenz nicht zu schämen; ist doch auch das Geschlechtsleben des erwachsenen Weibes ein *dark continent*. Aber wir haben erkannt, daß das Mädchen den Mangel eines dem männlichen gleichwertigen Geschlechtsgliedes schwer empfindet, sich darum für minderwertig hält, und daß dieser 'Penisneid' einer ganzen Reihe charakteristisch weiblicher Reaktionen den Ursprung gibt." (Freud 1972b [1926]: 241; for a critical discussion, see Rohde-Dachser 1997 [1991]

105–107, 1993b, 1999, 2003; Stengers & Van Neck 2001 [1998]), and in hysteria seen as resulting from the psycho-physical constitution endemic to the female body as the opposite of the male body controlled by rational self-discipline, the very characteristic of "man" as the subject and embodiment of reason (see, for example, von Braun 1994 [1985]; Lamott 2001; Nolte 2003).

In these terms, uncontrolled orgasm – whether as an "illegitimate" striving for its enjoyment or as an inability to experience its pleasure in an "appropriate" way – appeared as as a manifestation of unreason inimical to decency, the civilized order of the body, in Kantian words, the *Sittlichkeit* of the subject (see Kant 1974a [1785/1786], 1991c [1797/1798]; cf. Höffe 2007 [1983]: 179–221; Schott 1993 [1988]; in terms of philanthropism, cf. Lempa 1993).

Thus, masturbation, hysteria and orgasm constitute the hard core of "the sexual" in *historical* terms, the terms of the genesis of the *idea* of "the sexual" as a specific mode of desires and pleasures that in their *intrinsic irrationality* constantly threaten the regime of reason; an idea that is an outcome of the efforts to rationalize the body in all of its functions, its expressions and experiences, especially with regard to the performance of the sexual organs (for the origin of this idea in Saint Augustine's libidinal body, see O'Daly 1987: 12–14, 45–55, 116–121). In these terms, masturbation, hysteria and orgasm, as the primal notions constituting "the sexual" in its genealogy, manifest the power of Enlightenment reason as the regulatory regime of desires and pleasures in the coming-into-being of the post-Biblical body; a secular body that, paradoxically, is a product, a re-conceptualization, of the Biblical body. As Kathy L. Gaca (2003: 4), in her study of the emergence of Christian sexual morality, says, "we should entertain no fantasies that we live in a society of post-Christian and genuinely pluralistic sexual rules." It is in this sense that "the sexual" is a religious concept in its very origin; an idea that from early Christianity till today has fundamentally contributed to the conception of the human body and its desires and pleasures (see, for example, Pagels 1991 [1988]; Jordan 2002; Carpenter 2003; Bernauer & Carrette 2004; Crawford 2007; for the renunciation of the body in early Christianity as the origin of the Christian conception of sexuality, see Brown 1988, for the Christian idea of the "flesh," see Miles 2005; in terms of "the battle for chastity," see Foucault 1990g [1992]).

After the centuries of secularization of the Western world in the wake of the Enlightenment, the early Christian past is still present: in Western culture, *there is no sexual without the Biblical archetypes concerning the human being as a corporeal being, a being doomed to live with the temptations of the flesh*.

What was common to both the struggle to prevent masturbation and the treatment of hysteria was that the sexual subject was understood as a specific *genital* subject, a self being the subject of one's own genitals. This sexual subject, however, was not only a genital subject; at the same time, it was also a gendered subject, a sexual subject constituted individually and socially according to the dominant sex divide, the matrix of gender differences based on the genital organization of the body (see, for example, Brown 1990 [1966]: 127–131;

Hawkes 1996: 26–28; Soble 2008: 79–82; Laqueur 1987, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1999, 2003; with regard to the homosexual body, see Moran 1996; in terms of the distinction between the "homosexual" and the "heterosexual," see Oosterhuis 2000; in the context of anti-masturbatory technologies, see de la Peña 2003: 143–155), as it was constructed by the medical discourses at the time; discourses that in themselves manifested the idea of medicalization, that is, medicine as a science turned into a scientistic ideology of medicalism purporting to control and regiment the body for the benefit of the civilized order of society and culture (see, for example, Conrad & Schneider 1992 [1980]: 172–213; Loetz 1994; Metz-Becker 1997; Seidel 1998; for sexuality defined in terms of pathology, see Wernz 1993; Gutmann 1998). It is in this sense that the idea of heterosexuality as the sexual paradigm of procreation, became constructed on the assumed "purpose" of the sexual organs, organs of *generation*, not of pleasure in its own right (see Laqueur 1987 [1986]).

But, precisely from this historical perspective, as Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay (2002a: 3) say, "'[s]ex,' as in biological distinctions of male and female, turns out to have only a little to do with sexualities." Accordingly, seen historically, "sex" as an apparently integrative designation for both gender and sexual practices disintegrates into various *sexualities* independent from the imperative of procreation. In this manner, the idea of what, after the invention of the "homosexual" in the mid-nineteenth century (see, Foucault 1990k: 38–43, 101; cf., for example, Jordan 1997: 163–164; Katz 1996; Somerville 1997), came to be known as "heterosexuality," constituting the sexual paradigm of procreation, became the hidden agenda of *all* sexuality during the emergence and consolidation of the notion of "the sexual" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

With regard to the history of onanism and hysteria as pathological concepts, what is important is that the sex division had repercussions on the very construction of onanism and hysteria as specific "sexual problems": while onanism was predominantly, though not exclusively, a male issue (the male was the model of the human being in general, and thus also that of the female body), hysteria was predominantly, though not exclusively, a matter concerning the specificity of the female constitution. In both cases, expressly the sexual organs were seen as the origin of the "evil": the genitals had the meaning as the source of sin turned into pathology (cf. Weeks 1997a [1981]: 19–33, 81–93; Allen 2000). The problem was, in Robert W. Connell and Gary W. Dowsett's (1999) words, "the unclean motion of the generative parts."

It is in this manner, as Bryan S. Turner (1997 [1984]: 109), referring to the Foucauldian conception of the interrelation between "medical history and sexual deviance," states, "the medical problems of subordinates" in times of the autocratic regimes were "products of the political and ideological regulation of sexuality."

> Late marriage was a structural requirement of European societies until the late eighteenth century, a requirement which was enforced by gerontocratic and patriarchal control. The demand for late sexual gratification was ideologi-

> cally enforced by certain medical theories which proclaimed the physical dangers of sexual "self-abuse" in onanism and which expressed middle- and upper-class anxieties about the threat of masturbatory insanity. Just as capitalists were encouraged not to spend their wealth in luxurious consumption, so dependents were encouraged not to spend their sexual potentiality in unproductive onanism. Similarly, hysteria in young women was the consequence of sexual unemployment, but a necessary feature of delayed marriage in a society where marriage was an economic contract. (ibid.)

Thus, if "all illness is social illness" (ibid.: 124; cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998: 44), it is clear that onanism and hysteria were not pathologies of organic bodies, but social pathologies of a repressive mode of the body politic constitutive of Victorian society, a manifestation of Malthusianism as a "potent ideology of the patriarchal household in a society where population growth was regulated by delayed marriage" (Turner 1997: 108), and in these terms, by delayed sexual gratification (for Malthus's theory of population, see Malthus 1992 [1798/1826]). In this sense, onanism appeared as "the paradigmatic expression of disease" with regard to reproduction of population, implying "a cluster of medical categories such as 'masturbation insanity' or 'spermatorrhea'" as designations for the negative consequences of this "'unproductive' form of sexuality" (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 44–45). Hysteria, in turn, manifested an "internal restraint of the body in patriarchal society," a mode of "social subordination of women" who were restricted both to living out their own sexuality and to pursuing an independent career (ibid.: 45; cf. Frank 1991: 42–47; Shilling 1993: 78–82; Synnott 1993: 236–238; Turner 1997: 124–125).

The Phantasm of Prosthetic Sex

From the Enlightenment through the nineteenth-century scientific rationalism, the coming into being of the sexual subject was conceived of as an effect of organs that, like an autonomous instance of power, were seen to function as a compulsory corporeal force, an irresistible, ominous and insidious urge, that constitutes – in a curious Althusserian manner of "interpellation" (see Althusser 1971 [1970]: 163–169; Gearhart 2004: 178–1993)[115] – the self as a subject of the sexual, the subject as an effect of *assujettissement* in terms of the genital. According to Foucault (1994a [1976]: 81; cf. Foucault 1983b [1982]: 239–242, 1990k [1976]: 60, 1991a [1975]: 30, 1992b [1984]: 27), the term *assujettissement*, "subjectification," refers to a twofold process of subjugation and subjection in the sense of self-policing: at the same time, power both acts upon and acti-

115 In the theory of ideology devised by Louis Althusser's (1971 [1970]: 163–169), the term "interpellation" refers to the process of the constitution of the subject. According to Althusser, ideology has an ability to address, to "call," us in a specific manner that effects our recognition ourselves as the ones who are addressed. Althusser illustrates this by an example in which a policeman tells somebody in the street to stop ("Hey, you there!") (ibid.: 163): as soon – and, of course, as far as – this somebody indeed breaks off his or her walk and turns around thus recognizing hat he or she is concerned, that is, being "hailed," the person thus addressed becomes a subject of ideology. It is precisely this moment of "hailing" and the corresponding reaction of the one who is addressed ("Oh, this concerns me…") that is the moment of interpellation or "calling" to the position of the subject.

vates the body (cf. Oksala 2005: 97–100). In this sense, as Judith Butler (1993: 34) explains, *assujettissement* "is not only a subordination but a securing and maintaining, a putting into place of a subject, a subjectivation." Accordingly, as soon as we enter the realm of "the sexual" we turn into subjects of a disciplinary body, embodiments of a subservient self: as sexual subjects we *produce* ourselves as the subjects of "the sexual."

In this manner, from the age of the Enlightenment to the era of nineteenth-century scientific reason, onanism and hysteria constituted a form of body politics in which a subject, in the sense of the subordinated and subjugated, became a sexual subject by recognizing and consenting to the seductive force of the genitals, both one's own genitals and the genitals of another; that is, perceiving, experiencing and internalizing one's own particular *genitality* in relation to the prevailing genital order, an order constituted according to the functions of the "generative parts" in procreation, the constitutive idea matrix of "the sexual" as the fundament of heterosexuality, the politically legitimate and thus legalized order of sexuality (for the origin of this conception in Aristotelian theory of reproduction, see, for example, Laqueur 1987: 4–16, 1992a: 32–33, 43–52, 54–55; Gotthelf & Lennox 1987; Lennox 2001).

This self-willing, and as such, self-willed, force of the genitals is the origin of what I call the enigma of the sexual; an enigma the responses to which are at the core of the genealogy of all that is defined in terms of "the sexual." In other words, "the sexual" is a discursive effect of what Derrida (1973 [1967]: 78–85, 1997 [1967]: 20, 98, 165–166, 186–187) designates as "auto-affection" (cf. Terada 2001: 17–18, 25–33; Royle 2003a: 54–55): as an effect of the linguistic of language, language "hears" itself "speaking." That is, *as soon as there is a language of "the sexual" it begins to speak by itself, through the discursive figures it has effected by itself*. These discursive figures may reflect the desires and pleasures of the body that are referred to by the term "the sexual"; but, this notwithstanding, they are not able to give an answer to the "simple" question as to *what precisely* it is we call "sexual" and why.

This is the enigma of "the sexual"; an enigma that, in fact, is the "origin" of "the sexual": "the sexual" begins where there is the signifier "the sexual," a signifier the linguistic effects of which are contingent. That is, each of the effects of "the sexual" is a "pre"/"post" instance of an open-ended process of signification in the manner of what Umberto Eco (1989 [1962]) calls *opera aperta*.

In this respect, the human body in general, as the specific organic condition of being human (see, for example, Turner 1997: 30; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 2–17; in Nietzschean terms, cf. Lash 1991: 270–278),[116] was defined from the

116 It must be emphasized that speaking of a specific organic condition of being human, I do not, of course, purport to reduce the human to the biological (the paradigm of all that is medical); I am only saying that in terms of the body the organic is a matter informed by culture: all that is corporeal is in itself *organized organically* in order to be living at all, becoming then, from the very inception, *inscribed culturally*. The body can be the *human* body only in the context of culture.

Enlightenment to nineteenth-century scientific rationalism not only by what was present in the discourses concerning corporeality, but, first and foremost, by what was present in absence, the sexual organs *as organs of sexuality*, organs of "sex"; organs that were not merely the "generative parts" of the body, but, at the same time, organs veiled with a deeply metaphysical figure characteristic of Christianity, the figure of the *pudenda*, "parts of shame," referring to those parts of the body that, according to the Biblical world-explanation, were "to be shamed" since the Fall (see, for example, Lyman 1989 [1978]: 56–57; Laqueur 1992a: 30–31; Davidson 2001: 391; cf. Sheets-Johnstone 1994: 118–120); that is, organs of dangerous desires and pleasures – precisely those terrifying sensations and affections within the body that constantly, again and again, threatened to ruin the moral of both the subject and society.

At the time, this was the problem of "sexual misery," to apply Foucault's (1990d [1977]: 112) words (cf. Merquior 1985: 122; Seidler 1987: 106), in a culture which, along with the progress of reason and science, was precisely in the process of forming the very idea of "the sexual"; the sexual, as we have seen, not so much as a source of pleasure, but as a threat, as a matrix of pathologies turning the rationally organized body into a vehicle of unreason (in the context of Kantian *Vernunft*, cf. Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]: 387–493; as positively valorized in terms of queer theory, cf. Huffer 2009): the body as the "other" of the subject, *another within the self*, the body as a dangerous alien of oneself; that is, the sexual body under the regime of the genitals as the emblem of the "monster," a figure typical of the time (cf, for example, Loughlin 1997: 208; in terms of *psychopathia sexualis*, cf. Krafft-Ebing 1997 [1886]).

In contrast to the pathological conceptions of sexuality from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, the idea of cybersex manifests the very abolition of the whole problem of "sexual misery" by means of technological rationalism of the cyborg, conceptualizing both the body and its desires and pleasures, also including all that is orgasmic, in terms of the machinic: the terms of technological reason (see, for example, Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15–16, 1996a: 32–64, 79–80; Dery 1996: 181–225; Botting 1999: 147–164; Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Jacobs 2002: 14–30; Woodward 2003: 191–192; Parisi 2004: 16–18, 23–26, 32–33; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 30–35; Dixon 2007: 444–445; Stenslie 1996, 1998, 2000b; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Hopkins 1998; Mason 1999; Pettman 2006; Levy 2007; in terms of Deleuze-Guattarian "desiring-machines," cf. Goodchild 1996: 78–83; in the context of Dada, cf. Jones 1998: 146–173; from the perspective of the onanism discourse in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, cf. McCormick 2000: 7–8). As Stenslie says, cybersex enables one to "get a real orgasm through a machine" (Berg 1994: 38). This is "sex" in the techno-futuristic pleasure dome of the "cyber," a postmodern *paradis artificiel* in the realm of the virtual and the prosthetic.

In this sense, cybersex is the triumph of the ideal of what I call a *postmodern orgasmology* as a manifestation of post-sex, a conception of an orgasmic sub-

ject as the subject of the ego-politics of desires and pleasures constitutive of the body management in the neoliberal order of global capitalism (see, for example, Harvey 2007 [2005]: 81–83; Lowe 1995; Haug 2000; Arestis & Sawyer 2004; Cooper 2008), *a form of body politics in which the economization of human bodies implies a disciplinary regime that is based on productive consumption* (see, for example, du Gay 1996a, 1996b; from the perspective of management and managerial subjectivity, see Hancock & Tyler 2001, 2009; Tyler 2004; in terms of "calculating hedonism," see Featherstone 1991b: 171–174, 186–187). Thus, in the realm of the techno-imaginary, cybersex reflects the real-existing order of neo-Fordism as a scientific-technological intensification and utilization of all the forces of the body in order to maximize its productivity and profitability, having its apotheosis in what I call the *Taylorization of the libido* as a manifestation of the *psychophysics of capital*, the disciplinary regime of advanced capitalism, the political economy of neoliberalism (in terms of "the sportive-dynamic body as a symbol of productivity," cf. Hoberman 1994).

In terms of the technological reconstitution of all that is corporeal, this is the world of the cyborg, a world in which bodies and machines live in a blissful symbiosis with one another (cf. Haraway 1991a: 171–189; Terranova 1996b: 167–168; Stelarc 1998: 116–117; Pitts 2003: 151–197; Dery 2005: 83–94; Flichy 2007a [2001]: 36–37, 68–69, 142–146, 151–152; in terms of "neo-avant-garde," cf. Berghaus 2005: 210–214; in the context of postmodern sport, cf. Hoberman 1994: 201–212; from the perspective of Ernst Jünger's technological utopianism as a form of "reactionary modernism," cf. Herf 1986: 70–108), a world of post-human desires and pleasures produced by machinic assemblages working in the technoscientific matrix of the cyborg. Whether this is also a "post-gender world" (Haraway 1991a: 150) remains to be seen.

However, what should be clear thus far is that cybersex, as a technoscientific phantasm of prosthetic "sex" in the world of the "cyber," is a continuation of the Enlightenment project by other means, the figurative means constitutive of the paradigm of the "post" (for an overview of the Enlightenment, see, for example, Porter 2001b; Outram 2005; for critical discussion, cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; Habermas 1998d [1985]: 26–32, 1998b [1985], 1998g [1985]; in terms of the Kantian question concerning the *Aufklärung*, see Kant 1991a [1784]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Hofmann 1999; for a critical reading of Kant, see Foucault 1984), not by other means but by the very same means set free by the Enlightenment itself: the means of scientific-technological rationalism as the paradigm of the disciplinary body constitutive of the modern (cf. Foucault 1991a [1975]: 135–169; Janicaud 1994; Pursell 1994).

From the Enlightenment to the Postmodern

All the sexual-technological appliances described above, each in a peculiar manner, are designed to control both the meaning and experience of the

transgressive self-encounter of the sexual subject through which the body, exceeding its own limits set up by culture, collapses into the soma for a fleeting moment, the moment of vertigo, or, in terms of the "post," the moment of *jouissance* (which, of course, only the female body is capable of experiencing in its *full* scope, as a sublime sensation beyond the terror of the phallus; see, for example, Bowie 1991: 152–157; Irigaray 1995 [1991]: 55, 98–13; for a criticism of the Lacanian "mysterious orgasm," cf. Jackson & Scott 2002: 106–107). This is the import of orgasm: *if the orgasm is the focal point of the sexual, it is also the focus of its control* (as a function of La Mettrie's "body-machine," see Judovitz 2001: 144–145; from the perspective of the history of the body, see Laqueur 1987; Muchembled 2008 [2005]; in terms of "the politics and epistemologies of sexual pleasure," see Haraway 1989: 354–359, 1991c [1987]: 144–148; for the construction of female orgasm in the context of primatology, see Haraway 1990: 149–155; with regard to "the science of orgasm," see Komisaruk et al. 2006; for "orgasms for sale," see Allina 2002).

In a very fundamental sense, orgasm is a political issue concerning the condition of possibility of being and having a body, *a body in its own right*. From Early Christianity to the political economy of neoliberalism, orgasm has been a central issue in efforts to control the experiences and expressions of the body.

The orgasmic body, a body both desiring and being able to enjoy pleasure that, *per definitionem*, exceeds the limits of the rational, this is the epitome of excess in the Western tradition; in Christian terms, the idea of *luxuria* entailing the desires and pleasures of the carnal body as the alluring source of sin, the very idea of transgression in Christian moral theology: turning away from God (see, for example, Berry 1994: 14, 64–68, 89–98; Rogers 1999: 100–101; in the context of the seven deadly sins, see Lyman 1989 [1978]; in connection to *sodomia*, see Jordan 2002: 59–61, 71–72);[117] the idea of the corruption of the human being by his or her own body, a being created in the image of God, as a materialization of God's design (see, for example, Hamilton 1991: 131–139; Louth & Conti 2001: 27–35), a master plan in which the human being is seen as the crown of Creation, the highest embodiment of *logos*, the supreme incarnation of Divine

117 The Latin term *luxuria*, from Latin *luxus*, "excess," "debauchery," luxurious living, especially in reference to sexual excess, does not mean the same as the contemporary word luxury in the sense of sumptuous living implying comfort and pleasure, expensive habits and ostentious wealth, in short, extravagance and conspicuous consumption. Rather, as a Christian idea and theological notion for the "sinfulness of the flesh," *luxuria* designates indulgence in carnal pleasures, lust and lechery, self-indulgent voluptuousness, concupiscence, reverly and fornication; that is, all that in contemporary terms means sexual excess in its various forms. As such, *luxuria*, lust, is one of the deadly sins, and thus as grave an offence as *superbia*, pride, *avaritia*, greed, *acedia*, sloth, *ira*, wrath, *invidia*, envy and *gula*, gluttony (the sinfulness of which becomes intelligible when compared with their opposites, the seven virtues: *castitas*, chastity, *humilitas*, humility, *industria*, diligence, *patientia*, patience, *humanitas*, kindness, *temperantia*, temperance). What is important is that *luxuria* expressly implies all kinds of "sexual sins," the most serious of which are offences subsumed under the notion of what is known as *crimina contra naturam*, "crimes against nature": *onania*, masturbation, and *sodomia*, meaning not only same-sex acts and bestiality, but also oral and anal intercourse, and other immoderate positions in marriage (see, for example, Jordan 1997: 3–5, 29–40, 63–64, 89–112, 126–129, 143–151; Rogers 1999: 100–101; Crawford 2007: 42, 67–71, 84–85; Berry 1994; Sharrock 1997; in Kantian terms, see West 2005: 40–47).

reason on earth (see, for example, Peters 2003: 39–40; for the idea of *logos* as "the Word of God" in Christian theology, see Lawson 1986 [1980]: 48–49).

This is the idea that, in secularized and scientistic form, informed, from the Enlightenment to nineteenth-century scientific rationalism, the ideal of the human being as an embodiment of reason. Accordingly, what I call the *micropolitics of the apparatic* as a technological regime for disciplining the sexual body, in the final instance, the function of the orgasm, is the idea of genitality that can be manipulated with technology. Expressions and experiences of sex and sexuality regulated by means of reason and science, by contrivances based on technological rationalism – that is, in terms of desires and pleasures, the rationale of the sexual-technological complex in its various forms, of which cybersex, as an imaginary manifestation of the rationality of the technological under the auspices of the "post," is the ultimate achievement brought about by the reason of the postmodern, the reason of technoscience, the reason of the "posthuman" (see, for example, Felski 1996: 226–230; Foster 1996: 277–287; Farnell 2000a: 122–123; Milburn 2004: 125–127; Weinstone 2004: 3–13, 62–73; Flieger 2005: 16; Dinello 2005: 13–14; Plummer 2005: 81, 2007: 25–26; Terranova 1996b; Dixon & Cassidy 1998; Hayles 1999; in terms of "cyborg orgasm," see Reid 1996 [1994]: 341; Haney 2006: 162; Toffoletti 2007: 9–10; Ekbia 2008: 64–65; for cyborg reproduction as a liberation from compulsory heterosexual orgasm, see Farquhar 2000: 216–217; cf. Haraway 1991a: 180–181).

While in the campaign against onanism, genital pleasure, forming, if enjoyed illegitimately, a source of moral and physical decay, was interdicted in order to postpone and contain it only within marriage for the purpose of procreation, and while in the treatment of hysteria female genitality was instrumentalized to a form of therapeutic pleasure to be enjoyed as a medical treatment outside sexual intercourse, in cybersex the "use" of the sexual organs is rationalized and technologized by transferring it from the site of immediate embodiment into the world of artificial corporeality, prosthetics and virtuality (see, for example, Kroker & Weinstein 1994: 4–26; Green 1997: 60–75; Palumbo 2000: 17–31; Graham 2002: 136–148, 187–209; Shaviro 2003: 114–131; Sundén 2003: 82–83; Grosz 2005: 148–152; Manning 2007: 112–121, 156–160); a phantasmatic realm produced by the imaginary of the technological constitutive of the postmodern, paradigmatically exemplified by the discourse around the "cyber."

What is common, however, to all these conceptions of the "appropriate use" of the genitals for orgasmic pleasure is the idea of conceiving of the sexual in terms of the technological; the technological as a very embodiment of reason: technology as *rational management* of the body by means of scientific control for the purpose of the optimization of its performance. In their manner of manifesting the discursive-technological construction of masturbation, hysteria and cybersex, as different as they are from each other with regard not only to the purpose and the use, but also to the very genealogy of the constitutive ideas of these three appliances – the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-*

Massage-Apparat and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* – the decisive issue pertaining to all of them is the same: the function of the orgasm (cf., for example, Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 127; Stoff 2002: 170–174, 186–190; Kenning 2004: 65–79; from the perspective of the "body-machine," see, for example, Bauer 2005: 40–44; for the historical origin of the idea, see Reich 1965 [1927]; cf. Robinson 1969: 17–18, 62–63; Bergmann 2004: 47–49; for a historical contextualization, see Fallend & Nitzschke 1997), although in each case conceptualized in different terms, whether as forbidden, displaced or enhanced.[118]

This, in terms of the sexual, is the historical trajectory from the Enlightenment reason to the scientific-technological rationalism of the postmodern known as technoscience (see, for example, Michael 2006: 41–62; for an overview, see Janicaud 1994; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Sassower 1997; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Bell 2006; cf. Robins & Webster 1999; in terms of the imaginary, see Marcus 1995; for cyberfeminist appropriation of technoscience, see Eubanks 2004: 155–159; in the context of queer reading of science fiction, see Hollinger 2008: 141–154; for a reconceptualization of "the sexual" in terms of "nanoengineering of desire" enabled by technoscience, see Parisi 2008: 290–306). In other words, this is the idea of the Taylorization of the libido, the imperative of the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern as the apotheosis of the rational accomplished by the modern (see, for example, van der Loo & van Reijen 1992 [1990]; Kumar 1995; Marcuse 2002 [1964]; Dusek 2006). As Ernest J. Yanarella and Herbert G. Reid (1996) emphasize, the rationalization of the performance of the human body to get it adapted to the demands of the rationalization of industrial production, is most clearly manifested by the principles of Fordism, or, in Gramscian terms, "Americanism" (see Gramsci 1971 [1929–1935]: 279–313; Maier 1987: 22–52; Harvey 1989: 121–197; Bertens 1995: 223–227; Jessop 2007: 110–117; in terms of "post-Fordism," see Amin 1994).

In this technocratic order, the human being has value only as labour force, as a component of the body-machine complex working according to the logic of instrumental reason, the reason of the modern (see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Habermas 1994 [1981], 1998b [1985]; Marcuse 2002 [1964]; Albert et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in Weber's notion of *Zweckrationalität*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010).

> The nineteenth-century process of institutionalizing of the technological world-picture became a key component of the twentieth century's corporate state by advancing a major cultural horizon for most of our social policies. Activities

118 I am, of course, not saying that all that is sexual can be reduced to orgasm; I am only saying that orgasm is an essential mode of corporeal pleasure. It makes no difference that this pleasure has been subsumed under the notion of the sexual only since the late eighteenth century (see, for example, Laqueur 1987 [1986], 1992a [1990]; Eder 1998). The fact of experiencing a *physical* sensation is not the same as the name that is given to describe, in a linguistic form, the quality and specifity of this mode of pleasure. That is, *sexual nominalism* is one thing; the sensations of the sexual body are another – regardless of whether it is a heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian or queer subject that is at issue as the subject of one's own sexuality (whatever it is), *as far as* the experience of the sexual has something to do with corporeality, genitality included.

> undertaken within the horizon of the technological worldview are ultimately aimed at domination, "mastery," or "control" inasmuch as the "outside world" is pictured as a field of resource objects to be exploited by calculative/manipulative approaches. In other words, the institutional anchoring of this horizon, which entails the bureaucratization of various modes of instrumental rationality, has facilitated the industrialization of cultural life as surely as it has the economy. (Yanarella & Reid 1996: 198)

From this perspective, it is clear that what is called the "postmodern," in fact, is a continuation of the modern by means of the very same scientific-technological rationality that is constitutive of it in the first place: the postmodern implies a recapitulation of the modern in its radicalized form (cf., for example, Bauman 1991 [1989]: 187–188; Heaphy 2007: 64–65; in aesthetic terms, cf. Lyotard 1984 [1979]: 79–81; Readings 1991: 53–54; Trottein 2002: 197–198). In this sense, the "postmodern body," in all its dimensions of embodiment and corporeality, is an incarnation of the reason of the modern: the reason of the performance principle intrinsic to the imperative of productivity, now in its ultimate manifestation, as the logic of productive consumption.

This is the logic that regulates the production and consumption of the "sexual" in contemporary culture: post-sex in the name of "sex," "sex" as its own simulation.

What is important here is that the logic of the modern is precisely the continuous and increasingly effective manner to objectify and occupy, to invest and appropriate, ever-new spheres and forms of life, and subsume them under the power of capital: to convert everything to the resource of production, to the source of surplus value, and finally, to the commodity form as the condition of possibility of the circulation of capital. This is the reason (in both senses of the word) of what I call the *psychophysics of capital* organizing the desires and pleasures of the body in the postmodern; a conception of body management manifested most clearly by post-sex, "sex" as a manifestation of the Baudrillardian "hyperreal" (see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2–13, 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84; cf., for example, Porter 1993a; Rodaway 1995), "sex" as the symbol and model of corporeal desires and pleasures controlled and regulated by the body management constitutive of the neo-Fordist order of contemporary capitalism, the disciplinary regime of productive consumption.

In the postmodern, there is no longer any "outside world" because, firstly, in the global order of capital everything is now *within* the "horizon of the technological worldview," and secondly, the postmodern body in the form of the cyborg is thoroughly *integrated* into the machinery of both production and consumption. This is the idea of what I call the Taylorization of the libido: desires and pleasures *disciplined* under the regime of reason, *the sexual as a manifestation of control* (cf. Hancock & Tyler 2001: 150–182; Jackson & Scott 1997; from a historical perspective in terms of "the self as project," cf. Eghigian et al. 2007).

It is in this sense that the human body is the most versatile experimental laboratory of the postmodern: the body as an assemblage of drives and desires, emotions and affects, sensations and imaginations, all in the grip of the cre-

ative power of capital ruled by the reason of the surrational, the reason of the imaginary.

What once began in the name of the Enlightenment as the emancipation of the human being by the faculties of reason, has now, in the postmodern, resulted, in the name of individual freedom, in an incorporation of the body-subject into the "body" of capital, into the body politic of the economic-political and the scientific-technological power structure of the neoliberal order, the order of neo-Fordism: the political economy of neoliberalism. That is, as a result of secularization, the place of the moral theology of Christianity has been taken by the ethos of efficiency, the post-moral rationale of capitalism. From this historical perspective, in all these technological constructions – the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* – to control the experiences and expressions of the sexual, the problem is the same: how to get something under the control of reason that *per se*, in its obstinate fleshliness, is beyond both reason and control, that is, the libidinal body (cf. Falk 1994: 45–67; Posner 1992; Ivanceanu & Schweikhardt 1997; in terms of the Augustinian moral theology of the flesh, cf. Clack 2002: 21–34; from the perspective of body modification, cf. Pitts 2003; in the context of the "Age of Reason," cf. Porter 2003).

This is the problematics of the sexual in terms of the rational, amounting to a politics of reason to administer the sensations and affections of the corporeal as a realm of unreason.

In this respect, we encounter a paradox here: if "the sexual" is at the same time a cause and an effect of an ambiguous discontent in culture (see Freud 1972a [1930]: 460–464, 1981c [1905]: 97–107, 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–350), how can it also be its cure? In other words, why can sexual desires and pleasures be understood simultaneously in terms of pathology and therapy, as a problem and its solution; or, to put the question in the Derridean manner, why is all that is subsumed by the signifier sexual a *pharmakon*, at once a poison and a remedy (see Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 121–122)?

If the relation between the real and the imaginary forms the enigma of the sexual, this question is an essential part of it. The problem is that all the efforts to solve this riddle by means of reason lead only in a *rationalization* of that which defies the imperative of reason: desires and pleasures that we, perhaps only for the sake of convenience, call "sexual"; *a disciplinary term* that, originating in the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century scientific rationalism (see, for example, Hawkes 2004: 107–174; Timm & Sanborn 2007: 169–202; Rousseau & Porter 1987b; Russett 1989; Cheek 2003; West 2005), has now, in the era of what is called the "postmodern," taken on the meaning of the final liberation of the body. But the problem still is: how is it possible to achieve the liberation of the body through its increasing rationalization, by the means that only imply evermore efficient disciplinization of the desires and pleasures of the body?

This is the problem of the cyborg, a prosthetic being created by technoscience dominating the imaginary of the postmodern: if prosthesis, as a "fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249), is an embodiment of scientific-technological reason in our post-Enlightenment world, what is *prosthetic sex*?

1.2 The Regime of Reason: Policing the Libido

> No monological discourse – and by that I mean here mono-sexual discourse – can dominate with a single voice, a single tone […]. I have felt the necessity for a chorus, for a choreographic text with polysexual signatures. […] [W]hat if we were to reach, what if we were to approach […] the area of a relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating? The relationship would not be a-sexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes, beyond the opposition feminine/masculine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which come to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices. I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each "individual," whether he be classified as "man" or "woman" according to the criteria of usage.
>
> Jacques Derrida (1995a [1981/1992]: 107–108)

> Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.
>
> Saint Augustine (1991 [397–398]: 145)

While, in one way or another, all that is genital in terms of desires and pleasures is sexual, the sexual is not to be reduced to the genital (cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 32, 34–35, 62–68, 98–107, 1983a [1938/1940]: 74–78, 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–350, 1987c [1923], 1990a [1912]; Bristow 1997: 62–83; Giles 2003: 67–70; Thwaites 2007: 62–78). Nevertheless, both the sexual and the genital are part of the libidinal – engendered by the mysterious power of what, from Augustinian moral theology to Freudian psychoanalysis, has been called the *libido* (see, for example, Freud 1981c [1905]: 7–8, 1986d [1915–1917]: 331–350; Tillich 1975 [1951]: 51–58; Sulloway 1979: 171–218; Hunter 1999 [1994]: 132–142; O'Daly 2004 [1999]: 157); a compulsive impetus, a lustful urge, that is not only at the core of the enigma of the sexual, but, beyond that, is also the driving force of desires and pleasures peculiar to the affective economy of the postmodern in its excessive volatility (see Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Deleuze & Guattari; 1998 [1972]; cf. Pefanis 1991: 86–99, 109–117; Woods 1999: 30–32; Elliott 2004: 25–28, 33–34, 45–48, 92–95; cf. Clough & Halley 2007).

What was once a source of religious body anxiety is now the *primus motor*, the "prime mover," of productive consumption under the regime of neo-Fordism, the disciplinary order of labour and bodies in the contemporary globalizing world ruled by the political economy neoliberalism. This radical change in terms of the libido is an effect of the enormous creative capacity of capitalism: lust, the *conatus* of desire, is the primal force of economic growth in a world in which pleasure is as valuable as surplus value (in terms of "calculating hedonism," see Featherstone 1991b: 171–174, 186–187). In this sense, indeed, we live, as Jean-François Lyotard (1993 [1974]) says, in a "libidinal economy" (cf., for

example, Bertens 1995: 134–136; Williams 2000: 28–50, 57–68, 74–88; Cooper 2002: 90–95; Potts 2002: 236–240).

Constitutive of the human being is an open body, a body that is capable of experiencing more than is possible within the limits and constraints of culture; this is the idea of what Freud (1972a [1930]) called *das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, "the discontent of civilization" (for a contextualization, see Berkel 2008: 81–119; in terms of critical theory, cf. Kellner 1984: 154–196; Marcuse 1987 [1955]). It is in this sense that, in *genealogical* terms, all that is sexual neither originates from nor ends at the genital: if there is any origin of the sexual at all it is in the realm of desires and pleasures which Freud (1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213) designates by the notion of the "polymorphous perverse" (cf., for example, Dollimore 1991: 205–227; Penney 2006; from the perspective of "sexuality at the *fin de siècle*," cf. Cryle & Forth 2008). That is, desires and pleasures of the body referred to as "sexual" originate from the *pre*-genital sensations and affections of the body *as a whole*, from arousing experiences of the body that are not organized under the imperative of the genital. In other words, what we call "sexual" is always – *always already* – a derivation of the perverse, a "civilized" epiphenomenon of the Freudian "polymorphous perverse," the free zone of desires and pleasures beyond the restricting categories of culture, beyond the disciplinary regime of "sex" and "sexuality."

It is in this sense that the open body is at the beginning of being human; a libidinal body, that turns into a closed body as a result of a comprehensive disciplinization process that is called culture, a process that *organizes* the body in its very embodiment (in terms of the "body without organs," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285; cf., for example, Bogue 1989: 90–95; Goodchild 1996: 77–88). In other words, there is no "sex" and "sexuality" without the organization of corporeal desires and pleasures by means of the disciplinary category of "the sexual"; a historical category that has had, and still has, an enormous power not only to regulate the relationships of human beings to one another, but, beyond that, to rule the structure of society and culture as a whole. From this perspective, there is no culture and society without the organization of the libidinal forces of the body, that is, without the disciplinary regime that makes the body a social and societal body (cf. Falk 1994: 10–67; Shilling 2005: 73–100).

But then the problem is: firstly, how does the libidinal relate to the orgasmic, and what is the sexual that ensues from this relation, and secondly, if the genital is not the same as the sexual, and the sexual is more than the genital, where and what is the difference, and what is this "more" of the "sexual" in the first place?

1.2.1 The Carnal Body and the Libidinal Economy of the Postmodern

My point of departure is that it is just this "more" that constitutes the "sexual" as *sexual*, as a culturally constructed, historical category the sense and significa-

tion of which have always been contingent – giving, for this reason, rise to the enigma of the sexual. As a corollary, what is designated as "sex" and "sexuality" depends on and is determined by the meaning, the conceptual or metaphorical "content," of the notion of "the sexual" at a time; a meaning which, indeed, has never been one (cf. Irigaray 1985b [1977]).

That is, there is no "sexual" as such, in the mode of Kantian *an sich* (cf. Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 75–78, 1990b [1781/1787]: 460–464, 1988b [1783]; Irrlitz 2002: 172–174); instead, "the sexual" is the name for its various definitions (expressed explicitly or implicitly) that are predicated upon historically variable conventions: as an idea and category, "the sexual" emerges from the uses of the body in specific historical circumstances in which certain sensations and affections, acts and practices, proclivities and orientations become subsumed under the name of "the sexual." Accordingly, the genesis of "the sexual," as the constitutive idea of "sex" and "sexuality," is its genealogy in terms of nominalism (see Foucault 1990k [1976]: 93, 105–106, 1992b [1984]: 35–37; cf. Balibar 1992; for the idea of genealogy, see Foucault 1980g [1976]: 82–83, 1977c [1971]).

In other words, *the exegesis of all that is "sexual" is the history of its nomenclatura*. And, in this sense, indeed, the non-originary origin of "the sexual" is the conception of the "perverse" as a derivation of Augustinian "original sin" (cf. Foucault 1990k: 36–49; Dollimore 1991: 132–147; Wiley 2002: 56–75; from the Freudian perspective, cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 33–72; for efforts of sexual liberation in terms of the "emancipation of the libido" during the Enlightenment, see Israel 2002: 86–96, 2006: 583–589).

This is the perspective from which I approach the enigma of the sexual in the study at hand.

The Secularization of the Biblical World

As a theological notion by its origin, "the sexual" is neither a prelinguistic *apriori* nor a postlinguistic *aposteriori*: it is a linguistic figure that names an experience of an unnameable; this is the *tertium* of "the sexual," its enigmatic "meaning" that is always a manifestation of its particular exegesis: "the sexual" is the matter of its inscriptions, and *thus*, the way of its readings.

The inscriptions and readings of "the sexual" as various linguistic figures and figurations in changing configurations, are based, as Mark D. Jordan (2002: 75) explains, on "detailed moral evaluations of sexual life"; appraisals and judgements that, in Western culture, have predominantly been formulated in theological terms from early Christianity to the beginning of the twentieth century.

> These evaluations were often enough condemnations of sexual sins, but even as condemnations they proved enormously resourceful in analysing and categorising human sexual desires and acts. Precisely because of their mistrust of human sexuality, many Christian moralists have, during two millennia, shown themselves astute catalogers of its varieties. They have given sex a seriousness that a more indulgent religious tradition might have denied it. Indeed, Christian

> theology has succeeded in demarcating the sphere of the sexual in the modern sense of the term as a special and separate sphere of moral consideration. Behind its thousands of particular judgments on sexual sins, behind its ever more expansive institutions for investigating and controlling genital acts and their prologues, Christian churches have been compiling an enormous vocabulary for sexuality. (ibid.)

An enormous vocabulary for sexuality, "[e]nough to fill libraries over centuries" (ibid.) – that is the origin of the nomenclatura that embraces the conceptions concerning "the sexual" in the Western cultural tradition; that is, experiences and expressions of life that have been designated as "sex" and "sexuality" have been theological issues from the very beginning, to the extent that the very idea of "the sexual" is a Biblical question, a fundamentally theological issue, to be seen even in Foucault's sexual hermeneutics, most clearly in his conceptualization of the desires and pleasures of the flesh in terms of confession (see, for example, Foucault 1990k: 59–68, 1980c [1977]; cf. Tambling 1990; Carrette 1999; Bernauer & Carrette 2004; Krondorfer 2009; Taylor 2009; Burrus et al. 2010; in the context of the "queering of theology," cf., for example, Althaus-Reid & Isherwood 2004).[119]

From this perspective, what we today call "sexual" is a result of a long history through which Augustinian "original sin," along with its concomitant "genital commotion" peculiar to the indulgence in *concupiscentia carnis*, "fleshly lust" (see Baldwin 1994: 117–127), turns, firstly, into the medieval moral-theological idea of *sodomia*, "sodomy" (comprising bestiality and onanism as well as oral, anal and same-sex intercourse) (see Carden 2004: 175–176; cf. Jordan 1997; Sharrock 1997), amounting to the notion of *crimina carnis contra naturam*, "crimes of the flesh against nature," finally codified by Kant in his moral philosophy (see Cadden 2004: 226–253; West 2005: 45–46); and, secondly, in the wake of the Enlightenment and the rise of scientific reason, into the medical and sexological concept of "sexual deviations" in the sense of the "perverse" and "perversions" (see Foucault 1990k: 117–119; Weeks 1997b [1986]: 33–34, 69–76, 86–88; in terms of "sexual diversity," cf. Plummer 1995: 90–91, 2002a), definitely classified by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1997 [1886]) in his monumental study *Psychopatia sexualis*, the epochal *summa* of "the sexual" (for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Hauser 1994; Oosterhuis 2000).

In short, this is the genealogy of "the sexual": a *medicalization of sin* leading to the scientification of corporeal desires and pleasures under the disciplinary notions of "sex" and "sexuality"; or, in Foucauldian terms, the transformation

119 It is in this sense that the Christian penitentials and the premodern pornography of the Renaissance (beginning with Pietro Aretino, 1492–1556) and the Enlightenment both enact, by linguistic and literary means, the passions of the flesh, that is, codify and by that give meaning, a specific sense, to the sphere of human life and culture that not until the twentieth century came to be called "sex." At the beginning of this long historical transformation from the Biblical vocabulary concerning the lusts of the flesh to the sexual nomenclatura peculiar to secularization stands the widely circulated book entitled *Aristotle's Master Piece* (several editions between 1684–1831), an anonymous collections of texts written in the mode of learned advices for the enjoyment of carnality or "veneral pleasures" (see, for example, McKeon 2005: 277–285; Rousseau & Porter 1987a: 7–10).

of *ars erotica* into *scientia sexualis* (Foucault 1990k: 53–73; cf. McHoul & Grace 1995: 76–86; Simons 1995: 34–36; O'Leary 2002: 174–175; Detel 2005 [1998]: 36–45; West 2005: 174–175). In this manner, "sex" and "sexuality" became an integral part of what are called the "sciences of man" (see Foucault 1989 [1966]; cf. Porter & Ross 2003; for the opening of the deconstructive discourse on the idea of "man," see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]). Thus, "the sexual" is the matter of "man."

If the "the sexual" and "the libidinal" are just names for certain corporeal desires and pleasures (whatever they happen to be), or more precisely, for specific sensations and affections that are experienced on and by the body (which in itself is always historically constituted), is orgasm also a contingent signifier, merely a culturally constructed linguistic figure, the signified or referent of which is as imaginary as all that is called "sex" and "sexuality" (cf. Foucault 1990k: 155–157; cf. Butler 1992: 351–353; Black 1998: 57–60; Strozier 2002: 118; in the context of "the Puritan origin of American sex," cf. Fessenden et al. 2001a: 5–6)?

Whatever the answer to this question might be, what is important here is that by considering sexual experience, or, more precisely an experience that is *called* "sexual," in terms of orgasm at issue is something that is not just a linguistic phantasm, an extra-corporeal idea, but an immediate corporeal sensation, a response of the body in a state of overwhelming excitation, regardless of the manner it is named. That is, the mode of pleasure engendered by the genitals – called "orgasm" in the nomenclatura constitutive of the historical paradigm of "the sexual" – is from the very beginning, from the Biblical times, conceived of as an experience of the body that is literally beyond reason, in a state of *ek-stasis*, "standing outside the self" (Pellauer 1994: 156). As such, as an atavistic outcry of the flesh, orgasm implies a threat to the faculty of mind in its efforts to make sense of the world and reach salvation in accordance with Providence (in terms of the Augustinian condemnation of carnal pleasure, see Crawford 2007: 62–63; for the conception of orgasm in the context of procreation, see, Laqueur 1992a [1990]: 43–52, 181–192, 1987 [1986]; cf. Haraway 1990: 145–155; for an effort to make sense of making sense in the sense of orgasm in the sense of Lacanian *jouis-sens* by way of "the deconstruction of Christianity," cf. Nancy 2008 [2005]: 126–127, 139–157; for the ambiguity of Biblical texts and theological meanings, see Helmer & Higbe 2006).

That is, in terms of genealogy, genital pleasure, culminating in the climax of lust that is named orgasm, is the origin of "the sexual" in Western culture; an "origin" that is not a specific point of time as a founding moment, but a complicated and multi-dimensional *process* of two thousand years reaching from Galenic medicine in the first century CE to the emergence of sexology in the late nineteenth century (see, for example, Laqueur 1992a: 25–29, 44–46; Schiebinger 2003: 197–198; Bullough 1994; Porter & Teich 1994b; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Sigusch 2008; in terms of sex difference, cf. Cadden 1993). In this sense, what today is called "sexual" is a Christian idea through and through,

a Biblical figure of thought turned into a secular category (cf. Cadden 2004: 221–230; Puff 2004: 234–253; Vidal 2004b: 255–278; Wiesner-Hanks 2000; for a translation of the Bible from a theological to a cultural authority during the Enlightenment, see Sheehan 2005).

In these terms, "the sexual," in all its variations (and, indeed, there are a plenty of them), is a paramount indication of the secularization of the Biblical world; a indication that shows how deeply the imaginary is constitutive of the "rational" and the "scientific," even to extent that what is understood to be reason, in fact, is an extension or a mode of the imaginary.

The Performative Body of Neo-Fordist Capitalism

Of course, to approach the sexual from the perspective of the orgasmic (a specific mode of pleasure at the level of organs) and the libidinal (forms of desires that as manifestations of the imaginary escape any localisation, although they are *related* to specific organs and parts of the body) is a problem in itself: there are experiences and expressions of the sexual that have nothing to do with the orgasmic, and with the libidinal only if, or inasmuch as, the notion of the libido is intelligible as something more than merely a figure of speech, a post-Augustinian conceit (cf. Smith 1999: 106–107; in terms of orgasm, cf. Michelson 1993: 96). In their mutual relations, the genital, the libidinal, the orgasmic and the sexual embrace a complex configuration of corporeal desires and pleasures that, precisely in their *carnality*, are always culturally conditioned. Accordingly, in complicated interrelations, the notions of the "genital," "libidinal," "orgasmic" and "sexual" refer to specific sensations and affects, emotions and passions, of the body that are discursively constructed, but *only on the basis of the organic constitution of the body*.

This implies that as far as all that is sexual is about a signifier, a linguistic figure naming something as "sexual," there are, at the level of sensations and affections of the body, desires and pleasures that may comply with it, or then again not: *the body is not to be reduced to the notions and categories that define it*. In other words, there are experiences and expressions of the body *without a name*; this is the very sense of the open body which the human body always – *always already* – is. The cultural begins with naming, but does not end with it, at its limits and limitations: culturally constructed as the body is, it is, nevertheless, not to be reduced to its meanings defined by culture: the cultural is not the same as the nameable; in other words, what is constituted by culture does not run out with that which can be categorized by naming.

The unnameable, the ineffable, is the condition of possibility of the freedom of the body, the very precondition of *subversive corporeality*: corporeal desires and pleasures that defy naming (cf. Butler 1990: 79–149; Holliday & Hassard 2001; in terms of "experimental desire," cf. Grosz 1994b; from the perspective of "transgressive corporeality" manifesting "the imaginary of theology," cf. Prosser 1995: 116–146). What is subversive is the *sine qua non* of the freedom of the body.

That is, a deviation of the norm is the origin of control; but it is the norm in and of itself that creates the "abnormal" in the first place. In this sense, the subversive is an issue of the liminal, and vice versa: exceeding the limits is the constitutive act of subversion, the act of freedom (cf. D'haen & Bertens 1994).

This discrepancy, the *excess* of corporeal desires and pleasures in relation to categories and conceptualities that label them in the rational register of "the sexual," demonstrates not just that the sexual is a cultural construction, but at the same time, that this construction, in its very constructedness, is in itself a *linguistic* construction, a discursive figure, intelligible only within the discursive order that has produced it in the first place (cf. Stein 1990b: 5–7, 1990c; Caplan 1987; Seidman 2003). In other words, the sexual/ "the sexual" *per se* constitutes the limits of sexual nominalism; limits beyond which there are desires and pleasures without a name: the body is always *more* than the categories in which it is tried to be made intelligible. This "more," however, is always, in one way or another, inscribed into the idea of "the sexual" in itself, "the sexual" that, paradoxically, produces its own subversion as a result of its production; thus, it is precisely this "more" that makes "the sexual" an *unstable* concept and category (in terms of "hysteria" as the origin of the Freudian "sexual," cf. Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]) – and, as we will see, an obscure object of desire intrinsic to theory-sex, "sex" in terms of post-theory.

Just because the body in itself, in its *nameless* desires and pleasures, is *always already*, before and beyond the regulatory power of naming, subversive, the Marquis de Sade is our contemporary, or, as Pierre Klossowski (1991 [1947]) says, *mon prochain*, "my neighbour," for each of us (cf. de Beauvoir 1991 [1951–1952]). Along with the Sadean subversive imaginary begins the deconstruction of "the sexual" at the same time and parallel with its emergence; a deconstruction which, of course, simultaneously implies the construction of "the sexual" from another perspective: from the standpoint of the anti-Enlightenment in the sense of a fundamental criticism of Enlightenment reason (see Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 88–127; Chaitin 2000: 238–243; Allison et al. 1995; Foucault 1996i [1976]; Glaser 2000). In the same manner, Georges Bataille (1997]), with or without Nietzsche, is the philosopher for expressions and experiences of the body that escape the politics of control based on the disciplinary regime of the language of "normality" (see, for example, Bischof 1984; Botting & Wilson 1998; Habermas 1998h [1985]); that is, a language that creates "normalcy" by naming certain things "normal" and others "unnormal," "abnormal" or "unnatural," in other words, "different," "strange," "weird," "odd," "queer" (for the idea of the subversive in the context of the avantgarde tradition, cf. Suleiman 1990).

From this perspective, it is not possible to understand "the sexual" without its "other," subversive desires and pleasures which, in a radical manner, refuse to comply with the discursive limits constituted by the disciplinary category of "the sexual" itself in the first place; in other words, without experiences and expressions which are beyond the "normal." In this manner, the *excess*, the

nameless surplus, of corporeal desires and pleasures is the subversive "other" of "the sexual." Paradoxically, however, at the same time as subversive bodies deny, refute and abandon the very idea of the "sexual body," it is the Baudrillardin *sign-body* (see Baudrillard 1998b [1970]: 129–150), the excessive body produced by the all-equalizing performance principle of postmodern capitalism, that is celebrated by post-theorists as the "performative body," a body that is capable of exceeding the limits by means of transgression: what was once "subversive" is now "normal." In this constellation, "transgressive sex" is no longer "marginal," it is at the core of the mainstream: performative bodies which enjoy performative sex, sexual practices and acts which subvert the "normal" by transgressing its limits time and time again (see, for example, McNair 2002: 163–207; Grosz 1989; Donnan & Magowan 2009b; in terms of pornography as "transgressive texts," cf. Juffer 1998).

Of course, there is no transgression without the "normal," the very condition of possibility of the "transgressive" (for a comprehensive discussion, see Jervis 1999; as a prelude to the "post," cf. Jenks 2003). Every transgressive act, whatever it is, presupposes a limit to transgress it, and thus always defines the "normal" anew, in its own way. In this manner, in the contemporary era of excess, an era celebrating the extravagance typical of all that is "postmodern," the subversive is possible only on the condition of a continual proliferation of the mutual counter-effects of the "normal" and the "transgressive": *the spirit of the Baroque is upon us*.

In these terms, what is today "normal" is an excessive body, a "limitless" body that is constantly challenged and prompted to produce libidinal energies that sustain and proliferate the political economy of productive consumption; a performative body, that is able to perform all the spectacular enactments that are needed in order to subvert the "normal," a body that is capable of indulging in all the seductions that obey the volatile logic of the sexual imaginary constitutive of the postmodern. For this reason, more important than the "sexual" as such is now the body in its very "bodyness," the body as the agency and vehicle, the personal and personified "instrument," of the libidinal enactments constituting the sexual subject of the postmodern (cf., for example, du Gay 1996a, 1996b; from the perspective of management and managerial subjectivity, cf. Hancock & Tyler 2001, 2009; Tyler 2004).

Forty years ago, in the distant seventies, Baudrillard already saw what it is that is "the new" defining our era.

> In the consumer package, there is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other. That object is the BODY. Its "rediscovery," in the spirit of physical and sexual liberation, after a millennial age of puritanism; its omnipresence (specifically the omnipresence of the female body […]) in advertising, fashion and mass culture; the hygienic, dietetic, therapeutic cult which surrounds it, the obsession with youth, elegance, virility/feminity, treatments and regimes and the sacrificial practices attaching to it all bear witness to the fact that the body has today become an *object of salvation*. It has literally taken over

> that moral and ideological function from the soul. (Baudrillard 1998: 129; cf. Pawlett 2007: 93–95)

In the secular world of the postmodern, the body is the most religious notion, a paramount signifier for the sacral, a preeminent symbol for the transcendent.

That is, what appeared as "sacrificial expenditure" for Baudrillard (1993b [1976]: 157) in the 1970s, are today "sacrificial practices" (Baudrillard 1998: 129) called forth by consumerism, advertising and fashion. In order to attain salvation in a world in which everything is for sale, the postmodern subject must sacrifice its individual autonomy, its very existence as a self, and comply with the libidinal economy of neo-Fordism. What was *luxuria* during the hegemony of Christianity is now luxury as the precondition of the very survival of capitalism. If affluence was the economic principle of the modern, excess is the rationale of the postmodern; that is, the postmodern is predicated on what Allen S. Weiss (1989), in the context of the modern, calls the "aesthetics of excess," turned into the economy of exaggeration in the postmodern: what I designate as *the economy of the bombastic* is the hard core of the "post." That is, a relentless exceeding the limits, a spectacular extravagance, an ostentatious prodigality, as the ultimate climax of what Thorstein Veblen (1953 [1899]) called "conspicuous consumption," is the secular-sacral ethos of the contemporary world in which desires and pleasures are subsumed by the logic of the "post," the logic of the commodity form.

Under the sign of the postmodern, the body is the focus of utopian thought; this is the body utopia of the postmodern: the Christian body resurrected as the survival body of the post-subject, the transcendental body of scientific-technological body modification. Thus, we live now in a world in which, as Baudrillard (2000b: 48) says, "the goal is no longer life transformed, which was the maximal utopia, but rather life-as-survival, which is a kind of minimal utopia" (cf. Clarke 2008: 136–138). In the constantly exacerbating struggle for the fitness (in both senses of the word) constitutive of the body politics of global capitalism, the only way one can reclaim oneself as one's own "self" is to renunciate oneself as an autonomous subject by adopting the pre-figured body projected by the body politics of productive consumption.

From this perspective, it is clear that to be a body by *having* a body is not the opposite of the Christian body; on the contrary, the postmodern body, as a logical outcome of the modern body, is a Christian body transfigured to the performative body of neo-Fordist capitalism. Thus, the idea of resurrection is inscribed into the imaginary of the political economy of the postmodern.

This is the socio-economic context in which the subversive body presupposes the excessive body, and vice versa. In other words, to be "normal" one has to have a "queer" body. To become "queer," this is the imperative of the "post" in terms of the libidinal economy of neoliberal capitalism (cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]), the economy of post-liminal transgression based on the post-ethical principle of exceeding the limits of the liminal (for a conceptual and historical

contextualization of the idea of transgression see, Foucault 1977a [1963]; Stallybrass & White 1986; Prosser 1995; Sargisson 1996; Jenks 2003; Hussey 2006; Donnan & Magowan 2009b; for a paradigmatic example of "becoming" as a regulative ideal of the "post," see Braidotti 2006). In other words, it is no longer sexual identity that defines the parameters of the body, but, on the contrary, the capabilities of the body *as a body* determine now the parameters of "the sexual." But, at the same time, the intrinsic excess of "the sexual" within its very core is that which always threatens to disrupt the whole idea of "the sexual" as the discursive precondition of "sex and "sexuality," and, for the same reason, necessitates the discursively constructed disciplinary order that maintains the idea of all that is sexual in its discursiveness: *the idea of the sexual as its own legitimation*.

From this perspective, it is understandable that to be a free body as *a truly free body* is a quite complicated matter in the cultural constellation of the "post," to say the least. In a specific manner, this problem pertains to the idea of "the sexual."

Towards the Politics of the Libido

What makes the discursive construction of "sex" and "sexuality" problematic is that the very category of "the sexual" is part of the enigma of the sexual: *why* is something called "sexual"? What is the import to categorize sensations and affections of the body, of which some are specifically labelled under the signifier "sexual"? Why, in general, should expressions and experiences of corporeal desires and pleasures have a *name* – if not for the sake of the disciplinary order of the body politics justified by the principle of reason. In this manner, paradoxically, rather than the imaginary it is the rational that is the precondition, the very condition of possibility, of "the sexual."

"After all," as John Jervis (1999: 161) says, "sex represents the *opposite* of mastery of the body: an irrational subordination *to* the body, an engulfment *by* the body." It is precisely this irrationality of the body from which the attempts of its rational regulation emerge: control policy *in the name of "the sexual."*

Thus, the manner in which in orgasm the order of culture (in the sense of civilization) implodes into atavistic lusts of the flesh raises the question as to what is the force constitutive of culture in itself that transforms some organs into the organs of the sexual, into the agents of sex and sexuality, invested by a mysterious "energy" that although it has its source outside nevertheless works only within the subject, with the agency of the organs that have *adopted* the function *as the organs of the sexual* (cf. Freud 1972a [1930]: 460–464, 1981c [1905]: 97–107; 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–330)?

From the Freudian perspective, this force is expressly the force of the libido (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 7–8, 1986d [1915–1917]: 331–350, 1991g [1914]: 139–152); a force existing in the imaginary but having, precisely as such, corporeal

effects – and beyond that, complicated and often threatening social and cultural as well as economic and political consequences that are, with regard to the problematics of the present study, intrinsic to the postmodern as a radical intensification of the modern in terms of the libidinal (cf., for example, Lyotard 1984 [1979]: 79, 1993 [1974]; Best & Kellner 1997: 25; Boone 1998; in terms of Marcuse's conception of the condition of "Eros" in capitalism, cf. Giddens 1992: 164–168). That is, the commodity form is the form of the libidinal in contemporary culture in which the intensities of the body are the necessary precondition of expanded consumption; in other words, productive consumption as the essential prerequisite of the growth of production, the very condition of possibility of capitalism today. It is for this reason that what I call the Taylorization of the libido constitutes the driving force of the postmodern body. Accordingly, the postmodern body as a libidinal body is the economic embodiment of contemporary capitalism: postmodern capitalism brought about by the imperative of productivity and efficiency constitutive of the modern in the form of *the modernization of the postmodern* (see Bauman 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002).

This is the problem field concerning the *psychosexual complex* that is the historical challenge of the reason intrinsic to the sexual-technological complex as a disciplinary regime of bodies and their desires and pleasures, manifesting the effort to "civilize" the temptations of the carnal body; or, expressed in the telling idiom of the Christian tradition, to mortify the seductions of the flesh by avoiding "lust and concupiscence" (see, for example, Weeks 1997a [1981]: 11; Wogaman & Strong 1996: 65; Grabowski 2003: 77–79, 88–89; for a historical overview in terms of religion and folklore, see Camporesi 1988 [1983]; for a historical contextualization with regard to early Christianity, see Brown 1988; from the perspective of the Enlightenment, see Porter 2003). In this respect, the order of the postmodern entails, paradoxically, at the same time a break away from, and a continuation of, this tradition: in the postmodern, the flow of desires and pleasures of the body, the whole forcefield of the libido, embracing the tensions between the sexual, the genital and the orgasmic, is ever-more effectively both cultivated and administered by the rationalization of the entire realm of the corporeal by means of the Taylorization of the libido.

The *unruly flesh*, the paramount problem of Christianity, is an obsession of the postmodern, an object of incessant economic calculation, an unending potentiality of desires and pleasures to be appropriated by capital and processed and converted to the commodity form defined in terms of usability and profitability; that is, the carnal body as a sustaining resource of efficient utilization and capitalization under the reign of the political economy of neoliberalism.

In this manner, the *economization of the body*, not only in production, but, first and foremost, in the realm of consumption is a preeminent objective of postmodern capitalism: the libidinal body is a productive investment object to be cultivated by all means available. This is the reason why, in spite of, or expressly because of, the apparent liberation of the body in contemporary cul-

ture as a consequence of increasing affluence, that is, the excess of desires and pleasures, the body is, in fact, more than ever a disciplinary body. Never has there been so comfortable, so pleasurable, means to subjugate the body under the rational control of prevailing body politics than in our liberal way of life in which luxury and hedonism are the highest values. *In the postmodern, desires and pleasures in themselves constitute the disciplinary regime that rules the expressions and experiences of the body.*

In this constellation, the *economization of the libido* is the condition of possibility of postmodern capitalism.

This is a post-Gramscian mode of disciplinization of the unruly body – unruly due to the excess of seductions typical of productive consumption constitutive of contemporary culture – to make it an effective instrument of production under the conditions of the political economy of postmodern capitalism (cf. Gramsci 1971 [1929–1935]), in order to increase its usability in consumption. Never before has the body been tied as tight to the demands of capital as today in the neoliberal system of globalized market forces, a mode of economic regime the most sacred principles of which are control, discipline and rationalization. That is, *the libido as a productive force* regulated and implemented in terms of economic efficiency adapted to the logic of the commodity form is the "pleasure principle" of the postmodern (cf. Freud 1972f [1926]: 179–180, 186–187, 1987e [1920]); the driving force of the sexual politics of the libidinal economy of productive consumption in the order of neo-Fordism – forming, in terms of the real, the dynamics of the imaginary constitutive of the "cyber" as a specific manifestation of the "post."

What is at stake here is the micro-politics of the body in the postmodern: a politics no longer based on command and coercion, constraints and prohibitions, but on mobilization and intensification, persuasion and incitation, a politics of desire organizing the sensual and affective forces of the body itself (cf. Hennessy 2000); a mode of politics in which the prevailing model of being a body is internalized within the psychic structure of the subject by means of self-discipline (see, for example, Turner 1997 [1984]: 48–59, 96–102, 159–174; Davis 2000: 36–39; in terms of "the micro-politics of capital," see Read 2003; with regard to the body as "physical capital," see Shilling 1993: 127–149). This is, at the same time, an issue of political reality and a new form of utopian politics functioning directly at the immediate level of corporeality and embodiment: instead of the state (or the social order) that has been traditionally the object of utopian visions, today *the body is the new utopia*, the utopia of the postmodern; that is, an ego-centred form of utopianism under the reason of the surrational.

This is the politics of the libido in the postmodern, an ego-politics of desires and pleasures purporting to *re-subjectivize* the subject as the subject of capital; capital as the *primus motor* of all that is libidinal in the contemporary world order, the order of global capitalism, the order of ruthless exploitation of

human and natural resources on a scale never seen before (cf., for example, Jones 2005: 46–144; Dierckxsens 2000).

In this order, the highly rationalized body is an indispensable resource of both production and productive consumption. As a result, there is now a new economy of the corporeal, a scientific-technological intensification of experiences of the body, exemplified by the "soft" discipline of fitness and wellness as an ever-expanding branch of service industries (cf., for example, Schneirov & Geczik 2003: 24–35; Hershock et al. 2003; Bieger 2006); a mode of economization of the body that, at the same time, relies on the instigation of both the desire for pleasure and the pleasure of desire. This is the dialectics of the postmodern in terms of the sexual subject as the subject of the Lyotardian "libidinal economy" (see Lyotard 1993a [1974]) – a notion that in itself is a product of the economization of the sexual in the postmodern. *Capitalizing in the body* – that is the principle of capital in terms of productive consumption that, in turn, is the precondition of work efficiency in the economic order of neo-Fordism.

From this perspective, the question is whether cybersex, as an imaginary form of post-sex, and, as such, a sexualized form of technology, is an indication of the transformation of the libidinal economy of the postmodern, in the condition of technoculture, extrapolated into the techno-imaginary of cyberculture as the "avantgarde" of technological reason, dominating the discursive order of technoculture (in terms of the historical avantgarde as the challenge of the reason of the modern, cf. Calinescu 1977; Bürger 1984 [1974]; von Beyme 2005). In other words, the issue is: what is it in the *idea* of cybersex that reflects, at the level of the imaginary, the *real* of the economic order of neo-Fordism, its relentless and ruthless dynamics of expansion and intensification, its maximation of productivity and profit (cf., for example, Connor 1989: 45–57; Harvey 1989: 125–172; Jameson 1998: 136–161; Arrighi 2002 [1994]: 239–356), not the least in terms of the economization of the human body?

As we have seen, the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit*, each in their own way, give a different answer to the question concerning the "legitimate" context of the enjoyment of sexual pleasure, especially the pleasure of orgasm. That is, these technological inventions conceptualize the sexual in disparate, even contrasting terms: as genital pleasure that is, respectively, forbidden, displaced or artificially enhanced. In this manner, they show that the way of enjoying orgasm is not just a private matter, but also a complex and contested socio-cultural issue that through the self-relation of the subject pertains to the relations between the subject and the prevailing cultural order as a manifestation of the body politics of the time, literally in terms of the politics of the body predicated on and organized around desires and pleasures (cf., for example, Haraway 1990: 145–155; Best & Kellner 1991: 289–290; Bocock 1993: 52–80; Gallagher & Laqueur 1987 [1986]; Featherstone 1991b; Stanton 1992a; Nicholson & Seidman 1995; Shevory 2000; Hennessy 2000; Davidson 2001; Lewandowski 2001; Stoff 2002; Kenning 2004).

That is, today, in the last instant, my body is not my body, instead, my body is an embodiment of the body politic in a specific cultural constellation: the *radical heterotopia of postmodern bodies* (cf. Siebers 1994a).

Thus, the control of orgasm is a – if not *the* – constitutive moment of the policing of the libido in the order of the sexual *in historical terms*. Orgasm, "the *summa voluptas*," dwelling "at the intersection of nature and civilization" (Laqueur 1992a: 48), is the most disturbing sensation of the body threatening the light of reason in the Christian tradition, still present in contemporary culture (cf. Laqueur 1987; Walter 1999; Margolis 2004; Lloyd 2005; Komisaruk et al. 2006). For Saint Augustine, "the specific evil entailed by lust was its mastery of the whole man" (Lyman 1989 [1978]: 55). In this sense, in Augustine's words:

> This lust asserts its power not only over the entire body, nor only externally, but also from within. It convulses all of a man when the emotion in his mind combines and mingles with the carnal drive to produce a pleasure unsurpassed among those of the body. The effect of this is that *at the very moment of its climax there is an almost total eclipse of acumen and, as it were, sentinel alertness*. (Saint Augustine 1966 [413–426]: 353)

This is the contradiction between reason and the "lust of the flesh," in contemporary terms, reason and sex, paradigmatically pronounced in Augustine's words: the contradiction between the rational order of the body and its irrational affections and sensations (cf. Primoratz 1999: 11); a contradiction that is at the core of postmodern capitalism, the economic order of productive consumption ruled by the commodity form; though, no longer as a moral dilemma, but as a pragmatic issue concerning the increase of productivity and economic growth: the tension between the demands pertaining to the libidinal body and the rationally organized working body.

What is at stake here is the primordial Christian problem concerning the management of that pleasure which is the most intimate, but paradoxically, the most publicly sanctioned form of corporeal sensations and affections, and as such, an object of a body regime under a strict regimentation of all the corporeal manifesting the flesh in its intrinsic unruliness (see, for example, Pagels 1991 [1988]: 220–235; Clack 2002: 22–27; Margolis 2004: 206–223; Hawkes 2004: 42–60; Foucault 1990b [1982]); that is, the urgency to control the "self-willing" drive that stubbornly resists the order of culture as the order of reason: sexual desire as a derision of reason – from a historical perspective, most clearly shown by the female body as a hysterical body in the nineteenth century, by what Freud (1977b [1898], 1977h [1896], 1981d [1905/1906]) called the "sexual aetiology of hysteria" (for the origin of the idea, see Freud 1962a [1950], 1977a [1894], 1977d [1893], 1977g [1895]; Freud & Breuer 1977 [1895]; cf. Sulloway 1979: 51–65, 89–91; Nasio 1998 [1990]: 33–38; for hysteria as "a strange pathology" in the early modern world, 1500–1800, see Rousseau 1993).

It is in this sense that, while traditionally, in the millennia-old Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman tradition, corporeal desires and pleasures have been, in one

form or another, an object of moral politics, whether in the mode of the "care of the self" (Foucault 1990h [1984]), or of Christian moral theology established by the Pauline and Augustinian teachings (see, for example, Grabowski 2003), in turn, in the contemporary world ruled by the postmodern, the libido is more than ever a political issue: the postmodern is about *the politics of the libido*, the body politics constitutive of the libidinal economy of the postmodern (see, for example, Grosz 1995c: 194–200; Elliott 2004: 45–48; Boone 1998; Pettman 2002).

Orgasm, Surplus Value and the Body as a Product of Commodification

But, in fact, what is the political here? In orgasm the body enjoys the pleasure of regression – a pleasure celebrated, in turn, in the imaginary theatre of post-theory as the subversive power of *jouissance* entailing a micro-politics of resistance against the rule of the bourgeoisie, the rule of conformism, the rule of self-denial deeply seated in the Western conceptions of the body as the source of sin and guilt (see, for example, Fiske 1989: 50–56, 94–95; Copjec 1994: 109–146; Freeman 1996: 238–244; MacKendrick 1999: 101–121; MacCannell 2003: 160–161; Lyotard 1993a: 108–121). Yet, paradoxically, as an apparently anti-civilization mode of pleasure, orgasm is at the same time both outside the constraints of the civilized order and within the disciplinary power of culture. The political of the postmodern body politics, manifested by the disciplinary regime of productive consumption, is precisely to *sexualize*, to subsume under "the sexual," the flows of desires unleashed by the libidinal economy of productive consumption, based on the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism (cf., for example, Miklitsch 1998; Reichert & Lambiase 2006).

This is the reason (in both senses of the word) why orgasmic pleasure is at the core of postmodern capitalism, in the cultural order of the political economy of neoliberalism: *orgasm is the driving force of surplus value*, a paroxysm the control of which is a fundamental economic issue.

Capitalism, of course, celebrates excess, but certainly not subversion (if it cannot instrumentalize it for its own purposes). Like everything else, also desires and pleasures are always promoted insofar as they comply with the logic of standardization, the logic of commodification (see, for example, Jameson 1991: 200–209, 235–236, 266–272, 313–318, 1979, 1988i [1983]; Jeannot 1998). This is the idea of post-sex: "sex" in the name of sexual liberalization in terms of the market liberalism of the neoliberal order of global capitalism: sexual pleasure as a commodity form. In this manner, *the sexual organized in the form of "sex" is the all-consuming meta-sign of desires and pleasures in the postmodern*; the libidinal economy promoted by the postmodern implies a cultural order that is based on a *radical sexualization* of desires and pleasures: "the sexual" in the mode of "sex" is the meta-model of *all* desires and pleasures. In other words, ecstasy as a whole-body orgasmic excitement, as an experience of *ek-stasis*, is the imaginary object of postmodern capitalism. That is, the *economization of orgasm* is the sine qua non of postmodern capitalism.

It is in this context that orgasm, as both a notion and a corporeal sensation, undergoes, like everything else, a transformation under the regime of neo-Fordism: the orgasmic is both expanded and intensified, and, at the same time, rationalized and disciplinized according to the productivity norms of what I call the *psychophysics of capital*. The ideal subject of the postmodern is an orgasmic body-subject, a docile and efficient consuming body, that desires for orgasmic experiences, whether they are sexual or associated with all that is marked and marketed as "sexual" in the sense of post-sex. That is, orgasm appears now as a liberation of the body, a promise of transgression of the regime of reason, but only under the rationality of the reasonable, the reasonable as an effect of the rational: *the reasonable as a mode of the libidinal* constitutive of the postmodern.

In this sense, the libido, once a self-willed, intemperate and unbridled flow of desire or an uncontrolled "sexual energy" (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 33–72, 80–93, 1986d [1915–1917]: 331–350), has turned into a well-controlled dynamo of desire in the libidinal economy of neo-Fordism – the utopian counter-model of which, of course, is the Deleuze-Guattarian "desiring-machine" (see Deleuze & Guattari (1998 [1972]: 1–22, 36–50, 322–339; cf. Bogue 1989: 88–96; Goodchild 1996: 78–83; Genosko 2002: 196–197, for the Nietzschean origin of the "desiring-machine," see Schrift 1995: 68–70, 1996: 341–342; in terms of "dream machines" in the context of art, cf. Hiller 2000; cf. Felderer 1996); a machine that is the dream object of post-theory in its politics of theory in the name of the "subversive" as the radical hard core of "libidinal flows."

Taken this or that way, the libido is an indispensable phantasm in the world of the "post," in both the economy of post-theory and the economic practice of postmodern capitalism. Nothing, however, could be more off the mark than to fancy that capitalism equals the liberation of the libido. What I call the *liquid libido* as the mode of desire in the service of productive consumption as a necessary precondition for the survival of contemporary capitalism is not a free and wild force of subversive corporeality, but expressly a *product* of market forces; that is, *orgasmic pleasure is a constitutive part of the economic rationality of postmodern capitalism, its indispensable economic factor.*

From this perspective, although orgasm is, in the Freudian sense, always a specific mode of *Organlust* (see Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 335–336, 1990c [1933]: 104–105, 1991d [1915]: 217–218; cf. Rapaport 1994: 87–89; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 363–364; Schöpf 1998: 123; van Haute & Geyskens 2004: 107) and, as such, an individual experience of one's own corporeality, it is, nevertheless, at the same time, in one way or another, constrained into a cultural form that is controlled by the politics of the libido – paradigmatically shown, as we saw above, by the efforts to police female orgasm in the context of medical procedures intended to cure hysteria. In this sense, the contemporary politics of the libido as the politics of orgasm is no longer a medical issue as it was still in the 1960s – to be seen in its paradigmatic form in the ultra-scientific laboratory model of sexuality developed by William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson

(1966): orgasmological rationality as part of American streamlined capitalism (cf. Robinson 1989 [1976]: 120–190; Bullough 1994: 195–209; Allyn 2001: 170; Tiefer 2004: 41–61; Morrow 2007: 117–132); instead, orgasm is today an issue of the *political economy of pleasure* as a politics regulating experiences and expressions of the corporeal by producing and managing desires and pleasures that conform to the prevailing political order, the order of productive consumption under the reason of neo-Fordism.

Under the imperative of efficiency constitutive of the economic order of neo-Fordism, the politics of orgasm is an integral component of the Lyotardian libidinal economy in its contemporary form: the ego-politics of pleasure as the motor driving economic growth, the legitimation of the prevailing political order. In this sense, orgasm is a political issue in neo-Fordist capitalism, and, accordingly, while orgasm is a product that produces productivity by reproducing the most important force of production, human labour, the orgasmic body is in itself a product of this production cycle. This integration of orgasm into the politics of productivity is both reflected and promoted by the spectacular body cult, manifested by the excessive "bodyism" of the advertising and marketing imagery constituting the substance proper of postmodern culture (cf., for example, Paterson 2006: 87–111; Lowe 1995; Muchembled 2008 [2005]; in terms of "carnal appetites" engendering "foodsexidentities," cf. Probyn 2000).

It is in this world that theory becomes colonized by the commodity form: in the form of post-theory, theory gives up the critical distance to its objects and turns into a part of the legitimation discourse of postmodern capitalism. That is, post-theory translates the language of commodification to the linguistic figuration of the "post," the libidinal language of "the theoretical," a language of pleasure ruled by the logic of the sublime. In this configuration, "the sexual" is a mode of "the theoretical," a mode of libidinal excitation. In this manner, post-theory is the most sophisticated form of postmodern "bodyism."

This kind of celebration of the orgasmic body as the climax of the consuming body produced by postmodern capitalism appears paradigmatically in John Fiske's (1986: 74) ecstatic view of libidinal pleasure, a view that, in fact, turns into an unintentional self-parody: for Fiske, "[t]he body and its orgasms are the site of *pleasure as resistance*," and in this manner:

> MTV is orgasm – when signifiers explode in pleasure in the body in an excess of the physical. No ideology, no social control can organize an orgasm. Only freedom can. All orgasms are democratic: all ideology is autocratic. This is the politics of pleasure. The signifiers work through the senses on the body to produce pleasure and freedom: the signifieds produce sense in the mind for ideology and control. Let us oppose them structurally (as well as politically) […]. (ibid.: 74–75; for a critical comment, see Frith & Horne 1987: 166–167)

Fiske's postmodern eulogy of "exploding" signifiers that effect "orgasmic" pleasure is typical of postmodern euphoria pertaining to the consumerist

conception of the body as a product of commodification. This is an imaginary carnalization of the Baudrillardian sign-body incorporating it in the circulation of capital. In this context, the *sacralization of the orgasmic body* constitutive of postmodern culture, in fact, is the reversal of the Christian idea of the sinful flesh seducing the human being to indulge in the pleasures of the body: instead of being a depravation, the uninhibited gratification of carnal lust is now the *summa bonum* of the human being. This is the ingenuity of capitalism: it can turn everything into the promotion of itself. That is, relentless voluptuousness or "ecstasy unlimited" (Kipnis 1993) is the economic imperative of productive consumption under the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism.

In other words, *capitalizing in orgasm is the driving force of the libidinal economy constitutive of postmodern capitalism*.

What is at issue here is that the Christian obsession with the carnal body has turned into excessive bodyism in the postmodern. In this manner, orgasmic performance as an orgiastic celebration of the lustful body, paradoxically, is a non-conform form of corporeal pleasure *within* the conformity of culture. This is the conforming force of the commodity form, a force that is at the same time *both* acknowledged and confirmed *and* questioned and transgressed by the libidinal forces of one's own body, the idiosyncratic libidinality of each body-subject (cf. Lash 1991: 270–278; Botting & Wilson 1998: 14–18; Jervis 1999: 160–161): the body as the subversive resource of the subject that at the same time is an object of control and adjustment pertinent to prevailing culture: the flesh as both the "ally" and the "enemy" within the body-subject as an incorporation of the prevailing order; an order in which subversive self-management follows the logic of the market. This is the difficulty of being a subject in the postmodern; a difficulty reflected in its own way by the theory-fictions in the form of what I call *theory-sex* typical of postmodern theory (see, for example, Botting 1999; Potts 2002; Parisi 2004).

In the postmodern, this contradictory force field – the regime of the political-economic regulation of desires and pleasures and, as its counter-force, the subversive self-management of the post-subject – is the order of productive consumption, the order of the libidinal economy. In this respect, *orgasm is the single most important issue in the sexual economy of the postmodern*, the economy of neoliberal market forces constitutive of productive consumption; a regime of the economic under which, as a result of the economization of life in its entirety, *the body in itself turns into a commodity*. This is the logic of the political economy of neoliberalism.

Living in the "World of Orgasmia"

But behind this constellation, there is the historical question: when, where and how one is entitled to enjoy the pleasure of orgasm, the pleasure of transgres-

sion, the pleasure of exceeding the limits of civilization.[120] This is a question that concerns the way the sexual is conceived of as something specifically "sexual," as an attribute of desires and pleasures that have their own *differentia specifica* in comparison to all other forms of desires and pleasures. The sexual is something specific since it always implies, no matter how far ever it is "civilized," a threat to the very idea of being "civilized": the sexual is intrinsically subversive and transgressive, but *only* in the matrix of culture, as a culturally informed form of the carnal (see, for example, Peiss et al. 1989; Stein 1990a; Porter & Teich 1994b; Weeks 1995b [1985], 2000; Lancaster & Di Leonardo 1997; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Parker & Aggleton 1999; Eder 2002; Phillips & Reay 2002; Crawford 2007).

What is at issue here is, in short, that subversion and transgression are possible only *within* the cultural order of each epoch, and, therefore, *there is no sexual outside culture: culture is the "nature" of all that is sexual*.

In this sense, orgasm is a cultural phenomenon, a manifestation of a culturalized body. Accordingly, in contemporary culture, what is an economic necessity is a body that has internalized and incorporated the *orgasmological imperative of neo-Fordism*, the disciplinary regime of postmodern capitalism. For this reason, orgasm is today a highly valorized, even glorified sign of individual freedom and happiness. This is an essential moment of the ego-politics of the subject in the postmodern; in other words, the *promesse de bonheur* in what Gail Hawkes (1996: 70) calls "the world of Orgasmia."

The celebration not just of orgasmic competence, but, first of all, of orgasmic performance as a key capability of the contemporary sexual subject (the "subject," of course, in the sense of the "post") is the climax of a decades-long process which began as the modernization of the sexual (see, for example, Valverde 1985: 37–38; Haraway 1990: 145–155; Stein 1997: 159–162; McLaren 1999: 221–222; Hancock & Tyler 2001: 152–155; Corrêa et al. 2008: 83–108; Robinson 1989 [1976]; from the perspective of literary modernism, cf. Stevens & Howlett 2000) and finally resulted in the "postmodernization of sex" (see, for example, Kimmel 2007: 19–20; Simon 1996; Bauman 1999; Rutherford 2007; in the context of "postmodernization of intimacies" in technoculture, cf. Plummer 2005: 80–82; in terms of the "postmodernization of pornosphere," cf. McNair 2002: 64; from the perspective of "pornotopia," cf. Marcus 2009 [1964]: 266–286; Krewani 1998a; Hentschel 2001). It is through this process that orgasm attained the status it has now as the glorified consummation of sexual pleasure. From the Reichian "function of the orgasm" to Masters and Johnson's scientistic

120 Similarly to masturbation, the enjoyment of orgasm is not a public event, at least not yet, except, of course, in the world of art (see, for example, Krystufek 2000, 2001); though, it is precisely masturbation, as a form of orgasmic pleasure, that Diogenes practiced in ancient Greece to re-establish the very humaneness of the human being in this way in opposition to the common understanding of the idea of the human, the human as a manifestation of the civilized order, the *Polis* (see Onfray 2000 [2001]: 87). The act of Diogenes was a politically radical move, a subversive gesture – unsurpassed still today, notwithstanding the cult of subversion in postmodern theory.

and technocratic, ultra-modern, behaviouristic model of the "human sexual response" as the culmination of the performance principle essential to the rationality of the modern in terms of the sexual, the idea of sexuality has gone through a transformation: in the first instance, sexual pleasure became *sex*, sex in the modern sense of the term, only to turn thereafter into "sex," the mode of the sexual constitutive of post-sex, *"sex" as a manifestation of commodification in the political economy of neoliberalism*.

In the world of the postmodern, sex is a lifestyle issue (cf. Hawkes 1996: 115–117), a matter of choice in the panoply of commodified leisure activities, a "hobby" integrated into the body politics of consumer hedonism following the logic of the performance principle (for the imperative of performance in the postmodern, see McKenzie 2001). As Catherine Hakim (2000: 81), in the context of the ongoing change of the premises of work, labour and employment, says, during "the postmodernization or postmaterialist phase of the 21st century, a society's value-system emphasizes individual autonomy, diversity, self-expression and individual choice regarding the kind of life one wants to lead." The only problem in the conditions of capitalism, if it is a problem at all, is that where we have lifestyle options there we are under the disciplinary regime of commodification: whatever one chooses to choose, it is a choice for capital (cf. Hawkes 1996: 117–123, 2004: 16–19, 182–184; Hancock & Tyler 2001: 171–172).

This is the historical import of the "sexual revolution" (see, for example, Garton 2004: 81–100, 210–228; Reumann 2005: 153–162, 199–207; Seidman 1992; Allyn 2001; Bailey 2006; from the standpoint of the contraceptive pill, cf. Marks 2001; for the "sexual revolution in early America," see Godbeer 2002; in the context of the postmodern, cf. Rutherford 2007); a "revolution" that, in spite of its real achievements in terms of liberation in sexual attitudes and mores, was as much an imaginary revolution as a revolution of the imaginary. As Steven Seidman (1991: 122) succinctly remarks: "We must not confuse a rhetoric of sexual revolution with the real thing." But precisely in this sense, as an imaginary and rhetorical configuration, as *a discursive construct*, the "sexual revolution" of the sixties is the origin of post-sex: sex as "sex," sex in the order of simulation; that is, as Baudrillard (1990f [1979]: 5) says, "[i]t is the ghost of desire that haunts the defunct reality of sex," and, accordingly, "[s]ex is everywhere, except in sexuality" (cf. Barthes 1983b [1970]: 29; for the idea of simulation, see Baudrillard 1994 [1981]). In other words, in contemporary culture, "[s]exuality does not fade into sublimation, repression and morality, but fades much more surely into the more sexual than sex: porn, the hypersexuality contemporaneous with the hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1990b [1983]: 11).

Yet, the problem still remains: what is it that, time and time again, moves the flesh bringing the body into a conflict with the dictates of culture, or, more precisely, the demands and requirements not only of civility, but, first and all, of civilization (from the Kantian perspective of *Sittlichkeit*, cf. Kant 1974a [1785/1786], 1991c [1797/1798]; Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]: 369–376)? This is a query that

concerns what Francis Barker (1984) calls the "tremulous body," a liminal body between the public and the private; in other words, the body as a contested site between the desires and pleasures of the self and the obligations of culture; that is, the body as the embodiment of the contradiction between the lusts of the flesh and the disciplinary order erected in the name of "the human" (for the full enactment of this conflict, see de Sade 1994 [1785/1904], 1995a [1795], 1995b [1797], 1995c [1797], 1995d [1791]; cf. Pfister & Zweifel 2002: 15–89; Allison 1995; Hénaff 1995 [1975], 1999 [1978]).

In this sense, the orgasmic body, both promoted and constrained by the political economy of neo-Fordism, is a laboratory of productive consumption, the libidinal basis of postmodern culture.

What today is a "tremulous body" is a result of a long development in which the anxiety concerning all that is corporeal has always been a central issue. Whether in the eighteenth century when onanism was conceived of as a severe disease, believed to damage the corporeal and mental health not only of the individual, but nations as a whole (Braun 1995, Laqueur 2003), or in the nineteenth century when hysteria was conceptualized as a grave disorder of the female body, seen to disturb family life as well as the social order (see Foucault 1990k [1976]: 104; von Braun 1994 [1985]; Lamott 2001; in terms of the disorders of "the Victorian self," see Littlewood 2002: 149–160), the anxious question was always the same: what is this wayward and irresistible power of the "generative parts" turning the subject into a powerless object of impulses and drives beyond the proper control of the self, *a marionette of one's own genitals* as it were?

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with the proliferation of the discourse on the sexual, especially in the form of emerging sexual science (see, for example, Birken 1988; Bullough 1994; Porter & Teich 1994b; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Sigusch 2008), the question concerning the wilfulness of genitality became a serious problem of the rational conduct of life, culminating in the moral order of Protestantism as the "spirit of capitalism" (see Weber 1993 [1904/1905]; cf. Holton & Turner 1989: 108–125; Turner 1997 [1984]: 86–87; Guttandin 1998; expressly in terms of the sexual body, see Turner 1996 [1981]: 296–317); an order that today, in the configuration of neo-Fordism, has returned with a vengeance: under the regime of global capitalism, there is nothing outside the logic of the rational. That is, *what in the postmodern is irrational is an effect of the rational: the order of the libidinal*.

1.2.2 At the Origin of the Sexual: The Horror of Erection

The body as a source of subversion against the prevailing order – that was the primordial Christian question turned into a philosophical issue, a quest of willpower and the freedom of will. The problem was: does all that is sexual, in fact, fundamentally threaten the ideal of the human being as an intelligent creature capable of reasonable reflection and measured action (cf. Peiss et al. 1989;

Schott 1993 [1988]; Martin 2006)? This is also a problem that haunts Freud's work from the early studies on hysteria (see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]) to his theory of what he calls *das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (see Freud 1972a [1930]) – a "discontent in culture" that in the postmodern has turned upside down and become the very driving force of the libidinal economy intrinsic to productive consumption, the order of desires and pleasures constitutive of postmodern capitalism.

From this perspective, if the whole idea of being human, the idea of being a subject of one's own subjectivity, an agent of one's own agency, is based on the principle of free will, all that is sexual seems to be the opposite of this premise of human autonomy. In this sense, the question concerning the desire for and the pleasure of the flesh is about a body that is a travesty of reason in its unpredictability. That is, the genital, the orgasmic and the libidinal embrace the sexual as an issue pertaining to the carnal body as an embodiment of unreason.

This issue concerns, in fact, Genesis, the constitutive narrative of Western culture (see, for example, Carr 2003: 15–55; Frye & Macpherson 2004 [1962]: 132–150; Hawkes 2004: 47–54; in terms of the female body as the "other" of "man," see Bal 1986). What is at issue here is the primal scene of the sexual – the term used here, of course, retrospectively – in the Christian tradition, the Fall (Genesis 1–3); the very moment in the inception of humanity when the sexual emerged in the world, a primordial world in its non-worldly state just created by God; a world that was living in a paradisial mode of existence before the catastrophic turn of events, thoroughly "innocent," outside the desires and pleasures of genitality; that is, the time when being human was equal to being non-sexual in the sense of *a-sexual*, paradigmatically expounded by Saint Augustine (1982 [388]: 73–77, 113–115, 125–126, 164–165) in his theory of original sin (cf. Clark 1991: 16–18, 1996: 4–10; Richards 1991: 22–23; Donnelly 1995: 383–387; Harrison 2000: 158–177; Wiley 2002: 56–75; for a comprehensive historical contextualization, see Brown 1988, 2000 [1967]).[121]

In this respect, the problem is: why and how the human body, a creation of God,[122] that has the ability to stand under the command of reason, loses this ability when those bodily parts that in the divine plan were purported to serve

121 It must be emphasized, however, that what in contemporary terms is called "sexual" was not the cause of the Fall, but its consequence; that is, the Fall refers to the transgression of the commandment or will of God ("But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," Genesis 2, 17), a disobedience that implies apostasy or the alienation from God. In this sense, it was not the lust of the flesh (or "sex" in contemporary terms), but the disobedience of the first humans, Adam and Eve, that constituted the origin of sin (see Pagels 1991 [1988]: 83–86; Baldwin 1994: 116–121; Clack 2002: 22–27); as Gerard O'Daly (2004 [1999]: 156) says, "the cause of sin is the human will," the "disobedience" (ibid.: 157), which the first humans committed against God's explicit command. "Pride was at the root of it, falling away from the immutable good, self-satisfaction," and, thus, "[t]he evil will precedes the evil act" (ibid.). In these terms, original sin has nothing to do with sexuality since *there is no sex in the Bible*.

122 As the Bible says: *Und Gott sprach: Lasset uns Menschen machen, ein Bild, das uns gleich sei […]. Und Gott schuf den Menschen zu seinem Bilde, zum Bilde Gottes schuf er ihn; und schuf sie als Mann und Weib. Und Gott segnete sie und sprach zu ihnen: Seid fruchtbar und mehret euch und füllet die Erde und machet sie euch untertan […].* (Mose, 1, 26)

solely as a means of the propagation of the species, an act performed as an act of volition instead of desire and pleasure (see, for example, Nelson 1979: 53; Pagels 1991: 67–68, 86–90; O'Daly 2004 [1999]: 151; Brown 1988: 33–64, 285–322, 387–426), take command by establishing their own regime; that is, the regime of carnal pleasure which "causes our reason to lose control of our genital organs" (Flandrin 1991 [1981]: 91); an irresistible craving ruling the body that has been defined in terms of the sexual for only some two centuries (see, for example, Brundage 1990; Davidson 2001; Hawkes 2004). That is, the insidious force of the sexual, in Augustine's vocabulary, the lust of the flesh in terms of *libido* and *concupiscentia*, always threatens the self-mastery of the human being, the capability of what Aristotles designated as *enkrateia*, in Augustine's Latin translation, *continentia*, the aim of which was sexual abstinence as an ideal state of being human (see Saint Augustine 1966 [413–426]: 257–407, 1971 [1887/419–420]: 263–267; Kirwan 1991 [1989]: 190; in terms of "the battle for chastity," see Foucault 1990g [1982]).

The Disobedience of the Body

It is in this manner that, as a consequence of the Fall, "sex" is "the way by which sin entered the world because the action of our sexual organs are disordered and incapable of control by reason" in contrast to "the Edenic state when humans were able to control *all* their organs, particularly the sexual organs, in accordance with God's plan" (Bennett 2008: 41; cf. Clark 1996: 7–8).

This is, from the very beginning, the problem of the libido, the problem of the mysterious force that has the power – against the powers of reason, against the powers of human will, against the regulations of moral politics, whether religious or secular – to turn the body into a sexual body, the seat of carnal desires and pleasures, the hotbed of sin.

As Saint Augustine – perhaps the most prominent Church Father of Christianity and one of the "founding fathers" of Western conceptions of sexuality (see, for example, Deane 1963: 54–56; Pagels 1991: 23–24, 78–81) – had to admit on the basis of his bitter experiences: while our other bodily parts are within our power, our sexual members are moved by "lust and concupiscence," and not by our own will (Deane 1963: 55; Flasch 1980: 78–79; Brown 1988: 415–419). Embarrassed and desperate, even horrified, Augustine was forced time and again to concede his own powerlessness under the power of the unpredictable and irresistible self-will of his own member that had a strange ability to move all by itself.

Imperturbable as he otherwise was in his faith, in this respect he could only state that when it comes to the moment of procreation (for him, the only legitimate purpose of the sexual act),

> the members which were expressly created for this purpose will not obey the direction of the will, but lust has to be waited for to set these members in motion, as if it had legal right over them, and sometimes it refuses to act when the mind

> wills, *while often it acts against its will!* Must not this bring the blush of shame over the freedom of the human will, that by its contempt of God, its own Commander, it has lost all proper command for itself over its own member? Now, wherein could be found a more fitting demonstration of the just depravation of human nature by reason of its disobedience, than in the disobedience of those parts? (Saint Augustine 1971 [1887/419–420]: 266; cf. Saint Augustine 1966 [413–426]: 345–401)

This outrageous discrepancy between will and desire in the corporeal constitution of the human being, this self-will of the flesh as "lust and concupiscence" ruling the human body – that is the hard core of the enigma of the sexual from the theology of the flesh of early Christianity to the orgasmology of neo-Fordism.

But the insidious effect of the libido is that, in a Hegelian manner of *Aufhebung* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; in Derridean terms, see, for example, Derrida 1982 [1972]: 40–41, 44, 1984a [1972/1968]: 19–20, 1984f [1972/1968]: 120–121; cf. Cox 1996: 125–128), it "sublates" the apparent discrepancy between will and desire. As Foucault explains, the libido as the driving force of desire is not external to will; on the contrary, it is its intrinsic impetus, its *primus motor*:

> The principle of autonomous movements of sexual organs is called libido by Augustine. The problem of libido, of its strength, origin and effect, thus becomes the main issue of one's will. It is not an external obstacle to the will. It is a part, an internal component, of the will. And it is not the manifestation of petty desires. *Libido is the result of one's will when it goes beyond the limits God originally set for it*. As a consequence, the means of the spiritual struggle against libido do not consist, as with Plato, in turning our eyes upwards and memorising the reality we have previously known and forgotten. The spiritual struggle consists, on the contrary, in turning our eyes continuously downwards or inwards in order to decipher, among the movements of the soul, which ones come from the libido. The task is at first indefinite, since libido and will can never be substantially dissociated from one another. And this task is not only an issue of mastership but also a question of the diagnosis of truth and illusion. It requires a permanent hermeneutics of oneself. (Foucault 1999b [1980]: 186; emphasis mine; cf. Foucault 1990g [1982]: 233–236)

This is the horror of erection, the irresistible power of the libido as the origin of "the sexual" from the Augustinian perspective.

Bekommen die monotheistischen Götter eine Erektion? (Accursi 2004: 17), "do monotheistic Gods get an erection?" Good question, but not only that we are not able to know because in lack of proper means we cannot ascertain the issue, but, more fundamentally, how are we supposed to know anything about God's life, except by way of *credo ut intelligam*: as a being beyond all that is human, God is always – *always already* – *deus absconditus* (in terms of "Satan's erection," cf. Lieb 1970: 97–99). What is clear, however, is that like in all monotheistic religions, and in contrast to Greco-Roman ideas of divinity, including the cult of the phallus (see, for example, Nelson 1994: 198–213; Keuls 1993 [1985]; in the world of the postmodern, see, for example, Reader 2006), in Christianity, God is beyond the realm of carnality: the will of God is not moved by desire, the insidious force of the flesh constitutive of the human condition.

Consequently, erection is not a divine incidence; it is an entirely human occurrence: it is precisely *the involuntary arousal of the body* as the punishment of disobedience that is the very origin of the human in humans. That is, erection, as an indication of *ardor libidinis*, carnal desire (Reynolds 1994: 260, 272), did not belong to the Divine plan: erection is an indisputable evidence of transgression, and, at the same time, its consequence, the result of original sin. In terms of the Augustinian moral theology, erection is the wicked and injurious effect of the sinful flesh that has the power to subjugate reason, the guarantee of the free will (see, for example, Salisbury 1992: 39–44; West 2005: 29–35).

For Augustine, elevating the male member to the paragon of the genitals as generative organs – conforming here to the Aristotelian conception of the male as the primary human in regard to which the female was conceived of as an imperfect male, and therefore, in Aristotle's words, "we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature" (Finucci 2001: 50; cf., for example, Laqueur 1992a: 30–62; Baldwin 1994: 95, 134; for ancient ideas of generation, see Finucci & Brownlee 2001) – that is the imperative of the "generative parts": *the genitals have a will of their own*; an independent and autonomous self-will of the flesh commanding the activity of the sexual organs that, instead of following God's design, obey only the whims of desire constitutive of human self-assertion; an idea that, in its own way, returns in the Freudian "pleasure principle" (see Freud 1991d [1915]: 214–219, 1987e [1920]), and, finally, in the libidinal economy of productive consumption, the economic order of global capitalism, as the highest form of the *rationalization of desire*.

From this perspective, what is called "sex" in the contemporary world is sheer misuse of procreative organs, be it in the form of fornication, adultery, onanism or sodomy, or of whatever acts and practices humans, under the imperative of the lust of the flesh, have invented to extract more pleasure from the body; that is, manifestations of the rampant voluptuousness of human carnality, all of which are not only detestable abominations from the perspective of Christianity and its moral theology, but, also, in Kantian terms, criminal acts in the sense of *crimina carnis*, "the crimes of the flesh" (see, for example, Zapperi 1991: 207–208; Gustafson 2002: 16–20; West 2005: 45–47; for a historical contextualization, see Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]; Laqueur 2003).[123] Thus, in the name

123 In his posthumously published *Eine Vorlesung über Ethik* (see Kant 1990/1924/1775–1780), Kant expounds on his ethical principles concerning the part of human life that, in contemporary terms, is referred to as "sex" and "sexuality." Although Kant's ethics is based on secular ideas of the *Würde*, "dignity," of the human being as an individual, and, as such, as a purpose in itself in the sense of not allowing *seine Person als Sache zu behandeln*, "to use one's person as a thing," his views, nevertheless, derive from Christian theology. From this perspective, what Kant calls *crimina carnis* or "the vices of the flesh" become intelligible: every form of sexual indulgence, except in marriage, is an abuse of oneself and the other as a person, and so *crimina carnis*, either as acts that are against the idea of matrimony (prostitution, concubinage, adultery), or acts that have entirely abandoned the purpose of the propagation of humanity and are thus non-procreative practices (onanism, sodomy, bestiality) (see Kant 1997/1924/1775–1780: 146, 161–162, 373–374, 420, 881), are contrary to the Biblical command to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (see, for example, Gustafson 2002: 16–27; West 2005: 45–47).

of their boundless self-assertion, humans have willingly forgotten that God created specific organs for the human being to accomplish the divine plan, as it is said in the Bible (Genesis 1: 28), to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," not to indulge in the selfish enjoyment of pleasure (from the contemporary perspective of genetics, see Moore 2003: 20–53).

In other words, *the Fall, the disobedience of the first humans against God's will, an act that constituted original sin, had as a consequence the disobedience of their own flesh implying that their bodies were no longer under the control of their will, constitutes the primal act of postmodern capitalism*.

In the Western tradition, this is the origin of the regime of the sexual: a passionate but anxious submission of the subject under the command of "lust and concupiscence," the voluptuousness of the flesh; or, as its reverse, as the ideal of asceticism, the repression and sublimation of all that is genital and carnal (cf., for example, Marcuse 1987 [1955]; Brown 1988; Camporesi 1988 [1983]; Burrus & Keller 2006; Burrus et al. 2010; in terms of the "consuming body" peculiar to the present world ruled by the commodity form, cf. Falk 1994). Thus, since early Christianity the flesh is the condemnation of being human: the carnal is the negation of the human being as the *imago Dei*, the "image of God."

From this perspective, whether or not we are living in postmodern times, Paul and Augustine are our contemporaries: seen historically, *the theology of the flesh is the deep structure of contemporary culture*, the culture of productive consumption under the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism manifesting the political economy of neoliberalism. That is, if the body capable of excessive consumption is the ideal of contemporary culture, its reverse is the Biblical body: both of them incorporate the idea of *luxuria* (see, for example, Berry 1994: 14, 64–68, 89–98; Rogers 1999: 100–101; in the context of the seven deadly sins, cf. Lyman 1989 [1978]) in the similar manner as the positive and the negative presuppose one another. In both cases, the lusts of the flesh constitute the essence of the human being, a carnal being always prone to exceed the limits set by reason; a disposition epitomized by the idea of "the sexual" distinctive about Western culture based on the Biblical conception of human existence.

For Augustine, it was, of course, especially the male member that disturbed him the most: the erection of the penis was a concrete proof that sexual desire – "lust and concupiscence" – is not under the power of human will, the power of reason designed to be an extension of God's will (Brundage 1990: 80–82; Krondorfer 1996: 7). On this basis, Augustine constructed a "theory that involuntary erection is a result of the Fall" (Kirwan 1991 [1989]: 195); a theory according to which it was the embarrassment caused by the sight of Adam's erection that got not only Adam, but also Eve to shame their nakedness: "Adam and Eve's genitals became *disobedient* in punishment for Adam and Eve's disobedience," and "that is why they covered them" (ibid.: 196; emphasis mine; cf. Lyman 1989 [1978]: 54–56; Pagels 1991 [1988]: 228–231; in terms of "rescuing sex from the Christians," cf. Sullivan 2006: 27–30). In this manner, Adam and Eve's transgres-

sion opened their eyes, and now they *saw* that they were naked; and only now they were ashamed. That was "the penalty of sin, inflected on them after their transgression, when disobedience violated the command and justice punished the deed" (Saint Augustine 1982 [388]: 135).

"It is reasonable then," as Augustine (1966 [413–426]: 355) explains, "that we should feel very much ashamed of such lust," the lust of the self-willing flesh of the human body;

> and reasonable too that those members which it moves or does not move *by its own right*, so to speak, and *not in full subjection to our will*, should be called pudenda or shameful parts as they were not before man sinned; for we read in Scripture: "They were naked, and not embarrassed." And the reason for this is not that they were unaware of their nakedness, but that their nakedness was not yet base because lust did not yet arouse those members *apart from their will*, and the flesh did not yet bear witness, so to speak, through its own disobedience against the disobedience of man. (ibid.: 357; emphasis mine)

This is the true meaning of the transgression committed by the first humans, Adam and Eve, their violation of God's command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. In other words, it is human disobedience that constituted original sin the result of which was that *the human body became disobedient against the human will*: the disobedience of the first humans were punished by God with the disobedience of their bodies. In the act of transgression, as Augustine (1966 [413–426]: 357) says in the words of the Bible, "the eyes of both were opened, and they discovered that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3.6). Their nakedness, however, was not plain nakedness of their bodies; rather, it was, as Augustine emphasizes, the loss of "grace" (ibid.), their original innocence, their divine purity, as they were created by God. In other words, human pride, the lustful self-assertion of the human being, is the origin of sin, not the lust of the flesh. Pride of the first humans in the face of God, their creator, is their Fall. Pride is their disgrace, pride that amounts to their shame.

Yet, as Foucault points out, the "famous gesture of Adam covering his genitals with a fig leaf," in fact, is "not due to the simple fact that Adam was ashamed of their presence, but to the fact that his sexual organs were *moving by themselves without his consent*" (Foucault in Foucault & Sennett 1982 [1981]: 14; emphasis mine). Thus, according to Foucault, "sex in erection is the image of man revolted against God," and, therefore, Adam's "uncontrolled sex is exactly the same as what he himself has been towards God – a rebel" (ibid.: 15; cf. Bernauer 1987: 51; Mahon 1992: 168; Falk 1994: 196; Nelson & Longfellow 1994). Or, as Alain Grosrichard, in his Hegelian-Lacanian-Žižekian reading, interprets the *Urszene* of human history, the moment when sin entered the world, as the origin of human self-consciousness:

> What "opens the eyes" of the first man and woman is the uncontrollable presence of the *organ* of procreation. Does it even deserve the name organ, given that it no longer corresponds to the definition of *instrument*. We see it, notice it, it attracts

> the gaze, only in that it is the intolerable reminder of that first sin by which Adam and Eve, turning away from God, presumed to set themselves up as their own masters. Whether erect or limp, it always represents more than itself. As a place-holder for the entire body, it is the signifier of the new Master: the desiring body, and the master-signifier of its new power. (Grosrichard 1998: 144–145)

As we can see, from Augustine to Foucault and beyond, it is the male organ, the member that moves the man, that *stands* at the beginning of a long line at the end of which is the prison-house of the body that Foucault (1994a [1976]) designated as *le sexe*.

But, in the contemporary world, in Luce Irigaray's (1985b [1977]) words, what is at issue is *ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, "this sex which is not one." Instead of one or two there are today as many instantiations of "sex" as there are enactments of it.

The Subject as the Agent of Self-Discipline

What is important here is that the Augustinian *theology of the flesh* is the distant source, the Freudian *caput Nili* (cf. Freud 1977h [1896]: 439), of all that is today termed as "sex" and "sexuality," although it is not the explanation of them: "the sexual" is still an enigma that only regenerates itself by the efforts to explain it; that is, an idea as a notion and category that time and again reproduces its cryptic complexity in, by and through its explanations.

From a Foucauldian perspective, what was original sin for Augustine turns into the idea of "the sexual" during the subsequent centuries; an idea at the core of which is the quasi-Biblical vision of Adam embarrassed by his disobedient organ, the *proto-sexual* fantasy of the literal standing up of the male member against the divine order, the will of God, the Creator of the human being: *the power of the phallus against the power of God*. This is the self-assertion of "man" as the crypto-origin of "the sexual." It is in this manner, by way of sexualizing the Biblical world and "sexing the church" (Kalbian 2005), that the Augustinian lust of the flesh, with all its spectacular consequences, turns into an autonomous yet omnipresent realm of mutually inciting sexual desires and pleasures. In this sense, in contemporary terms, the existence of human being is sexual from the very beginning, from the primordial origin: Adam, the First Man, created by God as an *a-sexual* creature, as a *natural* part of the divine order, became *human* just at the moment when he realized his genitality; that is, when he noticed that his member was not under his control, the power of his will, like the other parts of his body, but under the irresistible self-will of the flesh.

Erection and its consequences – that is the insidious effect of that mysterious force Augustine (1966 [413–426]: 350–355, 379–385) designated with the Latin word *libido*, meaning by that the power of seductive images stemming from and instigating *concupiscentia*, the lust of the flesh (see Reynolds 1994: 257, 261–276; Rist 1994: 321–327; O'Daly 2004 [1999]: 157; Bonner 2002 [1963]: 375–378, 398–401, 1962). As Augustine (1991 [397–398]: 203) explains in his *Confessions*, the "live images of acts" that were fixed in his memory, as he says, "by

my sexual habit," continued to "attack" him also when he was in sleep: "they [the images] not only arouse pleasure but even elicit consent, and are *very like the actual act*" (emphasis mine). These lustful scenes were vivid afterimages of his "sexual adventures" (ibid.: 24–51) in his adolescence, full of voluptuous escapades, before his conversion (cf., for example, Deane 1963: 54; Brown 1967: 170–178; Kenney 2005: 95; MacDonald 2006: 46–47; from the feminist perspective, cf. Stark 2007: 25–28).

Although, according to Augustine (1991 [397–398]: 208), the human willpower can, at least to a certain amount, resist the seductions of these "live images of acts" in sleep, they nevertheless have "somehow been done in us" so that they are prone to effect what Augustine calls "nocturnal emissions," that is, orgasmic pleasure inducing an involuntary emission of semen – for centuries a veritable problem in Christian moral theology (see, for example, Foucault 1990g: 237–238; Elliott 1999: 11–34; West 2005: 30; Krondorfer 2009: 82–85).

In this sense, the libido, though it designates sexual desire as such in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 7–8, 1986d [1915–1917]: 331–350, 1991g [1914]: 139–152), is for Augustine an all-consuming imaginary force – a force in the imaginary – that is the driving force of carnal desire, a force inciting and goading desire in general. In the Augustinian world, the libido is explicitly the realm of lustful and voluptuous images, the mental reality of reminiscences, associations and fantasies of carnal acts (in contemporary terms, sexually arousing imagery dominating the postmodern mediascape), that obscures the light of reason and delivers the human body – in itself, without the command of reason, only a poor being in its weakness – over to the powers of the libido as the agency of evil, seducing the soul to turn away from God; the abandonment of God as the constitutive idea of sin in Christianity.

What for Augustine was a vicious force constantly threatening the salvation of the soul, has turned in the world of the postmodern into a subversive power of pleasure, a power of libidinal flows promising, in postmodern theory, a liberation from the moral politics of the bourgeois order. In other words, as we will see, the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris, and the concomitant political radicalism, are a manifestation of libidinal forces turned into subversive politics, attempting over and over again, by the means of revolt, to overthrow the prevailing order; that is, to subvert the order of reason, the political regime of the modern, by the politics of the imaginary, *the politics of theory: the micropolitics of desire* (see, for example, Lyotard 1993a [1974]; May 1994; Starr 1995; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; Hardt & Negri 2000; Ross 2002; Badiou 2005 [1998]; Bourg 2007; Cusset 2008 [2003]; Wolin 2010) – constituting, paradoxically, a postmodern control politics in terms of writing as a substitute for thinking.

These are the vicissitudes of the libido in the Western tradition, a tradition in which reason, desire and pleasure have always been in a tense relation to one another. In this tradition, the sexual body has been a political problem, whether in terms of religion or moral; a problem concerning the constitution of the sub-

ject as the master of one's own carnal desires and pleasures, the subject as the agent of self-discipline (cf. Foucault 1990h [1984], 1992b [1984]); a mode of agency that, in the final instance, has turned into the politics of the self as the ego-politics of the subject constitutive of the postmodern in the realm of theory: libidinal politics in the mode of "postmodern anarchism" (Call 2002), that is, post-Nietzschean "aristocratic radicalism" in terms of the pleasures of the sublime effected by the "post" of post-theory (cf. Sarje 2000: 18–19; Detwiler 1990).

The Dominance of the "Genital Thing"

If, for Freud, after his pathbreaking findings concerning the relations between the genital, the sexual and the libidinal (see Freud 1981c [1905], 1986d [1915–1917], 1987d [1900]), and his decisive discovery pertaining to the import of the unconscious, it was clear that the self is no longer the "master in his own house" (Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 295), for Augustine, after his becoming conscious of the terrible powers of the libido, a man was not the master of his own member, but on the contrary, it was his member that was his master. In this sense, the Augustinian libido constitutes the paragon of the subsequent conceptions of desire as an irresistible driving force of the human being, a force that rules and moves the body against the control of reason. From Augustine to Hegel, Freud, Lacan and Foucault, desire has appeared as the master of human existence, as a whimsical and capricious sovereign of human endeavours; a master whose sovereignty, paradoxically, is always dependent on the ruled.

While in the Hegelian world in which the master (*Herr*) is not autonomous and omnipotent in himself, but can attain his authentic self-consciousness and thus his real self-existence and proper ability of his action only through the recognition (*Anerkennung*) of the "Other," the bondageman (*Knecht*), as the one who creates the appropriate preconditions for the master to become the master in the first place (see see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150–155), the Augustinian man, in turn, is a man constantly running the risk of becoming the slave of his own member that is all the time "gesticulating" in the manner of the true master under the regime of the libido.

Thus, from the Augustinian perspective it seems not so much to be the female that is her sex (and as such the "other" of "man"), a "sex" that is present only in its absence, in contrast to the male that is the universal human in its full presence, as phallogocentrism in its various forms has traditionally postulated the "difference" between "man" and "woman" (see, for example, Shaktini 1989: 195–201; Rose 2005: 18–21; Jagger 2008; 18–20; for the origin of the term, see Lacan 1977g [1966/1958]; Cixous 1980 [1975]: 93–98; Culler 1982: 165–172; Irigaray 1985b [1977]: 162–163; Feder & Zakin 1997: 46–47; in terms of religious imagination pertaining to the female body, cf. Cooey 1994: 22–29); rather, it is the Augustinian "man" that lives under the command of his sex, the regime of the phallus; that is, the male *is* his sex, the embodiment of his member, the penis with the will of its own. This is the origin of the order of the phallus – an

order, paradoxically, celebrated by post-theory under the patronage of Lacan, the great master of the Phallus, under the sign of the "post" (cf. Clément 1983: 180–184; Gallop 1985: 133–156; Bowie 1991: 122–157; Jantzen 1998: 51–60, 96–100, 170–204; Borch-Jacobsen 1999 [1990]: 221–263; Reader 2006).

Yet, why is it that the female sexual organs also behave according to their obstinate and irresistible self-will, as the organs that live up to their own internal life, relentlessly issuing, again and again, their demands for gratification, the demands for sexual pleasure, the demands of the body to enjoy the mode of pleasure that brings the subject outside its rational self, into the vertigo of orgasmic enjoyment, the state of *ek-stasis* in the ecstasy of *jouissance* (cf. Ussher 1997: 236–237)? In other words, why is it, as Kathryn Bond Stockton (1994: 26–33, 49–55, 148–157) says, referring to Irigaray, that there is a "'God' between women's lips"? Or, in Lacanian terms, "you only have to go and look at Bernini's statue [*Saint Teresa*] in Rome to understand immediately that she's coming, there is no doubt of it" (Lacan 1985 [1973]): 147; cf. Elam 1994: 53; Jantzen 1998: 53; for a critical contextualization from a historical perspective, see Mazzoni 1996: 38–50); yet, we are still standing before an enigma: "what is her *jouissance*, her *coming* from?" (Lacan 1985: 147; cf. Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 303–306).[124] If the sexual is not the same as the libidinal, nevertheless, is it actually the genital that by dominating, in one way or another, both the sexual and the libidinal, most effectively resists the command of reason?

No wonder that up to the nineteenth century, until Freud's (1981c [1905]) radical redefinition of the sexual in relation to the libidinal as a mode of affectivity that Freud was the first to give its full signification (see, for example, Sulloway 1979: 179–184, 204–213, 264–277; Grosz 1994c: 29–39; cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]: 41–48; Bristow 1997; Boone 1998), all that was "sexual" was understood in terms of the genital, that is, as something obstinate and thus in need of control. Accordingly, at the time more often than not the answer to questions concerning the enigmatic effects of the sexual was, in one way or another, the same as the young Freud heard the famous Parisian physician, Jean Martin Charcot, the Director of the Salpêtrière, to give as an explanation to hysteria: *Mais, dans cas pareils, c'est toujours la chose génitale, toujours… toujours… toujours* (Freud 1993b [1914]: 150; cf. Lorenzer 1993 [1984]: 69–70; Gay 1995 [1988]: 92; Sadoff 1998: 58; Munz 1999: 87).

124 To avoid sexual mysticism inherent in Lacan's conception of female sexuality it is appropriate to refer to Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott's comment on Lacan's extraordinary faculty to understand women better than they themselves do. Stating first that there is "a strong tradition of treating women's pleasure as mysterious and unrepresentable – especially in psychoanalysis" (Jackson & Scott 2002: 106) they then remark that the "most infamous version of this" is Lacan's "notion of a female *jouissance* beyond the phallus, beyond language, beyond-even-knowledge of those experiencing it" (ibid.). "Yet while Lacan claims that women cannot know their pleasure, *his all-seeing eye can immediately discern evidence of it*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; to get on the track of Lacan's extraordinary faculty, see Borch-Jacobsen 1999 [1990]; Roudinesco 1999 [1993]). As we have thus far seen and will see time and time again in the course of the study at hand, all those who operate in the theory-matrix of the "post" have the same extraordinary faculty as Lacan, namely to see things that are beyond language and representation, that is, things that appear only to the "all-seeing eye" enabled by post-theory.

Throughout the whole nineteenth and far off through the early part of the twentieth century it was always about this "genital thing" murmured like a mantra by Charcot. In this sense, the hysteric – in the most cases, the female – was the emblem of the sexual; the sexual that was seen as the manifestation of the genital – the genital that was the very source of the anxiety about masturbation in the discourse on onanism before the discourse on hysteria.

While, during the early twentieth century, Freud (1981c [1905]: 32, 132–145, 1983a [1938/1940]: 74–75, 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–350) deemed it necessary to expand the definition of the sexual to include practices that are neither genital nor reproductive (cf. Marcuse 1987 [1955]: 201–206; Bristow 1997: 62–71; West 2005: 122), now at the beginning of the third millennium the notion of corporeality has also become configured entirely anew: no longer are there the constraints of the carnal, the burden of the flesh, instead, the unlimited sphere of the "cyber," a sphere not of being but "becoming," a phantasmatic realm of free-floating libidinal corporeality in terms of "the virtual" (see, for example, Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53–55; Žižek 1997b: 127–164; Schaffer 2002b [1999]: 437–441; Case 2007: 29–31; O'Farrell & Vallone 1999; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002); in other words, in the world of the "cyber," desires and pleasures are redefined in terms of "terminal flesh" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 19–20, 243–297).

Obviously, this is – at least, for the moment – the terminal point of the scientific-technological interest in the "proper function" not only of the genitals but the whole sexual body; that is, as Stelarc (1991) proclaimed in his programmatic statement already at the beginning of the 1990s, "the body is obsolete," and since then the techno/cyber-theoretical theory scene time and again reiterates it as a multivocal echo (see, for example, Birringer 1998: 59–61; Farnell 2000b: 129–133; Goodall 2000: 151–152; Bell 2001a: 143–144; Mackenzie 2002: 121; Massumi 2002: 89–90; Wilson 2002: 157–178; Cooney 2004: 142; Nayar 2004: 254–255; Case 2007: 208–209; Dixon 2007: 308; Giannachi 2007: 69; Kuppers 2007: 115–117; Zylinska 2009: 168–170; Herzogenrath 2000; for a critical discussion in terms of genetics and bioengineering, cf. Baillie & Casey 2005).

This is the "sex" of the cyborg: "the sexual" as an index of a transformative process taking place in the world of the "post," "sex" in terms of the "cyber" as a practice of transgression and transcendence, as an agency on the way beyond the paradigm of the sexual constituted by the reason of the modern.

Neo-Fordism: The Psychophysics of Capital

From this perspective, all that is "cyber" indicates profound changes not only in the perception and experience of the sexual, but also in the idea of the rational. In this sense, "sex" in the world of the "cyber" demonstrates that reason, both as such and as its reverse, the "Other" of reason, is always intrinsically intertwined with the sexual (cf. Posner 1992: 111–145, 181–219; West 2005; from a

historical perspective, cf. Nussbaum & Sihvola 2002b); thus, as paradoxical as it may sound, *there is no sexual outside reason: reason is the origin of the sexual.*

But it is only in the postmodern that reason becomes the very premise, the constitutive condition, of the sexual: in the postmodern, there is no sexual *without* reason (whether there is reason without the sexual is another question). Thus, cybersex, as a high-tech form – that is, as an instance of ultra-rationalization inherent to technoculture – of the sexual, indicating the future of sex, or better, "future sex" (see Plant 1998: 30–32; Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Gray 2001: 157–160; Potts 2002: 217–265; Plummer 2003: 527, 2007: 965–966; Foster 2005: 81–114; Getty & Winkelmann 1996; Waskul 2004a; cf. Barker 1999; Botting 1999), even suggests the beginning of the end of sex as we presently know it (cf. Woolford 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b; Stenslie 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000b, 2006). Thus, in terms of the sexual we are now about to leave the world invented by the Enlightenment for ever, the paradigm of reason and scientific rationality constituting the modern (see, for example, Hall et al. 1992; Hall et al. 1996; Schmidt 1998; Schmidt & Strauß 1998). Yet, the postmodern does not mean a departure from the modern; in other words, there is no postmodern without the modern: this is the dialectics of reason, the logic of post-reason: the logic of the postmodern as the reason of neo-Fordism based on the scientific-technological body management regulating the psychophysics of capital (cf. Sayer 1991; Allen 1994 [1992], 1996; Amin 1994; Schatzki & Natter 1996; Rohkrämer 1999; Pronger 2002).

According to Jeffrey Weeks (1995a: 25), we are living through "a period of radical transformation," an age characterized by a "sense of fundamental change with all its resulting uncertainty."

> This sense of change, of indeed being on the edge of time, has been compounded by the weakening of the legitimizing traditions and master discourses of high modernity. The twin process of a secularization of moral values, and of a gradual liberalization of social attitudes, especially towards what has traditionally been seen as "the perverse," have begun to dissolve the old verities. The narrative comforts of the Christian tradition have long suffered the corrosive effects of scepticism and critique, creating the space for fundamentalist revival alongside liberation from superstition. Now even the "Enlightenment project" of the triumph of reason, progress and humanity, the sense that science and history were leading us inexorably to a more glorious future, has been subjected to searching deconstruction, and its roots have been shown to be murky. Reason has been reduced to a rationalization of power, progress has been seen as the tool of white, Western expansionism, and humanity as the cloak for a male-dominated culture which treats women as other. The universal aspirations and foundational givens of modernity have been radically challenged. (ibid.: 25–26)

This is the cultural constellation, as Weeks shows in his study, also of all that is sexual. In my view, what is important in this context is that, on the one hand, "the sexual," as a complex topos, is used as a means to deconstruct reason and rationality, while, on the other, "the sexual" in itself has become an object of a thoroughgoing rationalization, and, in the discursive constellation of post-theory, an object of theoretical passions, and, as such, a theoretical obsession, that

is, an object of theory-sex. Never before have "the sexual" and "the rational" been so intimately (in both senses of the word) intertwined with one another as in contemporary culture under the sign of the postmodern.

It is in this sense that all that is "cyber" is about the "post." In the world of the "post," nothing is impossible because everything is possible. This is the logic of the surrational.

In these terms, in the world of the "post," the technological is the embodiment of reason. Accordingly, in the light of Stenslie's cybersex bodysuit we have arrived in the new age – as the true heritage of the New Age (for a historical contextualization, see Hanegraaff 1996; Heelas 1996; Sutcliffe 2003; in terms of cyberhype, see Sobchack 1994; in the context of cyberculture and technological body modification, see, Dery 1996: 33–72, 232–245; Ziguras 1997; Featherstone 2000; Zylinska 2002b; Tofts et al. 2003; Toffoletti 2007; Miah & Rich 2008) – of the post-subject, the era of the "terminal identity," meaning that the "body has become a machine" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 244); or, as Baudrillard (1988d [1987]: 44) prefers to say, as a result of "sexual liberation," in its "technical sophistication," the "body has been reduced to a division of surfaces."

This is the world of the "cyber"; a world in which both the sexual and the technological are dominated by the desire of the postmodern: the liquid libido.

1.2.3 The Unreason of the Body, or, The Mysteries of Orgasm

Is orgasm an effect of discourse? If all that is sexual, understood as an experience and expression of specific corporeal desires and pleasures, is effected by the "sexual dispositive" (Foucault 1978e [1977]: 122–124; cf. Brieler 1998: 458–461; Raab 1998: 26–29; Jäger 2001: 74–76; Schneider 2004: 145–148), a regulative assemblage embracing discursive and non-discursive arrangements and mechanisms constituted by "power-knowledge" that does not repress but *produces* what it names (Foucault 1980a [1975]: 61, 1980h [1976]: 93–103, 1990k: 23, 93, 97–99, 105–106, 1980c [1977]) in the sense, as Foucault (1980f [1977]: 120) says, that "'[s]exuality' is far more of a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality," then, what else is orgasm if not a sensation that is brought about by a discourse that is constitutive of "the sexual" in a certain cultural formation; namely, if we take the postulation of poststructuralism seriously that there is nothing outside language, or, as Derrida (1997 [1967]: 158) says, "*[t]here is nothing outside of the text*," is orgasm, as a strange exception, beyond the discursive, somewhere in the realm of primordial corporeality as an atavistic experience of the *flesh*?

According to the basic idea of the study at hand, this is a problem that for its part is about the very condition of possibility of all that is sexual: is sexual experience (whatever it happens to be) entirely, up to the involuntary paroxysms of the body what is called orgasm, just an effect of the discourses on the sexual,

or, rather, an experience that, although it is named and thus categorized by means of language, nevertheless takes place beyond language, independently of all linguistic influence? If this question is taken seriously – that is, not only as a postmodern linguistic game similar to other linguistic games played on the theory scene of the "post" – it has consequences on the idea and the limits of "the discursive." What is at issue here is the question concerning *the linguistic of language*, the way a discursively constructed figure of language, a signifier, brings about what it signifies: not just the signified of "the sexual," but, moreover, the very *experience* of the sexual as an experience of the fleshliness of an individual body, regardless of whatever it is as such.

The Reason of the Sexual: The Rational of the Irrational

Approaching the issue of the sexual in terms of the Derridean paradox of the *pharmakon* (see Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 95–117; cf. Hobson 1998: 64–77), it is necessary to see that against the idea of the sexual-technological complex – that is, the historically emerged conceptual matrix exemplified here by the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* – stands its counter-pole, a similarly historically emerged constellation of what I call *the psychosexual complex of the modern* (cf. Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–350, 427–446, 1990b [1933]: 119–145, 1972d [1925], 1981c [1905], 1987b [1924], 1990a [1912]; Sulloway 1979: 173–218, 309–343, 378–397; Sadoff 1998: 166–209; Hawkes 2004: 144–175), a conceptual and theoretical frame of reference concerning, in Western culture, the constitution of the sexual subject in terms of reason, purporting to regulate the contradictory relations between orgasmic pleasure and the order of culture (cf. for example, Posner 1992: 18–35. 53–67, 113–116; MacKendrick 1999: 111–112; Maines 1999: 50–66; West 2005).

In general, in the tradition of Western culture, sexual pleasure is conceived of rather as a *problem* – religious, moral, theoretical, epistemological, political, or, as in contemporary culture, "practical," in terms of sex "practices" as the practices of "sex" in the form of "technologies of the self" peculiar to the postmodern (cf. Foucault 1988a [1982]: 16–22; Hutton 1988: 129–133; Sarup 1996: 77–93) – than as a pleasure as such, as a pleasure to be enjoyed innocently and innocuously, just as the pleasure of the flesh. Of course, one is entitled to ask whether there is such a thing as "innocent" and "innocuous" pleasure at all in a culture that is predicated upon the idea of guilty from the very beginning – the idea of "original sin," paradigmatically formulated by Pauline and Augustinian moral theology (see, for example, Deane 1963; Kirwan 1991; Rist 1997; Grabowski 2003)?

Here we come back to the mystery of orgasm that is at the core of the enigma of "the sexual."

With regard to the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern, it is precisely within the framework of the psychosexual complex of the modern that the problematics of orgasm as the climax of genital pleasure has constituted

the "other" of reason (see, for example, Laqueur 1992a: 43–52; Abramson & Pinkerton 2002 [1995]: 38–42, 53–81; 152–155; Potts 2002: 25–32, 36–37, 71–101; from a cultural-historical perspective, see Muchembled 2008; for the idea of orgasm as a "hysteric paroxysm," see Maines 1999: 7–47; for the construction of female orgasm in the context of primatology, see Haraway 1990: 149–155; for "the moral significance of female orgasm," see Pellauer 1994; in terms of the genital rationalism of Stoa, see Gaca 2003: 67–71; for Erich Fromm's anti-Marcusean idea of "heterosexual genital sexuality" in itself as a manifestation of the rational, cf. Jay 1973: 93–94, 128–129). What was taken as a challenge to scientific rationality within the modern is celebrated as its transgression within the postmodern. That is, orgasm, as both the climax of sexual pleasure and the emblem of the loss of self-control as the negation of the human will, is the quintessence of the derangement of reason – and, as such, an affective bout that is possible only to humans: animals and machines are not able to short-circuit reason and desire. *This is the very rationality of sexual pleasure: the disruption of the regime of reason glorified by the counter-reason of the surrational constitutive of the "post."*

As we can see, genital relations as sexual relations embrace, even in the postmodern, a highly cathected area of cultural intelligibility, whether in terms of "male" or "female," "hetero" or "homo," and, accordingly, "orgasmic potency" once again plays an important role in the imaginary of capitalism (in the context of the Reichian "sexual revolution," cf. Reich 1933, 1965 [1927], 1966, 1993 [1936]; Giles 2003: 26–30; for a historical contextualization, see Fallend & Nitzschke 1997; in comparison to Marcuse, cf. Kellner 1984: 181–189). In these terms, orgasmic enjoyment and rational conduct of life presuppose one another in the economic order of neo-Fordism in which the political economy of sexual pleasure is based on the free market of affective experiences, a postmodern mode of libertinism specific to productive consumption, in which inputs and outputs are calculated according to the logic of cost-benefit rationality. In other words, desires and pleasures under the sign of "the sexual" are commodity options produced and consumed as affective transactions.

From this perspective, it is apparent that orgasm is still the focal point, the very paragon, of the sexual: orgasmic pleasure is the most concrete evidence that encountering the challenge of the flesh reason fails; in other words, orgasm is the emblem of ecstasy, the historical prototype of *ek-stasis*: caught by the orgasmic commotion, the body-subject is *außer sich*, "beside oneself," frantic in the ecstasy of sensations without names. In a word, what I call *ecstatism* is the undefinable rationality of the orgasmic body, a body that in itself is the apotheosis of the surrational, the mode of imaginary reason constitutive of the "post." In other words, *Ergriffenheit* without *Begrifflichkeit*, a non-conceptual *Erhabenheit* is the origin of the *politics of orgasm*, not only in terms of the cultural practices that control and regulate the experiences of the sexual, but also in terms of discourses that bring about these practices (cf. Reich 1965 [1927]; in the context of radical feminism, cf.; Rich 1985 [1984]: 9–11; Segal 1994: 31–69;

Hogeland 1998: 59–69; Mottier 2008: 58–62; Lydon 1970; from the perspective of primatology, see Haraway 1989: 354–363).[125]

Thus, the orgasmic and the rational constitute a dialectical antagonism that resides in the core of Western rationality, a rationality for which the body, in its autonomous – that is, uncontrollable, "self-willing" – corporeality, in Christian terms, the *flesh*, is not only a perplexing problem, but also an object of anxious aversion; a problem that concerns the arbitrary whimsicality of the sensations and affections endemic to the corporeal in general, the ominous temptations, the sinister seduction of carnality: the body as the disturbing "other" of the subject, the body as a source of passions that threaten the serenity of the soul and the peace of mind – a problem that has a long historical tradition (see, for example, Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]; Nelson & Longfellow 1994).

What is at issue here is not only the dialectical antagonism between sense and sensibility, but also a dimension of a conceptual constellation that Derrida (1984g [1972/1971]: 226), in his discussion of "white mythology," metaphorization and "dialectical idealism," describes as "the oppositions of nature/spirit, nature/history, or nature/freedom, which are linked by genealogy to the opposition of *physis* to its others, and by the same token to the oppositions sensual/spiritual, sensible/intelligible, sensory/sense (*sinnlich/Sinn*)" (cf. Jütte 2000; Barck et al. 2002 [1990]; in terms of Bible studies, cf. Dawes 1998: 70–72); an antagonism that, after Cartesian and Kantian rationalism, is now, in the configuration of the "post," attempted to be surpassed by a radical reduction of all being to the linguistic of language, the "substance" of the very discursive in all discourses; a "substance" that precisely in the "post," paradoxically, is the opposite of the rational: unending linguistic figuration as the disruptive power of the imaginary intrinsic to language – already demonstrated by the Surrealists (see, for example, Orban 1997: 87–116; Patterson 1993; for Derrida's connections to Surrealism, cf. Brannigan 1999). Thus, in the world of the "post," the question is no longer about the destruction of reason: now the irrational, celebrated in the name of the "subversive," is the very salvation of all that is rational (cf. Connor 1989: 13, 41, 54–55, 201–245; Bertens 1995: 164; Suleiman 1990; in terms of Surrealism and critical theory, cf. Hoß & Steinert 1997).

In this configuration, "the sexual," along with all its seducing associations, is the most spectacular figure: *without "the sexual" there would be no postmodern*.

125 The idea of "the politics of orgasm" was first formulated by Susan Lydon (1970) in the feminist campaign against the Freudian myth of "vaginal orgasm" to promote "clitoral orgasm" as a real experience of women (see Koedt 1996 [1970]). To avoid all misunderstandings, however, it is appropriate to emphasize that there is no such thing as a "politics of orgasm" *as such*; instead, what there is is a political context, or a constellation of life that becomes politicized, in which the experience of the body, especially in terms of corporeal pleasures, turns into a political issue. It is in this sense that Adrienne Rich (1985 [1984]: 9) speaks of "the politics of orgasm." Having first considered herself as "a Marxist" in the realms of "philosophy and literature and science and theology," she became "a radical feminist" who found her body as a political matter in a wider context: "The politics of pregnability and motherhood. The politics of orgasm. The politics of rape and incest, of abortion, birth control, forcible sterilization. Of prostitution and marital sex. Of what had been named sexual liberation. Of prescriptive heterosexuality. Of lesbian existence." (ibid.) It is in this sense that *the personal is political*, not only in terms of feminism, but in general, always and everywhere.

Reason, that great invention of the Enlightenment, has taken a new form in the postmodern in which precisely the rational in and of itself is possible only as a *rationalization of the irrational* – of course, named not by this term, but referred to by the term the "other" of reason; in other words, the reason of the imaginary that I designate as the surrational.

But what is the "other" of reason in itself if not an effect of the imaginary that is constitutive of all that is "post."

This is precisely the order of reason of the surrational; a form of reason without which contemporary capitalism – capitalism with a "human face" – could not sustain.

Although the psychosexual complex, the conceptual framework of orgasmic pleasure, is essentially a product of the modern in the sense of modernization (see, for example, Valverde 1985; 36–37; Segal 1994: 180–198; Hawkes 1996: 1–4, 69–70, 146–147; Katz 1996: 60–61; Oosterhuis 2000: 19–72; Hancock & Tyler 2001: 152–154; Corrêa et al. 2008: 83–108; Weeks 1997a [1981]), it already has its roots in the *pre-sexual* – understood historically as *pre-modern*, before the idea of "the sexual" as the unifying notion and category constitutive of "sex" and "sexuality," in contrast to the Biblical and psychoanalytic paradigms (and, in this sense, "pre-Foucauldian") – conceptions of corporeal desires and pleasures elaborated on in Antiquity and Christianity, as far as the different modes of constitution and the functions of male and female bodies are concerned (see, for example, Nelson 1979; Boswell 1981; Brown 1988; Brundage 1990; Halperin et al. 1990; Laqueur 1992a; Winkler 1994 [1990]; Jordan 1997; Nussbaum & Sihvola 2002b; Gaca 2003; Carden 2004; Langlands 2006).[126]

The enjoyment of the delights of the flesh, its modes and practices, experiences and expressions, has been a controversial object of various theories posited through the times by the ancient Greek and Roman physicians, philosophers and poets, through the thinkers of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment to the natural scientists of the nineteenth century (see, for example, Hawkes 2004: 24–106; Ariès 1990c [1982]; Veyne 1990 [1982]; Stanton 1992a; Winkler 1994 [1990]; Sigusch 2008), culminating in the Freudian paradigm of "the sexual" (see, for example, Hawkes 1996: 25–28, 62–64, 2004: 148–161; Bullough 1994: 70–71, 86–91, 149–155; Weeks 1995b [1985]: 82–103, 127–181), and finally in its radical criticism by feminists, poststructuralists and queer theorists – a criticism aiming, through various approaches of "deconstruction," at a disruption of the whole idea of "the sexual" by means of the disruptive power of language, the

126 The idea of the "pre-sexual" embraces three levels which are closely interconnected: (1) the Biblical, (2) the historical (the "Foucauldian" in present study) and (3) the psychoanalytical (the Freudian view). As such, this idea, of course, is in and of itself a linguistic construction, a conceptual projection based on a certain conceptuality concerning the body and its desires and pleasures. In this sense, the "pre-sexual" presupposes, in one way or another, a retrospective conception of the body in historical terms, a view which may even incorporate mythological features. This mythological aspect can also be seen in both Freud's and Foucault's "histories" of the coming into being of "the sexual," as different as their narratives otherwise are (cf. Young 1990; Elliott 2004).

subversive potential of the linguistic of language (see, for example, Butler 1990; Wagner 1993; Borstein 1994; Sedgwick 1994; Potts 2002; Parisi 2004; in the context of the Enlightenment, see Wagner 1987).

In all these theories, differences notwithstanding, and regardless of the fact that the desires and pleasures of the flesh have been subsumed under the notions of the sexual only for a couple of centuries (see Foucault 1990k: 23, 150–157, 1992b [1984]: 3–6; cf., for example, Garton 2004: 14–15, 23–24, 188–189; Padgug 1992 [1979]; Bland & Doan & 1998a, 1998b; Davidson 2001; Walter 2004), the issue of genital pleasure and orgasm has retained its importance as a challenge to reason – even in negative terms, as normative forms of pleasure questioned by the theoretical reason of the postmodern (see, for example, MacKendrick 1999: 111–112, 114, 126; Walter 1999; Lewandowski 2001), a mode of theoretical radicalism for which sex and sexuality only appear as subjugating and disempowering effects of a normalizing discourse instated by disciplinary power, as the very subjection of the subject.[127] That is, in Foucauldian terms, rather than trying to liberate ourselves from the "repression" of sex (see Foucault 1990k: 15–35; cf. Rousseau 1999: 5–7, 20–28; Huffer 2009: 49–62, 105–108; Taylor 2009: 74–76, 155–162), we must see, on the contrary, that what is called "sex" (*le sexe*) is repressive in itself: it is *a regulative category* that constraints the free enjoyment of "bodies and pleasures" (see Foucault 1990k: 157–159; cf. Giddens 1992: 168–172; Stanton 1992b: 1–2; Grosz 1995c: 218–227; Bersani 1996: 79–84; Habermas 1998a [1985]: 334–336; McWhorter 1999: 105–135; Halperin 2002a: 22–23; Oksala 2005: 124–131; Kelly 2009: 144–149; Butler 1999a).

Yet, as both an intimate corporeal experience and an object of scientific and theoretical explanations, orgasm belongs, in the last analysis, indeed, to the realm of the "other" of reason; orgasm understood here, of course, not in terms of physiology and a "release" or "response" of organism (cf. Kinsey et al. 1998a [1953]: 89–103, 125–132, 161–173, 193–210, 359–390, 539–760; Kinsey et al. 1998b [1948]: 157–181, 190–192, 203–217, 579–581; Reich 1965 [1927]; Masters & Johnson 1966; Margolis 2004; Lloyd 2005; Reumann 2005; Komisaruk et al. 2006; in the context of feminism, cf. McLaren 2002: 110–112; in queer terms, cf. Huffer 2009: 125–126), but as an experience of the flesh – the flesh with all its Biblical connotations (cf., for example, Jantzen 1998: 47–48; Berger 1999: 14–15; for a historical contextualization, see Hawkes 2004: 6, 37, 100–101, 113, 120–121, 156, 163–165). Whatever shifts of meaning with regard to the sexual there have been in general, it is the "unreason" of orgasm that has successfully resisted various efforts to rationalize, whether conceptually and theoretically, or by practical measures, the forms of corporeal pleasure manifesting the sexual (whatever it as such, in itself, is). In this sense, the orgasmic body, in the

127 As we will see, in contemporary theory (as a formation of theory effected by poststructuralism), as an idea to be understood theoretically, the sexual, orgasmic pleasure included, is nothing but just another mode of the linguistic of language: behind the signifier of "the sexual" there is *nothing* that were not, *always already*, a figure of language (cf. Butler 1990). In this sense, in post-theory orgasm, in the last analysis, is a discourse effect, regardless of its carnal physicality as an experience and expression of the body.

Western tradition, resists civilization, the civilizing practices of the disciplinary regime of the corporeal in the name of reason (see Elias 1980a [1939], 1980b [1939]; Foucault 1991a [1975]; Weber 1993 [1904–1905]; Freud 1972a [1930]).

Or, is this rather an idealistic vision of an "authentic body" that lives in its intrinsic autonomy beyond culture and civilization, a post-Rousseauan vision of a "natural body" as an anti-body resisting the artificiality of the civilized subject, and, finally, a post-Romantic vision of a "Dionysian body" that enjoys its ecstatic corporeality, its original carnality; in short, a vision that finally amounts to orgasmic mysticism *à la* Reichian mysteries of orgasm, in a similar manner, *mutatis mutandis*, as Lacan celebrates the mystical power of the phallus?

From a "Frantic State of Epilepsy" to the Ecstasy of *jouissance*

Be that as it may, what is at issue here is that as an atavistic corporeal experience, the pleasure of orgasm is in itself, indeed, not only the opposite, but, at the same time, the reverse, of Western reason. However this "great pleasure," in the words of the Greek physician Galen, being "coupled with the exercise of the generative parts" and resulting in an "epileptic seizure" (Laqueur 1992a: 43–46, 2003: 193), has been interpreted, it is always understood to be, in one way or another, something that takes the body beyond reason, in a state of being "ecstatic," "out of oneself," "separated from oneself," in *ek-stasis* (cf. Pellauer 1994: 154–162; in the Hegelian context, cf. Dillon 1995: 155–163).

In this manner, what is orgasmic is Dionysian: a moment of exaltation, an ecstatic instant, excessive beyond the rational (which, of course, is not the same as the reasonable); in Christian terms, sensations and affections, experiences and expressions, of the body belonging to the realm of *luxuria*, passions and lusts, voluptuous pleasures that, instigated by the libido, corrupt the soul and alienate the human from God (cf. Jordan 2002: 86–93; Laqueur 2003: 281–284; Crawford 2007: 67–70; Berry 1994; Sharrock 1997).

This is the "problem" of orgasm. However omnipotent the powers of reason otherwise are, when facing the seduction of orgasmic pleasure they are confronted with their own intrinsic impotence, the constraints of the rational. From the standpoint of reason, it is, of course, frustrating that this "simple" corporeal sensation, this fleeting moment of intense pleasure, has the power to ridicule the self-assurance of reason as an ability to give even things that seem to be beyond reason both a rational and reasonable explanation.

From this perspective, what appear to be mysteries of orgasm manifest, in the light of reason, the undeniable presence of its other side, the "other" of reason challenging all that is rational.

Since it is apparent that in the world of the "cyber," a world dominated totally by the imperative of technological reason, the idea of sexual pleasure has been detached from the realm of the flesh, or, as it is called in cyber discourse, from the frustrating and oppressive world of *meat* (see Dery 1996: 91, 116, 247–253;

cf., for example, Morse 1994: 157–158; Wilson 1996: 224; Plant 1998: 33; Botting 1999: 8, 17, 150–153, 158–169, 181–186; Kennedy 2000a: 471–475; Cavallaro 2001: 147–150; Adam 2002: 159–160; Bell et al. 2004: 8–9; Haney 2006: 94; in the context of "medical ethics and feminism," cf. Rothfield 1995: 168–169), it is, perhaps, appropriate to recall what orgasm actually was at the time when the body was still not only apprehended, but, first and foremost, *experienced* – experienced in one's own *flesh* – as something carnal, as the embodiment of the subject in carnal corporeality; that is, when orgasm was not yet an effect of discourse, but, indeed, a sensation of the flesh, an atavistic experience of the carnal body.

In this respect, it is illuminating to quote a nineteenth century scientist, a Parisian physician named Félix Roubaud, who described orgasm, as he conceived of it in his *Traité de l'impuissance et de la stérilité chez l'homme et chez la femme* (1855), a treatise on the problems of male and female sexuality, as an essential part of intercourse; to be emphasized, as it was understood at the time:

> The circulation quickens, the arteries beat strongly, the venous blood, arrested by muscular contraction, increases the general heat, and this stagnation, more pronounced in the brain by the contraction of the muscles of the neck and the throwing of the head backward, causes a momentary cerebral congestion, during which intelligence is lost and the faculties abolished. The eyes, violently injected, become haggard, and the look uncertain, or, in the majority of cases, the eyes are closed spasmodically to avoid the contact of the light. The respiration is hurried, sometimes interrupted, and may be suspended by the spasmodic contraction of the larynx, and the air, for a time compressed, is at last emitted in broken and meaningless words. The congested nervous centers only communicate confused sensations and volitions; mobility and sensation show extreme disorder; the limbs are seized by convulsions and sometimes by cramps, or are thrown wildly about or become stiff like iron bars. The jaws, tightly pressed, grind the teeth, and in some persons the delirium is carried so far that they bite to bleeding the shoulders their companions have imprudently abandoned to them. This frantic state of epilepsy lasts but a short time, but it suffices to exhaust the forces of the organism, especially in man. (Béjin 1985 [1982]: 182; cf. Kinsey 1998a [1953]: 631–639)

It is evident that in this regressive-primitive state of the body, described by Roubaud as a "frantic state of epilepsy" induced by orgasm, there is very little, if anything at all, to be ascribed to reason; the body is taken up by forces that obey only the passions of the flesh. But then again, if there is nothing rational in orgasm, is it still reasonable, reasonable from the point of view of the body as the lived body, as a corporeal experience of the subject, the body-subject in its carnality (for a contextualization of the carnal body in terms of contemporary philosophy, see Welton 1998)? In orgasm, the subject disintegrates, falls apart, enjoys the pleasure of "pure" being, an atavistic mode of existence without the self conditioned by culture; a mode of being that, paradoxically, is celebrated by the linguisticism of post-theory, in its writerly figurations concerning the subversive effects of *jouissance*; in other words, instead of being an experience of the flesh, the "sexual body" is a literary figure in terms of theory (see, for example, Grosz 1989: 52–56, 77–82, 89–102; Grosz & Probyn 1995; Kirby 1997; for a thorough critique of that position, see McNally 2001).

Jouissance – that is a mode of pleasure that is more than bliss. As Stephen Heath (1977: 9), explaining the difference between *plaisir* and *jouissance* in Barthes, points out that one of the meanings of *jouissance* in French is the "pleasure of sexual climax" that, in terms of the text, is more pleasurable than plain *plaisir*: it is a "'thrill' (easily verbalized with 'to thrill', more physical and potentially sexual, than 'bliss'), 'climactic pleasure,' 'come' and 'coming' (the exact sexual translation of *jouir*, *jouissance*), 'dissipation' (somewhat too moral in its judgement but able to render the *loss*, the fragmentation, emphasized by Barthes in *jouissance*)" (see Barthes 1974 [1970], 1975 [1973]; cf. Lavers 1982: 59, 167, 198, 205–207; Jameson 1988i [1983]: 65–69; MacCannell 2003; for a critical view, cf. Harvey 1989: 57–58; in Lacanian terms, cf. Lacan 1985 [1973]: 49–52, 55, 59, 89, 97, 117, 120, 137–138, 142–145, 147, 152–154, 168; Fink 1997 [1995]). In this theoretical figure, the desire, even a passion, for unreason typical of postmodern theory is to be seen – a desire that nevertheless has a long tradition in Western thought (cf., for example, Caputo 2000: 18–40; Megill 1985; Graham 1992; Schad 2004; Wolin 2004).

In fact, is the "unreason" of the sexual body the very reason of being a sexual body? That is, reasonable for the subject as an embodied subject, as a subject of one's own body, a part of which are the sexual organs with their particular mode of pleasure called *Organlust* by Freud (1986d [1915–1917]: 335–336, 1990c [1933]: 104–105, 1991d [1915]: 217–218; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 363–364; Schöpf 1998: 122–124; for a theory-historical discussion, see van Haute & Geyskens 2004: 64–68); that is, the experiences of desires and pleasures as a specific mode of corporeal irritability in terms of the psychical, as sensations and affections of organs that are libidinally cathected (cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998: 92–96).

Thus, it is apparent that these involuntary "convulsions" and "cramps" of the body in the grasp of orgasmic seizure, these irresistible manifestations of the flesh in its very carnality, are something different compared to Harawayan "cyborg 'sex,'" a rationalized and technologized mode of "sex" that, as Haraway (1985: 66) says, "restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" entailing thus a "nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism" (cf. Barr 1993: 218; Apter 1999: 216–217; Sim 2002: 173). Notwithstanding that "ferns" and "invertebrates," as forms of flora and fauna, are without doubt something organic, it is evident, however, that they belong to another order of the organic than the organic of the human body – a body that has nothing to do with vegetables and animals precisely due to its culturality; a body that is not natural but cultural, and that precisely as such is able to sense and feel its carnality; a body that is "unnatural" exactly in this sense (cf., for example, Benthien 1999; Benthien & Wulf 2001; from a historical perspective, cf. Cowan & Sicks 2005a).[128] That is, *the natural state of the human being is unnatural*.

128 Paradoxically, while "sexual" as an attribute and a term, deployed by Linnaeus, was at the time when the term was introduced not applied to humans, but plants and later also to animals, in contemporary understanding it is solely humans that are characterized not only as sexual beings, but also as creatures that are said to "have sex." Although plants and animals, each in their realms in different manners, are divided into two sexes according to the sexual divide, they do not, of course, practice sex – although Linnaeus understood the procreation of plants in "erotic" terms, as a mode of "eroticism" (see Schiebinger 2004 [1993]: 18–38).

In contrast to the world of the cyborg, in the "old" world of humans, described by Roubaud, carnal pleasure was, of course, something cultural, codified by various cultural practices, but, nevertheless, it was about experiences and expressions of the corporeal in the sense of *Leiblichkeit* of the body as the *Leib*; corporeality as the lived body in itself, as an incorporation of the self: the body as the embodiment of the subject (cf., for example, Holzhey & Leyvraz 1987; Gugutzer 2002).

To specify, firstly, orgasm as the climax of intercourse manifested a specific atavistic mode of pleasure experienced in and by the body in a "natural" state – as it was understood at the time. Secondly, for Roubaud the sexual was something that took place in the flesh, in the carnal body that was experiencing itself by itself, living in orgasm for a fleeting moment outside the constraints of culture. Accordingly, thirdly, the experience of the sexual, as a bodily act, was a phenomenon based on the special organization of organs in the human body, a process that proceeded all by itself according to the functions of the organism. Fourthly, and most importantly, the sexual body was, for Roubaud, a body that enjoyed its *own* corporeality beyond the control of reason, beyond all the rational, that is, as a body that was able to indulge itself in a state of "unreason" – precisely the "frantic state of epilepsy" as Roubaud described orgasm.

These atavistic manifestations of the flesh, these primordial convulsions and paroxysms of the carnal body in its "natural" state, beyond the control of the mind, are, of course, no longer comprehensible in the world of the "cyber," in a world in which all that is *meat* arouses only disgust and horror. That is, orgasm is no longer intelligible in a world ruled by scientific-technological reason, the reason of control. The cyborg is an embodiment of this reason, and, as such, it is the opposite of primordial, uncontrolled spasms of the carnal body.

1.2.4 Approaching the Ethos of Postmodern Ego-Politics

As different as the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* are from each other in their manner of exemplifying the discursive-material constructions of onanism, hysteria and cybersex, nevertheless, the decisive issue pertaining to all of them is the same: the very idea of orgasm as a corporeal release engendering intense pleasure that is beyond reason; an atavistic carnal experience which the French language, in its poetic eloquence, calls *la petite mort* (cf. Margolis 2004: 72; Falk 2004 [1985]: 194; Huffer 2009: 126). In this respect, the discourses of onania, hysteria and cybersex have a common problem: the uncontrollability of orgasm, or more precisely, the irrational desire for orgasmic pleasure, a desire that refuses to comply with the demands of reason.

Notwithstanding that the sexual, as a cultural category regulating desires and pleasures embraced by the terms "sex" and "sexuality," is constituted by language, orgasm is evidently something that takes place in the body, in

sensual corporeality, in the world of the flesh that is absolutely beyond the regime of language.

As a notion, defining and articulating a certain organic reaction of the body, orgasm, of course, is a linguistic figure, a signifier, but as a phenomenal-experiential *Erlebnis* it is a physical sign, an *index* of a specific corporeal sensation, a sensation that, of course, is always culturally coded, discursively articulated in the body schema of each epoch. In this way, as a specific experience of the body, orgasm is a corporeal matter, although the manner in which it is talked about is discursively constructed – in the postmodern, even celebrated more and more as the sign of personal health and happiness, as a sign of fitness, wellness and personal success (cf., for example, Lowe 1995: 128–135; Volkwein-Caplan 2004). In other words, *the management of orgasms is a career issue in the economy of the postmodern* (cf. Jackson & Scott 1997; Hancock & Tyler 2001).

The Pleasure of Artificial Corporeality

In the words of Wilhelm Reich (1965 [1927]), what is at issue here is the problem concerning "the function of the orgasm" (cf. Robinson 1969: 60–65; Stoff 2002: 187–190; Walter 2004: 167–168; in terms of the modernization of sexuality, cf. Kenning 2004: 64–67; for a historical contextualization, see Briehl 1995; Fallend & Nitzscke 1997);[129] in my reading, a function that is not only a problem of an individual body, but, moreover, a problem of body management in various cultural formations, both constituted and manifested by certain discursive orders. That is, for example, the orgasm prescribed by the "sexual normality" in the America of the 1950s is not the same as the orgasm celebrated by the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and the 1970s – or the orgasm in contemporary culture dominated by the imperative of health as the key to personal success and happiness (see, for example, Fox 1994: 119–160; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 147–150; Morris 1998; for health as a "postmodern utopia," see Siebers 1994a).

In contrast to the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat* and the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* as pathological conceptions of the sexual, the *Cyber SM bodysuit* manifests in a pointed way the great expectations under the sign of the postmodern concerning the future of sex: the idea of cybersex pronounces a promise of a total rationalization of the "unreason" of the sexual – paradoxically, in the hope of a total sexual freedom; a freedom of an orgasmic body as the guarantee of the existential freedom of the subject: *I orgasm, therefore I am* – that is the declaration of independence of the sexual subject in terms of post-sex. In cybersex, orgasmic pleasure is no longer bound to the mundane matter of *meat*, instead,

129 As stated above, the "function of the orgasm" was, for Reich, the moment of an inhibited release of sexual energy experienced as a climax of intercourse; a release that was a precondition for both the mental and corporeal health of the individual (see Reich 1965). Instead of the Reichian bio-physiological concept of orgasm my interest pertains to the cultural meaning of orgasmic pleasure; a meaning that is always discursively constructed and, as such, historically variable, as the exemplary cases discussed here show. In my conception of the sexual, what is called orgasm is *a culturally codified form of experiencing sexual pleasure in its very carnality*, as the experience of the flesh that various theories of sexuality have attempted to make intelligible by means of language.

it is a mode of pleasure engendered by virtuality and prosthetics; that is, the pleasure of artificial corporeality as the very condition of the post-subject as a "post-body" (cf., for example, Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 79–80, 1988c; Kroker 1992, 1993, 2004b; Hayles 1999; Hassard et al. 2000; Holliday & Hassard 2001; Graham 2002; Toffoletti 2007; in terms of "trans," cf. Baudrillard 1993c [1990]: 3–35, 1990c [1983]; Braidotti 2006).

This is a body that is a rationally controlled instrument of the subject: the cyborg as myself that is the "Other" of "me" being thus an "I" for "myself" – in other words, the "Other" as a prosthetic and virtual extension and amplification of *me, myself and I*.

What, however, is common to all these technological constructions – the *Anti-Onanie-Apparat*, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* – is that they establish a techno-corporeal double bind (see Bateson 2000 [1972/1969]: 271–278) of the sexual and the rational; that is, a situation in which the subject is caught in the middle of the mutually contradictory correlation between the sexual as a manifestation of the "other" of reason, and the technological as a projection of scientific rationality entailing a control politics of the body. Both of these poles have their own transitive logic creating a situation in which the subject is an object of two mutually opposite yet equally demanding objectives: the demand of the "unreason" of sexual reason as the reason of the body, and the demand of the reason of control as the reason of culture in the form of science and technology (cf. Freud 1972a [1930]).

Thus, as a mode of corporeal pleasure, sexual pleasure is, even in the postmodern, a strictly regulated compromise between the immediacy of the body and the rules of the prevailing economic order: the human body is not only an object of Foucauldian "power/knowledge" (see Foucault 1980a [1975], 1980f [1977], 1980g [1976], 1980h [1976]), it is also, in and of itself, a politically organized force field of sensations and affections, an embodied matrix of desires and pleasures that, at the same time, is both complying with and struggling against the rules and regulations defined by the imperative of efficiency constitutive of neo-Fordism – rules and regulations that are instrumental of techno-culture manifesting the logic of technoscience (cf., for example, Robins & Webster 1999; Cooper 2002; Michael 2006).

The problem is, however, that there is no *human* body outside culture; in other words, desires and pleasures of the body are *always already* something cultural. Nevertheless, as a lived body, as the experience and expression of the corporeal, the body is always an individual and unique manifestation of the flesh (which is not to be reduced to the organism). In this sense, the human body is, by necessity, always a double body: a carnal incorporation of myself and an embodiment of culture as the "other." This double body, in its intrinsic contradiction, is the condition of possibility of the subject as long as there is anything one can call "subject."

This is the precondition of the body politics in terms of the sexual – a micropolitical power structure that in the postmodern, in the economic-political order of neo-Fordism, creates the basis of personal and social body management amounting to an ego-politics of the subject.

The Postmodern: Re-Writing the Orgasmic

In all the conceptions of sex and sexuality discussed here, what is sexual is reasonable, but only as far as it is rational. Thus, as paradoxical as it might be, these sexual-technological appliances, each in a peculiar manner, postulate that, on the one hand, although the sexual belongs to the realm of unreason, on the other, it is the rational, as the guarantee of the reasonable, that is the very reason of the sexual – as far as the rational, always defined differently in various historical constellations, gets the upper hand. This entails that there is no sexual, as both an idea and a mode of experiences and expressions of corporeality, without the tension – still unresolved today, but, on the contrary, heightened – between reason and its "other," the unreason of the body.

If this tension is a product – a true achievement – of the modern, it is all the more an insurmountable condition of the postmodern, a cultural constellation based on both an abolition of inhibitions and a sublimation of desires and pleasures of the body. Thus, whatever the forms of desires and pleasures are in the postmodern, they are, in the final analysis, controlled by reason.

This is the logic of neo-Fordism, the logic of productive consumption, as the order of the libidinal economy of the postmodern: *reason and pleasure are mutually conditioned*, each of them being the very condition of possibility of the other.

In cybersex, this inherent double bind is extremely rationalized: it is turned into a form of the surrational, a mode of reason in which the rational and the imaginary collapse into one another. To recall: whereas the imaginary in the modern created a sphere of the surreal, manifested by Surrealism, the imaginary in the postmodern gives rise to another order of the real, the sphere of the surrational; this is the reason of postmodern rationality. A surrational world is not irrational; on the contrary, it is a world in which rationality has attained the highest degree, the state of assured faith, the certainty of belief. In the world of the surrational, everything is possible just because the almighty of reason has made the concept of the impossible impossible. This is the logic of the postmodern imaginary; for this reason, the reality effects of the imaginary in the postmodern are, indeed, real.

After the oppressive order of the modern, we inhabit now the world of the "cyber," a world beyond Enlightenment reason, brought about by the order of the "post." This is the matrix of post-theory in which theory is no longer a realm of the rational, but a playground of the imaginary. In this configuration, both the rational and the sexual have reached a terminal state (cf., for example, Bukatman

1996 [1993]; Rutsky 1999; Bell & Kenndy 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). What is cybersex, then, if not, as an effect of the imaginary, the logical conclusion of the reason of the rational: if, for Hegel (1986b [1821]: 24), *Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; / und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*, in the world of post-theory as a post-Hegelian world, what is rational is imaginary, and what is imaginary is rational: everything has become possible *because the reason of the imaginary does not recognize the impossible: it is beyond the impossible*. That is, freedom is no longer the telos of history, as in the world of the Enlightenment; instead, freedom is now a personal choice: the rationality of becoming as the reason of becoming a post-body in the mode of the post-subject is the post-teleological telos inscribed in the imperative of the "post" as the reason of the imaginary.

This is the dialectic of reason in the world of the "post": the idea of the surrational is the intrinsic principle of reason dominating the postmodern; that is, the imaginary is the very reason of reason in terms of the "post."

In these terms, following the para-logical logic of post-reason, cybersex, as a climax of the reason of the imaginary, manifests the ultimate triumph of reason in the postmodern: it is a Hegelian *Aufhebung*, a sublation (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; cf. Inwood 1992: 283–284), of the instrumental reason of the modern *in the form* of the scientific-technological rationalism of the postmodern, and, as such, a constitutive part of the surrational, the reason of the imaginary (for the idea of "instrumental reason," see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Albert et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in Weber's notion of *Zweckrationalität*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010). That is, only in the realm of the surrational, a realm that embraces a higher grade of reason, the dialectical contradiction between the imaginary and the rational is, in the Hegelian sense, *aufgehoben*: resolved by way of annuling, canceling and suspending, and thus preserved and raised to a higher level of reason, to a higher power of rationality involved by the potential (see Hegel 1983 [1812–1816]: 114–115; in Derridean terms, see, for example, Derrida 1982 [1972]: 40–41, 44, 1984a [1972/1968]: 19–20, 1984f [1972/1968]: 120–121; cf. Barnett 1998; as a critical counter-position to Derridean deconstruction, cf. Houlgate 2006: 36–37, 82–83, 199–239, 301–303). That is, in the world of the "cyber," the potential is actual in its very potentiality: the potential is realized by the imaginary, in other words, the potential is *aufgehoben* in the imaginary.

Thus, taken together, the problem of all these technological inventions to regulate the sexual is, in one way or another, genitality as a source of orgasmic pleasure; a pleasure that always defies the order of reason. What is at stake here is whether there is "too much" or "too little," at a "proper" or a "wrong" moment, or in an "approved" or a "disavowed" manner, or, as specifically in the case of cybersex, only if an appropriate technological outfit is available, of that enticing and exciting pleasure that the genitals are able to engender; the genitals as an *agent* of unreason – an agent always exceeding the limits of all that is rational.

In this sense, as the signifier signifying the "otherness" of all that is corporeal in terms of the rational, the sexual is at the core of the Western conception of reason, rationality and rationalism: the sexual is, in the Cartesian-Kantian tradition, the demon of reason, the ultimate threat of all that is rational and reasonable (see, for example, Schott 1993 [1988]: 43–82, 101–114; Nussbaum & Sihvola 2002a: 2–4; Hawkes 2004: 59–60; Böhme & Böhme 1985 [1983]; Posner 1992; West 2005); in other words, the sexual is the most provocative *agent provocateur* of reason.

Although the sexual and the genital are, as pointed out above, not the same (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 32, 132–145, 1983a [1938/1940]: 74–75, 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–350; cf. Bristow 1997: 62–65), there is one point at which they intersect; this point is precisely orgasm. This holds good even in the sense of sexual skepticism for which it is essential to deconstruct the sexual not only by subverting the power of both the genital and the orgasmic (see, for example, Grosz 1989: 25–38, 52–74, 115–118, 230–233; Potts 2002: 88–101; Beasley 2005; in terms of the "abolition of orgasm," cf. Walter 1999; Lewandowski 2001), but also the whole organic constitution of the human body as a sexual body; or, as in cultural theories that are drawing on Lacan, *écriture féminine* and poststructuralism in general, to literally *rewrite* the orgasmic in terms of *jouissance* (see, for example, Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 64–86, 114–125, 134–149; Rodowick 1988: 242–254; Still & Worton 1993a: 26–32; Dean 2000: 51–52, 60–61; Lacan 1985 [1973]; Fink 1997 [1995]; MacCannell 2003; in terms of "theory's romance," see Elam 1992: 141–174; for an overview of "writing-the-body" or "body-writing" in *écriture féminine*, see Osinski 1998: 151–167; cf. Irwin 2010).

It is in this manner that, in the theory discourse of the "post," orgasm as an atavistic form of carnal pleasure has been dethroned in the name of the liberation of the body. Along with the devaluation of the flesh the orgasmic has been replaced by the cult of *jouissance*; thus, in the postmodern, orgasm is to *jouissance* what the penis was to the phallus in the modern: all that is flesh is now subsumed by the linguistic of language, the substance of the imaginary (see, for example, Kirby 1995). That is, in post-theoretical anti-sexual radicalism deriving from Foucault's (1990k [1976]) conception of what he designates as *le sexe*, the orgasmic, with all that is "sexual" in general, is *passé*: instead of orgasm what is at issue now are various "intensities" that the body as a whole is capable of experiencing in the state of freedom, released from the constraints of the sexual, the sexual as the *sine qua non* of the "heterosexual matrix" or "compulsory heterosexuality" (see Butler 1990: 5–34, 151; Weiss 1999: 74–80; Lloyd 2007: 27–44; in terms of "cyberfiction," see Emig 2006).

The Sexual Rationalism of Technoscientific Body Management

From a historical perspective, whether it be the orgasmic seizure or the ecstasy of *jouissance*, in terms of the right to pleasure, the question is always the same: who is in charge of allowing or denying the access to pleasure, the access to an

uninhibited enjoyment of the carnal. All that is sexual is still today a highly contested matter in various cultures, regulated by religious or secular authorities; even in the condition of the postmodern in which the individual – paradoxically, in the form of the post-subject – is assumed to be the highest authority of the self, the question is: how is this authority constituted?

That is, if pleasure is a political question in general (cf. Jameson 1988i [1983]), the more this pertains to sexual pleasure: as we have seen above, sexual pleasure is the most momentous challenge of reason, and, precisely as such, a political issue.

Thus, the question concerning the legitimizing authority of sexual pleasure is central in the politics of the sexual: the way in which the subject, as a sexual subject of his or her *specific sexuality* (whatever it might be), is given the allowance to experience and express sexual desire (as a reminder, a form of desire that, of course, is not there *per se*, without the signifier of "the sexual"), to enter the realm of sexual enjoyment, to indulge oneself in that enigmatic form of corporeal arousal which, like the Kantian beautiful, is a *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck* (cf. Kant 1990c [1790/1793/1799]: 155) – or, in terms of sexual skepticism, in the ecstasy of *jouissance*, this *something* that is designated – linguistically *coded* – not as the orgasmic, but, nevertheless, has an intensity able to effect a temporary transgression of the limits of the body as an embodiment of culture (see, for example, Rival et al. 1999: 297–298; Jenks 2003: 93–94; Pettman 2002; Hussey 2006; MacKenrick 1999; Donnan & Magowan 2009a; in the context of "the politics and poetics of transgression," cf. Stallybrass & White 1986; in theological terms, cf. Lingis 1994: 16–19; Prosser 1995).

While the idea of the anti-onanism apparatus was to prevent orgasm as a solitary pleasure (seen as a "solitary vice") in the name of the physico-theological conception of the human organism, an organism seen to have its own physiological and physical forces (see Porter 1995: 86–87; Rosario 1995: 105–114; Sharrock 1997: 420–421; Laqueur 2003: 192–209; Richter 2006: 93–98; McCormick 2000), and while the rationale of the vibrator for female genital massage was to effect orgasmic pleasure (though without this designation) under the supervision of the "medical gaze" peculiar to the nineteenth century medico-scientific conception of the psychosomatic functions of the female body (see Garton 2004: 101–123; Crozier 2006: 293–397; Bührmann 1998; Seeck 1998; Nolte 2004; Walter 2004), the constitutive principle of the cybersex bodysuit is to turn orgasm into a mode of *cybernetic pleasure* in the sense of the *machinic*, produced by a specific interactive technology for the manipulation of the body under the sign of the "sexual," a technology embodying the reason of the cyborg (cf. Hartmann 2004: 52–56; Bauer 2005: 44–55; Cusset 2008 [2003]: 255–256; in terms of the Lacanian cyborg, cf. Nusselder 2009: 66–70, 90–98; from the historical perspective of the Weimar Republic, cf. Lungstrum 1997: 135–143; Biro 2009).

Masturbation, hysteria, cybersex – that is the continuum of "the sexual" in terms of reason, science and technology from the Enlightenment to the postmodern.

While the anti-onanism device in various forms was a simple gadget (although certainly not so simple for those who were doomed to have their genitals encaged into its robust encasement) to keep in check the compulsive sexual urge of all those who could not control their "vice," the vibrator was part of a true electro-mechanical industry producing what Rachel R. Maines (1999), in her seminal study, calls a "technology of orgasm" to be used for administering of female sexuality in cases it was seen to have been going out of control. What, then, is the cybersex bodysuit if not the very proto-type – reflecting precisely the logic of the scientific-technological reason of the postmodern in its imaginary form – of sexual-technological systems for the production of orgasmic pleasure as a form of technoscientific body management, that is, as a mode of being cyborg, the paradigmatic embodiment of neo-Fordism.

This is the end of "natural sex," the definitive end of all the natural in terms of the sexual; this is the beginning of "future sex" (cf. Getty & Winkelmann 1996). As Stenslie (2000b: 206) says, cybersex is about "sex" that "will come to serve as one of the foundations of art practice," entailing an entirely new mode of the sexual, "Next Sex" (see Stocker & Schöpf 2000b); that is, a mode of the sexual subsumed by the regime of the technological: *prosthetic sex as a pleasure of the cyborg*.

1.3. The "Cybersex Bodysuit" and the *jouissance* of the Technological

> Welcome to a Virtual World! Strap on your avatar! Don't have the programming skills or time to build your own? No problem. We provide a complete library of pre-assembled characters; one of them is bound to fit you perfectly. Join the community of like-minded users who agree that three-dimensional space is more sexy! Yes, there is nothing more liberating than flying through a 3D scene, executing risky maneuvers and going for the kill. Mountains and valleys can represent files on a network, financial investments, enemy troops, the body of a virtual sex partner – it does not really matter. Zoom! Roll! Pitch! Not enough visual realism? For just an extra $9.95 a month you can upgrade your rendering speed to a blistering 490,000 polygons a second, increasing the quality of the experience a staggering 27.4 %! And for another $4.95 you will get a chance to try a new virtual world every month, including a mall, a brothel, a Sistine Chapel, Paris during the Revolution of 1789, and even the fully navigable human brain. A 3D networked virtual world is waiting for you; all you need is your credit card number.
>
> Lev Manovich (1997: 288)

> Now, if even sex becomes virtual, what will happen to art? Cybersexuality is the example of total dislocation or delocalization: there is no longer any specific place, just the emission and reception of sensations. It's clear that art will suffer consequences.
>
> Paul Virilio (2001: 129)

"The prosthetic," "the virtual," "the posthuman" – as we have seen thus far, it is in these terms that the body is redefined in the discursive constellation of the "cyber" as a techno-imaginary manifestation of the "post."

What does this great transformation of the human being entail in terms of the sexual, conceived of as a category comprising specific corporeal desires and pleasures that, perhaps, more than ever, have in contemporary culture highly contested meanings, precisely as *idiosyncratic forms* of desires and pleasures in their individuality (see, for example, Ott 1998; Bhattacharyya 2002; Potts 2002; Hawkes 2004; Beasley 2005)? Is the sexual in contemporary culture, as a designation for certain sensations and affections, practices and acts, of the body, in fact, *evaporating into the haze of postmodern hedonism* promoted and propagated by the consume-oriented cult of fitness and wellness as a form of body fetishism typical of the excessive affluence in the Western world (see, for example, Bertens 1995: 206; Letiche 1998: 144–145; Schneirov & Geczik 2003: 33–35, 99–122; Pronger 2002; Lipovetsky 2005)? However this question is to be answered in detail, it is apparent that the sexual is now determined by the very ethos of the excessive affluence; that is, the principle of constantly exceeding the limits, "upgrading" the efficiency and affectivity of the body by ever-new means made available by technoscience and consumer culture (in terms of "the sportive-dynamic body as a symbol of productivity," see Hoberman 1994; cf. Rail 1998b).

In this constellation, "sex" and "sexuality" take on an ostentatious sign-value based on simulational self-reference in which the scene of "the sexual" is rede-

fined in terms of the obscene; the "obscene" understood, of course, in terms of the "post." As Jean Baudrillard noted, analyzing postmodern culture under the notions of simulation and the hyperreal, already at the outset of the 1990s:

> Sexuality has gone weightless. It is now reaching the state of "obscenity." But everyone conspires to mask its disappearance by setting up *trompe l'oeil* stage decore. (Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 129)

What was once pornography is now the impudent and blatant, brazen and insolent, staging of "sex" as a spectacle of designer bodies; a spectacular and spectral enactment of bodies that display their "sexiness," their postmodern "sex appeal," by recycling their abstract "sexiness," the self-iterating "sexiness" constitutive of post-sex; that is, desires and pleasures that are referred to by the abstract attribute "sexy." Like economic value in the abstract form of financial capital, "sex" is the revenue of speculation, the return of investments that operate with "free-floating signifiers," self-referential signifiers that signify by auto-affection. This is the logic of the sexual economy of postmodern capitalism: abstract "sex" as an imaginary abstraction of surplus value that reflects the real of neoliberal capitalism in the form of the hyperreal (cf. Baudrillard 1994a [1981]: 1–3, 7, 12–14).

In this sense, if "the sexual" as a discursive figure is a historically conditioned attribute for specific arousing and exciting expressions and experiences of the body (whatever they in themselves may be), manifesting an indefinite, multifarious and variable, yet, paradoxically, clearly recognizable impulses or "symptoms" of desire (see, for example, Stein 1990a; Stanton 1992a; Eder 2001), and, if sexuality presently, in the postmodern, is nothing but a *trompe l'oeil*, a "deception of the eye," and as such, a simulation of itself, then, one cannot avoid raising the question: *does sex still have a future at all* – namely, as something that can still be defined in terms of the *sexual*, the sexual in the sense of the *corporeal* as an experience of the *flesh*?

1.3.1 My Body Is Your Body: Your Body Is My Body

If, in postmodern sport, the highly trained athletic bodies in themselves constitute today a scientific-technological test laboratory not only to enhance their performance capacities and to break records again and again, but, more fundamentally, to redefine the very performance capacity of the human body in itself under the imperative of efficiency maximation (see Hoberman 1992; Gebauer 1997, 2006; Rail 1998b; Caysa 2003; Miah 2004; Volkwein-Caplan 2004; Magdalinski 2008; in terms of "post-sport," see Pronger 1998), how are the limits of the sexual body to be determined in the libidinal economy of postmodern capitalism, the economy of what I call *post-liminal libidinality*? Thus, the question is: are there no limits at all not just to sexual desires and pleasures, but to the very experience of embodiment? And, to bring the issue to the logical conclusion: in fact, for what do we still need the whole notion, the conceptual complex of

"the sexual" and its confusing derivatives "sex" and "sexuality," if the limitless proliferation of desires and pleasures peculiar to the commodification of culture under the conditions of neoliberalism has effaced the *differentia specifica* of "the sexual"?

In other words, if the sexual is only a mirage today, that is, a phantom of something which in itself has already disappeared altogether, even a spectre from the past, is the era of the sexual, in terms of the real, now over once and for all (cf. Bogard 1996: 160–161; Potts 2002: 217–265; Waskul & Vannini 2008: 247–250; Moore & Kosut 2010a: 144–145; in terms of the "cyber," cf., for example, Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup 2000; Gillis 2004; Parisi 2004; Waskul 2004b) – a situation which we, in fact, would have all the reasons only to celebrate in the name of Foucauldian "bodies and pleasures" (see Foucault 1990k [1976]: 157–159)?

Seen from the perspective of the last three centuries, from the Enlightenment to the postmodern, the question of the sexual is one which concerns the vicissitudes of reason as the very power that informs the bodies, turning the matter of the corporeal into a rationally formed embodiment of the subject: the subject as a body-subject of its "own" self, a body subjected by and to its very "identity" as a subject-body of its own subjectification. What is at issue here is the way in which various formations of culture constitute subjects as the subjects of the sexual, reflecting, in this manner, the demands of reason at different times; reason that forges the corporeal into an embodiment of the rational. In the final analysis, these formations are, in the Derridean sense, *toujours déjà*, "always already," of language (see, for example, Derrida 1997 [1967], 1981a [1972]), effected by the linguistic of language as the generator of signification, creating the condition of possibility of the body as the *human* body, the body as a constantly ongoing cultural construction (cf. Gallagher & Laqueur 1987 [1986]; Featherstone et al. 1991; Bordo 1995 [1993]; Komesaroff 1995; Turner 1997 [1984]; Williams & Bendelow 1998; Holliday & Hassard 2001; Falk 2004 [1985]; Shilling 2005).

"Sex" as a Postmodern Art Form

In this manner, the "natural order" of being human, the very human "nature," is informed by language, a sphere or mode of being that is always already beyond the "natural." Since, or as far as, language is the order of culture, being human is not natural. The "nature" of the human being is culture, a realm of the artificial. For this reason the human being is always already *posthuman*, a result of its self-constitution, an *ex-centric* being in its intrinsicality (see Plessner 1975 [1928]; cf. Kockelkoren 2005: 151–152).[130] There is nothing human beyond

130 The human being is from the very beginning, from the *origin*, always already "posthuman": to "be" human is not to be but to *become* human, to continually appropriate, through the whole life, something that is before and outside each individual: language and culture. In this sense, by constitution the human being, as Helmuth Plessner says, is an *ex-centric* being, a being that has an "excentric position" in relation to all the other living beings (see Plessner 1975 [1928]; cf. Hammer 1967). For this reason, the notion of the "posthuman" in contemporary theory (see, for example Hayles 1999) is more than problematic: artificiality is the true "essence" of the human.

this "nature," the culturality of all that is human. This "nature," however, is not the same as the nature "outside" the human being: nature as a being in its own immanence, a sphere of being in its human-independent beingness (cf., for example, Böhme 1992; Soper 1995; Gloy 1996).

This is the problem of being human: the difference between nature and culture, a difference that is *within* the cultural, and as such, within the very human; that is, the *différance* of the "natural" in itself.

This *différance*, the difference not in between but within, constitutes the problem of the sexual; the problem of the linguistic of language that is the constitutive principle, the condition of possibility, of all that is "human," the "sexual" included.

If, in the age of the Enlightenment, a person, whether young or adult, male or female, who could not resist the temptation of masturbation and was therefore strapped into an anti-onanism device, an embodiment of proto-cyborgian body-technology, what was the hysteric woman of Victorian science a century later, to be cured by connecting her into a vibrator massage apparatus, if not a Harawayan cyborg *avant la lettre*: a "hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 1991a: 149; cf., for example, Muri 2007; Biro 2009)? Not only in the nineteenth-century sexual science, preoccupied by the idea of hysteria, but also in the Enlightenment control policy of onanism, what was at issue was precisely fiction: a fictional disease constructed by medicine turned into medicalism manifesting the rationality of scientism, a scientific ideology in terms of the sexual (cf., for example, Sorell 1994 [1991]; Stenmark 2001).

What, then, is Haraway's cyborg as a "condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (Haraway 1991a: 150) but a technoscientific fiction, a configuration of the signifiers effected by the "cyber"; a post-theoretical theory-fiction reappearing, according to the logic of the postmodern, as an imaginary model for the cybersex apparatus constructed by Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford, the *Anzug "Cyber SM bodysuit* referred to above. In these terms, Stenlie's cyborg is a body-machine interface system, hybridizing, in an inverse form, the anti-onanism device and, through a conceptual de/re-territorialization of "the sexual" in terms of the "cyber" (see Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 141–145; Bogue 1989: 103–106, 113–119, 142–149; Goodchild 1996: 50–72), the vibrator massage apparatus. As such, it is, in the context of the technological, a figure in the theatre of the imaginary of the sexual: a linguistic construction on the discursive scene of the "cyber," that is, in the constellation of cyber discourse.

To approach this fiction, cybersex as a "technical-corporeal materialization" (Mackenzie 2002: 51) of "the sexual" in the discursive context of media art, it is illuminating to complement the tour to the *Deutsches Hygiene-Museum* with a visit to a parallel art exhibition in Dresden under the title "Let's talk about Sex" (for an overview, see Altmann 2001).

Along with various works of art dealing with sex and sexuality, this show dedicated a whole room for Stenslie's sex apparatuses – called in his idiosyncratic artspeak *Cyber SM* (1993), *Inter_Skin* (1994) and *Körperanzug, Prototyp* (1999) (see Stenslie 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1996; cf. Benthien 1999: 265–274, 2001: 326–333; Bauer 2005: 48–49) – with the necessary computer paraphernalia to give the spectator an interactive experience of the workings of cybersex technology on the basic level of its apparatic construction in terms of media art (for a contextualization, see, for example, Wilson 2002: 164–167, 752–753; Popper 2007: 255–260; Sommerer & Mignonneau 1998; Daniels 2002; Daniels & Schmidt 2008; Sommerer et al. 2008a; Sommerer et al. 2008b; Stocker et al. 2009); of course, only as a simulation, or, as we will see later on, as *a simulation of simulation in the form of a technological simulacrum of post-sex*. Not only is there to be seen a whole cybersex bodysuit consisting of receivers, effectors and vibrators for the genitals and the other erotogenic body parts, but, moreover, this apparatus can be touched by the visitor and played with by the computer to give an idea how it feels to get sexual stimulation tele-tactically, as an effect of a state-of-the-art sex machine (cf. Pearce 1997: 144–145; Krewani 1998b: 147–151; Lunenfeld 2000a: 35, 89–95; Daniels 2003: 109–114, 2008: 44–45; Meecham & Sheldon 2005 [2000]: 157–163; Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]: 204; Rötzer 1999c: 103–106, 1999b, 1999d, 2000; Tikka 2001; in terms of Baudrillardian "obscene" turned into "cyber-(ob)scene," cf. Mey 2007: 146–158).

In this artistic-discursive theatre of "the sexual," both the assumed cybersex partners, enjoying a technologically produced sex act, and the exhibition visitors concretely probing the artificial organs of Stenslie's sex machines, are involved, curiously, like postmodern descendants of film-viewers in Walter Benjamin's theory of cinema as a modern aesthetic apparatus, in a new kind of socio-technologically organized sense experience (cf. de Lauretis & Heath 1980; Rosen 1986), giving spectators the possibility to "test" the figures seen on the screen (Benjamin 1974 [1936]: 24; for a theory-historical contextualization, see Gumbrecht & Marrinan 2003). As a result of a technological mediation, as Benjamin says, the spectator turns into an "experimentator" who can experience what it is to "feel oneself into the apparatus" (ibid.; cf. Leschke 2003: 172; Schmidt 2003: 81–82; in terms of "expanded cinema" as part of artistic media experimentation in the 1960s, cf. Youngblood 1970; in the context of experimental television aesthetics in the 1980s, cf. D'Agostino 1985; with regard to video art, cf. Hanhardt 1987; Hall & Fifer 1990);[131] an experience that is an important aspect of interactive media art (see, for example, Wilson 2002: 653–657, 747–763; Popper 2007: 181–311; Huhtamo 1995c, 2000; Dinkla 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Daniels 2008; Kwastek 2008a, 2008b; Stocker et al. 2009; from a historical perspective, see Grau 2003, 2007; for a media-philosophical discussion in

131 In Benjamin's (1974: 24) own words: *Das Publikum fühlt sich in den Darsteller nur ein, in dem es sich in den Apparat einfühlt. Es übernimmt also dessen Haltung: es testet (*emphasis in the original). In my argumentation, the issue is precisely this *"sich in den Apparat einfühlen"* by concretely "testing" the objects on display; a mode of "testing" that is specific to interactive media art.

terms of the "affective," see Hansen 2004; for "the romance of interactivity," see Wooster 1990; for utopian visions, see Ascott 2003).[132]

Although in the gallery space it is, for obvious reasons, not possible to put on the whole cybersex gear in order to experience an authentic cybersex act,[133] the mere probing of the functions of various receivers, effectors and vibrators, differently designed for the male and the female body parts and attached to these bodysuits, can nevertheless give a fairly instructive impression – of course, *at the level of the imaginary* constitutive of post-theory – of what it would be to experience perhaps not so much an "abrupt jolt into other flesh" (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 71) as a smooth gliding into cyberspace to have virtual sex, immersed in a mode of being beyond the body (cf. Balsamo 1996: 127–131; Suárez 2000: 183–187; Ulmer 2005: 94–99); a mode of being that, according to John Perry Barlow (1990a: 42), gives a sensation "like having had your everything amputated."

Theory as a Postmodern Art Practice

In the microcosm of the art exhibition, Stenslie's body-machine installation, providing for the visitor an involving encounter with cybersex apparatuses, illustrates the idea of interactivity not only in the concrete context of this specific technology to be played with, but, moreover, as the working principle peculiar to media art in general, and interactive media art installations in particular (for a contextualization, see, for example, Schwarz & Shaw 1996; Lovejoy 1997 [1989]; Schwarz 1997; Sommerer & Mignonneau 1998; Weibel & Druckrey 2001; Candy & Edmonds 2002; Daniels 2002, 2003, 2008; Malloy 2003; Wilson 2002; Frieling & Daniels 2004, 2005; Giannetti 2004; Popper 2007; Sommerer et al. 2008a, Sommerer et al. 2008b; Bogen et al. 2009; Stocker et al. 2009; for a theory history of interactive media art, see Gendolla et al. 2001; for a history of the body in the context of arts and sciences, see Clair 1993; from the utopian-visionary perspective of the *Wunschmaschine*, cf. Felderer 1996). If there is an art form that in its very terms embodies the intertwining of the body and technology (for a comprehensive overview, see Jahrmann & Schneebauer 2000), and by extension, the technologization of sex, it is media art that at the same time reflects the idea of

132 According to Erkki Huhtamo (1992: 5), the "roots of interactive media art are to be found in the 1960s": "The expansion of the traditional field of art, the dream about 'Total Art,' the annihilation of the barrier between life and art, the 'dematerialization of the art object' (Lucy Lippard), process art, participation art, concept art, Fluxus, the Happening movement and Situationism, 'Art and Technology,' kinetic art, 'cybernetic art' (Jack Burnham), closed-circuit video installations – these phenomena may be heterogeneous, but they are part of one and the same process which had a profound effect on the relationship between art and its audience." (ibid.)

133 This has been, though, partly the case in various cybersex demonstrations organized by Stenslie and his assistants, including the Helsinki show at the ISEA'94. Of these shows the first one took place on 8 December 1993 in Paris when Stenslie and his former partner, Kirk Woolford, arranged via Internet, with body suits and computer technology, an interactive tele-tactile sex encounter between the participants in Cologne and Paris (see Stenslie 1994b: 72; Velena 1994: 34–40). Since then, similar events have been set up until the late 1990s in the context of media and techno art exhibitions where along with performing models some visitors or journalists have also had an opportunity to test this form of future sex (see Stenslie 1996).

both technoculture and the postmodern (for a contextualization, see, for example, Murphie & Potts 2003: 39–63, 73–94; McRobert 2007).

According to the two prominent media artists, active also as theorists and promoters, Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau (2009 [2003]: 204), "[m]edia artists have long explored *the sense of touch for tele-virtual communication*" (emphasis mine), as an example of which they refer to the "cyberSM body suit" devised by Stenslie and Woolford, for the first time publicly presented in the now famous remote-controlled cybersex experiment between Cologne and Paris in 1993 (see Stenslie 1994b: 72; Woolford 1994a: 41–41; cf. Velena 1994: 34–40, 1998 [1995]: 168–173; for the cyberSM presentation in Helsinki in 1994, see Stenslie 1994d; Woolford & Stenslie 1994a; cf. Tikka 2001).

In her article "Virtual Sex. The Killer VR Application. Coming to Terms with the Sexual Ghost in Virtual Space," Trudy Barber describes the first CyberSM experiment as follows:

> The interactive sex-suit and computer screen was designed by Stenslie and Woolford at the Cologne Academy of Arts in 1993. The installation was called Cyber SM and involved a demonstration of bodily interaction between Paris and Cologne. A body image was selected on screen, and was then sent from one country to the other. By activating a mouse on the screen body, the real-time body was vibrated. (Barber 1997)

This is the *Urszene* of the subsequent cybersex narrative in terms of "interactivity" and "tele-tactility" in the context of media art and its theoretical mythologization (in detail, see Chapter 2.3).

Far away from one another, but connected by telecommunication lines, the "users" who wore these computer-controlled interactive techno-suits were able to *experience* – as the story goes – each other in what is called "telepresence" (see, for example, Rheingold 1991: 256–258; Manovich 2001: 164–172; Sherman & Craig 2003: 20–37, 157–163; Wilson 2002: 467–485, 515–556; Grau 2003: 3–7, 167–174, 271–292; Kac 2005; in terms of cultural criticism, cf. Dreyfus 2001: 49–71). In this manner, as Sommerer and Mignonneau explain, referring to the Stenslie-Woolford experiment, a similar Japanese project and Stelarc's remote-controlled body, the participants of the prosthetically constructed tele-sex act

> touched *images of virtual bodies on a screen*, sending the touch coordinates and their intensity to the remote user. As a result both users felt strong physical feedback including vibrations and shocks upon their bodies, which created a strong sense of presence and connection between the remote users. In 1995 Japanese media artist Naoko Tosa et al. demonstrated a system called *Networked Neuro-Baby*. Users in Tokyo and Los Angeles could remotely shake hands by squeezing a specially designed "Handshaking Device," which measured the handshake's pressure and relayed the position and pressure data to the remote user through a force-feedback interface. In 1995 Australian media artist Stelarc devised a system called "Ping Body/Proto-Parasite" where on-line users could remotely control Stelarc's body, which was connected to the Internet with various sensors, motors and actuators attached to his muscles and extremities. (Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009: 204; emphasis mine; for the possibility of reconstructing the

> human sense organs through an artificial sensorium, see Spreen 1999; in relation to Stelarc's "Ping Body," see Stelarc 1997: 154–155)[134]

According to Eduardo Kac (2001: 98), the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex experiment, in its advanced form of *CyberSM III* (see Woolford 1994a: 42–43, 1996a: 92–93, 1994b; Woolford & Stenslie 1994a), belongs to the category of "robotic art." In these terms, Kac describes the experiment as an "Internet installation in which participants are geographically separated and wear electronic components that, upon local touch, vibrate the corresponding areas on the distant participant" (Kac 2001: 98). More specifically:

> One participant's erogenous zones are strapped up with sensor pads which vibrate and are controlled by the actions of another participant at a distant location, who in turn receives the results of the one participant touching him or herself. As both participants touch their own suits, they respectively control intensity and location of these touches on one another. They can also speak to one another. Local computers enhance the participant's perception of the touch with sight and sound. The objective of the piece was to experience touch sensations in the context of network communications. (ibid.; cf. Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Barber 2004, 2010; Levy 2007; Dixon 2008; in terms of "techno-fetishism," cf. Nusselder 2009: 121–123)

What is "the sexual" in a cyberSM act is thus an entirely new kind of sensual pleasure that Stenslie (2009) calls "haptic hedonism" enabled by "Haptic Hedonistic Bodysuits" (in terms of "tactile technologies," cf. Stenslie 1994b, 2000a; Woolford 1994a, 1996a); as Stenslie explains:

> A challenge is to practically create and reproduce physical, sensomotory sensations. Sensations of pleasure are often associated with the (cutaneous) skin and its many functions. It is both a sexual jewelry and a tool to sense. It's a perceptional gateway to physical reality. My works use skin as an intersensorial surface to serve as a basis for sensual excitement. (Stenslie 2009)

In this sense, the male and female versions of cyberSM bodysuits used in the cybersex experiments are prototypes of a new body technology under the sign of "haptic hedonism." As Stenslie summarizes the idea of cyberSM:

> In my CyberSM project (1993) bodysuits were used for the first time to induce both users with haptic stimulus. The cyberSM project includes touch, sound, voice and visual 3D navigable bodies into its sensory vocabulary, allowing humans interacting in a virtual space to actually feel each other with their bodies. Not only does this physical element of communication let the CyberSM project model inter-human communication, it also creates a new form of complex, multisensory interaction. The physical dialogue made possible by the bodysuits included nipple-, anal-, penile- and vaginal stimulation. In terms of pleasure, sexual feelings can be provoked through a combination of visual stimulus and

134 The idea of Stelarc's Ping Body work is succinctly defined by Eduardo Kac (2001: 111) in terms of what he calls "robotic art": "Performance in which the artist's body was actuated by Ping commands, which tracked fluctuating Internet activity." That is: "In response to Ping commands, the artist's body was stimulated by the flow of data on the Net. Since aleatory pinging to Internet domains makes it possible to check spatial distance and transmission time, the artist used this dynamic data to control body motion with a muscle stimulator directing 0–60 volts to his body. Ping values that indicated spatial and time parameters of the Internet automatically created the performance." (ibid.)

> vibrators. This has a certain degree of sexual brutalism, and putting a dildo in/up your groin is not always necessarily pleasant. Or wanted. But the playfulness and multisensory sensations of cyberSM compensated for the brutalism and most of the 1000+ participants observed reported having had a good experience. (ibid.; cf. Stenslie 2008; Woolford 1996a: 91–93; Rieser 1997: 86–90; Popper 2007: 258–259; Paterson 2007; Bicchi et al. 2008)

As we can see, a radical transformation concerning the ontological and epistemological position, the very existential condition, of the body and the subject as a phenomenological body-subject, as a lived body and its subjective experience (cf. Wertz 1987: 272–277; Welton 1998), has taken place in the world of the "cyber": the body is possible only by means of its technological extensions, a prosthetic paraphernalia *constituting* it as a body in the first place (cf. Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Hayles 1999; Heil et al. 2007; Miah & Rich 2008; in terms of medicalization, cf. Hughes & Paterson 2004 [1997]: 151–158; for a critical discussion, see Cooper 2002; Nusselder 2009). In the tele-operating cybersex assemblage, the participants, or the "users," instead of touching their mutual bodies in their corporeal presence, manipulate *the images of virtual bodies on a screen*. That is, instead of their corporeal presence, they are in an interactive *telepresence* with one another by the mediation of "various sensors, motors and actuators" attached to their "muscles and extremities" (Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]: 204). In other words, their absent bodies establish their virtual "presence" in terms of tele-mediated simulation.

It is this technological-discursive frame of reference, conceptualizing – or, rather, *metaphorizing* – the possibilities of interactivity by artistic means, that is the conceptual context, the defining theoretical matrix, of the cybersex technology originally constructed by Stenslie and Woolford (cf. Rötzer 1994: 108–109, 1996a, 1996b; Creed 1997: 27–30; Morton 1999: 304–305; Zielinski 1999: 282; Zhai 1998: 204; Bell 2000: 394; Ascott 2003: 264–265; Daniels 2008: 44–45). In this sense, sexual intercourse is replaced by technological "outercourse" in cybersex (Waskul et al. 2004: 18–24), *a prosthetic procedure taking place in the absent presence of telepresence, as a tele-tactile experience of phantom bodies in the immersive and interactive environment of virtual reality* (cf. Rheingold 1991: 345–353; Stelarc 1991, 1997, 1998, 2002a; Goldberg 2000; Zylinska 2002b; for a critical contextualization in terms of surveillance, cf. Bogard 1996; Levin et al. 2002).

To interact, to communicate and exchange information with machines instead of human beings, or, with machinic entities ascribed with human-*like* attributes – that is the imperative of the technological systems creating immersive environments based on the idea of interactivity (see, for example, Lovejoy 1997 [1989]: 199–123; Hillis 1998: 45–49; Lunenfeld 2000a: 85–95; Grau 2003: 6–7, 13–18, 276–278, 348–349; Popper 2007: 213–220, 231–236; Kwastek 2008a: 17–21, 2008b; Simanowski 2011: 120–157; Huhtamo 1995a, 1995c, 2000; Moser & MacLeod 1996; Morse 2003; Stocker et al 2009; for interactivity as a "myth," cf. Manovich 2001: 55–57; in terms of "narrative as virtual reality," cf. Ryan 2001), thematized by media art and the concomitant prosthetic theory ("prosthetic" in both senses of the term) functioning as its theoretical – that is, metaphori-

cal – supplement, if not as an art form in its own right: *theory as a postmodern art practice*, theory constitutive of what I call *art-art*; that is, theory as the post-Heideggerian *Sein* of media art (cf. Heidegger 1989a [1936–1938]).[135] As a post-avantgardist mode of art, media art has thus become, during the last two decades, a techno-scientific idea laboratory emblematic of the intellectual fascination with "the mediatic" as a *conceptual sublimation* through a theoretical hypostatization of the mediatization intrinsic to the postmodern (cf., for example, Nusselder 2009: 51–53, 128–129; for a theoretical contextualization, see Fornäs 1995: 2–7, 71, 89–90); a laboratory in which "science" is a theoretical sublation of science fiction, theory consists of theory-fictions in the mode of postmodern pataphysics, and the future is already present as post-futuristic visions in the mode of virtual futurity (cf., for example, Gendolla et al. 2001; Reck 2002).

In these terms, media art manifests what Wolfgang Müller-Funk and Hans Ulrich Reck (1996) call *inszenierte Imagination*, a realm of the techno-imaginary that exists by force of theory enabled by the "post;" a hypostatization of "the theoretical" leading, in the final instance, to what I refer to as *theoretical media euphoria* celebrated by postmodern media theory as a post-McLuhanian *mediatism* (for paradigmatic examples, see de Kerckhove 1990a, 1990b, 1994, 1995, 1997 [1995], 1998, 2000; cf. Wolf 1996a, 1996b).

It is from this discursive constellation, a theory matrix following the logic of the surrational, that "sex" in terms of the "cyber" emerges; a mode of "the sexual" that transduces libidinal energies between "the theoretical" and "the technological" (cf. Gendolla 1982; Gorsen 1987; Pfister & Zweifel 2002).

Towards Sexual Interpassivity

In this techno-artistic, discursively constructed laboratory, the idea of the body as a machine, as a cybernetic system interacting with other systems, whether organic or machinic, is the *Leitmotiv* of both theoretical and practical experiments (see, for example, Stocker & Schöpf 1997, 1999, 2000b, 2005; cf., for

135 By the term "art-art" I designate a situation in postmodern art in which the work of art has no longer any referential relationship to the world outside the realm of art, nor to the aesthetic universe constituted by various artistic approaches of modern art and the historical avantgarde (such as, for example, conceptual art), but is entirely reduced to itself in the sense of *radical self-referentiality* (cf., for example, Hohendahl 1991: 166–170; Wood 2003 [1996]: 388–405; Kroker 2004b: 169–171; Sandler 1996); that is, "art-art" is self-reflexive in a post-critical sense, or functions purely as an illustration of theory, as a *theory object* simulating art *in terms of theory*. In other words, art-art is post-art in which theory not only reflects "the artistic" in art, but, first and foremost, constitutes its proper "content," its "substance," that is, its legitimation as art. In short, without theory and its institutional assemblage of critics, curators, theorists, and not the least, of financiers, art-art would be nothing, or nothing but a postmodern social game – if that is not already the case. In this manner, art-art is a paradigmatic manifestation of the transnational postmodern art scene comparable to the closed world of the transnational financial markets. In this sense, the discursively constructed "art-world" of Ars Electronica, the leading forum of media or techno-art, is a techno-theoretical paragon of *theory-art* that reflects "the theoretical" of "the technological" by way of artworks which in themselves reflect "the theoretical" of "the technological"; in other words, media art and Ars Electronica constitute a discursive constellation in which theory is the very condition of possibility of the artworks of which it is the theory, theory in the sense of post-theory (for a historical overview of Ars Electronica, see Druckrey 1999; Leopoldseder et al. 2004).

example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995; Terry & Calvert 1997; Barkhaus & Fleig 2002; Vasseleu 2002; Zylinska 2002b; Kroker 2004b; Munster 2006; Toffoletti 2007; Kroker & Kroker 2008; Lischka & Sick 2007; from a historical perspective, cf. Mayr 1986; List & Fiala 1997; Orland 2005a; Muri 2007; Biro 2009; in terms of performance art, cf. Birringer 1998; Dixon 2007; with regard to contemporary culture in general, see Mazis 2008; for a critical discussion on human-machine interrelations, see Suchman 2007; for a demythologizing contextualization, see Rodowick 2001; cf. Lovink 2003: 161–174). In this sense, media art, in the mode of *theory-art*, constitutes a postmodern discursive configuration under the sign of what I call *post-Cartesian machinism* (for a philosophical-historical problematization, see Baruzzi 1968a, 1973; Sutter 1988; Meyer-Drawe 1996; Des Chene 2001; in the context of classical cybernetics, see Pias 2003, 2004).

From this perspective, the body is the "political unconscious" (cf. Jameson 1981) of media art, its uncanny "other," its repressed phantom as a celebrated *present absent*, or, in Derridean terms, a techno-phantasmatic appearance manifesting the "spectrality" of the "post" (see Derrida 1991 [1987]: 24–25, 62, 1994 [1993]: 11, 17, 30, 39, 91, 132, 167, 1996 [1995]: 84–85, 110–111). That is, the hidden corpus of media art is the absent body that is present in the machine, as a "ghost of the machine" in terms of the "post" (for the origin of the idea, see Ryle 2000 [1949]; for a critical contextualization from the historical perspective of cognitive science in terms of "mind as machine," see Boden 2006).

It is precisely this present absence, *in its absent presence*, that constitutes "the sexual" not only in Stenslie's cybersex experiments, but, beyond that, in all comparable efforts to enact or stage "sex" in terms of the "cyber." In this sense, cybersex always already deconstructs the conditions of possibility of its own existence which it attempts to construct by means of technological *Inszenierung*, by way of techno-discursive *mise-en-scene*. *This* is the pleasure of the machine in terms of media art; a pleasure the seduction of which is the Holy Grail of all that is called "interactive" and "immersive": only immersing in the vertigo of the machinic, the post-subjective techno-subject projected by media art becomes – or rather, is assumed to become – active; that is, the interactive subject is active only by being *reactive*, reacting at the interface to the actions of the machine, to its technical "intelligence" based on techno-logic.

Here we are in a postmodern, techno-savvy re-installation of Heinrich von Kleist's (1964 [1810]) *Marionettentheater* modified in terms of the "cyber": instead of Schiller's *Anmut und Würde*, "gracefulness and dignity," displayed by von Kleist's dancing marionette (cf. Ruprecht 2006: 19–55), we have the pleasure to experience – to take a paradigmatic example – the jerking movements of Stelarc whose body, connected to the Internet interface in his *Ping Body*, *ParaSite* and *Exoskeleton* performances, is no longer performing by its own inner automatism, the lightness of the natural body – an "innocent" body moving unconsciously – admired by von Kleist, but by remote control, by the external impulses given it by the audience around the world (see Stelarc 1997, 2002a,

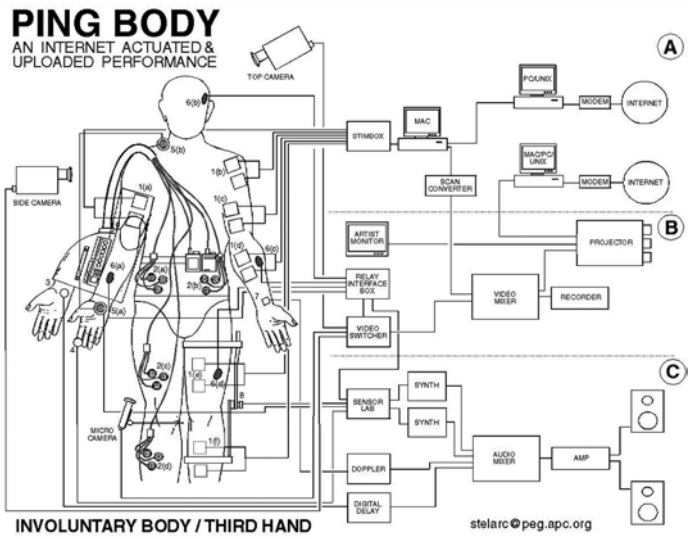


Fig. 48. Stelarc, *Ping Body*, 1996. In his statement "Parasite Visions. Alternate, Intimate and Involuntary Experiences," Stelarc dreams of a body that has left behind the constraints of biology:

"Imagine a body remapped and reconfigured – not in genetic memory but rather in electronic circuitry. What of a body that is intimately interfaced to the WWW – and that is stirred and is startled by distant whispers and remote promptings of other bodies in other places. A body that is informed by spiders, knowbots and phantoms … […] Imagine a body that is open and aware, invaded, augmented and with extended operation. Consider a body whose awareness is extruded by surrogate robots in situations and spaces where no body could go. These machines with arrays of sensors, manipulators and hybrid locomotion would exponentially multiply the operational possibilities – scaling up the subtlety, speed and complexity of human action. Perhaps what it means to be human is about not retaining our humanity …" (Stelarc 1997: 156–157)

Referring to the French philosopher Gilbert Simondon (1924–1989), one of the idea sources of Gilles Deleuze, Adrian Mackenzie (2002: 117) argues that in Stelarc's technological post-body we encounter a form of "collective individuation" in the sense of the *transindividual*. It other words, Stelarc's "involuntary body" and "third hand" constitute a radical form of the decentred subject: a prosthetic post-subject as a post-corporeal embodiment of organs without a body.

2002b; Wilson 2002: 157–160, 549–552; Popper 2007: 254–256; Farnell 2000a, 2000b). This is Stelarc's "cyborg theatre" (Giannachi 2004: 55–68) in which we can witness the spectacular transformation of the human body into an obedient body-machine system regulated by remote control, the prosthetic body of the cyborg – a post-artistic manifestation of the neo-Fordist subject in the trans-machinic constellation constitutive of the political economy of neoliberalism.

In this sense, the cyborg, paradigmatically incorporated by Stelarc, is a technological paragon of the "death of the subject" celebrated by post-theory (see, for example, Leitch 1988: 289, 1992: 153–152; Agger 1990: 19–20; Wood 1998: 77–80, 84, 92–93; Torfing 1999: 56–57; Couldry 2000: 44–45, 115–117; Terada 2001; in terms of the "death of the author," cf. Barthes 1977b [1968]; Burke 1992).

That is, instead of being an autonomous self as an agent of its own actions, Stelarc is an automaton that mechanically performs the instructions given to it, a servomechanism of external control (in terms of "control society," cf. Deleuze 1992b [1990]; from a historical perspective, cf. Kang 2011).

This is the built-in model of Stenslie's cybersex system: an interactive body-machine assemblage in which each action is an automatic reaction performed by the "ghost in the machine," the computer program controlling the system: the body as a proshetic extension of the techno-logic of algorithms (for a comprehensive overview, see, for example, Dale & Lewis 2004). From this perspective, like Stelarc's desubjectified techno-body, Stenslie's post-subjective cyber-body is a prosthetic alien whose members live their own life (see Stelarc 1998: 121; cf. Braidotti 1997a [1996]: 520–522). Or, as Trudy Barber (1997) says, describing the first

Stenslie-Woolford cybersex experiment, the sexual subject in this cybersex act appeared as a "sexual ghost in virtual space."

From this perspective, the idea of interactivity implies a radical negation of the self-conscious subject as a self that is able to decide over its own deeds and actions.

Thus, the question is: what is the promise of interactivity in terms of media art? No longer a real face-to-face encounter between humans, but a virtual experience of facing the interface between the self (real or imaginary) and the "other" somewhere in the imaginary space created by computer technology is the ideal of the techno-mediatic deconstruction of the subject promoted by the "interactivism" in the name of media art, and, its theoretical elaboration by post-theory (see, for example, Cham 2009: 15–19; Coulter-Smith & Coulter-Smith 2009; 50–64; Ascott 1991; Huhtamo 1992, 1996a, 2000; Dinkla 1994, 1997a, 1997b; Rötzer 1995c; Leeson 1996; Rieser 1997; Lunenfeld 2000a, 2000b; Manovich 2001; Wilson 2002; Morse 2003; Frieling & Daniels 2004, 2005; Buurman 2005; Wegenstein 2006; Daniels 2008; Kroker & Kroker 2008; Simanowski 2011).

The idea of interactive art installation, the paradigmatic art object in the context of media art, is to involve the viewer in a process in which he or she turns into a "user" the decisions of whom not only bring the installation into action or "enliven" it, but also make it *intelligible* in terms or art; in other words, the responses of the "user" *constitute* it as an art-work. But, what is important is that, in fact, it is not the viewer/user who makes the decisions, but, instead, the art exhibition/symposium/festival visitor as an *interpassive* receiver is built in, *pre-programmed*, in the system of the installation (for the origin of the idea of "interpassivity," see Pfaller 2000). As Eduardo Kac (2005: 114) says, rather than breaking away from "the monologic model" for which "computer-based interactivity" promises to open up a "liberating horizon," "electronic interaction has the danger of promoting instead interpassive experiences that catalog all possibilities within a preestablished and restrictive system of choices"; in this manner, "the interactant has to choose one option after another, being ultimately guided down a *multioptional monologic path*" (ibid.). In other words, the subject of media art is not the viewer/user, but the programme running behind the scenes, that is, the "ghost in the machine" as the "omnipotent" and "omniscient" *para-subject* of the media subject.

This is the fate of the sexual subject in the world of the "cyber": one is no longer the subject of one's own actions, but the object-subject of the machine, a subject-object *subjected* by its technological "intelligence" (in terms of the Althusserian theory of ideology operating by "ideological state apparatuses," cf. Althusser 1971 [1970]). What does this imply?

According to media theorist Marie-Luise Angerer, the Stenslie-Woolford cyberSM project has similarities with the films by Kathryn Bigelow and David Cronenberg. In *Strange Days* (1995), Bigelow "portrays humans who are linked

via their brains" and can thus "retrieve the thoughts and feelings of someone else via a 'squid'" in their brain; that is, "[s]tored on a chip, the wishes and desires, fears and moments of happiness of others enable" them to "experience someone else's emotional images" as their own (Angerer 2004), in a similar manner as Gibson (1995 [1984]: 70–71) describes what he calls "simstim," that is, *simulated stimulation*, in his science fiction vision of cyberspace (cf. Springer 1996: 131–132; Cavallaro 2000: 97–99, 104, 114, 158, 175; Rapatzikou 2004: 128–129; in terms of prosthetics, cf. Wills 1995: 83–86; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; in the context of "the military-industrial-media-entertainment," cf. Der Derian 2009b: 82).

In addition to the virtual reality of cyberspace, the characters in Gibson's *Neuromancer* can experience the whole sensorium of other persons by means of "simstim"; that is, a technology which enables one to experience vicariously the sensations and experiences of other people in one's own body as virtual simulacra that, paradoxically, are actual reality, real experiences occurring simultaneously in the real life of each person (cf. Biocca & Levy 1995a: 138–139; Heuser 2003: 101–102; Dinello 2005: 160). In this manner, "you can access live or recorded simstim without having to jack out of matrix" (Gibson 1995: 71). Although Case, the protagonist of Gibson's cyberspace saga, contemptuously deems simstim as "a meat toy" (ibid.), he nevertheless enjoys its ability to expand the range of his own sensory experiences: "He knew that the trodes he used and the little plastic tiara dangling from a simstim deck were basically the same, and that the cyberspace matrix was actually a drastic simplification of the human sensorium, at least in terms of presentation, but simstim itself struck him as *a gratuitous multiplication of flesh input*" (ibid.).

Here we have, in fact, an exact description of cybersex; that is, a simstim technology that allows for a sexual encounter as a mutually experienced vicarious experience, as a technological simulacrum of virtual sex. In other words, to have sex, all you need to do is to *jack in* and the fun can begin (in terms of "teledildonics," cf. Rheingold 1992: 346–353; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 52–56).

Likewise, in his films *Scanner* (1984), *Videodrome* (1986) and *EXistenZ* (1999), Cronenberg thematisizes something similar: "Humans linked up via communication wires," implying an intimate connection between "telephone lines and natural telepathic abilities," become assimilated by the media which amounts to their "inability to distinguish realities" (Angerer 2004). In a world saturated by media experiences, we are therefore, according to Angerer, confronted by questions: "What is real, and what is virtual? Who is a machine, and who is human?" (ibid.).

These questions pertain to technological corporeality, machinic experiences as out-of-body experiences in one's own body, a body turned into a technologically expanded prosthetic body. That is, a world of vicarious experiences that are finally the only reality: a world of techno-bodies living in their monadic solitude (cf. Leibniz 1998 [1714]). In this new world, the very idea of experience

becomes redefined in terms of prosthetics; in David Wills's (1995: 85) words: "Jacked in, prosthetized, there is no structural distinction between body and machine, indeed between the mechanics of the switching and the fluidity of immersion in one or the other mode" (cf. Rutsky 1999: 122–124; Angerer 2007b: 85–126; Creed 2003; Volkart 2006). From this perspective:

> It is not by chance that Chris Cunningham's videoclip for Björk's song "All is full of love" (1999) focuses on a cyborg whose loneliness and need for love causes it to turn to its clone. Artificial beings apparently also love/live better as a couple. The media artists Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford produced the variant "human hooked up to (love) machine": In *CyberSM* (1993/94), two people – one in Paris and one in Cologne – have sex with each other. Squeezed into bodysuits and hooked up to computers, their movements, emotional stirrings, skin and heart frequencies are calculated and transmitted, resulting in a "real simulation" of arousal and orgasm. These different combinations of human and machine are referred to as "cyborgs." In this connection, the male/female figure of the cyborg stands for omnipotent feasibility, both material and mental. Not only are parts of the body exchangeable and replaceable, the psychical dimension also undergoes a remodelling. (Angerer 2004)

What is important here is that the sensuous and sensual body capable of experiencing sensations and feelings in, on and by itself is downplayed in favour of an extraneous techno-sensorium operating autonomously according to its own techno-logic; an artificial para-"body" delivering digital effects that simulate corporeal experiences. That is, in Baudrillard's (1993b [1976]: 52) words, this is "the demiurgic ambition," constitutive of technology, "to exorcise the natural substance of a thing in order to replace it with a synthetic substance."

Especially with regard to cyberspace, this is the form of pleasure – *according to media art theory* – to be experienced by the subject not only through the interface, or at the interface, but, moreover, as the "pleasure *of* the interface" (Springer 1991; emphasis mine). That is, no longer the unpredictable, confusing and threatening presence of the flesh with all its mundane complexities, but, instead, a safe, clean and hygienic play with a technologically produced simulacrum, a machinic self as the "Other" of oneself, is the object of desire in the world of the techno-imaginary (cf., for example, Kroker et al. 1989: 203; Simpson 1995: 139–156; Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 79–80, 1997b: xi; Rutsky 1999: 47–56; Cavallaro 2001: 211–212; Smith 2001: 65–76; Kern 2000); an "Other" that always, in the last analysis, turns out to be *a virtual mirror image of the self* – of course, a mirror reflecting the mirror-like phantasms of the self that always already, in itself, is an imaginary figure of the self in its relationships to the machinic entities of the "cyber" (see Lacan 1977f [1966/1949]; cf. Weiss 1999: 105–106, 120–127; Wegenstein 2006: 26–27; Nusselder 2009: 84–93, 97–98; Žižek 1999c; White 2006; Sielke & Schäfer-Wünsche 2007, Mondloch 2010; in terms of the destruction of the subject, cf. Hayles 1993b: 186–188; Botting 1999: 144–147; in the context of Baudrillardian "hyperreality," see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2–13, 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84; cf., for example, Loader 1997b: 10–11; Rodaway 1995; Perry 1998; Tiffin & Terashima 2001).

Thus, it is the topos of interactivity, elaborated on by media art, with all its theoretical and practical ramifications, that is the central discursive construction around which not only Stenslie's experiments, but also the entire idea of cybersex revolves. In cybersex, it is the specific form of the interface as the *substitute*, a prosthetic surrogate, of corporeal intimacy – that unstable and deceptive sphere of the flesh – and as such, as the supplement of the supplement in its circular logic of the supplementary (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 145, 156, 167–178, 187, 200, 215–219, 235–259), that creates the precondition for the mode of interactivity that conjures up the simulated corporeality necessary for the experience of "the sexual" as an absent presence in its present absence in the realm of the "cyber." In other words, *a phantom body as a spectral apparition is both the object and the subject of prosthetic "sex" in virtual reality.* This is the constitutive idea, the theoretical-artistic concept, not only of Stenlie's "cybersex body suit," but also of many other similarly phantasmatic and post-theoretical visions of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" (see, for example, Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53–55; Plant 1998: 30–31; Case 1999: 140–143; Wiley 1999 [1995]: 135–139; Misztal 2000: 203–204; Creed 2003: 115–131; Sundén 2003: 147–178; Mellor 2004: 37–38; Koh 2005: 222; Meecham & Sheldon 2005 [2000]: 162; Weeks 2007: 158–162; van Doorn & van Zoonen 2009: 262–264; Gillis 2004; for an overview, see Collins 2006).

In this respect, the problem is: *if* cybersex is sex, and *if* sex – also in the mode of *autosex* constitutive, as we will see, of all the modes of virtual and prosthetic "sex" – is something "interactive" as such, what, then, is *interactive sex*? Does cybersex, in fact, mean *sexual interpassivity*, or even *interpassive sexuality*, as a post-sexual variation of the interpassivity peculiar to "interactive" media art (cf. Žižek 1997b: 111–113, 1999c: 104–110; Pfaller 2002: 25–46)? Taken this or that way, as an imaginary technology cybersex, no doubt, is a new dimension of sexual encounter; it is apparently the ultimate form of sexual simulation promoted by post-sex: cybersex is "sex" in a world in which simulation is the real thing, "sex" in a world in which the most advanced form of reality is the absence of the real altogether (cf. Baudrillard 1980, 1983b [1981], 1999 [1983], 2000b).

In other words, cybersex is "sex" in the world of postmodern pataphysics, a world in which the real is possible only in the form of "imaginary solutions" based on the techno-logic of the "post" in terms of the "cyber" (cf. Jarry 1996 [1911]; Shattuck 1979; Bök 2002; in Baudrillardian terms, cf. Baudrillard 1990b [1983]: 28, 85, 1990c [1983]: 165, 1994b [1992]: 1–9, 14–20, 1997c: 13–14, 1997e: 41–42; Kellner 1989: 162–163, 1994: 14–20; Genosko 1994a: 104–116, 1994b: 293; Levin 1996: 196–208, 277–278).

"Multiple Body" and the Pleasure of "Polysexuality"

Supposing that sex, in general, still has something to do with the body (of course, this is not at all a necessary precondition of sex), it is precisely the question of corporeality, and more basically, the experience of carnality, the pres-

ence of the flesh, that is the key issue also in the efforts to bring sexual pleasure under the control of technological reason. What is my body in the world of cybersex? Nobody? Somebody? Anybody? Stenslie's interview included in the exhibition catalogue of the Dresden art show on sex points out the essential; as Stenslie says: *Ich zieh Deinen Körper an – I wear your body* (Altmann 2001: 44; both in German and English in the original; cf. Benedikt 1994 [1991]: 14–15; Stone 1994b [1991]: 123). Miraculously, a virtual body turns into a real body; in other words, in a post-Biblical manner ("And the word became flesh," John 1:1–18), as Gibson (1995: 26) says, "data made flesh" is the way in which virtual becomes real in cybersex – an instance of the post-metaphysical transubstantiation of the virtual into the real as it is supposed in media art theory in general (cf. Heim 1995: 70–71; Giannachi 2004: 131–145; Mitchell & Thurtle 2004; Miles 2005; Bartlem 2009; Kehling 2009).

The virtualization of the flesh – that is the *grande idèe* of the "cyber," its constitutive *Wunschvorstellung*, its post-utopian projection of the resurrection of the body in the digital transcendence of cyberspace, a vision of liberation from the shackles of the *meat* body, a dream of "leaving the 'meat' behind" (Wolmark 1999b: 8) typical of cyber discourse, enabled by the post-Nietzschean, post-Heideggerian linguistic ecstasy (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885], 1969b [1888–1889/1908], 1969c [1889], 1973a [1882/1887]; Heidegger 1989a [1936–1938]); that is, a technoscientific phantasm materialized in the immateriality of the imaginary as an elevating experience of the sublime in the presence of the absent presence of the transformative power of desire. It is in this manner that, in the mirror-like interface relationship, in its virtual space enabled by the techno-imaginary *embodied* by the body-machine interface in its techno-corporeal liminality, the subject "will *interface* with the computer, forming part of an information machine in which the body's limbs and organs will become interchangeable parts" (Grosz 1995c: 110; emphasis mine; cf. Haraway 1991a: 154, 165, 173, 174, 176, 177–178, 180; Warhol 2002 [1963]: 748; Pryor 1991; in utopian terms, cf. Hands 2004; for the idea of the liminal in the postmodern, see D'haen & Bertens 1994).

This is the postmodern paraspace of "the sexual" in which bodies are free to float in the unending vastness of virtuality and, by way of random encounters, to experience the pleasures of "cybersexuality" (see Wolmark 1999a), that is, "sex" in terms of the "cyber" effected by the post-Baudrillardian "hyper":

> Sex will be possible in HyperReality between real individuals and virtual individuals, that is to say between anatomically constituted people who are physically present in physical reality in one place and people who are virtual either in the sense that they are physically and synchronously present somewhere else or in the sense that they are activated by an artificial intelligence. In physical reality the real people would be wearing dildonic or sheet-like contraptions that were part of a comprehensive data-suit. The perception of the physically present person would, however, be that he or she was making love to another person. (Tiffin 2001: 135; cf. Rheingold 1991: 345–353; Heim 1993: 83–108; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53–56; Botting 1999: 153–186; Kroker 2004b: 21–22, 28–29, 170–171, 175)

In this condition of post-material corporeality, cyber-subjects, regardless of gender and sexual orientation, are invited to enjoy the sublime pleasure of *suprasensual bliss*, the *jouissance* of the "cyber": an "orgasm flaring blue in a timeless space" of cyberspace (Gibson 1995: 45; cf. Kellner 1995: 310–311; Cavallero 2000: 124–132; Haney 2006: 100–101; Suvin 2010: 144–145).

Here we are witnessing the birth of what Mark Poster (2006a: 41–42, 88–180) calls "the digital self." In the techno-sexual relationship, we observe in a new way that, indeed, the "mirror reflects": it "brings about a logic of self and other" (ibid.: 175). "The screen is thus a liminal object, an interface between the human and the machine that invites *penetration of each by the other*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). The human and the machine as "partners" penetrating one another (cf. Botting 1999: 196–208) – that is the post-liminal liminality of the interface, a moment of "the sexual" in which the difference between the corporeal and the machinic becomes sublated in a manner that even sublates the Hegelian sublation, the *Aufhebung* of the opposites (cf. Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; Inwood 1992: 283–284; in Derridean terms, cf., for example, Derrida 1982 [1972]: 40–41, 44, 1984a [1972/1968]: 19–20, 1984f [1972/1968]: 120–121).

It is from this perspective that William Bogard's (1996:155) view that "[c]ybersex is about making a cyborg" becomes intelligible (cf. Bauer 2005: 44–51); in fact, as Elizabeth M. Reid (1996 [1994]: 341) says, "[c]yborgs are born out of virtual sex."

If, at the outset of the twentieth century, the female patient in the vibrator treatment hardly had the feeling of "wearing" the body of the physician who was giving her therapy, a century later the "partners" – whoever and of whatever gender they happen to be – engaged in a cybersex act, although they may have some kind of sensation of "wearing" the bodies of one another, at least as simulation (cf. Rheingold 1991: 346–347; Hayles 1993b: 179–183; Springer 1996: 80–94; Benthien 2001: 326–334; Wilson 2002: 164–167, 753; Stenslie 2006: 154–156; Popper 2007: 255–261; Woolford 1996a, 1996b), they hardly think of having some kind of therapy.

Or rather, do they? Is cybersex, in fact, a high-tech form of post-sex as a postmodern therapeutic exercise, a post-futuristic extension of body techniques applied in the context of fitness and wellness characteristic of the body regime of the postmodern? In other words, is cybersex a techno-imaginary elaboration of the postmodern body cult called into being by ever-more sophisticated body technologies constitutive of the commodification of the human body in contemporary culture (cf. Rail 1998b; Pronger 2002), a mode of neo-spiritual body therapy *à la* the New Age movement intended to foster not only the somatic well-being, but also the self-assurance of the postmodern "decentred subject," an experience of being a some*body* in a culture that at the same time adorns corporeal fitness and represses the carnal body in its real fleshliness (cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998: 73–75, 89–95; Shilling 1993: 111–130, 2005: 86–88,

121–125; Shaw 2008: 85–86; from a cultural-historical perspective in terms of the body disgust, cf. Menninghaus 2003 [1999]: 46–100, 183–220)?

In the postmodern, the utmost form of freedom is to invent oneself anew all the time. This is the moment of the post-subject, an *ex-static* ego, immersed in the euphoria of the "post"; a form of the self that is appropriate to a culture living in the future already today.

This is the idea of body utopianism peculiar to the postmodern: I am my body that is my invention, I am my own technological "Other," which, in fact, is a "Third": a body-machine assemblage that is not just part machine, part organism, but, beyond that, an entity of a third order, the order of a technological simulacrum (cf. Rail 1998a: 147–150; Pronger 2002: 150–612). In terms of the cyborg, this entails a post-body that is a "hybrid of machine and organism" (Haraway 1991a: 149). The post-body is a body that has the ability to transgress and transcend the limits of the organic body, a body that, according to Stelarc (1991: 501), has now become "obsolete." Thus, the crucial question pertaining to the post-identity of the post-subject living in the post-body of the cyborg is, as Haraway (1991a: 178) says: "[w]hy should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin"? Yes, indeed, why?

Cybersex is an answer to this question; in terms of pleasure, it is the ultimate extension of the sensuous and sensual body to the technoscientific sphere of *extra-corporeal existence*, the existence of the posthuman being in the world of post-biological body-morphing. Cybersex opens up a new dimension of the corporeal and the sexual beyond the body, in the realm of prosthetic and virtual corporeality, in the endless non-space of the "Turing Galaxy" (Grassmuck 1995b), the world of the Freudian "prosthetic God" (Freud 1972a [1930]: 450–451) in its postmodern incarnation as the cyborg (in theological terms, cf. Schäfer-Bossert 2003, 2005).

According to Stenslie, cybersex not only makes it possible to "expand our sexual repertoire" by reconstituting our body in terms of the machinic and thus multiplying our sense of sexual identity and experience of sex; moreover, prosthetic sex in virtual reality creates a situation in which "you can have sex with someone you don't know and can't see" (Altmann 2001: 44). As a result, the terms of identity are also radically redefined since cybersex amounts to a peculiar mirror constellation, a technologically created post-Lacanian mirror stage (cf. Lacan 1977f [1966/1949]; Bowie 1991: 21–26, 197–198), in which the subject is invited to encounter itself as the "Other," and to (mis)recognize the "Other" as the self (cf. Gallop 1985: 59–82). From Stenslie's perspective, this does not, of course, imply losing one's own self, but on the contrary, it entails a true revelation for the sexual subject: a moment, as Stenslie says, of a "discovery of the self" (Altmann 2001: 44) as a *reinvention* of oneself as the subject of the post-body (cf. Stone 1992: 609–611, 616–619, 1995e: 9–32, 86–97, 1995a, 1995b, 1995d; Angerer 1999a; O'Farrell & Vallone 1999; Angerer et al. 2002; Sofoulis 2003).

This is the pleasure of the post-subject living in an artificial corporeality in which "my" body is your body, and vice versa.

Thus, in the post-organic state of cybersex act, in the realm of prosthetic and virtual corporeality, sex, gender and identity become objects of an affective investment stemming from the post-theoretical techno-euphoria of the "cyber" and turn into an entirely new libidinal experience of being: a mode of being *a sexual subject beyond sexual identity* – as it is postulated by the theories concerning post-gender as the ultimate form of post-identitarian "identity": non-identitarian forms of desires and pleasures as a "subversive" mode of "sex" (see, for example, Duncker 2000: 57–60; Foster 2000 [1997]: 441–446; Jagodzinski 2004: 153–208; Suleiman 1990; Bright 1992; Kroker & Kroker 1993a; Case 1996). As Stenslie explains:

> It is arousing not to know who you're having sex with. Is it a man or is it a woman? Cybersex gives fantasy free range. With Inter_Skin, you feel, through touching yourself, masturbation, a stranger's body. The stimuli are transmitted simultaneously. *You feel my body and I wear yours*. Paradoxical, erotic phenomena are communicated. Which man would not want to experience a female orgasm, as if he were a woman. Here the fantasy comes into play and in the end, the brain is really our most largest sexual organ. (Altmann 2001: 41)

Free you mind – free you body; free yourself from your body – free yourself from your mind! In Stenslian terms, this is the imperative of cybersex, "sex" as a postmodern mode of masturbation with bodiless no-bodies in the realm of technological disembodiment, post-sex in artificial corporeality in the ecstasy of the "cyber," the pleasure of hysteria as a technological delirium. It is evident that here we are entering some new, emerging realm of "polysexuality" (see Peraldi 1997 [1981]; cf. Preciado 2003; Perniola 2004 [2000]; in terms of "new barbarians," cf. Hardt & Negri 2000: 214–218), a realm of radical deconstruction of sexual desires and pleasures, not in the form of sublation, but by way of the abolition of the entire idea of "the sexual" as it is known since its inception during the Enlightenment and its aftermath (in terms of subversive sexuality in the Enlightenment, cf. Rousseau & Porter 1987b; Rousseau 1991; Porter 1995). In the world of the "cyber," we encounter a post-disciplinary body regime in which not only promiscuity attains an unparalleled multidimensionality, but, moreover, in which the post-sexual post-subject as the post-body body-subject becomes thoroughly redefined in terms of technology.

The Sexual Rationalism of the "Cyber"

This is a world that emerges from what Donna Haraway (1991a: 150) calls "cyborg 'sex'" (cf. Bogard 1996: 153–178; Gray 2001: 87–97, 151–160); a world in which "the sexual" and "the technological" have penetrated one another in an inextricable manner.

While some two centuries ago the "solitary vice" was about to ruin the sound social order in the minds of the morally concerned through the depravation of the health of those who committed the "heinous sin of self-pollution," and

while during the Victorian age until the days of Freud hysteria was seen by scientists and physicians as a female sexual disorder harming the harmony and decency not only of family relations but of whole society, now in the postmodern it is cybersex that will enable the ultimate emancipation of sex and sexuality in the mode of post-sexual desires and pleasures as a radical subversion of the very idea of "the sexual"; that is, what is now emerging under the sign of the cyborg is no less than a radical emancipation from *all* that has been known as "sexual" up until now, a fundamental scientific-technological upheaval signalling an entirely new era in terms of Harawayan "cyborg 'sex'" (see, for example, Case 1996: 95–97; Peppers 1997: 170–171; Apter 1999: 216–219; Žižek 2000: 65–66; Potts 2002: 217–265; Parisi 2004: 7–13; Plummer 2004: 532–533; Foster 2005: 81–126; Haney 2006: 161–164).

This is a veritable rehabilitation of the conceptual/metaphoric universe constituted by the signifiers "onania" and "hysteria" prevailing from the Enlightenment through the era of nineteenth-century scientific reason to Freud's *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905); a postmodern *détournement* of the sexual discourse of the modern reclaiming pathological notions of the past in the form of libidinal cathexis in which the negative has been turned into a positive (for the idea of *Besetzung* or *cathexis*, see, for example, Freud 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205, 1977d [1893]: 54, 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96), into the techno-logical positivism of the "cyber" in terms of the "post": a technoscientific affirmation of the "death of the subject" in the name of the posthuman entailing the pleasure of the post-subject, a pleasure exceeding the limits of all the inherited and conventional: the ecstasy of *jouissance* in the vertigo of techno-euphoria (cf., for example, Jameson 1988i [1983]: 72–74; Hollywood 2002: 146–149, 162–166), a delirious lift off experienced as a technological immersion in the "bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (Gibson 1995: 12).

In these terms, cybersex is the very climax of post-sex, "sex" in a technological pleasure dome in which the imaginary appears as the real precisely because it is simulation. From the Stenslian standpoint, in cybersex we enter a universe of nomadic monadology, the realm of post-reason in the mode of the surrational. In these terms, cybersex is the ultimate manifestation of what I call the liquid libido, a form of the libido effected by the postmodern – a libido that circulates not only in the sphere of the corporeal, but also in the world of the technological.

"Can sex become art?" (Altmann 2001: 44). This question, posed by Stenslie, can, of course, be encountered by a counter-question, a question that is implied by Stenslie himself: can art become sex? If cybersex *à la* Stenslie, in the context of media art, "sex" as a form of "art" (art in the mode of art-art) in the sense of theory-sex (see Stenslie 2000b), is in itself, in the mode of post-theory, parallel to, even analogical with, art as a way to think about the unthinkable, or, in Bukatman's (1996 [1993]: 152) words, a "method of conceiving the inconceiv-

able," what about the cybersex bodysuit designed by Stenslie: in which way it is an "object to think with" (Turkle 1995: 121–122), an object for conceiving of something that is as yet unconceived of in terms of both the sexual and the artistic? For Stenslie, in his conception of cybersex, what is at issue is what he calls "orgiastic art" (Altmann 2001: 44). As Stenslie says, "[m]y interest in sex in art is about integrating physicality" (ibid.).

"Integrating physicality" – to what, with what? Stenslie's idea is that "[c]rossing the *physical-intellectual* border should point toward enjoyment" and effect a "release of *sexual arousal*" that would be the "ultimate state of emotion" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Plant 1998).

Cybersex as the *ultimate state of emotion* – what does this mean? What is, in fact, "the sexual" in cybersex conceived of by Stenslie? Making an attempt in the "Let's talk about Sex" exhibition, what did I feel, or more appropriately, in Benjamin's words, how did I "feel myself into the apparatus"?

Perhaps I could not concentrate in a public place in an appropriate manner, or, maybe my old-fashioned *organic* body was not sensitive enough, or, I simply did not have the sufficient power of imagination (understood as the imaginary of the "post"), or whatever, but all the same, I must admit that it was not sexual arousal, in fact, *nothing sexual at all* that I experienced by beholding Stenslie's cybersex body suits in the Dresden sex and art exhibition. If it was about something that one can approach in terms of artistic experience at all, it was something that I can first and foremost describe as a disillusionment in the sense of the German word *Ernüchterung*, a "sobering," as a disenchantment pertaining to the theory behind Stenlie's installation, a moment of anticlimax as a Benjaminian *profane Erleuchtung*, "profane illumination" (see Benjamin 1991d [1929]; for a historical contextualization, see Buck-Morss 1989; Cohen 1995 [1993]): a moment of *Entzauberung*, an evaporation of the aura of the technological sublime (cf. Benjamin 1974 [1936]), a disenchantment dispelling the delusion of the techno-imaginary. I came to realize that the vibrator, in both the contemporary cybersex bodysuit and the female vibration massage apparatus a hundred years ago, has remained almost the same in technical terms, as an electro-mechanical device, but its function and meaning have, indeed, thoroughly changed. Where there was once pathology, we have now the *jouissance* of post-sex in the form of a prosthetic and virtual experience (cf. Wise 1997: 181–183; Markham 1998: 165–166; Nguyen 2003: 283–285, 288, 296–299; Robinson 2003: 382–385; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 34–36; Melzer 2008: 165–167).

This is "sex" in the "post-corporeal global space" of the postmodern in which "our embodied experience" is not only "fragmented and commodified" (Littlewood 2002: 176), but also turned into an epiphenomenon of simulation.

What in the nineteenth century was the medical imaginary as the regulative paradigm of "the sexual" is now the techno-imaginary constitutive of the "cyber." In this sense, both the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* as a therapy practice

in the nineteenth century and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* in Stenslie's art-sex experiments are, *mutatis mutandis*, fictional constructions in terms of the fictional of theory, that is, theory-fictions that conjure up an idea that is discursively constructed from the theoretical figures typical of the time. What for the physicians of the Victorian times was a theoretical fiction of the female sexual body, is for Stenslie a postmodern theory-fiction of "sex" in the world of the "cyber."

This is the effect of discourse: in terms of the organism, the same technological procedure, genital massage with the vibrator, defining the idea of the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat*, is now, in the context of the *Cyber SM bodysuit*, fantasized, and apparently also experienced by those who *believe* more in words than in actual reality (whether as a corporeal experience or as a perception of reality, or both), as being entirely different than a century ago: what at that time was understood as a therapy engendering nervous relaxation accompanied by corporeal well-being for the female patients, is in the present taken to be a new kind of sexual practice bringing masturbatory pleasure; that is, the pleasure of prosthetics and virtuality as a technoscientific form of sexuality beyond the constraints of heteronormativity in the manner of Harawayan "cyborg 'sex'" (Haraway 1991a: 150; in terms of dildo sex that "rewrites" and "resignifies" the "sexual" independent from sex and gender norms as a "subversive" practice, cf., for example, Findlay 1996: 152–164; Inness 1998: 130–132; Creed 1999 [1995]: 115–117; Butler 2004: 182–197; Brooks 2006: 138–163)[136] – or, at least, in the words of Howard Rheingold (1991: 346), the inventor of *teledildonics*, the prototype of cybersex: "so the scenario goes."

What is at issue here is, on the one hand, what the physicians a century ago using the vibrator as a means of therapy said and believed they were doing, and what the patients themselves were experiencing; and on the other, what the designers of contemporary cybersex equipment purport to achieve, and what the users are supposed to or actually do feel in their technologically extended body as a post-corporeal body-machine assemblage.

In both cases, however, it is about the same matter: in their own ways, the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat* and the *Cyber SM bodysuit* exemplify the fictionalization of theory that, at the same time, implies a theoreticalization of the fictional in terms of the imaginary. In these terms, both of these *discursive-technological constructions* (which is also the mode of being of the cyborg) manifest what I call *theory-sex*: in both cases, the "sexual" is a *theoretical phantasm*, an enticing and seducing object of *theoretical desire* as a desire for theory that, at the

136 The manner in which the genital vibrator is dealt with in Stenslie's cybersex apparatus can be compared with a media art installation *Hysteria* (2000), made by a female artists, Beth B, in which (with the help of foam core, wax, wire, motors, video monitors and projection, padded wall, vibrators, strait-jacket, ovarian compressors, cots and live performance) the complex thematics of hysteria and its medical and cultural contexts are conceptually and historically dissected. While Stenslie invests in a physical-corporeal (although mediated) interactivity between the spectator – or, rather, the "user" – and the machine, Beth B counts on an intellectual confrontation of the past with the present of the visitor. Still, both of them have the idea of the vibrator as *a sexualized device* as an essential object of artistic/aesthetic interest in their artworks (see Kemp & Wallace 2000: 176–183).

same time, is a theory of desire. Accordingly, in Stenslie's theory-fiction of the *Cyber SM bodysuit* at issue is a technologized form of post-sex; in contrast, in the *Vibrations-Massage-Apparat*, representing the nineteenth century therapy apparatuses, we encounter the theoretical fiction of hysteria, taken at the time as the reality of a specific female disorder (see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 81–97; cf., for example, Sulloway 1979: 22–100; Gilman 1994 [1993]: 139–140; Gay 1995 [1988]: 69–74; Maines 1999: 25–47; Didi-Huberman 2003 [1982]: 1–81; Bronfen 1998).

This is what I call the politics of words: like technology in general also Stenslie's cybersex system is a discursive construction, a manifestation of language, a "technical-corporeal materialization" (Mackenzie 2002: 51) of signifiers; signifiers that, in the manner of post-theory, effect what they signify. This is the seduction of the "cyber": a mode of libidinal language celebrating the omnipotence of technology; a language that turns – like by a magic touch – plain matter-of-fact pieces of equipment into an imaginary technology that has real effects – the "real" in the mode of Barthesian *l'effet de réel*, the "reality effect" engendered by the linguistic of language (see Barthes 1989 [1968]: 146–147, 1968: 88; cf. Jameson 1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 22–23, 1988j [1977]: 135).

In the world of the "cyber," the libidinal is linguistic and the linguistic is libidinal: *the libidinal language of the "cyber" is a corporeal sensation of the post-body, the thrill of being "cyber,"* a phantasmatic experience of theory appearing as reality.

"Seduced" by Stenslie's cybersex system, touching with my hand both the penile and vaginal vibrators and feeling their robotic tremor – with their magic *bzzzzzzz-bzzzzzzz-bzzzzzzz* sound – I fell, instead of the spell of post-theory, in deep thoughts about the destiny of the human being in the world in which, as Siegfried Giedion's (1948) panoramic history of technology formulates it, *mechanization takes command*. At the same time, I was transferred to the world of Surrealism as such as I experienced it in the form of a historical reconstruction in another exhibition entitled *Puppen, Körper, Automaten. Phantasmen der Moderne* in Düsseldorf, Germany (for an overview, see Müller-Tamm & Sykora 1999) a couple of years earlier. I opened my mind in terms of the "cyber" and let my mind's eye show me the fantastic world of cybersex, an amazing world of cyborg sex, a mode of "sex" in which, in the mode Haraway's (2000a: 121) "cyborg surrealism," "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249).

Yet, on second thoughts, immersed in this simulation of simulation, meditatively trifling with the machinic genitals of these cybersex bodysuits, I came to the conclusion that the world of the "cyber" is actually not so much surrealist as, indeed, surrational; *a world in which reason has become a mode of the imaginary*. This is the world of the "cyber" in which being is becoming and the potential actual. This is a world in which the linguistic of language is all that there is.

The moment of Benjamin's profane illumination that I experienced encountering the *Cyber SM bodysuit* was a moment of what Baudrillard (1988b [1987]:

41–42, 1990b [1983]: 182, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 127, 1997c: 13, 2000b: 54, 77–78) calls "objective irony" (discussed in detail in Excursus 1) – the initial moment of the study at hand, the moment at which I saw that sometimes *there is only a small step from pathos to bathos*.

1.3.2 Cybersex as a "Politics of Artificial Life"

If, as we saw above, in Saint Augustine's world, a world in which the seduction of the carnal was a source of sin, the problem was how to bring the male member – this self-willed and arbitrarily behaving organ – under the control of reason, in the world of cybersex, what is at issue is how to bring not just the genitals, but the whole sexual body under the control of the machine; the machine working now as an integral – that is, in a true sense, *intimate* – part of the body, as the "Other" of the subject that, in fact, is the "Other" of oneself, a new form of agency: a "Third" enjoying the pleasure of hybridity in its liminality and liminality in its hybridity (cf. Haraway 1991a: 150–151, 1997: 25–47; D'haen & Bertens 1994).

This implies that in cybersex it is precisely the enigmatic *Eigendynamik* of the sexual organs that, on the one hand, issues a challenge to sexual rationalism, while, on the other, this rationalism is in itself challenged by the instrumental reason inherent in all that is technological (see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; cf. Held 1980: 75–74, 148–174, 250–254; Jay 1973). This is the aporia not only of the techno-imaginary utopia of "sexual" pleasure in the mode of cybersex, but also of all that is "cyber" in general: *the body is always more than reason is ever able to imagine*. In other words, the insurmountable contradictions between the demands of *both* unreason and reason *and* the sexual and the technological imply the impossibility of "sex" in terms of the "cyber." This is the unresolved double bind of the cybersex: on the one hand, there is the power of the technological, a power to redesign everything by means of technology, including everything corporeal and sexual; on the other, there are the allurements of the libido, the desires and pleasures promised by the unreason of the body, the tension between the temptations of the flesh that is to be brought under the control of reason and the reason of the machine in terms of cybernetics (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; Pias 2003, 2004).

But then again, as cyber discourse wants us believe time and time again, this is an aporia only in terms of conventional logic dictating that *tertium non datur*. In the world of the "cyber," a world of the surrational, the option of the *tertium*, of course, is always possible, provided that there is an appropriate imaginary solution at hand in the mode of pataphysics constitutive of all that is "post." In other words, it is only the question of the resistance of the material to be overcome by the forces of the imaginary; a mode of theoretical "quantum leap" typical of post-theory: in terms of the "post," what is material is imaginary, and what is imaginary is material. This is the post-Hegelian version of the mutual

relations of the rational and the real constituting one another (cf. Hegel 1986b [1821]: 24).

"Cyborg 'Sex'" as a Form of "Post-Gender" Pleasure

In the world of the "cyber" – to be remembered, in the mode of the "post" – nothing is impossible. Like in the world of pataphysics, the most sublime mode of reason in the era of the *fin de siècle*, everything was possible and thus real in terms of the imaginary, in the world of the "cyber," the imaginary is the very condition of possibility of the real. This is the basis of the great transformation of the corporeal effected by the techno-logic of the "cyber." If, in technoculture, and all the more so in cyberculture, nothing is natural any longer, but everything is now artificial in one way or another, it is evident that the same applies to the body, as well as the whole realm of corporeal desires and pleasures in general. If, in the world of the cyborg, as Haraway (1991a: 180) says, the "machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment," what does this mean in terms of carnality, the experiences of the flesh – if not an abandoning of all that is *meat* and replacing it by a techno-organic body construction, the hardware of the prosthetic body, a post-body living in the realm of the "cyber" (for the idea of "meat" as an abject in cyber discourse, see Dery 1996: 91, 116, 247–253; cf., for example, Morse 1994: 157–158; Wilson 1996: 224; Plant 1998: 33; Botting 1999: 8, 17, 150–153, 158–169, 181–186; Cavallaro 2001: 147–150; Adam 2002: 159–160; Bell et al. 2004: 8–9; Haney 2006: 94; in the context of "medical ethics and feminism," cf. Rothfield 1995: 168–169).

If cyborgs, according to Haraway (1991a: 180), consider "more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment," what does this imply with regard to orgasmic pleasure – if not a *dismembering* of the sensations of corporeality into effects of the machinic.

In this sense, the "sex" of the cyborg embraces no longer practices, sensations and affections that are pertinent to the human body, the desires and pleasures of the flesh, the realm of human carnality. And although the anti-onanism device and the genital massage apparatus were both technological inventions with the purpose to regulate sexual pleasure, the *idea* of "the sexual" was nevertheless entirely different compared with the sexual in the world of the cyborg, to emphasize, the cyborg in terms of the "post" (for the historical difference between the cyborg *avant la lettre* and the cyborg in terms of the "post," see Muri 2007; cf. Biro 2009). The world of the cyborg is not only a "post-gender world", but also – and perhaps, first and foremost – a world, as Haraway (1991a: 150–152) assures us, beyond all that is Oedipal. In the world of the cyborg, not only the paradigm of being predicated upon psychoanalysis, but the whole Christian tradition based on the terror and horror of the flesh is finally and definitely abolished (cf. Griffith 2004: 224–225; Waters 2006; Detsi-Diamanti et al. 2009). In other words, after the coming of the cyborg, we are living in a world

in which, literally, "data made flesh" (Hayles 1999: 5, 37, 47; Mitchell & Thurtle 2004) defines our posthuman condition.

Most importantly, the regime of the phallus, the politics of "phallogocentrism" (Haraway 1991a: 175), has been overthrown in the world of the cyborg once and for all; thus, what Haraway calls "cyborg 'sex'" (ibid.: 150) is absolutely a phallus-free mode of sexual pleasure. As a result, according to Haraway, "[i]ntense pleasure in skill, *machine skill*, ceases to be a sin [sic]" (ibid.: 180; emphasis mine) and therefore the enjoyment of the technological is now an "aspect of our embodiment" (ibid.). Thus, what we have in the world of the cyborg is the *jouissance* of the machinic, the bliss of the techno-organic body, the ecstatic alterity of the "hybrid of machine and organism" (ibid.: 150), the "Other" turned into the "Third" under the sign of the "post."

This is the pleasure of *terminal sex* in terms of the "cyber" (see Stenslie 2000b). As Ballard said in the early 1970s: "Sex times technology equals the future" (Springer 1996: 50). This is the future in which we are living now – in the world of the "cyber." This is the world in which the Augustinian vicious temptations of the flesh, the power of the libido, is replaced by a new libidinal force, the seduction of the "cyber." This is the promise of cybersex; that is, a promise of a mode of pleasure that is absolutely liberated from the burden of the flesh; in Ballard's, words: "I believe that organic sex, body against body, skin area against skin area, is becoming no longer possible" (ibid.: 51). This is the present future of the cyborg. As Haraway intimates, "I would rather go to bed with a cyborg than a sensitive man" (Penley & Ross 1992a: 18).

Why not? This is now possible in the world of the "cyber," in a world in which the Freudian *Wunscherfüllung* (Freud 1987d [1900]: 555–577) has turned into reality, a reality of the imaginary – the only reality that we have in terms of the "cyber" under the sign of the "post."

This is a world in which cybersex becomes perfectly intelligible. If, in the Enlightenment world of Immanuel Kant, what we now call "sex" was constituted by a *Geschlechtsgemeinschaft* or *commercium sexuale* (Kant 1991c [1797/1798]: 389), that is, a kind of micropolitical *contrat social* in terms of "the sexual" (a category and a notion that at the time was just emerging), cybersex implies a new regime of the social in which the subject first and foremost stands in relation to its nomadic self based on what Rosi Braidotti (1997a [1996]: 520–522), a leading post-theorist in terms of technoavantgardist feminism, calls a "cyberbody," a multiple self that consists of ever-changing simulacra, be they corporeal or machinic, or both in various configurations (cf. Angerer 1999a: 27–55, 1999b; in terms of the "hyberbody," cf. Flanagan 2002: 427–433; for the concept of the "multiple self," see, for example, von Braun & Dietze 1999). In the world of the "cyber," we experience a millennial leap into the future already present, a world in which the "connection with the computer keybord becomes a prosthetic connection of humanoid body with machinic body, creating an entirely new experience – a cyberbody" (Kennedy 2000a: 471; cf. Clark 1995: 124–127; Feath-

erstone & Burrows 1995a: 10–12; Cavallaro 2000: 72–79; Wilson 2002: 146–150; Haas 2006: 36–46; Jahshan 2007: 51–52; for an overview concerning the question "what will be left over from the body," see Becker & Schneider 2000).[137]

The cyberbody is an embodiment of a radical mutation, a result of a post-evolutionary evolution. That is, "[a]s the biological body is paralleled first by its mechanical, and now also by its informational clone, our conceptions of individual, body and gender are being undermined by neurobionic and robotic prosthetics; cyborg theory and *cyberbody fetishism* constitute one initial response" (Stocker 1996: 27; emphasis mine). In, by and with the cyberbody we can enjoy the pleasure of exceeding the limits of the human; as Stelarc says:

> THE CYBERBODY is not a subject, but an object – not an object of envy but an object for engineering. THE Cyberbody bristles with electrodes and antennae, amplifying its capabilities and projecting its presence to remote locations and into virtual spaces. The Cyberbody becomes an extended system – not merely to sustain a self, but to enhance operation and initiate alternate intelligent systems. (Stelarc 1998: 121; cf. Angerer 1999a: 53–55, 1999b: 177–179; Dery 2004: 117–119; Wilson 1995; Scherger 2000; in terms of "synthflesh," cf. Kern 2000)

Consequently, one is no longer a "one," nor the one and the same, since in the world of the "cyber" being someone, as Marie-Luise Angerer (1999a) says, is a "body option" (cf. Wagner 2006: 156–157; Wegenstein 2006: 196; Brandstetter 2003; Reiche & Sick 2002; cf. Reiche & Kuni 2004; Lummerding 2005).

Thus, the Freudian tenet that *die Anatomie ist das Schicksal* (Freud 1987b [1924]: 400, 1990a [1912]: 90; for a critical discussion, see Quindeau 2008: 99–118) has definitively lost its validity in the world of the cyborg: all that is corporeal, be it in the form of incorporation or embodiment, is now not a destiny but an act of free will, or, an enactment of desire, or both in complex interferences. Accordingly, what is sexual in this constellation is a question of choice; what counts is not to conform to the norm, but the ability of the subject, by subverting the normative as the "normal," to invent itself anew all the time, all over again (cf., for example, Jackson 1999: 167–173; Davidson & Taylor 2005: 90–98; Elliott 2009: 107–113, 219–225): sex, gender and the subject have been liberated from the constraints of phallogocentrism and they have thus become a

137 Andy Miah and Emm Rich (2008: 33–36) try in their book *The Medicalization of Cyberspace* to make a distinction between the "cyberbody" and the "cyborg" by quoting Dànielle Nicole DeVoss's definition: "The term 'cyber' refers to a term coined much earlier [than Haraway's 'cyborg'], but popularized by William Gibson, a popular science fiction writer, in his 1984 book, *Neuromancer*. Cyberbodies are 'high-tech' bodies that, instead of problematizing representations of bodies and the heterosexual imperative in much visual representation, reproduce norms of sexuality and the sexualization of certain women's bodies, and validate the male gaze. The cyberbody does not politicize the potential of the techno/synthetic/mechanical body in the ways that theorized notions of cyborg bodies can." (ibid.: 33) If this definition, with the words "much earlier," is supposed to refer to the history of cybernetics, one can only state that *in cybernetics there is no "cyber"*: cybernetics is not about any "cyber," but, instead, as its founder, Norbert Wiener (1961 [1948]), defines, it is about "control and communication in the animal and the machine." Then again, the notion or metaphor "the cyborg" is in itself a postmodern theory-fiction, a "free-floating signifier," in a similar manner as "the cyberbody": both are post-theoretical figures brought about by and recycled in the linguistic configuration of cyber discourse, the phantasmatic discourse revolving around the "cyber," *a para-signifier that in itself means nothing*.

free choice. Here, the subject is its own object, an object of subjective design in an objectified form that produces an extended and enhanced form of the self, *an objective subject*; a subject that is not the "Other" but a "Third": a self as an object of the subject, a being in between the subject and the object, a new form of agency as a post-Deleuze-Guattarian body-machine assemblage (cf. Goodchild 1996: 50–51; Potts 2002: 240–254; Johnston 2008: 111–120; in terms of the "body-machine complex," cf. Seltzer 1992b, 1998 [1995]).

This is the realm of the artificial, a realm beyond the "natural," a realm of a technological redesign of all that is human, enabling an ego-politics of the self, amounting in the end to what Sarah Kember (2000), a feminist techno-theorist, calls a "politics of artificial life" (cf. Nayar 2004: 301; Weber & Bath 2003, McNeil 2007; Suchman 2007; Kroker & Kroker 2008; Zylinska 2009). This is the mode of being of the cyborg.

As in general, also in terms of cybersex, the cyborg is not a being coming after the human being; instead, it is about a second order of being human: in terms of the "post," the cyborg is a *post*-human being, a being that, in its mode of being "post," is not an opposite but a derivation of the human, and, at the same time, a being that exceeds the limits and thus sublates the idea of being human in its radical "otherness." In a Nietzschean manner, the cyborg is a *Zwischenstufe*, a *Brücke*, an "interstage," a "bridge," between the human and the *Übermensch* (Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 10–11), the mode of being human after and beyond the human (cf. Žižek 2001c: 36–37, 2006: 193; Hayles 1999). In these terms, the cyborg is a "post-gender" creature (Haraway 1985: 67): it – indeed, "it" since the cyborg is beyond all the inherited marks of identity, "he" and "she" included – is a posthuman entity without identity, a being based on objective subjectification and subjective objectification of the "self," the "self," of course, in terms of Derridean *sous rature*, "under erasure" (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 60, 66, 75, 88; Norris 1987: 16; Spivak 1997: xiv–xli, xlviii–lxiii; Irwin 2010: 21–22).

The cyborg does not ask: who am I? The cyborg says, as self-conscious of its alterity: where I come, there I shall be the paragon of being beyond the constraints of the self, a being not as a closed "I" but as an open possibility, a potentiality in actuality (cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 356–368). To be a cyborg is not to be a being reduced to the body one is born with: to be a cyborg is to appropriate and adopt a mode of post-body being by *en-owning* a body that is a post-corporeal non-body embodying technology as a discursive inscription, as a techno-political incorporation of textuality, the very immanence of being in the world of the "post" (cf. Haraway 1991a: 179–181). In this sense, the cyborg *has* a body, a prosthetic *Fremdkörper* (cf. Hürlimann et al. 1999; Barkhaus & Fleig 2002); that is, a post-body as a networked assemblage of post-biological prostheses, a technological hybrid exceeding all the limits and limitations of the biological body. The cyborg does not live, it *exists* in its posthuman existence beyond all the constraints of being human; that is, the *ex-centric* existence of the cyborg is the ultimate state of freedom, a mode of being beyond the

disciplinary order of binarities, beyond the terror regime of phallogocentrism (see Haraway 1991a: 176; Braidotti 2006: 37–38, 127–130; Cregan 2006: 148–149; Haney 2006: 3–5; Volkart 2006: 64–70; Toffoletti 2007: 19–20).

The Sexual Self-Relation of the Prosthetic Subject

In these terms, as a posthuman being the cyborg is an entity thoroughly denaturalized. After the collapse of the paradigm of the "natural" there is nothing purely "biological" either (cf., for example, Bender & Druckrey 1994; Robertson et al. 1996). Accordingly, to be a cyborg is to be an object of the subject: *one is not born, but, rather, becomes a cyborg*. This becoming is not a one-time event, not an occurrence with a closure; instead, the becoming of the cyborg is a continuous process, not a Nietzschean *ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (see Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 270–272, 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 333–335, 1973a [1882/1887]: 250; cf. Salaquarda 2000: 75–79; in Heideggerian terms, cf. Behler 2000: 351–380), but an unending reconfiguration of the parameters that enable the cyborgian existence as the becoming of becoming in its perpetual becomingness (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 232–309; cf. Goodchild 1996: 150–172; Braidotti 2006). Thus, the cyborg is a technological form of the post-subject, a mode of subjectivity that is defined in its objectivity, as the objective agency its own post-subjective, non-identitarian existence: *the cyborg is not, it "is" always becoming*.

While, in the tradition of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment the subject was seen to be constituted in terms of difference between the object and the subject, in the world of the "cyber" – following the logic of the "post" – this constitutive difference becomes thoroughly ambiguous. In the post-phallogocentric matrix of being defining the parameters of the "being" of the cyborg, all that there is are supplements, supplements of supplements, all in their *constitutive* supplementarity. Precisely for this reason, the mode of existence of the cyborg is not of being, rather, it is, as Willem Flusser 1998 [1994]) emphasizes, a mode of being as a process of *Werden*, a form of becoming in which, in the manner of Stenslie's "cybersex bodysuit," theory dissolves into technology and vice versa, and, as a result, a new body emerges in and through a post-biological emergence.

As a consequence, as Haraway (1991a: 177) says, all "dualisms" that "have been persistent in Western traditions" disappear: that is, dualisms being "systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals" become disrupted; in short, the "domination of all constituted as *others*, whose task is *to mirror the self*" (ibid.; emphasis mine), implodes in its own impossibility. *The cyborg has come to the world in order to free ourselves from the prison of identity, from the delusion of the mirror.* As we can see, this is not just a radical change, this is a fundamental transformation: this is a post-Christian, post-evolutionary mode of self-mutation beyond the binary logic of phallogocentrism; as Haraway says:

> Chief among these troubling dualisms are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man. The self is the One who is not dominated, who knows that by the service of the other, the other is the one who holds the future, who knows that by the experience of domination, which gives the lie to the autonomy of the self. To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial. One is too few, but two are too many. (ibid.)

Our escape from this "apocalypse," as Haraway says, is "high-tech culture" that "challenges these dualisms" (ibid.), not in the manner of conventional technology, but "in intriguing ways" (ibid.): no longer is it "clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine" (ibid.), neither, "what is mind and what body in machines that resolve into coding practices," and, as a result, in this new situation ruled by a radical in-difference, "we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras" (ibid.). "Biological organisms have become biotic systems, communications devices like others" (ibid.: 177–178), and therefore, "*there is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic*" (ibid.: 178; emphasis mine). In these terms, as we can see, the era of ultimate freedom has now begun.

What does this imply in terms of "the sexual"? If the sexual as *sexual* has any meaning at all in this emerging constellation, it is brought about by the sexual self-relation of the prosthetic subject, the mode of being subject in the world of the cyborg. This is a thoroughly new mode of the sexual: the Freudian *Objektwahl* (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 99–101, 129–130, 132–145, 1986d [1915–1917]: 338–340, 1991a [1915]: 288, 1991d [1915]: 227, 1991g [1914]: 154–157, 1987c [1923]; as a mode of narcissism, cf. Altmeyer 2000: 42–44, 57–59; in terms of technologies as a mode of doubling of the body, cf. McLuhan 1964: 37–60) now embraces all kinds of objects that are prosthetic extensions of the subject as the cyborg. As a result, the sexual subject turns into a sexual object of its own design, an object of desires and pleasures that belongs to a system in which the functional logic of automatons (self-controlling, self-governing machines) and the principle of being autonomous (living organisms as a form of technology) become intertwined (from a historical perspective, cf. Kang 2011). As Haraway (1989: 139) says, the "cyborg is the figure born *of the interface* of automaton and autonomy" (emphasis mine).[138]

138 It is, in fact, surprising to notice how deep Haraway is in her cyborg theory, in spite of her technological radicalism, clinging to just the paradigm of the biological she is at pains to deconstruct: throughout her work she attempts to constitute the cyborg *outside* the parameters of the biological, but this notwithstanding the cyborg, at the literally constitutive moment, does not come into the world by becoming, but is *born*, given birth to like the humans and animals in the pre-cyborg world (see, particularly, Haraway 1991a: 162–163). This is, at the theoretical level, not a Freudian "slip of tongue," but an instance of the Freudian "return of the repressed" (see Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632).

It is in this way that will and desire, these thoroughly human notions manifesting the fundamental incalculability and unreliability of the human being, implode in the world of the cyborg, and are replaced by some new kind of post-Freudian *Triebkraft* or motivating "drives" that do not follow the logic of will and desire, the logic of subjectivity as the paragon of indeterminacy. Thus, the object-choice of the sexual subject as the cyborg is a post-cybernetic process in which the positions of the subject and the object are constantly interchanged. During the last century, a definitive break in history has occurred: the anti-onanism devices trying to prohibit masturbation have disappeared for ever, and the genital vibrators deployed against hysteria have turned into interactive apparatuses for tele-tactile sex to be enjoyed by the post-body of the post-subject independently of any alien interests – except, of course, the self-interest of the cyborg-subject as an alienated self in its self-alienation effected by itself: *the radical alterity of being a cyborg*.

In the world in which virtual reality, cyberspace and the cyborg reconstitute the human being according to the principles of the prosthetic reconfiguration of corporeality, subjectivity and agency, now establishing the precondition of a new life form of being posthuman, cybersex is a logical extension – of course, in the form of permanent deconstruction – of the sexual; though, on the premises that, firstly, there is still logic in a world in which everything has become thoroughly contingent and thus ambiguous, and secondly, if the sexual as *sexual* can still be ascribed with a meaning at all. From this it ensues that what is at issue here is not only the logic of never-ending *différance*, but, moreover, the transformation of the sexual in the ever-proliferating realm of "sex," post-sex in the form of *jouissance* redefined by the techno-logic of the "cyber."

Thus, what is sex in the world of the cyborg is beyond all that is intrinsic, indispensable, essential, in a word, defined by the logic of identity, the logic of the mirror; in the paradigm of post-sex, there only prevails one rule, the law of the contingent. In this sense, cybersex is "sex" in a world in which a transition "from the sexual rebellion to gene and reproduction technology" (see Treusch-Dieter 1990) has been accomplished, and, as a result, the sexual has turned into an *opera aperta*. In short, if cybersex is sex at all, it is post-sex in the world of the posthuman.

The posthuman – what is it? No longer is it about the "jargon of authenticity" (Adorno 1973 [1964]), instead, what is at issue now is a post-Futurist/futurological rhetorics of artificiality. Neither, *Wie man wird, was man ist* (Nietzsche 1969b [1888–1889/1908]), instead, how one becomes what one is not. This is the logic of becoming. This is a new mode of post-Nietzschean *ecce homo* (cf. Haraway 1992: 86–90). This is the ethos of the "cyber," the ultimate form of post-ethical technologism following the logic of the "post" (cf. Dinello 2005: 18–31), the logic of a radical transformation of the epistemological and ontological premises of all being under the imperative of the political economy of neoliberalism (cf. Foucault 1989 [1966]: 386–387; Heidegger 1977a [1938], 1989b [1962]; 2000b [1953]).

Excursus 1: In the Theatre of the Imaginary

> The end of representation, the end of aesthetics, the end of the image itself in the superficial virtuality of the screen. But here is a perverse and paradoxical effect. It seems that while illusion and utopia have been eradicated by the impact of all our technologies, by virtue of these same technologies, *irony itself has passed into things*. There appears to be a counterpart to the loss of illusion of the world, namely the irruption of *objective irony* in this world. Irony as the universal and spiritual form of the disillusion of the world. Spiritual in the sense of *Witz*, of spirit arising from the very heart of the technical banality of our objects and our images.
>
> Jean Baudrillard (1997c: 13)

> All I am really asking for is permanent passion and irony, where passion is as important as irony.
>
> Donna Haraway (2000a: 172)

If, in the postmodern, there is something Baudrillard (1990f [1979]: 129) calls "sexual reason" – which, of course, is not to be conflated with the reason of the postmodern (cf. Norris 1985: 19–46; for a critical examination of the reason of the postmodern, see Schrag 1992), although there are constitutive interconnections between the two – the study at hand is a critique of the sexual reason of the "cyber." But, as for things that do not exist there can be no critical "outside," also here the only way that remains for a critical interrogation of the "post" as the linguistic matrix of the "cyber" is an immanent critique (cf. Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Held 1980: 183–189, 200–202). Why immanent critique? Because after the "linguistic turn" (see Habermas 1992 [1988]: 44–51; cf., for example, Clark 2004b: 126–129; Iggers 2005: 118–133, 135, 150; LaCapra & Kaplan 1982; Rorty 1992b [1967]; for a critical overview, see Neal 2007: 113–127; in terms of "the postmodern turn," cf. Seidman 1994a),[139] brought to its logi-

139 According to Christopher Norris (1985: 200), it was actually Foucault (1989 [1966]) who, in his "archaeology of the human sciences," emphasized the linguistic constitution of knowledge as a "product of discourse," brought about by "enabling fictions" based on "structures of *representation*" or forms of language "arbitrarily" changing "from age to age." In this sense, "the last great mutation in the order of knowledge was that which focused attention on *language* as the site and source of all understanding," and, in these terms, "[m]odernity is seen as issuing directly from this *widespread linguistic turn*" (Norris 1985; 200–201; emphasis mine), having its origin, among other things, in the views and visions of such different personifications of history as Nietzsche, Mallarmé and de Saussure. This is the idea of Foucault's "much-quoted pronouncements of an end to those philosophies of history and reason which elevated 'man', the transcendental subject, to a role of sovereign authority," henceforth "dissolved into a figure of language, a transient 'fold' in the fabric of representations which compose the human sciences" (ibid.: 201). As we can see, Norris's statement, as many others on these premises, is internally contradictory: on the one hand, history is arbitrary, on the other, it is made by "men" of "ideas."

cal conclusion by Derridean deconstruction (see, for example, Derrida 1978e [1970/1966], 1982 [1972], 1984a [1972/1968], 1997 [1967]; Con Davis & Schleifer 1985) and the Lyotardian collapse of "metanarratives" (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]), there is no metalanguage (cf. Jameson 1974 [1972]: 123–126, 159–160, 207–209; Lacan 1977h [1966/1960]: 311; Barthes 1977a [1971]: 164; Culler 1982: 199, 257–258; Norris 1987: 64–65; Arrivé 1992 [1986]: 143–163; Sarup 1993 [1988]: 10–11; Hobson 1998: 209); what there is is "only" writing; that is, in the context of the present study, writing in its radicalized form as *écriture* (in the context of the problematization of the author in the debates concerning the idea of structuralism in Paris in the 1960s, cf. Foucault 1977e [1969]: 119–129).

What Barbara Johnson (1995 [1990]: 39) calls a "theoretical 'revolution' in France in the 1960s" (cf. Simons 2004b: 2–5; Starr 1995), especially after the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris (one just thinks about the historical and intellectual echo of the words "occupation," "collaboration," "resistance" and "liberation" at that time) (see, for example, Ross 2002; Christofferson 2004; Seidman 2004; Bourg 2007; Wolin 2010; for a global contextualization, see Fink et al. 1998; for an overview of France in the Second World War and its still living legacy, see Davies 2001), gave rise to the conception of theory in terms of writing (cf. Heidegger 1989a [1936–1938]), finally leading to what I term post-theory, *a postmodern theory style in which simulation has taken the place of thinking* (cf. Baudrillard 1994a [1981]), a mode of theorization by way of ontologization of "the textual" in the sense of *écriture* (for the origin of the "post" of post-theory in poststructuralism, see Young 1982; Royle 2000). As Johnson says:

> Writing (*l'écriture*) came to philosophical, psychoanalytic, and literary prominence in France in the 1960s, primarily through the work of Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and other writers who were at the time associated with the journal *Tel Quel*. Philippe Sollers, in a "Program" that heads the group's collective theoretical volume, proclaimed 1967: "A comprehensive theory arising out of a thought about the practice of writing cries out for collaboration." *Writing, it seemed, was to become the key to all mythologies*. (Johnson 1995: 39; emphasis mine)

In the wake of the events of 1968, the tumultuous moment of the "political" under the super-signs "Althusser" and "Lacan," the "radical modernism of the *Tel Quel* circle around Philippe Sollers" (Jay 1993a: 469) redefined the parameters of writing in an entirely new way, manifested, in its most radical form, by Derrida's "notion of *écriture* as a dissemination of coherent intelligibility" (ibid.; cf. Rodowick 1988: 15–17, 274–275; for the historical genesis of the *Tel Quel* group as a literary and theoretical avantgarde, see Kauppi 1994, 1996; Ffrench 1995; Brandt 2000; Marx-Scouras 2004; for a political contextualization in terms of antitotalitarian critique of the Left, see Christofferson 2004: 198–206).

1.1. Towards a Post-Freudian "Other Scene"

What is peculiar to, even constitutive of, *écriture* as a text-immanent mode of writing, writing in terms of writing, is "the sexual," in its most ambiguous and polyvalent manner, of the textual as the intrinsic moment, the driving force, of writing in the Freudian sense of *Trieb* (see Freud 1981c [1905]: 47, 66–69, 94, 157, 1991d [1915]: 214–221, 1983 [1938/1940]: 70–73); a mode of writing amounting to a "sexualization of the text" implying a "textualization of sex" (Jardine 1985: 183–182). While, as Jay (1993a: 528) says, for Kristeva and Irigaray, the "issue of writing (or language in general) was central," Derrida, in turn, in his *Spurs*, "had pitted *écriture* against style, suggesting that 'if style were a man (much as the penis, according to Freud, is the 'normal prototype of fetishes'), then writing would be a woman."

It is in this manner that writing, in the sense of *écriture*, is inherently a Freudian matter (in both senses of the word); consequently, what I call post-theory can be properly understood only as a Freudian question, a question concerning the presence of the absent. Thus, in the world of the "post," rather than being behind the scenes, "Freud" is always – *always already* – on the scene.

In the conception of writing in the mode of *écriture*, "the specificity of social and historical conditions remains in a very real sense a secondary matter in relation to *the actual textual processes which are privileged in their ability to inaugurate subjectivity*" (Smith 1988: 35; emphasis mine). The "implicit political stance and the typical vocabulary of this view of signifying practices" (ibid.) is manifested, for example, in Julia Kristeva's writing from the late-1960s to the early-1970s in the context of the *Tel Quel* circle, paradigmatically expressed in her *text* entitled "Revolution in Poetic Language" (Kristeva 1984 [1974]; cf. Moi 1985: 161–173). The common denominator in the politics of language practiced by the writers of the *Tel Quel* group was the idea that "the struggle against capitalist ideology is to be conducted by *changing the signifier*" (Smith 1988: 35; emphasis mine), that is, "altering existing practices of representation" (ibid.; cf. Brandt 2000; in terms of the "sacralization" of the literary, cf. Foucault 1990j [1975/1986]: 308–309).

This "sudden spectacular interest in writing" (Johnson 1990: 39), constitutive of "French theory" (see ffrench & Lack 1998c; Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Cusset 2008 [2003]; in terms of feminist theory, see Cavallaro 2003; for a historical contextualization, see van der Poel et al. 1999; Kauppi 2010; for a theoretical reevaluation in terms of "historicizing theory," see Herman 2004), is also the key to the emergence of the postmodern mythology of the intrinsic liberatory power of radical textuality, the discursive order of the "post," the matrix of post-theory (in terms of the transition "from Marx to Madonna" in the world of the "post," see Rutsky & Macdonald 2003b; cf. Schwichtenberg 1993; Rutherford 2007). In cyber discourse as the phantasmatic configuration evoked by the "cyber," in turn, the "post," in a peculiar manner, is the copula between "French theory" and "Californian ideology" (see Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]), the world-

view of the postmodern techno/theory avantgarde manifesting the post-utopian futurism typical of all that is "cyber."

1.1.1 The Immanent Irony of Language

In this constellation, it is not only that political theory turns into a "textual practice" (see Shapiro 1992), but, more fundamentally, "the political" in itself is now nothing but "textual practices" in the name of the "post"; textual practices that attempt to conjure up various radical moves and interventions in terms of "the subversive" and "the sublime" by means of textual enactments in the sense of the German word *Inszenierung*.

In the world of the "post," "the theoretical" as the epistemological and ontological rationale of theory, its very *raison d'être*, is constituted by what I call the *spectralization of theory*; that is, instead of referring to some assumed reality, theory is now interested in phantom objects, virtual entities that "exist" in the *virtual reality of language* created by the theory itself. In other words, self-referential simulacra are "the reality" of theory in the spectral world of post-theory (for the idea of the spectral, spectrality and spectralization, see Derrida 1991 [1987]: 24–25, 62, 1994 [1993]: 11, 17, 30, 39, 91, 132, 167, 1996 [1995]: 84–85, 110–111; cf., for example, Spivak 2000: 7–10, 23, 30–32; Punday 2003: 43–47; Rufo 2009: 230–246; Negri 1999; Ratmoko 2006; Tatum 2007). Never before in world history have there been so many spectres as today in the world of post-theory, a world in which innumerable multitudes of ghosts and phantoms haunt the scriptural realm of post-theory, the surrational sphere of the "post."

Yes, *es spukt* in the world of the "post," but the morning star of postality is our guiding star in the spectrality of postness. Far away in the past are the days of the Enlightenment when the subject of history, in spite of the enormous advancement of reason, could not see the world but "through a glass, darkly"; today, in the light of the "post," the light of the post-rational constitutive of the surrational, we see things, whatever they are, in their spectral specularity, in the speculum of post-theory, in its spectacular spectrality.

The Politics of Writing in Terms of the "Post"

In these terms, then, the study at hand is an inquiry into the specific linguistic configuration that I call cyber discourse; a postmodern discursive formation in which the things that are not there are there by the force of "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of all that is "post" (for the origin of the idea in anthropological studies concerning "the symbolic universe of tribal societies," see Gil 1998 [1985]: 92–106; in terms Lacanian psychoanalysis, see Feldstein 1995: 150–152; for Žižek's rereading of Lacan, see Rickert 2007: 56–57; for paradigmatic examples, see Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). In a peculiar manner, the signifiers that follow the logic of the "post" constitute the condition of possibility for the mode of theory that

I refer to as post-theory, a manner of writing writerly theory in the sense of *écriture*. This is about a "universe of discourse" (cf. Marcuse 2002 [1964]: 84–120) in which signifiers, effected by hypostatization, materialize into "things," presences in their own right: *apparitions that simulate materiality in, by and through their virtuality*; in other words, phantasmatic apports created by the virtual reality of language constitutive of the "post." These "things," *phantom objects* typical of the "post," manifesting the linguistic materiality of signifiers, take on a meaning *sui generis* producing what Baudrillard (1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b [1983]: 182, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 127, 1997c: 13, 2000b: 54, 77–78) calls "objective irony" (cf. Gane 1991a: 174–176; Roberts 1991: 226–228; with regard to *das Erhabene* in Heidegger's philosophy, cf. Thomä 2003: 106–109).

In short, what is at issue here is the problem of linguistic hypostatization in, by and through which figures of language appear as existing entities, as "objects" in their very "objectivity." This is what I call the *reality of theory*; a reality in its virtuality typical of post-theory.

Here we can see, indeed, that the universe of post-theory is a "closed world" (cf. Edwards 1996), an inward, introspective and autonomous realm of writing, a virtual reality of language, that exists by the force of "free-floating signifiers"; a discursive space maintained by its own self-mirroring linguistic figuration: a realm of writing created by an "endless 'substitution of signifiers'" (Smith 1988: 45; cf. Young 1981a: 2, 8, 14–16, 1990: 66) that revolve around themselves recycling their own substitutes, "free-floating signifiers," that reproduce and proliferate themselves. It is in this manner that "the writing of our day has freed itself from the necessity of 'expression'; it only refers to itself" by way of "the very nature of the signifier" (Foucault 1977e [1969]: 116). Thus, the literality and literariness of signifiers constitute the "post" in post-theory: post-theory fabulates on its own fabulations premised upon the discursive figures effected by the "free-floating signifiers" of its own making: *free-floating fabulations about "the theoretical" that has replaced "the literary" of literature* on the theory scene of the postmodern (in terms of *literaturnost* and *ostranenie* in Russian formalism, cf. Erlich 1965 [1955]: 172; Hawkes 1977: 60–67; Striedter 1994 [1969]; for a historical contextualization, see Pomorska et al. 1987; in terms of the Derridean "age of literature," cf. Nealon 1993: 80–82).

In this sense, post-theory is not so much a mode of theory theoretically reflecting itself, but, rather, a form of theory that is self-mirroring its own phantasmatic world, a mirror-world that mirrors itself as a mirror-world (cf. Foucault 1990j [1975/1986], 1998 [1966]). It is illuminating, perhaps, to see this from a historical perspective, from Karl Kraus's position, expressed in his polemical article on Freud's theory in *Die Fackel* (30 May, 1913) in which he deemed psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century: *Psychoanalyse ist jene Geisteskrankheit, für deren Therapie sie sich hält* (Anz 2006: 102); in Fredric Jameson's (1988b [1975]: 123) translation: "Psychoanalysis is that illness of which it believes itself to be the cure."

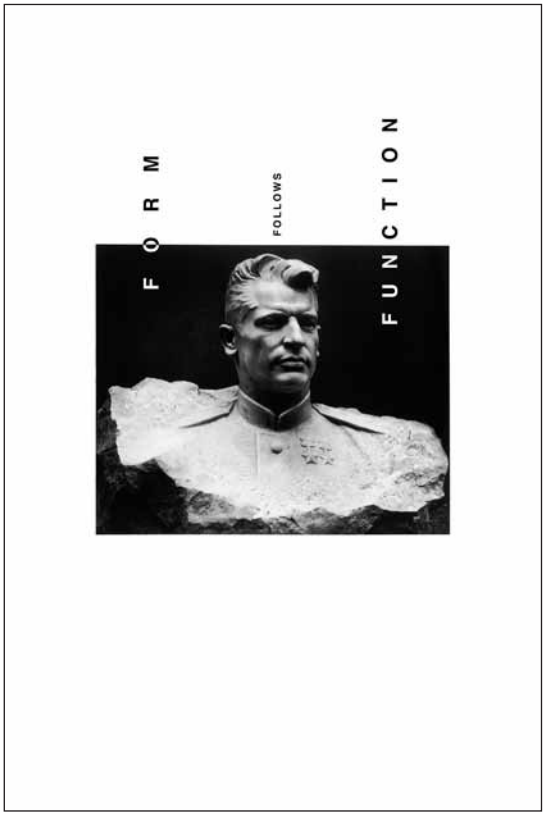


Fig. 49. Kimmo Sarje, *Short course in aesthetics*, 1. Project for *Taidehalli* magazine, 1986 (for a theoretical contextualization, see Sarje 2003).

Mutatis mutandis, this is the idea of the imaginary constitutive of post-theory. In the world of post-theory, we are in what I call the *theatre of the imaginary* (cf. Foucault 1977d [1970]).

After the "linguistic turn," through a peculiar ironic twist, the universe of post-theory has, in fact, taken the place reserved earlier to the world of literature; the "world" of literature, understood in terms of "the literary," is now replaced by the universe of "the theoretical." Before the radical criticism in terms of deconstruction exercised by contemporary theory upon the very possibility of "the literary" *sui generis* (see, for example, Lentricchia 1980; Culler 1982; Norris 1982; Leitch 1983; Con Davis & Schleifer 1985; Bertens 1995; Kirby 1997; Glendinning 2001; Rapaport 2001; for a reconstruction of deconstruction as a philosophical trajectory in terms of phenomenology from Heidegger through Sartre to Derrida, see Rajan 2002a, 2002b), literature was a mode of writing that had the legitimation in itself, a specific manner of using language justified by its own artistic and aesthetic criteria (for a paradigmatic example, see Wellek & Warren 1956 [1949]). The problem was, as R. Radhakrishnan (1986: 230) points out, that the "full presence or identity of a literary masterpiece" was something that in and by itself "engenders and anticipates criticism, thus rendering it tame and redundant."

For this reason, literature had, as Radhakrishnan specifies, "continued to be 'understood,' 'appreciated,' 'adulated,' 'emulated,' and 'glorified,' but never '*diagnosed*'" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Whatever the theory of literature was it always presented itself as something *post factum*, after the literary fact: a work of literature in its artistic and aesthetic singularity, in its auratic uniqueness, the apotheosis of

which, of course, was poetic language in its very self-closedness, and its theoretical reflexion in the theory discourse of what came to be known as the "New Criticism" (cf. Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 38–46, 79, 126–127; Lentricchia 1980) in its highly intellectual and, in this sense, "elitist," even "esoteric," self-centeredness amounting, in the end, to an art of interpretation with an inclination to "technicist emphases" (Arac 1986a: ix). In this context, a literary work was, to apply the famous title of a seminal study by Cleanth Brooks (1975 [1947]), a prominent theorist of the New Criticism, a "well wrought urn" (cf. Arac 1983: 187; Guillory 1995 [1990]: 247).

For the New Criticism, a literary text was an artwork closed in on itself; an idea of aesthetic integrity paradigmatically manifested by poetry. As Jonathan Culler (1997: 80) succinctly summarises, as a specific mode of language, the "lyric is based on a convention of unity and autonomy, as if there were a rule: don't treat the poem as we might a bit of conversation, a fragment that needs a larger context to explain it, but assume that it has a structure of its own," and thus, "[t]ry to read it as *an aesthetic whole*" (emphasis mine).

Paradoxically, this same, *mutatis mutandis*, now happens in what I call post-theory: it is theoretical mythopoetics constituting a world of its own.

During the heyday of the New Criticism, the problem was that there was "no need for an independent theory of criticism *qua* criticism; what theory there was took the form of validitation and prescription" (Radhakrishnan 1986: 230). In these terms, "[l]iterature was naturalized and thus placed beyond active, perspectival scrutiny and analysis" (ibid.); in other words, literature was a world in itself, cut off from surrounding reality, a "closed world" of, and, as such, *effected by*, "the literary" in its very literariness detached not only from everyday life, but, first of all, from the realm of theory, theory understood as theoretical reflection without the mission of aesthetic legitimation. Thus, the theory of literature was a metalanguage that described the world of "the literary" that pre-existed in relation to the theory thereof, a world that existed in its literary autonomy, as a realm of literary language (for a problematization of metalanguage in terms of "the thought of the outside," see Foucault 1998 [1966]).

This situation, of course, had consequences for both literature and theory. As Radhakrishnan points out:

> Because literature and the cultural excellence it exemplified were assumed to be axiomatic, there seemed to be no reason for the development of a theory that could be *diagnostic and adversarial in intent*. Literature was closed off as the domain of perfection, epiphanic truths, and timeless verities. The very performance of language in literature was contra-distinguished from the social and quotidian aspects of language-in-the-world. It was perfectly admissible for teachers and professors of English to be blissfully oblivious of developments in sociology, linguistics, ethnology, political science, philosophy, psychology, and any form of social epistemology. It was considered the unique privilege of literature to continue its timeless, preordained, teleological path in the face of all sorts of upheavals, ruptures, and revolutions in the social sciences. The conviction was that *great literature did not need to be self-referential in any problematic or critical manner*. (ibid.: 230–231; emphasis mine)

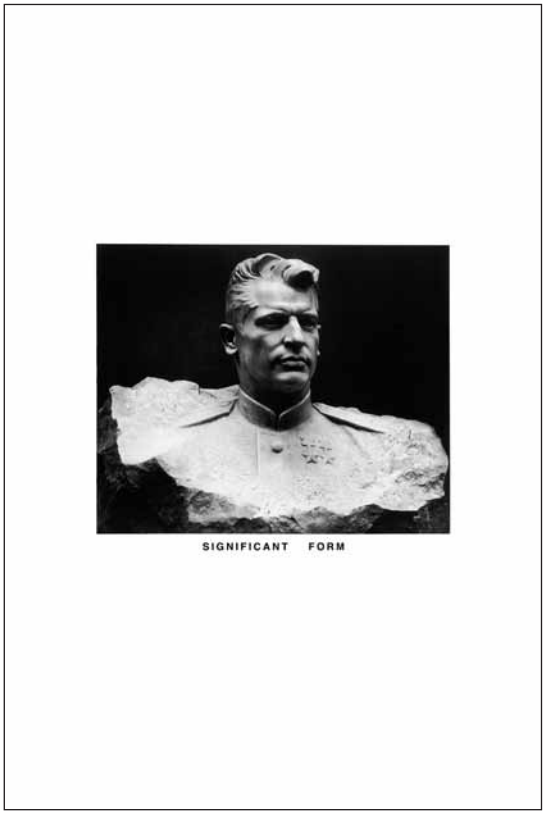


Fig. 50. Kimmo Sarje, *Short course in aesthetics*, 2. Project for *Taidehalli* magazine, 1986.

Ironically, this is now the situation of theory under the sign of the "post." The sublime position of "the literary" has been occupied by "the theoretical"; "occupied" also in the sense of Freudian *Besetzung*, or, as it is rendered in the official English translation, *cathexis* (see Freud 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622, 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96); that is, charged with libidinal "energy," the driving force of desire; in other words, *the libido of theory* as a desire for theory.

To understand my idea properly, it is appropriate to recall Freud's idea of *Besetzung* on which I base my argument concerning the libidinalization of theory typical of the "post." According to J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis (1998: 92), *Besetzung* (in English, *cathexis*, in French, *investissement*) is an "economic notion": "Tatsache, daß eine bestimmte psychische Energie an eine Vorstellung oder Vorstellungsgruppe, einen Teil des Körpers, ein Objekt etc. gebunden ist." Interestingly, although Élisabeth Roudinesco and Michel Plon (2004 [1997]: 89) otherwise define *Besetzung* in similar terms as Laplanche and Pontalis, they maintain that it is "[v]on Sigmund Freud aus dem militärischen Bereich entlehnter Begriff"; that is, psychic energy *occupies*, submits under its power, the object in the manner of military occupation. In this respect, I see things differently; *Besetzung*, in my conception, is a psychic investment, an affective charging, of an object of desire; in this sense, the theory objects of post-theory are charged, invested, by the libidinal allurement of "the theoretical" in terms of the "post."

What was once literature is today theory, or, rather, Theory, also referred to as "high theory" (cf., for example, Young 1990: 163; Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 190–208;

Wolfreys et al. 2006 [2002]: 145). Pondering possible relationships between the Renaissance and contemporary theory at the beginning of the twenty-first century "following the age of 'high theory' in American academia," Rebecca Zorach (2008: 3) remarks:

> If I might try to define high theory, I would call it the emergence of the European post-68, post-structuralist critique of the European philosophical tradition in the new context of the United States, a culture both exuberantly capitalistic and anti-intellectual – and one that had partially, but only partially, absorbed that tradition in the first place. (ibid.)

That comment exactly describes what I understand by the Americanization of cultural theory in the name of "the postmodern" and its latest result, the mode of theory that I refer to as post-theory, theory under the sign of the "post," the sign of "the sublime" and "the subversive," that is, the sign of "the theoretical" and "the political": "the theoretical" *as a form* of "the political."

Like the "closed world" of the Cold War maintained by a specific "politics of discourse" (Edwards 1996), post-theory is in its very *theoreticality* – in its theoretical *theatricality* – a linguistic universe *sui generis*: a peculiar discourse constituted by a politics of words based on an agenda set by this very discursive politics itself for itself; a politics of theory that attempts to subvert the legacy of the Enlightenment constitutive of the reason of the modern by a politics of language in which the sublime appears as the highest sphere of reason: the reason of the imaginary, the reason of the surrational as the condition of possibility of all that is "post." In this sense, the "post" signifies an academic argot, a particular scholarly language with its own idiomatic vocabulary, semantics and style, that is, with its distinctive rhetorics. The more cryptic the language of post-theory is, the more radical it is: theoretical radicalism is the very *raison d'être* of post-theory, its post-political legitimation as the politics of subversion.

Accordingly, post-theory is *a Theory with an Attitude*: whatever one writes in this idiolect is *literally* beyond question, it is legitimated by the writing itself, justified by the configurations of signifiers that reflect themselves in their linguistic particularity in which repetition, understood as Derridean "iteration" (see Derrida 2000 [1988]),[140] and an assumed "uniqueness" combine with one

140 In its ordinary sense, iteration means repetition and is thus synonymous with restatement, reiteration, recapitulation, rehearsal, duplication, retelling and redoing, that is, it refers to acts in which something is recited, reprised or replicated, performed again or ingeminated. But the problem is *what* is it that is repeated in repetition, what is it we iterate in an act of iteration? Is it the same or something different, and if it is something different, is it repetition at all? To emphasize the problematic character of repetition, Derrida gives it a specific meaning by using the word *iteration* in its etymological sense: the root of the word, *iter*, "comes from *itara*, *other* in Sanskrit" (Derrida 1984e [1972/1971]: 315), and, accordingly, iteration and the possibility of iterability refer to a "logic which links repetition to alterity" (ibid.). In this specific sense, iteration implies not only the absence of an original meaning, but also the absence of the presence of an addressee: to be legible, that is, iterable, writing must signify in itself, without an origin and a recipient. But, at the same time, paradoxically, writing is always contextual. As Derrida says: "Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written," "can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion"; thus, "there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring" (ibid.: 320; in terms of *reiteration*, cf. Butler 1993; for differences between Derrida and Butler, cf. Rapaport 2001: 110–112).

another in a manner that is "uncanny" in the Freudian sense of *das Unheimliche* (see Freud 1986b [1919]). What are called "theoretical practices" in postmodern academia (see, for example, Best & Kellner 1997: 19; for a paradigmatic early example of the linguistic figuration typical of the "post," see Ulmer 1989a, 1989b [1983]) constitute, in post-theory, a practice of "the theoretical" as an exercise of theory *as theory*, "theory" in terms of the "post."

As a result, in the world of the "post," *theory speaks of itself by itself for itself*. This is the logic of post-theory, the logic of the discursive agency of the "post," the *primus motor* of post-theory, the sign of its auto-affective autonomy. Thus, the politics of writing constitutive of post-theory is an issue of writing in terms of "the political" defined in terms of *écriture*.

Is there Heresy in the World of the "Post"?

In this manner, the "post" is about the literalism of the signifier, the textualism of the text and the linguisticism of language, in a word, the *scripuralism* of writing; accordingly, "the post," in fact, constitutes an advanced mode of literacy, a literacy in terms of "the theoretical": the epistemology of literariness, the literality of letters, amounting to a *figuration of theory* as a new mode of the literary: whatever there is in the world of the "post" it is *always already* a literary text, a manifestation of writing in terms of *écriture*. This, for me, is the idea of the "liberation of the signifier" (Derrida 1997 [1967]: 19; cf. Zavarzadeh 1992: 10), a liberalization of language in terms of the libidinal. This is the effect of the "post" in post-theory: a *linguistic libertinage* as a promiscuity of signifiers. Thus, the "post" signifies ludic plurality, a playful heteroglossia as a radical heterodoxia. The liberatory effect of/in the "post" implies the freedom of difference in terms of *différance* (Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]), a "truly liberatory program" (Foley 1985: 113), advanced by Derrida: what is my "post" is not necessarily your "post"; therefore, in the world of the "post," as Derrida (1979 [1978]: 103) says, "truth is plural."

Consequently, in the world of the "post," a world of epistemological relativism, or, rather, what I call *epistemological agnosticism*, we can enjoy the pleasure of the undecidable, the pleasure of the aleatory and the contingent. In other words, *the quadrature of the circle* is everyday reality in the world of the "post." This is a world ruled by a postmodern, post-Euclidean and post-Einsteinian relativity theory: *the signifier and the signified are absolutely unrelated to one another* enabling an absolutely aleatory and contingent "meaning." In terms of the "post," not only the *coincidentia oppositorum* is possible, but, more fundamentally, there are no longer any opposites at all since, as a result of a continual deconstruction of what are called "binary oppositions" (see, for example, Johnson 1980a: x–xi; Bertens 2001: 128–135, 147–150; Edgar & Sedgwick 2008 [1999]: 27–28) as a radical anti-binarism (Ebert & Zavarzadeh 2008: 19, 75–76), everything, depending on the perspective, is a variation of the same or an endless diversity of diversities.

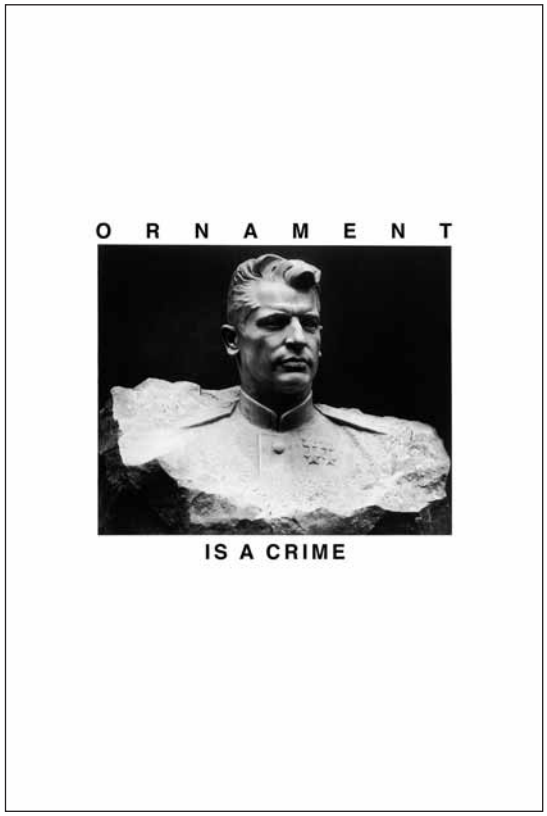


Fig. 51. Kimmo Sarje, *Short course in aesthetics*, 3. Project for *Taidehalli* magazine, 1986.

That is, what we have now under the rainbow of the "post" is an unending *glossolalia*, an incessant flood of words, a ceaseless flow of "free-floating signifiers," enabled by the never-ending deconstruction of binarities, the most horrible tradition of the modern. Thus, what counts is not *what* is said, but what is *said*, "said," of course, in terms of writing.

What happened once in *Café Voltaire* in Zurich is *Kinderspiel* in comparison to the theory games – even the orgies of theory – of today: instead of Dada what we have now is the "post."

As we can see, there is nothing original, in the sense of the originary, in the world of the "post"; what there is is an overwhelming excess of disparate signifiers each having the capacity to signify worlds within worlds, potentialities in their signifying actuality, in their "permanent present" (Jameson 1989 [1983]: 125) of the absent presence in its spectral present absence. There is no past in the postmodern; what counts under the sign of the "post" is the ability of appropriation (see Nealon 1993: 50–71), paradigmatically enacted by postmodern art (see Evans 2009; for interconnections between "Romanticism and the postmodern," see Sarje 1989). In the post-historical world of the "post," we live "on the museum's ruins" (Crimp (1989 [1980]), in the condition of a continuous "after."

Inevitably, this raises the question: what is the utopia of the "post," of course, in terms of *post-utopia* (the only form of utopia in the world of the "post") (cf. Jameson 1988d [1977], 1999 [1982])? It is a "politics of multiple centers and plural strategies" (Ryan 1982: 116); that is, in Derrida's (1978e [1970/1966]: 289) words,

instead of a centre, there is now a "play of substitutions," the "movement of *supplementarity*," that constitutes the "meaning" in post-texts as texts that signify in the mode of the "post." Decentring of the centre implies a disruption of all origins, of all originary points of departure in the sense of what Derrida (1997 [1967]: 12, 26, 97–98, 154, 167) designates as presence, expressed by such terms as, for example, *ousia*, *stigmè*, *nun*, *eidos*, *energeia* and *essence*, and, in these terms, a recognition of the "other" within oneself. This is the end, the final end, of the beginning: we live today in the world of a continuous continuing, the *basso continuo* of the "post" in its radical dissonance. In this sense, the "post" is about "empowerment"; that is, as Haraway (1991a: 177) says in her Sibylline words typical of the "post": "to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial"; in other words: "One is too few, but two are too many" (ibid.).

But, in fact, "the political" – what is "the political" of the "post," "the political" in terms of "the theoretical"? "Writing is the continuation of politics by other means" (Hawkes 1977: 148). This is the way Philippe Sollers, the leading theorist of *Tel Quel* (see Kauppi 1994: 17–39; 1996: 73–79, 104–118; ffrench & Lack 1998c; cf. Wollen 1982: 208–215; Rodowick 1988: 14–35; Brandt 2000), a literary-theoretical journal and a faction with a Maoist inclination, defined, in his highly indicative article, "Ecriture et révolution," the idea of "the political" during the heyday of the *événements* of May 1968, the euphoric events of the "Parisian Spring" bringing about a new conception of theory in terms of "the political" (see, for example, Macdonell 1987 [1986]: 12–23; Dosse 1998b [1991]: 142–203; Ross 2002; for a historical contextualization concerning the intellectual situation in postwar France, see Khilnani 1993; for a political history of the May events in Paris, see Wolin 2010); that is, "the political" in terms of what I call the politics of words, "the political" as post-political linguistic figuration celebrating the subversive; linguistic radicalism as the most radical form of "the political." This is the idea of post-theory: the continuation of the politics of *Tel Quel* by other means, the means of the "post."

Like "sex," that is, simulation of sex in the form of post-sex, post-theory lives from excess, extravagance and hyperbole, in a word, grandiloquence: a theoretical self-aggrandizing in the mode of linguistic *grandezza*. This is the intrinsic affinity of "the sexual" and "the theoretical," the autotelic auto-affection of desire (cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]: 165–166), in the world of the "post": "textual autotelism" (Thurley 1983: 167–168) as an all-consuming "logomania" (ibid.: 187–194), an affective state of both the post-authorial author constitutive of the "post" and the text in which the writing "subject" (understood, of course, in terms of the "post") and the writerly object dissolve in the vertiginous delirium effected by blissful textualism, the *jouissance* of theory in the mode of *écriture*. This, for me, is what Christopher Norris (1993: 182–256) calls the "textual sublime."

In other words, the "post" signals a new kind of affection in the world of theory: no longer the suspension of disbelief (the modern), but, instead, the belief in permanent suspension of the real (the postmodern) (cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]) is

what defines the experience of pleasure in the world of the "post": the pleasure of the sublime as the pleasure of the subversive.

The "post" has its post-originary origin where the difference between "the literary" and "the theoretical" disappears. This does not, however, imply that post-theory is a new mode of literature *as* literature; no, post-theory is explicitly about theory: *theory as a mode of writing in terms of the literary*, the terms of scripturalism constitutive of *écriture* as writing theory predicated upon "the theoretical" peculiar to post-theory.[141] This is the radical difference, in terms of *différance*, between theory and literature, or rather, between literature and theory: a difference that obliterates itself by itself.

From this perspective, my interest in the present study is to show that cyber discourse, in its academic form as an exemplary instance of post-theory, is in itself an ironic language in the Baudrillardian sense: a linguistic configuration in which "free-floating signifiers," materialized into "things" (for the Kantian *das Ding as sich*; see, for example, Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 75–78, 1990b [1781/1787]: 460–464, 1988b [1783]; Irrlitz 2002: 172–174), enact their own irony in and by their very "thingness." In order to bring this to the fore I use an approach that I call *methodical irony*: a mode of immanent critique based on writerly writing in the manner of writing that thematizes itself as writing: writing on writing, writing on the written, rewriting the written in its own terms (in Freudian terms, cf. Rey 1980 [1977]). It is in this manner that, in the present text, *the "post" as the condition of possibility of the "cyber" is taken in its own terms*. In these terms, I will argue that all that is "cyber" takes place in what I call a theatre of the imaginary (cf. Barthes 1983 [1954]: 80, 1981 [1968]: 36), a mode of theory writing that functions, in Roland Barthes's (1989 [1971]: 5–6) words, by means of a "theatricalization" of language which is not "designing a setting for representation, but *unlimiting the language*" (emphasis mine), bringing forth a "play of signification" (Rylance 1994: 71).

Thus, all that is "cyber" constitutes a *scene of writing* under the sign of the "post" (cf. Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]), the sign of *unlimited unlimitation*, the very sign of linguistic excess constitutive of post-theory as the discursive matrix of cyber discourse (cf. Young 1981b; in terms Derrida's reading of Freud, cf. Jay 1993: 335).

What is important to notice in this connection is that the present text proceeds on the very same scene which it speaks about; that is, there is no "off" for the text at hand precisely for the reason that it takes place in the linguistic universe of the "post," in its textual immanence in the mode of immanent critique.

141 In its own way, this kind of writing as literary activity abolishing the borderlines between the literary and the theoretical has one of its origins in Barthes's conception of author as *écrivant*. As Jonathan Culler (1990: 101) aptly summarizes, "[w]hen Barthes looks back on his work in *Barthes par Barthes* [1975], he sees not a critic, nor a semiologist, but a writer." Accordingly, he "does not weigh the validity of the concepts he has stressed but notes their *efficacy as tactics of writing*: they 'make the text go,' they 'permit him to say something'" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In fact, this was his programme from the very beginning; already in 1966, during the epochal conference that initiated what came to be called poststructuralism in America (see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]), Barthes declared that for a true writer, "*to write* is an intransitive verb: one simply writes (or writes a text)" (Culler 1990: 101).

Fig. 52. Kimmo Sarje, *Short course in aesthetics*, 4. Project for *Taidehalli* magazine, 1986.

After the collapse of the modern, we live in a world in which the idea of representation has imploded: after the disruption of the difference between the present and the absent, there is no longer possible to refer to anything outside or beyond the reference itself; that is, to refer to something is to make it present by presenting it by means of self-referring linguistic figuration. In this constellation, language operates by way of presencing, bringing "things" present in the form of signifiers and their kaleidoscopic configurations (in Heideggerian terms, cf. Heidegger 1977f [1953]: 9–10, 2000b [1953]: 12–13). Thus, in the world of the "post," signifiers have taken the place of *dramatis personae*, not as representations of some persons or personifications, neither representing anything in themselves or in general, but as figures *sui generis*: signifiers in the mode of the "post" are hypostasized as post-Greimasian "actants" (see Greimas 1983 [1966]; cf. Hawkes 1977: 89–95; Sturrock 1986: 126–128), as linguistic agents, that, in, through and by their variable figurations, configurations and mutual relations, enact ever-new acts of the linguistic play constitutive of all that is "post."[142]

In this sense, the study at hand, my writing *in the present text*, constitutes a counter-scene in the manner of the Freudian "other scene," *ein anderer Schau-*

142 John Sturrock's (1986: 126) summary of the Greimasian *actant*, a "character" functioning as a "narrative device" but having, in contrast to *actor*, no personal characteristics, succinctly illuminates the idea: "*Actants* are purely formal elements in a narrative, equivalent to the subject and object of a grammarian; they are parties to any action of whatever kind, personal or otherwise, but they have no names, no qualities and no meaning beyond their grammatical role. They are, in short, the product of a structural analysis, the most abstract narrative entities conceivable." (ibid.)

platz (see Freud 1987d [1900]: 541; cf. Lohmann 1991 [1986]: 24–27; Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]: 196–221, 1981d [1972/1970]; for the readability of dreams as psychic and cultural "texts," see Marinelli & Mayer 2000; cf. Parker 1997).[143] If, for Barthes (1977a [1971]: 164), the "theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing," in the study at hand, the practice of writing can coincide only with the writing itself that is the present text in its absence, the present study embedded in what Derrida (1982 [1972]: 59–60, 1984h [1972]: xxiii) calls the "general text" (cf. Howells 1999: 135; Protevi 2001: 2–4, 43–44, 59–66).

In these terms, my interest is the seduction of the signifier, the textual allurement of the "cyber" in the linguistic matrix of the "post." If, as we have seen above, there is no outside in the world of the "post," the premises of what before the "post" was called "critical thinking" or "criticism" are no longer what they used to be; what they are now can be approached from a perspective not dissimilar to medieval theology: is there heresy in the world of the "post"?

What does this question imply? While, as Haraway says above, for her, "passion is as important as irony," for me, in turn, *irony is as important as passion* (cf. Foucault 1996c [1983/1985]). As we will see, this difference is significant.

1.1.2 The Schizophrenic as a Moment of the Postmodern

In the study at hand, I apply the idea of Fredric Jameson (1991: 25–26), according to whom, postmodernism is characterized by a "practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory"; qualities that Jameson attributes to postmodern cultural products (whatever they are), including, among other things, such linguistic forms as "textuality, *écriture*, or schizophrenic writing." Drawing on Lacan's understanding of schizophrenia as a "breakdown in the signifying chain, that is, the interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning" (ibid.: 26), Jameson elaborates on the idea in order to show that meaning in this sense is no longer, as Ferdinand de Saussure already anticipated long before the paradigm of the "post" (see de Saussure 1966 [1916]: 65–70; cf. Culler 1986 [1976]: 18–52), a correspondence between the signifier and the signified, but,

143 In his *Traumdeutung*, Freud (1987d [1900]: 541), reflecting the *besondere Eigentümlichkeiten* of the dream, draws on G. Th. Fechner's idea that *der Schauplatz der Träume ein anderer sei als der des wachen Vorstellungslebens*. For Freud, Fechner's expression offered a point of departure to elaborate on a hypothesis that would allow one to apprehend the specific features of the dream, and finally, the logic of the unconscious. To describe, that is, to *imagine* in terms of theory, this "other scene," Freud constructed an imaginary "microscope" or a "photographic apparatus" inside which there was a space embracing the "psychic locality" that was not real (in the sense of external reality) but *ideal*, that is, psychic (ibid.). This is the "other scene" of dream: dream takes place in a world that has its own logic. For me, this is the logic of the "post," and, by extension, that of the "cyber"; the logic of Freudian *Verschiebung* and *Verdichtung* (see Roudinesco & Plon 2004 [1997]: 1086–1087, 1106–1108) of meaning in the manner of Derridean dissemination and supplementation (cf. Norris 1987: 113–117; Bowie 1991: 70, 217–218), constituting the realm of the imaginary, not in the sphere of the psychic but in *the virtual reality of language effected by figurative writing*.

instead, it is "generated by the movement *from signifier to signifier*" (Jameson 1991: 26; emphasis mine).[144]

In my reading, the origin of the postmodern is precisely here, in the replacement of the "one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified" by the movement from one signifier to another; as Jameson says:

> What we generally call the signified – the meaning or conceptual content of an utterance – is now rather to be seen as a meaning-effect, as that *objective mirage* of signification generated and projected by the relationship of signifiers among themselves. *When that relationship breaks down, when the links of the signifying chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers*. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

This "rubble," these random and unforeseen configurations of signifiers, is the groundless groundation, the unfounded foundation, the basis without basis, of the postmodern, which, in turn, is the cultural matrix of post-theory, theory in the mode of the "post."

Signification beyond Meaning: The Logic of Contingency and Incongruity

In terms of the "post," a sudden jam, a "schizophrenic" interference, between unrelated signifiers, enables a mode of signification in which the meaning is not anticipated by a stable relation between a signifier and a signified, but generated by an unexpected interplay between signifiers – understandably generating, in the world of post-theory, a linguistic euphoria, a theoretical "high," echoing, in the manner of the postmodern, *la mode rétro* (Jameson 1991: 19), the presence of an undefinable sublime celebrated by the Surrealists under the sign of the *merveilleux*, the "marvellous," as an expression of the enigma of desire – excellently described by Salvador Dalí and Louis Buñuel in their *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) (cf., for example, Spector 1997: 102–105; Bürger 1996 [1971]: 82–83; Duplessis 1992 [1950]: 30–32; for "Breton as the poet of unreason" constitutive of Surrealism, see Foucault 1996a [1966]; for Harawayan "cyborg surrealism," cf. Haraway 2000a: 121).[145]

144 As John K. Sheriff (1989: 3), quoting Charlton Laird, the editor of *Webster's New World Dictionary*, says, the problem of meaning in general is that "nobody knows what meaning is or how to define it"; in a similar vein, W. W. Quine, in terms of analytical philosophy, dryly states that "pending a satisfactory explanation of the notion of meaning, linguists in the semantic fields are in the situation of not knowing what they are talking about" (ibid.); and, more widely, as Jeffrey Stout, in terms of literary studies, wryly states: "literary criticism, religious studies, classics, history – in short, all disciplines involving the interpretation of texts – will consist largely in failure to deliver promised goods" (ibid.: 3–4), that is, the meaning they are searching for. Therefore, Stout's modest proposition is simply that, "at least in hermeneutical theory and literary criticism, we quit talking about the meaning of texts altogether" (ibid.: 4). And, with regard to the "treatment of meaning in structural and deconstructive theories," what they have achieved is "merely the working out of what is implicit in Saussure's definition of the linguistic sign" (ibid.). So, much ado about nothing?

145 According to J. Hoberman (1999 [1984]: 61), "*Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or* were films which subverted, deconstructed, and disrupted the institutional mode of representation while simultaneously attacking the 'purity' of the French commercial avantgarde." Notwithstanding that the "subversion," "deconstruction" and "disruption" are proclaimed intentions of post-theory, what it achieves, in comparison to Dalí and Buñuel, is an *attitude* of radicalism, a simulation of the "political," as what I call *the politics of boudoir*, that is, noise in the literary salon of the postmodern.

Here, Jameson does not, of course, understand schizophrenia in psychoanalytic or clinical terms as a mental disorder. What Jameson (1991: 29) calls "schizophrenic disjunction or *écriture*, when it becomes generalized as a cultural style, ceases to entertain a necessary relationship with the morbid content we associate with terms like schizophrenia." Now schizophrenia "becomes available for more joyous intensities," precisely for that "euphoria," which Jameson has seen, in his analysis of postmodernism, "displacing the older affects of anxiety and alienation" (ibid.; cf. Currie 1998: 96–113; Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]). "Euphoria" and "intensities" – these are, for Jameson (1991: 32–33), constitutive attributes of postmodernism, dominated by a concomitant mode of affective perception, "a strange new hallucinatory exhilaration" that is constitutive of all that is "post." In these terms, the breakdown of the "signifying chain" (see Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]: 153–154) amounts to a mode of writing that engenders a new kind of pleasure, the pleasure of schizophrenic textuality, a mode of random textuality appearing as a *familiar but strange* reality: the reality of "things" that emanate "hallucinatory exhilaration" as the mode of the *merveilleux* celebrated by post-theory.

In schizophrenic experience, the temporal unity of the experience, the very internal structure that is based on a continuum and coherence between the successive moments of the event, occurrence or incident (constitutive of memory and identity), is broken down into an a-temporal concurrence of random perceptions. To illuminate how a schizophrenic experience "feels," Jameson quotes from the autobiography of a schizophrenic:

> I remember very well the day it happened. We were staying in the country and I had gone for a walk alone as I did now and then. Suddenly, as I was passing the school, I heard a German song: the children were having a singing lesson. I stopped to listen, and at that instant a strange feeling came over me, a feeling hard to analyze but akin to something I was to know too well later – *a disturbing sense of unreality*. It seemed to me that I no longer recognized the school, it had become as large as a barracks; the singing children were prisoners, compelled to sing. It was as though the school and the children's song were set apart from the rest of the world. At the same time my eye encountered a field of wheat whose limits I could not see. The yellow vastness, dazzling in the sun, bound up with the song of the children imprisoned in the smooth stone school barracks, filled me with such anxiety that I broke into sobs. I ran home to our garden and began to *play "to make things seem as they usually were*," that is, to return to reality. It was the first appearance of those elements which were always present in later sensations of unreality: *illimitable vastness, brilliant light, and the gloss and smoothness of material things*. (Jameson 1991: 27; emphasis mine)

This is the moment of the "post" – the moment of the implosion of meaning constituting the powerful experience of *signification*, the moment of pure signification without the disturbing presence of referents and referentiality: without the semantics of reality (understood as the actual present given by sense perception). This is the vertiginous effect of the "post," its vertiginous affect as the moment of "high."

In Jameson's description, what is characteristic of a schizophrenic experience is a "breakdown of the relationships between signifiers" which implies a "breakdown of temporality, memory, a sense of history" (Featherstone 1991a: 58). As a result, time, place and meaning have broken down into *an unreal reality* in which the past, present and future have lost their temporal coherence and turned into a prodigious and exuberant sensation of detached and fragmentary moments of the presence of the present, presence in its sheer presence.[146] What happens here is that an "experience of pure material signifiers," in other words, a "series of pure and unrelated presents of time," constitute a heightened perception and feeling of the presence of something unnameable that precisely as such seems to have a bursting meaning in its meaninglessness, an oppressive significance, that no longer belongs to the "normal" course of signification. The presence of the present takes on a reality of its own: as a perceived, or more appropriately, *experienced*, reality, the real becomes a reality that is beyond all the real. This is the reality of the "post" in its most sublime form: the *jouissance* of "the theoretical" of post-theory.

As Jameson says, "thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs the subject with *indescribable vividness*, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming, which effectively dramatizes the power of the material – or better still, the *literal* – signifier in isolation" (Jameson 1991: 27; emphasis mine).

> This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of *euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity.* (ibid.: 27–28; emphasis mine)

These are the keywords of the "post": "euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity," a mode of excitement and allurement of an enigmatic presence experienced as a powerful emanation of an unexplainable absence that easily, unnoticed, turns into hysteria, the highest moment of post-theory: the *jouissance* of theory released from the burden of signifieds, theory as an overwhelming presence of pure signifiers, as pure signification without the disturbing presence of meaning (cf. Derrida 1978e [1970/1966], 1981a [1972], 1997). An enhanced experience of a void, a pleasurable loss of the subject, and an abundant presence of the absent in the mode of the "imaginary" – that is the sensibility of the "post" as the sign of the ultimate emancipation brought about by the counter-Enlightenment of post-theory (see, for example, Lacan 1977b [1966]; Bowie 1991; Borch-Jacobsen 1999 [1990]; cf. Gutting 2001: 234–257; in

146 This overwhelming sensation of the present, the intensified moment of the *presence* of the present, appears also in the experience of *das Unheimliche* as analysed by Freud (1986b [1919]; cf. Roudinesco & Plon 2004: 398–401; Parker 1997: 72–79), as well as in what in Surrealism is referred to by the term *merveilleux* (Spector 1997: 102–105). Especially *das Unheimliche*, the "uncanny," has in the postmodern, particularly in the 1990s, as Martin Jay (1998: 157–164) says, "The Uncanny Nineties," experienced an unprecedented popularity in cultural theory; a paradigmatic example: according to Bruce Grenville (2001b), what he calls "experiments in cyborg culture" are manifestations of the "uncanny."

terms of the "cyber" as the theoretical crystallization of the "post," see Parker 1997: 186–235; cf. Žižek 1997b: 127–164).

In other words, it is this condition of impossibility that is the condition of possibility of all being in terms of the "post." In this sense, in the world of the "post," as for Derrida, "[i]mpossibility is not the *opposite* of the possible: impossibility *releases* the possible" (Beardsworth 1998 [1996]: 26).

Extrapolating from the clinical description of schizophrenia to the products of contemporary culture, Jameson concludes that postmodernism comprises a constellation in which unrelated signifiers constitute the very condition of possibility not only of all meaning – inasmuch as there is any meaning in a culture ruled by *affects* constitutive of the commodity form – but of signification in general. In terms of textuality, this implies that the "isolated signifier is no longer an enigmatic state of the world or an incomprehensible yet mesmerizing fragment of language but rather something closer to a sentence in free-standing isolation" (Jameson 1991: 28; in terms of *parole in libertà* celebrated by Futurism, cf. Orban 1997: 24–28, 52–53; Sheppard 2000: 209–221). In my reading, this implies that the "post" speaks a language in which both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic register are imploded into one another and the semantic has been replaced by the syntactic, though, in a manner in which the syntactic follows some unknown logic of contingency and incongruity (for a paradigmatic example, see Haraway 1997).

In other words, the textual world of the "post," as an intertextual conglomeration of post-texts, "dissolves the union of signifier and signified," and thus "frees the signifier from its enthrallment of representation" (Maltby 1991: 5; cf. Butler 1984: 47–59; Collins 1989: 43–49).

The Motivity of Post-Theory: The Desire for the Subversive

The breakdown of the signifying chain, an overwhelming presence of isolated signifiers, the intoxicatory, hallucinogenic power of language effecting a strange state of euphoria and intensities, and an alluring derealization of reality (cf. Porombka & Scharnowski 1999), all that crystallized in the suggestive power of "free-floating signifiers" – that is the logic of what I call post-theory, theory as writing in the mode of *écriture*: not only that meaning is now generated by the movement from signifier to signifier, even not only that the signified is to be seen merely as a meaning-effect of the signifier, but what we currently have in theory in the mode of post-theory is just writing, unending textuality, the *pleasure of linguistic schizophrenia* as the very source and motivation of theory. For this reason, post-theory is a projection of a specific desire: the desire for the pleasure of schizophrenic glossolalia as a linguistic disruption, the breaking down of the signifying chain: the supreme form of theory in the name of the "post."

In this sense, in post-theory, indeed, as Jameson (1988b [1983]) says, pleasure is a "political issue": the "post" is about the politics of words as the pleasure of the

surplus of signifiers set free from signifieds. For this reason, *desire is inscribed in language in post-theory*; this is the post-Kantian *Bedingung der Möglichkeit*, the condition of possibility, of the "post" (cf., for example, Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 146, 155; Derrida 1997), and, at the same time, its mesmerizing effect.

In other words, *post-theory is a manifestation of desire for theory*; it is a *jouissance* effected by the linguistic of language: a *jouissance* as the pleasure of desire simultaneously engendered by and proliferating theory: desire inscribed in the language of the "post" working as its self-effecting motivity, a *pour-soi* of the linguistic of language, "the *purely* linguistic" (Jameson 1988e [1971]): 10) in its very linguisticity. That is, in the world of the "post," it is language in itself that is the agency of "auto-affection": instead of the subject "hearing oneself speak [*s'entendre parler*]" (Derrida 1973 [1967]: 79), it is the linguistic of language as the "signifying substance" (ibid.; cf. Baldwin 2001: 94–95; Howells 1999: 11; Dews 2007 [1987]: 11–12) that, through auto-affection, effects "the theoretical" of theory in post-theory. It is in this manner that the desire for theory is inscribed in the text in and by the act of writing: it is *the unconscious of the textuality* of the text calling forth the post-surreal moment of the *merveilleux* as a hallucinatory experience of language in the world of the "post" (cf. Freud 1961 [1905], 1986d [1915–1917], 1987d [1900]; cf. Parker 1997: 1–26; Foucault 1996a [1966]).

Thus, it is in, by and through the auto-affection of theory that "the theoretical" is the condition of possibility of "theory as fiction" (Bowie 1988 [1987]) in the world of post-theory (in terms of "theoretical fiction," cf. Stratton 1990: 26–28; Young 1990: 203; Currie 1998: 51–70; Derrida 2000 [1988]: 88). This is the genesis of post-theory as a theory discourse constituted by what I call *theory-fictions* (cf. Berman 1988; McQuillan et al. 1999; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b). To theorize in terms of theoretical fictions, of course, is as such nothing new. In his *Traumdeutung*, Freud was aware that his theory concerning the specificity of dreams as a moment of the "primal process" was, in the last analysis, as he himself says, a *theoretische Fiktion* (Freud 1987d [1900]: 604, 609), a "theoretical fiction," a theoretical construction that was based neither on empirical facts nor on deductive conceptualization, but on fictional speculation (cf. Derrida 1973: 150; de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 150–151; Thomas 1990: 1–16; Shaviro 1997). What is new in the theory discourse of the "post," however, is that what was an *auxiliary construction* for Freud is now the whole idea: post-theory is a realm of theory-fictions that are "there" in the imaginary of language, effected by the linguistic of language: fictions that constitute a world *sui generis*.

In this sense, post-theory is a manifestation of what Jonathan Culler (1997: 95–109) calls "performative language" (cf. Johnson 1980a: 52–66; Austin 1975 [1962]; Butler 1990, 1993, 1999; Salih 2007; Jagger 2008; in terms of Durkheim's idea of "social facts," see Rafanell 2009; for a critical contextualization of "the performative" in postmodern theory and culture, see McKenzie 2001). As a result, writing theory in the mode of the "post" turns into the seduction of

"the theoretical," "the theoretical" that is a *theory-effect* of post-theory: instead of argument it is the allurement of language, the enticement of *écriture*, that engenders the figures and figurations in the configuration of post-theory. Understanding, therefore, is not the motive of the "post": it is the proliferation of "free-floating signifiers" that motivates the somnambulistic pilgrimage of post-theoretical theory writing as the auto-motivity of auto-affective language under the sign of "the theoretical," a mode of writerly writing that is presented as "theory" in the world of the "post."

In short, *post-theory is a prolonged funeral procession of critical thinking: a carnival of the surrational in terms of theory*.

Now, is post-theory about pseudo-theory? No, of course, not. *Post-theory is post-theory*. This is the idea of the "post" in post-theory. In other words, in terms of *jouissance*, the "post" has an inexhaustible capacity to produce post-Barthesian "reality effects," *effets de réel* (Barthes 1968), in the world of post-theory. In this sense, the "post" *signifies* the "real" in its very theoreticality: a reality as a virtual reality of language.

If this is the situation of theory in terms of the "post," a situation prevailing since some two decades in postmodern academia, then, what I call *the postification of theory* already began in the 1980s, a time of transition when *the postism peculiar to the postmodern turned into the postism of theory under the sign of poststructuralism*: the time of theoretical *postality* in its excessive *postness* (see, for example, Rutsky & Macdonald 2003a: xi; Levine 2004: 19–23; Weinstone 2004: 181–196; Flieger 2005: 24–25; Derrida 1990b; Habermas 1992 [1988]; Zavarzadeh et al. 1995; McCance 1996; for a political critique of "the posts," see Carter 2004: 48–52; for critical discussions in terms of dissent towards "Theory's Empire," see Patai & Corral 2005).[147] It is in this manner that a "post-haste, or the rush to 'post'" (Hitchcock 1996: 74) has dominated the scene of theory in Western academia since the early 1990s when poststructuralism and the postmodern, *as a result of their reciprocal interplay*, became the predominant paradigm in the humanities, the time when "postism," "postality" and "postness" created "the sound" of theory, the "*Zeitgeist* in Babel" (Hoesterey 1991b); in other words, when post-theory in the name of Theory began its triumphal "march through institutions." In this sense, referentiality lost its position as one of the basic ele-

147 It was the prominent sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf (1990 [1988]: xiv) who already complained in the late 1980s the excessive proliferation of "postism": "'Postism' has of course become a veritable author's disease: more and more writers want to impress on us that unheard-of things have happened in recent times, but since they cannot put their fingers on them, they settle for the claim that we are therefore living post-some-other-time. Perhaps I should not be too hard on them. For one thing, some of these authors are very good. Daniel Bell's *Coming of Post-Industrial Society* remains an important book, although Bell has moved on to other and perhaps profounder things. I myself spoke of 'post-capitalist society' in my book on *Class*. And under the influence of the excitable 1970s, I began a long manuscript entitled 'Modernity in Eclipse,' which fortunately I did not publish. The redeeming feature of its title is that it avoids 'postism,' though only just; an eclipse passes and through a glass darkly one can see the sun return unscathed. For me at any rate, the sun of modernity has returned." (cf. Callinicos 1989: 25) So, how to avoid "postism"? This question is no longer relevant in the contemporary world in which the "post" has become the very sign of "contemporaneity," the emblem of being *au courant*, at least in postmodern academia.

ments of theory. This is the point of no return in terms of theory, the point at which, as Scott Lash (1990a: 69) characterized the situation of theory at the time, "post-structuralist theory" began to turn into "postmodernist" mode of writing as a result of the self-referentiality of theory.

> If post-structuralist theory is postmodernist – and most commentators think so – then the Derridean "il n'y a pas un hors du texte" would be the postmodernist canon. This would also be canonical self-referentiality. The absence of an *hors-du-texte* would mean a semiotics consisting solely of signifiers, in which utterances have their effect totally apart from any relationship they may have to signified and referent. In fact signified and referent are banished as *hors du texte*, and meaning is generated through the differential values of elements and spaces in networks of signifiers. (ibid.; cf. Devaney 1997: 9)

In my reading, this is the moment of the "post" in contemporary theory; the moment of a radical disappearance, or, rather, banishment, of referentiality from theory understood in terms of reference and referent, that is, as a relation to theory-external reality (whatever it in itself might be). In other words, the *hors-du-texte* is now within theory, inside its very structure, built-in in its textuality as *the reality of theory*. This is the idea of the "post" in post-theory: the virtual reality of language enabled by the unending postification and posting of the "post," constituting the postism of post-theory, the postality of "the theoretical" in its very postness.

Accordingly, this is the paradigm shift of theory that constitutes the theatre of the imaginary in the study at hand.

From this perspective, it is not difficult to see that post-theory is the "third wave" of theory preceded by structuralism and poststructuralism after the seminal inventions of de Saussure and Freud (for an overview, see, for example, Milner et al. 1990; Rosenau 1992; Sim 1992; Docherty 1993b; Newton 1997 [1988]; Drolet 2004b; for the "origin" of the "post" in Derridean deconstruction, see Arac et al. 1983; in terms of "'postmodern' reason," see Norris 1985; as a critical evaluation, see Norris 1992, 1993; for a radical critique of the "post," see Callinicos 1989; Zavarzadeh et al. 1995). In short, post-theory is an effort, time and again, to *misread* de Saussure and Freud by means of Saussurean linguistics and Freudian psychoanalysis; that is, to radicalize de Saussure and Freud in terms of "the political," "the political" constitutive of the politics of theory in postmodern academia. That is, subversion is not only the seductive signifier of post-theory, the guiding star of all that is "post," but, more fundamentally, as linguistic disruption of meaning, subversion in the mode of "subversive writing" (Maltby 1991: 17) is celebrated as the very "method" of post-theory (cf. Leitch 1983: 39–53).

It is in this manner that, in the world of the "post," one can enjoy the thrill of participating in a subversive movement, an academic movement of postmodern radicalism that celebrates "the subversive" of "the political" that is "the political" of "the subversive."

In these terms, the subversive is the driving force, the libido, of post-theory: the libidinal language of the "post" is a linguistic form of transgression (in Bataillean terms, cf. Foucault 1977a [1963]); in other words, "the sexual" and "the textual" are intrinsically related in the world of the "post." This is the idea of the desire for theory constitutive of post-theory: a desire for pleasure as a pleasure of desire in which "the sexual" and "the textual," under the vertiginous impact of the "post," mingle with one another in their promiscuous interrelations, in the ecstasy of writerly delirium. What was once "polymorphous perversity" for Freud (1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213) has turned into polymorphous libidinality in post-theory in the mode of what Rick Rylance (1994: 68) (referring to Paul de Man's critique of Barthes' "formalism") calls "perverse polysemy": the *jouissance* of the subversive in terms of the textual of the sexual and the sexual of the textual. Thus, in post-theory, in Barthes's (1977 [1975]: 133) words, "meaning and sex become the object of a free play," the linguistic play of "free-floating signifiers."

The *écriture automatique* of Post-Theory

From the perspective outlined above, the study at hand is a writerly intervention that employs the language of its object through the textual strategy of *appropriation* (see Foster 1985: 166–179; 1999 [1982/1984]: 197–199; Nealon 1993: 50–71; Bertens 1995: 91–94; Wheale 1995: 119–121; Solomon-Godeau 1999 [1984]: 80–81; Evans 2009);[148] that is, the study "speaks" the language it is studying, but differently, not at a metalevel, but from an internal distance by way of what Baudrillard (1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b [1983]: 182, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 127, 1997c: 13, 2000b: 54, 77–78) calls "objective irony"; that is, in the manner of immanent critique (provided, of course, that critique *as critique* has still any meaning in the world of the "post"; in terms of "metafiction," cf. Currie 1995). As such a double-text (cf. Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]), as writing upon writing, the present study is a reading; a reading in the sense of writing: a *writerly* reading (cf. Barthes 1974 [1970]; Culler 1982: 31–83, 1990 [1983]: 87–90). This is a reading that unfolds and evolves as a "text as writing-reading" (Kristeva 1998b [1967]: 29–30), through a "double gesture" implying a "double play" (Derrida 1982 [1972]: 6): *the reading at hand is dia-*

148 "Seriality and repetition, appropriation, intertextuality, simulation or pastiche: these are the primary devices employed by postmodern artists," describes Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1999 [1984]: 80) the practices of postmodern art. "Utilized singly or in combination," these devices can be employed "as refusal or subversion of the putative autonomy of the work of art as conceived within modernist aesthetics" (ibid.). According to Solomon-Godeau, Barthes's 1968 essay "The Death of the Author" is the "*ur*-text to delineate the implications of the shift away from the author as both source and locus of meaning" (see Barthes 1977b [1968]). In my view, though, the loss – or better, the abandoning – of authenticity and originality was first theoretically elaborated by Walter Benjamin in his seminal essay "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (Benjamin 1974 [1936]). Craig Owens (1980a, 1980b), in turn, in his two ground-breaking essays, entitled "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," emphasizes appropriation along with site specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity and hybridization as the key strategies of postmodern art (cf. Crimp 1989 [1980]; Evans 2009; in Baudrillardian terms, see Zurbrugg 1997; in the context of popular culture, see Chambers 1986; Frith & Horne 1987, Hebdige 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Fiske 1989).

critical: taking the discourse of the "cyber" as a manifestation of the "post" my reading proceeds in terms of *différance*.[149]

In this sense, the text of this reading comprises the textual world effected by the "cyber," a textual universe that, in turn, is an effect of the "post," the subtext and the paratext of all that is "cyber," its constitutive linguistic matrix.

What is important here is that in its desire for the subversive, the "post" produces ever-new instances of what Freud designated by the term *Fehlleistung* or *parapraxis* (see Freud 1990h [1901]): *auto-affective slips of the tongue are the true substance of post-theory* (in terms of Freud's theory of *Witz* as a manifestation of the unconscious, cf. Freud 1961 [1905]). In this sense, the "post" is always already "para" in its linguistic contingency, in its very postness constitutive of the postality of post-theory.

In terms of contemporary theory based on the idea of the postmodern in the sense of poststructuralism (see, for example, Poster 1989; Leitch 1992; Sim 1992; Seidman 1994b; Lentricchia & McLaughlin 1995 [1990]; Barry 2002 [1995]; Biti 2001 [1997]; Davis 2004; Harris 2004 [1996]; Simons 2004a; Koch 2007; for the historical background, see Simons 2002), a mode of theory that has emerged in the wake of the "linguistic turn" in the Western academic world, whatever the object of study is, it is *always already* given in language; this is "the postmodern turn" (Seidman 1994a) brought about by poststructuralism in theory, a turn to a linguistification not only of theory, but, more fundamentally, of the very object world of theory. Thus, in terms of the "post," there is no separation between epistemology and ontology since both "the epistemelogical" and "the ontological" now belong to the same order, the order of "the linguistic."[150] This is "the spell of language" (Pavel 2001 [1989]) constitutive of the paradigm of the "post."

149 It is important to emphasize that reading is not the same as interpretation. While the idea of interpretation is based on the hermeneutical assumption that there is "somewhere" – as "far away" and as "deeply concealed" as it might be – the *origin* of the meaning (though, not the original meaning) that can be reached through meticulous work on the text to be interpreted, in contrast, the idea of reading does not presuppose an origin: each reading is an original in itself (of course, only as far as it is original in the sense of non-repetition) that as such constitutes the "origin" of itself. In this sense, each reading is a universe in and for itself; and this universe is literally endless: a reading does not reach a closure; a reading is a never-ending text that all the time opens anew (cf. Culler 1997: 55–69; Biti 2001 [1997]: 496–504; Barry 2002 [1995]: 34–36, 73, 91; Selden et al. 2005 [1985]: 267–277; cf. Docherty 1996).

150 Postmodern theory, based on the linguistification of "the theoretical," that is, as an outcome of poststructuralism and as such, as Jameson (1984: 61) says, a "theoretical discourse" being "itself very precisely a postmodernist phenomenon," is the theory matrix of post-theory, a mode of theory in which the strict line between the object and the way in which this object is considered has collapsed; in other words, theory is approached as a literary genre in terms of *reading*, and what is the "literary" in this context is part of general textuality. In this sense, theory entails a linguistic enterprise that *constructs* the object it is studying. As Jonathan Culler (1997: 1) says, "[i]n literary and cultural studies" what we have is "just plain 'theory'"; it is "not the theory of anything in particular, nor a comprehensive theory of things in general"; instead, it is a theory that becomes theory in the process of theory that brings forth the object it is theorizing, an object which it is a theory about (for a discussion, in broader terms, of this kind of understanding of theory, or theory after the "linguistic turn," *theory as Theory*, see, for example, Arac 1986b; Burgin 1986; Buttigieg 1987; Berman 1988; Poster 1989; Bannet 1989, 1993, 1993; Best & Kellner 1991; O'Hara 1992; Sarup 1993 [1998], 1996; Simons & Billig 1994a; Dellamora 1995; Cahoone 1996; Eagleton 1996, 2003; Dews 2007 [1987]).

To understand *this* "turn," the only way leads, as Heidegger (2000b [1953]: 7) says, *auf eine ungewöhnliche Weise durch die Sprache*, "through language in a manner that is extraordinary" (Heidegger 1977f [1953]: 3–4, 1985a [1957/1958], 1985b [1958]). In language, one is always implicated, if not even involved in complicity; therefore, commitment is the only way "out." But, this implies not an unconditional surrender; on the contrary, it is language in itself that provides the possibility of what Linda Hutcheon (1989: 11) calls "paradoxical postmodernism of complicity and critique, of reflexivity and historicity" (cf. Hutcheon 1988: 201–203).

In my reading, this means that in language, every counter-move not only provokes, but it also necessitates the very same language it purports to counter. There is no counter without that to which it is counter: the "counter" defines itself *in relation* to its object which it is thus *dependent on*, precisely as its counter-effect. Thus, the counter, in its unending possibility, is a sign of aporia: it implies the *cul de sac* of undecidability (cf. in Derridean terms, cf. Norris 1992: 49–50), and it is this dead end that is the very beginning of post-theory, the beginning of unending postification of ever-new "posts" in the free zone of theory within postmodern academia, a realm of theoretical radicalism that came into being after the implosion of the sign in the 1970s as a result of the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris (see Excursus 2).

This is the world of the Lyotardian *différend*, the "differend"; as Lyotard (1996 [1983]: 13) says, the "differend is the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be." Not only that this "state includes silence, which is a negative phrase," but, at the same time, "it also calls upon phrases which are *in principle* possible" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In other words, the Lyotardian differend marks the difference that prevails between the potential and the actual, the present and the absent. Thus, to meet the possibility of open speech is "to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them" (ibid.; cf. Haber 1994: 19–21: Reese-Schäfer 1995 [1988]: 63–77; Gutting 2001: 321–331). In these terms, antagonistic disputes, consisting of irreconcilable positions and irresolvable conflicts, constitute the radical heterogeneity in a world in which it is precisely the antagonism articulated by the differend that is the way out of aporia.

This, indeed, is a noble, if not a sublime, vision of ethics that sublates the dilemma of insurmountable differences.

In the world of the "post," however, the Lyotardian differend as a genuine dispute over positions turns into what I call the *politics of words*: the differend becomes a moment of theory itself, the irresolvable contradiction within theory that drives theory forward (cf. Lucy 1997: 173–175), or, in Derridean terms, "the undecidable" as the very premise of theory (see, for example, Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 138, 1981d [1972/1970]: 211, 220–222, 1982 [1972]: 3, 46, 2000 [1988]: 103, 116; cf. Nealon 1993: 16–18, 36–39); that is, what Lyotard designates as "phrases" take on the meaning of linguistic figures as "free-floating signifiers" in post-theory; and silence as an issue not(-yet) pronounced, a matter not(-

yet) discussed, is replaced by an all-inclusive *noise of theory*. This is the way in which "the theoretical" is enacted in post-theory: *the art of noise in the theatre of the imaginary*; that is, the "aesthetic" in terms of the "post," a postmodern reminiscence in the Freudian sense of the term (see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 86: *der Hysterische leide[t] größtenteils an Reminiszenzen*; emphasis in the original; cf. von Braun 1994 [1985]: 21–76, 1996: 138); in other words, a theoretical reminiscence of Dada and Surrealism. Hence, the aporetic, rather than the apodictic, rules the post-textuality of post-theory. In these terms, a post-text, as a scriptural embodiment of post-theory, is, by necessity, always – *always already* – in itself a manifestation of textual differend: an irresolvable "dispute" over meaning turned into unending signification in terms of aporia.

Thus, incommensurability is the *Weltanschauung* of the "post," *undecidability its highest ideal*. In this world, there are no differences; instead, *différance* is the general rule of the "post."

In this manner, the encountering of the counter-effect, being itself effected by a counter countering another counter, leads to a never-ending circularity of mutually re-activating counter-moves, a post-logical *circulus vitiosus* of reciprocal re-reactions re-reacting on re-reactions – a situation that explains the enormous productivity of post-theory, its overwhelming excess, in comparison to which the self-reproducing theory production in the 1960s and 1970s in the name of "revolution," the theory-euphoria under the sign of "the political" (see, for example, Wiggershaus 1986; Fink et al. 1998; Hecken 2008), was like an overture preceding a Wagnerian opera. This, in my view, is at the same time the cause and the effect of what Daniel O'Hara (1992: 180) calls the "new orthodoxy in theory" (quotation marks in the original) ruling the world of post-theory:

> I see theory now as a "field" for the performance of a certain cultural ritual of postmodern intellectuals. The "theorist" assembles from the collective archive figures, texts, contexts, issues, problems, and questions and reconfigures them into a story told according to the constraints of professional conventions upon personal desire, as these constraints apply – unevenly, to be sure – to the theorist in question. […] A suitable *mask play* is thereby performed, in which pressing intellectual, political, and personal matters are played out but in a conventional form that privileges the contingent imagination of professional revisionism. (ibid.; emphasis mine)[151]

151 The intellectual situation of American academia at the beginning of the 1990s described by O'Hara can be compared with the French intellectual situation in the aftermath of the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris. Foucault's (1996b [1982]: 375) experience of those times is illuminating: "I think that before '68, at least in France, you had to be as a philosopher a Marxist, or a phenomenologist or a structuralist and I adhered to none of these dogmas. The second point is that at this time in France studying psychiatry or the history of medicine had no real status in the political field. Nobody was interested in that. The first thing that happened after '68 was that Marxism as a dogmatic framework declined and *new political, new cultural interests concerning personal life appeared*. That's why I think my work had nearly no echo, with the exception of a very small circle, before '68." It is in this situation that, for Foucault, pleasure took on a new theory-political meaning, and, in general, the personal became political and what was called "micropolitics," intimately connected to the "libidinal," came on the agenda of theory in French intellectual circles (for paradigmatic examples, see Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]), finally leading to the politics of theory in the name of the "post."

"Professional revisionism"? Yes, in the form of professional *re-visioning*: ever-new visions of the same, "the theoretical" of theory; theory as the theatre of the imaginary. On the scene of the "post," ever-new variations of the figures already seen constitute the plot, the escalation of "meaning" beyond meaning: the proliferation of signification, the excess of "the theoretical" in its extravagant postality effected by the very postness of the "post." This is the logic of post-theory. As Derrida, referring to the "problem" of the interpretations upon interpretations, says: some interpretations are "more powerful than others," and, therefore, the "hierarchy is between *forces* and not between true or false" (Smith 1988: 47; emphasis mine). For this reason, there are "interpretations which account for *more meaning* and this is the criterion" (ibid.; emphasis mine); this is the criterion of "the theoretical" in terms of the "post," except that at issue is no longer the meaning of meaning, but the suggestiveness of signification.

This is the foundation of the theoretical productivity of post-theory, the reason of its enormous productive capacity: instead of "interpretations" (in terms of the "post," there is nothing to interpret) it is now *readings* that proliferate theory in the world of the "post," readings enabled by and enabling unending *signification*: ever-new re-readings of re-readings: *what you read is what you write* – that is the creative principle of the "post," the ethos of postality in its radical postness.

Yet, this, in fact, is nothing new. This was already the situation of theory in the 1980s, during the initial phase of what Steven Connor (1989: 18) calls the "postmodernism debate," a theory discourse which, paradoxically, "advertises its commitment to indeterminacy, openness and multiplicity, but provides in itself the discursive means to limit the force and implications of such questions" (ibid.). The debate on the postmodern can be seen, according to Connor, as an "intellectual-discursive process which simultaneously multiplies critical options and binds them into recognizable and disseminable forms" (ibid.). Or, in words of Dana Polan (1988: 49), quoted by Connor: "The postmodernist effect intensely frames critical discourse as a kind of mechanistic *combinatoire* in which everything is given in advance, in which there can be no practice but the endless recombination of fixed pieces from the generative machine." Thus, whatever you say is already said, *always already, toujours déjà*. Whatever you need for your theory is there, in the form of pre-fabricated linguistic figures, pre-written formulas and phrases in the virtual memory of the discourse machine of the "post."

This is the *écriture automatique* of post-theory, its linguistic auto-affection effected by the "post," the master signifier of post-theory based of the post-surreal *automatisme* of language.[152]

152 In this connection, it is appropriate to recall Breton's definition of Surrealism: "Surréalisme, n. m. Automatisme psychique pur, par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale. […] Le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d'associations négligées jusqu'à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée. Il tend à ruiner définitivement tous les autres mécanismes psychiques et à se substituer à eux dans la résolution des principaux problèmes de la vie." (Breton 1924: 42)

Things That Are Not There Are There

One could think that this kind of self-mirroring circularity would constitute a serious obstacle to the regeneration of theory, to its innovation capacity. So what is the way out of this redundancy, the repetition of the same in the form of unending variations? More theory, of course, more theory, more theory in the name of the "post." Theory as a manifestation of never-ending *différance*, a sublime state of "the theoretical" beyond the realm of the Lyotardian differend. This is the situation today in the world of post-theory. More theory: readerly writing and writerly reading in terms of theory under the sign of the "post." Thus, in terms of the "post," it does not make sense to speak of "the death of theory" (Lucy 1997: 163–183; in the context of the "death of the author," cf. Barthes 1977b [1968]; Foucault 1977e [1969]). The "post" is a diametric antithesis of any thesis postulating a death of theory (whatever it might be). In the world of the "post," theory is alive more than ever. A different matter altogether is what it has to say or whether it has anything to say at all.

In this sense, *the "post" is the very saviour of theory: the "post" implies the resurrection of theory before its death*.

As for reading, it is appropriate, however, to emphasize, as self-evident as it may be, that there is no reading without language, without signification; without signifiers woven into a text; signifiers which do not represent concepts and thoughts in the form of signifieds, as de Saussure (1966 [1916]: 65–78) – the "founder of modern structural linguistics" (Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 84), and as such the initiator of the linguistic paradigm of contemporary theory – saw the function of language.[153] Instead, signifiers *produce* the signifieds they seem to "refer" to (see, for example, Culler 1986 [1976]: 18–50; for a historical contextualization, see Albrecht 2007 [2000]: 15–70). Accordingly, the act of writing of a signifier ("theory") does not bring forth a corresponding signified (a/the meaning of theory, its sense) as an idea or a concept existing in its own right as a differentiated and articulated meaning; instead, it opens up an unending movement from one signifier to another (see Hawkes 1977: 19–28; Sturrock 1986: 14–27; Harland 1987: 11–19). In terms of the "post," this implies a limitless time-space of signification beyond the constraints of time and space, a process of linguistic

153 With regard to his contemporaries, de Saussure was radical in that he entirely excluded the level of the referent from language, the world of the "real" objects, and conceived of language as a system of arbitrarily assembled signs (*signe*) consisting of two equally important sides, the signifier (*signifiant*) and the signified (*signifié*), producing the meaning only through the internal relations between the signs, without any recourse to the external world (see de Saussure 1966: 65–70, 114–122). For this reason, "in language there are only differences *without positive terms*" (ibid.: 120), and therefore, "*language is a form and not a substance*" (ibid.: 122; cf. Koerner 1973). This is not only the key to de Saussure's theory of language, but also the point of departure of structuralism. However, the theoretical tradition of structuralism, initiated by de Saussure (structural linguistics) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (the study of mythologies and culture based on structural linguistics) (see Hawkes 1977; Sturrock 1986; Harland 1987), has been questioned since the late-1960s and superseded by various strands of poststructuralism (see, for example, Culler 1986: 116–131; Bannet 1989; Sim 1992; Sarup 1993 [1988]) seeing language, instead of a static structure, as a dynamic process, as a spatial-temporal matrix of unending signification. The founding text of this anti-foundationalism is Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (see Derrida (1978e [1967/1966]).

figuration proliferating ever-new signifiers, thus producing *a realm of textuality as a world in itself*.

If there is such a thing as "the ideology of the text" (Jameson 1988c), it is the textuality of the text in itself in post-theory; textuality as innumerable instantiations of the textual in the manner of the "transcendental signified" produced by the signifier "text" (cf., for example, Derrida 1978e [1967/1966]: 280, 1982: 19–20, 49–50; 1997: 20; Sheriff 1989: 33–34; Dews 2007 [1987]: 39), textuality as the ultimate substance of all being in the world of the "post."

Accordingly, it is a world of textuality, the world of the "cyber," effected by the "post," that is the object of my study. And, consequently, in this *text* – the study at hand – I am interested, firstly, in the reality effects of words, and, secondly, in a "reality" as it is reflected by words which in themselves are effects of discourse. This is the manner in which the "cyber," at the same time, is both the origin and the result of cyber discourse. In other words, what is called "feedback" in cybernetics (see Wiener 1961 [1948]) is the self-referentiality of the "cyber" in cyber discourse: like the "post," the "cyber" constitutes its own condition of possibility, its post-Kantian *Bedingung der Möglichkeit* (cf., for example, Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 146, 155), as an unending movement of textuality in the name of the "cyber," instantiated by innumerable "cyber-texts."

This is the manner in which things that are not there are there in the world of cyber discourse, a world enabled by the "post." In other words, cyber discourse, to apply Northrop Frye's new-critical expression, is a "self-contained literary universe" (Lentricchia 1980: 166), for which there is no "extraliterary scene" (Lentricchia 1995 [1990]: 432) to be find. The "literary" of cyber discourse is enacted by its own tropicity, the tropes effected by the "cyber," the "thisness" of all that is "cyber" in terms of the "thatness" of the "post."

This is the irony of cyber discourse: its literality is in its literariness, in its post-formalist *literaturnost*, which, however, is a direct opposite of the *ostranenie*, "defamiliarization," of Russian formalists (see, for example, Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 2–4; Stam et al. 1999 [1992]: 10–11; Womack 2006: 112–114): the suggestivity of the "cyber" is not in its estrangement, but on the contrary, in its effort to familiarize the strange, the realm of the imaginary, by means of alluring linguistic figures, its techno-imaginary tropes, its post-poetic conceits. Therefore, to understand cyber discourse it is to be taken at its own words, *literally*.

1.1.3 Reading in Terms of Objective Irony

If there is a theory of irony, there is, of course, also *an irony of theory*. Although the former is not necessarily the precondition of the latter, nevertheless, to understand the latter it might be helpful to have an idea of the former (cf., for example, Rorty 1989; Hutcheon 1994; Colebrook 2004). In other words, although irony does not necessitate theory, there is no theory without irony.

To consider irony in terms of theory, of course, has its own irony: to be valid, a theoretical explanation of irony has to be also able to explain the irony of theory; that is, to present, in one way or another, itself as a theory that in itself can become not only an object of irony, but, more fundamentally, *be irony within itself as theory*. In this sense, relating theory and irony to one another, a question arises: is it, in fact, precisely the irony of theory that is a theory of irony in and by itself?

This question, of course, can be discussed in various contexts in which language is considered with regard to its capacity to say something "else" or "more" it appears to be saying (see, for example, Hutcheon 1988: 142–140, 1994: 9–36; O'Hara 1992; in terms of "Romanticism and the postmodern," see Sarje 1989). But it is certainly illuminating, if not instructive, to approach it by studying the way in which irony is *woven* into the *textuality* of cyber discourse, a postmodern discourse that is effected by the "post." In other words, the discourse of the "post" is permeated by "irony as a principle of structure" (Brooks 1951 [1948/1951]); that is, irony, in this context, is not just a specific trope, but it is a structural aspect of the "post," an intrinsic dimension of the postness of the postality constitutive of the "post."

This is the very logic of the *post-modern*: the "post" of the postmodern is what the postmodern is to the modern: a radicalization of self-referentiality. But there is a difference: while the postmodern implies a critical self-reflexivity of the modern, in the sense that the modern becomes conscious of itself in the postmodern (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]), *the "post" of the postmodern is a reified moment of the postmodern*, its self-satisfied reflexion: the "post" is a sign of complacency, a contented smile with a cause that is not its own.

There Is No "Cyber" without the "Post"

Precisely here is the "structural irony" of the "post": it is its own double; in other words, *the "post" is a pastiche of the postmodern*. We remember Jameson (1991: 21) saying: "the art language of the simulacrum, or of the pastiche of the stereotypical past, endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a *glossy mirage*" (emphasis mine). If the postmodern, by necessity, had still the modern as its content (the postmodern as a radicalized reflection of the modern), what we have in the "post" is the "waning of the content" (ibid.: 25) altogether; that is, a "disappearance of the historical referent" (ibid.) (which is the modern in the postmodern). This *colossal emptiness is the very "content" of the "post."*

For this reason, the "post" of the postmodern has a complex relationship to parody (cf. Hutcheon 1985) – a relationship of which the study at hand, in its entirety, is a writerly reflection – that has emerged along with the inevitable triumph of the postmodern as the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991). As Jameson says:

> In this situation parody finds itself without a vocation; it has lived, and that strange new thing pastiche slowly comes to take its place. Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of *a linguistic mask*, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs: it is to parody what that other interesting and historically original modern thing, the practice of a kind of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls the "stable ironies" of the eighteenth century. (Jameson 1991: 17)

It is precisely this "linguistic mask" that is my interest in the present study. The "post," in the mode of pastiche, is about "blank parody." In other words, the discourse of the "post" is "speech in a dead language," but, paradoxically, it is this very language that makes the enormous vitality of the "post," its overwhelming productivity: its aesthetics of excess and hyperbole, its futuristic rhetoric, and, not the least, its commodity and consumption oriented erotic, its complacent erotic which is its eroticism of complacency. If, in the order of the "post," there is something Linda Hutcheon (1988: 94) calls "the ironically undercut megalomania" of the postmodern, it is, in my reading, the "ironic" in the manner of pastiche: a self-contented smile frozen to a mask of complacency. In other words, the "ironic" here is not subversive, rather, it presents itself as "subversion" by way of blank mimicry. But then again, this is the specific aesthetic and erotic allurement of the "post," its camp-like abundance which, indeed, includes an ironic moment (cf. Sontag 1966 [1964]), the moment of incredulity in its own terms, an intrinsic duplicity that is aware of itself.

In the study at hand, the discourse of the "post," as well as the present text as its ironic double, takes place in the linguistic matrix of what I call post-theory; that is, a mode of theory predicated upon writing in the sense of *écriture* (cf. Jameson 1991: 26, 29; Kristeva 1980 [1969]); a mode of writing in which the written is the ontological proof of its epistemology, and vice versa (in terms of the writerly/textual radicalism of the *Tel Quel* circle as a form of "the political," cf. Kauppi 1994: 138–139, 159–163, 189–190, 2010: 47–57; Brandt 2000; in terms of "language to infinity," cf. Foucault 1977b [1963]).[154]

That is, in post-theory, *écriture* is the condition of possibility of "the theoretical" constituting post-theory as theory. Accordingly, within the paradigm of post-

154 In his "Introduction," the translator of Kristeva's *Desire in Language* (Kristeva 1980 [1969]), Leon S. Roudiez (1980: 19–20) explains the meaning of *écriture*, "writing," in Kristeva: "This word must unfortunately convey two distinct meanings as it corresponds both to *écrit* [writing in the sense of the written, written matter, script; certificate, testimony] and to *écriture* [the faculty of writing, the mode of writing, handwriting; style] (in the recent, stronger sense of the latter term). The situation is somewhat confusing in French, but worse in English. *Ecriture* is what produces 'poetic language' or 'text' (in the strong sense of *that* word […]). One could possibly use the word 'scription' to convey the sense of contemporary *écriture*." In this sense, what Roudiez says about *écriture* in Kristeva (cf. Moi 1985: 150–178) can be applied to *écriture* in general in the "French context" of contemporary theory; that is, in reference to theory discourses relying on "French theory" or poststructuralism (theoretical approaches deriving from or drawing on Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, and other French theorists).

theory, it is no longer possible to think in terms of thinking; instead, if thinking as such, as thinking, is still possible at all in the contemporary world (cf. Heidegger 2000d [1952], 2000h [1965]), it is possible only as writing in terms of writing, the terms of the written. These terms are the terms of language, the terms of *différance* (see Derrida 1982: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]), also in the context of the Lyotardian differend, the context of the aporetic as its own sublation (see Lyotard 1996 [1983]; in Derridean terms, cf. Beardsworth 1998 [1996]: 31–33). This is the logic of the "post," the logic of ambiguity and undecidability, in the final analysis, the logic of aporia as the only way out of the duplicity of language: *the apodictic of the aporetic as its own sublation* (cf. Butler 1984: 60–82; Buttigieg 1987; Dellamora 1995; Docherty 1996). In writing, the linguistic of language is the very "substance" of the written; a substance that is informed by the unending movement of *différance*.

All this is constitutive of the radical in-difference that is the *differentia specifica* of the "post" in its relation to the postmodern: if differences are still possible in the postmodern as a radicalization of the modern, in contrast to that, the paradigm of the "post" implies a cultivation of in-difference as a politics of *différance*: in terms of the "post," there is no difference that makes the difference necessary for distinctions. This is the very reason for the overwhelming productivity of the "post," its linguistic excess that is the "contents" proper of post-theory, the "substance" of "the theoretical" that constitutes it as "theory."

This is the point of departure of what I call methodical irony: an irony self-reflecting itself with regard to "the theoretical" of theory; an irony in which irony is built-in in the textuality to be examined by way of reading as a mode of writing, and vice versa. In this sense, the irony in the present study as a study of the "post" in the constellation of the "cyber" is irony in its own terms, the terms of subversion *immanent* in the object of the study. In other words, the irony in the text at hand is intrinsic in the Derridean mode of *acentric* (Lentricchia 1980: 164), in its writerly ex-centricity, implying, as Mary Jacobus says, "a multiplicity, joyousness, and heterogeneity which is that of textuality itself" (Hutcheon 1988: 66). This is the sense of Jameson's (1991: 33) "hallucinatory exhilaration" as I see it being manifested in the paradigm of the "post," in its excessive linguistic figuration that is the constitutive idea of "the theoretical" in post-theory.

It is from this standpoint that I approach *the suggestive nonsense that is the very sense of the "cyber" in terms of the "post."*

In these terms, the object of the study at hand is the "real" of the imaginary that constitutes the reality of theory in the world of the "post." In other words, I am interested in the manner in which the things that are not there are there. My focus is on the imaginary of language in the discursive universe of the "cyber" effected by the logic of the "post." In the world of the "post," the real as its own double is the only real: the real in its very duplicity.

Thus, the problem is: how is it possible to inquire into things that do not exist, but which, at the same time, are not non-existent either? In other words, if there is no difference between fiction and reality, nor between the fictional and the factual, nor between the fictitious and the theoretical (cf. Haraway 1991a: 149–150), how is it appropriate to approach objects that not only are there in language, but, more fundamentally, are to be apprehended, to be made *intelligible*, by no other means than in terms of language? The answer is implied by the question itself: to apprehend the objects to be considered they are to be approached in language, through language, paying attention to *the effects of the linguistic of language*, in and through which the things peculiar to the discourse to be studied are given, in and through which they, in the final analysis, *exist*. Thus, the "post" in post-theory is about *the pleasure engendered by the possibility of the impossible in terms of theory* (cf. Derrida 2002a [1996/1998]: 56, 2002b: 396, 2005 [2001]: 74–92, 114, 159, 168; Beardsworth 1998: 31, 33, 42–44; Hobson 1998: 59–61; Lacan 1977b [1966]); that is, what I call *the theoretical thrill* of the "unthought" (Derrida 1984h [1972]: xxviii; Pefanis 1990: 134), or even the "unthinkable" in its very unthinkability (in the context of the Cold War, cf. Kahn 1960, 1962, 1984; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005), constitutes "the theoretical" of post-theory.

In this sense, cyber discourse, as a manifestation of a specific writing style in the mode of the "post," is an effect of all that is "cyber" that, in turn, is effected by cyber discourse. But there is no "cyber" without the "post." The "post" is the *logos* of the "cyber": the "post" is the logic by which the "cyber" becomes "cyber."

This is the logic of the study at hand: I am *writing in terms of writing*, the terms of the written; that is, the terms of the "post."

Writing in Terms of Writing, or, the Ecstasy of Signification

This kind of circular movement of signification, of course, is pertinent to language in general; this is the precondition of all discourse. In this manner, each discourse produces the "objects" which it is a discourse about (see Foucault 1992a [1969], 1996e [1972]; Rorty 1996 [1986/1979]: 41–43; Marti 1999 [1988]: 41–47; Kögler 2004 [1994]: 33–48; Schneider 2004: 88–94), and, in turn, each "object" proliferates, in its own way, the discourse it is the "object" of; this is what Hannelore Bublitz (1999) calls *das Wuchern des Diskurs*, "the sprawl of discourse" (cf., for example, Young 1981a: 8–11; Nola 2003: 406–411). Thus, according to Foucault (1992a: 49), the task does not consist of "treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations), but, rather, as *practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In these terms, what is at issue in the study at hand is "the ordering of objects" (ibid.) constitutive of discourse. To specify, the problem concerns "words and things" in the way in which *words as things* that, in turn, are *things as words,* in themselves enable the specific proliferation of discourse typical of the "post."

This is the double logic of discourse as a linguistic formation that brings about the "things" by means of certain words. That is, seen discursively, things *are* words that constitute the "thingness" of things. This is "the order of things" (Foucault 1996o [1966]) that determines the discursivity of discourses.

It is in this manner that the things that are nominated in discourse come into being by nomination; this is the idea of Foucauldian "nominalism"; as Foucault (1990k [1976]: 93), with regard to power, says: "[o]ne needs to be nominalistic"; power is "the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." Similarly, sexuality is "the name that can be given to a historical construct" (ibid.: 105; cf. Balibar 1992).

In the world of the "post," the imperative of the nominal takes its final turn: language in itself turns into nominalism: *what you name is there by force of naming*. This is the idea of what I call the *linguisticism* constitutive of post-theory.

What, however, is peculiar to cyber discourse as a mode of post-theoretical linguisticism is that as a language of desire it is a *libidinal language* that effects its own libidinality, the pleasure of desire evoking desire for pleasure, the reciprocal double bind of *jouissance* in the world of the "post." Desire, the *modus operandi* of cyber discourse, creates the "objects" it desires for, and, at the same time, desires for the "objects" it has created. In both dimensions, cyber discourse is about production and proliferation of desire that takes place in language, through discursive figures that manifest desire (Turner 1997 [1984]: 232–234; Frank 1991: 51–52, 62–65). Thus, the dissemination of the libidinal by way of linguistic figuration is the driving force of cyber discourse as a discourse enabled by the "post" (cf. Lash 1990b: 63–69, 87–89, 177–179; Featherstone 1991a: 34–40; Derrida 1981b [1972/1969]). In this sense, what is at issue here is the constitution of desire; in Judith Butler's (1999 [1987]: 24) words: "In the case of desire, we must ask, what kind of world makes desire possible?" That is, "[w]hat must the world be like for desire to exist?" (ibid.).

This is an important question, indeed; a question that enables the historicizing of the postmodern and its later derivations, post-theory and the cultural constellation of the "post." In my reading, one of the implications of Butler's question concerns the historicity of language, not so much in terms of linguistics as in terms of the discursive substance, the universe of linguistic figures and figurations, that constitute a language as a language in and of a certain historical situation. Thus, to reformulate Butler's question with regard to the study at hand: *what must the world be like for post-theory to exist?*

In terms of the "post," the answer is clear (provided, of course, that there is anything "clear" in terms of the "post"): in a historical situation in which the political economy of neoliberalism has penetrated the innermost structure of academia it is "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991) that

determines not only the intellectual landscape, but the very substance of contemporary theory.

In this situation, it is the "world" conceived of by the linguistic figuration of post-theory in itself that enables the desire for theory not just to exist, but to become the driving force, the libido, of theory, and, as such, "the political" in the politics of words as a politics of theory (cf. Lash 1990b: 80–96). In these terms, in the world of the "cyber," it is nothing else but the very "cyber," *as an effect of the "post,"* that is the condition of possibility of desire in and of cyber discourse. It is desire understood in this manner, as Derridean "auto-affection" of the linguistic of language constitutive of the "post" (see Derrida 1973 [1967]: 79–80, 83, 85–86, 1978c [1967/1966]: 197, 230, 1982: 40, 109, 1997: 20, 98, 154, 165–167, 250, 257, 286; cf. Terada 2001), that creates the "objects" of cyber discourse (for a paradigmatic example of textual/writerly auto-affection in terms of the "post," see Clough 2000: 114–115): "things" that exist as "free-floating signifiers," as phantasmatic objects of desire enacted by the discourse itself; desire not so much as an expression of the Baudrillardian "ecstasy of communication" (see Baudrillard 1988d [1987]), but, rather, in the mode of the *ecstasy of signification* enabled by the excess of linguistic figuration constitutive of the "post."

This is the genealogy of all that is "cyber," in the most exemplary way manifested by the ecstatic visions of "cyberspace" and the "cyborg," celebrated by cyber-theorists in the theory-fictions typical of cyber discourse (for paradigmatic examples, see Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002).

In these libidinal "objects" of cyber discourse, not only, as Haraway (1985: 64) says, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion," but what is equally important is that the borderline between fiction and theory is now also transgressed. In this manner, the discursive figures of cyber discourse are theory-fictions that, according to the logic of the "post," embrace a realm of the imaginary that counts as real (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 593–626; cf. Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; von Braun 2001; in terms of postmodern theory, cf. Silverman 1983: 157–162; Bowie 1991: 98–102; O'Hara 1992: 33–34).

With regard to the idea of theory-fiction, cyber discourse, paradoxically, "represents" the "crisis of representation" peculiar to the postmodern (see, for example, Foster 1985: 128–132; Harvey 1989: 49–54, 204–219; Jameson 1991: 51–52, 127–128, 169–170; Rosenau 1992: 92–108; Bertens 1995: 239–243; Deane 1995 [1990]: 356–357; Wheale 1995: 154–155; Wallis 1999 [1984]). In the matrix of the "post," the crisis of representation has reached its ultimate point, the point of no return: the signifier no longer *re*-presents the signified; instead, from now on the signifier only *presents itself* in the mode of the incessant "re," the mode of post-Derridean "iterability" (cf. Derrida 2000 [1988]). In this way, beyond all the referential relations (except, of course, to itself), cyber discourse is a manifestation of postmodern pataphysics in the Baudrillardian manner

(see Baudrillard 1990b [1983]: 14, 28, 85, 1990c [1983]: 165, 1993c [1990]: 108, 149, 1994b [1992]: 1–9, 17–18, 1997c: 13–14, 1997e: 41–42, 2000b: 52–54; Kellner 1989: 162–163, 180, 203, 1994: 14–20; Genosko 1994a: 104–116, 160–161, 1994b: 293; Levin 1996: 196–208, 277–278; for the idea of pataphysics in Jarry and its applications thereafter, see, for example, Henderson 1998: 47–51; Fell 2005: 13, 53–54; Shattuck 1979; Bök 2002; Ferentschik 2006), a language in which the imaginary has taken the place of the real.[155]

That is, in the sense William Gibson (1995 [1984]: 67) describes cyberspace, cyber discourse is a "consensual hallucination" in itself; an imaginary space effected by the language of the "cyber," a language that enacts the objects it speaks about.

This is the politics of words constitutive of cyber discourse; words that do not signify by referentiality but by self-reflexivity: words that constitute a world *in the virtual reality of language* in its perpetual post-Lacanian "mirror stage" (cf. Lacan 1977f [1966/1949]; Bowie 1991: 21–26, 197–198).

The politics of words is not about what is there to be "mediated" or "described" – that is, to be *re*-presented – by means of language; instead, it is about the *excess* of signification typical of all that is "post," the surplus value of the linguistic of language; the surplus value not of "meaning," but of the evocativeness of the figures of language created by the language itself. This is the condition of possibility of the intelligibility of the "cyber" effected by the logic of the "post," the logic of linguistic promiscuity: *the "sexual" of the textual*, the language-immanent desire constitutive of all that is "post."

Thus, because the "object" of the present study consists of words, I am interested in their discursive effects: a world brought about by words, a world called into being by words, words that circulate in the discursive universe of the "cyber." This is the world of cyber discourse, a world constituted expressly by what in cultural theory are called "free-floating signifiers," signifiers that engender the signifieds they are the signifiers of (cf. Thurley 1983: 166–176; Leitch 1988: 270–276; Sheriff 1989: 32–50; in terms of postmodern art, cf. Foster 1988). In this manner, cyber discourse is about things that are there due to the effects of all that is "cyber." In cyber discourse, words become things in their own right, "things" that "are there" regardless of whether they exist or not. In the world of the "cyber," signifiers are the objects they signify; this is the postmodern mode of "objectivity" enabled by the "post."

155 The idea of *pataphysics* (originally spelt 'pataphysics) originates from the fantastic world of Alfred Jarry, especially from his absurdist-satirical novel *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician* (1911). According to Jarry, pataphysics is the "science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics"; in this sense, pataphysics is a "science of the particular," explaining a supplementary universe; thus, pataphysics is the "science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments" (Shattuck & Taylor 1965: 193–194; cf. Bök 2002; Ferentschik 2006; with reference to Baudrillard, see Kellner 1989). This is the key to my idea of the virtual reality of language constitutive of cyber discourse, the world of the "cyber" as a linguistic universe in which everything, in terms of the surrational, is possible because the logic of the "post" has made the very possibility of the impossible impossible.

It is in this manner that writing in terms of writing is the condition of possibility of post-theory, a mode of theory in which "the theoretical" is the very "object" of theory.

What If You Cannot Say What You Mean?

It is precisely here that the Baudrillardian objective irony presents itself. Accordingly, this is the point of departure of the approach I am employing in the study at hand: the logic of what I call *methodical irony*; an approach which makes it possible to consider theory in its intrinsic irony, or, as Baudrillard (1990e: 17) says, "theory as objective irony."

In his discussion of the logic of objective irony, Baudrillard (1988b [1987]: 40) emphasizes his position as a "position of the analyst" (which, of course, has its psychoanalytic connotations), a position that includes a certain "ambiguity" that is in a tension with the position of the text as a text, as a textual universe having its own logic – like dream in Freudian theory (see Freud 1987d [1900]), or *écriture automatique* in Surrealism (see, for example, Gershman 1969: 35–79; Chéniex-Gendron 1990 [1984]: 47–60; Spector 1997: 23–24, 42–47, 98–107).

The position of objective irony, in fact, is a double position for it implies, on the one hand, "the position of a text," and, on the other, "the position *adopted in the text* in relation to its object – or at least the object described by the text itself" (Baudrillard 1988b: 40; emphasis mine). It is from this position of the double perspective that objective irony emerges, including a certain provocative moment; as Baudrillard explains:

> In the sense that the text attempts to move towards the end of something – towards a sort of catastrophe, a *something lost* – there is indeed an element of provocation, since the text must be situated within its own logic, within its own processes. There is a provocation in that one wishes to accelerate this logic. One goes therefore in the same direction as the text – but one accelerates, one goes much faster towards the end of the text. And one plays on the logic itself to be able (at least) to reach a point beyond it, so as to make the system reveal itself more clearly. It is more or less a strategic position that one adopts: one of precipitation, of acceleration, as demanded by the text itself. (ibid.; in terms of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961], 1998b [1961])

With regard to the relationship between an analyst and the text to be analyzed, one can take a position simultaneously as an analyst and an author or a writer (or a speaker), a position, as Baudrillard says above, being adopted *in the text in relation to its object*. This ambiguity of being simultaneously an analyst and what I call a *textual agent* creates the possibility of approaching a textual universe in terms of irony *inscribed in its very textuality* (cf. Derrida 1981a [1972], 1984b [1972], 2000). In this manner, as Baudrillard explains:

> One is compelled to *produce* meaning in the text, and one produces this meaning *as if* it arises from the system (even if in fact the system lacks meaning) in order precisely to play that meaning against the system itself as one reaches the

> end [of the text]. So there is a position here – a third position – which I would describe as that of *objective irony*. (Baudrillard 1988b: 40–41)

This "third position" – the position between an analyst and a reader (a reading writer and writing reader) as a textual agent situated in the text simultaneously *following and anticipating* the intrinsic movement of a text in its own irony – is, *in this text*, my position. Thus, as Baudrillard says:

> Objective irony is not subjective irony: it is not an irony based on solipsism or any separation of discourse from the subject. *Objective irony is precisely the irony whereby one is able to turn the system, to make it work against itself, to play against itself.* This creates an ironic effect within the text, since its position is bound to be ambiguous. (ibid.: 41; emphasis mine)

In this manner, "one always in a sense remains the subject of a discourse, any discourse, so one always in a sense assumes the position of an analyst" (ibid.). What is, however, absolutely important here is to observe that "one must also exert the same strategy to the *object* of discourse" (ibid.), the things made by the words of the discourse in question. In other words, in the same way as "one works with the subject, one must also *work towards the position of pure object, towards the 'vanishing point' of discourse itself*" (ibid.; emphasis mine); that is, to elaborate on the discursive perspective as a double perspective; that is, to proceed in reading from both the point of view of the text and of oneself within the textual space opened up by the discourse. In this manner, what the text that one is writing (as the text at hand) – that is, working upon – involves is, at the same time, "both provocation and analysis": there is a "simultaneous requirement to give meaning to the text (analysis) and also to give an end to that meaning (provocation)" (ibid.).

> And what really differentiates this procedure from other processes of negation – for example, the negative dialectic of Adorno – is precisely what I call objective irony. That is, there is a movement within the text, from subjective irony as used by Adorno and others (based on the irony of the subject) to objective irony – *the irony of the object itself*. (ibid.: 41–42; emphasis mine)

In other words, *objective irony is immanent irony*, an irony that is inscribed in the objects in themselves. This is the point of departure in my approach in terms of methodical irony as an application of Baudrillard's "objective irony" (in terms of Baudrillardian "pataphysics," cf. Genosko 1994a: 115–116).

What is important here, as Baudrillard (1988b: 42) says, is that by applying the textual strategy of objective irony, one achieves a distance to the text, "not a 'critical' but an 'ironic' distance," a distance "between the subject and the text – and when this occurs, then of course the position of the analyst disappears" (cf. Baudrillard 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 1998a [1997]: 70–71, 115). What remains, as I read Baudrillard, is the textual agent *within* the text, an *agent provocateur* produced by the text in itself in the mode of writing in terms of the written (cf. Bignell 2000: 33). This is the idea of immanent critique: the position of the critique is not outside, but inside the language to be considered; that is, the critique pro-

ceeds in terms of the language under consideration, within the linguistic space created by that language.

This is my position in the present text as a text that takes place *within* cyber discourse. In the manner of Baudrillard's "objective irony," the textual world of cyber discourse as a conglomeration of "cyber"-texts in the textual matrix of the "post," speaks of itself by itself in the textual space of the present text, the text of the study at hand. If, in cyber discourse, as a techno-imaginary manifestation of post-theory, there is a politics of language, it is, in the very same terms, also the politics of my writing in the present text. And, if cyber discourse is about a politics of linguistic performance, then it is also about my text: a politics of linguistic performance that produces what it names; that is, a politics of words engendering things that are *within language*, writerly things existing as linguistic figures that constitute a reality in and of themselves: the virtual reality of language in terms of the "cyber."

The irony of this politics is about the politics of irony (in terms of the "politics of parody," cf. Butler 1990: 137–141). But what is the irony in the politics of irony? *The irony is that you cannot say what you mean because you cannot mean what you say, and vice versa*. Words and meanings are in a radical incongruity with one another (cf. Gane 2000: 58). If the meanings of words remain beyond meaning what remains are plain words, even – or explicitly – in their excessive suggestiveness. As a result, in the final instance, the "post" is about a radical loss of innocence in the sense of the naiveté of serious theory. But, not only that, in critical terms, nothing can be taken at face value, and, more fundamentally, there is today no such a thing as "face value" in the first place. Speaking about "assaults by literary and philosophical theory on modernist formalist closure" in postmodern discourse, Linda Hutcheon (1988: 124) maintains that "postmodern fiction has certainly sought to open itself to history," or, in Edward Said's words (referred to by Hutcheon), to "the 'world.'" It seems, however, "to have found that it can no longer do so in any remotely innocent way" (ibid.). Is there any way out of this predicament? What Hutcheon calls "un-innocent paradoxical historiographic metafictions" situate themselves "within historical discourse, while refusing to surrender their autonomy as fiction" (ibid.), enabling thus a linguistic space within which a critical position as an enactment of irony becomes possible. What is at issue here is:

> a kind of *serious ironic parody* that often enables this contradictory doubleness: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel status in the parodic reworking of the textual pasts of both the "world" and literature. The textual incorporation of these intertextual pasts as a constitutive structural element of postmodernist fiction functions as a formal marking of historicity – both literary and "worldly." At first glance, it would appear that it is only its constant ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity that distinguishes postmodern parody from medieval and renaissance imitation. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

In the postmodern, what we have instead of "medieval and renaissance imitation" is what Hutcheon calls an "intertextual parody of historiographic metafic-

tion" that offers a "sense of the presence of the past, but a past that can be known only from its *texts*, its traces – be it literary or historical" (ibid.: 125).

This is the situation in the discursive order of the "post": what we have are always – in the postmodern manner, *always already* – texts in their very textuality. *The "post" implies a linguistic realm of textuality in which texts refer to themselves*; texts that can be considered only within this very realm. Thus, the critical practice of theory is theory in itself; this is "the political" of theory in post-theory.

Irony as a Form of Duplicity

What does this mean in terms of cyber discourse as a techno-imaginary manifestation of post-theory? If we substitute *theory* and *future* for Hutcheon's "literature" and "past" we have not only the situation of the "cyber" in the matrix of the "post," but, at the same time, the condition of post-theory in the cultural constellation of the postmodern. And moreover, what is "historicity" in Hutcheon's description turns into *postmodern futurism* in cyber discourse (see, for example, Haraway 1991f, 1997; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b; Plant 1997b, Dixon & Cassidy 1998; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Gray 2001; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Yaszek 2002; Zylinska 2002b; Chorost 2005). In these terms, whatever we try to say about the "world" of the "cyber" amounts, by necessity, to what Hutcheon calls "serious ironic parody" in terms of Baudrillard's "objective irony." It is in this constellation that "the technological" in cyber discourse, in fact, manifests what Mike Gane (2000: 57–64) calls the "bathos of technology," the anticlimax of the technological sublime (for the technological sublime, cf., for example, Graham 2002: 154–175; Heuser 2003 202–112; Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996; in comparison to Derridean "spectralization," cf. Derrida 1994 [1993]: 127, 133, 154, 159; Abbinnett 2003: 33–36, 67, 144–158, 181–184).

In these terms, the "cyber" is not only a logical consequence of the "post," but post-theory, as the linguistic matrix of the "cyber," is the very condition of possibility of cyber discourse.

As we can see, irony is the language-immanent driving force of both theory and discourse in the world of the "post"; that is, whatever you say in terms of the "post" it always – always already – implies objective irony, not only the immanent irony of the objects spoken about, but, more fundamentally, *the immanent irony of the language in itself* constitutive of the objects under consideration.

Thus, the irony is a discrepancy between words and meaning, a duplicity of an utterance in its own terms (cf., for example, Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 192, 1982 [1972]: 86, 1991 [1987]: 41, 62, 97, 2000 [1988]: 12; Leitch 1985: 20; Norris 1987: 99, 114–115; Hutcheon 1988: 43–51; Royle 2003a: 15, 92; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 251–252; Gendron 2008: 21–25; Ormiston 1988). If, in general, words never mean as such, in their singularity, but through their implicit or explicit relations to one another, by their contextuality and intertextuality, through

their position in the system of language (see de Saussure 1966: 65–70; Derrida 1997: 30–47, 51–55, 1982 [1972]: 18–24; cf. Beardsworth 1998: 8–118; Howells 1999: 47–50), *a fortiori* this is the case in the world of the "post." For the same reason, words also betray themselves not as such, but by being duplicated, reproduced, read in new contexts. Each speech act is in itself always already not a repetition, but a new instance of the word; that is, an instance of "iteration" enabled by the "iterability" intrinsic to language (see Derrida 2000). Thus, every context entails a *recontextualisation*, and, as a result, every duplication implies *a possibility of duplicity*. In these terms, as Derrida says:

> Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called "normal" functioning. What would a mark be that one could not cite? And whose origin could not be lost on the way? (Derrida 1984e [1972/1971]: 320–321)

Inevitably, this raises the question: *what,* then, is it that is "cited" in a citation? This question, in turn, implies the very problem of duplicity (cf., for example, Norris 1987: 99, 114–115; Descombes 1989 [1979]: 140, 151; Taylor 1990: 36, 38, 67, 70, 78, 113, 117, 138, Bové 1992: 72–73).[156] In other words, the double-dealing of citation, the recontextualization through duplication, allows the same be another: a citation is the same *as* another. And, further more, the words read can signify something entirely different from the words written, as we see in a *quotation* from Antonin Artaud *cited* by Derrida:

> I made my debut in literature by writing two books in order to say that I could write nothing at all. My thoughts, when I had something to say or write, were that which was furthest from me. I never had any ideas, and two short books, each seventy pages long, are about this profound, inveterate, endemic absence of any idea. (Derrida (1978b [1967/1963]: 8)

156 The meaning of the word "duplicity" given by dictionaries is in itself an example of the duplicity of duplicity: on the one hand, duplicity refers to the quality or state of being double or twofold, that is, a consequence or result of something duplicated; but, on the other hand, duplicity implies a contradictory doubleness of thought, speech or action, and further, the belying of one's true intentions by deceptive words. In other words, duplicity, in this extended sense, means deception, dishonesty, deceit, hypocrisy and double-dealing, and, further more, can designate even improbity, trickery, ostentation, sham and pretension. In Derrida, or in the Derridean context, however, duplicity is not necessarily the same as mendacity, nor means it intentional deception. Rather, Derridean duplicity implies, on the one hand, the undecidability of meaning, an aporia of signification, and, on the other, duplicity of language in the sense of deceptivity or deceitfulness, treacherousness or delusiveness of words (see, for example, Derrida 1982 [1972]: 86; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 251–252). In this sense, every signifier has a "double-face" and is thus "duplicitious" (cf., for example, Boyne 1990: 142–143, 152; Behler 1991 [1988]: 126, 134; Leitch 1996: 54). For this reason, duplicity is inscribed in the very logic of language: everything that is given in language *can* be deceptive: using language is always *potentially* double-dealing. Therefore, to read at face value can imply a pitfall of self-deception: a text says something but means something else.

Fig. 53. Kimmo Sarje, *He*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm (for a theoretical contextualization, see Sarje 2003).

Regardless of whether one reads Artaud this or that way, his words betray themselves. What Artaud's words say is something different from what Artaud is saying with his words, and what Derrida says about Artaud's words is, again, something else, to say nothing of my words here, in the present text: citing Artaud cited by Derrida I am not saying the same as neither of them. As Derrida (1978d [1967/1966]: 177) says in his "La parole soufflée": "As soon as I speak, the words I have found (as soon as they are words) no longer belong to me, are originally *repeated* (Artaud desires a theatre in which repetition is impossible)." *In other words*, a duplication is not a duplicate, it is an iteration in the Derridean sense (see Derrida 2000), a double that implies a possibility of duplicity.

Hence, there is no irony without duplicity, as there is no duplicity without the double-dealing of words. This is the irony immanent in language: *this is the idea of immanent critique in the study at hand, in my text*.

In general, this is the condition of possibility of the political in the politics of words. What is "the political" of this politics? It is an immanent incredulity in its own words: even you yourself cannot take literally what you say; that is, you must remain true to your own words, words that have meaning only through their intrinsic duplicity. This is the politics of the politics of language in the mode of Baudrillardian objective irony: the politics of duplicity in the sense of the linguistic of language (cf. Derrida 1982: 86; Boyne 1990: 142–143; Behler 1991 [1988]: 126, 134–135; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 252). In other words, *irony says the truth by not saying it*. The political in this politics is precisely the demand to take words as words, *seriously*. That is, *the sincerity of irony is its duplicity*: in

irony, you are always on the side of truth. But this truth is true only in terms of irony. This is the irony of irony. This is the political in the politics of irony (cf. Rorty 1989: 73–139; Donovan 2005: 1–10, 179–225).

This is not only the irony of Haraway's cyborg; this is the irony of all that is "cyber."

It is from this position that I read, among other things, Haraway's (2000a: 172) declaration of position: "All I am really asking for is permanent passion and irony, where passion is as important as irony." Only, as I stated above, for me, the things are the other way round.

1.2 The "Dangerous Supplement," or, What Did Derrida Say?

A world as a text presenting itself, through this very same text, as an object of study performed by means of performative writing – as an approach, this, of course, is a problem in itself; not so much a problem of poetic language in terms of the "figurative" (see, for example, Bové 1983: 12–17; Johnson 1995 [1990]: 42–45; McLaughlin 1995 [1990]: 85–90; Culler 1975; Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1986; Hutcheon 1988), not even as a mode of theory, as a language of "radical textualism" (see, for example, Leitch 1983: 87–164; Gasché 1983; ffrench & Lack 1998c), but a problem in writing that understands itself as an *inquiry* into the linguistic figures that constitute an idiomatic "universe of discourse" to be considered in terms of its own linguistic figuration. This is the problem one encounters studying the world of the "cyber," a "world" that exists only in language, as an effect of language; a postmodern newspeak that in itself constitutes a virtual reality engendered by the linguistic of language, the very function of the *productivity* of all that is linguistic.

While, in poetic language, the never-ending instability of the signifier is the source of the meaning, in contrast to that, in the language of inquiry, a language that is supposed to function as a means of cognition, the constant vacillation of signifiers incessantly undermines the possibility of proper knowledge, knowledge as an understanding of the object in its specificity (cf. Hazelrigg 1989). In other words, the problem is what N. Katherine Hayles (1993c) calls "flickering signifiers" constitutive of all that is "cyber," the condition of possibility of which are the "free-floating signifiers" of the "post." In this constellation, while self-referential linguistic figuration has replaced knowledge as the epistemological rationale of theory, virtuality has taken the place of reality as its ontological object, without, however, that this virtuality is thematized as a specific mode of virtuality: the virtual reality of language that is the epistemo-ontological basis of the "post."

I am not, of course, a proponent of what is called the transparency of language, based on the idea of the stability of meaning; this, indeed, is a linguistic naiveté, and, as such, a theoretical self-delusion. Therefore, in the present study, there is no ultimate difference between poetic and cognitive language, no pristine sep-

aration between "poetic" and "cognitive" signifiers, no strict demarcation line between the language of fiction and the language of factual knowledge ("factual knowledge" that in itself is an impossibility in this context). This is for the simple reason that in the world of the "post" these distinctions no longer exist.

In other words, in the text at hand I am "reading-writing" the language of the object of my study performed as a critical paraphrase of its linguistic figuration.

Taking this position, the present reading, in the final instance, is a reflection on Jacques Derrida's (1997: 158) postulation that *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*. If "there is nothing outside of the text," or, if "there is no outside-text" (notice the difference), what is the object of the reading I am considering in the study at hand? Or rather, what *can* it be?

1.2.1 What is the "Textual" of/in Intertextuality?

In terms of the present text, this general problem translates into a specific one: if "there is no outside-text," how can one study an object that does not exist? To answer this question, it is firstly appropriate to emphasize that the idea of this Derridean tenet is not the "nothing," neither the "outside"; the idea is the *text*, text in terms of textuality (Derrida 1982: 33; cf. Muller & Richardson 1988a: 165), text as *writing* in the sense of textual performance (cf. Wolfreys 1998: 64–81). This is the idea of writing as *écriture*, a mode of writing that does not present itself as a transparent medium, but as an instance of performative textuality that foregrounds itself as writing, as a written text in its *writerly* textualness, in its figurativity, in its very literariness implying both the literary and the literal (cf. Butler 1984: 47–59: Culler 1988: 217–230; Smith 1988: 24–40; Bannet 1989: 186–202; Nealon 1993: 132–159; Johnson 1995 [1990]).

For Derrida – I am here first of all referring to his epochal works *Of Grammatology* (1997 [1967]), *Writing and Difference* (1978 [1967]), *Margins of Philosophy* (1984 [1972]) and *Dissemination* (1981 [1972]), as well as to Derrida on Derrida in the form of interviews, published as *Positions* (1982 [1972]) – a text is not a closed entity, a distinctive whole with a closure, but from the very beginning, from Derrida's *Urschrift*, that is, *Speech and Phenomena* (1973 [1967]), a never-ending intertextual terrain of "stratified" texts (Norris 1987: 25–26) consisting of readable "traces," traces of traces, *ad infinitum* (cf. Howells 1999: 50–52; Beardsworth 1998: 6–18), even in a theological sense (cf. Bannet 1989: 192–193).[157] What is a trace is an indication of an absence that precisely as such defines a

157 In the genealogy of contemporary theory under the sign of the "post," the year 1967 during which Derrida published his epochal texts – *Speech and Phenomena*, *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology* – was the *annus mirabilis* that signalled, in terms of theory, the turn of the times from structuralism to what came to be known as poststructuralism. After Derrida's intervention, nothing was the same any more: difference was now understood in terms of *différance*, and where there was once the signified was now the signifier. All this implied the definitive loss of certainty that was replaced by the undecidable disseminating unending indeterminacy and ever-new aporias (Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]); Culler 1975, 1981, 1982; Johnson 1980a, 1980b, 1987; Lentricchia 1980, 1983; Norris 1982, 1984, 1987; Leitch 1983, 1988, 1992; Rapaport 2001).

presence in its absence: a trace is not a trace of some original entity, nor a trace *of* something in general; rather, it is what is left of an absent thing "after" it has taken place on the scene of its past present, which, of course, is never present *as such*. Hence, the trace is, paradoxically, a trace in and by itself, without a preceding origin, a thing "of" which it presents itself as a trace.

In this sense, the trace functions like the signifier: it is never identical with itself. A trace is the difference that makes a difference: it is a matter of constant referral on from one signifier to another, to signifiers each of which signifies (and thus *may* become meaningful, being, though, always in the process of signifying in the sense of unending proliferation of signification) only as a difference from the other (Derrida 1997: 46–47, 61–73). A trace is like the Freudian unconscious: it is not a reality of what was once present, but a "past which was never present and never will be" (Howells 1999: 100), or, as Derrida (1984a: 20–21) says, it "differs from, and defers itself," and as such, "it is woven of differences," "it sends out delegates, representatives, proxies," without itself never existing.

In other words, a trace is the forwarding after-effect of the difference effected by *différance*; as such, the trace is what enables the non-identity, and thus the heterogeneity, of meaning, the surplus of all signification, and, accordingly, the condition of possibility of reading as writing in terms of writing as reading constitutive of post-theory.

The Reason of Duplicity, or, Mind the Gap between the Signifier and the Signified

From the standpoint outlined above, a text is a texture of interwoven and interacting "traces," an interplay of "supplements" in a never-ending movement of "dissemination"; all this implying the constitutive activity of writing as the realization of *différance* (Derrida 1997: 46–47, 144–152, 1982: 44–47; Norris 1987: 64–69; Bannet 1989: 202–227; Lagemann & Gloy 1998: 121–152). In his *text* entitled "Living On," Derrida (2004 [1979]: 69) radically questions "all those boundaries that form the running border of what used to be called a text, of what we once thought this word could identify, i.e., the supposed end and beginning of a work, the unity of a corpus, the title, the margins, the signature, the referential real outside the frame, and so forth," and postulates an entirely new notion of "text":

> What has happened, if it has happened, is a sort of overrun [*débordement*] that spoils all these boundaries and divisions and forces us to extend the accredited concept, the dominant notion of a "text," of what I still call a "text," for strategic reasons, in part – a "text" is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (not submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines) – all the limits, everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference – to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth) (ibid.)

Fig. 54. Kimmo Sarje, *We Enter into Factual Non-objectivity and We Fear It*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm.

As a result, the world is intelligible (if it is intelligible at all) only in its textuality that is, in the Derridean manner, *toujours déjà*, "always already" (Derrida 1997), based on intertextuality; a world that can be apprehended (if it can be apprehended at all) through readings in the form of writing of the written. As Julia Kristeva (1986: 36–37) says, "[t]he word's status is thus defined horizontally (the world in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus)"; consequently, "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read"; and therefore, "*any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations*; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (emphasis mine).[158]

Similarly to Derrida's (1997: 158) postulation that *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, Kristeva's statement concerning intertextuality as "a mosaic of quotations" does not, however, imply saying anything about the world: like Derrida, Kristeva does not speak about the existence of the world in her sentence, nor about some state-of-the-world. Kristeva's intertextuality is thus comparable with Derrida's textuality: Derrida's dictum "simply" states that "there is nothing outside of the text," or, "there is no outside-text"; that is, in terms of intelligibility, what there is is there only as an effect of language, *within* language (not, of course, in language as such, in itself, but as an effect of the linguistic of language). This is the rea-

158 Kristeva's definition of intertextuality can be compared, on the one hand, with the Bakhtinian idea of the dialogic (see Bakhtin 1981 [1971]) that has influenced Kristeva's theory, and on the other, with the Derridean conception of writing as a free play of traces, entailing the ultimate radicalization of the intrinsic self-referentiality (or self-reflexivity) of language suggested originally by Ferdinand de Saussure (see, for example, Derrida 1997: 30–73, 1982: 18–30; de Saussure 1966 [1907–1911]; Koerner 1973; Culler 1986 [1976]).

son of language that in itself embraces, without making any difference as such, both the rational and the irrational, since, in terms of language, there is no difference between what is rational and what is irrational (cf. Foucault 1996g [1983]); what there is is the *différance* between them that is always to be found only *within* them, immanent in the linguistic realm marked by them.

It is in this manner that reason is possible only in the immanence of language, in the presence of the linguistic of language; that is, as far as there are linguistic forms that constitute reason as reason; of course, as far as reason can be understood in terms of *reason* (for a paradigmatic problematization of this issue, see Derrida-Foucault controversy in Boyne 1990: 53–89). Accordingly, reason can be questioned only in its own terms; these terms are the terms of language. What is intelligible is informed by the formations of signifiers, by figures and configurations that are the very forms of thought, also including all that belongs to the realm of the "other" of reason, since it is always reason that not only defines what is reason and what is not, but, first and foremost, *brings about what is non-reason* (of course, always in terms of reason itself) (cf. Foucault 1965 [1961], 1989 [1966], 1992a [1969], 1996g [1983]). The limits of the world are given in the word, in language, informed by the (inter)play of signifiers materialized in discourses that delimit the realm of reason from its "other," the world of non-reason.

In this sense, as Ludwig Wittgenstein (1995b [1922]: 67) in his time postulated, the constitutive prerequisite of the intelligibility of the world is given in language: *Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 2002 [1922]: 149; cf. Goeres 2000: 45–52).

Accordingly, if the limits of *my* language stand for the limits of "my" world, it is obvious that the world is apprehensible as far as there are words for it; words that have inscribed an "I" (as a subject of a particular linguistic utterance), words by which a self as an "I" is constituted as a speaking subject capable of saying "I" in relation to something that can be called a "world." Or, as Lacan (1977e [1966/1953]: 65) says, "[i]t is the world of words that creates the world of things." In this sense, the object of my reading is the world constituted by the words that circulate in the universe of cyber discourse, the world of the "cyber" that has come into being through the logic of the "post." It is this kind of Derridean "scene of writing" (see Derrida 1978c [1967/1966]: 196–231; cf. Norris 1987: 206–223; Howells 1999: 96–102) that makes up the world I am reflecting upon – the writing "I" that I am, of course, as an effect of cyber discourse in the present text in its constitutive absence: *writing about the "cyber" I cannot be outside the linguistic realm constituted by the figures of the "cyber."* In my reading, the "scene of writing" is an imaginary space effected by the "unconscious" of language, the linguistic of language constituted by the unending movement of *différance*. What is "present" on this "scene" is never present *an sich*; it is always present as a presence that is present only through the absence of what it is presenting.

In language, one usually thinks that to present means to represent, to bring present in the sense of "to stand for." But what is represented is not what is represented; representation is always – *always already* – about presentation, not about *re*-presentation of something pre-existing. Words stand for a world only so far as it is about a world they have brought into being; no word, moreover, is never identical with itself: this is the reason of duplicity constitutive of all language (Lentricchia 1980: 170–171; cf. Foucault 1996g [1983]). This is the idea of the presence in its absence. For me, this is the idea of writing *as* a scene: since a signifier has as its signified always *another signifier*, signifiers enact the signifieds that are there only by virtue of signifiers that *signify not signifieds, but other signifiers that are always already signifiers in themselves*. Thus, the object to be considered here is not some "outside-text": I am interested in the world of words effected by the "object language" of the present study, the language of the "cyber" in the linguistic matrix of the "post."

If we want an *exact* definition of what this means in this context I do not know any better way than to quote Derrida exactly in his exact words; words by means of which Derrida explains the internal logic and the logic of interrelations of the texts he had written till the year 1967 (see Bass 1978: ix–xiii)[159] (a quote as a *pars pro toto* for the idea I am putting forward in this *text*):

> Par la date de ces textes, nous voudrions marquer qu'à l'instant, pour les relier, de les relire, nous ne pouvons nous tenir à égale distance de chacun d'eux. Ce qui reste ici le *déplacement d'une question* forme certes un *système*. Par quelque *couture* interprétative, nous aurions su après-coup le dessiner. Nous n'en avons rien laissé paraître que le pointillé, y ménageant ou y abandonnant ces blancs sans lesquels aucun texte jamais ne se propose comme tel. Si *texte* veut dire *tissu*, tous ces essais [a collection of Derridas's essays written between 1959 and 1967] en ont obstinément défini la couture comme *faufilure*. (Derrida [1966/1967] in Bass 1978: ix)

What is the point here? The point is that Derrida's "brief discussion of chronology with the metaphor of following a thread through a text," pertaining to his writings collected under the title *Writing and Difference* (Derrida 1978), concerning the order and textual relationships of Derrida's texts, is in itself a kind of explication of the method *en miniature*; a "method" that is based on a highly idiosyncratic use of language, especially of ambiguous meanings – in the sense of signifying sense – of words typical of French. Therefore, as Alan Bass, commenting on the intricacies in translating Derrida's writings, remarks, the translation of Derrida's note, originally appended to the list of sources used by Derrida

159 As Alan Bass (1978: x) says in his "Translator's Introduction" to Derrida's *Writing and Difference* (Derrida 1978f [1967]), the "year 1967 marks Derrida's emergence as a major figure in contemporary French thought." Till that year, that is, between the years 1959 and 1967, Derrida had written three "texts" (the first two consisting of several essays), all of them appearing in that same year, 1967; texts that came to have an epochal impact on thinking, theory and philosophy within Western academia: *La voix et le phénomène, L'écriture et la différence* and *De la grammatologie*. These are the "these texts," *ces textes*, and their chronological and thematic interrelations, to which Derrida refers in the quotation below.

Fig. 55. Kimmo Sarje, *Lenin Is a Mirror*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm.

in his *L'écriture et la différence*, is "impossible without commentary," which Bass, in order to bring the implicit explicit, has placed in brackets in his translation:

> By means of the dates of these texts, we would like to indicate [*marquer*: to mark] that in order to bind them together [*relier*: to put between covers the pages forming a work, originally sewing], in rereading them [*relire*: *relier* and *relire* are anagrams], we cannot maintain an equal distance from each of them. What remains here the *displacement of a question* certainly forms a *system*. With some interpretive sewing [*couture*] we would have sketched this system afterward [*après-coup*; in German *nachträglich*. Cf. "Freud and the Scene of Writing" for the analysis of this notion.] We have only permitted isolated points [*le pointillé*: originally a means of engraving by points] of the system to appear, deploying or abandoning in it those blank spaces [*blancs*: Derrida's analysis of Mallarmé, which was to be written in 1969, focuses on the role of the *blanc* in the text; see also the epigraph to this volume which refers to Mallarmé's notion of *espacement*: "the whole without novelty except a spacing of reading." For the analysis of the *blanc* and *espacement* see "La double séance" in *La dissémination*, Paris: Seuil, 1972] without which no text is proposed as such. If text [*texte*] means cloth [*tissu*: the word *texte* is derived from the Latin *textus*, meaning cloth (*tissu*), and from *texere*, to weave (*tisser*); in English we have *text* and *textile*. Derrida comments on this derivation at the outset of *La pharmacie de Platon* also in *La dissémination*.], all these essays have obstinately defined sewing [*couture*] as basting [*faufilure*: the *faux*, "false," in *fau-filure*, or "false string," is actually an alteration of the earlier form of the word, *farfiler* or *fourfiler*, from the Latin *fors*, meaning outside. Thus basting is sewing on the outside which does not bind the textile tightly.] (December 1966) (Bass 1978: xiii)

In this Derrida's note and its commented translation by Bass we can "clearly" (though, of course, not in the sense of Descartes's "clearly and distinctly"; see Descartes 1985b [1637]: 121, 1985c [1644]: 199, 207, 216; cf. Cottingham 1986:

66–72, 75–76; Patterson 2008) see Derrida's "method" in operation, taken apart, dismantled, in its constitutive components; a "method" (or a mode of "argumentation") constitutive of which is textuality as "weaving," a "texture" consisting of associative cross-references, French idioms allowing for puns, and foregrounding of language in its very linguisticity (that I call the linguistic of language on which I am focusing in my text). All this, in one way or another, is peculiar not only to Derrida's deconstructive reading of various texts, but – in a derivative form – also to poststructuralism, and particularly to its most linguisticist mode that I designate as post-theory; that is, a mode of writerly writing based on word-play, punning and the ambiguities of meaning, in other words, on the potential textuality effected by "free-floating signifiers."

In this regard, it is obvious that words do not represent the things they are seemingly referring to or speaking about; instead, words are signifiers that substitute signifiers for signifiers; signifiers that never supply a signified, but displace a signifier for another that is not the same, and that, *precisely as such*, signifies (if its signifies at all). In other words, *words do not re-present*, since in the world of language there are no referents; what there is is *différance*.

in this Derridean sense, the study at hand, my text as a *texte* in the form of *faufilure*, is a reading of cyber discourse *après-coup*, in its Freudian sense of *nachträglich*, in the mode of "deferred action" or "retroaction" (see Laplanche 1998 [1967]: 313–317; Lacan 1977h [1966/1960]: 303; Evans 1996: 207; cf. Derrida 1978c: 214, 1984a: 21; Spivak 1997: lxxxi–lxxxii), *in statu nascendi*, as the coming into being of a presence of the future in its absence. That is, if, in general there is, in Derridean terms, "no 'transcendental signified'" (Derrida 1982: 20, 29, 44, 65, 86, 1997: 20–23, 49–50, 158, 1978f; cf. Norris 1987: 61, 63, 116–117, 197–198), the less there is reality in the world of the "cyber": what is "cyber" takes place in the virtual reality of language. Consequently, my approach is not to ask what is there "behind" the text; my question is: what is there *in* the text, *within* its textuality? Thus, the present text is a textual *mise en scène* of the "cyber": a writerly-readerly *mise en scène* of cyber-writing that takes place on a Freudian "other scene," *ein anderer Schauplatz* (see Freud 1987d [1900]: 541; Rath 2006: 256–257; Wegener 2007: 236–241), the scene of the present text as a mirror effect of cyber discourse.

The Fallacy of "Logocentrism"

All of this is about a situation of which de Saussure (1966 [1916]: 166), in his epochal theory of language, postulated: *dans la langue il n'y a que des différences* sans termes postifs (emphasis in the original), "in language there are only differences *without positive terms*" (de Saussure 1966 [1916]: 120; emphasis in the original; cf. Derrida 1973 [1967]: 140–146; Jameson 1974 [1972]: 15–18; Culler 1986 [1976]: 28–29; Hazelrigg 1989: 199–120). In other words, it is always a negative, a "not this" that constitutes the meaning of a "this." This is the principle of Saussurean difference, the elementary form of Derridean *différance*; the idea of the "other," establishing the intrinsic logic of language that enables sig-

nification: a difference that is constitutive of language. It is in this sense that de Saussure's pivotal statement is the historical background behind the idea of *différance* (Derrida 1984a; Hobson 1998: 27–28, 93–94; Howells 1999: 50–53); an idea the linguistic expression of which, paradoxically, is "neither a word nor a concept" (Derrida 1984a: 3), or, a "concept-that-is-not-a-concept" (Sheppard 2001: 122, 125–126), but a *grammè* or a "graphem" (Derrida 1997: 9), a written mark making possible the idea of *différance*.[160]

What is the difference of *différance*? It is the "little" but fundamentally significant difference between the "e" (*différence*) and the "a" (*différance*), between the common French word for difference and the Derridean neologism hybridizing the senses of the words to "differ" and to "defer," both implied by the French word *différer*. As a result of such a *significant* misspelling, a meaningful act of linguistic violence, *différance* signifies both the temporal delaying or postponing and spatial transferring or spacing out the signified that, in the last instance, always already, *toujours déjà*, is another *signifier* (Davies 2001: 222–223; Moore 2001: 63–65).

With the "non-concept" of *différance* Derrida ultimately radicalizes the Saussurean conception of language as a system of differences without positive terms: for Derrida, constitutive of language is not a *system*, but the "differentiality or the being-different of their [the Saussurean] differences" (Bennington & Derrida 1999 [1991]: 71).

What, then, is the "radical" in Derrida's radicalization of Saussure? Derrida deconstructs Saussure's sign, the very distinction between the *signifiant* ("acoustic image") and the *signifié* ("concept"), between the *signifier* and the *signified*, the constitutive idea of Saussure's conception of language as a system of differences that has both an acoustic and a conceptual dimension (see de Saussure 1966 [1916]: 111–122; Culler 1986 [1976]: 18–29). By this operation Derrida turns the signifier into a *written mark* and makes it the basic element of language (for the far-reaching consequences for cultural theory following the deconstruction of the sign, see, for example, Culler 1981, 1982, 1988; Payne & Schad 2003; Cusset 2008). Thus, "Derrida collapses all signifieds *within signifiers*" (Lentricchia 1980: 168) and substitutes *différance* for Saussurean "difference." As Culler (1982: 97) says, the linguistic process of "difference-differing-deferring," a specific linguistic *Ereignis* enacted by the *simultaneous* movement differing and deferring, differentiation and deferment, brings about both difference and deference at the same time, a movement that initiates the play of words, their eternal coming and becoming, without a terminal point, a closure (cf. Spivak 1997; Caputo 1997; for a philosophical reading in terms of "the economy of *différance*," see Harvey 1986; cf. Gasché 1986).

160 As Kristeva (1986: 59–60) emphasizes, with regard to *grammè* or *gram*, "Derrida uses the word *gram* (from the Greek *gramma*, 'that which is written') to designate the irreducible material element of writing, as opposed to the vast amount of extraneous connotations currently surrounding that word." It is precisely in this sense that I speak of writing in terms of the written: what is written is nothing ideal, it is *material*, and it is this materiality of writing that is the condition of possibility of language (cf. Coward & Ellis 1977).

Fig. 56. Kimmo Sarje, … *If the Image Changes, Faith Changes and So Does the Idea*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm.

Thus, *différance* designates the fundamental non-identity of all signification: instead of being stable and identical with itself the meaning constantly differs through endless deferring (Derrida 1982: 26–29; cf., for example, Beardsworth 1998: 35–42; Howells 1999: 133–135; Plotnitsky 2001: 66–79); this applies, of course, to *différance* itself: Derrida is not "outside" *différance* (Bennington & Derrida 1999 [1991]: 70–84).

In these terms, *différance* not only marks, but in itself it *is* (of course, in the sense of "is"), in fact, not so much a linguistic as a *philosophical* position (cf. Hobson 1998: 15–20; Harvey 1986): to use language is to produce *différance*; to produce counter-thinking *within* thinking that always takes place in language, *by means of writing*. This is a position of radical indeterminacy: in language each term is always already something different to what it appears to be; words do not mean by a meaning, they signify through traces as marks and vestiges of other words, and are constantly in a process of procreating offspring. Consequently, a signifier never has a signified, it has only "supplements"; a signifier can only signify difference since it is an effect of difference in itself. Thus, meaning – in the sense of a "full" and "stable" meaning – is always absent: the idea of a "transcendental signified" is only a "logocentric delusion," a phantasm brought about by the "metaphysics of presence" (Derrida 1997: 23; Norris 1987: 45; Plotnitsky 2001: 77–78; cf. Howells 1999: 18–20, 36–38, 48–49). As Derrida says:

> It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called present element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping *within* itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark

Fig. 57. Kimmo Sarje, *'He' is Not He, But Only 'He'*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm.

> of its relation to the future element, this *trace* being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of *this very relation to what it is not*: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. (Derrida 1984a: 13; emphasis mine)

If this is the logic of language, *a fortiori* it is the logic of irony: there is always the possibility that meaning betrays itself, turns against itself through "ironic overturning" (Thein 2001: 19–20); that is, meaning is contextual, never present in itself. Like the *pharmakon*, a Derridean "undecidable" (Norris 1987: 35), irony is a "nonidentity-with-itself always allowing it to be turned against itself" (Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 119). Irony "happens" by what Derrida (1981d [1972/1970]) calls the *double séance*, the "double session," performed by a "double reading" (Hobson 1998: 85–88; cf. Nealon 1993): in this sense, every text is a double text in itself and of itself, a text that is always already out of phase with itself. A slight *displacement* in a reading of a text is sufficient not only to produce its counter-text, but, in fact, to foreground the very textuality of the text (for the Freudian *Fehlleistung* or "parapraxis," cf. Freud 1990h [1901]; for Freud's linguistic theory of joke, cf. Freud 1961 [1905]). Language betrays itself in the moment that it is most serious; it is the moment it occupies – also in the Freudian sense of *Besetzung* or *cathexis* (see Freud 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622, 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96) – the site of the "truth," the site of non-contradiction that therefore appears as self-evident, as a revelation of reason. Language always implies more than intended meaning.

The possibility, the very source, of irony is this *intrinsic duplicity* of language, its self-difference with regard to the meaning, its incongruity in its own terms: irony is duplicity of utterance that is effected by the *différance* in its own words. The moment of irony is a distance aware of itself, the unconscious of language become "conscious" of itself for a fleeting moment (cf. Freud 1961 [1905]). In language, there is no reason without duplicity. Thus, what else is irony, if not a misreading of a misreading (cf. Norris 1987: 45; Howells 1999: 67–71), or, in terms of literary theory, *misprision* (cf. Bloom 1975; Lentricchia 1980: 185; Culler 1982: 175–180; Selden 1989: 95–97)? Applied to the study at hand, at issue is a mode of reading in which a text, rather than being a double, a "productive misreading," of its precursors as in Bloom (1975: 74–75), is a double of itself: a counter-text that is implied by the text itself, the textual universe I am reading, by way of re-reading, in the present text, the study at hand. From this ensues that, as a stratagem of reading, irony is to take things seriously, in their own "seriousness," a "seriousness" that implies its own subversion. In this sense, irony embraces, as Haraway (1985: 65) says, the potential of blasphemy, the most radical form of irreverence in our scriptural culture based on the tradition of the Scriptures.

In this respect, the present study is a reading in the sense of "within"; that is, in the sense of Derridean "breaching" (*entamer*, "to break into") and "broaching" ("to begin") from within the borderlines of the "within" (see, for example, Derrida 1978c: 200–202, 214, 1997: 56–57; Spivak 1997: lxxxvi; Bearn 1998).

In these terms, as a reading this is a reading as a *re*-reading in the Derridean mode: a "[r]eading, and *therefore* writing" (Derrida 1997: 19; emphasis mine). If "all readings are misreadings" (Culler 1982: 175), what else can a writing-reading be, if not always already, and in each instance, a *mis*-writing based on a misreading. In reading as well in writing, the double is not a double *per se*, it is a double in terms of duplicity, in terms of the terms in themselves; that is, each text is a potential counter-text in its own terms. Thus, this is a reading that explores not only the textual world it is studying (a world that is constituted through and in *this* text), but, under the same condition of the conditional, it enacts its own signifying procedures, itself as a writing of the written. As an instance of *mise en abyme* (see Dällenbach 1989 [1977]), the present text, *present in this text*, is a double reading (cf. Nealon 1993).

The text of the present reading consists of an intertext of other texts; a paratext constituted and instituted in and by writing. If, in the Western tradition, the tradition of the "metaphysics of presence," "[w]hat is written is read as speech or the surrogate of speech" (Spivak 1997: lxx), the idea of text in Derrida's *writing* is to emphasize that the written is writing (Derrida 1997: 19); that is, if "'[w]riting' is the name of what is *never named*" (Spivak 1997: lxx; emphasis mine), text is the name of the named in terms of *différance*. A text, whatever it is, is always – "always already" – traversed by a "trace-structure," through which everything is "*always already* inhabited by the track of something that is *not itself*" (ibid.: lxix; emphasis mine).

This is the Derridean world of "general text," a world of an "economy of written text, circulating through other texts" (Derrida 1997: 149); a world in which a text always takes place on a "scene of writing" (Derrida 1978c: 215–221; cf. Norris 1987: 206–207; Johnson 2001: 85–88).

To assume that there is an "outside of the text" – God as the *primum signatum*, *logos* as the origin, the presence of nature, experience and subjectivity, the self-presence of consciousness given in speech, speech itself as a "mirage of immediacy" (Derrida 1997: 141), in general, all the premises of Western thought – is the fallacy of "logocentrism" and the "metaphysics of presence" (ibid.: 11, 23; for the idea of *logos* as "the Word of God" in Christian theology, cf. Lawson 1986 [1980]: 48–49), paradigmatically exemplified for Derrida by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (cf. Norris 1987: 97–128; Howells 1999: 47–60); the "Rousseau" of and in Rousseau's writing re-written by Derrida in his writing: Derrida in his *écriture* as the "Derrida" effected by Derridean discourse; a "Derrida" as an effect of "Rousseau's" writing.

1.2.2 "Seduced by This Fatal Advantage…"

For Rousseau, instead of writing, the spoken word is the guarantee of authenticity and truthfulness of the self; that is, speech is the origin of the subject and its unique identity. In contrast, for Derrida, close-reading texts written by Rousseau, what is at issue is neither speech nor writing, but *expression* of something, Rousseau's expression of something that escapes his attention.[161] Yet, since it is "so little a matter of looking for *truth signified* by these writings," Derrida does not assume that some "metaphysical or psychological truth" (Derrida 1997: 150) *about* Rousseau, "Jean-Jacques's life *behind* his work" (ibid.; emphasis mine), is to be found expressed in Rousseau's texts. Thus, "one cannot abstract from the written text to rush to the signified it *would mean*, since the signified is here the text itself" (ibid.).

That is, a text does not signify something outside itself, it signifies itself as a text; a text is a structure of signifiers that is the world signified, a world existing as signification. A text remains irreducibly text. A text "says" nothing, a "text *performs*" (Norris 1982: 108).

For Derrida, the Derrida (1997: 150) *reading* Rousseau, "if the texts that interest us *mean* something, it is the engagement and the appurtenance that encompass existence and writing in the same *tissue*, the same *text*." Thus, the life of an author is not behind his writing, as if separated from it, in some "biographical" sphere in which *bios* exists before *graphein*. Instead, life and work are made of

161 As seen above, in the case of Rousseau, too, Derrida (1997: 95–268) demonstrates the very impossibility of saying anything in general. As Christopher Norris (1981: 80) "says," "Rousseau cannot mean what he says (neither can he say what he means)," since in the act of speaking it is not the subject but language that "speaks"; and "speaking" – in the Derridean sense – is nothing but writing. Accordingly, Derrida does not speak language, language speaks Derrida, and this language is his writing: the writing of "Derrida" writing Derridean writing in terms of *écriture*.

the same "tissue," the material of the text: there is no life outside the text (cf. Foucault 1977e [1969]). In other words, Rousseau becomes Rousseau by writing; Rousseau is *the* Rousseau of his texts: as there is no "outside-text" there is no "outside-Rousseau," and, by the same token, there is, of course, no "outside-Derrida," a "Derrida" external to "his" writing. As Rousseau discloses in his *Confessions*: "I would love society like others, if I were not sure of showing myself not only as a disadvantage, but as completely different from what I am"; the "part that I have taken of *writing and hiding myself* is precisely the one that suits me" (Derrida 1997: 142).

The "Supplement," or, the Logic of Masturbation

Where does Rousseau *hide* himself? In his text, of course. But, at the same time, it is in this very same text that Rousseau *reveals* himself. This is the duplicity inherent in all texts: texts betray themselves in, through and by their own textuality; in other words, each text is an instantiation of textuality in which a text "fails to say what it means to say" (Milner & Browitt 2002: 115). Accordingly, Derrida points out Rousseau's paradox with regard to his own writing; as Rousseau says: "If I were present, one would never know what I was worth" (Derrida 1997: 142). Thus, contradicting his own words, Rousseau comes to say that it is not in his presence, in his speech, but expressly in his *writing*, in his absence for himself, that his true self appears, becomes present in its *absence*. Rousseau is his writing, although Rousseau tries to show by all possible means that he is the "authentic" Rousseau *outside* his writing, *before* his text.

For Rousseau, in his own words, "writing serves only as a supplement to speech" (ibid.: 144). And more than that, the very same measure that makes his true presence present is actually, as Derrida *reads* Rousseau, a "dangerous means, a menacing aid," an "*addition*," that as an "image or representation" is only "adjoined" to speech, the "natural expression of thought" (ibid.). Instead of being an unmediated presentation of personality ("soul," "spirit," "mind"), writing, as Derrida *reads* Rousseau, "diverts the immediate presence of thought to speech into representation and the imagination" (ibid.); this "recourse is not only 'bizarre,' but dangerous" (ibid.). Thus, writing is an "addition of technique," and, as such, an "artificial and artful ruse to make speech present when it is actually absent" (ibid.). Therefore, writing, for Rousseau, is "not natural"; it is "violence done to the natural destiny of language" (ibid.). In the end, writing, according to Derrida, spells out the "negativity of the letter in which must be read the degeneracy of culture and the disruption of the community" (ibid.).

For this reason, writing, for Rousseau, is a "dangerous supplement" (ibid.: 150–151) which "lures language away from its authentic origins in speech and self-presence" (Norris 1982: 63), an addition that turns into a substitution and thus perverts speech, presence and authenticity: writing is the very perversion of human existence, the humane in the human being; as such, writing is the perversion of culture.

What, then, is this *dangereux supplément*, a complement and an addition that takes the place of (what is assumed to be) the original? What is Rousseau's obsession that "cheats Nature and saves up for young men of my temperament many forms of excess at the expense of their health, strength, and, sometimes, their life" (Derrida 1997: 150)? Masturbation. This "vice which shame and timidity find so convenient, possesses, besides a great attraction for lively imaginations – that of being able to dispose of the whole sex as they desire, and to make the beauty which tempts them minister to their pleasure, without being obliged to obtain its consent" (ibid.).

Masturbation – that is Rousseau's "dangerous supplement" that substitutes artificial excitement for natural pleasure, replaces a shared enjoyment by solitary act, presence by absence; a self-deception that destroys the authenticity of the experience, the experience of another as the experience of oneself. For Rousseau, masturbation is similar to writing, it is a supplement, an addition insidiously turning into a substitution. Even Rousseau's own writing, which should be only a "support and complement to speech," emerges as a "'dangerous' replacement for it" (Howells 1999: 56). The "danger" of the supplement is that it "shows up a fissure in the metaphysics of presence, while attempting to mask absence" (ibid.). In other words, as Barbara Johnson (1981: xii) says, masturbation, for Rousseau, is "both a symbolic form of ideal union, since in it *the subject and object are truly one*, and a radical alienation of the self from any contact with an other" (emphasis mine).

The threat of the supplement, the horror of counterfeit appearing as genuine, haunts Rousseau everywhere; thus:

> In Rousseau's texts it is not merely in the domain of signification that the disturbing (il)logic of the supplement is at work. The term is used repeatedly whenever a situation of ambivalence occurs. For example, in the case of education, the supplement of culture is essentially inferior, but it may be necessary to remedy the deficiencies of Nature. Education is both the *chance* (good fortune) of humanity, and also the source of its perversion. Similar paradoxes attach to many of Rousseau's concerns: the surrogate motherhood, to study of botany as a supplement to society, and to the study of minerals as a supplement to botany. The supplement is a potential source of scandal and catastrophe because it shows up the *essential* (rather than merely *accidental*) insufficiencies of whatever it is supposed to complete. (Howells 1999: 56)

Just like in terms of writing, in terms of the sexual the supplement also takes the place of the authentic – so Rousseau wants to believe, although even his own experiences prove the contrary.

"Not only Rousseau's sexual partners (the most permanent of whom he always refers to as 'Maman') all appear as a chain of substitutions for each other, and ultimately for his lost mother, but in the domain of the sexual act itself, masturbation is described as a supplement for heterosexual intercourse" (ibid.: 56–57). Masturbation might be a "refuge, a substitute, a complement," for Rousseau, and even, as he feels, a "dangerous perversion" (ibid.: 57); all the same, "Rous-

seau will never stop having recourse to, and accusing himself of, this onanism that permits one to be himself affected by providing himself with presences, by summoning absent beauties" (Derrida 1997: 153). Masturbation can be a "*furtive* experience," a solitary act that, as Rousseau says, belongs to "all the follies which the remembrance of this dear mamma caused me to commit when I was no longer in her presence" (ibid.: 152).

Nevertheless, as Derrida points out, it is precisely "at the moment when the mother disappears that *substitution becomes possible and necessary*" (ibid.: 152–153; emphasis mine). And more than that: the very substitution, all that is supplementary, is the only "real" there is. It is precisely here, with regard to the "absence of the referent or the transcendental signified," that Derrida's (1997: 158) dictum "*[t]here is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n'y pas de hors-texte*]" appears; as Derrida says:

> What we have tried to show by following the guiding line of the "dangerous supplement," is that in what one calls the real life of these existences "of flesh and bone," beyond and behind what one believes can be circumscribed as Rousseau's text, there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the "real" supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus to infinity, for we have read, *in the text*, that the absolute present, Nature, that which words like "real mother" name, have always already escaped, have never existed: that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence. (ibid.: 158–159)

In Derridean terms, then, there is no subject, no experience or presence, nothing, absolutely *nothing*, without the intervening effect of the supplement. What seems to be unique is *toujours déjà*, "always already," traversed by alterity, traces of temporality, and finally, the "other." Self-identity, whether of the subject or of a thing at hand, is always irredeemably affected by division and difference.

The Excess of Onanism as the Pleasure of Writing

The impossibility of self-identity, the primordial non-identity of all that seems to be identical with itself, this is what Derrida calls auto-affection, an intrinsically reflexive movement of differentiation pertinent to all existence, resulting, among other things, in the "divided nature of self-presence" (Howells 1999: 22–23). Auto-affection, inscribed in all textuality, initiates a "chain of supplementarity" as a "chain of deferred mediations aiming to (re)produce the mirage of an immediate presence and an originary perception" (ibid.: 57). In this manner, auto-affection constitutes a "universal and self-reflexive structure of experience" that undermines what it seems to promote: "immediacy and presence" (ibid.). It is precisely here that the supplement emerges: it is the insidious interloper that always already inhabits the very intrinsic structure of experience: what we experience as immediate and present is, in Derridean terms, mediated by the mediation of supplementarity (cf. Norris 1987: 61–62, 66–67).

For Derrida, the structure of supplementarity is inscribed in the entire tradition of Western thought aspiring to find out the primordial origin of the authenticity of all being, the unmediated presence of the world in itself.

> Self-presence, transparent proximity in the face-to-face of countenances and the immediate range of the voice, this determination of social authenticity is therefore classic: Rousseauistic but already the inheritor of Platonism, it relates, we recall, to the Anarchistic and Libertarian protestations against Law, the Powers, and the State in general, and also with the dream of Fourierism. (Derrida 1997: 138)

In terms of the sexual this means that there is no – there *cannot* be – undivided, self-present and unmediated experience of the sexual; the supplement and the sexual are cognate terms, they have the same source: auto-affection, that is, "the movement of *différance*" (Baldwin 2001: 94).

According to Derrida (1973: 89), the supplement has a "strange structure": it manifests a logic in which "by delayed reaction, a possibility produces that to which it is said to be added on" (for the Freudian idea of *Nachträglichkeit*, see Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 313–317; cf. Derrida 1978c: 214, 1984a: 21). Thus, "signification, meaning, perception and presence" become understandable only "in terms of the logic of supplementary" (Howells 1999: 24). "The additional or 'supplementary' features are in fact nothing of the sort, they are essential to the very *constitution* that they have been deemed to contaminate" (ibid.: emphasis mine). This implies that "presence cannot preserve itself against absence, division and difference"; "[d]ifference and non-identity lie at the heart of even the most apparently unproblematic moments of plenitude" (ibid.). "Indeed, difference is, for Derrida, precisely what prevents and replaces self-identity" (ibid.). This is the effect of the supplement, itself effected by *différance*, and, in turn, effecting the unending proliferation of *différance*.

In these terms, as a supplement – Rousseau's "dangerous supplement" – masturbation *produces belatedly that which it is deemed to be adding to*. Rather than being just a complement or a replacement of sexual act, masturbation is a supplement that functions in the Derridean sense of *après coup* (see Spivak 1997: lxxxi–lxxxii), or in Freudian terms, *nachträglich*, through a "deferred action" or "retroaction" (see Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 313–317): it is, at the same time, the origin and the effect of "the sexual"; that is, as a supplement, a supplementing act of supplementation, masturbation is *always already* there not only *before* the sexual act, but *before* the whole idea of "the sexual": owning to its supplementary structure, masturbation is the origin and the effect of "sexual auto-affection" that "begins well before what is thought to be circumscribed by the name of masturbation" (Derrida 1997: 167); thus, where "the sexual" begins there is always already masturbation. In this sense, *there is no sexual without masturbation, the absent presence of the supplement* (whatever it is supplementing), inscribed in "the sexual" in itself. It is in this manner that, in Derridean terms, masturbation is not only an "external" addition to or an

"extrinsic" substitution of sexual experience; it is the *intrinsic necessity*, the condition of possibility, in a word: the very *origin* of all that is sexual.

This is the Derridean "strange structure" of the sexual: the sexual has no origin *except its own supplementarity*, the "play of substitutions" (Derrida 1978e [1967/1966]: 289) in which each substitution is an addition that is always already a supplement, an originary replacement of an assumed origin.

It is in this sense that the supplement is the "origin" of writing in the same manner as masturbation is the origin of "the sexual." As Derrida (1997: 155) says, not only that Rousseau "had to have recourse throughout his life to that type of dangerous supplement that is called masturbation," but, more fundamentally, for Rousseau, it was a form of self-experience "that cannot be separated from his activity as a writer." What is important here is that in Derrida's reading of Rousseau, both masturbation and writing follow the same logic, the logic of the supplementary and supplementation (cf., for example, Norris 1987: 118–124; Boyne 1990: 99–102; Clark 1999: 6–10; Royle 2003a: 53–56; Kopelson 2004: 71–73).

Both writing and masturbation imply an addition to plenitude that turns into a substitution, threatening, and finally, abandoning, the original – an "original" that was there only as an effect of the supplement in the first place. Both masturbation and writing trade a mediated image for an immediate experience, "immediate" only in the imaginary. In this manner, "[a]ll supplements are supplements of another supplement: *it is supplementarity itself which is originary*" (Howells 1999: 60). The "danger" of the supplement is precisely "that of the image"; therefore, supplementarity is a "question of the imaginary" (Derrida 1997: 151; for the Augustinian idea of the libido as the source of seductive images, cf. Saint Augustine 1966 [413–426]: 350–371, 1991 [397–398]; Flasch 1980: 145–147; Bonner 2002 [1963]: 375–378, 398–401). "Just as writing opens the crisis of the living speech in terms of its 'image,' its painting or its representation, so onanism announces the ruin of vitality in terms of imaginary seductions" (Derrida 1997: 151). Derrida's conclusion leaves no refuge, no retreat, no *Hintertür*, for delusions:

> The dangerous supplement which Rousseau also calls a "fatal advantage," is properly *seductive*; it leads desire away from the good path, makes it err far from natural ways, guides it toward its loss or fall and therefore it is a sort of lapse or scandal (*scandalon*). It thus destroys Nature. But the scandal of Reason is that nothing seems more natural than this destruction of Nature. It is myself who exerts myself to separate myself from the force that Nature has entrusted me: "Seduced by this fatal advantage, I did my best to destroy the good constitution which Nature had restored to me, and [to] which I had allowed time to strengthen itself." […] The dangerous supplement destroys very quickly the forces that Nature has slowly constituted and accumulated. In "out-distancing" natural experience, it runs non-stop [*brûle les étapes* – literally "burns the halting points"] and consumes energy without possibility of recovery. (Derrida 1997: 151)

This is the terrible power of the imaginary, the horrible realm of the Augustinian *libido*, a realm of culture created by an ever-escalating excess of signification, an excess that as the result of supplementarity is the *intrinsic*, ineffaceable and irredeemable, source of all meaning understood as unending signification, and, by the same token, the allurement of masturbation. That is, from the Derridean perspective, masturbation is not a metaphor for writing, neither is writing a metaphor for masturbation, rather, both equal one another in a decisive point: both masturbation and writing are predicated upon the "logic of supplementarity" (Norris 1987: 67, 121), the logic of substitution that is the logic of addition, enabling "imaginary experiences" to proliferate beyond the limits of the real. According to this logic, the supplement is *always already* the originary origin not only of language but of desire as well.

This is the signifying process as an economy of signification (cf. Protevi 2001: 1–14), an economy of dissipation based on incessant dissemination. This is the inescapable force of seduction, a process of seductive supplements in which a signifier becomes replaced by another promising a fulfilment of desire, a desire that *never* finds its fulfilment: a signifier that never finds its signified, but always remains as an obscure object of its desire, effected by the signifier itself in its promiscuous relations to other signifiers. What in Rousseau's eyes appears as a loss is, in fact, a self-multiplying procreation of ever-new signifiers, a proliferation of offspring, a generation of progeny in terms of signification as *an economy of excess: the excess of onanism that is the logic of writing*.

This is the logic of the supplement; this is the logic of the sexual. And, in Harawayan terms, this is the logic of prosthesis as the logic of masturbation: this is not only the idea what Haraway (1985: 66) calls "cyborg 'sex,'" "sex" as prosthetic pleasure in the world of the cyborg: this is the very idea of the cyborg, and *a fortiori*, the idea of all that is "cyber" effected by the "post."

1.2.3 The Difference of *Différance*

If, in terms of Derridean textuality, the supplement has such a power to transform the imaginary into the real (of course, the real of the imaginary), what is the source of this power? Where does the supplement come from? What is its origin – if it has any?

To be certain, the supplement, like nothing pertaining to signification, as Derrida uses to say, "has not fallen from the sky" (see, for example, Derrida 1973: 6, 141, 1982: 27, 80, 81, 1984a: 11). In essence, the supplement is thoroughly mundane, entirely immanent, it inhabits language, it is completely material, without any trace of the ideal. Although the supplement is but one instance of the Derridean logic of language – language as a play consisting of, among other things, "arche-writing," "trace," "invagination," "hymen," "dissemination," *pharmakon*, all of them, operating in various formations and concatenations, with and through *différance* (see, for example, Derrida 1978f, 1981a, 1984a, 1997) –

it perhaps shows most clearly the constitutive non-identity of all meaning. If supplementarity is the very principle of signification, the trace is its condition of possibility, its vehicle and agency, its "medium."

In the Derridean economy of signification, the trace has taken the place of Marxian value (see Marx 1983 [1867]: 49–160). And what for Marx appeared as surplus value has turned into the "instituted trace" (Beardsworth 1998: 12–13) in the Derridean production of meaning; the trace as the institutive alternation of repetition and difference engendering the freeplay of signifiers, a "generalized writing" as "arche-writing" constituting the "*originary structure of repetition*" (ibid.: 17; cf. Gasché 1986: 157, 166–167, 181, 273–276; Stiegler 2001: 241, 250–255). That is, what Derrida (1997: 56–57, 60–61; Spivak 1997: xv) calls *archi-écriture*, "arche-writing," is the primordial "basis" of all language, whether in the form of speech or writing; it is an effect of the *trace originaire*, the "originary trace" or "arche-trace" (Derrida 1997: 61–62), that is "*the absolute origin of sense in general*," although, paradoxically, "*there is no absolute origin of sense in general*" (ibid.: 65; emphasis in the original; cf. Norris 1987: 93–95; Hobson 1998: 29–30; Howells 1999: 51). In this manner, the logic of the supplement as the "always-already" structure of signification brings about the surplus value of language, the signifyings excess effected by the linguistic of language.

This is the origin of what I call *the libidinal economy of signification*, the circulation of desire in the realm of textuality, the movement of "the textual" as the precondition of "the sexual" in the linguistic matrix of the "post": "the sexual" of "the textual" that is "the textual" of "the sexual": *desire as textual auto-affection*.

Does the Letter Always Arrive at Its Destination?

In the manner outlined above, the excessive productivity of signification as the movement of dissemination and supplementation, that is, as the proliferation of signifiers, is the generative principle of "arche-writing" constitutive of all language, whether spoken or written (Derrida 1997: 56–65).

As a mode of writing *avant la lettre*, "writing before the letter," "arche-writing" is "writing before writing proper" (Howells 1999: 52) that operates through an incessant movement of inscription marking the traces that enable language, whether speech or writing, and thus makes possible the process of signification: "arche-writing" is the very condition of possibility of all language; the condition that, however, is not possible without the never-ending multiplication of the trace, without the traces of traces that have no origin but only traces without traces. For this reason, the trace is not an index of presence; on the contrary, it is an indication of an absence that precisely as such defines a presence in its absence. Hence, the trace is not, paradoxically, a trace *of* something, it is the moment of difference that effects this "something": the "trace is not only the disappearance of the origin," it is a "nonorigin" that "becomes the origin of the origin" (Derrida 1997: 61).

In my reading, this means that language, in Freudian terms, is an eternal *fort-da* game: that which is "away," *fort*, is "there," *da*, and that which is "there" is "away," alternatingly but incessantly (see Freud 1987e [1920]: 12; cf. Geier 2002: 93–107; Wegener 2004: 70–71). Though, what always remains is a trace; that is, *a lack generating desire*; a desire, inscribed in the text under reading, and, by extension, onto the textual subject (a subject constituted as the subject of the text, as an effect of the unending flow of textuality), a desire to complete what is incomplete: desire as the lack of consummation. In this way, a text is a texture of interwoven and interacting traces, an interplay of supplements in a never-ending movement of dissemination (Derrida 1997: 144–145), "the 'free play' of textual dissemination" (Norris 1982: 11) implying and enabling an excess of signifiers (Howells 1999: 78–81, 100–101); an excess of supplementation without an origin. As Derrida says:

> Germination, dissemination. There is no first insemination. The semen is already swarming. The "primal" insemination is dissemination. A trace, a graft whose traces have been lost. Whether in the case of what is called "language" (discourse, text, etc.) or in the case of some "real" seed-sowing, each term is indeed a germ, and each germ a term. The term, the atomic element, engenders by division, grafting, proliferation. (Derrida 1981b [1972/1969]: 304)

If this is the logic of language, it is, as the study at hand shows in its own way, the logic of post-theory: the logic of desire in the mode of theory as a dissemination of signifiers in an unending movement of supplementation following the logic of masturbation.

This implies that every text in terms of the "post" is a text of desire, a desire that is immanent in the textuality of the text. In the intrinsic desire of the text, it is precisely this difference between the "incomplete" and the "complete," a difference constituted by the dialectic of lack and consummation, that is a manifestation of the *fort-da* of the text, the difference between "there" and "away," the difference between the present and the absent.

This is the world of letters. In contrast to the Biblical world in which *In the beginning was the Word* (John 1:1), this is a world that has its origin in a Derridean letter, a letter as an act of a post-Biblical genesis. In the words of the *Luther-Bibel*: *Im Anfang war das Wort, und das Wort war bei Gott, und Gott war das Wort* (Johannes 1, 1; cf. Heidegger 1985a [1957–1958]: 187, 1985b [1958]). This is the *Ur-Ursprung*, the primordial origin of the world, the world constituted by the power of *logos*. It is precisely this world – the world established by the *first* Word, the Word of God – that Derrida aims to deconstruct by means of his primal word, the "trace" as the "nonorigin" of all being, a word that enables the disruptive movement of the Derridean counter-words that he has introduced to create an order that is outside the order of *logos*. In this sense, Derrida's enterprise – the politics of *différance* – is a deconstructive reading of the idea of origin in terms of *différance*: a world written into existence as a linguistic universe constituted by unending dissemination and supplementation.

Fig. 58. Kimmo Sarje, … *He Suprematised Matter, Not Idea*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm.

Je parlerai, donc, d'une lettre (Derrida 1972 [1968]: 3). "I will speak, therefore, of a letter" (Derrida 1984a: 3); and Derrida *speaks* – speaks, of course, not present for himself, but in the absence of his "own" presence – of a letter that gives him an absolute freedom in the sense of disrupting *all* the constraints of language that impede the freeplay of linguistic figuration inscribed in all language, a *carte blanche* to speak what he wants: "the letter a" (ibid.). By substituting through a grammatical metathesis, as a specific act of linguistic "infraction" (ibid.), this *a* for the orthographic *e*, by this "gross spelling mistake" that, in fact, is a "discreet graphic intervention," Derrida creates a "neographism" that is "neither a word nor a concept" (ibid.): *différance* (cf. Derrida (1973: 131–132; Moore 2001: 63–65; Plotnitsky 2001: 70).[162]

The idea of *différance* as a specific mode of difference is that it signifies an "in-between" that in itself is both a "passive" state (to be different) and an "active" operation (to make a difference) (Derrida 1984a: 7–8; Culler 1982: 97). As Derrida says:

> *Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive (the *a* of *différance* indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distributed between the terms of this opposition) production of the intervals without which the "full" terms would not signify, would not function. It is also the becoming-

162 Grammatically, *différance* is a verbal noun that is based on the gerund form *différant* (differing) of the verb *différer* (as a derivation of the Latin *differre*) meaning both to defer, to delay, to postpone, to put off in time: *temporisation/temporalisation*, and to differ, to deviate, to be dissimilar, to remove in space: *espacement* (Derrida 1984a: 7–8; Howells 1999: 50).

> space of the spoken chain – which has been called temporal or linear; a becoming-space which makes possible both writing and every correspondence between speech and writing, every passage from one to the other. (Derrida 1982: 27)

What is important here is that the "activity or productivity connoted by the *a* of *différance* refers to the *generative movement in the play of differences*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). These differences "are neither fallen from the sky nor inscribed once and for all in a closed system," as it were a "static system" (ibid.); rather, differences "are the effects of transformations" (ibid.); that is, signification is always in a transformative movement; that is, signification is always already an unending act of transgression, a transgression of meaning.

The ambiguity of *différance* is effected by the fact that it can be perceived and thus apprehended only in the written form since *différance* and *différence* sound similar in spoken language (ibid.: 3–4); a fact that for its part emphasizes Derrida's idea that in the dichotomy speech/writing the first term is subsumed and determined by the latter (and not the other way around as the Western tradition has it). As a notion, *différance*, utilizing the double meaning of the word *différer* is a neologism that is possible, of course, only in the French language; the same applies, for example, to the Derridean terms *supplément* (substitution/addition) and *entendre* (hear/understand) that are essential stratagems in Derrida's strategy to demonstrate that *writing is constitutive* not only of all language but of all being (see Derrida 1973: 76–79, 1997: 27–73; cf. Norris 1987: 28–62, 63–76; Howells 1999: 23–24, 133–135).

From this point of view, the question is: could Derrida be Derrida without being French, without Derrida's being *français*? In other words, would we have the logic of *différance* without the Derridean *différance* – a *différance* possible only in the French language? To understand the import of this question in its historical dimensions, it is appropriate to compare it with the question: would Heideggerian philosophy be possible without Heidegger's being German, without Heidegger's German language, without Heidegger's *Heidegger-Deutsch*?

The "famous inaudible 'a'" is the "key signifier" that opens the "scene of writing," the "scene of *Différance* [sic]" (Plotnitsky 2001: 70). The idea is that *différance* is a linguistic "event" that simultaneously enacts deferment and differentiation, and thus brings about differing and deferring, difference and deferral (see Derrida 1973: 129–131, 1978c: 197–198, 1982: 24–29, 1984a: 16–18; cf. Norris 1982: 46–48; Hobson 1998: 27–28; Howells 1999:133–134); that is, as Culler (1982: 97) says, *différance* is a specific process of "difference-differing-deferring." It is by means of this ambiguity that Derrida (1997) wants to transpose his discourse beyond what he calls "logocentrism" and the "metaphysics of presence" – an endeavour that is as impossible as it is possible, and vice versa (in terms of Foucault's defiant effort to rewrite the history of reason, cf. Foucault 1965 [1961], 1989 [1966], 1992a [1969], 1996g [1983]; for the controversy opened by Derrida with his criticism of Foucault, see Derrida 1978a [1967/1964]; cf. Boyne 1990).

This move, this extremely complicated and in itself contradictory gesture – Derrida "speaks" language he wants to deconstruct from *within*, since there is no meta-language in the Derridean world – entails what I above referred to as an ultimate radicalization (not *the* ultimate, since in the realm of *différance* there is no closure) of the Saussurean idea that "in language there are only differences *without positive terms* (de Saussure 1966 [1916]: 120; cf. Beardsworth 1998: 8–18). For Derrida, to specify, it is not the difference between the signs, but the difference *within* the signifier that is decisive: the trace, effected by *différance*, is the difference of *the* difference that enables all meaning (in terms of information as "a difference which makes a difference," cf. Bateson 2000 [1972/1969]: 459). Therefore, *différance* designates the "fundamental" ("fundamental," of course, in Derridean terms, *sous rature*, "under erasure") *non-identity* of all signification. Instead of being a stable and identical with itself meaning is constantly deferring through endless difference, the difference constitutive of differences: *différance*.

The Presence of the Absent on the Scene of Writing

In language, each term, as a result of an incessant postponing and spacing out, is *toujours déjà*, "always already," something different as it appears to be: words do not mean by a meaning, they signify through traces and supplements, in an unending movement of dissemination (see Derrida 1978f, 1981a, 1984b, 1997), the unstoppable movement of cumulative proliferation. Words upon words that carry with them marks and vestiges of other words being, at the same time, in a continual process of promiscuous procreation producing offspring without origin, linguistic figuration that unfolds through inter-references that create interferences. The potentiality of language is inexhaustible: each utterance only replenishes all that is already replete, excessive in its overwhelming fullness: linguistic *luxuria*, the origin of "wrong" thoughts and deeds, of heresy and subversion (in theological terms, cf., for example, Berry 1994: 64–69, 88–97; Jordan 1997: 37–38, 2002: 86–94).

As a consequence, a signifier never has a signified; it has only traces and supplements (cf. Howells 1999: 50–62); a signifier can only signify difference since it in itself is an effect of difference, an effect that itself is an effect of *différance*, the "originary" difference. Thus, "Derrida's term suggests a *reality* not caught up by such standard metaphysical dichotomies as active/passive, event/state, action/passion" (Gutting 2001: 299; emphasis mine); *différance* is both at once, although not as a Hegelian "synthesis," but as a radical indeterminacy, as an undecidability, in the end, as an aporia. To use language is to produce inevitably *différance*; the full meaning is always absent – if there is "full meaning" at all in the first place: the idea of a final meaning, a "transcendental signified," is only a "logocentric" delusion, a ruse of the "metaphysics of presence." In short, as Derrida (1982: 27) says, *différance* is "a structure and a movement no longer conceivable on the basis of the opposition presence/absence."

Fig. 59. Kimmo Sarje, *He Wanted to Lead Everybody out of the Icon Corner, …*, from the series *Nostalgia for Avant-garde*, 1989, montage, acrylic on poster, 90x60 cm.

To sum up, *différance* implies (1) "the (active *and* passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving"; (2) "the movement" which "produces different things, that which differentiates," and is, as such, "the common root of all the oppositional concepts that mark our language"; (3) "the production" of "these differences, or the diacriticity" that is "the condition for any signification and any structure"; and (4), in Heideggerian terms, an "unfolding of difference, in particular, but not only, or first of all, of the ontico-ontological difference" (ibid.: 8–10).

Je parlerai, donc, d'une lettre. This is the opening to *différance* that is, in Lacanian terms, the Derridean "agency of letter" (Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]). While, for Lacan, the letter moves in the realm of the unconscious working as the "material support that concrete discourse borrows from language" (ibid.: 147) and that as such brings about the "essential localized structure of the signifier" (ibid.: 153), for Derrida (1997: 7–73), in contrast, the letter is the effect of "the *grammè*" or "the grapheme" as the "written mark" (ibid.: 9), that generates traces of the traces as the movement of *différance* in the "writing before the letter," *avant la lettre* (ibid.: 3–93; cf. Sharpe 2004: 68–70). For Derrida, there is no language, no sense, without writing, without the play of differences, the differences of differences, that are enacted by *différance* as the prerequisite for the process of signification, the production of "meaning" that never *is* but "is" always becoming.

Thus, while, for Lacan (1988b [1978/1954–1955]: 205), "a letter always reaches its destination," for Derrida there is no destination at all since *différance* as the constitutive self-activity, the auto-affection, of language proceeds without any end

station, without a closure. And more than that: in the Derridean world there is neither arrival since there is no centre as the point of departure in the first place (see Derrida 1978e). All there is is the never-ending movement of *différance*. In other words, in contrast to Lacan in Derrida's world there is no teleology; what there is is only contingency, contingency in terms of *différance*.

It is precisely this kind of Derridean "scene of writing" (see Derrida 1978c: 221–243) that makes up the world I am reflecting in the study at hand. What is "present" on this "scene" is never present *an sich*; it is present always as a presence that is present only through the absence of what it is to present as an assumed *re*-presentation. A word always "stands for" a world, but only in the sense of a world it is about to "create"; the word, however, is never identical with itself. This is the idea of writing *as* a scene: signifiers enact signifieds that are "there" only by virtue of the signifiers: signifieds are not represented by signifiers, signifiers *are* the signifieds. Ultimately, this is the irony of the signifier, the intrinsic irony of language in general: if the "signified" implies the delusion that behind "the letter," a combination of letters forming a word, there is a specific object that exists in its own right, independent of language, outside and beyond the letters, it is precisely the "signifier" itself that, as *the* "signified" of the "signifier," maintains the deceptive impression that there is a world *an sich* behind the world of signifiers. In other words, the signifier is based on its own "objective irony": *the signifier is the signifier of linguistic reification*. In other words, the imaginary existence of the signifier is its condition of possibility, its Kantian *Bedingund der Möglichkeit*.

It is in this sense that, in the study at hand, I read cyber discourse as an effect of the "cyber." In a Derridean manner, my reading of cyber discourse is not intentional (inquiring into some assumed intentions of the authors writing in terms of the "cyber"); instead, the present text is a lexical reading: I am interested in the world of words, a world of textuality, the world constituted by the "cyber."

If, in Derridean terms, a text is always a "scene of writing," where is there the "where" the present text takes place? And if, in the same terms, a "scene of writing" is always a *double séance*, a double text that is already out of phase with itself (cf. Hobson 1998: 72–75; Howells 1999: 62–63), how is it possible to be in the presence of a scene that is not only a double of itself, but, at the same time, present in and through its very absence?

With this question we are approaching the "other scene" effected by the signifiers circulating around the "cyber," the "cyber" as the origin and pretext of the text at hand, "my" text as a counter-text of all that is "cyber."

As stated above, in cyber discourse, a discourse working in the mode of post-theory, we are transposed into a theatre of the imaginary. In these very terms, the "present" text is a double-text in the sense of *double séance*. As we saw above, this is not, of course, about a theatre of the *ancien régime*, a theatre of rigorous rules controlling the coherence of time, place and action; nor about

a Brechtian Enlightenment theatre with its estrangement or *V*-effect. Instead, post-theory as a whole takes place in an enigmatic world permanently in a state of a Beckettian *waiting for*. This is the textual *mise-en-scène* of "free-floating signifiers"; a stage on which one signifier always takes the place of another without having an ultimate signified, without reaching "The End" of the show. What, then, is this "other" of the "other scene"?

The "other" is the "double" of the *double séance* intrinsic to cyber discourse as an instance of post-theory, a "double" that takes place in the text at hand, in the present writing as a presence in its absence. The "other" is a configuration of figures constituting cyber discourse *in this text*; figures that consist of "free-floating signifiers" effected by the "cyber," restlessly circulating in the imaginary space of cyber discourse: the "other" is a matrix of the traces of traces in this text reflecting the world of the "cyber" in terms of the "post," the terms of post-theory. What once took place on the "scene of writing" brought about by the *événements* of Paris in May 1968, now occurs in the realm of post-theory, and, *in these terms*, in cyber discourse. In this sense, the imaginary of cyber discourse forms a "phantasmatic parallel real" (Collins 1995: 79), a linguistically constituted world in which the "tomorrow that never was, *is* (ibid.).

For me, this is the world that is the *double séance* in this text, a *paratext* of the textual world of the "cyber."

While, for Haraway (1991a: 149), the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion," in cyber discourse, the difference between fiction and theory has collapsed. All that is "cyber" is possible in the world of theory-fictions: this is the *real* of the "cyber," this is the real of the imaginary.

This is a world in which the potential turns into the actual by the force of the signifier, and nonsense becomes sense, the only sense; or, in Barthesian terms, while "in readerly [*lisible*] texts the signifiers march," "in writerly [*scriptible*] texts they dance" (Hawkes 1977: 114). In these terms, the world of the "cyber" is *l'effet de réel* (see Barthes 1989 [1968]: 148, 1968: 88; cf. Jameson 1988k [1975–1976/1986]: 22–23, 1988j [1977]: 135) enabled by the "post"; that is, a world as a discursive universe brought about by linguistic figuration, writing forging reality, writing *as* the reality of the real in the imaginary effected by the linguistic of language. While poststructuralism "merges literary language into *écriture*, or writing and textuality in general" (Felperin 1985: 107), cyber discourse hybridizes science fiction and post-theory: in cyber discourse, Californian linguistic play meets with Parisian high-theory; that is, the linguistic excess of the "post" intertwines with the maelstrom of "free-floating signifiers" of the "cyber," and, as a result, academic theory-euphoria engendered by the "cyber" following the logic of the "post" turns into the *jouissance* of cyberia, and vice versa (see Rushkoff 1994; cf., for example, Dean 2002a: 157–162, 166–172; Kim 2002: 17–20, 57–60, 66–73, 120–123; Jakubowicz 2004: 204–221; Partridge 2005: 150–155).

The "Post" Is Always Already "Before"

A world as a *l'effet de réel* brought about by linguistic figuration – that is the "third" order of things, an order beyond the binary opposition of fact and fiction, beyond the distinction between ontology and epistemology, beyond the problematics of "normal" science (the science of the "normal") founded on the non-solvable problem of the dichotomy between the *Realobjekt* and the *Erkenntnisobjekt*. In these terms, to study the world of the "cyber" means to approach objects that do not exist according to the paradigm of the "normal." Thus, the "cyber" belongs to the realm of the para-normal. In other words, cyber discourse is a linguistic-imaginary "paraspace" embracing a "rhetorically heightened 'other real'" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157).

This is a mode of writing that Gregory L. Ulmer (1989b [1983]) designates with the notion "post-criticism." Here, the relationship of the critical text with its object of study is "to be conceived in terms no longer of subject-object but of subject-predicate" (ibid.: 86). That is, instead of being an object separated from the subject, an object in its ontological objectiveness (the object of "normal" science), in post-criticism, the object of study is what one *does*. It is, as Ulmer (1994: 94) says, the "implication of textual mime for post-criticism, informing paraliterature as a hybrid of literature and criticism, art and science, is that *knowledge of an object of study may be obtained without conceptualization or explanation*" (emphasis mine). In these terms, as a method post-criticism "functions with an 'epistemology' of *performance*," entailing "knowing as making, producing, doing, acting" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Butler 1990, 1993; cf. McKenzie 2001).

What does this imply? If the idea of a study is not to understand an object in its objectivity, in its objective given-ness (the subject-object relation), but to see an object subjectively, in terms of the subject, through the predicates which one as the subject of the study is able to read into or to inscribe in the object being studied (subject-predicate relation), then the subject itself is the proper object of the study, and accordingly, the object turns into an imaginary entity created by the language *in which* the subject approaches this object – the subject in itself always already as an effect of language.

This is the world of writerly writing, writing as *écriture*; a world in which both the subject and the object are constituted by language, in which the subject and the object *are there* as entities effected by the linguistic of language, the generative principle of all signification. No longer is a representation of an object an objective of the study, nor a *re*-presentation of a text under the reading, nor any other textual operation at some meta-level; instead, what is the idea of writing as *écriture* is a movement of reading that takes place text-immanently, *in the textuality* of the text to be approached by the reading, the work of the reading subject as the work upon the text under the reading. The objective is no longer an interpretation, nor any other hermeneutic procedure. The aim is neither to understand a text in its own terms, nor make it in some other

way comprehensible. What counts is the reading of the subject in its absolute subjectiveness, in terms of a particular reading in its absolute particularness (cf. Ulmer 1989a, 1989b [1983]).

In terms of conventional methodology, this, of course, is a *cul de sac*, a dead end of the effort to understand the world as it is (what an illusion, what a delusion, indeed, we hear the "post" proclaim time and time again). In terms of post-theory, however, there is a way out of this aporia. It is the Derridean way of writing between parentheses, throwing oneself as the writing subject into an absolutely endless *mise en abyme* of meaning, throwing oneself into the in-between of the parentheses, the unending non-space of *chora*.

As Derrida (1984a: 5) says, the "difference marked in the 'differ()nce' between the e and the a eludes both vision and hearing"; therefore, "we must be permitted to refer to an order which no longer belongs to sensibility," but "neither can it belong to intelligibility, to the ideality which is not fortuitously affiliated with the objectivity of *theōrein* or understanding" (ibid.).[163] For Derrida, what is at issue here is a new order that "resists the opposition, one of the founding oppositions of philosophy, between the sensible and the intelligible." This order is announced precisely in the movement of *différance*, "between two differences of letters"; this is the idea of *différance* that – from the very beginning – "belongs neither to the voice nor to writing in the usual sense"; instead, it is "located *between* speech and writing" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

In my reading of the "cyber" in terms of the "post," what is in the "betweenness" of the "in-between," that is, between the parentheses of the "differ()nce" in the sense of within the non-space effected by the Derridean (), is not a space of the impossible, but the space of the imaginary. Precisely for this reason, writing in the present text between the parentheses, I am writing between the lines, between the lines of the texts I am writing about. This is the idea of *methodical irony*, constitutive of the textuality in my text: I am writing between the lines that "are there" on the "other scene" of the "cyber" effected by the "force of the letter" constitutive of the "post."

Similarly to Derrida who, in his effort to make apprehensible (if not apperceptible) the realm of *différance* that not only "cannot be apprehended in speech," but that "also bypasses the order of apprehension in general," and, in the end, "remains silent, secret and discreet as a tomb" (ibid.: 3), is left to his own devices, the devices of his own writing as *écriture*, what can I resort to here, if not to the devices of writing, the writing *in this text*: the means this text brings about

163 It is appropriate to notice here, as Derrida's translator Alan Bass (Derrida 1984a: 5) explains in his footnote, that a "play on words has been lost in translation." The "difference between the *e* and the *a* of *différence* and *différance* can neither be seen nor heard" (ibid.) This difference is "not a sensible – that is, relating to senses – difference," but "neither is this "an intelligible difference, for the very names by which we conceive of objective intelligibility are *already in complicity* with sensibility" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Moreover, *theorein*, the Greek origin of theory, literally means "to look at," "to see"; and what in translation reads as "understanding" is in Derrida's original *entendement*, the noun form of the verb *entendre*, "to hear" (ibid.).

in its very textuality and thus makes available as a method of inquiry. That is, the study at hand is a Derridean "writing *on* writing" that, at the same time, is a "writing *within* writing" (ibid.; emphasis mine); it is for this reason that the imaginary, a realm beyond the sensible and the intelligible, can be approached only through writing, *a writing that does not pretend to be anything but writing*.

It is like "speaking" about the Freudian "unconscious" (see, for example, Freud 1987d [1900]: 541–545, 555–578, 1991a [1915]) that, by definition, is something *unconscious* (not present in the conscious), and cannot therefore be nor become conscious *as unconscious*, writing about the imaginary can take place only through a detour, "only through a very indirect discourse *on writing*" (Derrida 1984a: 4; emphasis mine). Similarly to the unconscious, the imaginary is not perceivable as such, but only in its traces, in its symptomatic figures and figurations. In this sense, what is "cyber" is *always already* between the Derridean parentheses. Accordingly, in the present writing, I am approaching – but, in the end, never reaching – the imaginary of the "cyber," a realm of language "being there" in terms of the "post," as such as it is manifested in cyber discourse. Thus, the present text, in its very textuality, is writing about *the imaginary that is writing the imaginary in the imaginary of writing of the writing of the imaginary in its written manifestations of the written being in itself always about the imaginary written in the imaginary of language*.

This is the *mise en abyme* of the "cyber" in the mode of the "post," the very condition of possibility of all that is "cyber."

If cyber discourse in itself constitutes a Derridean "scene of writing," and if "there is no outside-text," what can my writing be, if not a scene of writing *on the scene of writing, within this writing*, the writing in the realm of cyber discourse. In this sense, the present text is "another scene," in the Freudian manner *ein anderer Schauplatz* (Freud 1987d [1900]: 541). This "scene," as a signifier constitutive of my text, of course, is *à la lettre* neither a word nor a concept, since it itself belongs to the realm of imaginary. Nor does it make sense to ask *where* this "other scene" is, since according to the logic of *mise en abyme*, as writing it is everywhere and therefore nowhere particularly. This "nowhere" that is everywhere in writing is writing as an incessant movement of *différance* as an unending movement of the traces of traces, the supplements of supplements, in an endless movement of dissemination.

In other words, the "post" is never "after"; it is always – *always already* – "before." Consequently, what is the "cyber", in its utopian textuality, is about the "post" *avant la lettre*. The tense of the "cyber" is literally the "before," before the fact, before the factuality of the letter. In this sense, in its literal literality, the "cyber" is about the *futurum perfectum* of the "post."

2 "Sex Times Technology Equals the Future"

> An ontological or technological prosthesis is an inversion of a conceptual prosthesis or prostheses of ontology. Objectified science produces what Jacques-Alain Miller describes as *piecès détachées*, that is, "detached pieces" or "spare parts." But these spare parts do not belong to a preexisting body. They are not prostheses that would repair or substitute for an organ; they are inventions that constantly modify the body and reality. An ontological or technological prosthesis thus assumes a body that is constantly modified, dynamized, and reinvented – it presupposes what psychoanalysis understands as a libidinal body. A technological prosthesis, then, far from a mere tool or instrument of cognition, is an organ of jouissance, a prosthetic substitute for the lost mythical organ Lacan calls *lamella*. In Seminar XVII, the pendant of the lamella is *lathouse*, the object-gadget of jouissance.
>
> Samo Tomšič (2012: 153)

> Cyberspace […] involves a curious form of *disembodiment*, in which each participant becomes a perceptual monad, a concept rather than a physical presence. Cyberspace parodies the gnostic demand for transcendence of the body, which is literally "left behind" like a prison of meat as one enters the pleroma of conceptual space. Ultimately, one wishes to "download the consciousness" and achieve purity, cleanliness, immortality. Cyberspace proposes that life is not "in" the body, but in the spirit. And the spirit is… inviolate.
>
> Peter Lamborn Wilson (1996: 224)

If sex has a future, what is *future sex*? The title indicating the theme of the year 2000 Ars Electronica festival, the highly influential discourse generator of media art and postmodern techno-theory, pronounces the problem, in its very words, concerning the future of sex: "Sex in the Age of its Procreative Superfluousness" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b).

Now, let us pause for a moment and enjoy the extraordinary ring of this declaration: *Sex in the age of its procreative superfluousness* – that is the sound of the future already present, the sound of the end of times in terms of "the sexual"; a historically ponderous notion in which, through two thousand years, *the imperative of procreation* overshadowed *the dynamics of desire* (cf. Angerer 2002: 243–248, 2000). In this sense, if the history of what since the nineteenth century has became designated as "sexuality" (Foucault 1990k [1976]: 104–106) was defined throughout two millennia, in one way or another, by the Biblical idea of procreation (see, for example, Caplan 1987; Stanton 1992a; Stein 1990a; Davidson 2001; Garton 2004), in contrast to that, future sex is predicated upon "procre-

ative superfluousness" pertaining to the very condition of possibility of "the sexual" (for a fundamental deconstruction of the entire conceptual complex of "the sexual" in terms of the "post," see Parisi 2004; cf. Irwin 2010: 115–127. 133–143; O'Riordan 2010: 99–122; Giffney & Hird 2008). In this constellation, the contemporary paradigm of post-sex, "sex" in the mode of simulation, signals future sex as virtual "sex" defined by the "cyber"; that is, the emerging paradigm of post-sexual desires and pleasures in the world of the cyborg in which, as Haraway (1991f: 249) already presaged in the 1980s, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (cf., for example, Menser & Aronowitz 1996: 25; Lury 1998: 153; Betcher 2001: 35–39; Siebers 2008: 63–64).

In other words, if there is something that can be designated as "sexual" in the future at all, it is possible only as an epiphenomenon of a cyborgian act, in the mode of *virtual experience by means of prosthetics*; or, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, "cyborg 'sex'" as the *jouissance* of the cyborg.

From this perspective, at the outset of a new millennium we have now reached the point of no return at which the meaning of sex and sexuality in terms of procreation has once and for all lost its inherited legitimacy: as a biological necessity, both sex and sexuality have become superfluous, as obsolete as what is contemptuously called the "natural body" in post-theory; as Geneviève Rail (1998a: 148) says, "[i]n the postmodern condition, the natural body disintegrates and what is apprehended as the body is only a simulacrum" (cf., for example, Conley 1991 [1984]: 57; Hayles 1993b: 174; Derrida 1995b [1992/1989]: 244–245; Balsamo 1996: 28–34; Hall 2002: 138–139; Nayar 2004: 78–83, 230–261; Magdalinski 2008: 27–28; Kroker & Kroker 1988a; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Kirby 1995; Zita 1998). Thus, future "sex" and "sexuality," if they have still any relevance and validity at all, are post-biological attributes of the body, which in itself has turned into a techno-body; they are purely technocultural forms of "the sexual" that are beyond not only of the imperative of reproduction, but also of the biological body altogether. In Stelarc's (1991: 591) words, "[w]hat is significant is no longer male-female intercourse but human-machine interface."

But is this, indeed, the whole story, the future of *all* that is sexual, that is, an entirely new era of sex and sexuality, that has nothing to do with the biology of procreation as it has been known until now (cf. Harding 1998: 26, 68, 85–108; Richardson 2000: 56–57, 99–100; Johnson 2005: 2–13, 36–40, 47–49; Jackson 1999; in terms of ectogenesis, cf. Coleman 2004; Gelfand & Shook 2006)?

2.1. Cybersex as a Postmodern Phantasm

In contemporary thoroughly technologized Western culture in which "the biological" and "the technological," after their deconstruction, are not only mutually intertwined, but even function as the extensions of one another, sex and procreation, evidently, no longer share the same paradigm, that is, sexual reproduction of the species, the precondition of the continuation of all life. Accordingly, artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, surrogate motherhood, and already potentially, cloning, in fact, all the techniques, procedures and practices as well as the concomitant scientific concepts and discursive figures concerning conception, pregnancy and birth, have fundamentally changed the idea of sexual reproduction as the propagation of offspring during the last three decades, and, as a consequence, the very idea of *sex* with all its dimensions is currently intelligible only in terms of deconstruction (for various aspects of the technologization of sexual reproduction, see, for example, Corea 1985; Farquhar 1996; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Hopkins 1998; Lublin 1998; Edwards et al. 1999 [1993]; Baker 2000a [1999], 2000b [1996]; Wilmut et al. 2001; Ferrell 2006; Djerassi 2008; in utopian terms, see, for example, Potts 2002: 217–265; DeKoven 2004: 32–35, 250–269; Firestone 1970; Siebers 1994a; Sargisson 1996; Matich 2005; Muñoz 2009; Ní Dhúill 2010; from the perspective of antique philosophy, see Gaca 2003).

In these terms, what in contemporary technoculture are designated as *reproductive technologies* have been, indeed, increasingly dominating the whole gamut of human reproduction from conception through pregnancy to birth since the late 1970s (cf., for example, Clarke 1998; Clarke & Olesen 1999; Lay et al. 2000; Baldi 2002; De Jonge & Barratt 2002; Ferrell 2006; Clarke et al. 2010). In this constellation, female bodies as "birth machines" (Barr 1993: 92) have been subsumed by reproductive technologies in the form of body-machine assemblages constitutive of the cyborg, to the extent that, *in principle*, sex as a "natural method" of procreation is already now superfluous: to have progeny one does not have to have sex. In other words, as a result of a comprehensive scientific-technological transformation of biology from a "natural" condition to an artefactual constellation, sex and reproduction have been separated from one another: in addition to the older contraceptive paradigm of *sex without reproduction* there is now a new paradigm: *reproduction without sex*. From this perspective, sex is nothing else but *an evolutionary residual*, a thing of the past that has entirely lost its relevance in the present high-tech world.

It is clear that in this situation the very idea of "the sexual," the notion and category constitutive of "sex" and "sexuality," being just some two hundred years old, has become thoroughly problematic, to say the least – namely, what have sexual desire and pleasure to do with the propagation of the species, especially when reproduction is a technological procedure carried out under scientifically controlled conditions?

2.1.1 "Sex" with Žižek in Cyberspace

In a world in which technology has taken the place of biology, or even the place of all that was once called "nature," the sexual body and the reproductive body are no longer the same thing: while the reproductive body, most notable as the female body, is the species body administered and managed by the health care systems (see, for example, Fox 1994; Lupton 1994a; Williams & Bendelow 1998; Bunton & Petersen 2005; Corrêa et al. 2008; Davis 2009; Reed & Saukko 2010; from a historical perspective, see Shorter 1997 [1991]), the sexual body, in terms of both the female and the male, as an individual instrument of personal pleasure, is increasingly driven by consumer culture and hedonism based on the logic of the commodity form. At the same time, whether reproductive or sexual, the human body is more and more a technological object, an object of body design. Instead of an atavistic carnal body, what we have now is *a post-biological body-machine*, an embodiment of social and personal efficiency, operating as an integral part of the machine world.

Accordingly, in this technocultural constellation, the beginning of new life has ceased to be a "natural fact"; it is now an instance of cyborg politics, a result of scientific-technological control and regulation of procreation, an increasingly important part of what Foucault (1990k: 143–150) calls "bio-power." Thus, in technoculture, one is not born, but brought into the world by technology, carried through and elaborated by a technoscientific process in which bodies no longer meet in the flesh, but are mediated by various apparatuses and interfaces: *the human body has become an extension of technology*, an adaptive appendage of complicated techno-systems. In this sense, indeed, the interface has been substituted for intercourse, as Stelarc (1991: 591) proclaimed in his techno-artistic rhetorics accompanying his cyborg performances in the early 1990s (cf. Salecl 2001: 34; Nayar 2004: 256–257; Kuppers 2007: 115–121; Stiegler 2008 [1996]: 152; for a historical contextualization in terms of "neo-avantgarde," see Berghaus 2005: 207–214).

What is the idea of the sexual in this constellation? If sex has become "superfluous" in terms of procreation, does sex have a future at all in the sense of specific functions of and activities with organs that formerly were used to reproduction? That is, why these functions and activities should still be called "sex" if their historical conditions no longer exist? Or does the technologization of sexuality precisely imply the end of organic sex, sex in the sense of the sexual organs, sex as carnal pleasure experienced as the immediate intimacy of desiring bodies? If sex no longer has anything to do with reproduction, what is it, in fact, we need the whole term for, the signifier *sex*, in the first place, and thus, would it be better to bring things into their logical conclusion: to give up *the idea* of sex altogether? In fact, if sex still has a future, is it actually in the past: a form of corporeal pleasure that in its natural fleshliness, in its atavistic carnality, is in the world of the cyborg already obsolete – or only feasible as a technological simulation?

Sex as a Manifestation of Science Fiction

Considering the problematics of sex and technology – or, cybersex and prosthetic God – from a historical perspective, the question is not so much the one still possible to be posed a good century ago, in the world of what Kai Mikkonen (2001) calls the "electric years" in the era of *fin de siècle*, awe-struck by an impetuous scientific and industrial advancement: "[c]an love become purely mechanical?" (ibid.: 185; cf. Anzalone 1996; Lindauer 2008; in the context of the mechanistic aesthetics of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, cf. Rutsky 1999: 55–71; in the cultural constellation of the postmodern, cf. Pettman 2006).[164] Rather, with regard to the politics of the cyborg – the cyborg as the emblem of the return of the repressed (in terms of the Freudian *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*, cf., for example, Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632): the Leviathan as the idea of the body politic – administering the technoscientific infrastructure of all the corporeal, and creating a world living precisely *for that reason* a "mythic time" (Haraway 1985: 66), the question is actually: what does it mean if the sexual is going to implode into the technological?

"The year 2000 has already happened," wrote Jean Baudrillard (1988g [1985]) a decade before the actual fact (cf. Baudrillard 1994b [1992]: 1–9). According to Baudrillard (1988g: 36), at that time it was "not necessary to write science fiction" any longer, because, as Thomas Foster (2005: 81) says, paraphrasing Baudrillard, "we now lived in such fictions" (cf. Baudrillard 1994a [1981]: 122–127), or, as Peter Lunenfeld (2000a: 33) puts it, in contemporary "technomediated cultures" we "do not read science fiction so much as live it" (cf. Wolmark 1994: 12–13; Butler 1999: 156–158). If we take such observations seriously, a question arises as to whether *sex is also a manifestation of science fiction* in the present world (cf. Potts 2002: 258–265); that is, no longer a real thing, but something that takes place in the imaginary of the postmodern, or in virtual reality, as a form of technological simulation – in a word, in the mode of cybersex? At any rate, in terms of the sexual, what is obvious is that we are now living in *the sexual laboratory of neoliberal capitalism* ruled by the performance principle of neo-Fordism, the imperative of the maximization of efficiency (cf. McKenzie 2001; Berthoud 2007).

164 In contrast to the world of the "cyber," the "electric years" (1880–1914) of the France of Zola, Villiers, Huysmans, Verne, Jarry and Roussel, studied by Mikkonen with regard to the literary forms expressing various aspects of human-machine relations, was a world in which – before the scientifically far-reaching invention of the unconscious by Freud (1987d [1900]) – love still appeared as an enigma enticing poetic imagination, whether romantic, decadent or pre-surreal. This is no longer possible in the world of the "post" in which all-pervasive scientific reason and technology have become the *raison d'être* of all being, and accordingly, human emotions have been turned into preprogrammed affective reactions to artificially constructed stimuli calculated to elicit corresponding and thus appropriate effects. As a consequence, what was once love is now "sex." For this reason, also eroticism, a realm existing only through the creative force of the irrational, has vanished in the contemporary world dominated by technoscientific reason, the reason of the cyborg.

For J. G. Ballard, it was clear already in the early 1970s that the future in general will be equal with "sex times technology" (Springer 1996: 50; cf. Dery 1996: 183–225; Kauffman 1998: 176–179). Speaking about the radical transformation of human life in modern society Ballard outlined the *future of sex* in an image signalling simultaneously a loss and a reinvention of the sexual.

> I believe that organic sex, body against body, skin area against skin area, is becoming no longer possible […] What we're getting is a whole new order of sexual fantasies, involving a different order of experiences, like car crashes, like travelling in jet aircraft, the whole overlay of new technologies, architecture, interior design, communications, transport, merchandising. These things are beginning to reach into our lives and change *the interior design of our sexual fantasies*. (Springer 1996: 51; emphasis mine)

No doubt, since the 1970s much has changed in the world, as a result of which science, science fiction, technology and theory have intertwined ever-more closely along with utopian and neo/post-futuristic ideas. In this manner, as Dominic Pettman (2002: 90–91) says, "new configurations of libidinal technology" have created a "Dionysiac landscape" that has "only intensified from the 1970s to the present." As a result, if, in the 1970s the equation "sex times technology equals the future" might still have appeared as a bleak and sinister vision of the insidious power of technology to even penetrate the intimate sphere of human life, both the sexualization of technology and technologizing of sexuality have become celebrated topics in the techno-imaginary of the postmodern (cf. Grenzfurthner et al. 2009). However, whether Ballard's prophecy has turned into reality depends, of course, on what we understand by "the future" – and not the least, how we conceive of what is called "reality." Thus, has Ballard's "no longer" become our "now," or, is it rather, as for Baudrillard (1991: 312), that science fiction "is no longer an elsewhere, it is an everywhere" (cf. Haraway 1991a: 149; Saguaro 2006: 205–222; Kuppers 2007: 130–132; McGowan 2007: 136–140; Cortiel 1999)?

Or, in fact, is it precisely the "interior design of our sexual fantasies" that is at issue not only in cybersex, but also in the postmodern imaginary of the sexual that I call post-sex, and, finally, in the theory discourse on the sexual that I designate as theory-sex?

While *sexuality* as a term, concept and category is a German form of thought in its origin, conceived of and elaborated on within *Sexualwissenschaft*, and critically reinterpreted by its counter-discourse, the Freudian psychoanalysis (see, for example, Sulloway 1979; Bullough 1994; Porter & Teich 1994b; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Sigusch 2008), *sex*, in turn, whether in its modern or postmodern form, is an American invention, an idiom of American culture (cf., for example, Schur 1988; Seidman 1992; Fessenden et al. 2001b). This applies all the more to cybersex that cannot be thought about without American sexual hysteria, without American utopian millennialism, without the American New Age as a form of radical individualism, and without American science fiction, that is, the whole universe of the technological imaginary as both popular fantasy

and academic theory typical of the American way of thinking (see, for example, Clareson 1977; Ross 1991d; Warrick 1980; Dunn & Erlich 1982; Porush 1985; Lefanu 1988; Slusser & Shippey 1992; McCaffery 1994d [1991]; Wolmark 1994; Jameson 2005; Seed 2005a; Hollinger 2009; in terms of the postmodern, see McHale 1992; for a historical contextualization in terms of American technological utopianism, see Corn 1986; Segal 1994, 2005 [1985]; for American technological sublime, see Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996).[165]

It is in this sense, as Joel Dinerstein (2006: 569) says, that "*technology is the American theology*" (emphasis in the original), and, accordingly, for Americans, "it is not the Christian God but technology that structures the American sense of power and revenge, the nation's abstract sense of well-being, its arrogant sense of superiority, and its righteous justification for global dominance." This is the background of all that is "cyber" and, by extension, of the techno-imaginary visions of prosthetic "sex" in a world in which cyberspace and the cyborgian mode of being constitute the parameters of the body-subject.

From this perspective, it is understandable that the seduction of cybersex is not so much about sex as the "cyber"; and this is what makes cybersex, as the Americans love to say, "sexy." On the theory scene of the "post," there is nothing as exciting as the equation of "sex" and the "cyber." Why and how is it, then, that the "cyber" is "sexy"; in other words, for what reasons is cybersex so seductive that it has become not only a popular phantasm, but even an object of high-theory, and not just in the American context (see, for example, Plant 1998; Case 1999; Velena 1998; Döring 2000; Plummer 2003, 2004, 2005; Dekker 2004; Perniola 2004 [2000]; Parisi 2004; in terms of "cybersexualities," see Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; for an overview, see Collins 2006, 2008)?

In these terms, the question is then: if "[s]ex (as sexual activity and its display) is the most important feature in contemporary virtual reality applications" (Emig 2006: 194), what is "the sexual" as a *theoretical figure* in this context?

The Fate of the Sexual in the Excess of "Sex"

According to Slavoj Žižek, the leading theory star on the postmodern theory scene celebrating the transformative and transgressive power of all that is

165 The proper understanding of all historical complexities of American technological utopianism as a futurological form of secular-religious millennialism would necessitate a separate study (cf., for example, Bozeman 1997). Suffice it here to sum up the topic by referring to Peter Wollen's (2002: 262) remarks on the "three principal effects of American technological utopianism," of which its contemporary "digital variant" surrounding the Internet is "really American utopianism": (1) "technological utopianism functions as an 'opiate of masses' […] substituting imaginary solutions based on the idea of a technological fix for engagement with the real issues"; (2) "technological futurism […] fuels nationalism, creating an image of the nation based not on its past and traditions but on its future prospects"; and (3) this kind of "futurism" serves to "inspire new inventions, the brain-children not of rational, purposive thinkers but of dreamers and visionaries." In this manner, American technological futurism is an affective mode of thought in its postmodern sense (see Clough & Halley 2007).

"post,"[166] in contemporary Western culture, we are living in an age in which the future of sexuality is seriously threatened. For Žižek (1996c: 189), articulating the thematic complex of "the sexual" in Lacanian terms, under the conditions of "late-capitalist liberal-democratic permissiveness," the problem is that sexual desire is withering away because, as he claims, "the sexual object is more and more depreciated" as a result, paradoxically, of its "direct accessibility"; that is, due to "the lack of obstacles that would heighten its value" (cf. Žižek 1995a: 122). It is precisely this "value" of the sexual object that is now in danger according to Žižek; a situation that, in turn, is about to endanger the existence of sexual desire altogether since expressly the "instant availability" of the objects we are desiring for threatens to "suffocate desire" in itself (ibid.: 123; cf. Žižek 1996c: 189–190). In other words, the overwhelming affluence of contemporary capitalism, and lately, the advent of "virtual reality" (ibid.: 190), are in the process of bringing about a loss of desire that defines the parameters of the sexual in its various forms in the contemporary Western world.

Thus, no longer sex – is this the future of sex? Or, is there *sex beyond desire*, pure sex in the sense of *absolute sex*, that is, sex without the teleology of desire, something that Foucault (1990k: 157–159) designates as "bodies and pleasures" (cf., for example, McLaren 2002: 108–109; Kelly 2009: 144–147; McWhorter 1999; Butler 1999a)? And, in this sense, is the loss of desire, feared by Žižek, in fact, the redemption of sex – an entirely new mode of "the sexual": "sex" beyond sex?

To understand the significance of these questions it is necessary first to ask what is it, in fact, that Žižek is purporting by speaking about the "suffocation" of desire? What can this mean in contemporary culture that is expressly living from an uninterrupted production and proliferation not only of desire in general, but sexual desire in particular? Is it, in fact, on the contrary, that instead of the "suffocation" of desire, what we have now is an *excess of desire* that is characteristic of the Western world celebrating its productivity under the sign of affluence; to specify, an excess of desire that in itself is increasingly *sexualized* by the economic order of what I call productive consumption, the present form of capitalism, constitutive of the postmodern? Thus, is it in the prevailing condition in Western culture in which the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991) has thoroughly invaded the *Lebenswelt*, that it is explicitly the all-consuming sexualization of the way of life in the manner of post-sex

166 To understand Žižek's role on the theory scene of the "post," it is advisable to see that he is "no ordinary philosopher, for he thinks and writes in such a recklessly entertaining fashion, he constantly risks making philosophy enjoyable" (Myers 2003: 1). "With a happy disregard for the typically cloistered atmosphere of critical thought, Žižek's approach is frenetic and explosive. Swivelling on his heels, he berates the political apathy of contemporary life in one moment, jokes about the man who thinks he will be eaten by a chicken in the next, then explains the ethical heroism of Keanu Reeves in *Speed*, exposes the philosophical basis of Viagra, and finishes up with a disclosure of the paradoxical value of Christianity to Marxism. In doing so, Žižek takes psychoanalysis and philosophy by the scruff of their necks and forces them to confront everyday life. All of which has compelled the British critic Terry Eagleton to describe Žižek 'as the most formidably brilliant exponent of psychoanalysis, indeed of cultural theory in general, to have emerged in Europe for some decades." (ibid.) As we can see, with all these qualities Žižek is undoubtly the most qualified theorist today to unravel the most important problem of our time, the problem of cybersex.

that is now characteristic of contemporary culture in terms of desire; in other words, "sex" as a continuous quotation of itself, as a *self-reflexive reiteration* of the cultural phantasm referred to as "sex" (cf., for example, Storkey 1997: 93–97; Ahmed 1998: 105–113; Bauman 2001: 220–237; Connor 2004a: 10–11; Simon 1996; Guillebaud 2001 [1998]; Sigusch 2005; Bhattacharyya 2002; Potts 2002)?

Thus, considering the comprehensive, all-embracing sexualization of desire specific to postmodern culture, that is, the overwhelming presence of "sex" in the sense of post-sex, is the problem, in fact, to apply Roland Barthes's (1983b [1970]: 29) observation that, while, in Japan, "sexuality is in sex, not elsewhere," in contrast, in America, "sex is everywhere, except in sexuality"? In other words, in its absent presence that is precisely its present absence, "sex" is *the* fetish of the "post."

In the light of Barthes's remark, if the "sexual" in itself, in its excessive omnipresence, even in its spectacular omnipotence, in its Derridean *spectrality* (see Derrida 1994 [1993]; cf., for example, Spivak 2000: 7–10, 23, 30–32; Punday 2003: 43–47; Rufo 2009: 230–246), is nowadays as self-evident *in its very banality* as it is equivocal, it seems to be obvious that it is not so much a "suffocation," but, rather, a thorough-going transformation of desire that is the problem in terms of the sexual: in the postmodern, there is no desire without the sexual, the sexual in the mode of "sex," a postmodern phantasmagoria of the sexual in the form of post-sex, a simulation of sex and sexuality as a – if not *the* – driving force of productive consumption defining the parameters of the mode of living, the very *lifestyle*, in contemporary culture manifesting the economic order of neo-Fordism, characterized, among other things, by the Taylorization of the libido.

In these terms, the *economization* of "the sexual" is a fundamentally essential driving force, a post-Freudian *Trieb* (cf. Freud 1981c [1905], 1991d [1915]), of the contemporary economic order in the Western world, to the extent that *without the production of "sex" capitalism would implode in its own impossibility*.

What I am arguing is that under the prevailing regime of capital, desire is no longer an autonomous realm dominated by its *Eigenlogik*, the irrational logic of the libido, but an indispensable factor in the politics of pleasure (cf. Jameson 1988i [1983]) as an increasingly important constituent of the extremely rational economic order of productive consumption in which *the production of desire* is an unconditional precondition of the survival not only of the subject, but of the whole system, the political economy of neoliberalism (see, for example, Comaroff & Comaroff 2001; Bewes 2002; Brown 2003; Graham 2006; Petras et al. 2006; Albritton et al. 2010). This is the political economy of desire in the postmodern implying a calculation and regulation of desire in which "the sexual," in its *imaginary power*, is the decisive determinant of the production of surplus value (in terms of "calculating hedonism," see Featherstone 1991b: 171–174, 186–187). In this new cultural constellation, dominated by transnational financial capital as the true sovereign of global capitalism, all that is sexual has been rationalized; that is, brought under the control of "instrumental reason" constitutive of

the modern (see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Jay 1973; Held 1980; Habermas 1994 [1981], 1998b [1985]; Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; Marcuse 2002 [1964]; Albert et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in Weber's notion of *Zweckrationalität*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010).

It is precisely this economic order from which the Taylorization of the libido has emerged, a rational organization of the libidinal economy of the subject in the matrix of productive consumption, the driving force of neo-Fordism (in terms of the management of the subject and managerial subjectivity, see, for example, du Gay 1996a, 1996b; Hancock & Tyler 2001, 2009; Tyler 2004).

In this economic order, as Arjun Appadurai (1996: 82–83) says, consumption turns into a "social discipline of the imagination." For me, this is precisely the idea of the Taylorization of the libido; that is, the regimentation of desire which, in the end, amounts to *a spectacular productivity of desire* in terms of economic growth and a corresponding form of subjectivity, the post-subject as a diligent and industrious producer and consumer of desire and its unending products, an avalanche of commodities ruled by the commodity form. This, in short, is the idea of what I mean by the affluence, the excessive abundance, constitutive of productive consumption, the political economy of contemporary capitalism.[167]

What is specific to the contemporary Western world following the imperative of the economic is that *desire itself has been sexualized*, and conversely, sexuality as a mode of corporeal well-being has become – in contrast to the Foucauldian (post)utopian paradigm of "bodies and pleasures" to be found *beyond* the terror regime of *le sexe* – an experimental laboratory of desires and pleasures *within* the order of productive consumption, cultivated according to the logic of the commodity form by consumer culture as the postmodern form of hedonism, a mode of pleasure seeking that Mike Featherstone (1991a: 44, 59, 86–87, 1991b: 171–177, 1999b: 6–8) calls "calculating hedonism" (for the origin of the term, see Jacoby 1980; cf., for example, Falk 1994: 138–141; Bertens 1995: 201–206; Lury 1996: 52–78, 99–107; Turner 1992b: 137, 1997 [1984]: 39, 116, 178, 192–193; Illouz 1997, 2007; Gottdiener 2000). This is the destiny of desire in the libidinal economy of neo-Fordism; this is the destiny of the sexual in the excess of "sex." And, accordingly, in my reading, this is the "sexual reason" of what Žižek (1994: 2, 1997b: 164, 2001a: 252; 2005b [1994]: 210) refers to as "virtual sex" (cf., for exam-

167 In an intriguing manner, Žižek (1996c: 231) situates his conception of the "suffocation" of desire in the context of "the antinomies of capitalism": "on the one hand, this saturation, this instant gratification that suffocates desire; on the other, the growing number of the 'excluded,' of those who lack the basic necessities of life"; that is, "here excess and lack, suffocation and deprivation, are structurally co-dependent, so that it is no longer possible to measure the 'progress' by an undisputed standard" (ibid.). Here I can only agree; but what then follows appears as fatalism to me: "it is inappropriate to claim that since some people live in abundance while others live in deprivation, we must strive for universal abundance: the 'universalization' of the form of abundance which characterizes late capitalism is impossible for *structural reasons*, since, as Hegel pointed out in his *Philosophy of Right*, in capitalism, abundance itself produces deprivation" (ibid.; emphasis mine). According to this logic, those who live in deprivation have to adapt themselves to their deprivation because it is, "for structural reasons," their fate, their predestined lot.

ple, Balsamo 1995b: 347–348, 366; Dietrich 1997: 176; McRae 1997: 74–76; Poster 1998: 191–192, 2001: 156–157; Botting 1999: 204–205; Cavallaro 2000: 127–128; Lunenfeld 2000a: 89–91; Bell 2001a: 126–127; Gray 2001: 135–138; Flieger 2005: 6–7, 29–30, 52–53; in the mode of "abstract sex," cf. Parisi 2004; for the origin of the idea of "virtual sex," see Rheingold 1991: 345–353, 1990); that is, in my terms, post-sex in the world of the "cyber" effected by the logic of the "post."

The Mystery of "Courtly Love"

Today, the pursuit of pleasure is not only the driving force of capitalism; the post-Freudian pleasure principle is the very imperative of postmodern culture as the cultural formation of the neoliberal order of contemporary capitalism (cf. Freud 1991d [1915]: 214–219, 1987e [1920]; cf. Marcuse 1987 [1955]). This is the idea of what I call the regime of productive consumption, the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism manifesting the logic of the political economy of neoliberalism. Under this regime, the Weberian protestant work ethic (see Weber (1993 [1904–1905]; cf. Mitzman 1985 [1965]; Scaff 1989; Lehmann & Roth 1993; Schluchter 2009) has returned with a vengeance: the "post" does not imply a paradise of freedom and leisure; on the contrary, it signals a pervasive mode of control, a control paradigm in which leisure-time follows the logic of work: a self-discpline that is optimized according to the demands of productivity. It is in this constellation that, paradoxically, calculating hedonism becomes not only the ethos of the postmodern work ethic, but, more fundamentally, the social-economic basis of postmodern body politics; a politics of the body in which a "controlled de-control of the emotions" (Featherstone 1991a: 81) determines the *corporeal kinetics* of the postmodern subject. That is, "liminal moments" in the "ordered disorder" (ibid.: 22) constitutive of productive consumption imply the thrill of temporary suspension of control (for the idea of the liminal in the postmodern, see D'haen & Bertens 1994).

In the postmodern, the control of affects is the precondition of the *controlled de-control* that guarantees the productivity of pleasure in terms of the maximization of enjoyment. This is the cultural constellation in which the sexual paradigm of the modern turns into the sexual paradigm of the postmodern; that is, the body culture of post-sex, the order of calculating hedonism under the seductive signifier of "sex": post-sex as a simulation of itself, "sex" as the reality of the imaginary produced by productive consumption.

It is from this position that I approach Žižek's conception of "the sexual" in contemporary culture in which all that is "cyber" – whatever it is in itself (see, example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b; Dery 1996; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Bell 2001a; Flanagan & Booth 2002) – has been claimed to have defined the parameters of being human entirely anew under the signs of "cyberspace," the "cyborg" and "cybersexualities," amounting, in the end, to what is called the "posthuman" (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Dixon & Cassidy 1998; Hayles

1999; Badmington 2000; Graham 2002; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008; from a historical perspective, cf. Orland 2005b).

That said, we can now return to the initial question: what does Žižek actually mean by the "suffocation" of desire; to specify, *what* precisely is suffocated and *how*? To clarify his thesis, Žižek (1995a: 122) refers to what Freud (1990a [1912]) calls an *Erniedrigung des Liebeslebens*, a "debasement of love life" (cf. Žižek 1997b: 43, 1999f: 195), meaning that:

> […] the psychical value of erotic needs is reduced as soon as their satisfaction becomes easy. An obstacle is required in order to heighten libido; and where natural resistances to satisfaction have not been sufficient men have at all times erected conventional ones so as to be able to enjoy *love*. (Žižek 1995a: 122; emphasis mine)[168]

"Within this perspective," as Žižek says, "courtly love appears as simply the most radical strategy for elevating the value of the object by putting up conventional obstacles to its attainability" (ibid.; cf. Grosz 1990: 137–140; Goodrich 1996: 32–38, 44, 49–50; Easthope 1999 [1989]: 92–95). *Courtly love* – what does it mean here, in the context of "virtual sex"?[169] According to Lacan, whose idea Žižek draws on in his conception of "virtual sex," constitutive of "courtly love" is the impossibility of its object that, paradoxically, makes that love possible in the first place; that is, in Lacan's words:

> The object involved, the feminine object, is introduced oddly enough through the door of privation or of inaccessibility. Whatever the social position of him who functions in the role, the inaccessibility of the object is posited as a point of departure. (Lacan 1997 [1986/1959–1960]: 149; cf. Žižek 1999b)

As we can see, Lacan's "courtly love" is based, in a paradigmatic manner, on a heterosexual model of desire: the "woman," as both an unattainable object and an ideal of "the feminine," appears to the man as an idealized woman idolized by him (see Lacan 1997: 99, 109, 122, 125–139, 145–153, 160–162, 214–215, 235).

168 The original reads: *[…] der psychische Wert des Liebesbedürfnisses sofort sinkt, sobald ihm die Befriedigung bequem gemacht wird. Es bedarf eines Hindernisses, um die Libido in die Höhe zu treiben, und wo die natürlichen Widerstände gegen die Befriedigung nicht ausreichen, haben die Menschen zu allen Zeiten konventionelle eingeschaltet, um die Liebe genießen zu können*. (Freud 1990 [1912]: 88) It is appropriate to notice here that, firstly, there is – as this quote also shows – no sex in the Freudian world; instead, there are, among other things, *Liebe*, *Liebesdürfnisse*, *Erotik* and *Libido*, all of them belonging, in one way or another, to the realm of *Sexualität* that is not to be confounded with "sex" (see Freud 1981c [1905], 1986d [1915–1917]); and, secondly, Freud speaks, faithfully to his time, expressly of heterosexual male sexuality in terms of tensions between two kinds of female sexual objects, the idealized loved one and the true object of sexual desire, a "debased" woman with whom the man can enjoy unrestricted sexual gratification. This is the dilemma of *Liebesleben* in Freud's times.

169 In his *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, Žižek (2005b [1994]: 89–112), among other things, elaborates on the theme of courtly love in the context of masochism, a theme which would deserve a discussion of its own; what is relevant for the topic at hand, the idea of "virtual sex," is Žižek's question in which, as if by way of a meaningful detail, Žižek's view on sex comes to the fore: "Why talk about courtly love [*l'amour courtois*] today, in an age of permissiveness when the sexual encounter is often nothing more than a 'quickie' in some dark corner of an office?" (ibid.: 89). From this standpoint, according to Žižek, it is important to notice that the "impression that courtly love is out of date, long superseded by modern manners, is a lure blinding us to how the logic of courtly love still defines *the parameters within which the two sexes relate to each other*" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

In this manner, courtly love is fictional, not only in the sense that it is a literary form, a genre of poetry, but also in the sense that it can be realized only as a pure fiction (see, for example, Homer 2005: 107–108; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, O'Donoghue 1982; Schultz 2006).[170] But, what has courtly love as *love*, in fact, to do with contemporary culture in which it is precisely *sex* – plain sex in all imaginable forms, *sex as a theory-fetish* of post-theory included – that has displaced all that once, long ago, was amorous, or, in another conceptual register, erotic which, in turn, has been now replaced by "cyberotics" (Dixon & Cassidy 1998; cf. Taylor & Saarinen 1994: "telerotics"), finally, sex as a form of desires and pleasures that has even entirely redefined the idea of love (see, for example, Giddens 1992; Illouz 1997; Padilla et al. 2007)? To support his argument, Žižek draws on Lacan who, according to Žižek, in his seminar *Encore*, "provides the most succinct formulation of the paradox of courtly love"; a formulation that with regard to Freud's is "apparently similar, yet fundamentally different" (ibid.):

> [a] very refined manner of supplanting the absence of the sexual relationship by feigning that it is us who put the obstacle in its way. (Žižek 1995a: 122; cf. Žižek 1996b: 513, 1996c: 189, 2005b [1994]: 94).

In other words, as Lacan (1985 [1973]: 141) says in his discussion on "feminine sexuality," courtly love is "an altogether refined way of making up for the absence of sexual relation by pretending that it is we who put an obstacle to it" (cf. Lacan 1999 [1975/1972–1973]: 69, 74, 86; Easthope 1989: 92; Lee 1990: 182; Stockton 1994: 44–45; Botting 2008: 30–31). But, as Lacan points out, the problem, first and foremost pertains to the man; that is, the covering up the absence of sexual relation by constructing a phantasmatic hindrance or barrier forestalling its enjoyment, paradoxically, is the very source of his sexual desire. "For the man, whose lady was entirely, in the most servile sense of the term, his female subject, courtly love is the only way of coming off elegantly from the absence of sexual relation" (Lacan 1985 [1973]: 141; cf. Grosz 1990: 128–142; Sarup 1992: 129; Hart 1994: 18–20; Stockton 1994: 44). That is, the prohibition, in itself, is the most appropriate "method" to create *both* the object *and* the desire for it. Or, as Žižek (1997b: 129) says referring to Hegel and Derrida, "the condition of impossibility of realizing the Goal" – in this case, sexual relation – "is simultane-

170 According to Sean Homer (2005: 107), courtly love is "a tradition of lyric poetry that developed in Provance, southern France, in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries and which spread throughout Western Europe in the Middle Ages." What is important in courtly love is that "it embodies a whole philosophy of love and represents an elaborate code of behaviour which governs the relations between 'aristocratic' lovers, turning the more bodily and erotic aspects of love into a spiritual experience" (ibid.). "The courtly lover both idealizes and is idealized by his beloved and subjects himself entirely to her desires" (ibid.); but because of the asymmetric relationship of the lovers (usually a knight fallen in love in a married woman), "there is an inherent impossibility, an obstacle to the fulfilment of love, in the very structure of courtly love" (ibid.). Therefore, the "love cannot be consummated in a physical sense and, if it is, disaster and death ensues" (ibid.). In this manner, courtly love "involves the agonies of unfulfilled love" (ibid.), which, precisely as such, constitutes it as an ideal of love: love as an idealized state in which the possibility of love is predicated on its impossibility.

ously its condition of possibility" (in Kantian terms, cf., for example, Kant 1990a [1781/1787]: 146, 155; Mohr & Willaschek 1998).

In other words, as we can observe once again, there is no sexual without the imaginary, the presence of the absent that *enables* its presence in the first place, by way of its very absence.

This is the logic of "virtual sex" in Lacanian terms, at least in Žižek's theory. The keywords here, of course, are to *supplant* and to *feign* (Žižek), or *make up* and to *pretend* (Lacan): if the object of our desire is absent, that is, if the object is not available for us, or we do not have an access to it, in order to both cover up and substitute its absence we have both to invent an excuse and pretend that it is no one else but *ourselves* that are the obstacle for attaining the object we desire for. In other words, to enjoy "love" we must make it impossible since it is precisely by and through this impossibility that not only our object of love, but the very possibility of love in itself, becomes possible (cf. Žižek 2002a: 228, 2005b [1994]: 89–102; in queer terms, cf. Hennessy 2000: 167–170).

Illogical as it may sound, this is the logic of the psyche – or then again, that of the theory of psychoanalysis *à la* Lacan (cf., for example, Bowie 1991; Goux 1991; Copjec 1994; Salecl & Žižek 1996; Borch-Jacobsen 1999 [1990]).

The Moment of Truth

After the invention of what Žižek (1995a: 122) calls "virtual sex" we are now able to encounter the problem of the "suffocation" of desire in terms of the "virtuality" constitutive of "sex" in the world of the "cyber" (cf. Žižek 1994: 2; 1996a: 284–286, 1996b; Branwyn 1994: 224–228, 233–235; Turkle 1995: 13–26, 179–191, 210–232; Bogard 1996: 153–160; Creed 1997: 19–22; Boer 1999: 61–64; Botting 1999: 203–205; Hayles 1999: 256–258; Jordan 1999: 63–65, 75–80, 104–108; Cavallaro 2000: 127–128; Sardar 2000: 747–749; Tsang 2000 [1994]: 433–435; Altman 2001: 57–58, 82, 106–121; Kuhling 2004: 71–72; Flieger 2005: 20–21, 51–61). At the same time, however, we are immediately confronted with another problem, "the alarming fact that in the aftermath of the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s, people are less and less prone to copulate" (Žižek 1996c: 191). And, furthermore, in the new situation, created by the challenge of "virtual sex," things have not become better, on the contrary, the excessive availability of "sex" has only deteriorated its desirability, and, accordingly, we are now facing a real dilemma, a true predicament: how are we supposed, as Žižek (1995a: 122) asks, to "propel again the desire to copulate today"?

What a question, the reader might exclaim in surprise. To say nothing of Žižek's idea of equating – indeed, of "copulating" – sex, desire and copulation in the Fordist manner typical of American orgasmology in the 1960s (see Béjin 1985a [1982]: 183–192, 1985b [1982]: 201–206; Bauman 1995: 154–155; Weingart et al. 1997: 94–95; Potts 2002: 25–32; Lotringer 2007 [1988]: 35–37) into a streamlined system of gratification (for the paradigmatic conception, see Masters & John-

son 1988 [1966]) – as if sex were only a question how to put it there. But as we will see in a moment, this, indeed, is an extremely serious question, if not even the question of questions in the economic order of postmodern capitalism the survival of which, as noted above, is predicated on the production of "sex."

So what is actually the relationship between "virtual sex" and the effort to resuscitate the "suffocation" of desire by way of "courtly love"?

To understand the odd logic of this relationship, it is appropriate in this connection to restate Žižek's argument. As Žižek (1995a: 122) stated above, the point is that it is not simply that "we set up additional conventional hindrances in order to heighten the value of the object," but, first and foremost, the "*external* hindrances that thwart our access to the object are there precisely to create the *illusion* that without them, the object would be *directly* accessible" (emphasis mine; cf. Žižek 1999b: 155–157, 160–162, 168–169, 2002a: 214–215). But then again, the problem stems, in fact, not from the hindrances as such, but from the very inaccessibility of the object itself in the first place; an object that only *appears* to be there for us. As Žižek (1995a: 122) says, what the hindrances conceal is that, from the very beginning, it is the "*inherent impossibility* of attaining the object" (emphasis mine) that both makes love impossible and constitutes its very possibility (cf. Dews 1995: 254–255); in other words, a hindrance that is already built-in in the affair as its structural precondition is its very condition of possibility.

As odd as it may sound, this is the logic of love, and, by extension, of sex, in the contemporary abundance of desires and pleasures under the imperative of "sex"; "sex" also in terms of the "cyber," that is, "virtual sex" as an extraordinary experience of the possibility of the impossible.

As Žižek (1996c: 190), in Hegelian terms, says, "what sets human desire in motion is a short circuit between the primordially lost Thing and an empirical, positive object, that is, the elevation of this object to the dignity of the Thing"; an "object" that "fills out the 'transcendent' void of the Thing," and precisely by becoming "prohibited" it "thereby starts to function as the cause of desire" (cf. Žižek 1996b: 513). But then again, in the midst of the excessive affluence inherent to the postmodern condition, when "every empirical object becomes available, this absence of prohibition necessarily gives rise to anxiety: what becomes visible via this saturation is that the ultimate point of prohibition was simply to mask the inherent impossibility of the Thing, that is, *the structural deadlock of desire*" (Žižek 1996c: 190).

Thus, once again we have run in a *cul de sac* of desire. But, it is expressly in this conjunction that the "cyber," like *deus ex machina*, arrives as the ultimate rescue, the final salvation, of sex suffering from the "suffocation" of desire. As Žižek assures us:

> One thing, therefore, is certain: the advent of cyberspace will shatter, and transform beyond recognition, the very basic structure of our capacity to desire, since it will lay bare the paradox of desire by cutting the ground from under

> the feet of the creative sublimation that enables us to escape this paradox (the fact that desire is sustained by lack and therefore shuns its satisfaction, that is, the very thing for which it "officially" strives): we elevate an empirical, ordinary object to the "dignity of the Thing" – we posit it as unattainable/prohibited, and *this inaccessibility keeps the flame of desire alive*. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

This, indeed, is fantastic in the strong sense of the word. Once again we can only wonder the illogical logic of desire: on account of its "logic of instant gratification, the universe of 'virtual reality' signals the opposite of what its name announces: the *end* of the virtual space of symbolization," the space of "transitive objects" (ibid.). Since "everything is instantly here" in the world of the "cyber," but, at the same time, "bereft of its substance and thus instantly devalued," "virtual reality" is therefore "a kind of Orwellian misnomer: it stands for the very opposite of virtuality, for *the saturation of the virtual space of symbolic fiction*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). (Just in passing, if the sexual subject, supposing that there is still something left over from it today, would let this train of thought to go through his of her head at the moment of the sexual act, it would be quite probable that, at the latest on that moment, his or her sexual desire would be paralyzed.)

Now, what is the highest moment of pleasure in the post-Orwellian paraspace of "virtual reality"? It is the extraordinary pleasure of "virtual sex," "sex" that is possible *exactly because it is impossible*. In other words, in the world of the "cyber," as Žižek says, "the availability of the object is paid for by its *de-realization*, by the frustrating experience that 'this (what we get) is not that'" (ibid.).

It is this "not that" which is the marvellous, fabulous pleasure of cybersex, "sex" which we enjoy as the supreme form of the real in terms of the sexual precisely for the reason that it is availabe for us only in the mode of its de-realization (for *Phänomene der Derealisierung* in general in contemporary culture, see Porombka & Scharnowski 1999; in the context of the new media, see Jörissen 2007).

From this perspective, then, it is possible to understand the dialectics between the possible and the impossible constitutive of the "paradox of courtly love," that is, the idea of Žižekian "virtual sex" as a technological invention that implies, at the same time, *both* the "suffocation" of desire *and* an effort to repair it; in other words, an invention that, by constructing an apparatic or prosthetic obstacle thwarting the direct access to sexual pleasure, is able to resuscitate the languid libido of the postmodern subject overwhelmed by the excess of the sexual. Indeed, an ambiguous situation that, in fact, obeys not so much the logic of the Lacanian psychoanalysis as the logic of the Derridean *pharmakon*: a poison that is at the same time the remedy (see Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 121–122).

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to observe that Žižek's argument is a variation of the famous Lacanian dictum that *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (Lacan 1999 [1975/1972–1973]: 5, 12, 34, 59, 71; cf. Rose 1985: 46; Copjec 1994: 207; Evans 1996: 181–182; Myers 2003: 90; Fink 1997 [1995]: 104–122, 2004: 84–85; Homer 2005: 106); which, according to Žižek

(2005a: 52), is the *constitutive impasse* of the sexual relationship in general (cf. Žižek 1992: 168, 1996c: 189, 1999g: 31, 1999f: 196–200, 2002c: 264, 2002d: 71–72, 2006: 13).[171] Thus, if, in Lacanian terms, the "sexual relationship" is from the very beginning not only an impossibility, but, seen theoretically, a *contradiction in adiecto*, how can we suppose that the virtual (whatever it in itself might be) is the salvation of the sexual? As interesting as this question as such is, my purpose here, however, is not to embark on a journey to the Marienbad of the Lacanian world, an enigmatic world of Theory. Instead, my aim is far more modest: an attempt to understand this thing called "virtual sex," or, as it is more usually referred to, cybersex (cf., for example, Balsamo 1995b: 347–349; Burnett 1995: 221–222; Bogart 1996: 121–128; Creed 1997: 17–22; McRae 1997: 74–83; Plant 1998: 30–32; Altman 2001: 57–58, 82, 106–121; Bartle 2004: 508–555; Parisi 2004: 5–44; Berger 2007: 122–123; in terms of "the inevitable virtuality of gender," see Warhol 1999: 91–103).

Thus, once again, what is it actually that Žižek is speaking about? In terms of theory, what is *his* "object of desire," or *expressis verbis*, his sexual object? That is, an object that, by the necessity of the Lacanian logic, remains, indeed, inaccessible – similarly to the Lacanian "Real" (see, for example, Bowie 1991: 94–95, 102–103, 109–110; Evans 1996: 159–161; Julien 1996: 112–144).

This question, this dilemma, brings us to the origin of cybersex, to the notion of "cyberspace," the very condition of possibility of all that is "cyber" in discourse-historically terms. As a reminder, cyberspace, in the words of William Gibson, its inventor, becomes existent when people hooked on the screen "develop *a belief* that there's some kind of actual space behind the screen, some place that you can't see but you know is there" (McCaffrey 1994a [1991]: 272; emphasis mine; cf. Žižek 1996c: 190–198; for the *Ur*-form of cyberspace, see Gibson 1995 [1984]; cf. for example, Kitchin 1998: 17; Wolmark 1999b: 3). Discussing this notion with Ulrich Gutmair and Chris Flor (1998) under the telling title "Hysteria and Cyberspace," Žižek explains that there are two "schools" of cyberspace. Firstly, the "deconstructionist version of cyberspace," a "post-Cartesian," "feminist" and "Foucauldian" one; and secondly, the "New Age school of cyberspace-ideology" (ibid.). While according to the first one, "[e]ach of us can play with his/her identities," the second one represents the "neo-Jungian idea that we live in an age of mechanistic, false individualism and that we are now on the threshold of a new mutation," a leap into a new kind of "Noosphere" (ibid.), the

171 According to Bruce Fink's (2004: 84) elegant explanation, Lacan's *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, in fact, implies that "the relationship between the signifier and the signified is problematic, even nonexistent," which, in its own way, explains "the nonrelation between man and woman," namely, the "relationship between Gentlemen and Ladies, between man and woman, is mediated by the phallus," to the extent that "the phallus is the very 'relationship' between the signifier and the signified" (ibid.); in other words, "the phallus is the missing relationship between them" (ibid.). What is important here is that "Lacan refers to the phallus as 'the signifier that has no signified'" (ibid.: 84–85), and, furthermore, "he asserts that the phallus is not unrelated to the bar between the signifier and the signified" (ibid.: 85). "In that sense, we might say that the phallus is the signifier of the barred relationship (or missing relationship) between the signifier and the signified (hence, also the missing sexual relationship" (ibid.: 85).

immaterial sphere of cyberspace (cf. Žižek 1997a: 65–67, 77–78, 1997b: 127–143, 154–164, 2001a: 214, 2005a: 73, 78, 85, 99, 109, 306–307; Graham 2002: 169, 230–231; in terms of "cyber-gnosticism," cf. Ess 2004a: 79–80, 89; Davis 1998).[172]

As we will see later on, these both schools, the "Foucauldian" and the "New Age" – whether separate or in various combinations with one another – not only profess the sublime realm of cyberspace, but they also proclaim the pleasures of cybersex and the cyborg, implying entirely new forms of pleasure beyond the mundane world of the flesh, or, as it is called in terms of the "cyber," *meat* (see Dery 1996: 91, 116, 247–253; cf., for example, Morse 1994: 157–158; Sobchak 1995: 211–212; Wilson 1996: 224; Plant 1998: 33; Botting 1999: 8, 17, 150–153, 158–169, 181–186; Cavallaro 2001: 130; Adam 2002: 159–160; Bell et al. 2004: 8–9; Haney 2006: 94, 100, 107; in the context of "medical ethics and feminism," cf. Rothfield 1995: 168–169).

Elaborating on his idea of "cyberspace schools," Žižek (2001c: 34) finally comes to the conclusion that there are, instead of two, in fact, four of them; that is, "four predominant theoretical attitudes with regard to cyberspace." To understand Žižek's idea of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" or "virtual sex," it is instructive first to see what the four cyberspace paradigms according to Žižek are – keeping in mind, at the same time, Gibson's critical remark above that cyberspace is an issue of *belief*, that is, a specific mode of neoreligious faith peculiar to "the New Age cyberspace cult" (Žižek 1997b: 86), to the New Age mindset in general (see Žižek 1997a: 4–5, 67–68, 1999e: 132–133, 322, 362–363, 384, 2005a: 84–85, 109, 2006: 7, 101, 159–160, 179–180, 216–217, 254–255; cf. Nusselder 2009: 57–58; Ess 2004a, 2004b; for cyberspace as a postmodern "myth," see Jahshan 2007: 73–116; Davis 1998; for a contextualization in terms of "the re-enchantment of the West", see Partridge 2004, 2005). Thus, these are now the prevailing "cyberspace schools" according to Žižek:

> (1) The purely technological celebration of the new potentials of supercomputers, nanotechnology and genetic technology;
>
> (2) Its New Age counterpoint, i.e. the emphasis on the Gnostic background that sustains even the most "neutral" scientific research;
>
> (3) The historicist-sociocritical "deconstructionist" deployment of the liberating potentials of cyberspace which, through its blurring of the limits of the Cartesian ego, its identity, monopoly on thought, and attachment to the biological body, allows us to pass from the male-Cartesian-liberal-identitarian subject to the dispersed-cyborgian "posthuman" forms of subjectivity, from the biological body to shifting embodiments;

172 The idea of "Noosphere" is originally proposed by the French Jesuit priest, palaeontologist, anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as a notion describing the highest level of being, the realm of pure consciousness, a sphere that exceeding the limits of the individual reaches to the unending cosmos. In human terms, this would imply a possibility of "marshalling planetary resources in a world united by love" (Fekete 1973: 114). This concept, according to which the cosmos develops from a most elementary origin to an increasingly complicated totality, has created the model for various visions of cyberspace as the ultimate "Noosphere" in which the world spirit – like the Hegelian *Weltgeist* – evolves to embrace all being (cf. Teilhard de Chardin 1959). This is one of the reasons that Julian Stallabrass (1995: 8) calls cyberspace theories "hi-tech-Hegelianism."

> (4) The Heideggerian philosophical reflections on the implications of digitalization, focusing on the notion of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-World, as the engaged agent thrown into a determinate life-world situation. In this view, the advent of genome and of the technological perspective of the "uploading" of the human mind onto a computer provided the clearest vision of what Heidegger had in mind when he spoke of the "danger" of planetary technology: what is threatened here is the very ex-static essence of *Dasein*, of man as capable of transcending self by relating to entities within the Clearing of his/her world […]. (Žižek 2001c: 34–35)

If these four approaches are the prevailing "cyberspace schools," which of them is it, then, Žižek himself belongs to? There can be, of course, many answers to this question, even more than just four. Yet, what is important is that there is only one answer that is the right one: Žižek belongs to none of them. Žižek's own Lacanian reading of cyberspace stands in an absolute opposition to each and everyone of contemporary "cyberspace schools": his position is a school for itself (cf. Flieger 2005: 20–65).

Against the "Predominant *Doxa*"

To understand Žižek's idiosyncratic conception of cyberspace as the precondition, as the very ontological and epistemological matrix, of "virtual sex," it is appropriate to begin with by summing up the main points in respect to which Žižek sets himself apart.

As we can see in Žižek's conception of the four predominant "cyberspace schools" above, it follows the logic of rising complexity. There is, firstly, the simple, if not simple-minded, technological enthusiasm about the assumed omnipotence of technology, paradigmatically represented, for Žižek, by the American promoter of new technologies, Ray Kurzweil, in his quasi science-fictional futurological report *The Age of Spiritual Machines* (see Kurzweil 1999; cf. Kelly 1994). Secondly, a kind of step towards "theoreticality," of course, in the sense of speculative techno-theorization not far away of science fiction, is typical of the New Age approach which, indeed, finds resonance in the circles of natural sciences; for Žižek, the key name here is Eric Davis with his techno-esoteric mysticism in his meditation under the title *TechGnosis* (see Davis 1998). A leap to postmodern high-theory takes place in the third category, the "deconstructionist" school drawing on poststructuralism, the theory style of "French theory," aptly exemplified, according to Žižek, by N. Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman*, a literary-theoretical "reading" of the history of cybernetics (see Hayles 1999). Finally, the most complex approach, the effort to get a theoretical grip of the world of the "cyber" by means of Heideggerian philosophy, as a telling example of which Žižek refers to Hubert Dreyfus's critique of artificial intelligence entitled *What Computers Can't Do* (see Dreyfus 1979, 1992; cf. Franchi & Güzeldere 2005b).

The first two approaches, according to Žižek (2001c: 35), "share the premise of total disembodiment, of the reduction of the (post)human mind to software

pattern freely floating between different embodiments, while the other two assert the finitude of the embodied agent as the ultimate horizon of our existence." In one way or another, a radical transformation of the body as the precondition of the subject is in the centre in all these approaches; a view at which Žižek's criticism aims. Taking Hayles's (much celebrated) idea of the "posthuman" as a paradigmatic example, Žižek states that "the moment one takes the fateful step from the immediate (finite, biological) *body* that we 'are' to the biotechnological *embodiment* with its shifting and unstable character" (ibid.) (as enthusiastically described by cyber-theorists time and time again), one can "no longer get rid of the spectre of the 'undead' eternal body" (ibid.: 35–36). This is a severe problem of all "cyberspace schools": a *phantom body* that haunts the subject in cyberspace (in terms of "postmodern aesthetics" as a manifestation of "a biotechnological utopia," cf. Stafford 1994).

But, in fact, an "*undead" eternal body* – what is it? In which sense it is a *spectre*? If all cyberspace theories are an issue of belief, a creed, a statement of faith, based on theory-fictions in the mode of post-theory, for the simple reason that cyberspace does not exist, except in the virtual reality of language, what, then, is Žižek's cyberspace theory, if not another issue of belief? Only that in Žižek's case the conceptual, or, rather, the metaphorical, framework is Lacanian psychoanalysis which in itself has become an essential part of the post-theoretical paradigm prevailing in Western academia. In this sense, the Žižekian "'undead' eternal body" that appears as a "spectre" is a theory-fiction in terms of the "post," an issue of belief, behind which the spectre of Lacan stands as an "undead' eternal body" haunting the scene of post-theory in the manner a phantom body; that is, *Lacan is a theoretical prosthesis of post-theory* (in terms of virtual reality as an instantiation of the Lacanian "Other Scene," see Žižek 1997a: 59–67). And it is in this sense that Žižek's own conception of cyberspace, as a "theory" oppositional to other cyberspace theories, becomes understandable, also with regard to cyberspace as the realm of "virtual sex."

In short, if you believe in Lacan, you believe in cyberspace, not like the others, but in your own way, in the manner you believe in the "spectre of the 'undead' eternal body"; that is, in the Lacanian manner. Criticizing the idea of what he calls "cyberspace ideologists" pertaining to the conception of "the Self liberating itself from the attachment to its natural body" (Žižek 2001c: 33), Žižek sums up the most common view of cyberspace as a realm in which the subject (of course, in the sense of what is left over of the subject in the world of the "post") appears as a mode of agent, which by turning itself into

> a virtul entity floating from one to another contingent and temporary embodiment, can present itself as the final scientific-technological realization of the Gnostic dream of the Self getting rid of the decay and inertia of material reality. That is to say, is the notion of the "aetheric" body we can recreate for ourselves in Virtual Reality not the old Gnostic dream of the immaterial "astral body" come true? So what are we to make of this seemingly convincing argument that cyberspace functions in a Gnostic way, promising to elevate us to a

> level in which we will be delivered of our bodily inertia, provided with another ethereal body? (ibid.: 34)

In other words, if, as Žižek (2004: 187) says elsewhere, the "Gnostic dream of transforming ourselves into 'software' or into virtual beings able to cut off the links to our natural body and freely float from one to another virtual embodiment" is but a seductive delusion, how do we find our way back to reality (provided, of course, that there is still any) (cf. Ess 2004a: 79–80, 89, 2004b)? The answer, no doubt, is that we renounce the old belief system (one of the four alternatives outlined by Žižek above) and adopt a new one, not just any one, but the right one, namely, the Lacanian conception of cyberspace, the best theorist for which is self-evidently Žižek himself.

That said, it is necessary to get an idea of what does Žižek, in fact, mean by "cyberspace"; that is: what is the constitutive idea of his particular "cyberspace school"?

For Žižek (1999c: 110), in his own words, as "a psychoanalytically oriented (Lacanian) philosopher," the crucial question about cyberspace concerns "the consequences of cyberspace for Oedipus"; that is, "the mode of subjectivization that psychoanalysis conceptualized as the Oedipus complex and its dissolution" (ibid.). "The predominant *doxa* today," as Žižek argues, is that "cyberspace explodes, or at least potentially undermines the reign of the Oedipus: it involves the 'end of Oedipus'" (ibid.). According to this idea, what occurs in cyberspace is "the passage from the structure of symbolic castration (the intervention of the Third Agency that prohibits/disturbs the incestuous dyad, and thus enables the subject's entry into the symbolic order) to some new, post-oedipal libidinal economy" (ibid.: 110–111; cf. Haraway 1991a: 151). This "end of Oedipus" is typically conceived of in emancipatory terms, as "the liberating potential of cyberspace: cyberspace opens up the domain of shifting multiple sexual and social identities, at least potentially liberating us from the hold of the patriarchal Law" (Žižek 1999c: 112); a view paradigmatically exemplified by such cyber-theorists as Allucquère Rosanne Stone and Sherry Turkle, according to whom, cyberspace finally "announces the end of the Cartesian *cogito* as the unique 'thinking substance'" (ibid.; Žižek 1999e: 1–2, 4, 22–23, 62–66, 100–101; cf. Stone 1994b [1991], 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1995e, 1996a; Turkle 1984, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998b; Cooper 2002: 139–159).

In this manner, "a whole school of cyberspace theorists (the best known is Sherry Turkle) advocate the notion" (Žižek 2001a: 202) that

> cyberspace phenomena make the deconstructionist "decentred subject" real in our everyday experience: one should endorse the "dissemination" of the unique Self into a multiplicity of competing agents, into a "collective mind," a plurality of self-images without a global co-ordinating centre, which is operative in cyberspace, and disconnect it from pathological trauma – playing in Virtual Spaces enables me to discover new aspects of "me," a wealth of shifting identities, of masks without a "real" person behind them, and thus to experience the

> ideological mechanism of the production of Self, the immanent violence and arbitrariness of this production/construction. (ibid.)

To counter this view of cyberspace, Žižek (1997b: 130) raises the question: "is not the notion of cyberspace a key symptom of our socioideological constellation?" "Does it not involve the promise of false opening (the spiritualist prospect of casting off our 'ordinary' bodies, turning into a virtual entity which travels from one virtual space to another) as well as the foreclose of the social power relations within which virtual communities operate?" (ibid.) This deceptive promise embraces "two contemporary myths about cyberspace" both of them suggesting "the postmodern epoch of dissemination" implying "the play of appearances no longer grounded in reference to some ultimate Truth, the multiple forms of constructed Selves" (ibid.: 131), namely: on the one hand, "a return to *pensée sauvage*, the 'concrete,' 'sensual' thought," and, on the other, "the move *from the modernist culture of calculation to the postmodernist culture of simulation*" (ibid.; cf. Turkle 1995: 20; Cubitt 1998: 29–60; Bogard 1996; Cubitt 2001)

It is against this view that Žižek posits his own conception of cyberspace as a diametric opposite of "the predominant *doxa*." According to Žižek (1999c: 112), what we have in the "end of Oedipus" theory of cyberspace is "another version of the standard postmodern deconstructionist narrative" implying that "in the bad old patriarchal order, the subject's sexual identity was predetermined by his or her place and/or role within the fixed symbolic oedipal framework." In other words, in Lacanian terms, "the 'big Other' took care of us, and conferred on us the identity of either a 'man' or a 'woman'" (ibid.; in terms of "simulacrum" and "virtual castration," cf. Kay 2003: 66–67). With the Foucauldian conception of sexuality, as an effect of power/knowledge (see Foucault 1980d [1977]), the "post-Oedipal" view of cyberspace got a new twist resulting in the idea that, in cyberspace, the subject gains the freedom "to shift between different socio-symbolic sexual identities, to construct his Self as an *aesthetic oeuvre*," a motif at work "from the late Foucault's notion of the 'care of the Self' up to deconstructionist feminist emphasis on the social formation of gender" (Žižek 1999c: 112; emphasis mine); and thus:

> It is easy to perceive how the reference to cyberspace can provide an additional impetus to this ideology of aesthetic self-creation: cyberspace delivers me from the vestiges of biological constraints and elevates my capacity to construct freely my Self, to let myself to go in a multitude of shifting identities. (ibid.: 112–113)

The obverse of this glorification of the aesthetic self-creation enabled by cyberspace, according to Žižek, embraces views that celebrate cyberspace as a realm bringing about a disintegration of subjectivity and identity, characterized by the notions of the perverse and the psychotic. Thus, in these theories:

> we are bombarded with interpretations which emphasize how cyberspace opens up the possibility of polymorphous perverse playing with and permanent reshaping of one's symbolic identity or how it involves a regression to the incestuous immersion into the Screen as the maternal Thing that swallows us, depriving us of the capacity of symbolic distance and reflection. (Žižek 1999e: 249–250)

"It can be argued, however," as Žižek remarks, that "the most common reaction of all of us when confronted with cyberspace is still that of hysterical perplexity, of permanent questioning: 'How do I stand with respect to this anonymous Other? What does it want from me? What game is it playing with me?'" (ibid.: 250)

What is important here, as we can see, is that cyberspace is a *psychic space* also for Žižek. But, far from being a "liberation from Oedipus," cyberspace, in fact, appears to Žižek a new kind of Oedipal structure, a Lacanian *psycho-space*, functioning as a post-theoretical "paraspace" (cf. Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157–166, 174–177; Flieger 2005: 20–65) in which the Imaginary is ruled, in Lacanian terms, by the Symbolic covering up the Real (see, for example, Žižek 1999e: 195–199, 272–277, 295–296, 313–316, 2005b: 30–32, 2005a). In this sense, cyberspace is, for Žižek, not just a technological assemblage, a world-wide digital network "out there" (in the sense of Internet), but it is essentially a psychic, if not a *psychoanalytic*, realm, an "inner space," sustained by the forces of desire, and, as such, intelligible only in terms of the Lacanian triad of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. In these terms, the Žižekian cyberspace is, like Haraway's cyborg, a postmodern *grand récit* (cf. Lyotard 1984 [1979]), a mythopoetic grand narrative with an epochal significance: a vision, not of salvation, but of seduction, a post-Heideggerian *Ruf*, "call" (cf. Heidegger 1977d [1927]: 314–335; Haar 1993 [1990]: 17–18, 71–72), to indulge oneself in the extraordinary pleasures of the *jouissance* of the "post."

There Is No "Sex" without the "Big Other"

After these preliminaries, we are now just about to understand the secret of cyberspace in Žižekian terms.

Instead of being some instantiation of the predominant "cyberspace schools," that is, a technological empowering system, a Gnostic realm in the manner of the New Age, a deconstructionist assemblage with liberating potential, or a Heideggerian counterposition to the imminent threat of planetary technology, cyberspace, for Žižek, is a Lacanian "big Other," that is, a new kind of *symbolic order* as an omnipresent control system not dissimilar to the Big Brother (see, for example, Žižek 1997a: 60–66, 75–77, 81–85, 99–103, 1999e: 258–262, 314–354, 361–380, 2001a: 20, 23–24, 34, 60, 87–89, 2002a: 205, 241, 243, 249, 2005b: 42–43, 72–77, 178, 2006: 66, 83–84, 108–112, 137–142, 183, 189; in terms of the Heideggerian *planetarische Technik*, cf. Heidegger 1983 [1935]: 208, 2000c [1966/1976]: 668–674; Loscerbo 1981). Thus, cyberspace follows "the logic of symbolic automatism in which the big Other 'runs the show,' and the subject is merely 'spoken'" (Žižek 2001a: 60). In this manner, the "big Other," not only as the real ruler of cyberspace, but the omnipotent ruler of our existence in general, is a mythopoetic multi-faced being, a chameleon-like entity, that can camouflage itself into extremely various appearances, from God to the Communist Party, from the British Secret Police assisting James Bond to the symbolic network of cyberspace; that is, a duplicious system operating by an insidious double logic

of deceiving and self-deception: although cyberspace is just an "empty screen" onto which we project our fantasies (Žižek 1997a: 77), it is exactly as such the "big Other" as a symbolic authority that controls us, and thus it is finally you yourself that, in, by and through your very Self, are an *extension* of the "big Other" (see Žižek 1999e: 258–262, 321–332, 338–341, 361–375, 380).[173]

This insidious entrapment of the subject by the "big Other" is only enforced by the world-wide rule of "cyber-capitalists" that, according to Žižek (2002a: 278), are "the paradigmatic capitalists today," most notably represented by Bill Gates and his "dream of cyberspace as providing the frame for what he calls 'frictionless capitalism'" (ibid.). What is so horrible in this new form of capitalism is that it manifests "an ideological short circuit between the two versions of the gap between reality and virtuality: the gap between real production and the virtual/spectral domain of Capital, and the gap between experiential reality and the Virtual Reality of cyberspace" (ibid.). In this situation, "the cyberspace gap between my fascinating screen persona and the miserable flesh which is 'me' offscreen" translates into the "immediate experience" of the "gap between the Real of the speculative circulation of capital and the drab reality of the impoverished masses" (ibid.).

However, what is the most horrible threat of cyberspace, according to Žižek (1997b: 164), is that it implies, in the final instance, "the almost perfect materialization of the big Other: out there in the machine, 'everything will be written,' a complete symbolic redoubling of reality will take place." Yet, in this desperate situation, more than ever, we should not forget the Heideggerian wisdom that *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch* (Heidegger 2000b [1953]: 29, 35) "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" (Heidegger 1977f [1953]: 28, 34). Thus, what is our "saving power" as our rescue from the grip of the "big Other" terrorizing our life as the Big Brother? Like the citizens of the Soviet Block, living under the terror regime of the Communist Party, one day gathered their courage and said aloud that this is just a bad dream which we must only wake from in order to be free. Likewise, if we are capable of seeing through the ruses of all that is "cyber" and thus prepared to dispel the spell of cyberspace we will be able to discard the insidious grip of the "big Other."

In this sense, by way of a dialectical twist typical of Žižek's Lacanian cosmology, it is the danger in itself that brings the rescue, our salvation from the insidious terror regime of the "big Other" camouflaged as cyberspace. To begin with, it is

173 What is crucial is that the "big Other" is an issue of belief in a very specific manner in which, as Žižek (2001a: 89) explains, "the structure of belief is that of the fetishist split and disavowal ('I know that there is no big Other, but none the less… [I secretly believe in Him]')," and thus "only the psychoanalyst who endorses the nonexistence of the big Other is a true atheist." "Even Stalinists were believers, in so far as they always invoked the Last Judgement of History which will determine the 'objective meaning' of our acts. Even such a radical transgressor as Sade was not a consistent atheist; the secret logic of his transgression is an act of defiance addressed to God, that is, the reversal of the standard logic of the fetishist split ('I know that there is no big Other, but none the less…'): Although I know that God exists, I am ready to defy Him, to violate his prohibitions, to act *as if* He does *not* exist!'" (ibid.)

expressly the "prospect of a perfect symbolic accountancy" as such that implies its reversal since it "augurs a new type of catastrophe in which a sudden disturbance in the digital network (an extra effective virus, say) erases the computerized 'big Other,' leaving the external 'real reality' intact" (Žižek 1997b: 164). "We thus arrive at the notion of *purely virtual catastrophe*: although, in 'real life,' nothing whatsoever happens, and things seem to follow their course, the catastrophe is total and complete, since 'reality' is all of sudden deprived of its symbolic support" (ibid.); the "symbolic support" that, as Žižek time and again assures us, is nothing other than the "big Other" in itself that *we ourselves incorporate in our fatal delusion of subjectivity* (see, for example, Žižek 1989: 72–76, 113, 197–198, 2001a: 87–89, 112–116, 157–165, 2005b: 42–43, 53–54, 69–77, 163–178).

This paradox, or, more appropriately, this post-Hegelian, post-Marxian and post-Leninist dialectics, of the "big Other" that is hiding in cyberspace behind its various virtual apparitions, its spectral disguises as digital camouflage, in cyberspace paradigmatically appears in "virtual war games" which are able to "simulate every conceivable condition of 'real' war" (Žižek 1997b: 164):

> So the question naturally crops up: if we have virtual sex, and so on, why not virtual warfare? Why shouldn't 'real' warfare be replaced by a gigantic virtual war which will be over without the majority of ordinary people being aware that there was any war at all, like the virtual catastrophe which will occur without any perceptible change in the 'real' universe? Perhaps, a radical virtualization – the fact that the whole of reality will soon be 'digitalized,' transcribed, redoubled in the 'big Other' of cyberspace – will somehow redeem 'real life,' opening it up to a new perception, just as Hegel already had a presentiment that the end of art (as the 'sesible appearing of the Idea'), which occurs when the Idea withdraws from the sensible medium into its more direct conceptual expression, simultaneously liberates sensibility from the constraints of Idea? (ibid.; in terms of postmodern theology, cf. Ward 2000: 149–150, 251)

It is in this manner that, as Sean Cubitt (2001: 149) points out, "Žižek imagines a kind of counter-Hegelian moment in which either cyberwar destroys the Other as the root of the Symbolic (and therefore of simulation)," or, alternatively, it is this "radical virtualization" in itself that will, indeed, "redeem 'real life,'" namely, by showing that once "the idea of reality has been overcome, there could be room for reality itself to spread out and take place." To understand *this* dialectical twist which, of course, is the final turn, we must take into account that, for Žižek, the key to liberation from the deceiving spell of the symbolic order, the "big Other," appearing to us in the virtual camouflage of cyberspace, is to be found in the function of simulacrum that, *in itself*, is able to reveal the ruse of the virtual; that is, "the simulacrum is not the successful substitution of an imitation for the original, but *the idea of origin itself*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). It is precisely in this manner that the "*concept* of reality is what hides reality, as a sensuous experience, from us," and, therefore, if there were "a way to trick the concept of the real into the trap on *unreality*, then *the real itself might re-emerge*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Kay 2003: 66).

Yes, *if* this would happen, we would be rescued. The only problem is precisely this "if": the "if" of post-theory radicalized by the logic of ambiguity oscillating between "the real" and "the virtual" in the post-Lacanian sense of the possibility of the impossible (cf. Elliott 2009: 107–108; McQuillan et al 1999; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b; Herbrechter & Callus 2004; in terms of "Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium.FEMALEMan©_ Meets_OncoMouse™," cf. Haraway 1997).

Meanwhile, however, we should not close our eyes to the fact that, as Žižek (2001a: 256) says, "the digitalization of our daily lives, in effect, makes possible a Big Brother control in comparison with which the old Communist secret police supervision cannot but look like primitive child's play." In other words, we are now living in a world-wide panopticon system described by Foucault (1991a [1975]: 195–229, 1996n [1977]) in his study of modern prison as a system based on the principle of "discipline and punish"; that is, each of us is sitting in a cell supervised by an invisible, always-present control-eye registering every moment in our life regardless of how minuscule and insignificant they ever are (see, for example, Robins & Webster 1999: 116–118, 177–178; Haggerty & Ericson 2006: 39–52, 261–275; for the principle of the panopticon as "the simulation of surveillance" in "telematic societies," see Bogard 1996: 65–66, 70–76; in terms of "surveillance society" based on electronic and computer technology, cf. Lyon 1994, 2001, 2003a, 2003b; Lyon & Zureik 1996). What makes the escape impossible from this surveillance system is precisely its insidious logic: it is, *horrible dictu*, us ourselves who, in our utopian naiveté, have *synchronized* our lives with the "circular, self-referential character" (Žižek 2001a: 186) constitutive of the mode of operation of the "big Other", and, thus: *we are the "big Other" of ourselves*.

Facing this distressing conclusion, one is entitled to ask whether there is any rescue from the grip of the "big Other" at all. It is at this point that my way departs from Žižek's way. For me, the way to freedom is the insight that cyberspace is just a postmodern fiction reflecting the imaginary of the technological constitutive of technoculture in its American form (cf. Porush 1985; McHale 1987, 1992; 1994 [1991]; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; in terms of post-cybernetic "cybernetics," cf. Hayles 1999); that is, in my terms, a post-theoretical theory-fiction, and hence, to put it in plain language, *cyberspace simply does not exist*, except in the virtual reality of language constitutive of post-theory.

In this sense, it is no other than Lacan himself who, in the final instance, is the "big Other," the effective and affective "Third" as the motive and motivating *prima causa* that is present in and through its absence in the Žižekian conception of cyberspace. That is, Lacan, as the *Übervater* of the "post" in terms of "the psychoanalytic," is the *theoretical phantom, the post-theoretical prosthesis*, of Žižek's idea of "sex" in the virtual realm of the "cyber." And, accordingly, in terms of cyber theory, Lacan is our "interactive" partner in the sense of interpassivity: *Lacan does the thinking for us*; in other words, *Lacan is the tamago-*

chi of the "cyber" in the framework of Žižekian cyberspace school (for the idea of "tamagochi" in Žižekian theory, see Žižek 1999c: 106–109, 2001c: 48, 2004: 118–119, 2006: 190–191; cf., for example, Jagodzinski 2004: 202–204; Armitt 2005: 205–206; in terms of "postvital living," Doyle 2003: 35; in the context of queer theory, cf. Halberstam 2008: 266).

Of course, we know that Žižek is very well aware of the fact that cyberspace, like everything else under the sign of the "cyber," is just a theoretical phantasm; or, then, Žižek is not Žižek, but somebody who speaks in his name; or, as a true Žižekian possibility, Žižek speaks as Žižek in the name of his theory, a theory as a Žižekian derivation of Lacan's theory, a derivation which, in fact, has come into being in a chiasmatic relationship to the *Lacanian discourse* that circulates and is recycled in postmodern academia in which "Lacan," similarly to other "French Theorists," is a Master Voice. And it is *this* Žižek whom we must, indeed, take at his word, that is, at the face value of Žižekian theory. In other words, in the strict Lacanian sense, whatever (in this context) Žižek announces us, he is not the subject of "his" *énoncés*, his "utterances," instead, he is the object-subject of the *énonciations,* the acts of "enunciation," which we encounter in his *writing* (cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]; Feldstein et al. 1995; in terms of writing, madness and theory, cf. Felman 2003b: 119–125): the "Žižek" who appears in his text (the text written under and in the name of Žižek) speaks behind Lacan's mask.

It is precisely for this reason that we must take Žižek seriously, as the most excellent theorist of Žižekian theory.

The "Lamella," or: The Possibility of Impossible Sex

Now, I think, we have brought all aspects together that are necessary for the understanding of "virtual sex," "sex" in cyberspace in the sense Žižek purports to make intelligible in his Lacanian discourse. Thus, with regard to the "suffocation" of desire and the "paradox of courtly love," it is interesting to know what Žižek actually has to say about "virtual sex." Do the key words, to "supplant" and to "feign," also play here an important role? In other words, the question is: how does it feel to have sex with Žižek in cyberspace? To begin with:

> This is my big thesis a propos sexuality. What was so shocking about virtual space [as it was introduced in the early 1990s] was not that before there was a "real" reality and now there is only a virtual reality, but through the experience of VR [virtual reality] we have somehow retroactively become aware of how there never was "real reality." Reality was always virtual, we just weren't aware of it. I think what is so horrible about virtual sex is not: My god before we had a real partner whom we touched, embraced, squeezed, and now you just masturbate in front of the screen or you don't even masturbate, you just enjoy knowing that maybe the other enjoys it through the screen or whatever. The point is we become aware of how *there never was real sex*. (Gutmair & Flor 1998; emphasis mine)

So, here we have it, once again the figure of "loss" – or then again, a moment of disillusionment, a true moment of post-Weberian *Entzauberung*, "disenchantment" (Weber 1968 [1917/1919]: 612; for a historical contextualization, see

Schluchter 2009; for "the limits of disenchantment" in contemporary European philosophy, see Dews 1995), effected by the light of reason, now in terms of the virtual: there is no "real sex"; in other words, what we in our excitement believed to be sex was, in fact, a delusion, or, even more pityingly, a self-delusion. Since the invention of virtual reality we have not only lost our dear and cherished illusions of the authenticity of sexual experience, but the actual shock is that we have lost sex itself. While the "suffocation" of desire is brought about by the lack of obstacles, and conversely, while desire is heightened not only by conventional, but expressly additional hindrances (whatever they happen to be), in contrast to that, as Žižek says, in virtual sex it is "not only that masturbation is having sex with an imagined partner," but, at the most fundamental level, the question is: "[w]hat if real sex is only masturbation with a real partner?" (Gutmair & Flor 1998; cf. Žižek 2006: 191). For Žižek, this is the real question.

> That is to say, you think you're doing it with a real partner but *you use the real partner as a masturbatory device*, the real partner just gives you a minimum of material so you can act out your fantasies. In other words there are always at least *three in sex*, it's never you and the partner, you must have a fantasy to sustain it. When the fantasy disintegrates, the partner gets disgusting. It's horror. (Gutmair & Flor 1998; emphasis mine; cf. Žižek 2002b: 226; in terms of postmodern theology, cf. Ward 2000: 149–150)

It is precisely this "horror" in the configuration of the "three" that is at issue for Žižek in "virtual sex" or cybersex as the genuine form of "real" sex. To avoid the horror effected by the disintegration of fantasy, we must, of course, maintain it, at any cost. Accordingly, if there is anything in real life at all which we can call "sex," it is only possible as a fantasy, with phantasmatic objects that camouflage the illusory existence of the "real" objects (in terms of the final degree of simulation, cf. Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 11–13), the objects that, as Žižek says, can be "touched," "embraced" and "squeezed" in real life (provided, of course, that life in these terms, or in general, is ever real). This implies that in Žižekian discourse "real" sex is always – *always already* – fantasy sex: fantasy is the "real" reality of sex, the only reality, even in the era of virtual reality. In other words, as Žižek confirms in another context:

> The hard lesson of virtual sex is not that we no longer have "real sex," intense contact with another person's body, simply as stimulation engendered by substanceless images which bombard us from the screen. Rather, it is the much more uncomfortable discovery that there never was "real sex": sex was always-already a game sustained by some masturbatory fantasmatic scenario. The common notion of masturbation is that of "sexual intercourse with an imagined partner": I do it to myself, while I imagine doing it with or to another. Lacan's "there is no sexual relationship" can be read as an inversion of this common notion: *What if "real sex" is nothing but masturbation with a real partner*? What if, even when I am doing it with a real partner, what ultimately sustains my enjoyment is not the partner as such, but the secret fantasies I invest in it? (Žižek 2001a: 252; emphasis mine; in terms of the Kantian *Geschlechtsgemeinschaft [commercium sexuale]*, cf. Kant 1991c [1797/1798]: 389)

Yet, if this is the case, we have run to another problem: if all that is sexual is about fantasy, appearing as the real reality of the sexual, what, in the first place, do we need *virtual sex* for, sex in cyberspace with "virtual" partners that, in fact, are nothing but our fantasies *in their very virtuality*, that is, sex in a realm of fantasy that, moreover, only exists as simulation? And finally, the most fundamental problem: if, as Žižek above says, "[r]eality was always virtual," what do we need *virtual reality* for?

As we can see, these are questions that pertain not only to the possibility of "the sexual" in sex, but, beyond that, to the epistemological and ontological preconditions of "the real" of reality, the reality in and of which we have real experiences (as we, at least, believe to have; cf. Hazelrigg 1989), also in cases in which we experience virtual reality as real. If, as in Žižek's Lacanian theory, the fantastic, the virtual and the simulational collapse into one another in a manner in which the phantasmatic of the imaginary and the imaginary of the phantasmatic appear as the real appearance of reality that, in itself, is nothing but an epiphenomenon of the symbolic, the "big Other," then, we find ourselves, indeed, in a vertiginous mirror world in which not only our psychic reality, but the reality that we believe is the real reality around us is nothing but an enigmatic mirror effect of "the Real" in its Lacanian sense.

From this perspective, I suppose, we have a foreboding of the fact that what we, in our helpless naiveté, have taken as sex in our real life is nothing but a delusion, something that in its real essence is not possible at all, except as a phantasmatic construction under the unavoidable regime of the "big Other," the order of the symbolic which does not symbolize anything but itself.

In this connection, Žižek introduces the Lacanian notion of the "lamella"; a Gorgon-like figure the entire existence of which seems at first to be beyond explanation. But, as we already have seen, *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch* (Heidegger 2000b [1953]: 29, 35); in this sense, that which rescues is close-by. As Lacan (1977e [1966/1953]: 65) says: "It is the world of words that creates the world of things." Accordingly, no sooner is the problem there, than Žižek has already the right words by which we can approach the enigma of the lamella, the hard core of the possibility of impossible sex, or, the impossibility of the possibility of sex. Let us begin from the very beginning.

> In chapter 15 of Seminar XI, Lacan introduces the mysterious notion of the "lamella": the libido as an organ without a body, the incorporeal and for that very reason indestructible life-substance that persists beyond the circuit of generation and corruption. It is no accident that commentaries on this passage are rare (for all practical purposes nonexistent); the Lacan with whom we are confronted in this passage does not have a lot in common with the usual figure of Lacan which reigns in the domain of cultural studies. The Lacan of the lamella is "Another Lacan," as Jacques-Alain Miller put it, a Lacan of drive not desire, of the real not the symbolic. (Žižek 1995b: 205)

As interesting as it would be to make a closer acquaintance with this "Another Lacan," we cannot lose sight of the main issue, the problem of cybersex. As

we have seen thus far, there is no cybersex without cyberspace that is its very condition of possibility, also in the Žižekian sense (see Žižek 1997b: 127–164, 1999c: 104–123, 2001c: 25–26, 33–34, 48–50, 52–55, 2005a: 85, 99, 306–307; cf, Kay 2003: 66–69; Flieger 2005: 21–25, 35–36, 47–68; in terms of postmodern theology, cf. Ward 2000: 149–151).

And precisely here is the connection between the Lacanian lamella and "sex" in terms of the "cyber." According to Žižek, cyberspace is an instance of what Lacan calls the "tissue of libido," that is, a "lamella" meaning a "substance of life which cannot ever be destroyed" (Gutmair and Flor 1998). "The problem here is no longer mortality but the opposite," a kind of "horrible life form, like that of vampires, which you can never get rid of" (ibid.). Therefore, the "true horror of Cyberspace [sic]" is that "one has this spectral dimension of life beyond death, an undead life, which is even true at the most banal, everyday level" (ibid.). Or, as Žižek (1999e: 155), referring to Lacan, specifies, cyberspace constitutes a "domain 'in between the two deaths,' the symbolic and the real," a realm in which "the ultimate object of horror is the sudden emergence of this 'life beyond death'" (ibid.); that is, the lamella: "the undead-indestructible object" implying "Life deprived of support in the symbolic order" (ibid.), "the non-subjective ('acephalous') 'undead' drive which persists beyond ordinary death" (Žižek 1997b: 89; cf. Žižek 1993: 178–181, 1999a: 280–281, 2005a: 160–161, 192, 2006: 121).

In these terms, far from being a realm of joyful deliverance, cyberspace is a space full of anguish and agony never experienced before:

> the more our (experience of) reality is "virtualized," changed into a screen-phenomenon encountered on an interface, the more the "indivisible remainder" that resists being integrated into the interface appears as the horrifying remainder of undead Life. (Žižek 1999e: 155; cf. Žižek 2002c [1991]: xcvii)

In this sense, Žižekian cyberspace is a world of beings that are existent only in a non-existence, "beings" that, according to Žižek (1995a: 125–126, 1997b: 199), exist precisely in the form of the Lacanian "lamella," a mode of existence that Žižek illuminates with a term originating from Hollywood – the "alien" (see, for example, Perkowitz 2007: 9–48; in the mode of "alien chic" in terms of the posthuman, see Badmington 2004; from the standpoint of feminism, see Melzer 2006; for a comprehensive study of "the science of aliens," see Pickover 1999).

"Is not the alien from Ridley Scott's film of that title the 'lamella' in its purest form?" (Žižek 1999a: 280). This is not a rhetorical question for Žižek; this is an issue concerning the subject confronted by its own sexual self. "This amoeba-like, flattened creature that envelops the subject's face stands for the irrepressible life beyond all the fine forms that are merely its representatives, its figures," figures that are "immortal and indestructible" (ibid.: 280–281). This, of course, is about Lacan seen through the spectacles of Hollywood (in both senses of the expression) (cf. Žižek 2001b [1992]). In Lacan's own terms, the "lamella," as the key concept of the Žižekian cyberspace, is, in fact, an incarnation of the Laca-

nian "myth of *l'hommelette* (little female-man omelette)" (Žižek 1999a: 280). As Lacan, according to Žižek, says:

> The lamella is something extra-flat, which moves like the amoeba. It is just a little more complicated. But it goes everywhere. And it is something […] that is related to what *the sexed being loses in sexuality*, it is, like the amoeba in relation to sexed beings, immortal – because it survives any division, any scissiparous intervention. And it can run around […] This lamella, this organ, whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ […] is the *libido*. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

The "lamella" as an "organ" that, in fact, is the "libido" – this Lacanian logic is inscribed in Žižek's magic formula that explains the possibility of impossible sex, or, alternatively, the impossibility of sex altogether.

Be it this or that way, here we have it, at last, the key to the mysteries of "the sexual" in Žižek's Lacanian terms: according to Žižek (1995a: 125), the "lamella" is like the "alien," it functions as the "complement that restores the lost plenitude of a human subject," and for this reason, the "lamella" is, in Lacan's words, an "indestructible *asexual organ without body*, the mythical part that was lost when human beings became sexualized" (ibid.: 125–126; in terms of the "body without organs," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285; for elaborations of the idea, see, for example, Bogue 1989: 90–94; Lash 1990b: 65–71; Grosz 1994c: 162–172; Goodchild 1996: 79–86; for Žižek's rejoinder, see Žižek 2004). Although aliens function like the lamella, they are in themselves, however, something different in terms of sex:

> In contrast to a "normal" sexual relationship, which is always mediated by a lack and, as such, "impossible," doomed to fail, the relationship with "aliens" is therefore fully satisfying: when a human subject merges with an alien, it is as if the round plenitude of a complete being, prior to sexual divisions, about which Plato speaks in his *Symposium* is reconstituted – a man no longer needs a woman (or vice versa) since he is already complete in himself. (Žižek 1996c: 192–193)

As we can see, while sex with aliens still belongs to the category of pleasure, in contrast to that, the lamella, in its radical asexuality, is intelligible only in terms of *jouissance*.

From this perspective, virtual sex in cyberspace does not follow the logic of the sexual: it exceeds all the parameters of conventional sexual reason. This is the sexual reason of "sex" in terms of the "cyber." An "asexual organ without body" – that is the very *raison d'être* of virtual sex, or cybersex in Žižek's Lacanian terms. That is, experiencing sex in cyberspace, one has an *impossible* sexual relation with a *non-existent* but nevertheless "immortal and indestructible" being, the "lamella"; a being that is both "asexual" and an "organ without body," and, furthermore, the libido.

Indeed, this is a new form not only of sex but of "the sexual" in general: *the highest form, the very essence, of the sexual is its primordial impossibility*.

A question still remains: what is, in fact, "the sexual" in this case? Žižek has no answer to this question: it remains a Lacanian enigma. Nevertheless, it is clear that from the Žižekian perspective, cyberspace is a Lacanian space, not only a realm of fantasy, but a fantastic world, a world of phantasms; a world of radical uncertainty, or, in terms of contemporary theory, a world of undecidability, the ultimate indetermination of all being (in Derridean terms, cf., for example, Gasché 1986: 217–225, 241–244; Norris 1987: 35, 42, 56, 80–82, 162; Nealon 1993: 29–45; Schrift 1995: 14, 17, 25–26; Irwin 2010: 96, 115): in cyberspace, in the final analysis, one can never know where one happens to be, to say nothing about the most serious problem: one is not able to tell *who one is* in cyberspace in the first place.

But then again, this is not necessarily a problem; the loss of the self in cyberspace can also be an empowering experience. As Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen (1994: Shifting Subjects, 1) say, "[i]n cyberspace, I can change my self as easily as I change clothes," and, as a result, "[i]dentity becomes infinitely plastic in a play of images that knows no end." Accordingly, in terms of the sexual, everything is possible is cyberspace, even all that is impossible altogether: cyberspace is a space of limitless choice in its "unthinkable complexity" (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 67; in terms of "thinking about the unthinkable" enabled by "the virtual as a place of utopia," cf. Pias 2005c); it is unending in its endless vastness, in its sublime limitlessness (see, for example, Robins 1996: 83–103; Wise 1997: 155–157; Jordan 1999: 59–178; Cooper 2002: 134–159; Herbrechter 2006: 267–286; Benedikt 1994 [1991]; Crang et al. 1999; Cavallaro 2000; Dodge & Kitchin 2001; Gunkel 2001; from a Heideggerian perspective, cf. Zimmerman 2000: 134–135).

All in all, there is, however, still a problem: if cyberspace is a Lacanian space, *where* exactly is this space, and for that matter, is it a space at all?

2.1.2 The Sexual Pleasure of the Techno-Imaginary

In the light of the preceding discussion, it is evident that as a Lacanian theoretician Žižek, indeed, does not belong to the "neo-Jungian," "New Age" school of cyberspace; it is equally evident that Žižek does not identify with "post-Cartesian," "deconstructionist," "feminist" and "Foucauldian" ideas of cyberspace either, because, as he clearly says, "I absolutely do not think that Cartesian subjectivity is threatened," and actually what is even more important, as Žižek emphasizes, is that "[o]nly in Cyberspace [sic] do we approach what Cartesian subjectivity is all about" (Gutmair & Flor 1998; cf. Žižek 1996c: 114, 119, 124–125, 193–194, 209–210, 218–219, 1997b: 12, 121–122, 2001c: 34; Myers 2003: 31–36). In these terms, cyberspace is not a question of one's own mundane corporeal existence; instead, it is *a philosophical issue concerning the parameters of the very possibility of being a subject*.

That is, in the last instance, the "cyber" is a Cartesian issue that reopens the question concerning the *cogito* in a fundamentally new manner (cf. Derrida 1978a [1967/1964]; Norris 2010).

In this sense, "sex" in cyberspace *à la* Žižek is, paradoxically, an effect of the "cyber" as much as it is its radical questioning. That is, we can never understand the impossible possibility of cybersex, its very essence as a post-Hegelian *Aufhebung* of the *coincidentia oppositorum* (cf. Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115), if we do not see it in the context of Žižek's oppositional position to all "cyberspace schools," whatever they might be; an opposition that in itself is an effect of that which it stands in opposition to.

If, for Žižek, the existence of the Cartesian subject is still possible in cyberspace, although, of course, only in the Lacanian form, that is, as an always already split entity (see, for example, Grosz 1990: 39–48; Fink 1997 [1995]: 44–48), in contrast to that, in terms of the "post-Cartesian" school, it is precisely to the subject as the centre of its own being that cyberspace gives the possibility to become decentred once and for all, to finally disrupt its self-centeredness, its monadic solipsism, indeed, its God-like ability to be its own condition of possibility (cf., for example, McCarron 1995: 261–262; Stallabrass 1996: 55, 63–64, 77; Sampaio & Aragon 1998: 145–150; Crampton 2003: 73–114; Ess 2004a: 78–80; in terms of "a Lacanian cyborg ontology," cf. Nusselder 2009 [2006]); that is, to overcome and finally annihilate all the features that characterize the subject as a negative notion in postmodern theory (for the idea of "the death of the subject" in the postmodern, see, for example, Rosenau 1992: 42–61; Best & Kellner 1997: 255–256; Malpas 2005: 56–57). And here, of course, it is expressly "sex" that is the way to the ultimate liberation, the liberation not only from the shackles of the Cartesian subject, but also from all constraints of gender and sexual orientation, and finally, from the mortal clay of the material body altogether (cf., for example, Lykke 2000 [1996]: 82–84; Muri 2007: 167–180; Clark 2004; Hughes 2004).

In short, in terms of the "post-Cartesian" cyber-school, the dead subject of poststructuralist theory will resurrect in cyberspace as an a-subjective post-subject. This is the final triumph of the "cyber": the redemption of the subject in the Heavenly City of the cyberspace.

The Techno-Imaginary: The Military Connection of the "Cyber"

It is in the world of the techno-imaginary that the political economy of the "cyber" brings together desire, technology and the consensual hallucination of capital; a mode of hallucination that, in fact, is a delivering *Offenbarung*, a saving revelation, a vision of the ultimate rescue, in its most sublime form: the *jouissance* of becoming a post-body post-subject in the matrix of the "cyber." Under the sign of the "cyber," you will be saved once and for all. In this configuration pertaining to the sexualization of all that is "cyber" what is at issue is not so much the technologization of the sexual as *the sexualization of the technological* as a way to never-ending pleasure, the *jouissance* of the "cyber" in the regenerating matrix of the "post." This is the realm of the techno-imaginary that is the figurative space in which cybersex appears not only intelligible,

but also technologically feasible, viable in the sense of a total redesign of one's own corporeal being by way of virtual prosthetics.

If "sex," as Foucault (1990k: 154) says, is a "fictitious unity" that has made possible to "group together, *in an artificial unity*, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures" (emphasis mine),[174] what is cybersex, then, as an aspect of various "cybersexualities" (see Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000), each in their own way reflecting postmodern sexual utopianism in the form of techno-futurism constitutive of all that is "cyber" (see, for example, Virilio 1997 [1995]: 103–111; Williams 1998: 125–127; Apter 1999: 216–217; Valovic 2000: 161–162; Kroker 2004b: 170; Benedikt 1994 [1991]; Jones 1995a, 1998; Ludlow 1996; Plant 1998; Smith & Kollock 1999; Wiley 1999 [1995]; Perniola 2004 [2000]; Waskul 2004a; Collins 2006, 2008), if not a fictitious assemblage of bodies and machines, organs and prostheses, desires and programmes, pleasures and interfaces, subjects and objects, articulated together in an artificial unity *of a different order*, the order of the cyborg – a postmodern order of "the technological" that, as Haraway (1991a: 154) argues, is about "unities" that are "monstrous" and "illegitimate" (cf., for example, Kirby 1997: 146–147; Gamble 2002: 43–44; Mortensen 2003: 110; Bell 2007: 101–102; Halberstam 1995; Braidotti 1997b [1996], 2003; Lykke 2000 [1996]; Graham 2002; Caputi 2004; Botting 2005; for a historical contextualization of the idea of the "monsters," see for example, Bann 1994; Douthwaite 2002; Knoppers & Landes 2004).

As a techno/cybercultural phantasm, cybersex is a postmodern theory-fiction like Foucault's "fictitious unity"; not a meta-fiction but *a fiction of the fictional*, a fictitious composite compounding both the mythopoetic figure of the cyborg and the imaginary of "the sexual"; not in a permanent unity, but in an assemblage that is all the time in the volatile state of "becoming," or, in Haraway's (1991a: 163) words, perpetualy "disassembled and reassembled." This means that as a notion cybersex is not only polysemic, but it is also "polysexual" (Peraldi 1997 [1981]; Preciado 2003; cf. MacKendrick 1999: 98–99; in Derridean terms, Derrida 1995a [1981/1992]: 107–108; cf. Shildrick 1997: 161–163; Royle 2003b: 42, 66, 224; from the standpoint of feminist critique of Foucault's "androcentricity," cf. Soper 1993: 38; for Madonna as a gender bender figure, cf. Van Bauwel 2004: 19–21); that is, cybersex comprises a techno-sexual "procedure" that is neither monological nor unilateral, but "recombinant" in the manner of a postmodern random generator (see Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 14–17, 1996a: 12, 27–28, 53, 56–57, 60, 1997b: xiv, 2004b: 15–16; Atzori & Woolford 1997 [1995]: 197; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 55), a post-cybernetic process with an open end in the sense of *opera aperta* (cf. Eco 1989 [1962]).

174 It is appropriate to notice that the idea of the fictitious is inscribed in Foucault's "method," his way of approaching things he is writing about. According to Scott Lash (1990b: 82), Foucault has from the very beginning qualified "his entire opus as 'fiction,'" meaning by that a strategy to write outside common language (the realm of "discourse" in general), in a space opened up by an "aesthetics of transgression," that is, a "non-discursive language" operating as a "counter-memory," as an immanent criticism reflecting the issues he is writing about in his self-reflexive language (ibid.: 81–89). This entails that the "fictitious," for Foucault, is a *methodological principle* to avoid the "self-evident" truth-claims of the "normal" academic writing style (whatever the "normal" happens to be).

Yet, having a second look at "the sexual" in cybersex it turns out that "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is a potentiating effect of the techno-imaginary which, in turn, is the effectuating *prima causa* as the non-originary origin the "cyber" in the first place. What is essential here is that sex is in itself, in the Derridean manner, *toujours déjà*, "always already" (see, for example, Derrida 1997 [1967]: 4, 47, 66, 89, 106, 112, 163, 201, 215, 292, 304), about the imaginary, whether as a historical reality or as a creation of fantasy (fantasy also being, of course, conditioned, in the final analysis, by history; see, for example, Burgin 1989). In this sense, *cybersex is about the real of the imaginary*: the imaginary is always a real reflexion of a historical situation, *a reality of another order* (cf. Castoriadis 1998 [1975]: 135–164, 340–373; Iser 1993; Habermas 1998f [1985]; Bronfen 1998; von Braun 2001). The question in the context of the present study is only what this "another order" is in terms of the "cyber"; a complicated question because, firstly, both "the sexual" and "the cyber," although they belong to different configurations, are, nevertheless, akin to each other in that both of them can be approached only through their *symptomatic manifestations*, through their cultural appearances and apparitions, which, moreover, are substantially different in their essence; and secondly, because, in the last analysis, each of them becomes intelligible only at the level of the linguistic of language, the primordial realm of language ruled by the logic of *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]).

In this sense, both "the sexual" and the "cyber" are post-effects in the Derridean sense: their discursive economy is based on "auto-affection," the logic of supplementation (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 165–167); that is, "the sexual" and the "cyber" are, at the same time, both the origin and the effect of what they designate; in the manner of Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* ("deferred action" or "retroaction," see Freud 1986a [1919]: 128–129, 147; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 85–86, 229–230, 236, 239, 281, 306, 427, 511; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 313–317), they name what they themselves have effected and effect what they have named. In other words, belatedly they produce that which they stand as denominations for. For this reason, both "the sexual" and the "cyber" refer to something (whatever it is) that "is there" by the force of their linguistic and discursive effects.

It is in this sense that "the sexual" and the "cyber" are symptomatic manifestations of the contemporary cultural constellation under the regime of the political economy of neoliberalism, an order of political economy the ruling principle of which is *the rationalization of the imaginary* in its ultimate form, the reason of the surrational.

Whereas what is "sex," for Foucault, is a theoretical figure cathected, *besetzt* (for the idea of *Besetzung* or *cathexis*, see, for example, Freud 1972f [1926]: 120, 204–205, 1977d [1893]: 54, 1987d [1900]: 572, 600, 604–612, 622; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 92, 107; cf. Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 92–96), with a negative investment, a category manifesting Foucault's (1990k [1976]: 157–159) politics of theory arguing for the abolition of the regime of "sex," in the sense of

le sexe (Foucault 1994a [1976]: 207–211), once and for all, cybersex, in turn, is a theory-fiction celebrating the coming of the posthuman, a technological wish-image emanating positive energy, the energy of the future as a post-utopian vision of "sex" in the world of the cyborg. While, in Foucault's world, we are living in a world of omnipotent disciplinary discourses generated by "power/knowledge" (see, for example, Foucault 1980f [1977]: 120–133, 1980b [1977]; Brieler 1998: 449–461; Mills 2003: 67–80; Rouse 1994), in contrast, in the world of the "cyber," we are invited to the world of freedom, the world of the imaginary of the technological, a potential world existing in the virtual reality of language inherent to the "cyber" in the mode of the "post."

As an imaginary projection of post-sex, "sex" as a phantasmatic idealization and idolization of sexual desires and pleasures, cybersex is a technophilic phantasm – at once a techno-futuristic fantasy and a post-theoretical theory-fiction – of an apparatic amplification and extension of sexual encounter by means of the prosthetic organs of the cyborg in the virtual reality of cyberspace (cf. Croissant 1998: 293–294; Gray 2001: 111–113; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 34–36). In these terms, as William Bogard (1996: 155) claims, "[c]ybersex is about making a cyborg." But then again, if the cyborg, as Haraway (1985: 65) says, is a "hybrid of machine and organism," in which sense is cybersex about *sex*; in other words, what is "the sexual" in and of the "sex" in the world of the cyborg? According to Haraway, to be a cyborg is about "power and pleasure in technologically-mediated societies" (ibid.: 71). Although it remains an open question what this means (or how it is adequate to read Haraway, otherwise than through of her irony), it is precisely in this configuration that "the sexual" and "the technological" intertwine amounting to various "cybersexualities," sexual identities and practices predicated upon the "cyber" (see Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000).

In this connection, it is appropriate to remind the reader that by cybersex I understand an *imaginary technology* brought about by the libidinal language of cyber discourse, a ludic-postmodern linguistic-discursive assemblage of themes and views originating from: (1) the visions of the 1960s counterculture and psychedelia, (2) the fantasies generated by popularized cybernetics (which has nothing to do with Wienerian cybernetics as a science of control and communication in the animal, human and machine), (3) the ideas of the New Age and transhumanism, (4) the literary figures of New Wave science fiction and cyberpunk (deriving form Gibson's fantasy of "cyberspace"), and (5) the theory-fictions of postmodern body theory as manifested by cyberfeminism (based on Haraway's figure of the "cyborg").

As this kind of discursive construction in the mode of *discursive hybrid*, cybersex has turned into both a topos of popular culture and a topic of post-theory during the 1990s, through the technophilic hype typical of cyberculture, and, as such, recycled as a reified phantasm time and time again by media and cultural theorists playing with the figures of the techno-imaginary and the posthuman (see, for example, Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 132–137; Kroker 2004b: 21–22, 170; Wil-

liams & Bendelow 1998: 86–87; Lunenfeld 2000a: 88–91; Zylinska 2001: 169–170; Farnell 2002a: 122–123; Pettman 2002: 31–32, 80–81, 90–91, 94–95; Wilson 2002: 153–154; Parisi 2004: 8–10; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; Dinello 2005: 13–14; Foster 2005: 86–90; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87; Case 1996; Plant 1998; Wiley 1999 [1995]: Stocker & Schöpf 2000b; Fernbach 2002; Gillis 2004; Mey 2007; for an overview, see Collins 2006, 2008; for a theoretical contextualization in terms of the posthuman, see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Graham 2002; Smith & Morra 2006b; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008).[175]

In this sense, the idea of cybersex, in a paradigmatic manner, is a linguistic hybrid typical of postmodern theory discourse; a mode of discourse that has effaced the differences between theory and fiction, and between the real and the imaginary; in other words, a discourse in which, as Haraway (1991a: 149) says, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion."

Searching for "cybersex" in the World Wide Web, you can literally find innumerable sites relating, in one way or another, to the amazing world of "sex" under the sign of the "cyber." Just one example, a short glance at "erotic revelations in cyberspace":

> […] cybersex, like the erotic rituals of the mystery cults, serves a purpose other than the conventional procreative or hedonistic ones. It also reforms (or "morphs") identity. In cyberspace one may assume a body of choice in fantasy. But it is in any case fundamentally a techno-body that occupies cyberspace. It is imagination embodied by machine technology. (Its apotheosis is the erotic cyborg.) (Bostock 2005)

In the manner typical of cyber discourse, this "definition" of cybersex is a combination of quite ordinary words that in reference to the generative signifiers "cyberspace" and "cyborg" take on a special meaning: they open up an access into the magic world of the "cyber," which, in turn, is the very signifier that is constitutive of cyber discourse, the linguistic matrix of cyberspace and the cyborg.

As a virtual reality of language, cyber discourse embraces a world in which the distinction between the potential and actual, between the real and the imaginary, has no meaning: cyber discourse is a world in which everything is possible because under the sign of the "cyber" nothing is impossible (see, for example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b; Jones 1995a, 1998; Cherny & Weise 1996; Dery 1996; Tofts & McKeich 1997; Harcourt 1999; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Bell 2001a; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Heuser 2003; Tofts et al. 2003; Foster 2005; Haney 2006; Jahshan 2007; Nayar 2010). The coming into being of the phantasmatic conglomeration

175 In contrast, what is reality is computer sex (netsex, online-sex) that is available (1) as part of global sex industry: pornographic or "adult" web sites and interactive strip-tease shows, and (2) as private sex-oriented entertainment and gaming: text-based chat services (web or IRC channels), and webcam sex performances (exhibitionism/voyeurism). Moreover, remote-controlled sex toys (sex robots) have been recently offered commercially on the Internet. In one form or another, masturbation is an essential component in all modes of computer sex (see, for example, Robinson & Tamosaitis 1993; Odzer 1997; Levine 1998; Lane III 2000; Turkle 1995; Cherny & Weise 1996; Waskul 2004a; for an overview of cybersex hype in the first part of the 1990s, see Freyermuth 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998).

of ideas and visions constitutive of cyber discourse is illuminatingly summarized by Geert Lovink and Pit Schultz (2010 [1996]), two techno-theory activists who have from early on both contributed to and critically observed the discursive formation of all that is "cyber" (see Lovink 1994, 1997, 2003, 2004; Lovink & Schultz 1997a, 1997b, 1997c); in their description of the workings of the "cyber," Lovink and Schultz refer to cyber theorists as having the function of generative agency proliferating ever-new combinations of the "cyber":

> Angelockt durch Literatur, empfindlich gemacht von psychedelischen Drogen, auf der Suche nach neuen Bewusstseinsformen und mit der Hilfe von LoTech als Punkelement trieben sie die technologische Einbildungskraft voran und schufen aus ihren Schlüsselerlebnissen Mysterien, die noch sehr lange die so genannte Netzkultur bestimmen werden: *Eintauchen, Entkörperlichung, Surfen, Gehirn-Schnittstellen, Unsterblichkeit, Allgegenwärtigkeit, künstliche Intelligenz, Hybridisierung von Körpern und Maschinen gipfeln in der Trinität von Cyborg, Cybersex und Cyberspace*. Es war ein Projekt des kalten Krieges, der Umwidmung von Militärtechnik zu vielfältigen mitunter exzentrischen Forschungszwecken unter Ausschluss öffentlicher Aufmerksamkeit. (Lovink & Schultz 2010 [1996]: 45; emphasis mine; cf. Lovink 2003: 26–29, 44–45, 74–77, 137–138, 162–163)

This "trinity of the cyborg, cybersex and cyberspace" constitutes the hard core of the world of the "cyber" in terms of desires and pleasures released from the constraints of everyday reality, a world of the present future in the virtual reality of language constitutive of cyber discourse; the world of what I call the techno-imaginary. Although the origin, in the sense of linguistic fountainhead, of this world is Gibson's *Neuromancer*, the *Ur*-text of all that is "cyber" (for the origin of the term "cyberspace," see Gibson 1987 [1982]), one should not forget that *technologically*, as Lovink and Schultz point out, the "cyber" emerges from the techno-political power constellation of the Cold War, from *the techno-imaginary of the military-industrial complex* after the Second World War (see, for example Kaldor 1984; Leslie 1993; Robin 2001; Der Derian 2009b [2001]; Nash 2009; Pavelec 2009; for the military-technological infrastructure of cyberculture, see, for example, Tomas 1995b: 35–37; Hartmann 2004: 14–19, 38; Turner 2006: 3–17, 28–38, 58, 94–95, 116–118, 239–247; Ricardo 2009b: 7–8; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Armitage & Roberts 2002b; Bishop & Phillips 2010; for the military rationality inscribed in the development of technology, see De Landa 1991; for Gibson's influence on the formation of cyberculture, see, for example, Heim 1993: 85–87, 134–135; McCaffery 1994c [1991]: 15; Featherstone & Burrows 1995a: 6–7; Jones 1995b: 16–17; Kellner 1995: 298–299, 305–316, 323–325; Kramarae 1995: 38; Jordan 1999: 21, 26–33; Kneale 1999: 214–218; Lyon 2002: 21–24, 27–28; Vint 2007: 102–123; Benedikt 1994 [1991]).

In other worlds, the deep structure of the technophilic fantasy world of the "cyber," the world of the post-futuristic techno-imaginary of the prosthetic reconstruction of the human being in terms of the posthuman, is the military mindset that from the First World War on has been the imaginary infrastructure of the modern, and, as such, the scientific-technological fundament of postmodern technoscience as the condition of possibility of postmodern war (see,

for example, Gray 1989, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2005; Gray & Mentor 1995a; Bibby 2000; Bousquet 2009; in terms of "thinking about the unthinkable," cf. Kahn 1960, 1962, 1984; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005). It is in this manner that, according to Friedrich Kittler, the contemporary media environment and the technologies of mass culture originate from the military equipment being originally intended to be used for information, communication, surveillance and control as the essential prerequisites that have enabled modern warfare in the first place, and, finally, contemporary technoculture as a whole. In this sense:

> Funkspiel, UKW-Panzerfunk, Vocoder, Magnetophon, U-Boot-Ortungstechnik, Bomberrichtfunk usw. haben einen Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät freigegeben, der Ohren und Reaktionsgeschwindigkeiten auf den Weltkrieg n + 1 einstimmt. Radio, dieser erste Mißbrauch, führt von WWI zu WWII, Rock Musik, der nächste, von WWII zu WWIII. (Kittler 1986: 170)

Accordingly, *Unterhaltungsindustrie ist in jedem Wortsinn Mißbrauch von Heeresgerät* (ibid.: 149; emphasis mine; see also Kittler 1991; cf., for example, Daniels 2002: 134–135; Leschke 2003: 286–287; Hartmann 2006: 130; in terms of "the military-industrial-media-entertainment network," cf. Der Derian 2009b [2001]).

Towards the Idea of the Prosthetic Body

It is not only the neo-futuristic vision of cyberspace that emerges from Gibson's science-fiction fantasy; as important is its other side, the topic of prosthetics. In his *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Gibson (1988) succinctly sums up the idea of cyberspace and, moreover, describes cyber-technology as prosthetic extension and enhancement of the body in a manner that is constitutive of cyber discourse (cf., for example, Hayles 1999: 291; Graham 2002: 194–195; Dinello 2005: 147–148; Booker & Thomas 2009: 257); in Gibson's words:

> *There's no there, there*. They taught that to children, explaining cyberspace. She remembered a smiling tutor's lecture in the arcology's executive crèche, images shifting on a screen: pilots in enormous helmets and clumsy-looking gloves, the neuroelectronically primitive "virtual world" technology linking them more effectively with their planes, pairs of miniature video terminals pumping them a computer-generated flood of combat data, the vibrotactile feedback gloves providing a touch-world of studs and triggers. … As the technology evolved, the helmets shrank, the video terminals atrophied. (Gibson 1988: 48)

This image of the prosthetic body as a body that is capable of exceeding the limits of carnal corporeality by means of prosthetics in the never-ending vastness of virtual reality appears time and time again in the phantasmatic visions of cyberspace, the cyborg and cybersex (see, for example, Heim 1994 [1991]: 74–75; Parisi 2004: 194–195; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; Vint 2007: 135; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87; Holmes & Federman 2010: 71–77).

It is in this way that the "cyber" signifies the world of the posthuman; a world in which, as Haraway (1991f: 249) says, we live in an entirely new condition of the corporeal in which "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves." Although, for Gibson, the cyber-body is

not only a male body (one recalls, for example, in *Neuromancer* the figure of Molly with her scalpel-like prosthetic finger nails and mirrored lenses over her eyes…; cf. Springer 1996: 135–136; Jordan 1999: 31–32; for a "prosthetic reading," cf., for example, Wills 1995: 326–328),[176] in the subsequent cyberpunk literary movement, a prosthetically empowered male body became the emblem of a futuristic body modification (see, for example, Pitts 2003: 151–184; Nayar 2004: 118–127; Ross 1991a; Nixon 1992; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Wolmark 1997; Cavallaro 2000; Foster 2000 [1997]; Flanagan 2002), and as such, curiously, in a postmodern manner of the Freudian *Penisneid*, "penis envy" (see Freud 1972d [1925]: 23–27, 1981b [1937]: 97–98, 1983a [1938/1940]: 120–121, 1990c [1933]: 134–136), the love-hate object of cyberfeminist deconstruction – only to finally turn into the celebrated erotic object of cyberfeminism, the very paragon of female "empowerment" in terms of the "cyber" (see, for example, Adam 1998: 144–150; Galloway 2004: 184–194; Hartmann 2004: 37–57; Wajcman 2004: 63–66, 2006: 100–109; Plant 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Reiche & Sick 2002; Reiche & Kuni 2004; in terms of cyberfeminist "techno-triumphalism," see McNeil 2000: 229–230).

Andrew Ross succinctly summarizes the original idea of "cyberpunk male bodies" for which "prosthetic help" was a necessary means of survival; that is:

> spare, lean, and temporary bodies whose social functionality could only be maintained through the reconstructive aid of a whole range of genetic overhauls and cybernetic enhancements – boosterware, biochip wetware, cyberoptics, bioplastic circuitry, designer drugs, nerve amplifiers, prosthetic limbs and organs, memoryware, neural interface plugs and the like. The body was *a switching system, with no purely organic identity*… (Ross 1991a: 152–153; emphasis mine; cf. Fernbach 2002; for "cybernetic bodies" in the context of "American bodies," see Johnston 2001a: 73–77)

This body, of course, is a discursive construct as *a literary figure*, although it precisely as such had a certain impact on the lifestyle of the cyberpunk movement which, in turn, affected the discursive elaboration of the prosthetic body as a cultural phantasm typical of the techno/cybercultural theorization in the early 1990s, that is, post-theory in terms of the "cyber." The suggestive power of this figure was such that it even seduced Douglas Kellner, a Marxian-oriented Frankfurt school sociologist, to a eulogy of Gibson as an avantgardist "social theorist" on a par with Baudrillard. According to Kellner (1995: 307), "*Neuromancer* projects a vision of implosion between humans and technology in a high-tech world of plastic surgery, implants, drugs, artificial organs, artifi-

176 As we remember, Molly is an impressive appearance, she is a cyborg: "She wore mirrored glasses. Her clothes were black, the heels of black boots deep in the temperfoam. […] She shook her head. He realized that the glasses were surgically inset, sealing her sockets. The silver lenses seemed to grow from smooth pale skin above her cheekbones, framed by dark hair cut in a rough shag. The fingers curled around the flecther were slender, white, tipped with polished burgundy. The nails looked artificial. […] She wore tight black gloveleather jeans and a bulky black jacket cut from some matte fabric that seemed to absorb light. […] She held out her hands, palms up, the white fingers slightly spread, and with a barely audible click, ten double-edged, four-centimeter scalpel blades slid from their housings beneath the burgundy nails. She smiled. The blades slowly withdrew." (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 36–37)

cial brains, and genetic engineering," and in this manner, as Kellner argues, it accurately describes social reality in advanced capitalism (cf. Gray 2001: 69–85, 99–113, 151–160; in terms of disability and medical technology, cf., for example, Thomson 1997: 111–124; Marks 1999: 4–15; Davis 1997b; Ott et al. 2002; Schnalke 2004; Siebers 2008; in the context of sport and technology, cf., for example, Cashmore 2010 [1996]: 175–203; Gebauer 1997, 2006; for "hybrid athletes," cf. Shogan 1999: 45–74; for the idea of body design as a way to "singularity," Kurzweil 2005; cf. Warwick 2004; in terms of body fetishism in feminist utopian fictions, cf. Siebers 1994b: 23–32; Neely 1994).

For Jameson (1991: 419), in turn, cyberpunk signified "the supreme *literary* expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself." In a cultural constellation in which "our faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of present-day multinational capitalism" (ibid.: 37), what was needed was a new language, a new mode of representation compatible with the enormous transformation of the world under the regime of postmodern capitalism in terms of technology. The challenge was the very complexity of this new cultural constellation; so it is appropriate to recall what Jameson said above:

> The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imagination to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself. This is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature – one is tempted to characterize it as "high-tech paranoia" – in which circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind. (ibid.: 37–38)

All this appeared for Jameson as an "enormous and threatening, yet only dimly perceivable, other reality of economic and social institutions" in terms of which the "*postmodern sublime* can alone be adequately theorized" (ibid.: 38; emphasis mine; cf. Bertens 1995: 123, 131–134, 160–172; Lyotard 1993c; Bukatman 1995; Hartley 2003; Giblett 2008). And it is precisely here that a "new type of science fiction, called *cyberpunk*" presented itself, according to Jameson (1991: 38), as a language with which it was possible to get a grip of the "third stage of capital," as narrative figurations attempting to give an intelligible form to the "paranoia" implied by advanced technology. In Jameson's reading, cyberpunk was thus "fully as much an expression of transnational corporate realities" as it was "of global paranoia itself" (ibid.; cf. Kellner 1995: 297–330; Csicsery-Ronay 1994 [1988]; Hollinger 1994 [1990]; McCaffery 1994b [1991]; McHale 1994 [1991]; Brande 1996; Burrows 1997). As we can see, also to Jameson, as a Marxist theorist like Kellner, the enormous transformative power of American techno-capitalism, at that time still in the constellation of the Cold War both politically and

intellectually, appeared as a revelation that exceeded human understanding, and was, therefore, intelligible only in terms of the imaginary, in the mode of the sublime.

As critical as Kellner and Jameson try to be in the face of American techno-capitalism, it is precisely their criticism, its *literary means*, that crucially contributed to the *postmodern phantasmagoria* that surrounded computer technology in the 1980s and early 1990s, the time when cyberpunk turned from a science-fiction subculture to an academic avantgarde (see, for example, McHale 1992: 225–267; Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 6–22, 115–123, 137–156; Dodge & Kitchin 2001; 183–187; Csicsery-Ronay 2005: 54–57; Porush 1985; Hafner & Markoff 1991; Dery 1994, 1996; McCaffery 1994b [1991]; Balsamo 1995a; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Brande 1996; Fisher 1997; Cavallaro 2000; Heuser 2003; Bould 2005; Foster 2005; in terms of "the hidden dialectic" of avantgarde, technology and mass culture, cf. Huyssen 1980). In other words, various techno-imaginary visions in terms of the "cyber," as Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (1992b: xii) say, manifest "postmodernist celebrations of the technological sublime,"[177] and express in this way the awe effected by the seemingly omnipotent powers of technology (see, for example, Carey 1989: 113–141; Szerszynski 2005: 59–64; Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996; for a historical contextualization in terms of the "American sublime" as a "poetic genre," see Wilson 1991). This is the cultural matrix from which the seduction of the "cyber" emerges; an intellectual and theoretical fascination which, however, would not have been possible without the triumph of the "post" in American academia in the 1980s (for the paradigmatic *summa*, see Jameson 1991): *the postness of the postality constitutive of all that is "post" is the condition of possibility of the "cyber."*

Critically analyzing the process in the late twentieth century which he tellingly calls "hacking away at the counterculture" amongst American intellectuals and academics fascinated with new technology, Ross remarks that:

> our common intellectual discourse has been significantly affected by the recent debates about postmodernism (or culture in a postindustrial world) in which *euphoric, addictive thrill of the technological sublime* has figured quite prominently. The high-speed technological fascination that is characteristic of the postmodern condition can be read, on the one hand, as a celebratory capitulation on the part of intellectuals to the new information technocultures. On the other hand, this celebratory strain attests to the persuasive affect associ-

177 The concept of the "technological sublime" was originally introduced by Leo Marx (1970 [1964]: 194–230) to express the emotional, semi-religious attitude towards technology. Later the concept served as a critical term in the analysis of technoculture (see, for example, Carey 1989: 120–123; Dery 1996: 3–17). In the contemporary sense, especially with regard to the postmodern, the concept of the sublime has its origin in the aesthetic theories of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, referring to an experience of "astonishment," "stupor" and "awe" which exceeds the human mind and is thus beyond proper representation; as a consequence, the human imagination attempts, through phantasmatic figurations, to represent that which is unrepresentable, so as to conjure up present that which is absent (see Jameson 1991: 32–38; Culler 1997: 77; Hartley 2003). Accordingly, the sublime is a borderline experience trying to find a form for the unrepresentable through figurative expressions. In this sense, as a metaphorical language, cyber discourse manifests the logic of the sublime in terms of technology; that is, it is an attempt to represent, by way of the techno-imaginary, the radical transformation of human existence in contemporary technoculture.

> ated with the new cultural technologies, to their capacity (more powerful than that of their sponsors and promoters) to generate pleasure and gratification and to win the struggle for intellectual as well as popular consent. (Ross 1991c: 99; emphasis mine; in terms of "terminal faith," cf. Taylor 1998)

It is in this cultural constellation that the "cyber" – intertwining recycled ideas of popularized cybernetics, cyberpunk and the cyborg (the cyborg as both a popular-cultural figure and the Harawayan "myth") in a typical postmodern manner, in the mode of "technoromanticism" (Coyne 1999) – became the guiding star of techno-libertarian utopianism, the shibboleth for utopian visions of a technological redemption (see, for example, Robins 1996: 96–97; Birringer 1998: 59–65, 306–310; Jordan 1999: 180–196; Haney 2006: 34–41; Jameson 1988e [1977]; Kling 1996b [1991]; Sargisson 1996, Burwell 1997; Barr 2000; Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]; Hartmann 2004; Sturken et al. 2004; Rüsen et al. 2005; Berthoud 2007; in terms of the rhetorics of "electrotech," see Brummett 1999: 81–83; in the context of American "astrofuturism," cf. Kilgore 2003).

In this manner, it is not only that the cyborg, as Haraway (1991a: 151) says, "is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity," being thus "oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence"; but, beyond that, this is the radical "otherness" promised by all that is "cyber": *the "cyber" is the sign of subversive heterotopia implied by the posthuman* (for a paradigmatic example, see Gillis 2002: 209–210).

In these terms, the "cyber," as a seductive signifier typical of the "post," mixed with "sex," as an even more seductive signifier constitutive of consumer hysteria and its academic pendant, the theory-hysteria around the figures "sex," "gender" and "body" in the 1980s and 1990s, created the origin, in the sense of linguistic-discursive configuration, for the visions and wish-images of cybersex, which, in turn, according the familiar logic of recycling typical of postmodern academia, were elaborated on into spectacular and amazing theory-fictions projecting a radical transformation of the human into the posthuman, in itself a post-theoretical phantasm peculiar to the theory hype in terms of the "cyber" (see, for example, Halberstam Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Badmington 2000; Gray 2001; Graham 2002; Cooney 2004; Smith & Morra 2006b; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; Miccoli 2010).

If cultural historians sometime in the future embark upon archaeological excavations on the terrain of postmodern culture, they will certainly meet a rich material in the sunken Atlantis of the postmodern techno-imaginary, the grand edifice of post-theory materialized in the amazing constructions of the "cyber"; material which, of course, does not witness of the kind of high culture that the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt were, but which, in their own way, will shed light onto the vanity that academic thinking is capable of. But, to understand this, what one necessarily needs is a thorough understanding of the sublime pleasure of the "post."

The Pleasure of "Postcorporeality"

Through the *figural translation* of cyberpunk science fiction into post-theory, all that is "cyber" turned in American academia into a source of theory-fictions purporting to give an "adequate" description of the transformation of the human body in late-capitalist technoculture. From this perspective it is, of course, clear that Allucquère Rosanne "Sandy" Stone, one of the most outspoken theorists of the "cyber," "knows that eroding boundaries between us and our prostheses – contact lenses, implants, artificial organs, genetic engineering, communication networks – have already turned us into transhuman" (Stryker 1996: 134); a metamorphosis that appears in a radicalized form in the Krokerian panic writing that in itself is a postmodern melange of high-theory *à la* French theory and American technological millennialism, that is, a postmodern mixture of science fiction and a subversive politics of words in the mode of the "post."

Thus, as we have seen above, the Gibsonian cyberpunk body turns into a panic vision of "data bodies" that are "half-code/half-flesh" (Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 51) in the Krokers's theory machine:

> Hacking human flesh by way of artificial intelligence, virtual reality processors, and the violent force-field of the electronic media is the sure and certain way by which virtuality actually eats the human body, becoming digi-skin: silicon flesh, 7-second brains, recombinant eyes, and android ears at the end of the century. (ibid.: 52; cf. Kroker & Weinstein 1994: 1–12, 48–56, 75–77; in terms of "cyberbodies," cf. Angerer 1999b)

This is the Harawayan cyborg in a radicalized form, driven to the level of linguistic hysteria by means of the "post"; the cyborg that, in turn, is precisely the primordial origin of all postmodern cyborg fantasies and theory-fictions circulated and recycled in postmodern academia as an explicitly "postmodern" and, as such posthuman/antihumanist figure in terms of the "literary" (see, for example, Simpson 1995: 165–168; Beller 1996: 193–198, 208–214; Adam 1998: 143–144; Arnold 2001: 6–7, 15–16; Mirowski 2001: 105–116; Halliwell & Mousley 2003: 173–179; Melzer 2006: 1–2, 11–12, 29–30, 144–148; Yi 2010: 2–10, 121–166; Gray et al. 1995a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Gray 2001; Zylinska 2002b; Åsberg 2009; Miah & Rich 2008; in the historical context of the Weimar Republic, cf. Biro 2009; in terms of the Enlightenment, cf. Muri 2007). While Haraway's cyborg is in itself a figure that is constructed, like Frankenstein's "monster," from heterogeneous "body parts" appropriated from science fiction,[178] subsequent cyborg visions have been "disassembled and reassembled" (Haraway 1991a: 163) into spectacular visions in the genuine postmodern manner by theorists who comment or otherwise elaborate on Haraway's original idea.

178 In her "Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway (1991a: 178–180) discusses "feminist science fiction" that has given ideas for her work. An "abbreviated list" includes following authors and works: "Octavia Butler, *Wild Seed*, *Mind of My Mind*, *Kindred, Survivor*; Suzy McKee Charnas, *Motherliness*; Samuel R. Delany, the Neverÿon series; Anne McCaffery, *The Ship Who Sang*, *Dinosaur Planet;* Vonda McIntyre, *Superluminal*, *Dreamsnake*; Joanna Russ, *Adventures of Alix*, *The Female Man*; James Tiptree, Jr, *Star Songs of an Old Primate*, *Up the Walls of the World*; John Varley, *Titan*, *Wizard*, *Demon*" (Haraway 1991f: 247).

As a result, since the late 1980s, when writing-the-cyborg *à la* Haraway's (1991a: 175–181) "cyborg writing," as a specific postmodern, techno-theoretical *style*, began to gather momentum in Western academia, there has emerged a large-scale theoretical edifice, dense in its intertextual references, in which all the texts relate to one another and each one singularly, in turn, refers to the origin of the whole: Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," the sacral text of the postmodern cyborg mythology, thus contributing to the proliferation of posthuman techno-theology as a post-Enlightenment vision of emancipation.

It is only consequent that all that is "cyber" finally turned into a neo-religious phantasmagoria typical of postmodern culture (cf., for example, Roberts 2002: 10, 68, 270–305; O'Leary 2005: 38–39, 45–48; Heelas 1996, 1999; Heelas et al. 1998). In this manner, the cyborg epitomizes what Diane Louise Prosser (1995) calls "transgressive corporeality." According to Tim Jordan (1999: 187), the world of the "cyber" appears as a "vision of heaven"; in this heavenly revelation it is precisely the cyborg, the "fusion of human and machine," that "inhabits cyberspace's imaginary": "all who enter cyberspace become cyborgs because they depend on machines for their online life." In this manner, "cyborgs are one of our last, greatest hopes"; but, luckily, nobody is left behind since "we are all cyborgs in cyberspace," and together we are now witnessing a new beginning for humankind: "cyborgs offer a revolutionary hope because they transform what it means to be human" (ibid.: 187–189). Similarly, for Mark Kingwell (1996: 197), the world of the "cyber" means "dreams of millennium": "Our minds are thus in one sense finally unshackled from our bodies; we have left them behind in our offices or studies and entered the non-corporeal space of the cyber-world," and thus, the "great mortal fact of life, the body's contingency, is no longer a simple given" (ibid.; cf. Leary 2000a [1988], 2003 [1988], 2004 [1979], 2005 [1965]).

That is, we are free to choose not only our corporeal habitus, but, more fundamentally, the very mode of our existence. Hallelujah, in the name of the cyborg, we are redempted: we have the pleasure to enjoy the final resurrection, the metamorphosis into the posthuman (for Haraway's Catholicism, see Haraway 2000a: 24, 86, 141, 2008b: 18, 162, 165, 172, 175).

It is in this manner that the postmodern mythology effected by the "cyber," originating from both Gibson's cyberpunk science fiction narrative and Haraway's cyborg theory-fiction, constitutes the techno-imaginary that is the idea matrix, among other things, of cybersex.

Writing about the "seductions of cyberspace," N. Katherine Hayles (1993b: 181), one of the leading theorists of the posthuman, maintains that the "teledildonic fantasy illustrates how the body as absent signifier plays into the eroticism of metamorphosis": the "body is transformed into a technomorphism not only through the visual display but also through the kinesthetic sensations" that even "reinforce," "in a different sensory loop, the audio transmissions." What is here important is that this "metamorphosis is not into a different biological form but into the cyborg that results from *splicing together the physical and vir-*

tual bodies" (ibid.; emphasis mine; for the relationship of technology and sensuality in terms of the "expansion of the body," see Tibon-Cornillot 1984; for the possibility of reconstructing the human sense organs through an artificial sensorium, see Spreen 1999; in the context of virtual sex and "teledildonics," cf. Grosz 2001: 40–45, 76; for a Deleuze-Guattarian conception of "teledildonics," cf. Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53–55; for "teledildonics" in terms of lesbian fiction concerning "the lesbian sex toy, dildo," cf. Moore 1995: 104–105). In the typical manner of cyber discourse, however, Hayles only states this "splicing" without saying one word as to how it should happen – except in the virtual reality of language constitutive of all that is "cyber."

In a similar manner, but in a more ecstatic tone, the "media philosophers" Mark S. Taylor and Esa Saarinen describe the pleasures of what they call "telerotics":

> The erotic dimension of electronic technology is more subtle and important than the excesses of phone sex and teledildonics suggest. Eros expresses a longing for that from which we are always already separated. The attraction of the meadiatrix is its capacity to connect. Phone and joy stick become the phallus that reunites the desiring subject with the body for which we are always searching. (Taylor & Saarinen 1994: Telerotics: 3)

"Virtual bodies" and "mediatrix," the "eroticism of metamorphosis" and the "erotic dimension of electronic technology" – that is fantastic, indeed. But why does it sound so familiar? This kind of sexualization of technology was already one of the themes of the American counterculture in the 1960s and early 1970s, part of its celebration of new technology as the key to the radical transformation of corporeal experiences, the liberation of the sensuous and sensual body. In this respect, it is appropriate to briefly recall the enthusiasm about the cinematic experiments typical of the 1970s avantgarde film. According to Patricia Mellencamp:

> Perhaps no one was more euphoric about liberation than Gene Youngblood. His passion over "expanded cinema" is orgiastic, downright orgasmic. The key to the hyped, speeding, massively pleasurable future is the equation of sex and technology. His *Expanded Cinema* is a whoopeebook of cybernetic/computer speak, with mind-boggling terms like "simultaneous synaesthetic synthesis." A brief example of one very male utopian fantasy of this futuristic technodreamer: in [a chapter entitled] "Synaesthetic Cinema and Polymorphous Eroticism" he asserts that "underground" movies are "synonymous with sex." "If we place any credence at all in Freud, *personal cinema is by definition sexual cinema*." (Mellencamp 1992: 68; emphasis mine; Youngblood 1970: 112)

"Personal cinema is by definition sexual cinema" – just substituting cyberspace for cinema immediately makes one to see the affinity between the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s and the cyberculture of the 1980s and 1990s in terms of the eroticization of technology. What in the 1970s was "expanded cinema" as an idea of a *total sensory environment enabling psychedelic experiences*, became at the turn of the decade from the 1980s to the 1990s the vision of virtual reality as an *immersive whole-body sensorium providing cyberdelic sensations* (see, for example, Dery 1996: 9–11, 23–30, 37–51, 2004: 113–119; Hillis 1998: 45–49; Partridge 2005: 150–155; Biocca & Delaney 1995; Huhtamo 1995b, 1995c, 2000; Moser & MacLeod

1996; Ryan 2001; Grau 2003; Bracken & Skalski 2010a; in the context of the psyche/cyberdelic, see Leary et al. 1964; Sheff 1990; Sirius 1990a; Leary 1994b [1989], 1998 [1980], 1999a [1965], 2002 [1988]; Davis 2001 [1998]; Lattin 2010; in terms of cyberia, see Rushkoff 1994; for a historical contextualization, see Torgoff 2004).

Like an echo from the wild seventies, but this time in the parlance of the "post" radicalized by the "cyber," Shannon McRae (1996: 262) celebrates cyber technology in her dream of "virtual sex" with "virtual bodies" that enable not only thoroughly new kinds of sensations, but also – once again – a radical transformation of the body, now into a form of promiscuity never seen before: "All the things that separate people, all the supposedly immutable facts of gender and geography, don't matter quite so much when *we're all in the machine together*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). This kind of "eroticizing technology" means for McRae "giving in to the pleasures of corporeality that render meaningless the arbitrary divisions of animal, spirit and machine" (ibid.; cf., for example, Haraway 1991a: 151–153; Pronger 1998: 283–286; Woodward 2003: 35–38; Nayar 2010: 37–38).

This is "sex" in the world of what Vicki Kirby (1997: 135), a radical post-feminist theorist, calls "*post*corporeality," sex in cyberspace by means of prosthetics; in other words, sex with cyborgs, or, as Haraway (1991a: 150), referred to by Kirby, says, "cyborg 'sex'" as a mode of pleasure that is beyond the oppressive regime of heterosexuality and Oeadipal relations, beyond the whole "heterosexual matrix" that constitutes "compulsory heterosexuality" (see Butler 1990: 24–26, 30–35, 45–46; cf. Blunt & Wills 2000: 130–132; Lloyd 2007: 33–35; for the origin of the notions, see Rubin 1975, 1984; Rich 1980). According to Kirby (1997: 146), the "*hybrid impurity* of the cyborg" is a "creature" that entails a "good representation" of the "*intrinsic contamination*" peculiar to all that is "cyber" (emphasis mine). In the "strange unity" of the cyborg, "animal melds with human; silicon and metal sustain bone and muscle; and edible chemistries chatter and intervene in the rhythms of biological dialogues" (ibid.). Thus, the "volatile instability," "unfixed contours" and "internal incoherence" of the cyborg promise "to disrupt the conventional politics that organize and legitimize sexual identity in terms of impermeability versus access, penetration versus reproduction, activity versus passivity, male versus female, culture versus nature" (ibid.).

In a paradigmatic manner, Kirby recapitulates Haraway's idea of the cyborg as a "monster" that has become a sacral figure idolized and celebrated by cyber-theorists as a common article of faith (see Haraway 1991a: 180–181, 1997: 37–38, 62, 215–216, 258, 1992c; cf., for example, Gonzáles 1995: 270–278; Lykke 2000 [1996]: 77–83; Clarke 2002: 38–43; Waldby 2002: 36–37; Murphie & Potts 2003: 116–117; Dinello 2005: 126–129, 139–141; Lykke & Braidotti 1996a). What is important here is that the "identity of the cyborg," according to Kirby 1997: 146), is "monstrous because there is nothing about a cyborg that can be regarded as essential": "in *out-lining* the peculiar transgressivity of the cyborg's identity, we see that the gestalt of its legibility appears through the logic of A/-A, a logic that conflates difference with absence" (ibid.).

From the perspective outlined above, it is, of course, self-evident that to have sex in the world of the cyborg, that is, "sex" in cyberspace by means of prosthetics, it is not necessary to be present at all: the constitutive difference of your self and your body, as Kirby says, your "hybrid impurity" and "intrinsic contamination," amount to an absence that is your special manner of being present, that is, *present in your absence*, an extremely exciting mode of absence that follows the subversive "logic of A/-A," a logic based on and bringing about the pleasure of the surrational.

To see better what the specifics of sex are in terms of the "cyber," it is appropriate to go *ad fontes*, to return to the origin of the cyborg. As Haraway (1991a: 149) says, in the world of the cyborg the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." This is a world in which we encounter "monstrous selves" (ibid.: 174), manifesting the "logic of the cyborg monsters" (ibid.: 178). The "cyborgs populating feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body" (ibid.). As M. Don Fletcher (1996: 53), referring to Marge Piercy, reminds us, this is a world in which "sexual taboos are jettisoned" with "reckless abandon, as there is bisexuality, lesbianism, miscegenation, incest, and sex between a young 'male' machine and an old human woman."

Like in Piercy's also in Octavia Butler's science fiction stories "sex is central, raising questions about the nature of sex as well as about the nature of humans (and, obviously, the two are closely related)" (ibid.: 57). In an exemplary way, the issue concerning the possibilities of cyborg sex is illuminated by Piercy in her science-fiction novel *Body of Glass*.

> Yod tells Shira that he experiences sex as mental (rather than physical) pleasure, and she wonders, idly, whether cyborgs masturbate. There is not the universal abhorrence of human-machine intimacy that bestiality has traditionally attracted (perhaps vibrators have conditioned us!), but Shira does worry about what people will think if they learn that her bond mate is a machine, and some of them do voice disgust. (ibid.)

This, of course, is idle pondering since in the world of the cyborg *nothing* is impossible: in its very essence (as far as the cyborg can have an "essence" in the first place) the cyborg exceeds *all* the limits; for the cyborg, the boundaries are there only to be transgressed: in the Harawayan cyborg world, an imaginary world in the mode of theory-fiction functioning as the model of all similar "cyber" visions, especially in feminist theorizing, it is precisely transgression that is the constitutive idea of the cyborg (for paradigmatic examples, see Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002).

The "Kama Sutra" of the "Cyber"

In the contemporary world in which an escalating process of rationalization has resulted in an implosion of reason into the imaginary, cybersex shows that what cannot be comprehended by the rationality of reason can be apprehended

through the rationality of the imaginary, by the reason of the surrational, the reason of the hyperrational constitutive of post-reason. As a manifestation of post-reason, cybersex exemplifies the auto-affective dissemination and supplementation of cyber discourse enabled by the Derridean "structurality of the structure" (Derrida 1978e [1970/1966]: 278–280) specific to the decentred motility of the linguistic play around the "cyber,"[179] the "free-floating signifier" that is the non-originary origin of cyber discourse, the "structural property" (Culler 1982: 89) of the linguistic matrix as the absent present of all that is "cyber" in the mode of the "post": *cybersex is a signifier of desire* in terms of post-theory, a signifier effecting its own pleasure, the pleasure of the enigmatic, the pleasure of the potential, the pleasure of the utopian; a phantasmatic signifier that keeps the "cyber" moving (both in the sense of motivity and affectivity, affection and affectation) as an agent of seduction: the seduction of the "cyber" as a signifier that signifies the most radical form of body transformation inscribed in the post-utopian programme of postmodern technoculture.

In a similar manner as the "post" of the postmodern signifies by its Derridean "undecidability" (see, for example, Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 213, 219–220–222, 261, 2000 [1988]: 116; cf. Norris 1987: 42, 80–82, 133, 162; Nealon 1993: 16–18, 36–39, 161–162, 168; Royle 2003a: 5–6), the "cyber" of cyber discourse escapes any determination; this is the very sense of the "cyber": the "cyber" is its own condition of possibility in terms of post-signification: signification as a *textual effect* of post-Kristevan *signifiance* (cf. Kristeva 1984 [1974]: 16–26, 99–105, 145–147, 1998a [1973]: 134, 173–174, 1980 [1969]; cf. Heath 1977: 10; Roudiez 1980: 18; Polan 1986: 59; Beardsworth 2004: 40–48; Lechte 2004). In these terms, as an ideal object of the "post" (in the sense of the ideality of the phantasmatic), cybersex is at once a symptom and a supplement in the libidinal language of post-theory, a language in the linguistic economy of which desire signifies promise, and the promise entails seduction (cf. Baudrillard 1990f [1979]).

Accordingly, as a reading of the "cyber," the study at hand is a symptomatic reading: what is called "cybersex" is a symptom of the postmodern in terms of the sexual that in itself is a reflection of "the sexual" which, *in itself*, remains

179 In his text, constitutive of deconstruction, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida (1978e [1970/1966]: 280) asks: "Where and how does this decentering [the 'thinking that there was no center'], this thinking the structurality of structure, occur?" and names three authors "in whose discourse this occurrence has kept most closely to its most radical formulation": "the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without present truth); the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness, of the subject, of self-identity and of self-proximity or self-possession; and, more radically, the Heideggerean destruction of metaphysics, of onto-theology, of the determination of Being as presence" (ibid.). This is the origin not only of deconstruction, but, as its consequence, it is also the origin of poststructuralism, and, finally, as a consequence of consequence, of all that is "post"; in this sense, Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger stand at the beginning of our era, *the era without a center*. What is important to notice, however, is that similarly as poststructuralism is not the same as deconstruction, the "post" is not equal with poststructuralism. The "post" belongs to the paradigm of the postmodern, understood in terms of theory: the "post" is the constitutive signifier of post-theory.

always – *always already* – beyond definition, and, for this reason, constitutes the enigma of the sexual, as discussed above (cf. Davidson 1992 [1987]).

In the Freudian sense, a symptom is in this context not an indication of something real "behind" or "beneath" it; rather, a symptom is a reality *sui generis* that is a manifestation of desire in its radical undefinability, in its speakable unspeakability (for various aspects of "the sexual" in Freudian theory, see, for example, Freud 1962 [1950], 1972e [1927], 1976a [1909], 1976c [1908], 1981c [1905], 1986a [1919], 1990f [1912]; for the origin of "the sexual" in Freud's conception of hysteria, see Freud & Breuer 1977 [1895]): *desire as a reality of the imaginary* (cf. Burgin 1989), a reality constituted by the virtual reality of language typical not only of cyber discourse, but of post-theory in general. From this point of view, cybersex is a linguistic figure that functions, to borrow Jameson's (1991: 38) expression, as a "representational shorthand" for desires and pleasures informed by the techno-imaginary of the postmodern, embodied, in a paradigmatic manner, by the Harawayan cyborg, the most spectral object of the desire for theory peculiar to post-theory (for the idea of spectrality in the Derridean sense, see Derrida 1994 [1993]; cf. Spivak 2000: 7–10, 23, 30–32; Punday 2003: 43–47; Rufo 2009: 230–246), the *theory-desire* constitutive of the "post" ruled by the Lacanian "desiring imperative of language" (Bowie 1991: 132).

In this respect, cybersex is a "Freudian word" (see, for example, Freud 1961 [1905], 1976d [1908], 1986b [1919], 1990e [1910], 1990h [1901]), a signifier effected by the displacement (*Verschiebung*) and condensation (*Verdichtung*) of meaning typical of the postmodern (see Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 174–176, 381, 1987d [1900]: 284–314, 519–521; cf. Roudinesco & Plon 2004 [1997]: 1086–1087, 1106–1108; in Lacanian terms, cf. Lacan 1977d [1966/1957]: 156–157, 160–161; Silverman 1983: 66–86; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 235–236; Bowie 1991: 57, 69–71, 104–106). As such a "free-floating signifier," cybersex is a post-theoretical instance of the Barthesian "pleasure of the text" (see Barthes 1975 [1973]); a technophilic, or rather, techno-euphoric, mode of pleasure in the economy of signification of cyber discourse. In this way, the textuality effected by the "cyber" is in itself an agency of desire, a text-immanent desire manifested by an ever-new proliferation of textuality. That is, the textual desire inscribed in "the sexual" of the "cyber" creates both its own object and a subject as its linguistic agent; a subject that becomes the subject of the text by being addressed by it in an appropriate manner, *in the mode of desire for theory, a desire for the sexual of the textual*.

This is the affective state of the subject cultivated by cyber/post-theorists as theory-subjects addressed by their own texts, "own" in the sense of a subject possessed by the language of the "post" (cf. Toth 2010: 18–19; Butler 1999b [1987]; in terms of "the affective turn" in contemporary theory, cf. Clough 2000; Clough & Halley 2007). As Barthes says:

> The text you write must prove to me *that it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language, its Kama Sutra (this science has but one treatise: writing itself). (Barthes 1975 [1973]: 6)

In this manner, cybersex is a *techno-imaginary manifestation of theory-sex*, both expressing and engendering the *jouissance* of *écriture* in the textual realm of the "cyber": the extraordinary pleasure based on the undecidability of the "post" as the ever-present subtext of the "cyber," its text-immanent meta-code. Thus, the "cyber" in cybersex is about Barthesian blissful textuality, a desire for pleasure effected by the textual-sexual of textuality in itself that, in fact, is a pleasure of desire in which the object of desire comes into being by its permanent absence, its constitutive impossibility; that is, *cybersex is a phantom object typical of post-theory*.

This is the logic of the Barthesian "Kama Sutra" transferred to the world of the "cyber," the world of cyber discourse as a virtual reality of language enabled by the linguistic excess of the "post."

In this manner, cyber discourse is a mode *performative writing* constitutive of all that is "post," a post-literary discourse in the sense of the paraliterary, producing textual objects that manifest the Barthesian "pleasure of the text." Accordingly, as a libidinal object in terms of post-theory, cybersex belongs to the "Kama Sutra" of the "cyber," a "galaxy of signifiers" (Barthes 1974 [1970]: 5; cf. Culler 1982: 189; Bensmaïa 1987: 55–59; Margolis 1995: 38–44; Jahshan 2007: 60–61) constituting an imaginary paraspace of post-theoretical linguistic figuration in which epistemology is equivalent with aesthetics and in which aesthetics engenders its own ontology, the ontology of the absent present enabled by its present absence; a textual realm that in itself is a realm of "the sexual": a *space of writing* as a realm of the textual imaginary produced by the libidinal language of the "cyber." In this sense, cybersex is about a specific postmodern *eroticism of theory*: driven by a desire for theory, the textual subject, a writerly subject produced by performative writing in terms of the "post," an agency of the text in the discursive position of the post/cyber-theorist, enjoys being seduced by the alluring figures and figurations of cyber discourse promising the pleasure of textuality, the *jouissance* of theory effected by "the theoretical" of the theory (cf. Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1984 [1974], 1998a [1973], 1998b [1967]; cf. Sjöholm 2005: 27–32; Moi 1985, 1986; in Barthesian terms, cf. Barthes 1975 [1973]), a mode of *jouissance* to be experienced in the orgy of "free-floating signifiers" circulating around all that is "cyber."

In these terms, cyber discourse is a new "science": "science as image-reservoir" (Barthes 1975 [1973]: 33), a postmodern "science" not studying, but *producing* desires and pleasures in terms of the techno-imaginary, a mode of writing engendering libidinal intensities, a specific post-political quality of intensities originally set in motion during the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris (see, for example, Sim 2005a [1998]: 7–12; Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Starr 1995; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]; Ross 2002; Seidman 2004; Bourg 2007; Wolin 2010). Accordingly, *there is no cybersex without the seduction of the "cyber" effected by the "post."* But, in contrast to Barthes (1975 [1973]: 10), for whom the erotic appears as a "staging of an appearance-

as-disappearance," the libidinal promise of the "cyber" – the promise of pleasure, the seduction of *jouissance* – emerges precisely at the moment when the object of desire is present only in its absence: the "cyber" signifies *a plenitude of lack turned into a plenitude of excess: the excess of empty signifiers that signify beyond meaning*. Thus, the "cyber," in its spectral void of meaning, in its *spectacular spectrality*, is the generative supplement in the economy of supplementation effected by cyber discourse, a signifier that generates ever-new figures of desire: obscure objects of post-theory, objects that engender the thrill of the subversive, the most precious thrill in the world of post-theory.

For this reason, as we can see, in spite of its elegant sophistry, or precisely because of it, Žižek's Lacanian theory of cybersex is much ado about nothing; "nothing," of course, in the sense of the "post": *nothing as an excess of meaning*, nothing as a signifying abundance.

It is in this manner that cybersex, as a phantom object that emanates the enchanting power of the surrational, is an extremely productive theory object: it has the compound capacity of cyberspace and the cyborg added with the enigmatic allurement of "the sexual." What is distinctive to cyber discourse, however, is that, as a techno-imaginary enactment of post-theory, it embraces objects all of which are products of desire. These objects, seductive phantasms produced by the linguistic figuration around the "cyber," appearing as post-theoretical theory-fictions, manifest the sexual of the textual in cyber discourse, a discourse following the logic of the "post": instead of a theory of desire, post-theory is about a *desire for theory* as a mode of libidinal language typical of all that is "post." It is in this way that both post-theory and cyber discourse are based on a libidinal language that is not so much theoretical reflection as playing with "free-floating signifiers" that in their dream-like configurations engender textual *jouissance*, the sexual of the textual, the textual as a performative instantiation of "the sexual."

What Derrida (1997 [1967]: 7, 165) calls the "logic of the supplement," the logic of supplementarity and supplementation as *the logic of masturbation*, is the logic of desire that engenders the movement of signification, the proliferation of signifiers, the texture of textuality: the world of the textual as a realm of desire – effecting, among other things, the world of the sexual, a world that, in turn, is an effect of the textual. This is the seduction of cybersex: it is a signifier without a signified; it is a signifier seeking after a signified, over and over again. It is this signifying *lacuna* – in both senses of the expression: a void of meaning and a meaningful void – that engenders ever-new signifiers to replace the lack of the signified in the idea of cybersex.

This is the desire for cybersex: a seduction of nothingness in its textual plenitude of all that is "cyber" following the logic of the "post."

To sum up: in terms of theory, the "cyber" is an effect of the "post." This is the seduction of post-theory: to be affected by writing that as text is effected by

the auto-affection of language, to get a "high" by playing with signifiers that are effected by the desire for theory that in itself is an effect of an affection for writing in terms of post-theory: the terms of "French theory" (see Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Cusset 2008); in short, the pleasure of textual affectation as the most genuine, most "authentic" affection in the world of the "post."

From this it follows that the textuality in the mode of the "post" is a never-ending process of intertextuality: while sexual pleasure engenders its own desire, textual promiscuity recognizes no limits. Thus, in cyber discourse, as Kristeva (1986: 37) says, "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (cf. Gillis 2002: 208). Precisely in this sense, the study at hand is about *words*; to specify, about a play of language that I call, in terms of theory, a politics of words. In post-theory, linguistic performance is not only the production principle; it is the principle of the very productivity of language. The production of theory is based on a play with "free-floating signifiers," signifiers that do not signify by means of signifieds, but by proliferating ever-new signifiers. As a mode of textuality, post-theory is a mode of performativity that is a function of desire, the desire for theory: *the sexual of the textual* is the driving force of post-theory.

This is the function of the linguistic of language that, according to the logic of the "post," constitutes the "cyber," and the whole discourse around it. This is the "third" order of textuality beyond the factual and the fictional in which all that is "cyber" not just appears, but, in the first place, *exists*. This is the order that forms the object of the present inquiry: cyber discourse as a mode of intertextual linguistic play that manifests, through the intrinsically promiscuous intertextuality of all that is "cyber," the *intersexuality of cybersex*: post-theoretical theory-sex as a cybertext that is circulated and recycled as a postmodern intertext on the theory scene of the "post." In this sense, the world of the "cyber" is a world of techno-textuality where bodies, texts and technologies live not in *liaisons dangereuses*, but in a happy cohabitation, intertwined with each other in a playful promiscuity, in the manner of the sexual inherent to the textual in the textual universe of the "post."

In cyber discourse, it is this text-immanent desire for the "cyber," following the logic of the "post," that engenders the desire for theory in the mode of post-theory as a form of post-reason, the reason of the surrational.

Beyond Oppressive Penetration: The Pleasure of Cyber Eros

From the perspective outlined above, what does it mean, in the scriptural practice of post-theory, to be affected by the "cyber," by its textual-sexual seduction?

"I am a cybersex addict" (Gillis 2004: 92). With this "confession" (as she says) Stacy Gillis, a feminist cyber-theorist, opens her discussion on cybersex, a discussion in the mode of self-indulgent ego-writing (cf. Stone 1995a, 1995c,

1995d, 1995e). In this manner, Gillis confesses that her relationship to cybersex is not only about addiction: "I am also a *cybersex virgin*" (ibid.). In the elevated state of the "post," in the post-Nietzschean euphoria of post-theory, Gillis is not just upset, but shocked by the low-minded banality of the conception of cybersex in the flat and dull reality of mainstream thought. Mocking the "Cybersex Addiction Help site" and similar advisory websites, Gillis (2004: 99) castigates their inability to make distinction "between sex, masturbation, pornography and/or sexual exchange." Against this unintellectual stupidity Gillis accentuates her own view according to which, "[t]o have cybersex – and this is no OED definition – is 'to cyber'" (ibid.: 92). *To cyber* – that is something entirely different in comparison to the bathos of "pornography," "the great industry of the internet" (ibid.).

After having desperately sought for *genuine cybersex* (in the sense of "to cyber") for which she had "spent time and money" – at the time of her writing, as Gillis says, by typing "cybersex" into a search engine the results were "600,000 pages" (ibid.) – Gillis resignedly came to the conclusion that "[t]here is no sex here, no bodily exchange of fluids, only masturbation or the promise thereof" (ibid.). Seen from the highland of post-theory, this, of course, is pure horror. The problem is, as Gillis says, referring to Sadie Plant, the "masculine sexualisation of technology" (ibid.) (interestingly, no word here about Plant's own techno-euphoric cybersex enthusiasm; see Plant 1998). Thus, and here is the great news, "what the majority of websites host is pornography, not sex" (ibid.; cf. Williams 2008: 311–314; in terms of "teledildonics," cf. Neely 2010: 91–92; for the contextualization of Gillis's position in contemporary theory, see, for example, Gillis 2002, 2007).

The problem, of course, ensues from the intrinsic unintellectuality of all that is masculine: the masculine inability to make distinctions, to think in clear categories, which inevitably amounts to misnaming things and thus conceptual confusions, and finally to the most gravest of the problems, *misreading*:

> While pornography websites have consolidated the largely masculine model which links masturbation with visuality, cybersex is misnamed if grouped under the same heading. To label these sites cybersex constitutes a misreading of the act of cybersex. *Cybersex is a synchronous sexual exchange – an exchange not possible within the stasis of these pornography sites*. (Gillis 2004: 92–93; emphasis mine)

In other words, if feminists would have control over sex in terms of the "cyber," the "masculine sexualisation of technology," the regime of the phallus, would disappear, and we would have *real* cybersex, technologized sex as a "synchronous sexual exchange" (in terms of "post-phallic culture," cf. Barr 2000).

Unfortunately, as Gillis explains, the Cybersex Addiction Help site also follows the masculine mode of thought, and as a result: the "labelling of cybersex as an *addiction* positions it as a *vice*, similar to *pornography*" (Gillis 2004: 93; emphasis mine). Consequently, the "conflation of cybersex and on-line pictorial pornog-

raphy enables the identification of cybersex as a dangerous preoccupation that disrupts and threatens 'real-time' relationships" (ibid.). According to Gillis, the addiction website implies that the technology of cyberspace is to blame; as the site argues: "cybersex participants are in fact isolated from real human contact," and in this way, as the website tries to make us believe, cybersex "objectifies the participants," and they "are often reduced to body parts" (ibid.). For Gillis, this entails a "reductionist account of technology" that ignores the "mediation of technology in most human interactions" (ibid.); that is, it misses the *feminist* understanding of technology, implying "synchronous sexual exchange" as *the genuine form of cybersex*.

In contrast to that, technological reductionism, typical of masculinist control of websites, has resulted in situation in which it is mere pornography that is offered *in the name of* "cybersex." Thus, according to Gillis, on the one hand, warnings of "addiction," and on the other, pornographic smut, this is the logic of addiction advisers on the web operating with the narrow mindset of masculine sex: sexual activities and practices under the power of the phallus, as an extension of the organ that constitutes the male as "man." Ruled by the logic of the phallus, the problem of cybersex, similar to "medical discourse," is that it "neither relates *textual exchange* to sexual exchange nor separates cybersex from 'sex with machinery'" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In this constellation, female sex is excluded from the pleasures of cybersex.

So, if you happen to be a feminist, what can you do if you do not find *real* cybersex in the web world? No problem, you can enjoy cybersex as *theory-sex*, and as we have seen, this is a form of pleasure far more arousing and gratifying than the boring world of conventional carnal sex, especially the pitiful world of heterosexual sexuality with its oppressive and mindless fixation on penetration and orgasm, that is, the oppressing masculine model of sex – the model which Gillis purports to subvert with her *feminist reading* of cybersex.

To get rid once and for all of the horrifying low-minded world of heteronormality – pornography and masturbation, penetration and orgasm – Gillis performs an acrobatic leap of thought, as her recontextualization of cybersex in terms of feminist reading makes clear, from "Žižek" to "bodily fluids," to the female/feminist realm of "the sexual." Taking a run-up from Žižek's idea that "cyberspace merely radicalises the gap constitutive of the symbolic order" because "(symbolic) reality always already was 'virtual'" and thus "*every access to (social) reality has to be supported by an implicit phantasmic hypertext*" (ibid.; cf. Žižek 1997b: 143; in terms of "technologics," "ghosts" and "*Doppelgänger*," cf. Kochhar-Lindgren 2005: 61), Gillis (2004: 93) lands at the declaration: "What I want to do is to experience the *exchange of bodily fluids* that marks out the domain of *physical sexual experience between bodies*" (emphasis mine). That is, in plain words: "What I want is to experience *the connection achieved between two bodies via an exchange of text*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Turkle 1995: 210–226; Ben-Ze'ev 2004: 4–6; Collins 2006: 209–213; Waskul et al. 2004).

Instead of explaining how it is possible to experience *physical sex* by exchanging *texts*, Gillis (2004: 93) refers to Arthur and Marilouise Kroker's idea of a "body fear," according to which, "[i]n 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" (cf. Negrin 2008). As so many others, Gillis is also infected by the Krokerian body rhetorics, a postmodern theory-hysteria around "the body." Here an illuminative passage of the Krokers's text referred to by Gillis:

> *Technologically*, the body is subordinated to the twofold hypothesis of hyperfunctionality 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 culture where power itself is always only fictional." (Kroker & Kroker 1988c: 21).

Of course, there is a grain of truth here: the body, indeed, is, both economically and psychically, a paramount investment object in the political economy of neoliberalism. A completely other matter is the Krokers's postmodern aesthetics of linguistic excess, the theory-hysteria typical of the "post"; a mode of postmodern hysteria with which cyber discourse is thoroughly imbued.

In the light of this theory-hysteria, it is understandable that Gillis is infatuated with the techno-euphoric cyber-textuality that is peculiar to all that is "cyber." Therefore, it is only logical that all of a sudden, instead of wasting her intelligence to further explaining what it is that constitutes *real cybersex*, Gillis (2004: 93) makes her "final confession" that, after all, "I am not interested in having cybersex": "Rather, I wish to watch/read others doing it in order to *explore the interaction of words and the configurations of online bodies*" (ibid.; emphasis mine); in other words, Gillis's endeavour to give a definitive redefinition of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" relies on an entirely new mode of voyeurism as both an appropriate research method of sex in cyberspace and a form of feminist cybersex as textual/sexual exchange – similarly as for Stone (1995e: 38), as she explains her research interest: "I want to see how people without bodies make love." Voyeurism and watching others having sex, of course, is not the problem here; the problem is how is it possible to *watch* sexual acts if these are nothing but just *textual descriptions* on the computer screen (even what you see with your "mind's eye" is about your own fantasies)?

In other words, "the sexual"/"the erotic" of Gillis's cybersex/sex research consists of "free-floating signifiers" that saturate the virtual reality of language constitu-

tive of cyber discourse. In this manner, as a post-theoretical theory-fiction, Gillis's cybersex encounter is predicated upon *affective writing* in the mode of *écriture* typical of post-theory. Thus, cybersex *à la* Gillis is a postmodern appropriation of Barthesian textual eroticism: "the pleasure of the text" is "the sexual"/"the erotic" in Gillis's enjoyment of the extraordinary pleasure of the "cyber" (cf. Stone 1994b [1991], 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1995e, 1996a; for the Barthesian sophisticated, thoroughly "French," textual ecstasy, see Barthes 1975 [1973]).

Hence, Gillis's conception of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" reiterates the usual theory mantra familiar from all cyber-texts enthusing about cybersex or sexualization of technology in the name of the "cyber," or the radical transformation of the body in the mode of the cyborg and virtual reality (the theories, among others, of Heim, Turkle, Stone, Waldby, McRae, Reid, Kirby, Hayles, Haraway and Žižek). Referring to Heim's ecstatic neo-religious vision of "our love affair with computers" (Gillis 2004: 93), Gillis maintains that "[w]ith the range of technological options, it should follow that there are a host of different ways in which to have cybersex" (ibid.; cf. Heim 1993: 85; Wertheim 1998: 48–49; Boon 1996; in reference to Stelarc, cf. McRobert 2007: 32; in the context of the New Age, cf. Newport 1998: 186–187). Without explaining, however, what precisely these "different ways" of having cybersex are, and without specifying with one word what the technologization of sex in feminist terms means *in practice*, Gillis only enumerates various new technologies:

> The possibilities of cybersex should be *endless* as ever-quickening technological obsolescence provides new fora for sexual engagement. The internet, the World Wide Web, chatrooms, CD-ROMs, mobile phone networks, virtual reality, interactive digital entertainment, biomedical technologies, artificial life, digital imagining and so forth are transformative paradigms in our technoculture. And *this technoculture is predicated upon an erotics of technology*. (Gillis 2004: 93; emphasis mine)

"An erotics of technology" – if that is "the sexual" in Gillis's conception of cybersex, it does in no way differ from the typical manner of sexualizing technology in cyber discourse; that is, in the name of "the erotic," Gillis celebrates "the sexual" of the "cyber" by way of a postmodern techno-utopian rhetorics (see, for example, Branwyn 1994; Kroker & Kroker 1995; Stone 1996a, 1996b; Boon 1996; Ehrlich 1996; Marsden 1996; Springer 1996; Stenslie 1996; Creed 1997; More 1997; Peppers 1997; Waldby 1998; Botting 1999; Case 1999; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Gargett 2002; Nguyen 2003; Barber 2004a; Perniola 2004 [2000]; Foster 2005; Emig 2006; Hollinger 2008). That is, Gillis's sexualization of technology occurs in the form of techno-euphoric textuality, in the mode technophilic writing constitutive of cyborg fantasies. Thus, it is clear that Gillis's idea of cybersex manifests the *eroticism of writing* based on "French theory"; in other words, the libidinal language of post-theory. As Gillis (2004: 94) says, "[c]ybersex is textual sex – *a textual jouissance*" (emphasis mine; cf. Turkle 1995; Reid 1995, 1996 [1994]; McRae 1996, 1997; O'Brien 1996, 1999; Ito 1997). And, to avoid wrong associations, Gillis (2004: 96) emphasizes that this mode of textuality

is absolutely outside pornography: "the penetrative gaze of pornography is absent in cybersex" (cf. Stone 1994 [1991]: 108–109). In other words, what Lynne Segal (1994: 61), referring to the radical feminist Andrea Dworkin's words, calls "the penis as 'a symbol of terror'" is abolished once and for all in Gillis's techno-sexual paradise.

In this manner, cybersex in Gillis's feminist world is the opposite of male sex – the most horrific and disgusting mode of sexuality; as Gillis explains.

> Cybersex differs from pornography in two crucial aspects: it is not an *asexual* discourse nor is it a fantasy practice. *It is a sexual practice*. (Gillis 2004: 93; emphasis mine)

In what way pornography is expressly an *asexual* form of sex, and in what manner cybersex as text sex is a "sexual practice" *in practice*, remains, again, without explanation. We only learn that:

> Cybersex is *a sexual act conducted semiotically*, albeit one in which signified and signifier are always potentially disengaged and, crucially, in one of the situations which is normally perceived as outside the territory of the metonymic gap. (ibid.; cf. Springer 1996: 82; Wajcman 2006: 102–103; Stone 1995c, 1998)

If this kind of "sex" still has anything to do with the body at all, it happens only through the "embodiment" that is specific to the cyborg, that is, in the mode of "cyborg semiologies," a mode of having and being a "body" that emerges through "cyborg writing" (Haraway 1991a: 163, 175; cf., for example, Howell 1995: 200–203, 215–216; Cornis-Pope 2001: 89–94; Graham 2002: 200–219; Yaszek 2002: 14–16, 156–160; Inman 2004: 108–111; Haney 2006: 3–4; for a theoretical contextualization in terms of "the substance of the corporeal," see Kirby 1997; cf. Ebert 1996: 108, 121–122, 147–148). For Gillis (2004: 97), the cyborg is a "person whose physical tolerances or capabilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by a machine or other external agency that modifies the body's functioning." In these terms, the question is "whether normal human limitations are extended by the *technological interfaces of cybersex*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Whether they are, indeed, remains again unanswered. Instead, we learn that "Haraway argues that the *only* viable bodies in postmodernity are *cyborgic bodies* that are enabled and sustained by communication networks and other hybrid discourses" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Haraway 1991a: 175; Rutsky 1999: 148–152; Graham 2002: 147–148; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000).

Regardless of whether or not you happen to like "sex" in terms of the "cyber," you have no choice in the world of the cyborg: becoming a cyborg is your destiny in the world of technoscience (see Haraway 1991a: 150).

The Interface: The Pleasure of Cerebral Sex

So, if, for one reason or another, you do not manage to become a cyborg, it is your bad luck: you are no longer viable to live. But no problem, if you believe in the resurrection of the body in the textual space of "cyborg semiologies,"

you can always practice cybersex with signifiers that are, in a truly postmodern manner, "disengaged" of signifieds, and what is most important, there are no more body fluids here: cybersex is absolutely *dry sex*, "sex" beyond the *meat* as the carnal body is called in techno/cyber discourse (see, for example, Morse 1994: 157–158; Beller 1996: 193; Dery 1996: 91, 116, 247–253; Wilson 1996: 224; Jones 1998: 18, 235, 238, 323; Botting 1999: 144–209; Adam 2000: 281–282; Dinello 2005: 114, 126, 149, 160, 180; Foster 2005: 11, 41; Zylinska 2005: 139; Vint 2007: 104–112). Accordingly, as Gillis explains:

> If safe sex is sex in which fluids are not permitted to mingle by the use of a prophylactic, then the safest sex is that in which bodies may mingle but fluids are separated not by mere rubber but by distance. It is possible *to have sex with someone without flesh touching flesh* (through gloves, clothing, condoms, etc.) but the fact that this counts as "sex" – whereas not being in sight of each other does not – conveys cultural assumptions about the "body" involved. The bodies entwining in cybersex are partly predicated upon the body fear of the late 20th century. As the materiality of the body is more and more threatened by the danger of disintegration and the threat of permeability, the apparent bodiless promise of cyberspace is all the more seductive. *Cybersex allows us to engage in bodily pleasures while escaping from the material confines of our physical body*. (Gillis 2004: 98; emphasis mine)

This is the world of the "cyber," the world in which the "free-floating signifiers," constitutive not only of the postmodern but of all that is "post," create their own reality, an imaginary realm effected by the linguistic of language, the substance of being in the constellation of the "post" in which the virtual has taken the place of the real. This is a *post*-real reality that, to apply Scott Bukatman's (1996 [1993]: 157–166) term, exists as a "paraspace" of the real world embracing a "rhetorically heightened 'other realm.'" This is the "reality" of cyber discourse – the reality of feminist cybersex *à la* Gillis's cyberfeminist vision (cf., for example, Case 1996: 88–91; Badley 2000: 75–79; Creed 2003: 115–135; Parisi 2004: 1–4, 8–9, 194–195; Nayar 2010: 128; Vasseleu 1997 [1994], 2002; Plant 1998; Wiley 1999 [1995]; Döring 2000; for "cybersexualities" in terms of feminism, see Wolmark 1999a).

In other words, in the cybersexual configuration outlined by Gillis we can experience "sex" (if we still have any reasons to call it by that name) in an entirely new manner, as an advanced form of what Gerard Loughlin (2004) designates as "alien sex": not only that "the sexual" in cybersex is entirely alienated from the matrix of conventional sex (as we remember Ballard saying above, "I believe that organic sex, body against body, skin area against skin area, is becoming no longer possible"), but, more fundamentally, what we naively were used – for some unknown reason – to call "I" in the sense of "self" has turned out to be a delusion in the world of the "cyber" implying that we are aliens to ourselves.

In cyber discourse in general, both embodiment and disembodiment are modes of being that are, in one way or another, sexualized; sexualized in terms of the linguistic figures in and through which "the body" – if this designation is still appropriate in the world of the cyborg – can be experienced and expressed

as the post-corporeal reality of one's own body by the cyber theorist as the writing subject of its own post-subjective "subjectivity" that, by means of writerly writing in the mode of *écriture* constitutive of post-theory (for the idea of the "writerly text," see Barthes 1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174; cf. Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Rylance 1994: 77–78; Grusin 1996: 45–46; Lucy 1997: 74–76), produces the subject position that enables the "being-in-the-world" of the writing subject in the first place (provided, of course, that it is still possible to "be" a subject after the "death of the subject" proclaimed by the "post"; see, for example, Huyssen 1986: 213; Di Leonardo 1991: 24; Rosenau 1992: 42–61; Terada 2001: 1–8; Davis 2004: 2, 81–83; Toth 2010: 39, 44; Burke 1992). In these terms, according to Stone, to enter cyberspace implies an act in which sex and gender become deconstructed; but, most importantly, as a deconstructive space, cyberspace is in itself a free zone beyond the oppressive world of the phallus, a world dominated by all-pervasive penetration. Thus, for Stone, in cyberspace:

> [p]enetration translates into envelopment. In other words, to enter cyberspace is to physically *put on* cyberspace. To become the cyborg, to put on the seductive and dangerous cybernetic space like a garment, is to put on the *female*. Thus cyberspace both *dis*embodies […], but also *re*embodies in the polychrome, hypersurfaced cyborg character of the console cowboy [sic]. As the charged, multigendered, hallucinatory space collapses onto the personal physicality of the console cowboy, the intense tactility associated with such a reconceived and refigured body constitutes the seductive quality of what one might call the *cybernetic act*. (Stone 1994b [1991]: 109; cf. Vasseleu and Plant above)

Cybernetic act – that is the magic moment that, like a postmodern *rite de passage*, a transgressive moment of "passing" (for the origin of the idea, see van Gennep 1960 [1909]; cf. Jenks 2003: 42–48), brings the cyber-subject to the realm of ecstatic experience in which, after the shattering of subjectivity, the fragmented and fluid self can enjoy the *jouissance* of the "cyber," the bliss of exceeding the limits time and time again (cf., for example, McRae 1997: 83; Malpas 2005: 71–72; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter 2009: 211–214; for a theoretical contextualization, see Mansfield 2000).

In the world of the "cyber," we have an extraordinary pleasure to enjoy the presence of the absent in its highest form: the absence of the present as a free-flowing textuality constituting the linguistic matrix of cybersex. No longer the obsolete sexual act, this oppressive ritual of penetration constitutive of the phallic world, a horrific world under the terror regime of the Phallus; instead, a "cybernetic act" in which all the inherited parameters of the sexual, in terms of both sex and gender, implode in their own impossibility, being nevertheless still defined, miraculously, by the "feminine" in the sense of "feminist" (in terms of "post-phallic culture," cf. Barr 2000). According to Stone (1994b [1991]: 109), in cyberspace the "unitary, bounded, safely warranted body constituted within the frame of bourgeois modernity is undergoing a gradual process of translation to the refigured and reinscribed embodiments of the cyberspace community" (ibid.). In terms of the sexual, this is an entirely new mode of being: "[s]ex in the age of the coding metaphor" that implies "absent bodies" and "absent

reproduction," a new form of existence in which desire is "refigured in terms of bandwidth and internal differences" (ibid.); in other words, a post-existential realm of being in which computer technology, with its logic of algorithms, defines the parameters of existence.

In these terms, what we have in cyberspace is the pleasure of the absent presence and the present absence in the mode of virtuality appearing as the immaterial materiality of the "cyber" (cf., for example, Rötzer 1995d: 127–130; Cubitt 1998: 144–149; Jordan 1999: 21–33, 55–58; Cavallaro 2000: 100–108; Heuser 2003: 99–126; Nayar 2004: 20–23; Jahshan 2007: 9–29; Nusselder 2009: 57–60; Moser & MacLeod 1996; for a post-material existence in the context of media art, cf. Ascott 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2006; in terms of the "techno-imaginary," cf. Rötzer 1989b). This is a world in which masculine penetration is replaced by a feminist "envelopment," an interfacing with all that is "cyber" enabling an excessive whole-body experience, the *jouissance* of cyberspace as a post-corporeal form of the sublime: the *plus-de-jouir*, "the surplus of enjoyment" (Nusselder 1999: 108) effected by the virtual hyperrealization of the body as an ecstatic experience of the "cyber" enabled by the excess of the "post" (cf., for example, Brande 1996: 103; Jagodzinski 1997: 42; Ward 2000: 149; Bullen & Kenway 2002: 56–67; Schaffer 2002a [1999]: 150–161; Aristarkhova 1999). This is the pleasure of the Harawayan "post-gender world," the world of "cyborg 'sex'" (Haraway 1985: 66–67).

Thus, paradoxically, even in the post-gender world, the hard core of post-sexual pleasure, the pleasure of the sublime in the form of *jouissance*, is in essence "feminine." This is the enjoyment of "the sexual," as Dominic Pettman (2002) says, "after the orgy" in a world in which, as Pettman argues referring to Camille Paglia's conception of male sexuality as an "orgasmic model of history," the "eternal *jouissance* of polymorphous 'female' sexuality is contrasted with that genitally focused male 'quickie' that lasts merely a millennium" (ibid.: 13). What is the *differentia specifica* of this world is that in it post-sexual pleasure is the most sublime experience of technological embodiment.

As odd as it my sound, the immersion of the body in technology implies a return of Romanticism with a vengeance, in Fred Botting's (1999: 223) words, "the romance of the machine":

> The romance of the machine, the reversal of huMan priority is complete. Historically, like the machine-tool, woman existed only as symptom and supplement to masculine priority. As body or nature to masculine mind and spirit, woman constitutes man's other, but in her proximity to the machine she surpasses male mastery and the role of automaton or doll. If feminine *jouissance* is closer to God, it also displays greater proximity to the machine which subjects man. Like the dialectic of the master and slave, the uncanny, always associated with images, is implicated in a new relation of humans and machines. New doubles and new ghosts arise to signify an immanent absorption into fatal screens, doubles one loves as oneself. (ibid.; from a historical perspective in terms of "sublime dreams of living machines," cf. Kang 2011)

As we can see, it is in this manner that the machine is the very embodiment of "the feminine," the imaginary generator of pleasure in the cyborgian post-gender world. As Haraway (1991a: 152) says, since the late twentieth-century "machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines": "*Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Therefore, to survive, we must learn that "machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves" (ibid.: 178). As soon as we learn this, we will see that "[i]ntense pleasure in skill, *machine skill*, ceases to be a sin," and, instead, it becomes "an aspect of embodiment" (ibid.: 180; emphasis mine). That is, the "machine is not an *it* to be animated, worshipped, and dominated"; on the contrary, the "machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment" (ibid.). In these terms, to "take intense pleasure in machines" (ibid.) is the post-Freudian *Lustprinzip*, "pleasure principle," of the cyborg (cf. Freud 1991d [1915]: 214–219, 1987e [1920]).

In the world of the cyborg, the body becomes spiritualized in an entirely new manner: the ecstatic experience of the post-body in cyberspace implies an implosion of the virtual and the sublime into each other effected by the specific erotic allurement typical of the matrix of the "cyber" (in terms of Harawayan "Catholic sacramentalism," cf. Haraway 2000a: 24, 86, 141). This is the highest form of *jouissance*, the immersion in the postmodern divine (cf. Pettman 2002: 32–34, 40–41, 173–174; Ward 2001, 2003; Loughlin 2004, 2007b): an experience of "sacred sex" (Ward 2000: 183–187) in the realm of the techno-imaginary. In other words, in cyberspace, we can enjoy the "ecstasy of Saint Teresa," the ecstatic pleasure of *jouissance* in its postmodern form (cf. Lacan 1985 [1973]: 49–52, 55, 59, 89, 97, 117, 120, 137–138, 142–145, 147, 152–154, 168; Bowie 1991: 152–157; Elam 1994: 53–54; Jantzen 1998: 53): in the vertiginous vastness of cyberspace, the post-subject, by surpassing the constraints of the self, enjoys its own loss as a moment of sacralization – which implies, paradoxically, the ultimate form of monadic, self-reflexive narcissism, that is, a post-cybernetic circularity as the logic of desires and pleasures in terms of the "cyber."

According to Claudia Springer (1996: 68), in the "cyborg imagery" of popular culture, what she calls "erotic interfacing" is "purely mental and nonphysical," and, thus, "it theoretically allows a free play of imagination," also exceeding gender limits: "computers in popular culture's cyborg imagery represent sexual release of various kinds for both genders" (ibid.). Similarly to Stone's theory-fiction of "cybernetic act," in popular culture there are also to be seen cyborg fantasies in which "the act of interfacing with a computer matrix is acknowledged to be solitary, but it is nonetheless represented as a sexual act, a masturbatory fantasy expressed in terms of entering something but lacking the presence of another human body or mind" (ibid.). Then again, cyberspace is not only about exceeding the limits of the phallic paradigm; it also entails a return of the "feminine" as an empowering mode of being in which the sexual

Fig. 60. Cyberspace as an extension of the sexual imaginary: a phantasmatic space in which the most sublime mode of pleasure is the pleasure of disembodiment (see, for example, Dery 1996: 233–236; Robins 1996: 29–32; Wilson 1996: 224; Coyne 1999: 63–68; Bell 2001a: 172–176; Žižek 2001c: 35; Booth & Flanagan 2002: 15): the pleasure of libidinal virtuality as virtual libidinality.

"In the comic book *Interface* the interfacing experience of a woman named Linda Williams […] is coded as masturbation, which becomes linked to the process of thinking. Williams is seen from a high angle lying supine on her bed, saying, 'I relax my body. My mind starts to caress the frequencies around me. There. That's better. I'm one with the super-spectrum now. I'm interfaced with the world.' In the last panel she is seen doubled, her second self rising nude from the bed with head thrown back and arms outstretched in a sexual pose. […] Although female masturbation is a staple of conventional pornography for a male spectator, Williams's interface/masturbation is drawn differently from the norm […]. Her body's activity distinguishes her from the conventional passive female object of pornography, and her masturbation is not a prelude to heterosexual sex. […] Williams takes control over her own sexuality, which embodies the cyborgian condition as represented in popular culture by being purely cerebral and simultaneously sexual." (Springer 1996: 68–69; cf. Barlow 1990a, 1990b, 1994a; Turkle 1995; Vasseleu 1997 [1994], 1999; Plant 1998; Gillis 2004)

It is in this manner that, if, in general, the sexual is a manifestation of the imaginary, in the world of the "cyber" it is, in addition, an effect of the virtual.

and the epistemic are intertwined; a mode of being in which to "know" is to know oneself in terms of the sexual; a form of "knowing" that resembles the Biblical meaning of the term.[180] Thus, the act of interfacing with cyberspace implies, among other things, an act of female masturbation, an experience in which the elevation of the female body into the bodiless realm of cyberspace leads into a specific feminine orgasmic pleasure: masturbation "becomes *linked to the process of thinking,*" knowing oneself in and through an act of self-sex (ibid.).

In this manner, "the cyborgian condition" is "purely cerebral and simultaneously sexual" (ibid.: 70); that is, "[i]maginary sex – sex without physically touching another human – prevails in cyborg discourses, although bodily sex is not altogether absent" (ibid.). "The emphasis on cerebral sexuality suggests that although pain is a meat thing, sex is not" (ibid.). Accordingly, "the sexual" is codified in cyborg fantasies as an act of communication, in Springer's words, an act of "erotic interfac-

180 In Biblical vocabulary, the word "knowing" refers, depending on the context, not only to cognition, but also sexual intercourse; for example, *Und Adam erkannte sein Weib Eva, und sie ward schwanger* (1. Mose, 4.1); for this linguistic usage the editors give an explanation: Erkennen *(eigentlich "kennenlernen, vertraut werden mit") is verhüllende Redeweise für die geschlechtliche Vereinigung. Sexualität ist hier nicht Selbstzweck (Lustgewinn) oder auch Mittel zum Zweck (Fortpflanzung); sie erscheint vielmehr eingebunden in die volle persönliche Zuwendung* (*Stuttgarter Erklärungsbibel* 1992: 13).

ing" (cf. Foster 2005: 81–86; for interface fetishism, cf. Nichols 1988; in terms of "data made flesh," cf. Mitchell & Thurtle 2004; from a utopian perspective, cf. Hands 2004). But, as Springer (1996: 71), quoting Baudrillard, says, "the term *communication* is imprecise," meaning that in the interface with the computer:

> the Other, the sexual or cognitive interlocutor, is never really aimed at – crossing the screen evokes the crossing of the mirror. The screen itself is targeted as the point of interface. The machine (the interactive screen) transforms the process of *commutation*, i.e., the process of reversibility from the same to the same. The secret of the interface is that the Other is within it virtually the same – otherness being surreptitiously confiscated by the machine. (Baudrillard in Springer 1996: 71; emphasis mine)

This is the double bind of the computer interface: "although the computer invites us to discard our identities and embrace an imaginary unity, it also, like a mirror, reminds us of our presence by displaying our words back to us" (ibid.). Thus, the "intensely private experience" at and through the interface "precludes actual interaction with another person and turns all computerized communication into a kind of autocommunication that may contain elements of autoeroticism" (Springer 1996: 72).

Towards Baudrillard's Sexual Reason

Autocommunication at the interface, self-sex as a prosthetic pleasure in cyberspace, masturbation as a cerebral act of transgression, this is "sex" in the mode of the cyborg. This is a new form of post-carnal pleasure, an ecstatic experience of *jouissance*, in which orgasmic climax transcends from the mundane materiality of *meat* to the sublime spheres of the "cyber." This is what Michael Heim (1993: 82–108) calls the "erotic ontology of cyberspace." It is about a specific mode of "love," more than just "[o]ur love affair with computer": in cyberspace, "[w]e are searching for a home for the mind and heart" (ibid. 84). This is a "fascination" that is "more erotic than sensuous, more spiritual than utilitarian": "Eros, as the ancient Greeks understood, springs from a feeling of insufficiency or inadequacy" (ibid.). In this sense, to become "cyber" is about a "symbiotic relationship and ultimately a mental marriage to technology" (ibid.; cf. Springer 1996: 85–87; Zhai 1998: 46–47; Cavallaro 2000: 103–104; Kennedy 2000a: 472–473; Ward 2000: 249–252; Graham 2002: 171–172; Heuser 2003: 23–24).

Referring to Gibson's *Neuromancer*, the inexhaustible source of ideas of the "cyber," Heim (1993: 86) notes that for Gibson, "cyber entities appear under the sign of Eros," and in these terms, cyberspace is a "space of rapture and erotic intensity, of powerful desire and even self-submission." "In the matrix," that is, in cyberspace, "things attain a *supervivid hyper-reality*" (ibid.; emphasis mine); that is, the virtual appears as real in the ecstatic experience of neo-religious revelation, in the mode of postmodern *Offenbarung* of the sacred. For Heim, similarly to the "sixteenth-century Spanish mystics," cyberspace is a realm of "spiritual divinity" and "sexual ecstasy" (ibid.). In this state of being, the immersion in Gibson's cyberspace is a

> [b]reathless union of meditation in terms of the ecstatic blackout of consciousness, the *llama de amor viva* piercing the interior center of the soul like a white-hot arrow, the *cautero suave* searing through the dreams of the dark night of the soul (ibid.: 86–87).

Accordingly, the ecstasy of cyberspace is, for Heim, an "orgasm," an "orgasmic" self-transcendence that exceeds all the limits of the sexual pleasure experienced in the poor carnal body of ordinary mortals living in the prison house of the flesh; an "orgasm" – here Heim quotes Gibson – that comes "flaring blue in a timeless space, a vastness like the matrix, where the faces were shredded and blown away down hurricane corridors," a climax of pleasure in which, oddly enough, the experience of the flesh, *meat*, is still there: "her inner thighs were strong and wet against his hips" (ibid.). Indeed, the old binary opposition – signified here by "her inner thighs" and the position of phallic penetration – is even difficult to exceed in cyberspace – a space of liberation in terms of the virtual in which the carnal body is otherwise only a dark memory of the distant past. The *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*, the "return of the repressed," this Freudian logic (see Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632), also haunts all that is "cyber"; what is specific to the "cyber," however, is that, as a linguistic materialization of the techno-imaginary, it is a manifestation of Derridean "spectrality" (see Derrida 1991 [1987]: 24–25, 62, 1994 [1993]: 11, 17, 30, 39, 91, 132, 167, 1996 [1995]: 84–85, 110–111; cf., for example, Spivak 2000: 7–10, 23, 30–32; Punday 2003: 43–47; Rufo 2009: 230–246; Negri 1999; Ratmoko 2006; Tatum 2007).

Then again, with regard to the lofty techno-mysticism typical of cyber discourse, it is only consequent that "sex" in cyberspace is ultimately a spiritual act, even with a Platonic origin; thus, what Heim (1993: 87) calls "cyber Eros" stems "ultimately from the ontological drive highlighted long ago by Plato":

> In her speech in Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima, the priestess of love, teaches a doctrine of the escalating spirituality of the erotic drive. She tracks the intensity of Eros continuously from bodily attraction all the way to the mental attention of mathematics and beyond. The outer reaches of the biological sex drive, she explains to Socrates, extend to the mental realm where we continually seek to expand our knowledge. (ibid.)

This is the *jouissance* of cyberspace, the ecstatic pleasure of the "matrix," an idea that, as Heim explains, "stems from the Latin for 'mother,' the generative-erotic origin" (ibid.: 88). Thus, like for Stone, cyberspace is also for Heim a "feminine" realm, a realm that, as Stone (1994b: 109) says, we do not "penetrate," but, rather, we let it "envelope" us (cf., for example, Brummett 2003: 77–80; Waldby 1998; Foster 2002; Gillis 2004; Wegenstein 2006; Paterson 2007; Pearson et al. 2008). In other words, entering the world of the "cyber," the subject experiences a radical transformation effected by the logic of the postmodern: being in the world is redefined, as Mary Flanagan (2002: 430) says, by a "disintegration of the subject" which turns the self into a "fragmented receptor constantly in flux." In this constellation, "boundaries between humans and machines"

become "irretrievably blurred" (ibid.) resulting in a situation in which the inside and the outside are always relative and mutually changeable positions.

After all the body-technological transformations and ecstatic experiences described above, it is, however, not yet quite clear what "the sexual" is in terms of cyberspace and the cyborg. To specify, what is "the "sexual" of the "cyber"? This is a question that concerns the sexual futurism of cyber discourse, manifested in the most avantgardist manner by the idea of what on the theory scene of the "cyber" is designated as "virtual sex" (see, for example, Branwyn 233–235; Dery 1996: 185–186, 199–203, 210–223; Deuel 1996: 129–132, 137–142; Hall 1996: 150–151; Springer 1996: 82–84, 88–94; Vasseleu 1997: 52–55; Jordan 1999: 184; Warhol 1999: 92–103; Cavallaro 2000: 127–128; Lunenfeld 2000a: 88–91; Sardar 2000: 747–749; Bell 2001a: 126–127; Grosz 2001: 40–45; Foster 2005: 43, 86–90, 116–127; Chun 2006: 243–244; Wajcman 2006: 102–103; Dixon 2007: 367; Barber 1997, 2004a; Tsang 2000 [1994]; in terms of "virtual orgasm," see Bright 1992: 60–70; for an overview, see Slade 2001: 723–733; Collins 2006, 2008; for the origin of the idea, see Rheingold 1991: 345–353, 1990). To specify, virtual sex implies a post-utopian vision of "sex" in the sense of both subversive gender constructions and sexual practices that are beyond the "normalcy" of the heterosexual matrix. In the world of the "cyber," as David Bell (2000a: 395), referring to Sadie Plant's conception of virtual sex, says, we can experience "the polymorphous perversity of posthuman pleasures," that is, a mode of pleasure that disrupts the conventional notions pertaining to sex, gender and the body (see Plant 1998: 30–35).

For the Krokers, "virtual sex" is "recombinant sex" (Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15–18), a self-reassembling product of "recombinant culture" (Kroker 1993: 6, 28–41, 51–54, 61–70, 125–163), a hybrid combination of recycled components circulating on the scene of the postmodern. In this manner, "[l]ife becomes a mediascape where every fragment of the cultural archive, and subjectivity with it, can be resequenced at will, reconstituted into an endless combinatorial of media effects" (ibid.: 66). In this context, sex, among other things, is a manifestation of panic: "panic sex" (Kroker & Kroker 1988b: 15–16; Kroker et al. 1989: 203).

> Panic sex? That's sexuality in the 1990s which is fast frozen around two poles: the sadism of the hysterical male on the one hand, and the inert silence of what we call "forensic feminism" on the other. It is our thesis that beyond the present state of panic sex there is an emergent form of sexuality, a new horizon of future sex, that we call The Last Sex. (Kroker & Kroker 1995: 10)

In "The Last Sex" as "future sex," there are, according to the Krokers, three aspects: "Recombinant Sex," "Intersex States" and "The Third Sex;" all of them exceeding not only the gender limits, but, more fundamentally, all the limits and limitations of sex and sexuality. This is a "new type of sexuality that floats between the binary signs of male and female," this is "Interzone Sexuality" (ibid.; cf. Baudrillard 1990f [1979]: 41–49, 1993c [1990]: 20–25). What is essential here is that as an experience of sex, this new mode of sexuality is precisely about "panic sex" (Kroker & Kroker 1993b: 15):

> What is sex in the age of the hyperreal? A little sign slide between kitsch and decay as the postmodern body is transformed into a rehearsal for the theatrics of sado-masochism in the simulacrum. Not sadism any longer under the old sign of Freudian psychoanalytics and certainly not masochism in the Sadean carceral, but sado-masochism now as a kitschy sign of the body doubled in an endless labyrinth of media images, just at the edge of the ecstasy of catastrophe and the terror of the simulacrum. (Kroker et al. 1989: 203; cf. Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 138–152)

This is about an "endless drifting between cynical sex and sacrificial sex as twin signs of the body in ruins *at the end of the world*" (Kroker & Kroker 1995: 11; emphasis mine; for the pathos of "ending" in postmodern cultural theory, cf. Collins 1995: 1; Smith 1996: 3; Sheehan 2004: 35; Kermode 1967; Burgin 1986; Vattimo 1990 [1985]; Maresch 1993; Dellamora 1995). Here we are, at the beginning of a new world: a world at the end of the world, a "post"-world beyond the dichotomy of utopia and dystopia. This is the world in which "virtual sex" as a mode of "panic sex" appears as the ultimate form of the "last sex."

To understand this radical transformation of the sexual – of course, in terms of "the sexual" – it is important to see that this is the sex of the "hysterical male" as a "prelude to the seduction of one libido" (Kroker & Kroker 1991b: ix). According to the Krokers, the "hysterical male" is a supreme sign of the postmodern signalling that – in contrast to Foucault – "there is no longer a relationship between sex and power" (ibid.). Power, "fleeing its basis in sexuality generally and male subjectivity specifically, now becomes a *viral* power, a power which speaks only in the previously transgressive feminist language of absence, rupture, plurality, and the trace": a "post-male power which leaves male subjectivity behind as a hysterical photographic negative of itself, and which disappropriates women of the privileged ontology of the Other" (ibid.).

After a century of the efforts of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud and the project of *Sexualwissenschaft* to come to terms with the enigma of "the sexual" (see, for example, Hekma 1989; Russett 1989; Bullough 1994; Porter & Teich 1994b; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Bührmann 1998; Ferdinand et al. 1998; Sigusch 2008), in the post-Enlightenment world of the postmodern it is at last possible to face things as they are, to encounter them with the cold eye of Weberian *Entzauberung* (cf. Weber 1968 [1917/1919]: 612; cf. Schluchter 2009). No longer theories that only obfuscate the issues they claim to clarify, instead, the cool rationality of Baudrillardian "sexual reason" (Baudrillard 1990g [1979]: 129) dominates desires and pleasures called "sex" in the contemporary world; a mode of reason in the light of which one is able to see that, if there is still anything left over from the sexual at all, it is now possible only as a result from the "production of *neon libidos*" (Kroker & Kroker 1991b: ix; emphasis mine); an entirely new kind of the libidinal that has emerged along with the transition to the present era in which "the sexual" is ruled by the logic of the apocalyptic: "the age of sacrificial sex, when sexuality too is both produced by power as a *trompe l'oeil* and then cancelled out" (ibid.). This is the terminal point of the sexual in the postmodern: a situation in which "all the sex differences are

simulated and exterminated in a spiralling combinatorial of *cynical signs*" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

And it is exactly here, in the realm of the "spiralling combinatorial of cynical signs," that cybersex as virtual sex is about hysteria in its postmodern form: panic sex as the ecstasy of the surrational effected by the "cyber." Except that it is, to be precise, instead of "cynical signs," about cynical *signifiers*, signifiers that have an extraordinary ability to signify, to signify in excess, without meaning; a mode of signification that is pregnant of absent meaning, signification that consists of *pure signifiers*, of a maelstrom of excessive signifiers that signify through the excess of signification, without the metaphysical noise of the signifieds.

This is the *hysteria of the signifier*; this is the hysteria of the "cyber." This is the world of post-theory; a world in which the sexual is about the textual.

What is the idea of hysteria in the world of the "post"? If hysteria, in its classical form, is about symptoms that are symptomatic, but which do not have any referential relation to what they seem to be symptoms of (for the origin of the idea, see Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, von Braun 1994 [1985]; Bronfen 1998; Lamott 2001), the hysterical symptoms constitutive of the "post" signify without the logic of representation; they are signs without referent, they are conglomerations of signifiers without signifieds; "free-floating signifiers" compound into contingent combinations, figures that form figurations alluring and seductive in their associative evocativeness; that is, forms of language and discourse that manifest the end of meaning after the beginning of the era of signification. And precisely for this reason, hysterical symptoms are pregnant with absent meaning, they are excessive signifiers that signify not meaning, but the lack of it: hysteria in the mode of "post" is about the presence of the absent in its absent presence; that is, the presence of the imaginary that constitutes the post-metaphysical metaphysics of the "post."

As Žižek says, cyberspace functions "in the hysterical way"; it is about "hysterical symptoms" that signify a "radical uncertainty: I don't know whom my letter will reach" (Gutmair & Flor 1998). Of course, this is for Žižek an instantiation of the Lacanian "letter" (see Lacan 1972 [1955], 1977d [1966/1957]; cf. Johnson 1980b; Muller & Richardson 1988b). In my reading, in contrast, it is literally about the *letter*; more specifically, about the letters effected by the "cyber," about the signifiers in the configurations of cyber discourse, signifiers effected by the *c-y-b-e-r* of the "cyber."

This is the hysteria of the "cyber": an ecstasy of phantasmatic symptoms appearing as seductive figures in the imaginary of the technological engendered by the linguistic of language in the mode of the "post."

2.1.3 Sex in the Era of Its Technological Reproducibility

If cybersex, as one can quite soon find out by immersing in the imaginary realm of discursive figures produced by all that is "cyber" following the logic of the "post" (as paradigmatic examples, see Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002), is both a *postmodern theory-fiction* toyed with by post-theory and a *neo-futuristic fantasy* recycled by postmodern popular culture, what, then, is "the sexual" in cybersex? In other words, if extravagant desires and pleasures, orchestrated around the commodified body by advertising and marketing, are predominant in the conception of "sex" in contemporary culture, reflected by even more extravagant theories of "the sexual" in postmodern academia (see, for example, Botting 1999; Bhattacharyya 2002; Potts 2002; Parisi 2004, Perniola 2004 [2000]; Beasley 2005), what is cybersex in this respect? In other words, what is specifically *sexual* in terms of the "cyber"?

The point of departure in the study at hand is that "the sexual" in cybersex is an issue concerning subjectivity, agency and embodiment in terms of prosthetics; that is, artificial corporeality and artificial organs as the source of extraordinary sexual desires and pleasures, entirely new forms of desires and pleasures that are peculiar to the cyborg (cf. Haraway 1991a: 149–151). To understand cybersex in these terms, as a contemporary manifestation of the Freudian *Prothesengott*, my focus, as the subtitle of the present enquiry indicates, is on the question ensuing from the configuration of "sex," desire and the posthuman body in cyber discourse. In this configuration, the cyborg, as a techno-imaginary phantasm typical of post-theory, exemplifies what Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (1988: 20–33) call the "hyper-modern condition" of "panic bodies" (see also Kroker & Cook 1988 [1986], Kroker 1990, 1992, 1993; Kroker & Kroker 1991a, 1996a; Kroker & Weinstein 1994; cf., for example, Balsamo 1996: 28–34; Springer 1996: 40; Birringer 1998: 268–274, 297–317; Genosko 1999: 11–12; Kern 2000: 99–105; Dyens 2001: 78–85; Lupton 2003 [1994]: 38–39, 68–69; in terms of "postmodern apocalypse," cf. Dellamora 1995); a condition of technoscientific and technocultural bodies for which life is always elsewhere: in the technological extensions and amplifications of the body (cf. McLuhan 1964; in terms of "the New Media Age," cf. Zylinska 2002a); a body that can enjoy only supplements, artefacts in their artificiality; a body in fragments desiring *organs without a body: the ideal body and the body ideal of all that is "cyber."*

In the 1980s, American culture was afflicted with a panic attack that resulted from the AIDS epidemic under the impact of what Thomas L. Long (2005) calls "American apocalypticism" (cf., for example, Altman 1986; Epstein 1996; Gostin 2004). This is the cultural context of what the Krokers call the "panic body" and "panic sex"; as the Krokers (1988b: 15) say, "[p]anic sex in America is the body in the postmodern condition as a filter for all the viral agents in the aleatory apparatus of the dead scene of the social," following "the breakdown of the immunological order" indicating "a desperate search" for "technologies for the

body immune." In this situation, "panic" became the keyword of American culture: "from *panic fashion* (the 'New Look' in the Paris fashion scene); and *panic science* (the deep relationship between AIDS and Star Wars research) to *panic policy* (the urinal politics of contemporary America) and *panic eating*" implying "a schizoid regime of dietary practices" (ibid.).

In short, "the age of AIDS and disappearing bodies" (ibid.) redefined the parameters of "the sexual" in the America of the 1980s – a cultural constellation in which the fascination of the cyborg becomes intelligible (cf. Singer 1993: 179–180; Bogard 1996: 158–159, 166–169; Lummerding 2005: 70–79; Lancaster 2011).

Prosthetic Sex as a Narcissistic Affection of the Cyborg

This is the constellation in which "sex" in terms of the "cyber" emerges as both a popular cultural fantasy and a theoretical figure in postmodern academia. The background of the appearance of cybersex as an alluring idea in both popular culture and academic theory is illuminatively summed up by the Krokers in their idiosyncratic postmodern language:

> First, then, the end of telic history (with the seriality of the Bomb), followed by the implosion of the social into a panic site (with the triumph of signifying culture in the era of promotional culture), and now there is the implosion of human sex itself into a catastrophe scene. The result is the production of a *cynical sex*, of sex itself as an ideological site of disaccumulation, loss, and sacrifice as the perfect sign of a nihilistic culture where the body promises only its own negation; where the previously reflexive connection between sexuality and desire is blasted away by the seductive vision of *sex without organs* – a hyperreal, surrogate, and telematic sex like that promised by the computerized, phone sex of the Minitel system in France – as the ultimate out-of-body experience for the end of the world; and where the terror of the ruined surfaces of the body translates immediately into its opposite: *the ecstasy of catastrophe and the welcoming of a sex without secretions as an ironic sign of our liberation*. (Kroker & Kroker 1988b: 15)

That was "what we get when sexuality is negation and when, under the pressure of the logic of exterminism, pleasure is coded by the seductive vision of the hyperreal: *sex without secretions*" (ibid.). Yet, it was not so much sex in itself that brought about this new constellation of the sexual, but the fate of the body in the postmodern condition emerging in American culture in the 1980s.

> Accordingly, the generation of bodies fit for the waiting time of post-catastrophe: parasited from within by retroviruses that circulate in the bodily fluids; and tattooed from without by the panic signs of the high-intensity market-setting – the body infolded in time, like a *world strip* from particle physics across which run indifferent rivulets of experience. With the body coded by the bleak (but fascinating, because reversible) exchange-process of host and parasite, postmodern consciousness, like a pulsar, also alternates between repulsion and seduction over the fate of the body as (both) a terroristic sign and a pleasurable scene of its own exterminism. At the *fin-de-millenium*, sex – like power, history, money, and the unconscious before it – is always triumphally suicidal as the sign of its darkest seduction. (ibid.: 15–16)

What was this "high-intensity market-setting" redefining the parameters of the American body in the 1980s was a manifestation of the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984). That is, where the commodity form reigns is where *the body becomes an aesthetic object exploited by capital*. Thus, "[e]verywhere 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" (Kroker & Kroker 1988c: 21). In addition to the ideological, epistemological and semiotic changes in terms of the body that occurs in this constellation, what is most important with regard to the transformation of sex and sexuality is the technological change: "the exteriorization of all the body organs as the key telemetry of a system that depends on the outering of the body functions" and "the interiorization of ersatz subjectivity as a prepackaged ideological receptor for the pulsations of the desiring-machine of the fashion scene" (ibid.). In this manner, the body is technologically 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. (ibid.)

What happens in this constellation is that, while the body is "no longer necessary for the autonomous functioning of technoscape, "it is finally free to be emancipated as the rhetorical centre of *the lost subject of desire after desire*" (ibid.; emphasis).

It is here that we encounter the subject of the "post" in its paradigmatic form: a naked body – in every sense of the term – as the post-subjective *subjectum*, the material substratum, the *hypokeimenon* subjected to the inscription practices constitutive of the political economy of neoliberalism, the disciplinary order of postmodern capitalism.

This is the world of "cyborg 'sex'" (Haraway 1991a: 150), "sex" gone through the "liberating" process of denaturalization; "sex" transferred to the realm of the technological; "sex" as a pleasure of being a cyborg, the *jouissance* of being posthuman: "sex" as the sublime pleasure of "prosthetic God." This fundamental transformation from the human to the posthuman, the becoming of the cyborg, is effected by cyber discourse, a language of desire – in the Kroker's words, "desire after desire" as the meta-code of the "post" – engendered by all that is "cyber" following the logic of the "post." Precisely in this sense, cyber discourse is a libidinal language that functions according to the Freudian *Lustprinzip* (Freud 1991d [1915]: 214–219, 1987e [1920]): the imaginary has taken the place of the real which, of course, is the only real for desire: *the real of the imaginary effecting the real of the sexual in terms of post-sex*.

It is in this world, in the imaginary world of desire, that cybersex becomes intelligible. Cybersex, as Stenslie (2000b: 206) says, is about a "distributed, dynamic, networked process going across entire species and life forms"; it is a "romantic orgy of Life-Art." Indeed, as we can hear in Stenslie's elevated words, in his mythopoetic parlance, *the "cyber" is a moment of the technological sublime* (see, for example, Wicke 1996: 302–303; Heuser 2003: 202–213; Slack & Wise 2005: 16–19; Morley 2007: 235–265; Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996): the imaginary is no longer – like medieval philosophy as the *ancilla theologiae* – the "servant" of reason, instead, it is reason itself, the reason of the imaginary, the reason of what I call the surrational.

If the cyborg, a "cybernetic organism," a post-body techno/bio construction consisting of a "hybrid of machine and organism" (Haraway 1985: 65–66), is from now on "our ontology" that "gives us our politics," it is apparent that in this new order of posthuman corporeality the politics of the sexual will also follow the same logic, the logic of prosthetics; that is, a logic, as Haraway (1991e: 249) says, emerging from that "*fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves*" (emphasis mine), the category of prosthesis. The ideal is no longer, as in the world of the human, an organic body as an autonomous organism, but a dis-membered aggregate of artificial, post-organic body parts, the members of the cyborg as a techno-body, as a heteronomous compound, a technological modification of the Lacanian *corps morcelé*, a body disintegrated to *fragmented organs without a body* (cf. Lacan 1977a [1966/1948]: 11, 1977f [1966/1949]: 4–5, 1993 [1981/1955–1956]: 39, 52, 69, 87; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 26–27, 275; Bowie 1991: 26–28; Evans 1996: 67; in terms of the "body without organs," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285).

This, I want to emphasize, is not about what Deleuze and Guattari (1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]) call the "body without organs"; instead, this is a mode of being that I designate as an aleatory assemblage of *organs without a body*; a disorganized, fragmented post-corporeal conglomeration that is the mode of being of the cyborg. No longer integrity and identity, nor originality and authenticity define the parameters of the postmodern techno-body; instead, disruption and dispersion, disintegration and dismantling, a continuous state of discontinuity consisting of plurality, multiplicity, difference and otherness, of radical heterogeneity, as a consequent negation of the logic of the "one" (cf. Haraway 1985; Irigaray 1985b [1977]) determine now the mode of existence of the post-subject as an embodiment of technology, both external and invasive: the technologies of prosthetic enhancement and amplification, extension and intensification, of the post-corporeal functionality of the post-subject (cf., for example, Sobchack 2004: 1–9, 168–188, 204–225; Manning 2007: 117–121, 131–132, 155–160; Miah & Rich 2008: 111–121; Zylinska 2002b; Smith & Morra 2006b). This is the pleasure of the cyborg, a non-identical non-identity, a post-subject enjoying its organs without a body, prosthetic organs that do not succumb to the temptations of the human, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, the "seductions to organic wholeness

through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity." *In the world of the posthuman, the desire for unity is definitely over.*

In terms of what Freud (1986d [1915–1917]: 335–336, 1990c [1933]: 104–105, 1991d [1915]: 217–218) calls *Organlust*, from now on all that is sexual in the world of the cyborg is transferred to the realm of artificial organs having their own logic of desires and pleasures. This is "the sexual" in cybersex: *"sex" with prosthetic organs of the cyborg in the artificial paradise of virtual reality.*

This implies that in the prosthetic world, not only the sexual body is defined anew, but also the subject as the sexual self turns into something that can no longer be understood in the sense of being human: the cyborg, also in terms of the sexual, is the paragon of the posthuman, a being for which desires and pleasures are completely beyond the organic, in the realm of the techno-imaginary – as far as this expression does justice to the extremely complex and complicated affective life of the cyborg, the life of a post-organic being that functions according to the rationality of technoscience, a hybrid embodiment of both the surrational and the irrational in their post-dialectical reciprocity (see, for example, Roden 2002: 97–102; Haney 2006: 159–167; Nusselder 2009: 94–95; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Chernaik 1999; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Weber 2003; Michael 2006; Asdal et al. 2007; Burri & Dumit 2007; Clough & Halley 2007; da Costa & Philip 2008): a mode of the affective that is intelligible only if it is seen through the conceptual optics of the technological sublime.

In the posthuman condition of prosthetics, the question concerning agency turns into an issue of the very possibility of subjectivity. The question is: if being in the world of the cyborg is becoming, what is its driving force, its *energeia* (capacity, activity, actualization, the ability to cause movement) and its process of *entelekheia* (coming-to-be, becoming, perfection, being-in-fulfilment) enabled by the vital force that moves and governs the self-realization of organism (see, for example, Beere 2009: 20–21, 159–162), in a world in which prosthesis is the "fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249)? If what used to be human is now to be considered in terms of the cyborg, that is, as an organism hybridized with machines and thus manifesting the rationality of scientific-technological reason, it is evident that not only the human will, but primarily the whole dynamics of desire, the very *primus motor* of human existence, takes on a new meaning as something that is non-human; a mode of desire that, consequently, is absolutely beyond the parameters of Oedipus (Haraway 1991a: 150–151; cf. Giannachi 2004: 47; Dinello 2005: 138–139; Flieger 2005: 25–26, 99–112).

If desire is a question concerning the subject, and if the cyborg is not human, a being that does not obey the logic of the human subject, what is this "most intimate self" referred to by Haraway? What is it in terms of the sexual? What is it in terms of the technological? That is, *what is the desire of the cyborg?*

To these questions my answer, to be discussed in detail in the course of this study, is in short: *love your prosthesis as yourself*. That is, the "self" is the libidinal object of the cyborg, implying a form of techno-affective narcissism as the pleasure of "the technological" in terms of redemptive empowerment. This is the new ethos of the sexual subject in the age of the cyborg emerging in the realm of corporeality augmented and amplified by prosthetics, constituting organs without a body, the post-corporeal mode of being posthuman. The cyborg is the epitome of the posthuman surpassing the conceptual complex of *eros*, *philia* and *agape* characteristic of the Western tradition (see, for example, Soble 1989, 1997; Soble & Power 2008), the ultimate transgression of the very idea of love, redefined in terms of scientific-technological reason; as we remember Haraway's exact definition of the post-Freudian, trans-Lacanian affectivity of the cyborg:

> The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. (Haraway 1991a: 151)

That is, in the world of the cyborg, at issue are no longer questions concerning human relations reflecting the relations between humans and God; instead, the cyborgian mode of being consists of the post-subjective, trans-corporeal attributes of the "prosthetic God," the modalities of the post-emotional affectivity constitutive of the cyborg, the affective capacity of the posthuman.

The Cyborg: A Contingent Assemblage of Organs without a Body

Radical transgression, techno-political self-reflectivity, subversive desires and pleasures as post-corporeal excitations effected by the affective algorithms of cyborgian encounters as libidinal transactions under the sign of the technological sublime – these and much more are issues that pertain to the conception of the posthuman in an entirely new cultural constellation emerging from the ever-accelerating techno-evolutionary transmutation of the human set in motion by technoculture, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, "by the late twentieth century," "a mythic time," when we all became "chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism"; that is, a cultural formation in which all being is defined by technoscientific rationality (see, for example, Rutsky 1999: 1–3, 15–21, 122–127, 148–158; Hansen 2000: 25–52; Penley & Ross 1992c; Sassower 1995, 1997, 2004; Robins & Webster 1999; Cooper 2002; Shaw 2008), and its most avantgardist form, cyberculture (see, for example, Aronowitz et al. 1996; Dery 1996; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Bell 2001a; Lévy 2001 [1997]; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Tofts et al. 2003; Haney 2006; Ricardo 2009a; Nayar 2010; from a historical perspective, cf. Rabinovitz & Geil 2004), a post-anthropological, post-cultural condition in which all that is real is imaginary, and vice versa, all that is imaginary appears as real.

In cyberculture, as a techno-imaginary *Wunschkonstellation* (Winkler 1997: 16–17) peculiar to the postmodern, a post-Freudian constellation of "wish-fulfilment" (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 555–577), embracing a discursively constructed

para-world in the manner of post-Benjaminian *wish-images* (Buck-Morss 1989: 110–158), the psychedelia of the 1960s counterculture (see, for example, Roszak 1969; Hamilton 1997; Stephens 1998; Braunstein & Doyle 2002; DeKoven 2004; Turner 2006; Gair 2007; Greenfield 2007) has revived in the form of the 1990s *cyberdelia* (Rushkoff 1994), be it an ecstatic technophilia or a postmodern theory-euphoria of high-theory, or some hybrid of both (see, for example, Dery 1996: 9–11, 22–28, 38–51; Aupers et al. 2008: 687–700; Ziguras 1997, 2004; Davis 1998; Partridge 2004, 2005). This is the cultural matrix of cyber discourse, the matrix of the techno-imaginary as the matrix of posthuman desires and pleasures. All that is "cyber," in terms of the origin ("origin," of course, in the Derridean manner *sous rature*, "under erasure"; see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 60–61, 75), is a product of the way of life in Californian high-tech culture in which technology is constitutive of an ego-centric lifestyle, an essential part of an extravagant body-obsessed consumer hedonism (see, for example, Sobchack 1994; Balsamo 1995a, 1995b, 1996), a mode of what I call postmodern ego-politics under the sign of the "cyber," a politics of the post-subject promoting the agency of its technologically enhanced and amplified self by interfacing itself with everything that can promote its ego-trip (cf. Haraway 1991a: 178–181; Leary 1994b [1989]; Turner 2006).

Accordingly, as R. U. Sirius (1997: 12), the leading hyper-theorist of cyberculture, assures us: the "cyber" is about "havin' fun in the warm California sun." This is an ego-politics of pleasure, the driving force of which is the desire for technology under the sign of the "cyber."

Pleasure, in its amplified and extended form, is the ethos of the "cyber," while the desire for technology is its gospel in terms of "prosthetic God." As a libidinal language, cyber discourse is an imaginary form of postmodern celebration of life enhancement, personal growth, individual success and ego-design; in short, *the self-promotion of the post-subject as its own Creator according to the God principle constitutive of the cult of the cyborg*.

In this respect, what is at issue in my inquiry is a reconfiguration of the self with regard to the new form of intimacy emerging through the relationship between the technological and the sexual. This is the process in which the New Age individualism of the 1960s counterculture turns into the *New Edge* self-promotion of the 1990s cyberculture (for paradigmatic examples, see Rucker et al. 1992; Leary 1994a; for the ego-politics constitutive of the cyber-subject, see Terranova 1996b: 165–173; Calcutt 1998: 86–88; Bell 2001a: 164–182; Turner 2006: 162–174; Escobar 2000 [1994]; for an incisive criticism, see Sobchack 1994). In terms of the sexual, this entails a sexual subject for which the appropriate sexual object is a technologically enhanced *me, myself and I*, a prosthetic being desiring its own prosthetic organs, the organs of prosthetic pleasure, the pleasure of technological narcissism (see, for example, Stone 1995d, 1995e; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Foster 2005).

This is the form of narcissism that explains the coming into being of cybersex. As William Bogard (1996: 155) says, "[c]ybersex is about making a cyborg."

Thus, cybersex implies a fundamental transgression, breaking the borderline between not only the human and the machinic, but, more fundamentally, desire and "the cybernetic" in its popular cultural, post-cybernetic form specific to cyberculture (for paradigmatic examples, see Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b): in the world of the cyborg, the circular causal movement of desire becomes redefined in terms of human-machine hybridization as a postmodern appropriation and resignification of cybernetics, its machine-organism configuration predicated upon feedback, homeostasis and autopoiesis (see, for example, Ansell Pearson 1997: 140–150; Day 2001: 38–54, 76–77, 83–89; Depew 2004: 51–62, 70–71; Krippendorf 2009: 2–9, 37–58, 112–130, 225–238; for the genealogy of the cybernetic model, see Pias 2003, 2004; Mindell 2002; for a historical problematization of systems theory in terms of the postmodern, see Rasch & Wolf 2000); that is, a cybercultural phantasm of increasing the efficiency of the body by means of recombinant interrelations in the body-machine complex of the postmodern (cf. Johnston 2001a: 73–77). Thus, cybersex is about a radical transformation of desire. As Haraway (1985) emphasizes, where the cyborg has come to power, there the whole Oedipal structure has collapsed, and, as a result, the post-body post-subject is *free to choose itself* in a peculiar post-Sartrean manner (cf. Sartre 1972 [1943]); that is, a *volatile and optional self* constitutive of the cyborg (cf. Angerer 1999a); though, a "self" that becomes a "self" only by adapting itself to the "anonymous wisdom" (Marcuse (1941: 419) of technoscience.

For this reason, it is problematic what, in fact, is the economy of desire implied by prosthetics. More specifically, the question is as to how the desire of the cyborg is *prosthetic* desire and *what* exactly it is a desire for (cf. Butler 1990, 1993, 1999 [1987])? And if it is a new mode of desire, in what sense it is *sexual*? Supposing, of course, that in the world of the cyborg there is still something called "sexual" at all (cf. Haraway 1991a: 150–151).

This is also, as is commonly known, the problem of the whole Sadean tradition (see de Sade 1995a [1782–1785/1904], 1995b [1795]; for a historical contextualization of the Sadean principles, see, for example, Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]: 88–127; Baruzzi 1968a; Glaser 1988; Bremmer 1989; Lacan 1989 [1962]; Roberts 1990; de Beauvoir 1991 [1951–1952]; Klossowski 1991 [1947]; Hénaff 1995 [1975], 1999 [1978]; Pfister & Zweifel 2002; for the complexity of the idea of the machine in the Sadean context, see Treusch-Dieter 2005), a tradition originating from a world in which the body was not an integral unity, an embodiment of existential integrity, and as such, the very corporeal precondition of the agency of the subject, but, on the contrary, a fragmented conglomeration of organs and body parts, each to be used at will as an object of desire and a source of pleasure (cf. Orban 2008). In this sense, along with the cyborg, "the sexual" has now, indeed, reached its terminal state: *the cyborg is a contingent*

assemblage of organs without a body, a posthuman body-machine hybrid, or, as Haraway (1991a: 163) says, "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" – provided, of course, that "the self" and "the personal" have still any meaning in a world in which the subject is just a contingent effect of anonymous discourses and power constellations ruled by technoscientific rationality, the reason of control (cf., for example, Sassower 1995, 1997; Kochhar-Lindgren 2005).

Whether this is, if not the beginning of, at least the transition to the world of "next sex" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b), remains to be seen.

Body Management as the Body Politics of the Postmodern

If cybersex, as Bogard says above, is about making a cyborg, then, the issue is: what is this new paradigm of "the sexual" suggested by Haraway (1985: 66) in her dream of "cyborg 'sex'" as "sex" that "restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" entailing a "nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism"? In terms of the cyborg, all that is sexual – if it is still about the sexual at all – takes place, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, in a "postgender world," a world beyond, in Butler's (1990: 5, 18–19, 31–32, 151) words, the "heterosexual matrix" or "compulsory heterosexuality" (cf., for example, Blunt & Wills 2000: 130–132; Salih 2002: 48–52, 61–62; Lloyd 2007: 33–35; from a primatological perspective, cf. Haraway 1990).

To be more precise, the problem is not the sexual *per se*; instead, the question is, how the *idea* of cybersex in terms of the cyborg is to be understood considering the celebration of the sexual in the postmodern in general, and especially in the context of what I call *theory-sex* as a consequence of various theoretical efforts to conceptualize, or to get grip of, the manifestations of post-sex, "sex" as a simulation of itself brought about by the logic of the commodity form in the context of the libidinal economy of productive consumption, the new form of capitalism in the order of neo-Fordism? That is, if this is the reality of the sexual today, the reality of post-sex in the contemporary world (meaning here the Western world in its excessive affluence), is cybersex, then, to be understood as the generative term for all variations of *prosthetic sex in virtual reality*, the most paradigmatic manifestation of the imaginary of the sexual in the world of the "post"?

In the study at hand, the sexual is considered as a discursive figure, as a cultural topos, that at the beginning of the third millennium, appears, in one way or another, as a symbol of "good life," or then again, as an enigma pertaining to the "Other" threatening the post-subject with the loss of the self in the perplexing variety of its own mirror-images surrounding the subject all over the commodified consumer culture and mediascape of the postmodern (cf. Baudrillard 1998b [1970]: 99–186, 1988d [1987], 1988e [1987], 1988f [1985]). Thus, in the framework outlined above, at issue are, in terms of the "sexual," the fantasies and theory-fictions typical of the "cyber" in the context of the "post." In this configuration, all that concerns the various dimensions and modalities of the

body – *carnality, corporeality, embodiment, incorporation, incarnation* – amounts to what the Krokers call the "panic body" (Kroker & Kroker 1988b: 11–13, 1988c: 23–25; cf., for example, Balsamo 1996: 28–34; McCance 1996: 3–6; Orr 2006; Kern 2000: 99–100, 105; Dworkin & Wachs 2009; in terms of "panic sex," see Lancaster 2011: 59, 80, 233; Herdt 2009b).

I consider the panic body to be an emblematic figure of the postmodern, *figuratively* manifesting the specific "structure of feeling" (Williams 1961: 64–66, 77–86; cf. Milner 1993: 39–45, 2002: 68–77) engendered by the extremely complex relations characteristic of the new reality brought about by contemporary technoscientific body politics; that is, the scientific-technological management of the body under the regime of transnational capital as the driving force of globalization in the economic order of neo-Fordism (cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998; Deane-Drummond & Scott 2006; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; Miah & Rich 2008). To emphasize, the sexual in the postmodern is no longer just about desires and pleasures; instead, it is increasingly a serious *economic problem* that concerns the very existence of global capitalism, its ability to generate sensations and affections that are vital for its survival: in the political economy of neoliberalism, the sexual in the form of post-sex is an integral part of the forces of production. That is, "sex" in terms of post-sex is a commodity form *constitutive* of the productive consumption as the unconditional condition, the very condition of possibility, of global capitalism (cf. Abramson & Pinkerton 2002 [1995]; Harvey 2005 [2003], 2006 [1999], 2007 [2005]; Eisenstein 2007; Herdt & Howe 2007a; Albritton et al. 2010; Liodakis 2010).

The commodity form is the libidinal hard core of global capitalism, its *logos* and *energeia*, its *raison d'être* in terms of economic growth, the sacralized principle of capitalism. This is the reason for the fact that all that is sexual equals the economic today: the economization of the sexual in the form of post-sex is an essential factor in the accumulation of capital.

This is the politics of body management as a form of controlling the subject in the neo-Fordist economic order based on an ever-increasing rationalization of both production and consumption amounting to a way of life *conditioned* by productive consumption. This is a new kind of disciplinary order that is first and foremost about a production of subjectivity *compatible with the demands of capital* (cf. Foucault 1990k [1976]: 139–159). As an imaginary technology typical of all that is "cyber," cybersex manifests, in a techno-imaginary form, through the figurative language of cyber discourse, the reality of the sexual in the postmodern; the sexual that is disciplined under the efficiency pressures of labour performance in the neo-Fordist economy of desire. At the same time, cybersex exemplifies the imaginary of the sexual constitutive of the productive consumption specific to the whole libidinal economy of the postmodern.

In both of these dimensions, cybersex is "real" in the mode of the imaginary; as such, it is an indication of the libidinal economy of global capitalism in terms of the technological reconstitution of the body; that is, a phantasmagoric mani-

festation of the politics of the cyborg as the survival strategy of the post-subject under the disciplinary regime of neoliberal capitalism.

Thus, in the last analysis, what in the postmodern is "sexual" is an *incorporation of capital*; capital now turned into the constitutive matrix of life, labour and language, understood as the parameters of becoming human (cf. Foucault 1989 [1966]: 250–302; Schneider 2004: 66–79). If capital is not only the economic precondition, but the very production principle of desires and pleasures in the postmodern, the more it is the driving force of the simulation that is the prerequisite of "the sexual" in the postmodern libidinal economy, and by extension, in a technological form, the *sine qua non* of cybersex: simulation, a representation without an original (Baudrillard 1994a [1981]), this is the origin of both the sexual subject and the sexual object in cybersex. *In the mode of the techno-imaginary, cybersex is a "theoretical" model of the sexual condition in technoculture*.

In this sense, cybersex is a phantasmatic projection of the sexual-technological complex in the contemporary world in which the configuration of "sex," desire and the posthuman body is not only science fiction, but, in terms of the biopolitics of neoliberalism, it is also the scientific reality of technological body management (cf., for example, Giddens 1991: 102; Quinby 1999: 125–146; Ach & Pollmann 2006; Arnaldi 2012; with regard to the body politics of the "new barbarians," Hardt & Negri 2000: 214–218). As Haraway (1985: 65) says, the cyborg is a "creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction."

The question is only: *what is fiction in a world in which the real is a mode of the imaginary and the imaginary in itself has taken on the function of the real*?

The reconstitution of the body as a non-integral conglomeration of organs, as an assemblage of prosthetic extensions and enhancements of the body as a cyborg, is an issue of supplementarity that is constitutive of all that is "post." In the last instance, this is an issue concerning the very *possibility* of the body in a world in which a specific desire for disembodiment, paradoxically, is the most intensive mode of embodiment, the mode of being outside the body, in the realm of external corporeality created by the magic power of the "cyber" (see, for example, Dery 1996: 233–236; Kline 1996: 352–356; Robins 1996: 29–32; Coyne 1999: 63–68; Booth & Flanagan 2002: 15; Muri 2003: 73–79, 82, 89; Ferreday 2009: 5, 71–72, 103, 146, 156; Bell 2001a: 172–176, 2004: 11; Nayar 2010: 8, 66–68, 76–78; Kline 1996); that is, prosthetic corporeality in virtual reality as the mode of existence of the technologically empowered post-subject, the subject of cyber discourse living in the ecstasy of the "post."

With the cyborg, we have arrived in a world in which, as Stelarc (1991: 591) proclaims, "the body is obsolete" (cf., for example, Dery 1996: 153–169; Cooper 2002: 117; Mackenzie 2002: 121; Massumi 2002: 89–119; Cooney 2004: 142–143; Case 2007: 208–209; Giannachi 2007: 69–73; Grundmann 2007: 90; Kuppers 2007: 115–117; Paterson 2007: 114; Toffoletti 2007: 128; Stiegler 2008 [1996]: 152; Zylinska 2009: 168–170; Salter 2010: 251–252). This is a world in which the desire for

the post-body is the most avantgardist affect of the post-subject, a desire that is inherent to all that is "cyber" engendered by the figurative matrix of the "post." While, as Brian S. Turner (1997 [1984]: 6) says, we are now – that is, in the real world embracing the Western civilization that enjoys its affluence on the cost of the third world – living in a "somatic society" in which "our major political and moral problems are expressed through the conduit of the human body," and in which, at the same time, according to Hayles (1993b: 173), "[p]erhaps not since the Middle Ages has the fantasy of leaving the body behind been so widely dispersed" as in contemporary culture. The post-utopian, neo-Futurist ideal of the "cyber" is to "get rid of the flesh"; that is, "not merely to leave the body but to reconstitute it as a technical object under human control" (ibid.).

This, in essence, is the idea of the body utopia projected by the visions of cyber discourse concerning the transformation of the human into the posthuman.

The Body as a New Utopia

In this kind of desire for disembodiment, what is at issue is a politics of control implied by the posthuman, a control that expressly pertains to the condition of possibility to *be* and to *have* a body (cf. Turner 1997 [1984]: 73–82; Williams & Bendelow 1998; Crossley 2001, 2006; Shilling 2005; for the difference beween *Körper* and *Leib*, see, for example, Hauser-Schäublin et al. 2001: 97–99, 107–109, 133–137; Caysa 2003: 36–57; Thomas 1996; Schmidt 2009). What Hayles (1993b: 188) deems a "postmodern fantasy" of, at the same time, both *leaving* and *redesigning* the body, is, in my reading, peculiar to the libidinal language of cyber discourse reflecting, in phantasmatic figurations, the imaginary of the sexual in the postmodern (in terms of technoscientific body modification in postmodern sport, cf. Magdalinski 2008: 33–36; Hoberman 1992; Gebauer 1997; Rail 1998b; Cashmore 2010 [1996]). This is a realm of the imaginary ruled by a postmodern driving force, a psychosexual form of the process of commodification, that I call the *liquid libido*, the post-Freudian *Triebkraft* of post-sex, that is, sex turned into "sex"; the imaginary of the sexual effected by the specific commodity form of productive consumption. As a corollary, this is the realm of cybersex as the most avangardist form of post-sex.

In this sense, cybersex is a technophilic phantasm – *at once a techno-futuristic fantasy and a post-theoretical theory-fiction* – of an apparatic amplification and extension of sexual encounter by means of prosthetic organs in virtual reality. It is a dream of a post-body typical of cyberculture, a body that is set free from the constraints of the organic: a post-biological body-machine made possible by body-technologies presently emerging in the laboratories of postmodern technoscience, laboratories understood here in terms of both conceptual models and practical research and innovation (see, for example, Pickstone 2000; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Asdal et al. 2007; in terms of science history, see, for example, Fleck 1980 [1935]; Latour 1983, 1987; Latour & Woolgar 1986; Rheinberger & Hagner 1993; Sarasin 1995, 2001; Rieger 2001a; Dierig 2006).

In terms of contemporary theory, this is the world of the posthuman, a world in which the difference between the real and the imaginary has become ambivalent and undecidable or it has disappeared altogether (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Gray 2001; Graham 2002; Smith & Morra 2006b; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008); that is, science, science fiction and what I call theory-fictions have, in the world of the posthuman, intermingled in a manner in which the distinction between concept and metaphor has lost its ability to make a difference. The problem, however, is that whatever the posthuman may yet effect, the body is always already there where we are just arriving: as a living organism *and* an embodiment of the subject, the human body is always in a state of transition in which the past defines the future. If, as Heidegger (1977d [1927]: 322–348, 1989a [1936–1938]) says, human existence is *Sein zum Tode*, "being towards death" (cf. Han 1999: 28–38; Trawny 2003: 48–68), at the same time, *we are living towards life*. In the final analysis, the double life of the body in the sense of being human as *being* and *having* a body might be a Derridean "undecidable" (see Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 213, 219–220–222, 261, 1982 [1972]: 46, 2000 [1988]: 116; cf. Norris 1987: 42, 80–82, 133, 162; Nealon 1993: 17–18, 36, 161–162, 168; Royle 2003a: 5–6), but, this notwithstanding, the body is *there*, obstinately, persistently. Thus, a desire for disembodiment is a desire that, in fact, is not about the body, but about the *substitution of the body with technology*: the body as a prosthetic assemblage.

It is precisely here that the problem emerges: *to what extent can the human body be extended and amplified with prosthetics that it still remains as a human body*, also – or, perhaps, expressly – in terms of the posthuman?

Whatever the posthuman is, what is certain is that there is no escape from the human body in real life. Seen from this perspective, it is clear that the body projected by cyber discourse is a utopian body in the sense of post-utopia. As a new utopia, the body in the form of the panic body is the return of the repressed in the postmodern (cf. Freud 1991b [1915]: 257–258): although the body as an embodied experience of the subject may be a personal fiction (the body schema as a phantasmatic body), as soon as the reality of the human body, the reality of *being* a body, is there, the theory-fiction of the posthuman body turns out to be what it is: a theory-fiction enacted by postmodern body utopianism in the name of the posthuman.

In reverse terms, the "post" is pregnant with the burden of the past, the burden of the flesh, the burden of being human in the body that can be repressed, but never abandoned. The power of capital that, by the Harawayan "late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time" (Haraway 1991a: 150), is no longer outside the body, but that has penetrated the whole tissue of the postmodern body, the very corporeality of the subject subjected to the logic of capital (cf., for example, Marcuse 1987 [1955], 2002 [1964]; Lowe 1995; Pronger 2002; Brown 2003; Gibson-Graham 2006 [1996]), is now the highest instance of the postmodern

politics of the body. This is the agony of the body in terms of the "post," the affective state behind the phantasmatic figure of the cyborg. This is the religious moment of all that is "cyber." The body is perhaps not the ultimate evidence, but it is definitely the last step before nothingness. In the final analysis, having a body – being a body is always a borderline experience, if not, at least with regard to the mortality of the human being, a haunting moment of vertigo on the brink of the abyss.

This is the postmodern "panic" of the panic body as a technoscientific wish-image: no matter how much the body is controlled, empowered and redesigned, the limits are always set by the body itself; no matter that this body is a thoroughly discursive construction, the body is still there as a body in its very bodiness.

In this sense, as far as ever the posthuman body, the panic body, is a post-body, a body beyond the biological necessities, it is, nevertheless, a body for which the future comes through the past, with a vengeance: the posthuman, as an aspect of the postmodern, is a result – perhaps the ultimate one – of the instrumental reason of the modern (see, Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1947]; Held 1980). At the same time, the panic body is both a symptom and a vehicle of the economy of desire inherent to the regime of transnational capital. *The body is an obsession of the postmodern*. This is what Terry Eagleton (1996: 71) calls the "new somatics": "[i]f the libidinal body is in, the labouring body is out." But, in fact, the libidinal body is in the order of neo-Fordism, the order of global capitalism, the labouring body, a panic body that works for pleasure, a body for which labour and pleasure are moments of the same libidinal project: *the intensification of ego-performance, the desire to be a body in its individuality*.

Accordingly, the postmodern body is a materialization of capital: the body is a personal as well as a social resource (cf. Trallori 1996; Holliday & Hassard 2001), or, as Heidegger (1977f [1953]: 17–23, 2000b [1953]: 17–22) says, *Bestand*, "standing reserve," determined by technology in the form of *Gestell*, "enframing" (cf. Dreyfus 1993: 306–308; Young 2002: 44–58). For this reason, the body is the utopia of the postmodern. This is the body utopia that has now taken the place of the classical utopia, the utopia of an ideal society. Nevertheless, the postmodern body utopia, as all utopias before it, is a *u-topos*, a "nowhere." The more it is an obscure object of desire.

Yet, like utopia in general, the postmodern body utopia, the utopia reflecting the imaginary of the postmodern body, always ends up encountering the hard reality: in the postmodern order of desires and pleasures, there is no deliverance of the body without the power of capital, its transformative capacity of all that becomes subsumed by it. The ever-more sophisticated instrumentalization of the body in production as well as in productive consumption is a high priority in the political economy of neoliberalism in which "human capital" is a profitable investment promising both an intensification of labour efficiency for

the employer and more effective pleasure for the employee (see, for example, Becker 1993; Hartog & van den Brink 2007& Held & McGrew 2007). *Higher work performance for more fun* – that is the ethos of neo-Fordism in which a rationalization of desires and pleasures, that is, the Taylorization of the libido, is the precondition of the constant increase of productivity in both production and productive consumption.

Thus, the panic body is a body produced and controlled by the power of capital, the formative force of surplus value: the body-machine complex of the postmodern is the real pantopticon of the contemporary world ruled by the logic of technoscience (cf. Foucault 1991a [1975]: 137–138; Schneider 2004: 125–133); that is, the postmodern body is constantly under the surveillance, observation and control of scientific-technological body management enabled by the computerization of biopolitics under the regime of the political economy of neoliberalism.

This is a new order of reason, the order of *libidinal rationality* constitutive of the postmodern: in the postmodern, what is rational is libidinal, and what is libidinal is rational. This is the order of the surrational, a form of reason for which everything, in terms of the imaginary, is reasonable just because it is rational. This is the order of postmodern body management (cf., for example, Turner 1992b, 1997 [1984]; Williams & Bendelow 1998; Fox 1999; Hassard et al. 2000; Hancock & Tyler 2001) that, in terms of the sexual, finds its equivalent in the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern, a high-tech instrumentalization of the resources of the body for the productive consumption of desires and pleasures. This is, in the realm of the techno-imaginary, the idea of the technologization of the sexual which, in fact, is about the sexualization of the technological enabled by the libidinal language of the "cyber."

2.2 The Body as an Extension of Technology

> Die Dinge treten gegen deren Vorstellungen zurück; was mit den letzteren vorgenommen wird, muß sich auch an den ersteren ereignen. Die Relationen, die zwischen den Vorstellungen bestehen, werden auch zwischen den Dingen vorausgesetzt. Da das Denken keine Entfernungen kennt, das räumlich Entlegenste wie das zeitlich Verschiedenste mit Leichtigkeit in einen Bewußtseinsakt zusammenbringt, wird auch die magische Welt sich telepatisch über die räumliche Distanz hinaussetzen und den ehemaligen Zusammenhang wie gegenwärtigen behandeln.
>
> Sigmund Freud (1986c [1913]: 105)[181]

> [I]t is no coincidence that tantra is one of the constant references of the New Age ideologists who insist on the fusion of body and spirituality, in the guise of the virtual "incorporeal spiritual body" able to experience extreme pleasures. Our biological body itself is a form of hardware that needs re-programming through tantra like a new spiritual software which can release or unblock its potential. Tantric notions are here translated into cyberspeak: phone wires become *nadis* of the virtual subtle corpus, computer terminals *chakras* (nodes of energy), the flow of vital *prajna* the infinite stream of information; we thus obtain "a cyborgasm that combines the incorruptibility of cyberspace with the most this-wordly sensual pleasure of the self."
>
> Slavoj Žižek (2011 [2010]: 8)[182]

> I am a person who fell in love with her own prostheses.
>
> Allucquère Rosanne Stone (1995e: 3)

If, as they say, sex "happens in the head," in the virtual reality of the mind (cf., for example, Turkle 1995: 21; Bogard 1996: 162–163; Reid 1996: 341; Leary 1994c [1985]; Stone 1995c), what, then, is it we need the sexual organs for? In other words, if the sexual is not something corporeal, but a matter of the mind (in both senses of the word), does this, consequently, imply that whatever sex is it always – *always already* – takes place nowhere else but in the theatre of the imaginary conjured up by the brain, and, in the final instance, is it what we experience as "sex" thus an aspect of the Cartesian *cogito* (cf. Dollimore 1991: 281–283; Judovitz 2001: 133–135, 175–176), which, in the world of the "cyber," is now transferred, "exterritorialized," from the mind to the immaterial realm of

181 The quote is from Freud's work *Totem and Taboo*; discussing the connections between animism, magic and the omnipotence of thoughts Freud (1974 [1913]: 85) noticed that, in this context, "[t]hings become less important than ideas of things: whatever is done to the latter will inevitably also occur to the former," and, accordingly: "Relations which hold between the ideas of things are assumed to hold equally between the things themselves. Since distance is of no importance in thinking – since what lies furthest apart both in space and time can without difficulty be comprehended in a single act of consciousness – so, too, the world of magic has a telepathic disregard for spatial distance and treats past situations as though they were present." (ibid.)

182 Slavoj Žižek refers here to the tantra sex vision elaborated on by Hugh B. Urban (2003: 253) in his book *Tantra. Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (in terms of "the age of spiritual machines," cf. Kurzweil 1999; in the context of Californian cyberculture, cf. Sobchack 1994; Ziguras 1997; Taylor 1998, 1999; for critical analysis of New Age spirituality and neo-religious religiosity, see Hanegraaff 1996; Heelas 1996, 1999; Heelas et al. 1998; Newport 1998; Sutcliffe 2003, 2006; from the perspective of "the re-enchantment of the West," see Partridge 2004, 2005).

virtual reality (see Treusch-Dieter 1997: 98–100), a mode of "reality" that exists only in the form of simulation?

From this perspective, rather than being an intimate corporeal experience, what is referred to as "sex" is now a *phantom experience* of networked brains, and, thus, has the brain, which used to be the "central organ" of the body, become, in fact, the only sexual organ, the only proper and relevant organ for the enjoyment of sensations and affections called "sexual," including that strange paroxysm that is designated as orgasm, understood to be the climax of those sensations and affections we as humans formerly enjoyed, without knowing why, in a very specific way, through curious acts and practices that, moreover, were culturally codified, and, as such, more or less strictly controlled and regulated for reasons that were more often than not highly obscure in the light of pure reason? Then again, leaving the question concerning human evolution aside, if the human habit, the form of certain experiences and expressions of the body termed "sex," is still considered important, even indispensable, for the well-being of the human being, and taking into account the extremely high expenditure and severe problems resulting from this odd habit, would it not be more simpler to induct appropriate sensations and affections *directly into the brain* (cf. Leary 1994a: 147–154; in terms of "neuropolitics," cf. Leary et al. 1977; Leary et al. 1988; for the combination of sex, brain and LSD as a "politics of ecstasy," see Leary 1998 [1980]; for the experience of "turn on, tune in, drop out," see Leary 1999a [1965])?

As Mario Perniola (2004 [2000]: 35), in his study of "the sex appeal of the inorganic," explains, "artificial sexuality is constituted by the prosthetic effect" of the cyborg that implies "the possibility of an intrusive sensor that by bypassing the mediation of organs and linking the computer directly to the brain" provides a virtual experience (cf. Daniels 2002: 74–75; Sevenant 2005: 115–117; Tabbert 2005: 54; Melzer 2006: 188–193, 210–211; Clarke 2008: 156–157; Foster 1996; in terms of an artificial sensorium replacing the human sense organs, cf. Spreen 1999; in relation to Oswald Wiener's fictional idea of a *bio-adapter*, cf. Wiener 1969, 1989 [1988]; for the origin of the idea of "inorganic sex" in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, see Benjamin 1999 [1972]: 8, 19, 69, 79, 894, 916; in terms of fetishism, cf. Freud 1972e [1927]). What results from this cyborgian modification of sexuality, of course, is not just any cyborg whatever, this is about *"the philosophical-sexual cyborg"* (Perniola 2004: 35; emphasis mine) that exhibits an extraordinary faculty, the ability to enjoy the pleasures of the techno-sexual entirely independently from all that is external to the sexual act; that is, autosexual pleasures in a total autonomy. In this manner, as Perniola specifies, "the philosophical-sexual cyborg" enjoys "an intrinsic sociality that does not depend on intersubjectivity but on a relation of interface that passes not between two subjects but between two almost things" (ibid.; cf. Hostert 2007: 112–114; Bartels 2005; for "sex" in the form of "sexual outercourse," cf. Foster 2005: 90–92; van Sevenant 2005: 52–54; Waskul et al. 2004).

But why "*almost* things," why not *entirely* things? If the artificial world of cyborg sexuality is already viable, at least in the mode of "the philosophical-sexual

cyborg," why to stop halfway: why to be content with a solution that is a compromise between the organic and the inorganic – especially, if Perniola's intention, as he emphasizes time and time again, is the pleasure engendered by *inorganic sex* (cf. Parisi 2004; Samsonow 2005; in terms of the Freudian conception of the "death drive" (Freud 1987e [1920]) as an aspiration to "dissolve" life back to its "primaeval inorganic state" in a "complete absence of excitation," cf. Dollimore 2001: 86)?

In general, why not enjoy technologically effected "brain sex" instead of "organ sex," sex by means of those curious body parts called the *sexual organs* (why "sexual organs"?), organs termed the *pudenda* for centuries in Western culture, and still a cause of panic in the ultra-liberal cultural constellation of the postmodern?

Of course, this question leads, inevitably, to the final question: why, in the first place, should we call these sensations and affections that "take place" in the brain "sex," if they have nothing to do with the body parts usually associated with that curious, self-repeating habit by attributing them by the signifier "the sexual," or even, if these strange states of mind in the name of "the sexual" can be induced artificially? In short, what is "the sexual" in brain sex, if there is such a thing at all?

2.2.1 From Electrosex to Sex Robots

All these questions, in fact, are only a logical consequence of the idea of the "love machine," suggested by McLuhan (1995 [1969]: 253) in his *Playboy* interview; a "machine" with which "ultimate orgasm is achieved by direct mechanical stimulation of the pleasure circuits of the brain" (ibid.; cf. Marchand 1989: 206; Dery 1996: 222; Theall 2001: 45–49; in terms of pataphysics, cf. Taylor 2007: 77). The background of this idea was McLuhan's reconception of the human being in a symbiotic relationship to technology, as a "servomechanism" of various senso-corporeal extensions of the body and its sense organs: "The Eskimo is a servomechanism of his kayak, the cowboy of his horse, the businessman of his clock, the cyberneticist – and soon the entire world – of his computer" (McLuhan 1995: 264; cf. Genosko 1999: 67–68; Cavell 2003: 85–86; in terms of "the New Media Age," cf. Zylinska 2002a). That is, the entire world would finally function as a servomechanism of global computer systems resulting from a comprehensive implementation of "automation and cybernation" (McLuhan 1995: 263; for the contextualization of "automation" and "cybernation," see, for example, Stanley 1978: 136–137; Bell 1991 [1980]: 43–50; Pena 2001: 23–25, 112–118; Dinello 2005: 60–63; Pickering 2010: 14; Michael 1962; Winthrop 1966; Jones 1997; Aronowitz & Cutler 1998; in the context of the Internet, see Barrett 1996; in terms of media art, see Huhtamo 2000).

As we can see, postmodern cyborg enthusiasm is a *post festum* result – perhaps the most spectral one – of the cybernetic mindset that, since the incubation of cybernetic thought in the 1940s and its final breakthrough in hard sciences in the 1950s, had been inscribed in both academic thinking and popular culture in postwar America, in what Matthew Farish (2010: 147–192) calls "the cybernetic

continent" (cf., for example, Johnston 2001a: 73–77; Light 2003: 35–54; Seed 2005b: 173–181; Gerovitch 2002a; Mirowski 2002; Pias 2003, 2004). Hardly having still anything in common with Norbert Wiener's (1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]) original cybernetics as a mathematical science of information and communication processes in machines and living organisms (see Heims 1980; Masani 1990), the "cybernetic" as a popularized term, widely circulated and recycled in media and public discussion in the 1960s and 1970s, referred to a general technologization of the human being by means of "human engineering" (Farish 2010: 148) enabling an ever-expanding symbiosis between the human and the machine.

The emblem of this post-Wienerian cybernetics was the idea of the cyborg as a technologically redesigned body – a "superhuman" body, especially celebrated by popular representations of the cyborg (see, for example, Cartwright & Baker 2005: 223–262; for Wienerian cybernetics as a control paradigm, see Day 2001: 48–51; in the context of the Vietnam War, cf. Edwards 1996).

Towards "Electronic Nirvana"

Impressed by the scientific-technological achievements of the time, David Rorvik, a science author interested in various technologies for amplification of human faculties, reported in his book *As Man Becomes Machine. The Evolution of the Cyborg* (1971) about various electronic equipment by means of which it was possible, at least experimentally in laboratory conditions, not only to restore corporeal functions damaged as a result of some lesion, but also to bring forth entirely new capabilities of the human body and its organs (in terms of "the second Genesis" in the sense of "the coming control of life," cf. Rosenfeld 1969; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Larabee 2000: 12, 32–36, 77–80; Muri 2007: 4–7, 86–116; Pickering 2010: 83–84; Halacy 1962, 1965a, 1965b; Ferkiss 1969, 1980; Dyens 2001; Franchi & Güzeldere 2005a). An extremely promising new technology in those days was a method, developed in the field of brain physiology, called the "Electronic Stimulation of the Brain," or ESB, by which it was thought to be possible to systematically control brain functions in order to bring about hoped-for psychological and psychosomatic effects in therapeutic purposes, or even entirely new mental abilities to expand human psycho-physical experiences (Rorvik 1971: 146–169; in terms of "biomedical engineering systems," cf. Clynes & Milsum 1970; in the context of contemporary cyborg theory, cf. Dumit 1995: 349–356).

"Animals with implanted electrodes in their brains have been made to perform a variety of responses with predictable reliability as if they were *electronic toys* under human control" (Rorvik 1971: 146); or even, the "*once-human being thus controlled would be the cheapest of machines to create and operate*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Schwitzgebel 1973; for a contextualization, see, for example, Freedman & Morriss 1972; Hagner 2008 [1997]; Hagner & Hörl 2008). With these quotations from leading scientists on the field Rorvik wants to illustrate the high expectations attached to brain technologies in the early 1970s. At a U.S. senate

hearing, for example, a scientist testified, with regard to the new methods of mind manipulation, that "I am almost frightened to say what I think might come of this" (Rorvik 1971: 146); and Rorvik, as if himself astounded by the immense possibilities opened up by ESB, asks: "Where are the new frontiers?" (ibid.). In other words, where are the new territories to be conquered in the fields of human enhancing by scientific-technological means cumulatively increased in the wake of military research during the Second World and thereafter in the Cold War constellation of the military-industrial complex in America in the 1950s and 1960s (see, for example, Andreski 1971 [1954]; Walker et al. 1992; Pavelec 2009)?

The answer, of course, is that the new frontiers and territories are in the human mind itself – which, as we know, is limitless. This is one of the dimensions of being human in a world in which, as Rorvik indicates in his title, "man becomes machine" through the "evolution of the cyborg." And what is particularly important from the standpoint of the study at hand is that this is one of the historical origins in the genealogy of the Harawayan cyborg (see Haraway 1985) as a body-machine assemblage manifesting the techno-imaginary of the postmodern.

If, as B. F. Skinner, the leading figure of behaviourism in postwar America, said that "[s]cience is steadily increasing our power to influence, change, mould – in a word, control – human behaviour" (Rogers & Skinner 1956: 1057; cf. Skinner 1971; Smith & Woodward 1996), and if, as scientists at the time estimated, "behavioural science" will make the "control of human behaviour with a high degree of precision" possible (Rorvik 1971: 146; for the control paradigm in American psychology, see Mills 1998), why should this not be done? For this scientific-technological enterprise, ESB was the right way because it, according to Rorvik, provided:

> a means of "mapping" the mind, of locating within the brain the specific sites at which various categories of emotion, feeling, action and thought originate. More than this, ESB provides a means of exerting some control over those feelings and actions. It can even help reactivate parts of the brain that have ceased functioning because of disease or trauma, induce immense pleasure, override "intractable" pain and, for a finite period, *enable one to relive one's past, even the most remote, 'unremembered'* past. (ibid.; emphasis mine; in terms of science fiction, cf. Dumit 1995: 349–356; Gibson 1995 [1984]; Bukatman 1996 [1993])

As Rorvik (1971: 148) explains, by implanting electrodes in the head it was possible to achieve a "wiring" of the brain; that is, to establish a functional schema of neuronal connections in the brain under which it would operate in an intended manner, for example, in order to suppress pain or increase pleasure. If thus far, by this kind of "technique of implanting electrodes," "thousands of laboratory animals, including cats, rats, dogs, dolphins, bulls and even crickets," had "been wired, some with more than one hundred electrodes" (ibid.), then, why not also "wire" humans? In fact, this had already been done in cases of "dozens" of patients "suffering from serious diseases or mental disorders" (ibid.). The problem was only to achieve a "*more natural man-machine symbiosis*" (ibid.: 149; emphasis). But due to miniaturization, even this was becoming possible with

"*portable instruments* tiny enough to fit inside the head bandages" or by means of an "electronic headgear under wigs and hats" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Alt & Rubinoff 1971; Mowshowitz 1976; in the context of virtual reality, cf. Biocca & Levy 1995a: 147; in terms of "expanded cinema," cf. Youngblood 1970).

As we can see, the cyborg was, in its pre-postmodern form, in place already in the 1960s and the early 1970s in the context of cybernetics, experimental psychology and behaviourism, almost two decades before Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" (see, for example, Sperry 1995: 35–40; Cordeschi 2002: 163–170; Sack 2007: 188–189; Tucker 2007: 94–142; from the perspective of feminism, see Birke 1999: 85–101, 154–156; with regard to the "militarization of learning and intelligence in US education," cf. Noble 1989: 17–25, 1991: 46–47; for a historical contextualization in terms of "general systems theory," see Hammond 2003). What occurred in this context was, at the level of the techno-imaginary distinctive about American culture (see, for example, Marcus 1995; Nye 1996; Bozeman 1997; Noble 1997; Segal 2005 [1985]), a radical cyborgization of the human being by means of neuronal implants and intracorporeal control devices in the manner Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline (1995 [1960]), two clinical scientists, had described the "altering man's bodily functions" in their epochal article "Cyborgs and Space" already in 1960 (cf. Rosenfeld 1969: 248, 274–277; Halacy 1965a), in order to create self-regulating human-machine systems for space travel (see, for example, Larabee 2000: 21–28, 32–36, 77–81; Yaszek 2002: 6–11; Allen 2008: 272–295; Launius & Curdy 2008: 198–199; for an anthropological contextualization, cf. Williams & Klemmer 1997; in the context of primatology, see Haraway 2000b: 403–404).[183]

This is the background of Rorvik's techno-optimistic vision of a radical redesign of the human body in order to enhance its performance in terms of rational, goal-oriented behaviour, even to the extent that the human being turns into a machinic system working under scientific control. As Rorvik explains:

> Very soon researchers hope to have *terminal devices that can be wholly implanted under the scalp*. But whatever the gear, the result is much the same. When current is discharged into the brain, the patient reacts. He may be induced to sleep or to work happily. In many cases the patient forgets that he is being artificially stimulated. At any rate *he never feels that he is doing something against his own will*. Stimulated to make a specific motor action, he "feels" that he himself created the stimulation. (Rorvik 1971: 150; emphasis mine; in terms of the cyborg as a multi-interfaced "bodynet," cf. Mitchell 1995: 28–29)

What we have here is a scientific-technological reincarnation of Foucault's (1991a [1975]: 135–169) "docile body," a paradigmatic instance of the modern

183 The reappearance of the cyborg as a "survival image" in the early 1980s in an entirely new context, in AIDS discourse, took place in the framework of what Ann Larabee (2000) describes as the "decade of desasters" (epitomized by the Challenger disaster in 1986): "AIDS activists transformed the nuclear discourse perpetuated by the national media and biomedical researchers, involving images of radioactive bodies and apocalyptic urban centers, into an articulation of survival and community. Emerging from military research and development of an *engineered, disaster-resistant body*, the cyborg also emerged in the 1980s to mitigate biomedical disasters, appearing in AIDS discourse to *reclaim medical technologies*, and in the popular figure of Stephen Hawking, who mediated both black holes and catastrophic illness." (ibid.: 12; emphasis mine)

form of subjectivity that is entirely appropriated by technoscientific reason and which, accordingly, has lost the ability to make a difference between his or her own will and what Marcuse (1941: 419) calls the "anonymous wisdom" of the prevailing order (cf., for example, Dery 1996: 164–166; Harvey 2000: 12–18, 49–51, 97–130, 2007 [2005]: 81–83; Smith-Windsor 2008: 283–284; for the cyborg as a feminist-utopian wish-image, cf. Braidotti 2003: 205–211). Of course, as Rorvik remarks, the "incredible power that one can exert over an individual's actions and emotions with ESB has given rise to some alarm" (Rorvik 1971: 150). "What works for lower animals in this realm can also be made to work for man" – even to the extent that, if this new technology will remain in "benign hands" of good-willing scientists, it is possible that it will be "ushering in a new era of '*electronic nirvana*'" (ibid.; emphasis mine). But then again, if ESB was thought to bring with it an "Electro-hierarchy," it was seen to allow the "leading figures in the military-industrial complex" to "run the society in the same way that they run their factories and armies," ending up in an ultra-rational form of technocracy called by Rorvik an "Electroligarchy" (ibid.: 151).

All the same, in a "*world rapidly growing accustomed to artificial external and internal prostheses, spare-part surgery and organ transplants*," as Rorvik assesses, the "idea of implanting metal wires in the brain is bound to become less and less 'foreign' and repugnant" (ibid.: 152; emphasis mine; cf. Dumit 1995: 349–356). At the time, it was estimated in the circles of human engineering and psychological adaptation research that this would open a "possibility that people will opt for the implants in order to 'cash in' on a new form of electronic entertainment" (ibid.; cf. Ross 1991a: 152–153; Kellner 1995: 304, 307; Graham 2001: 306–307; Saco 2002: 131–133; Gibson 1995 [1984]; from the historical perspective of American technocracy, see Akin 1977; Noble 1979 [1977]; Burris 1993; Schwab 2004). For Rorvik, this was not at all a vision of a distant future, but present reality in the early 1970s, for scientific research at the time had, as he believed, already proved that

> the so-called "pleasure centres" of the brain can be wired in such a way that one can create, *with the mere push of a button, an almost orgasmic state of euphoria or cause the individual to hallucinate as vividly as if on LSD*. With computer programming it may be possible to create within the mind synthetic experiences of almost any description. (Rorvik 1971: 153; emphasis mine; cf. Perniola 2004: 35)

What, instead, was still a vision of the future, though not a distant one, was an idea, proposed by a scientist named Dorman D. Israel, a Fellow of the Institute of Radio Engineers, to *use radio waves to transmit information directly into the brain*. Accordingly, "brain implants will be much sought after around the turn of the century to implement new means of communication," enabling a "*direct electronic thought transference*," and thus an opportunity to "*enhance creative capabilities*" of human beings (ibid.; emphasis mine). Here we can see, in a paradigmatic form, not only the idea of the Enlightenment concerning the "perfectibility of the human being" (see, for example, Schouls 1989: 135–137; Porter 2001b: 16–18; Passmore 1970), driven to its logical conclusion: to *the perfect compatibility of the human body with technology* to the extent that what is human is entirely defined

by devices and appliances extending and empowering the body understood as a malleable organism; but, beyond that, visions of human engineering as an enhancement and finally as an exceeding the limits of the human as elaborated on in American technological research and development projects in the 1960s and 1970s, which anticipate, in an elementary form, the idea of the posthuman celebrated by cyber discourse in the name of the "post," as a postmodern version, as we will see, of Timothy Leary's psychedelic "neuropolitics" (see Leary et al. 1964; Leary et al. 1977; Leary et al. 1988; Romanyshyn 1989: 27–31; for historical contextualization, see Lee & Shlain 1992 [1985]; Higgs 2006).

What, in the 1960s and 1970s, took place under the imperative of scientific-technological rationalism, as a teleology and theology of progress, inscribed in the cybernetic mindset (for the idea of the teleological in the context of cybernetics, see, for example, Faber 1986: 55–65, 72–93, 97–117; George & Johnson 1985; Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]; Illetterati & Michelini 2009), turned into the techno-imaginary of the 1980s and 1990s reflecting the reason of the surrational. In this sense, in the crosslight of the past and the present, it is instructive to see how the faith in technological omnipotence continues from the 1960s to our days.

> Writing in the Proceedings of the IRE as if from the perspective of the year 2012, Dr Israel notes that by the year 2000 people will be able to transmit their thoughts over substantial distances "but always by appointment" – a most fortunate limitation. By 2012, he goes on, things will have advanced to the point that "newborn infants can be operated upon and the latest submicroelectronic equipment installed in the brain and at certain critical points in the spinal column so that they are almost certainly assured not only of the benefits of full non-radio communicative powers but also there is reason to believe that *their scientific creative ability will be enhanced*. Logically enough, this operation must be performed within two weeks of birth because if the infant is only slightly exposed to contact with its family who still have not completed their '*unlearning*' and *readjustment* (to the new technology), he might never become a good subject for the modern system of communication." (Rorvik 1971: 153; emphasis mine)

No wonder that, according to Rorvik, "[l]ike nuclear energy, ESB possesses a fantastic potential for good as well as evil" (ibid.: 154).

In the course of ESB experimentation, scientists "discovered that all of the brain's functions – the autonomic, the somatic and the psychic – are susceptible to electronic control" (ibid.). This entailed, as one scientist put it, that in "exploring intracerebral physiology, we are reaching not only the soma but also for the psyche itself" (ibid.). In these terms, with regard to brain functions, it was now to be considered the influence that can in this way "be exerted over the autonomic system which resides largely in the hypothalamus, that deep, dark elemental area of the brain that controls our most basic and primitive needs"; that is, the system that helps to "regulate blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, hunger, sleep, sex and many other things" (ibid.). What we see here is a genesis of an entirely new kind of human being, even a new species: a *cerebral being* as a scientific-technologically constructed *brain-human* whose body is just a "flesh-machine" the function of which is only to execute the orders given to it by the omnipotent brain; in

other words, the emergence of a post-Cartesian *cogito-being* the body of which is nothing but a subordinate subsystem of the brain which, in itself, is nothing but a control mechanism under the control of technoscience (for the idea of control in American behavioral psychology, see Mills 1998).

This is the world of the cyborg brought to its logical conclusion: a world in which docile techno-bodies implement the instructions given them by the "anonymous wisdom" of the scientific-technologically organized human-machine system, an entirely new kind of social formation formerly called human society.

The Technology of Electronic Euphorics

All this was to be seen not only in Rorvik's techno-optimistic scenario in his *As Man Becomes Machine. The Evolution of the Cyborg* and its subsequent elaborations (see Rorvik 1971, 1978), but also in the various visions concerning the coming of a new type of society in post-war America, a new "golden age" in American culture (Biggs & Helms 2007: 10), an era of great expectations generated by economic prosperity and advanced technology (see, for example, Noble 1979 [1977], 1986 [1984], 1997; Pursell 1995; Hughes 2004a [1989]; Hacker & Vining 2007) resulting in a secular eschatology under the sign of "the American technological sublime" (Nye 1996): an era dominated by the spirit of the Cold War, enthusiasm for the "Atomic Age" and anticommunist hysteria culminating in the paranoia of McCarthyism, the coming into being of American supremacy that began with the economic boom of the Korean War (1950–1953), experienced its turning point with the Sputnik shock (1957) and celebrated its triumph with the Apollo Moon landing (1969) (see, for example, Wang 2009: 183–189, 219–248; for the America of the Vietnam War as "the end of victory culture" and "the disillusioning of a generation," see Engelhardt 2007 [1995]).

In this constellation, what Jessica R. Johnston (2001b) calls "the American body" became an influential social ideal (cf. Brandt 2007) implying, on the one hand, a model of personal success in the sense of the "pursuit of happiness," and a manifestation of the scientific-technological logic of the military-industrial complex, on the other. That is, the body as a personal survival machine functioning according to the performance principle constitutive of American capitalism (cf. Yanarella & Reid 1996: 207–215; Marcuse 1941, 2002 [1964]; McKenzie 2001) was characteristic of "the American body" as an incorporation of the imperative of scientific-technological modernization (in terms of "total mobilization" and the figure of the *Arbeiter*, cf. Jünger 1980 [1930], 1982 [1932]). In the light of this machinic conception of the human body, what Rorvik describes as "the evolution of the cyborg" (as the subtitle of his study sums up his idea) implied that is was feasible to develop technologies called "electroprostheses" by which implanted electrodes and the human body, combined together, turned into a "bio-cybernetic system" (Rorvik 1971: 155–158). By means of a "programmable brain stimulator," it was possible to "put together a chain of movements that closely approximates natural, co-ordinated bodily motion" (ibid.: 157).

In other words, what we have here is a machine-organic assemblage manifesting the logic of Wienerian cybernetics (see Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950], 2003a [1954], 2003b [1949]; Wiener & Schadé 1963a, 1963b; cf. Schwitzgebel & Schwitzgebel 1973), reappering later in the visions engendered by the Harawayan cyborg (see Haraway 1985, 2004; Schneider 2005). That is, as Wiener (1968 [1950]: 185) says, "*[w]hat is used as an element in a machine, is in fact an element in the machine*" (cf. Pursell 1995: 287–290; Mirowski 2002: 58–68; Bousquet 2009: 117–118; Franchi & Güzeldere 2005b).

If, in the "ironic political myth" of the cyborg invented by Haraway (1991a: 149), the borderlines between the human, the machine and the animal are breached and broached (ibid.: 150–155; cf. Haraway 1989: 117, 138–141; Haraway in Gane 2006: 143–148), the border-crossing and hybridization is already in place in the human engineering of the 1960s and the 1970s, in its most straightforward manner, without any irony, if not the "objective irony" elaborated on by Baudrillard (1988b [1987]: 41–42, 1990b [1983]: 182, 1994b [1992]: 16–17, 51–52, 1996 [1995]: 70–73, 127, 1997c: 13, 2000b: 54, 77–78); as Rorvik describes the principle of adaptation to the machine:

> As complex as the whole system sounds, it has been simplified to the point that, as noted, the monkey can himself operate a small set of switches. With proper training this enables him to control his own movements. He learns, for example, that if he wants to raise his right arm he is to push one switch, if he wants to move rapidly forward he is to push another switch, and so on. (Rorvik 1971: 157; in terms of primate studies, cf. Haraway 1989: 137–139, 156, 1991g [1988]: 47–57; Dewsbury 2006)

In this manner, by increasing the number of brain implants and their computer-controlled co-ordination, it was expected that it would become possible to construct "even more sophisticated cybernetic organisms" (Rorvik 1971: 157). From this, there was, of course, only a little step towards the wiring of the so-called "pleasure centres" of the brain in such a way that one can create, with the mere push of a button, an "almost orgasmic state of euphoria or cause the individual to hallucinate as vividly as if on LSD." Accordingly, the result was what Rorvik calls "electrosex" (ibid.: 160; cf. Ellul 1980 [1977]: 30, 95, 114, 173–174, 288; Leary 1994a: 142–176; Velena 1998: 88–90).[184]

> Intriguing as the electrosomatic devices are, it is the psychic and behavioural functions of the brain that are the most spectacularly controlled by ESB. This was demonstrated by Dr James Olds, who was the first to discover the so-called "pleasure centres" of the brain while experimenting with rats at McGill University in Canada. The nature of the pleasure induced by stimulating these centres (located in a variety of areas) seems to transcend that associated with mere

184 According to the dictionary *Electricities: Webster's Quotations, Facts and Phrases* (2008: 535): "Stereostim is a form of electrosex, electrical stimulation for the purpose of sexual pleasure. It is accomplished by transmitting amplified audio signals through electrodes applied to the genitals." It is in this sense that both the "erotic telepresence technology" or "teledildonics" proposed by Rheingold (1991: 345–353) and the "cyberSM" cybersex system constructed by Stenslie and Woolford (see Stenslie 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2006; Woolford 1996a, 1996b) are virtual and prosthetic modifications of electrosex.

> food, drink or sex. The stimulation seems to result in a sort of *super-euphoria* or *hyper-ecstacy* that causes the animals to forget more jejune pleasures. (Rorvik 1971: 160; emphasis mine; in terms of the cyberspace experience, cf. Gibson 1995; in the context of Stenslie-Woolford "cyberSM," cf. Stenslie 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1996; Woolford 1994a, 1996a)

In one experiment, rats were "wired for pleasure" and then permitted to press the stimulating lever themselves" (Rorvik 1971: 160). What happened? They turned into *animal sex-machines*: they pressed the pleasure button wildly, "some at the astounding rate of 5000 times per hour!" (ibid.). "Some of these sybarites kept it up for twenty-four hours a day for periods of up to three weeks, taking only the briefest rat naps and scant seconds for food and drink" (ibid.). "Electrosex", as Rorvik concludes, "combines the best of all possible pleasures" (ibid.) – exactly as in the visions of cybersex and "teledildonics" a couple of decades later (see, for example, Rheingold 1991: 345–353, 1990; Case 1996: 177–179; James & Carkeek 1997: 109; Vasseleu 1997: 53–55; Lunenfeld 2000a: 88–91; Stone 1995c; Barber 1997, 2004a, 2010; Plant 1998; in terms of lesbian fiction concerning "the lesbian sex toy, dildo," cf. Moore 1995: 104–105).

These "pleasure centres" are, as is commonly known, not a privilege of animals. This fact was only confirmed in experiments in which human brains were stimulated by electronic means to control certain disorders. But the results were not always as expected; for example, "some patients undergoing stimulation suddenly began discussing sexual matters," several engaged in "flirtatious activity that was out of character with their normal behaviour," and, most surprisingly, "several of the stimulated subjects expressed their desire to marry the doctor," even, as Rorvik (1971: 160) adds, "regardless of whether they were of the opposite sex."

> Though the subjects who experienced changes in the sexual ideation apparently experienced pleasurable feelings, they are not necessarily the same, intense feelings that kept the rats up day and night pressing the pleasure pedal. Other human subjects, however, have experienced similar pleasures. One man, equipped with one of Dr. Heath's *intracranial self-stimulation* (ICSS) devices, for example, was particularly fond of pressing one of the buttons on the portable device. According to the reports on this patient, "the feeling was good; it was as if he were building up to a sexual orgasm." Dr. Heath observed that, "regardless of his emotional state and the subject under discussion in the room," the pressing of this particular button "was accompanied by the patient's introduction of a sexual subject, usually with a broad grin. When questioned about this, he would say: "I don't know why that came to mind, – I just happened to think of it." (ibid.: 160–161; emphasis mine).

The stimulation – regardless of whether we call it *sexual* or not – with this electrosexual prosthesis, the "intracranial self-stimulation device" – resembling the later visions of "teledildonics" as a high-tech masturbation apparatus (see, for example, Pryor & Scott 1994: 175; Lunenfeld 2000a: 90; Bell 2001a: 126–127; LaFont 2003: 363–368; Ferguson 2010: 60; for "wired wanking" as "the beginnings of cyborg intimacy," see Kaloski 1999 [1997]: 205–206) – was, as the scientists concluded, a "highly effective sexual aphrodisiac," and understandably, the "patient

called upon it frequently" (Rorvik 1971: 161). In other experiments, it was demonstrated that the experiences with electrosexual prosthetics could have even more intensity than in the case above, that is, the man with the "broad grin."

> One woman, while undergoing stimulation of a pleasure centre in the brain, found it impossible to control herself. Her mood would abruptly switch from its usual serenity to one of euphoric giggling and laughing. She could only describe what it was that she was feeling as "pleasant tingling sensations of the body." Another patient, who was generally silent, would spontaneously exclaim such things as "Hey! You can keep me here longer when you give me these," when apparent pleasure centres were stimulated. (ibid.)

According to Rorvik's conclusion, just as "self-involvement and inward-looking attitudes have been found to characterise many drug-induced 'highs,'" a similar "*self-orientation seems to accompany the electrically induced pleasure state*, at least initially" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Then again, there were also experimental results of the electro-stimulation of the pleasure centre in the brain showing that "this preoccupation with internal pleasures" can, in cases of "sustained stimulation," lead to "pleasurable feelings" that are expressed "in an increasingly outward direction" (ibid.). Although the "intracranial self-stimulation device" apparently functioned like a high-tech masturbation apparatus, it nevertheless, at least in some cases, although in an entirely unknown way, also seemed to enable what one of the scientists cited by Rorvik calls a "shift from pleasurable thinking to friendliness" (ibid.) – just like, as we will see, in Howard Rheingold's (1991: 351) "teledildonics" as a "deep physical, social, emotional communion with another person," a techno-euphoric vision of "erotic telepresence technology" making possible to "reach out and touch someone – or *an entire population* – in ways humans have never before experienced" (ibid.: 345; emphasis mine; cf., for example, Foster 2002: 492–497)

2.2.2 From "Neurosexual Intercourse" to Sex with "Sensual Machines"

In 1994, ten years after the publication of Gibson's *Neuromancer*, the seminal work of all that is "cyber," Timothy Leary – the most influential prophet of the virtual world, the man who turned the *psychedelic* into the *cyberdelic* (as we will see later) – visited Autodesk, at the time the largest manufacturer of CAD software favouring experimental research and development, trying to realize the idea of cyberspace as an everyday working and leisure environment; that is, to transform a science fiction vision to a technological reality (see, for example, Rheingold 1991: 166–169, 175–176, 184–187; Laurel 1993 [1991]: 184–185; Stone 1994b [1991]: 97–98; Biocca & Deleney 1995: 109–110; Kendrick 1996: 145–146).

What happened? Leary saw the future – *the future already present*, the future in its real virtuality, present as virtually real. Leary had an opportunity to experience cyberspace as the reality of virtual reality realized by computer simulation: not as a new universe, but as a playground of "virtual racquetball" (Leary 1994a: 17; cf. Aukstakalnis & Blatner 1992: 198–201). That is, a simple simulation of fun

sport with cartoon-like figures – that was now what had resulted from the galactic science fiction future imagined by Gibson a decade earlier (see Gibson 1995 [1984], 1997 [1982]; in terms of theory-fictions, see, for example, Heim 1993, 1998; Markley 1996b; Cavallaro 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; in terms of virtual sex and "teledildonics," see Grosz 2001: 40–45, 76). But, in fact, what Leary saw was the future in retrospect: the then present state of the future opened up in front of Leary's eyes as it was conceived of and elaborated on through laboratory experiments and attendant futuristic visions during the previous ten years (see, for example, Barlow 1990a, 1990b, 1994a, 1995; Robinett 1990; Sutherland 1990; Chung et al. 1990; Fisher 1990a, 1990b; Rheingold 1991; Biocca 1992a, 1992b; Pryor & Scott 1994; Biocca & Delaney 1995; Biocca & Levy 1995a, 1995b; Durlach & Mavor 1995; Deuel 1996; Hillis 1996; Schroeder 1996). Still in the mid-1990s, virtual reality as a full-body immersive experience was a *potential* form of computer simulation, half prototypes, half scenarios of possible solutions – and, most of all, fantasies, theory-fictions and omnipresent media hype.

In terms of the cyberdelic, however, the potential seemed to be actual: in the actual present of the Autodesk experiment, Leary already saw – with his extraordinary prophetic perception trained by his psychedelic visions stemming from LSD hallucinations – a virtual future, cyberspace as everyday reality (cf. Dixon & Cassidy 1998).

"How to Boot Up Your Bio-Computer"

Experiencing the reality of virtual reality in 1994 it appeared to Leary as the reality of the future here and now. What Leary (1994a: 17) thought he was seeing was a "platonic reality," as "some literary computer folks," according to Leary, say "in honor of the Socratic philosopher who described *a universe of idealized or imagined forms*" (emphasis mine). From this perspective, for Leary it was clear that a virtual realization of "platonic reality," as a customized parallel universe, had become real, real not just as a technological viability, but, more fundamentally, as a new ontological and epistemological reality, existing parallel, or even instead of, everyday reality, the reality of what is called "real life." In *this* reality, as Leary reports:

> Now, we can don cybersuits, clip on cybergoggles, and move around in the electronic reality *on the other side of the screen*. Working, playing, creating, exploring with basic particles of reality – electrons. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

And, as Leary argued, the "implications of this electronic technology for work and leisure and interpersonal intimacy are staggering" (ibid.). For example, "within ten years" – that is, around 2004 – "many of us will not have to 'go' to work" (ibid.).

> We will get up in the morning, shower, dress in our cyberwear suits, and "beam" our brains to work. No more will we have to flight traffic in our air-polluting 300-horsepower cars, hunt for parking spaces, take the elevator to our offices. No more flying, strapped in our seats in a monstrous toxic-waste-producing air-polluting jet-propelled sky-dinosaur, jammed with sneezing, coughing sardines, fighting jet lag to attend conferences and meetings. (ibid.)

All these tiring nuisances of everyday material reality, the reality of millions of people all around the world, were about to be history.

> Tomorrow our brains will soar on the wings of electrons into the offices of friends in Tokyo, then beam at light speed to a restaurant in Paris for a flirtatious lunch, pay a quick, ten-minute visit to our folks in Seattle – *all without physically leaving our living rooms*. In three hours of electronic, global house calls we can accomplish what would have taken three days or three weeks of *lugging our brain-carrying bodies like slabs of inert flesh*. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

If this was to be our reality of work and leisure, then, what about the most intimate of our intimate relations, the experiences of sex and sexuality, for which we usually need our material bodies, at least in everyday reality? Instead of "lugging our brain-carrying bodies like slabs of inert flesh," would it not be easier just to leave the carnal body behind altogether and "beam" our brains there where we expected to enjoy sexual pleasures – "brain sex" literally? The right answer, of course, is yes. Among other things, the future, according to Leary, would involve a possibility of empowering individuals not only to "actively communicate" and "perform," but also to "create electronic realities" (ibid.: 19). With new technology, enabling "inexpensive extensions of our brains," we would be able to experience "each other at unimaginable level of clarity, richness, and intimacy," and then, "*reality designing*" would be a "team sport" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Rheingold 1991: 286–311; Heim 1998: 75–124; Hillis 1999: 164–199; Helsel & Roth 1991; Pimentel & Teixeira 1993; Tollander 1994 [1991]; Tomas 1994 [1991]; Moser & MacLeod 1996).

All this would also open up a new reality of "erotic interaction" (Leary (1994a: 19). By making a distinction between "physical communication," or "bodies rubbing," and "neurological signals," or "words and thoughts transmitted electrically," we could see that "electronic appliances" were "beautifully cooperative" in order to find much more pleasing experiences than the conventional "physical union," whether "complete" or not; namely, the "union of minds and brains," bringing us the "interplay of empathy, wit, fantasy, dream, whimsy, imagination," in short, the pleasures of "platonic love" (ibid.). Through all this we would be able to transcend sex as "mindless genital acrobatics" (ibid.; in Freudian terms, cf. Weeks 1997b [1986]: 71–72; from the Foucauldian perspective, cf. Carnes 1998: 119–120; with regard to post-heterosexual sexuality, cf. Dean 2000: 1–21; Harrison & Hood-Williams 2002). In other words, there would be "intense chaotics waiting to be re-created," not alone, but "with our friends" (Leary 1994a: 19).

To make clear what he means Leary describes a "typical episode of erotic play that could happen the day after tomorrow" (ibid.).

> The two lovers, Terry and Jerry, are performing bodily intercourse beautifully with elegance and sensual skill, etc. They are also wearing platonic lenses. At one point Jerry touches her/his watch, and suddenly they are bodysurfing twelve-foot rainbow waves that are timed to their physical erotic moves. Sounds of liquid magnificence flood their ears. Terry giggles and touches her/his watch, and the waves spiral into a tunnel vortex down which they spin and

> tumble. They intercreate reality dances. *Terry is a seething volcano over whom Jerry soars as a fearless eagle, while birds sing and the Earth softly breaths*. (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Rheingold 1991: 346)

From this perspective, it is absolutely clear, as Leary says, that Plato "was magnificently on beam" when he said that the "material, physical expressions are pale, crude distortions of the *idea forms* that are fabricated by the mind, the brain, the 'soul'" (Leary 1994a: 19; emphasis mine). This means that "we are talking about learning how to operate our minds, our brains, our souls" (ibid.). In other words, we are "learning the rudiments of *mind-fucking*, silky body juicy fucking, and … brain-soul fucking" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

> In fact, most physical sex, even the most "complete unions," is no more than graceful motions unless enriched by brain-fucking imagination. And here is the charming enigma, the paradoxical truth that dares not show its face. Usually, even in the deepest fusions, *neither partner really knows what is flashing through that delightful, adorable mind of the other.* (ibid.: 20; emphasis mine)

But this great transformation in terms of the body and corporeal experiences also has consequences with regard to the presentation of ourselves in everyday situations (cf. Goffman 1959). In the future, the "wearing of cyberclothing will be as conventional as the wearing of body-covering clothing," even to the extent that to "appear without your platonic gear would be like showing up in public stark naked" (Leary 1994a: 19). In the end, a "new global language of virtual-signals, icons, 3-D pixels will be the lingua franca of our species" (ibid.; cf. Russell 1990a, 1990b; Sheff 1990).

Our future as human beings, for Leary, is not life as corporeal beings in material reality; instead, it is an issue of "how to boot up your bio-computer," your brain. In these terms, the future had already began at the beginning of the 1990s; of course, not all over the world, but, as they say, in the "land of unlimited possibilities," the United States of America in which technological millennialism is a central part of national ideology.

> Those young, bright baby-boom Americans, who had been dialling and tuning television screens since infancy, and who had learned how to activate and turn on their brains using chaotic drugs in serious introspective experiments, were uniquely prepared to *engineer the interface between the computer and the cybernetic organ known as the human brain*. (Leary 1994a: 40; cf. McLuhan 1964, 1995 [1969])

Cybernetics, the science of controlling information and communication in living organisms and machines,[185] according to Leary's scenario, is the scientifically secured way to the future of the human being. For Leary, our future is not in the body, but in the brain, provided that we learn to *interface* the computer with

185 It should be clear that in this context what is at issue is not so much the scientific cybernetics founded by Norbert Wiener (1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]) as a "cybernetic" mode of thinking of the human being in terms of technology, as an "information machine" equal to the computer (cf., for example, Hayles 1999: 64–68; Ferkis 1969; Noble 1989, 2008; Edwards 1996; Poster 2002; 2004; Pias 2003, 2004; Johnston 2008). In America, a popularized form of cybernetics at the time was a widespread model for considering human life as well as the functions of society as systems based on information processes (see, for example, Pickering 2010: 10–15, 54–62, 72, 81–83, 113; Helvey 1971; Cordeschi 2002).

our "cybernetic organ," our human brain. Through his comprehensive experiments with LSD and other brain activating substances since the early 1960 Leary had learned that being human is not to be a body-being, but being cerebral, a brain-being (Leary 1994a: 39–41, 1977, 1995 [1968], 1999a [1965], 2000a [1988], 2001 [1988]; for a science-historical contextualization, see Pickering 2010: 10–15, 80–81). The conclusion of these experiments was that the brain-computer connection was the key to an entirely new mode of being human: "external engineered tools helped us understand inner function," that is, the workings of the mind as the true basis not only of the individual, but of human life in general.

Thus, the "humanistic" aim was to "teach individuals how to self-administer psychoactive drugs in order to free their psyches without reliance upon doctors or institutions" (Leary 1994a: 42). The art of programming the "bio-computer" (ibid.) was the technology of human liberation. As Leary (1999a [1965]: 7) explained, a "group liberation cult is required"; that is, "[y]ou must form that most ancient and sacred of human structures – the clan" (ibid.): "A clan or cult is a small group of human beings organized around a religious goal" (ibid.; cf. Leary 2005 [1965]; for the "liberation cult" initiated by Leary, see O'Brien 1988: 54–61; Slack 1974; for "cybergnosis" as a salvation strategy, see Aupers et al. 2008: 687–694; in terms of cyberspace religiosity, cf. Brasher 2004; Højsgaard & Warburg 2005; Drees 2009; in the sense of "technosophy," cf. Fisher 1997: 123–125; for cyberspace as the reality of "angelic bodies," cf. Lévy 1997 [1994]: 91–123). This, indeed, was far more comprehensive a political programme than Kant's philosophical project of *Aufklärung* as *der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbsverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*; that is, the liberation of the human inability to use the faculty of reason independently from alien guidance, *das Unvermögen, sich seinen Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen* (Kant 1991a [1784]: 53) – only that instead of Kantian *Verstand*, the faculty of reason, what we needed was a technologically enhanced brain, our "bio-computer" empowered by cyber technology.

In Leary's terms, only where the individual was able to use the personal "bio-computer," one's own brain, *interfaced* with the computer as a brain-external information and communication machine, would the individual be a free subject, a self in and for itself: a subject of the new world: the agent of one's own self as a technologically enhanced post-subject, a post-biological cyborg, a monadic/nomadic cybernaut navigating in its own universe, or, in Leary's (1994c [1988]: 64) words, a "reality pilot" of one's own destiny (cf. Balsamo 1995a: 353–354; Kennedy 2000a: 474–475; Heuser 2003: 24–25). As Leary (1994a: 42) proclaimed: "If we are to stay free, we must see to it that the right to own digital data processors becomes as inalienable as the constitutional guarantees of free speech and a free press."

But this was only one side of the post-Enlightenment freedom programme vigorously promoted by Leary. The other side, as important in its political consequences, pertained to the lessons drawn from the 1960s counterculture, essentially based on LSD and similar brain activators. In his article "The Sociol-

ogy of LSD," Leary (1994d [1983]: 99) argued that "[h]ippies were the first naïve, innocent, idealistic babies of the *new neurological-information society*," a pioneer generation that had found an important "evolutionary tool" (ibid.), LSD, to *reprogramme* the mind of the individual and whole society; that is, a new technology to "activate and direct one's own brain function" (ibid.: 100). "Self-managed brain control is the future deck" (ibid.: 101) – that was Leary's conclusion of the LSD experiments and experiences since the 1960s. In this manner, the aim was to "gear our brains to multiplicity, complexity, relativity, change" (ibid.: 103); that is, a new mode of subjectivity and agency based of the "politics of ecstasy" (Leary 1998 [1980], 2004 [1979]; for LSD and psychedelic experiences as a cultural alternative to Western rationality, see Stevens 1987; for a historical contextualization in terms of "acid revolution," see O'Brien 1988: 54–65; for "acid dreams," see Lee & Shlain 1992 [1985]).

The Pleasure of Cyberotics

It was time to understand that facing the challenges of the future, in contrast to the answers given by religious and political leaders, as Leary (1994d: 103) proclaimed, the "scientific answer is to increase intelligence, expand your consciousness, surf the waves of chaotic change planfully" (ibid.). Millions of Americans had already witnessed in their own lives that "[p]sychedelics produce states of possession, trance, delightful chaoticness, expanded consciousness, spiritual illumination, mystical emphaties with natural forces" (ibid.: 100). These individual experiences, together with scientific research, were the "biochemical knowledge" to be applied to "manage the synaptic patterns" of all those who had committed themselves for a better future. Thus, the message was clear:

> Since our research had demonstrated that set and setting determine the course of an altered-state experience, we constantly broadcast signals of intelligent reassurance: "Trust your nervous system, go with the flow, the universe is basically a beautiful and safe place." (ibid.: 101)

In these terms, both LSD and the computer were, for Leary, scientific mind technologies for expanding individual experience in order to make humans, as technologically empowered agents of change, to work in harmony with the forces of the universe.

Precisely in this connection, sex and sexuality took on a new meaning in Leary's psycho-political programme, in his enterprise to advance and promote postmodern ego-politics in the name of what Leary called "neuropolitique" or "neuropolitics" (see Leary et al. 1977; Leary et al. 1988; cf. Romanyshyn 1989: 27–28; White 1993; Connolly 2002; Young 2006), a post-political programme of new hedonism on a scientific-technological basis of brain research and neuroscience (for a historical contextualization, see Higgs 2006).

"Cyberotics" (Leary 1994a: 123), condensed in one word, is an entire new mode of "the sexual" refined by "the erotic," sublimated to post-corporeal "bodiness"

in the mode of the virtual; the key to an avantgardist culture of enjoyment embracing a psyche/cyberdelic mixture of sex, body design and hedonism as a continuation of the LSD experience by other means, the means of cyber technology enabling a way of exceeding the limits of the one-body confinement (for a comprehensive overview of Leary's conception of sex and sexuality, see Leary 1999b; cf. Plant 1997b: 199–214, 1998: 30–32; Ryle & Soper 2002: 189; Taylor & Saarinen 1994; Dixon & Cassidy 1998; in terms of cyberotics, cyberspace and "the *jouissance* in the cyborg," cf. Kennedy 1999: 130–133; for a historical contextualization, see Stevens 1987). If this is the present future, what was there before it? This question brings us back to the distant past of Leary's youth, to the time of his becoming conscious of desire as the driving force of the body (see Greenfield 2007: 13–20, 60–78; Higgs 2006).

> The year was 1938. Place: a small town in Western Massachusetts. Cultural background: Irish Catholic. Erotic climate: dry and frigid. Growing up in this chill environment I was taught there was virtue and mortal sin – nothing in between. Good was to think and act like the neighbours, to be proper and decent. Bad? The human body. Any passing reference to sexual functions was very bad. The mention of genital organs was taboo! Erotic feelings – bad. Sexual desire – beyond bad. It was evil! (Leary 1994a: 125)

In this situation, Leary decided that "my family – and by extension, society's great Anti-Sex Gang – would not gain control over my precious bodily fluids" (ibid.). Before the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s, a Biblical puritanism prevailed in America, and, at the same time, American culture was – as it is still more today – thoroughly sexualized in and through its peculiar anti-sexual manner, a form of everyday sexual politics in which the body was a perpetually brewing source of irrational impulses to be kept under the control of the disciplinary regime established by the American puritan tradition (see, for example, Pivar 1973; Haller & Haller 1974; Sokolow 1983; Gardella 1985; D'Emilio & Freedman 1997 [1988]; Rousseau 1999; Fessenden et al. 2001b; Godbeer 2002; Horowitz 2002; Reumann 2005; in Weberian-Foucaultian terms, cf. Spanos 1995: 100–103). It is in this sense that "the sexual," in American culture, is a disquieting and perturbing signifier that reproduces itself through its persistent production; a production of signification that has its roots in the peculiarly American religiosity. Thus, Leary's "first experience with erotic literature was provided by the Bible": "I would sit poring over Old Testament descriptions of lasciviousness, burningly aware of the fundamentalist erection bulging in my trousers while Mother and aunts beamed approval from the living room, sure that I would become a priest" (Leary 1994a: 125; cf. Haraway 2000a: 8–13).

> Soft-core porn abounded in the 1930s. Endlessly I eyeballed with dreamy lust the Montgomery Ward mail-order catalogue with its pictures of young trollops shamelessly modelling silken underwear. Pert wantons in nylon hose! Housewife harlots in steamy corsets. Voluptuous nymphomaniacs in one-piece bathing suits, crotch panels hugging tightly to the firm, labial curves. Sexual repression had created such a steamy hot-house atmosphere that the slightest spark could produce in me a pulsing flame. (Leary 1994a: 125; cf. McLuhan 2002 [1951])

What is important here in terms of the future is that immersed in the Biblical eroticism, Leary got on the track of the mysteries of sexuality. "The secret erotic library of my youth taught me a valuable lesson about the thermodynamics of sexual expression and repression": "*Sexual arousal is all in the mind*" (Leary 1994a: 125–126) – a revolutionary insight with as revolutionary consequences, as the whole career of Leary as the prophet of both psychedelia and cyberdelia shows.

In other words, what is sexual is a *neuro-psychological matter* for Leary, a matter of which his "neuropolitical" programme and his psycho-politics of LSD in the name of psychedelia is made in the first place.

> The human being comes equipped with sexual organs wired to the brain and booted up by hormones. The hardware is activated by various cues your brain has learned to associate with sexual invitations and availability. These cues, as shared by a particular society, become the pornography of that culture. Each society and each person develops unique trigger stimuli. The stimuli may change from person to culture to time frame. (ibid.: 126)

If one lives in a "socially highly repressed environment," like the America of Leary's youth, an "innocent illustration may retain its tang of arousal" (ibid.). "The sexual brain is wired to imprint as trigger stimuli any cue that turns you on" (ibid.). In a politically or religiously puritanical culture, "the sexual" appears by the "slightest glimpse of a bodily part," or the "lightest hint of double entendre," anything endowed with double meaning (ibid.). In such an environment, Leary experienced something that drove him ahead in his academic career, and well beyond, as he was later to study psychology and to do experimental research with LSD and other psychedelic substances. During his younger years he "encountered a great and enduring paradox of the human condition (male division)," an anxious experience that already plagued Saint Augustine, the Church Father and one of the founding fathers of the Western conception of sexuality as an intrinsically evil force, as we saw above: "Although sex was obviously important to a happy life, I did not have *perfect control* over my erections" (ibid.: 127; emphasis mine; cf. Saint Augustine 1966 [413–426]: 357, 1971 [1887/419–420]: 266). This lack of control over his own body was a serious problem for Leary – and a scientific challenge.

Despite advances in sciences, "we couldn't get control of the most important part of our body" (Leary 1994a: 127). "Maybe this was what philosophers meant by the 'mind/body problem'" (ibid.). In the light of Leary's extensive reading and researching on the subject, the "male erotic response turned out to be a most complex, delicate situation," and the more adult males were perplexed by facing the "exquisite complications of erotic interaction in the fast-moving, ever-changing, postindustrial, interactive civilization" (ibid.: 128), the more it was about becoming a serious problem with grave social and societal consequences. Thus, the learned opinion was in the 1960s that "much of the conflict, aggression, paranoia, and sadism that was plaguing society was due to sexual frustration" (ibid.). Referring to Freud and Reich, Leary concluded that "[s]ex means cheerfully giving up control to receive pleasure," and consequently,

"[t]he less sex, the more compulsion to control" (ibid.; in terms of the "sexual revolution," see, for example, Jordan 2002: 124–125, 132–135, 146; Seidman 1989; Allyn 2001; Escoffier 2003; with regard to *Playboy*, "playroom" and "pornotopia," see Preciado 2004: 220–253; Snyder 2004: 135–142; Fraterrigo 2009).

If this was one aspect of the problem concerning the neuro-psychological constitution not only of human sexuality, but, more fundamentally, human society as a whole, at least from the male point of view, a contrary and complementary one, according to Leary, was pertaining to substances that arouse sexual desire. There was every reason to believe that "if a safe, dependable aphrodisiac were available, many of the psychological and social problems facing our species would instantly be ameliorated" (Leary 1994a: 128). Leary's intensive study of historical material on the subject demonstrated that "[t]hroughout the ages, intelligent, affluent, ambitious, and just plain horny human beings have continually sought the alchemical grail – the true aphrodisiac" (ibid.). For Leary, it was all the more astounding to notice that the contribution of "modern science" to "this noble search" was simply non-existent: "nothing," "nada," "zilch" (ibid.: 129).

Not only that there was no "proven aphrodisiac" in the medical literature of the time, there was "apparently no research being done on this most important topic" either; there seemed to be only a "veil of secrecy around the subject" (ibid.). And thus, as Leary reports:

> There was no doubt about it. There was a social taboo against the idea of *a pill that would give man a calm, certain control over his precious equipment*. I couldn't understand it. If your car decided to run when it wanted to, you'd have it adjusted right away. If your television set was temperamental and turned off at its own whim, you'd take steps to put you back in charge. (ibid.: 130; emphasis mine)

For Leary, this was simply unbearable. But then, suddenly, Leary himself found the solution. Sitting in August 1960 beside a swimming pool in Mexico, he consumed *psilocybin mushrooms* and discovered the "power of psychedelic drugs to *reprogram the brain*" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

> I rushed back to Harvard. Frank Barron and I started the Harvard Psychedelic Drug Research project. Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts and Allen Ginsberg were our advisors. We assembled thirty of the brightest young researchers in the area. We were on to something that could change human nature. We felt like Oppenheimer after his Alamogordo bomb, except better, because *psychedelic drugs allowed you to release the nuclear energies inside your own head*. (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Higgs 2006: 32–74; Greenfield 2007: 99–200; for the "Harvard Psychedelic Club," see Lattin 2010: 37–60)

During the next two years, Leary's project group studied the "reactions of a thousand subjects to LSD" (Leary 1994a: 129). The group discovered that the "key to a psychedelic drug session is set and setting," in other words, "your mind fix" and a proper "environment" (ibid.: 130–131). When sex was brought into this constellation the results were tremendous. As Leary's colleague, Richard Alpert (future Baba Ram Dass) commented, by this "inner exploration stuff" you can "access any circuit in your brain and change your mind," so it was time to face the fact that you

are "turning on the *most powerful sexual organ in the universe*" – the brain (ibid.: 131; emphasis mine; for Leary and Alpert's cooperative LSD research and experimentation at Harvard University, see Lee & Shlain 1992 [1985]: 71–101, 263–264).

This is the origin of the cerebral conception of sex and sexuality typical not only of Leary's psychedelic sexual politics, but also of the cyberdelic mind-set constitutive of "sex" in terms of the "cyber," the paradigm of cybersex celebrated by cyber discourse.

"Press Enter and I'll Boot up My Male-Merge Function!"

During the following two decades, from the early 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, Leary "multiplied" his "sensory pleasure" and "learned the techniques of erotic engineering" (Leary 1994a: 131). In his life, "[e]verything became a source of aesthetic-erotic pleasure" (ibid.). The "effect was in the head": "If you knew how to dial and tune your brain, you could enrich your sex life beyond your wildest dreams" (ibid.).

> But there was still that matter of controlling the rod of flesh. We could boogie around in our brains. Good! But why couldn't a man be able to operate his penis at will the way he moves the voluntary organs of his body? (ibid.; cf. Saint Augustine 1966 [413–426]: 345–401, 1971/1887/419–420]: 266)

This Augustinian problem remained, but in the mid-1980s the scientific-technological advancement in the field of computer technology had brought about something with which, indeed, as Leary had stated twenty years earlier, "you could enrich your sex life beyond your wildest dreams." The newly developed home computer, connected as a terminal to a computer network, had enabled an entirely new mode of sexual pleasure, as Leary (1994c [1985]: 147) explains in his article entitled "Digital Activation of the Erotic Brain."

Sex as a *digital activation of the erotic brain* – what this computer-age "sexual revolution" entailed Leary illustrates with a little story about a "young woman named Vicki," a "novice cyberpunk," "sitting alone in her bedroom," "on the edge of the chair with her legs spread wide," and "looking intently at a computer terminal on the desk in front of her" (ibid.). Vicki is using an "electronic-communication device for her own private pleasure, without institutional or government authorization" (ibid.). Suddenly, something happens, Vicki "blushes with excitement" and this "something" gets her "breathing heavily," with "her optics" she follows the "*letters squirting across the screen like spermatozoa*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Then, "Vicki smiles," and with "her right hand she begins typing letters on the keyboard in front of her" – Vicki is now "in the arousal mode" (ibid.).

> Oh Ron … I feel so baudy when we're on line. You're such a good transmitter! And you download sooooo good! Oooh you're so compatible – let's interscreen… I like your big, strong hardware. (Where?) I want to put love-bytes on your keyboard and slide your joystick into my F-slot. Tell me how you want me to access you. Press enter and I'll boot up my male-merge function! Oooh! Disk overload! My systems are crashing! (ibid.)

This is the way "cybernetworks" (ibid.) function in terms of sexual pleasure turned into "letters squirting across the screen like spermatozoa" – that is, in Leary's definition above, the idea of "digital activation of the erotic brain." Vicki, the "novice cyberpunk," has just learned to use "her Macintosh computer to boot up and artfully program the lust circuits in her brain" (ibid.). And, as Leary says, "after fifteen minutes of this *cyberaphrodisia*" (ibid.: 148; emphasis mine), Vicki and Ron have "constructed the most romantic, elegant, sophisticated, all-out, wanton, mutual sex affair imaginable": "Prefrontal nudity, floppy disco, sloppy disco, hard disco, cyberporn" (ibid.). "*I'll show you my display menu*," Vicki whispers – the computer screen has now become for both of them a "vehicle of their inner steamy, fantastic, cyberotic party" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

This is the idea of "cyberaphrodisia": the "erotic brain" is activated, the mind enjoys pleasurable thrills that take place in cyberspace. The computer, a machine, and the human brain, a "bio-computer," have been merged, fused, into a symbiotic human-machine system producing and processing sexual information.

In this way, for their own pleasure, Vicki and Ron were using the "power of modern electronics to *brain-fuck*" (ibid.; emphasis mine); that is:

> to link up their nervous systems by means of carefully selected signals transmitted between their computers by the phone lines. These lovers have thus become members of a fast-growing, erotic network – those who have discovered the *intimate possibilities of cybersex*. The secret is this: Computer screens have a powerful, hypnotic ability to create altered states in the brain. Two people communicating through their fast-feedback computers can access a range of brain circuits arguably *wider than can be reached by bodily contact*. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

That cybersex is more powerful experience than conventional body sex is, according to Leary, due to the simple fact that "the brain and the computer work the same way – in the language of electric impulses, of light" (ibid.).

Of course, as Leary assures us, "[n]o one is implying that the basic skin-tissue hardware is in any way outmoded": "Nothing can replace the kissing, cuddling, licking, nuzzling, nibbling, smelling, murmuring, sucking, joking, smoking, honey-moaning, fondling, biting, entering, and receiving the tender exchange of love's soft bruises" (ibid.: 149). Yes, even for Leary the pleasures of the flesh are, indeed, an important experience, but, as Leary emphasizes, in *scientific* terms, they are not *real*; namely, the truth is that:

> however enjoyable, our bodily contacts exist for us only as registered in our brains. We sense the touch and taste and perfume and the membrane softness of our lovers *only in clusters of electric signals picked up by our neurons and programmed by our mindware*. (ibid.; emphasis mine).

Thus, the scientific truth is that "the brain is the ultimate organ of pleasure" (ibid.). Having your brain, your "bio-computer," connected through the interface with the computer, you can enjoy an enormous expansion of your sex life. "People who use computer signals to arouse each others' sexual desires have

stumbled onto the next evolutionary step in human interaction: *quantum sex*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Of course, there are still people who claim that computers "depersonalize humanity" and "alienate us more from each other" (ibid.). The problem is that they "think of the computer as a machine" (ibid.).

> But the computer is not a machine. It's a silicon subcircuit of an electronic brain. It's an interpersonal communication device, a cyberphone. (ibid.)

The brain and the computer belong to the same order: both of them "receive, sort, and output 'ideas' in clusters of electric on/off signals" (ibid.; cf. Tomas 1995b: 31–38, 2004: 52–60, 141–144; Corning 2005: 361–364; Andrew 2009: 17–20; Pickering 2009: 118–120, 2010; Shannon & Weaver 1962 [1949]; Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]). For this reason, "[t]he brain is a powerful knowledge processor" (Leary 1994c: 149) that works on the same principles as the computer. And, precisely for the same reason, the brain is "the ultimate pleasure organ" in a similar manner as the computer is a "powerful organ for *neurosexual intercourse*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). "When two people link up via computers, their 'naked' brains are *interscreening*," not through a mediated connection, but "*directly*": all the "complicated apparati of bodily contact – garter belts, bedrooms, zippers, bras, contraceptives, body parts – are *bypassed*" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

This is the pleasure of "neurosexual intercourse": "[y]our electronic tongue can slide along the Q-links into his soft pink receivers with no clumsy props to get in the way" (ibid.). This is the new world of "quantum sex": our body parts are "tissueware"; we enjoy "telesex" that "encourages brain play"; like the "nerve cells in birds" get in the state of "neurotumescence," our "brain is a sexual organ that can swell and subside like the pink membranes of penis and vagina" (ibid.: 150–151). Forget the flesh, the time has come for "cyberfucking," the time to "learn how to become skilled at telefucking" (ibid.: 152–153). This is the world of cybersex.

> For many people, cybersex – using the telephone or computer to arouse the brain – is easier than running around like a horny robot, pulling clothes off and on, jumping in and out of sacks with strangers. […] Cybersex is a relaxed way of learning how to explore this brand-new frontier of cybercourse. […] Cybersex uses the powerful instruments of knowledge processing and communication to perform the most important task of this stage of human evolution. You are learning how to use your head, to take over the programming of your bored brain. Surfing your own brain waves. […] Cybersex and brain-fucking could be a key to freedom and growth. If you don't use your head for your own pleasure, entertainment, education, and growth, who will? (ibid.: 154)

In this way, in the new world of cybersex, you are a "neurosexual pioneer," you have the pleasure to "belong to the first generation of your species to use your magnificent brain as a sexual organ" (ibid.). In other words, what Leary calls "neurosexual intercourse" is the psychedelic progenitor of the paradigm of machinic sex in the world of the "cyber," cyberdelic experiences in terms of post-sex, virtual "sex" in the mode of simulation. It is in this sense, as Stelarc (1991: 591) says, that in the world of the prosthetic redesign of the body, "[w]hat is significant is no longer male-female intercourse but human-machine interface" (cf., for example, Salecl 2001: 34; Nayar 2004: 257; Stiegler 2008 [1996]: 152; Hands 2004).

Prosthetic Sex with "Sexbots"

"We don't always need real bodies," says Ray Kurzweil (1999: 179), a leading American techno-futurist and an authority on artificial intelligence, in his prophetic scenario for the twenty-first century, entitled *The Age of Spiritual Machines*. But, as astonishing as it may sound in the new world of nanotechnology, neural implants and virtual reality, what we still need, according to Kurzweil, is the millennia-old corporeal pleasure that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, has been called *sex* in the sense it was given in American culture (see Richardson 1971; Schur 1988; Seidman 1992; from a historical perspective, see Pivar 1973; Haller & Haller 1974; Sokolow 1983; D'Emilio & Freedman 1997 [1988]; Grossmann 1997; Horowitz 2002).

Regardless of whether or not sex is something that ultimately takes place in the brain, how is it possible to enjoy sexual pleasure without a real body, real in the sense of the experience of existing in one's own body as a bodily subject in its very own subjective embodiment predicated upon a personal history as a unique form of corporeality (for disembodiment in terms of thinking, cf. Lyotard 1988–1989)? Is it not expressly carnal corporeality that is the unconditional precondition, the very *sine qua non*, of the experience of sex (whatever it as such might be)? Not necessarily, as the brain sex experiments carried out in the 1970s by means of "intracranial self-stimulation device" and other electrosexual prostheses, described by Rorvik above, show. Even less do we need a body now, because, according to Kurzweil (1999: 179–194), it has become possible to escape the burden of the flesh into what he calls the "virtual body" (cf., for example, Warhol 1999: 92–98; Nayar 2004: 292–304; in feminist terms, cf. O'Farrell & Vallone 1999; Green & Adam 2001).

And quite soon, as Kurzweil (1999: 184) assures us, humans – or what is left over of the contemporary human being as *human* – will have sex with the "sensual machines." "Late in the first decade of the twenty-first century," that is, today, "virtual reality will enable you to be with your lover – romantic partner, sex worker, or simulated companion – with full visual and auditory realism" (ibid.: 185). "You will be able to do anything you want with your companion except touch, admittedly an important limitation" (ibid.). But in the "second decade of the twenty-first century" we will have what Kurzweil calls the "all-enveloping, highly realistic, visual-auditory-tactile virtual environment" – and then, "virtual sex becomes a viable competitor to the real thing" (ibid.; cf., for example, Creed 1997: 19–23; Turkle 1998: 397–414; Botting 1999: 169–174, 184–186, 204–205; Rötzer 1999c: 103–106).

In other words, according to this scenario, cybersex, "teledildonics" or whatever denomination you prefer to describe the virtualization of sexual experience, is no longer just a techno-imaginary vision, but quite soon everyday reality.

"Virtual sex," that is, sexual encounters (whatever they happen to be) with and through "sensual machines," will be "better in some ways and certainly safer" in comparison to the experiences of carnal sex, and what is most important, it will

not only provide "sensations that are more intense and pleasurable than conventional sex," but even "*physical experiences that currently do not exist*" (Kurzweil 1999: 185–186; emphasis mine). According to Kurzweil, the augmentation and enhancement of sexual encounters and experiences through technology will have several benefits showing that we do not, indeed, need "real bodies" to have sex.

Firstly, while today, "lovers may phantasize their partners to be someone else," "users of virtual sex communication will not need as much imagination" because you will be "able to change the physical appearance and other characteristics of both yourself and your partner" (ibid.: 186) "You can make your lover look and feel like your favorite star" – and even "without your partner's permission or knowledge" – though, you should, of course, "be aware that your partner may be doing the same to you" (ibid.; cf. Žižek 1992: 167–168, Žižek 1999c: 112–113, 1999d: 55–56, 2006: 143, 191).

Secondly, "[g]roup sex will take on a new meaning in that more than one person can simultaneously share the experience of one partner" (Kurzweil 1999: 186).

> Since multiple real people cannot all control the movements of one virtual partner, there needs to be a way of sharing the decision making of what the one virtual body is doing. Each participant sharing a virtual body would have the same visual, auditory, and tactile experience, with shared control of their shared virtual body (perhaps the one virtual body will reflect a consensus of the attempted movements of the multiple participants). A whole audience of people – who may be geographically dispersed – could share one virtual body while engaged in a sexual experience with one performer. (ibid.)

Thirdly, "[p]rostitution will be free of health risks, as will virtual sex in general" (ibid.). Virtual sex is absolutely safe sex, because there is no body contact whatsoever; that is, "using wireless, very-high-bandwidth communications technologies "neither sex workers nor their patrons need leave their homes," and accordingly, "risks of disease and violence" would be eliminated (ibid.: 186). Contemporary political and legal disputes concerning the permissibility of prostitution would disappear, because "virtual prostitution is likely to be legally tolerated, at least to a far greater extent than real prostitution is today, as the virtual variety will be impossible to monitor or control" (ibid.). Instead, each participant in virtual sex would be autonomously in charge of his or her individual action, because virtual reality has a "means for users to immediately terminate their experience" (ibid.: 187; cf. Rheingold 1991: 346; Clark 1997: 88; Barnes 2008: 19; Stenslie 1996)

In comparison to brain sex in which your body is still a whole with a head, what is striking here – if we disregard the question concerning *sex as sex* for a while – is the way Kurzweil dreams about sexual encounter as a "bodiless" experience, that is, sex not only without immediate, physical contact but, moreover, as a virtualization of one's own body, the body as the embodiment of one's own flesh (cf. Waskul 2004b: 50–52; Waskul et al. 2004: 14–17, 29–31; White 2006: 22–23, 140–141, 149–152). This, of course, is only consequent because the basis of "virtual sex" is a fundamental transformation of the human being. What is at issue here becomes evident through the question posed by Kurzweil (1999:

187): "once the simulated virtual partner is as capable, sensual, and responsive as a real human virtual partner, who's to say that the simulated virtual partner isn't a real, albeit virtual, person?"

Of course, virtual sex in the form described by Kurzweil, would also have far-reaching social consequences, similarly to Rheingold's (1991: 345–357) "teledildonics" vision:

> How will such an extensive array of sexual choices and opportunities affect the institution of marriage and the concept of commitment in a relationship? The technology of virtual sex will introduce an array of slippery slopes, and the definition of a monogamous relationship will become far less clear. Some people will feel that access to intense sexual experiences at the click of a mental button will destroy the concept of a sexually committed relationship. Others will argue, as proponents of sexual entertainment and services today, that such diversions are healthy outlets and serve to maintain healthy relationships. Clearly, couples will need to reach their own understandings, but drawing clear lines will become difficult with the level of privacy that this future technology affords. It is likely that society will accept practices and activities in the virtual arena that it frowns on in the physical world, as the consequences of virtual activities are often (although not always) easier to undo. (Kurzweil 1999: 187; cf. Nunes 1997: 170–173; Willson 1997: 150–159)

Whatever one thinks about these social issues, virtual sex would be not just pure sex, because, according to Kurzweil (1999: 187), in addition to "direct sensual and sexual contact, virtual reality will be a great place for romance in general": "Stroll with your lover along a virtual Champs Élysées, take a walk along a virtual Cancún Beach, mingle with the animals in a simulated Mozambique game reserve" – and, in this way, your "whole relationship can be in Cyberland" (ibid.; cf. Leary 1994a: 124–161; Freyermuth 1996a, 1996b, 1998).

In the end, in this techno-utopia of "Cyberland," the future in terms of sex belongs to beings who are no longer humans at all: *future sex will be provided by sex robots*.

> Virtual reality using an external visual-auditory-haptic interface is not the only technology that will transform the nature of sexuality in the twenty-first century. Sexual robots – sexbots – will become popular by the beginning of the third decade of the new century. Today, the idea of intimate relations with a robot or a doll is not generally appealing because robots and dolls are so, well, inanimate. But that will change as robots gain softness, intelligence, pliancy, and passion of their human creators. (By the end of the twenty-first century, there won't be a clear difference between humans and robots. What, after all, is the difference between a human who has upgraded her body and brain using new nanotechnology and computational technologies, and a robot who has gained an intelligence and sensuality surpassing her human creators?) (Kurzweil 1999: 187)

In the long run, according to Kurzweil, all this means that not only sexual encounter, but also sexual desires and pleasures, as well as the constitution of the human body and of being human in general, are going to be totally different than today because they are then thoroughly determined by technology.

My concern here is not whether all that Kurzweil is claiming will be possible in the near or distant future, or ever; neither whether this is desirable or objectionable. Instead, what I am interested in is the fantasy of *leaving the body behind in virtual reality*, or as it is nowadays more commonly called, cyberspace (cf. Hayles 1993a: 173, 188; Fisher 1997: 117–123; Seidler 1998: 19–20; Saco 2002: 127–130; Shields 2003: 71–73; Grau 2003: 278–279; Nusselder 2009: 35–37). Thus, my focus is precisely on this fantastic vision that in the near future – a future, in fact, already present – people, who or what they ever will be, are going to be "able to engage in virtual sex *regardless of their physical proximity*" (Kurzweil 1999: 185: emphasis mine). This idea of the absent body, a body that is nevertheless claimed – in Kurzweil's fantasy, experienced – to be present, even in an intensified form, is typical not only of visions concerning sex in virtual reality, but also of all kinds of fantasies distinctive about cyberculture in general. Whether in this or that form, *the desire for disembodiment* is inscribed in all that is "cyber": it is a recurrent topos of cyber narratives (see, for example, Kline 1996: 352–356; Fisher 1997: 112–113; James & Carkeek 1997: 107–109, 119–123; Cavallaro 2000: 75–79; Muri 2003: 73–79, 82, 89; Serfaty 2004: 100; Foster 2005: 50; Gibson 2006: 70; Toffoletti 2007: 16).

This topos is not just a contingent figment of imagination; it is a well-established phantasmatic figure intrinsic to what I call cyber discourse, to the extent that various visions of disembodiment are constitutive of cyber discourse, most clearly in the fantasies and theory-fictions of cyberspace (see, for examaple, Heim 1993; Benedikt 1994 [1991]; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Jordan 1999; Bell & Kennedy 2000).

What is interesting, and in its own way illuminating, in Kurzweil's vision of "virtual sex" with "sensual machines" is not its assumed originality but its *typicality*: instead of being original it is, in fact, a recycled, futurologically reinterpreted version of sex fantasies typical of cyber discourse. As such, it is not so much a part of the narrative of all that is "cyber;" rather, as a second order *product* of cyber discourse, it attempts to be, in a "serious" manner, a conventional latter-day derivative of the 1980s and the 1990s hilarious techno-avantgardism of Californian cyberculture (see, for example, Rushkoff 1994; Sobchack 1995; Kroker & Kroker 1997b). In this sense, Kurzweil's dream of sex without "real bodies" reproduces, in a simplified manner, cybercultural visions of virtual sex – like a schematic copy of a pop art painting, a second order Warhol as a simulation of simulation (cf. Grace 2000: 154–158; Cubitt 2001: 82–84; Butler 2009: 52; Zurbrugg 1997).

But it is precisely for this reason that Kurzweil's techno-sexual fantasy, presented by him as a description of reality in the future, is so interesting: it is a "copy" that puts us to the track of the "original," the post-Baudrillardian "hyperreality" of the "cyber" in the real dreamland of cyberia (Rushkoff 1994), a world "out there" in which you are just "havin' fun in the warm California sun" (Sirius 1997: 12).

If there are any origins at all in the postmodern, the hyperreal is the real origin not only of cybersex, but of all that is "cyber."

Accordingly, it is in this manner that the wish-image of getting rid of the material body, of the flesh, of all the confinements of the corporeal in general, forms the basis of the seductiveness of cybersex. The peculiarity of this seduction, however, is not actually sexual but linguistic: the allurement of language, typical of cyber discourse, generates, among other things, also the specific techno-erotic fascination that is constitutive of cybersex. In this sense, cybersex is a matter of a libidinal language in which the seductive is about "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of the world of the "post."

2.2.3 The Pleasure of the Interface

In the early-1990s, on the horizon of Western culture a new desire appeared; a desire for disembodiment, a desire to escape the limits and limitations of the human body by enjoying virtual corporeality in what was called "cyberspace" after Gibson's (1995 [1984]) seminal science fiction vision (see, for example, Benedikt 1994 [1991]; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000). Through the imaginary, specific to the postmodern, what was science fiction became theory-fiction: Gibson's literary fantasy of cyberspace turned, in the world of post-theory, into a phantasm of an immaterial realm of disembodiment (see, for example, Clark 1995: 124; Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 78–85; Kline 1996: 352–356; James & Carkeek 1997: 107–110; Bell 2001a: 170–176; Coyne 2001: 63–66; Currier 2002: 524–528; Parisi 2004: 2–4; Haney 2006: 34–35; Boler 2010: 186–187). As Lisa Nakamura (2002: 67) sums up, "*[c]yberspace* (a term coined by Gibson in his novel and subsequently picked up by computer scientists) is *about* disembodiment in a fundamental sense." But the body was, as always, stubborn: it did not assent to the seductive views opened up by fantasy, the alluring scenes promised by the constitutive faculty of humans: the unbounded power of imagination. Thus, while the mind floated and roamed around beyond the constraints of gravity in the fictional immateriality of cyberspace, the body remained in the material world, at the gate to the world of virtuality.

This is the problem of the interface: the impossibility of transforming the material into immaterial. For this reason, what is called a "virtual body" (see, for example, Heim 1995: 67–68; Penny 1995a: 62–63; Balsamo 1996: 116–132; McCance 1996: 5–6; Morse 1997: 27–28; Williams 1998: 121–131; Lunenfeld 2000a: 79–80, 87–88; Grosz 2001: 79–81; Currier 2002: 525–528; Graham 2002: 187–194; Schaap 2002: 111–112; Galloway 2004: 190–191; Nayar 2004: 217–233, 242–254; Munster 2006: 86–91, 96–100, 106–115; Jahshan 2007: 52–53; Vint 2007: 104–108; in terms of "new philosophy for new media," see Hansen 2004), always remains virtual: the body in virtual reality or in cyberspace cannot be material precisely because it is virtual; a "virtual body," in the sense of virtual reality as a computer-generated simulation, is a *contradictio in adiecto* or an oxymoron: what is material cannot be virtual at the same time, except in theory and fantasy (for the idea of the "virtual body" in phenomenology, cf. Ihde

1998). This notwithstanding, the more the "virtual body" is cultivated in the phantasmatic visions of post-theory in terms of the "cyber"; that is, this magic signifier, the "cyber," constitutive of cyber discourse, functions as a linguistic prosthesis that has the ability to turn non-existent into existent and impossible into possible by way of the imaginary. Accordingly, the "cyber," although it is in itself meaningless, is a highly evocative signifier that never refers to the real; instead, it signifies the imaginary of the real, and vice versa, the real of the imaginary.

This is what constitutes "the virtual" of "the virtual body": it is an effect of the virtual reality of language constitutive of cyber discourse, which, in itself, is an effect of the "cyber."

Whose Face Is the Interface?

Since the early days of computer science, the gate, the point of access, between the "here" of the mundane, material reality and the "over there" of the imaginary "space" behind the computer display, has been designated as the interface (see, for example, Jordan 1999: 44, 60, 122–125; Dodge & Kitchin 2001: 91–107, 153–155, 176–178, 184–218; Lister et al. 2003: 41–42, 112–119, 168–172, 221–222; Sherman & Craig 2003: 40–54, 64–69; Fisher 1990b; Laurel 1990, 1993 [1991]; Bardini & Horvath 1995; Bardini 2000; in the context of media art, see Sommerer et al. 2008a, 2008b; in Lacanian terms, see Nusselder 2009; from a utopian perspective, see Hands 2004). Without the interface, there would be no computer neither would there be the imaginary universe opened up by it. The interface is a "face" in between that enables a two-way traffic from "here" to "over there" and back, that is, the human-computer interaction; but what is more important is that it is an intersection at which the imaginary appears real, and the real turns into the imaginary. In this sense, the interface is not only a term of computer technology; moreover, it is a notion that implies a new way of conceiving of the world around us, the world of corporeality included. As Peter Weibel (1992: 8) says, the "electronic world with its model worlds and computer simulations, interface and virtual realities gives us *reason to believe* that the world can be now understood in terms of an interface" (emphasis mine).

But the problem is precisely what is this "reason to believe"; that is, what is it that we believe in when we have a "reason to believe" that the "world can be now understood in terms of an interface," even "the world *as* interface" (see Weibel 1996; emphasis mine; in terms of the body as an "interface," see Angerer 1998; Scott 1999; Sielke & Schäfer-Wünsche 2007; for "the pleasure of the interface," see Springer 1991; Angerer 1993)?

Considering this problem, my point of departure is that what makes the interface to the interface is the prefix, this tiny linguistic prosthesis, *inter*. In itself, as a signifier, "inter" signifies something that is in between, an ambiguous intermediary space as a form of mediation that is at the same time something "on the one hand" *and* "on the other hand." In other words, interface is neither this

nor that, but something of a third order, expressly the order of "in-between." As Geoffrey Bennington, in his Hegelian-Derridean reading, summarizes:

> *In*ter. As a prefix, this term displays an uncanny obedience to the difference of its own meanings, one in which we can imagine Hegel finding something of the speculative pleasure he famously finds in the word *Aufheben*, in the *Greater Logic*. *On the one hand*, inter- separates, places between two or more entities, keeps them apart, puts up a frontier, prevents them meeting, joining, mingling and maybe identifying. Inter-val is perhaps the clearest case of this sense. Inter-calating, inter-posing, inter-polating, inter-mitting all obey this logic. But *on the other hand*, inter- joins, provides a means of communication and exchange. This can go from inter-view to inter-action to inter-course to inter-penetration, and implies just the opposite of the first sense of inter-: here the gap or difference is not being established or reinforced, but diminished, overcome or denied. "Inter" in this second sense inters "inter" in the first sense, or, if you like, "inter" in the second sense comes after, is *post* with respect to "inter" in the first sense. (Bennington 1999: 103; cf. Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115)

Thus, "inter" is a genuine post-term in the sense I am speaking here about the "post": a term that has a *double-face*. This is why everything that takes place at the interface has an ambiguous character: the real and the imaginary intermingle with one another time and time again. What, however, is certain is that the materiality of the body always remains insurmountable, in both physical and phenomenological terms; what is possible for the mind is impossible for the body: the body lives here, while the mind can float over there, in a world to which the body has no access *as a body in its material reality*. However, this does not imply the Cartesian mind-body dualism (see, for example, Baker & Morris 1996; Rozemond 1998); what is at issue here is simply the fact that I can *imagine* things concerning my body which the body *as a body* is not able to do: while my body is constrained by its materiality, my mind, due to its immateriality, can move around in its own worlds, the worlds of imagination and thinking; that is, the mind has access to realms to which the body can never go.

What is problematic in cyber discourse is that this distinction – the difference between the material and the immaterial, and correspondingly, between the real and the imaginary – has imploded, with far-reaching consequences as the study at hand attempts to show.

In terms of the "cyber," the problem of the body, of course, is that, due to its very materiality, it can never reach the immaterial space beyond the screen, the realm behind the surface of the computer display. The body remains on this side, while the mind of the "user," a new kind of subject (or rather, a subject position), travels freely on the other side, in the immateriality of cyberspace, in the virtual world of digital information, or, more technically, of data. In contrast to conceptions according to which the realm beyond the screen, cyberspace, embraces "virtual reality" in which we appear as "virtual bodies" (see, for example, Stone 1994b: 106–107; Balsamo 1996: 116–132; Hayles 1996b: 6; Tenhaaf 1996: 62, 65; Morse 1997: 28; Fisher 1997: 121–125; Grosz 2001: 41–42; Flichy 2007a [2001]: 137–141; Paterson 2007: 103–107, 118–139; McRae 1996; O'Farrell & Vallone 1999), for me, firstly, cyberspace does not equal virtual reality; and

secondly, there are only virtual bodies in the imagination inscribed by the imaginary of language, whether in science fiction or in the theory-fictions of post-theory; as William R. Sherman and Alan B. Craig (2003: 17) say, "cyberspace is not the same as virtual reality": cyberspace is a "location" that "exists only in the minds of the participants."[186]

For this reason, I find appropriate what Claudia Springer (1996: 50–79) calls the "pleasure of the interface." As Springer says:

> In pop culture human fusion with computer technology is often represented in positive terms, creating a hybrid computer-human that displays highly evolved intelligence and escapes the imperfections of the human body. Nevertheless, while disparaging the imperfect human body, pop culture simultaneously uses language and imagery associated with the body and bodily functions to *represent* its vision of human/technological perfection. (Springer 1996: 50; emphasis mine)

With regard to the theme of my study, the sexualization of technology, this implies that "[c]omputer technologies thus occupy a contradictory discursive position, representing both escape from the physical body and fulfillment of erotic desire" (ibid.: 50–51). It is in this manner that "[p]opular culture has embraced the idea of *artificial sexuality*" (ibid.: 50; emphasis mine).

In these terms, *as a specific linguistic representation that tries to efface its own character as representation by its fantastic linguistic figuration*, the "pop-culture discourse on computers reveals a new manifestation of the simultaneous revulsion and fascination with the human body that has existed throughout the Western cultural tradition" (ibid.: 55; cf. Hayles 1993a: 173, 188; Lupton 1994a: 100–106, 1994b: 563–565; Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 78–93; Zylinska 2001: 128–130; Rapatzikou 2004: 112–115; for a historical contextualization in terms of "freakery" or "cultural spectacles of the extraordinary body," see Thomson 1996; from the perspective on the "uncanny," see Grenville 2001b; Kelley 2004). One of the fantasies created by this discourse is precisely the idea of artificial sexuality, that is, sexual desires and pleasures in cyberspace or cybersex in virtual reality by means of prosthetic technology.

Seen from the perspective outlined above, it is obvious that the discursive figuration around the signifiers "cyberspace" and the "cyborg" is a postmodern continuation of ideas that pertain to the forms and manifestations of the body that

186 Because cyberspace only exists in science fiction, bodies in cyberspace, of course, are, by the same token, immaterial, virtual bodies, whether in the form of pure imagination, fiction and fantasy, as imaginary projections, existing in language, or simulation, as computer-generated or cinematic figures. Virtual bodies, or, as they are also called, "cyberbodies" (see, for example, Clark 1995: 115, 124–126; Heim 1995: 73–75; Stelarc 1998: 121; Angerer 1999a: 27–55; Cavallaro 2000: 72–79; Kennedy 2000a: 474; Küppers 2003: 116; Jahshan 2007: 51; DeVoss 2000; in terms of prosthetic "cyber(body)parts," see Wilson 1995), are literally virtual bodies, bodies that exist only virtually, not really; not really even in virtual reality that should not be confounded with cyberspace. The problem is that in cyber discourse the levels of the virtual, simulated and imaginary are not separated but used synonymously. The basic mistake is that in cyber discourse a clear conceptual distinction between what exists in reality and what is representation of real or fantasy entities is not made: it is not made since in the world of the "cyber" the distinction between the real and the imaginary does not exist.

does not conform to the idea of "the normal body," the ideal of the human body as an embodiment of normalization (see Foucault 1990k [1976]: 136–145, 1991a [1975]: 170–194, 1994b [1963]: 34–36, 2003 [1979]; cf., for example, Rouse 1994: 96–102; Smart 2002 [1985]: 92–106; McWhorter 1999). In other words, cyber discourse, as an apotheosis of post-utopian visions concerning a scientific-technological transgression of the "normal body," dreams of a transgressive body that is a techno-imaginary variation of what Johanna Oksala (2005: 124–134) calls the "anarchic body"; that is, a projection of a discursive politics of the body the aim of which is to subvert the body ideal and the ideal body of prevailing culture based on the idea of "the normal." In this sense, the "cyber-body" is a *post-body*, a body that begins where "the normal" ends, a body that is a technoscientific incarnation of transgression: a body that is an embodiment of "otherness."

This idea is the origin of various visions of cybersex, or virtual sex, or whatever it is called in the rhetorics of cyber discourse as a radicalized manifestation of contemporary technoculture dominated by what I call the *imaginary of the technological*.

It is this imaginary, condensed in the idiom of the "cyber," that is the source of the pleasure of the interface; a peculiar pleasure that is experienced *at* the interface, in an intimate symbiosis with the computer. To transgress the boundaries of the body, to leave the "*meat* body" behind, to move free in the virtual realm opened up by the computer interface – that is the recursive dream of cyber-theorists seduced by the technological sublime constitutive of the "cyber" (see, for example, Heim 1993; Benedikt 1994 [1991], Stone 1995e, 1996a; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Booth & Flanagan 2002; Foster 2005; for the technological sublime, see, for example, Carey 1989: 113–141; Wilson 1991: 197–263; Penley & Ross 1992b: xii; Nye 1996: 143–172; Hillis 1999: 58–59; Graham 2002: 154–175; Hughes 2004b: 38–39; Giblett 2008; in terms of cyberspace religiosity, cf. Højsgaard & Warburg 2005).[187]

What is at issue here is an immersive experience of the subject enjoying the libidinal space beyond the screen, a *visionary space*, that simultaneously embraces the computer as both a machine and the world it suggests by its ability to simulate the real world in one way or another – *nota bene*, a "world" actually appearing only on the surface of the computer screen or on the mini-displays of the virtual reality helmet, experienced nevertheless as an "immersive" experience (for the idea of "immersion," see Biocca & Delaney 1995; Huhtamo

187 It should be noticed that the sources I am referring here to are only a tiny exemplary sample of the enormous amount of literature emerged since the mid-1980s on the themes of all that is "cyber" (cyberspace, virtual reality, the cyborg, cyberculture, the posthuman etc.). As I am writing this, there is no longer the possibility of gaining a comprehensive overview even of the publications that are published annually on this subject, to say nothing of the three decades that have passed since the Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), the origin of everything that is "cyber." In its own way, this publishing industry around the "cyber" would be an interesting subject for a study concerning the cultural transformation this literature as such indicates, or is a symptom of; that is, a postmodern theory literature as a curious mixture of science fiction fantasies and academic theory-fictions.

1995b, 1995c; for a narrative construction of the interface and immersion, see Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 185–196; as contextualized from a historical perspective, see Grau 2003: 7–15, 198–204; for "computers as theatre," see Laurel 1993 [1991]; in terms of "interfaciality," see Munster 2006: 117–149).

Accordingly, whatever cybersex is it is always, *always already*, *sex at the interface*, sexual desires and pleasures at the *imaginary intersection* of the body and the machine. In this sense, cybersex is prosthetic sex, sexual encounters with the prosthetic organs of the cyborg. Thus, it is the interface – a double-sided face as a transfer and transit, a transitive transition, that through a two-way traffic translates and transforms the technological into human terms, and vice versa – that entails a shift of paradigm in terms of the sexual as it is theorized in the discursive space of cyber discourse that, in its very discursivity, is predicated upon the linguistic of language constitutive of post-theory. As such a transmutor, a theoretically conceived in-between, the interface effects a transfiguration of the experiences and expressions of the sexual from the practices of the flesh (whatever they happen to be) to the operations of the "techno/cyberbody" enabled by the imaginary of the technological intrinsic to all that is "cyber"; that is, the body of the cyborg. Suggested by the fantasy of cyberspace, cybersex as sex at the interface is "virtual sex" by means of the prosthetic organs of the cyborg, "sex" in the world of body-machine hybrids existing in the techno-imaginary of cyber discourse (see, for example, Case 1996: 88–91, 1999; Plant 1998: 30–32; Lévy 2001 [1997]: 185–186; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; Nayar 2010: 124–132; Wiley 1999; Bell 2000a; for an overview, see Collins 2006, 2008; in terms of science fiction, see Jones 1996).

This is the context in which the transition from "here" to "over there" has become the integration of the "this-ness" of the world "here" with the "there-ness" of the world "over there," a conceptual and experiential fusion, an imagined amalgamation, of the material and the imaginary, and, accordingly, interaction has turned into intertwining of the subject with the object, an intermingling of the phenomenological body-subject with the object-world engendered by computer-generated simulation. What is crucial in this context is that both transformations have enabled a redefinition of the human, of course, only in terms of theory. This is the origin of the posthuman in the world of cyber discourse.

The Cyborg as the Terminal Stage of the Enlightenment Project

In these terms, suggesting both a technologization of the sexual and a sexualization of the technological, the interface – to emphasize, as it is theorized in cyber discourse – implies a transgression: a "violation" of the inherited sanctity of the boundaries between the human body and the machine; that is, on the one hand, the integrity of the body as the substratum of personhood, the self in its autonomy, and on the other, the machine as a combination of functions that serve an external purpose. For centuries we have been used to thinking that my body is my body, it is not a nobody, and, accordingly: I not only have

a body, but *I am a body* (cf., for example, Moltmann-Wendel 1995; in terms of the difference beween *Körper* and *Leib*, cf., for example, Hauser-Schäublin et al. 2001: 97–99, 107–109, 133–137; Caysa 2003: 36–57; Thomas 1996; Schmidt 2009); in other words, what Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow (1998) call "the lived body" is the body that I am only if I am the body that I have; that is, embodiment and corporeality, mutually intertwined, constitute a subject as a body (in Nietzschean terms, cf. Tambornino 2002: 73–94). But wherever this body, incorporating and embodying my sexuality (whatever it happens to be), is defined according to the logic of the machinic, the logic of instrumental usability (cf. Kant 1974a [1785/1786]: 59–67, 1990c [1790/1793/1799]: 319–324), my body is no longer my body: it is an object of interests that are not under my control: they are under the control of the machine.

That is, where the body is seen as an extension of the machine, it becomes a machine in itself (cf. Wiener (1968 [1950]: 185). For this reason, in the conceptual, or, what amounts to the same thing, metaphorical, space effected by the "cyber" in the manner of the "post," I am no longer a subject, but an object defined by the functionality and usability in the discursive realm of the machinic; in other words, in the imaginary world of cyber discourse, the human body-subject is redefined by the terms of the posthuman, understood in terms of the technological (cf. Hayles 1999: 85–127, 213–219; Rutsky 1999: 19–21; Graham 2002: 105–110, 176–195; Vint 2007: 11–21, 177–183; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; from a historical perspective, cf. Orland 2005b).

Every tool is a step towards the interface between the human subject (always a *body-subject*) and its environment, but only the historical constellation constituted by the compound effects of the industrial revolution, the factory system based on the assembly line, the military-industrial complex, and finally, the scientific-technological control paradigm enabled by cybernetics and the computer (see, for example, Beniger 1986; Zuboff 1988; Mindell 2002; Mirowski 2002; Hook & Norman 2002; Hammond 2003; Pias 2003, 2004; for a historical conceptualization of technology and machine, see Mitcham 1994), has created the preconditions for the technologization of the human body as a theoretical object imagined to exist in a *symbiotic cooperation of the body and the machine*. This, in short, is the genealogy of the interface; a three-century process culminating in the postmodern reconfiguration of the human being as the cyborg; the cyborg as the conceptual and/or metaphorical embodiment of the posthuman or as utopian visions of the obsolescence of the human being as a biologically determined corporeal being (see, for example, Stelarc 1991; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Gray et al. 1995b; Gray 2001, 2005; Zylinska 2001, 2002b; Graham 2002; Weber & Bath 2003; Gordijn 2004; Weinstone 2004; Irrgang 2005; Deane-Drummond & Scott 2006; Waters 2006; Muri 2007; Riskin 2007; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; Miah & Rich 2008; Wolfe 2009; Bruns 2011).

From a historical perspective, the cyborg is the terminal stage of the Enlightenment project, the rationalization of the human body in the name of the *perfect-*

ibilité of the human being (for a classical formulation, see de Tocqueville 2003 [1835/1840]: 4, 439, 444, 521–523, 562; for discussion on the idea, see, for example, Schouls 1989: 135–137; Porter 2001b: 16–18; Winston 2005: 8–12, 84–101; Passmore 1970).

With regard to contemporary culture, the interface symbolizes the coming into being of a technocultural constellation in which the position of the subject is defined in terms of the computer. Thus, facing the interface, we can see the face of the machine: *our* face as the "Other" of the computer in Lacanian terms (see Lacan 1988b [1978/1954–1955]: 27–89, 227–322; cf. Fink 1997 [1995]: xi, 16; Schmidgen 1997: 99–126; Johnston 2008: 76–83, 94–105; Nusselder 2009: 3–7, 17–20, 62–63, 70–76, 88–90, 96–96, 101–116, 129–138). As Eve Tavor Bannet sums up the Lacanian notion of the subject as a machinic non-subject:

> There is in Lacan no autonomous, self-conscious subject in whom, as in a container, knowledge, experience and emotion inhere, whose relationship to the social environment can be measured in terms of creativity and self-recognition. […] Lacan's model for man is the computer. Man is a machine whose predetermined linguistically programmed circuits are governed by binary structures: closed-open, absent-present, 01. (Bannet 1989: 14)

In these terms, face-to-face with the computer we encounter a self that is over and over again constituted by the process of internalizing its own externalization – a psychoanalytic process in terms of the technological (cf. Freud 1986d [1915–1917], 1987d [1900]). In this sense, the interface is the face of the postmodern self, the "decentred subject" as a multiple self (see, for example, Smith 1988: 117–120; Poster 1995b: 32, 35, 57, 77, 88, 90–91, 93; Barvosa 2008: 5–17, 84–89, 194–203); a "subject/object" or an "object/subject" that, paradoxically, is "re-centered" in its decenteredness by the artificial intelligence or machinic reason emanating from the computer, the real self of the postmodern subject.

At the interface, I am connected to a mind that is superior to my body, and hence, it is my new super-ego: the collective mind of cyber discourse that defines my very existence in terms of the "cyber," the terms of the techno-imaginary. This is an enthralling moment, a moment of empowerment – a moment of a post-Enlightenment enlightenment enlightening the human mind on its overwhelming capabilities in an *intimate symbiosis* with the machine, its "other" as its new self. From the very beginning, this is a magic moment.

> The first thing you will notice is the light. The fluorescent banks in the high ceiling are dimmed, so the light at the eye level is dominated by the glowing screens set at intervals throughout the cavernous room. There are no windows, so the bandwidths have that cold otherwordly truncation. Surfaces are in muted tones and mat colors, dampening unwanted reflections. Some of the screens flicker with strings of digits the color and periodicity of traffic lights, but most beam the standard Day-Glo palette of pastels usually associated with CRT graphics. While a few of the screens project their photons into the void, most of the displays are manned and womanned by attentive acolytes, their visages lit and their backs darkened like satellites parked in stationary orbits. Not everyone is held in the thrall of the object of their attentions in the same man-

> ner. A few jump up and down in little tethered dances, speaking into phones or mumbling at other electronic devices. Some sit stock still, mesmerized, engaging their screen with slight movements of wrist and hand. Other lean into their consoles, then away, as though their swaying might actually have some virtual influence upon the quantum electrodynamics coursing through their station and beyond, to other machines in other places in other similar rooms. *No one is apparently making anything, but everyone seems nonetheless furiously occupied*. (Mirowski 2002: 1; emphasis mine)

"Furiously occupied" – that is the magic effect of the interface, its mesmerizing influence upon the subject sitting in front of the computer screen, the display that connects the "here" of the material world with the "over there" of the imaginary space behind the screen. In the constellation described by Philip Mirowski, we have entered the present future, a space embracing objectified subjects, inhabiting, as Mirowski says, "rooms with a view" (ibid.: 2). This is a technological environment in which we can see ourselves in the face of the computer, the interface between us and the machine – the face of our mind incorporated by high-technological equipment having its origin in military technology (see, for example, Levidow & Robins 1989a; De Landa 1991; Edwards 1996; Gray 1997, 2000, 2005; Ceruzzi 2003 [1998]). *The interface: a mirror of the metamorphosis of the human into its double of itself, a technological double that obeys the reason of the technoscientific reconstitution of the human being*.

> Where is this place? If it happened to be 1952, it would be Santa Monica, California, at a RAND study of the "man-machine interface" […]. If it were 1957, then it could be only one place: the SAGE (Semi-Automatic Ground Environment) Air Defence System run by the U.S. Air Force. By 1962, there were a few other such rooms, such as the SAGA room for wargaming in the basement of the Pentagon […]. If it were 1967 instead, there were many more such rooms scattered across the globe, one of the largest being the Infiltration Surveillance Center at Nakhom Phantom in Thailand, the command center of U.S. Air Force Operation Igloo White […]. By 1977 there are many more such rooms, no longer only staffed by the military, but also by thousands of employees of large firms throughout the world: the SABRE airline reservation system of American Airlines […]; bank check and credit card processing centers […]; nuclear power station control rooms […]. (Mirowski 2002: 2; cf. Edwards 1996: 43–111; Gere 2002: 47–74; Zuboff 1988; Star 1995; Bogard 1996)

But these "rooms with a view" serve not only professional purposes. "In 1987 a room like this could be found in any suburban shopping mall, with teenagers proleptically feeding quarters into arcade computer games" (Mirowski 2002: 2; cf. Skirrow 1986; Haddon 1988a, 1988b, 1993; Stallabrass 1993; Friedman 1995; Grassmuck 1995a; Wolf 2008; for Gibson's observation of video games as the *ur*-experience of cyberspace, cf. McCaffery 1994a [1991]: 272). Or, at the same time, in the "very pinnacles of high finances, in the tonier precincts of New York and London and Tokyo, with high-stakes traders of stocks, bonds, and 'derivatives' glued to their screens" (Mirowski 2002: 2); "in those rooms, 'masters of the universe' in pinstripe shirts and power suspenders make 'killings' in semiconscious parody of their khaki-clad precursors" (ibid.; cf. Baker 2000: 7–16, 42–50, 62–74; Sutcliffe 2006: 46–47, 170–174, 375–378).

Fig. 61. Enigma, the German cipher machine, based on an electromechanical rotor system, used by the German army, navy and air force during the Second World War for the encryption and decryption of messages in order to conceal their military communications. The basic model, the *Wehrmacht* Enigma, was an elaborate modification of a cipher machine designed by the Berlin engineer Arthur Scherbius in 1918, available on the commercial market since 1923, then also adopted by the German Navy in 1926, and soon thereafter by the German military as a whole. Battery powered and portable, Enigma was a highly versatile device that made it possible to send encrypted radio messages in Morse code from command centers, armoured vehicles, submarines, airplanes and frontline units (see, for example, Copeland 2004e: 220–245; Swedin & Ferro 2007: 31–32; Schmeh 2008: 124–144; Bauer 2009: 46–52, 152–155).

The significance of codified information, in the form of cryptography, for military operations, and decoding as its counterforce, has, of course, always been a well-known fact in the history of warfare (see, for example, de Leeuw & Bergstra 2007), but, from the very beginning of the Second World War, the enormously increased dimensions and speed of military actions set new demands for information and communication in combat situations, epitomized by the term *Blitzkrieg* (see, for example, Kaufmann 1996: 308–367; cf. Kittler 1986: 362–379; for a historical contextualization with regard to the military application of mathematics, see Booß-Bavnbek & Høyrup 2003).

It is in this sense that computation, information processing and the ideas of machine language, the binary code and the cipher machine, as important origins of the computer, derive from the inventions and innovations of Polish and British mathematicians and engineers before and during the Second World War, referred to as codebreakers, particularly Marian Rejewski, Henryk Zygalski and Jerzy Różycki in Warsaw and Paris, and Alan Turing and his colleagues at Bletchley Park (the Government Code and Cypher School), Britain's main decryption centre near London during the war (see, for example, Rakus-Anderson 2004: 420–430; Copeland 2012: 37–76; Copeland et al. 2006).

At the Origin of the Terminal Subject

This is the economic-political and cultural constellation of postmodern technoculture, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, by "the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time," in which, along with the figures of cyberspace and the cyborg, the idea of cybersex began to crystallize; the time of unlimited faith in the power of capital and technology as the almighty alliance bringing us a future never seen before (see, for example, Negroponte 1995; Gates 1995). According to Mirowski (2002), this is the time of "machine dreams," a time in which economics became "cyborg science," a time of high expectations that, indeed, came true – only in a little bit different form, as the postmodern fantasy world of cyber discourse, and its reverse in the shadow, not so luminous reality of computerized labour conditions and a thorough militarization of everyday life, the world of what William Bogard (1996) calls the "simulation of surveillance."

This is the real world behind "the euphoric, addictive thrill of the technological sublime" (Ross 1991c: 99), the world of postmodern technological reality turned into the imaginary of technological: a dream world of reason in terms of the surrational.

What is decisive here is that during a decade, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the "rooms with a view" took over both private spaces and work environments in the same way around the globe, firstly in the United States and quite soon all over the Western world (see Kling 1996a [1991]; Crang et al. 1999; Jordan 1999; Chun 2006).

In a paradigmatic manner, the breakthrough of this technological transformation of the Western world ensuing from the computerization of society and culture is described by Shoshana Zuboff (1988) in her comprehensive study entitled *In the Age of the Smart Machine* concerning the radically changing conditions of work as a consequence of computer technology.

Fig. 62–63. In 1936, Alan Turing (1912–1954) (on the left), a prominent British mathematician, introduced the idea of a theoretical "computing machine" to mathematics in his article "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem" (1936). Turing's imaginary device was an ideal machine implying an abstract model of an algorithm by which it was possible to explore specific mathematical problems concerning the conditions and properties of "real numbers whose expressions as a decimal are calculable by finite means" (Turing 2004c [1936]: 58). Since then, Turing's invention has become known as the "Turing machine" in mathematics and computer science as well as in cultural theory (see, for example, Bolter 1984: 43–52; Rothenberg 1993: 138–142; Winston 1998: 147–155; Gere 2002: 17–19, 38–46; Herken 1995; for the origin of the term in Alonzo Church's review of Turing's theory in 1937, see Copeland 2004b: 6).

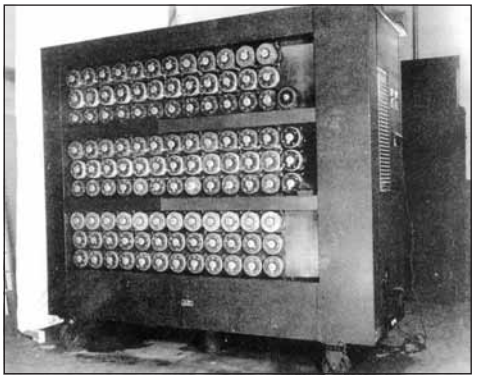
Turing's theory of computation as a "mechanical process" (Hodges 1992 [1983]: 96–98) was a response to the mathematical programme proposed by the German mathematician David Hilbert (1862–1943) (on the right) in 1928, the most influential mathematics authority in the early twentieth century, according to whom mathematics was to be seen as a formalist system in which each proposition or its negation could be deduced from basic axioms and thus proved to be valid (see Copeland 2004b: 46–49; in terms of "the modernist transformation of mathematics," see Gray 2008: 410–413); that is, a logical construct that in itself was to be complete, consistent and decidable, and, as such, as Hilbert said, able to express "the entire thought content of mathematics in a uniform way" (Copeland 2004c: 9). In this sense, Hilbert's programme conceived of mathematics as "a consistent system" that "contains no contradictions" and that, at the same time, is "a complete system" in which "every true mathematical statement is provable" (ibid.).

What was essential in Hilbert's programme was his conception of what he designated as the *Entscheidungsproblem*, the "decision problem," concerning the truth or falsity of mathematical statements. According to Hilbert: *Das Entscheidungsproblem ist gelöst, wenn man ein Verfahren kennt, das bei einem vorgelegten logischen Ausdruck durch endlich viele Operationen die Entscheidung über die Allgemeingültigkeit bzw. Erfüllbarkeit erlaubt* (Börger et al. 2001 [1997]: 3), "The decision problem is solved, if one knows a procedure that, through finitely many operations, allows for the decision about the general validity or satisfiability of a given logical expression."

While the first two of Hilbert's claims, concerning the completeness and consistency of mathematics as a system, were refuted, in terms of arithmetics (and thus with regard to the parts of mathematics of the greatest relevance), by Kurt Gödel (1906–1978), a prominent Austrian-American mathematician and logician, it was Turing who finally tackled the decidability problem and demonstrated in his treatise on "computable numbers" that there was no such "procedure" that was able to decide the truth or falsity of *every* mathematical proposition (see Turing 2004c [1936]; cf. Davis 1995: 137–147; Gray 2004: 434–436; in terms of algorithms, see Penrose 1999 [1989]: 40–97). By means of his "machine," Turing thus showed that mathematics is not a closed axiomatic system, but an open field allowing for ever-new discoveries.

In this sense, as "an idealization of the human computer" (Copeland 2004b: 41), the Turing machine "was the modern computer in essential outline" (Copeland 2012: 15) inasmuch as it implied a mathematical model of the computer as a *computing machine*. Thus, "Turing saw right away that the very simple logical operations" enabled by his machine could, in principle, "be realized physically, since they required only operations such as were employed in contemporary teleprinters and automatic telephone exchanges" (Hodges 2007 [2004]: 4; in terms of programming, see Priestley 2011: 77–98; for a historical contextualization, see Boden 2006: 155–237; Teuscher 2004).

One of the fields explored by Zuboff was the introduction of computer-assisted information processing to office work. Already in the late-1970s, during the preliminary phase of her research, Zuboff noticed how clerks "who had performed one small operation in a long paper chain" were suddenly using computer technology "to accomplish *all the functions associated with a single product*" (ibid.: xi). Visiting the offices of a bank, Zuboff came to witness a "sight that would eventually become so familiar as to defy notice – *an entire floor of people at their workstations, staring into the screens of desktop terminals*" (ibid.: xi–xii; for postmodern work as a complex combination of people, screens and "social virtuality," see Garsten & Wulff 2003).



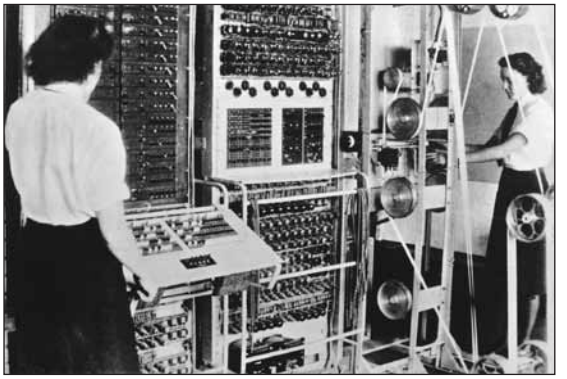


Fig. 64–65. To cope with the enormous amount of coded information included in the German military communications transmitted by Enigma machines, it was indispensable for the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park to develop a machine that was able to break the continually changing German code settings as fast as possible, particularly in order to enable the combat against the devastating attacks of German U-boats on supply convoys during the Battle of the Atlantic (see Hodges 1992 [1983]: 194–263; Copeland 2004e: 257–262). Elaborating on the decoding machine, called the Bomba, constructed by the Polish Cipher Bureau cryptologist Rejewski in 1938 to break German Enigma ciphers, Turing helped with his theoretical work to design the Bombe, an electromechanical deciphering machine in 1939–1940 (on the left) (see Copeland & Proudfoot 2005: 110–112; Copeland 2012: 55–76, 2004e; Rakus-Anderson 2004). To decode the German teleprinter messages encrypted by the Lorenz SZ 40/42 cipher machine, Thomas H. Flowers, a British Post Office electronic engineer specialised in telecommunications research, and the cryptanalysis unit at Bletchley Park devised an entirely new type of deciphering machine, named Colossus, in 1943–1944, the world's first electronic, digital and programmable computer, set into operation in the final phase of the war (on the right) (see Copeland 2012: 99–121; Copeland et al. 2006).

Although Turing was not directly involved in the development of Colossus, his mathematical theory of computable numbers (1936), his decoding technique termed "Turingery" (1942) and his statistical approach to codebreaking contributed to the design and operational deployment of Colossus (see Copeland 2004e: 262–263, 2008; Copeland et al. 2006). In addition to the fact that Turing's inventions "shortened the war in Europe by as much as two or four years" (Copeland 2012: 37) and saved thus millions of lives, what is essential here is that, firstly, both the Bombe and Colossus were supra-human in their capacity to process very large amounts of information infinitely faster than any human being, and, secondly, they introduced a new paradigm of knowledge beyond human intelligence: digital information based on the logic of algorithms (cf., for example, Golumbia 2009).

Turing's mathematical ideas and their application in codebreaking inauguratated a new era, the era of post-Leibnizian calculative reason: the reason of the computer, the paradigmatic form of the *trans-classical machine* (for the origin of the notion, see Günther 2002 [1957]; cf. Ropohl 1991: 169–172; Manzei 2003: 92, 109–115; Weber 2003: 158–159, 164–165; in terms of *Vorausberechenbarkeit*, cf. Heidegger 1977a [1938]: 94–96, 1989b [1962]: 17, 2006b [1959–1969]: 23, 175–177).

Later, at the beginning of the 1980s, exploring what she calls "automating and informating the white-collar workplace" (Zuboff 1988: 124), Zuboff once again had an opportunity to observe the new technological environment of clerical work.

> For the millions of people who work in or have occasion to visit corporate facilities, the on-line office has become a familiar, even a cliched, image. There are the clusters of desks, usually separated by partitions, and each is home to a video display terminal. The office may be softly lit; some even have a smattering of potted palms or rubber plants. A quick glance can give the impression that the women and men who work in these offices *have been mesmerized by the green or amber glow of their video screens, as they spend the better part of each day with attention fixed on luminous electronic numbers and letters*. (ibid.)

Everywhere in these new offices, the "rows of desks and paper clutter had given way to clean surfaces and desktop terminals" (ibid.: 125), while, at the same time, as Zuboff was to observe again and again, the more intensively the clerks were engaged in the work process at the interface, the more they were isolated from one another (ibid.: 129–159; cf. Wright 1995: 86–89; in terms of "cyborg exis-

tence" as a contemporary continuation of the Cartesian *cogito*, cf. O'Leary & Brasher 1996: 254–257; from the perspective of technocracy, cf. Burris 1993: 56–64). The rationalization of work based on computerization resulted, among other things, as Zuboff shows in her study, in a new subject position in the technologically advanced world: a subject alone at the interface; in other words, *a computer subject as a technological monad* enclosed in its cubicle.

That is, a subject living not only on the condition, but, more fundamentally, as an *extension* of the "smart machine," a machine that is superior to the human being as a self: this was the beginning of the postmodernization of work and labour conditions in the order of neo-Fordism, the order of global capitalism ruled by the imperative of neoliberalism.

This was the "future of work and power" (as Zuboff indicates in her subtitle) that became reality in the world dominated by the computer, a world in which work was subsumed by the techno-political regime of "cybernation" (see, for example, Bell 1991 [1980]: 43–50; Dinello 2005: 60–63; Pickering 2010: 14; Michael 1962; Winthrop 1966; Jones 1997; Aronowitz & Cutler 1998), the project of "computerization" implying a "modernity modernised" (Finnemann 1999 [1997]) – the world we are now living in; that is, in the office environment, the computer screen has opened up a window on a world not of one's own making, but a world of systemic rationality based on the "anonymous wisdom" (Marcuse 1941: 419) of capital embodied by technology. In other words, if, in the disciplinary order of Fordism constitutive of the modern, the emblem of scientific-technological rationalization was "man on the assembly line" (Walker & Guest 1952; cf. Allen 1996; Yanarella & Reid 1996), in the postmodern, it is the human being alone at the interface (see Laurel 1990; cf. Opitz 2004); a being that is defined in terms of the paradigmatic machine of the contemporary world, the computer.

Fig. 66. From wartime codebreaking to the beginning of the computer age after the war: Turing's "universal machine" or the "Turing machine" as the conceptual model of the computer; that is, a hypothetical computing machine operating by a predefined set of rules in order to determine a result from a set of input variables (see, for example, Herken 1995; Eberbach et al. 2004; Copeland 2006; for a contextualization in terms of "the mechanization of mathematics," see Beeson 2004). Turing inspecting the Ferranti Mark 1 computer in 1951, the first commercially available, electronic stored-programme general-purpose digital computer, based on a pilot model, the Automatic Computing Engine, ACE, designed by Turing in 1945–1950 (for the significance of the ACE in the history of computer, see Copeland 2005).

From a long historical perspective, it is evident that, firstly, military intelligence, in this case, in the form of the Enigma and its counter measures, the codebreaking operations at Bletchley Park based on Turing's theoretical work (see Turing 2004a [1950], 2004b [1947], 2004c [1936]), have contributed to the development of artificial intelligence (see Fetzer 2004: 120–122; Copeland & Proudfoot 2005: 122–136; in terms of machine intelligence, see Copeland 2004a; for Turing's writings, see Copeland 2004f, 2012); and, secondly, the combination of the computer, digital information and algorithms as a new kind of data processing method, deriving from Bletchley Park deciphering machines, constitutes the techno-logical infrastructure that has enabled the rise of contemporary world-wide computer networks with their diverse dimensions from personal communications over the Internet to the global financial markets, commercial data mining and mass surveillance programmes.

According to Miroswski (2002: 2), by 1997, "with the melding of home entertainment centers with home offices and personal computers via the Internet (a lineal descendant of the Defence-funded ARPANET), any residential den or rec room could be refitted as a scaled-down simulacrum" of any of these kinds of computerized work environments that had their origin in the military control facilities (see, for example, Abbate 2000: 76–78, 113–145; O'Regan 2008: 167–176, 181–183). It might be the "temporary premises of one of the burgeoning 'dot-com' start-ups which captured the imaginations of Generation X," or it could even "be promoted as the prototype classroom of the future" (Miroswski 2002: 2) – all the same, the computer interface defined the subject anew in terms of technoculture: *a subject that becomes subject in a face-to-face relationship to the interface*. In this constellation, work in America at the turn of the millennium brought about "serried ranks of Dilberts arrayed in cubicles staring at these screens" (ibid.) – "Dilberts" that are to be found today all over the world, not the least in academia, a world in which popular science fiction fantasies have turned into theory-fictions under the sign of the "post": the imaginary world of post-theory.

This is the origin of what I call the *terminal subject* (cf. Bukatman 1996 [1993]), the mode of being of the subject at the interface; a postmodern subject positioned at the intersection of the body and the machine; a self as the self of the machine. Today, in a world that is dominated by technology, all that is human takes on a technological meaning; a meaning that defines the subject even before the birth of the human individual, a being that is going to become a subject. Today, one is at the interface already before one is born. Although this is not the origin of what Robbie Davis-Floyd and Joseph Dumit (1998) call "cyborg babies" conceived of by means of "techno-sex," this is an essential part of procreation and reproduction, in terms of technology, in the contemporary world: *one not only becomes a cyborg,* but, more fundamentally, *one is born as a cyborg*, if by the cyborg we understand human-machine interconnections that define what is or what is taken as human (see, for example, Gray 2001: 21–37, 87–97; Lay et al. 2000; Coleman 2004; Gelfand & Shook 2006; Mamo 2007; Clarke et al. 2010).

If reproduction and birth are an essential part of cyborg technologies in the contemporary world, what does it mean in terms of the interface?

> The room is dark. The technician glides a flat wand over the sound-conducting gel spread all over my belly. I look at the monitor, as the technician begins to interpret the image in an intimate whisper: "There is the spine, those are the toes… all ten. Okay, let's see your fingers, Baby." The fetus spreads all ten of its fingers as if on command. "Oh," the technician announces, "He's proud." It takes thirty minutes to measure and inventory the body parts of the fetus: the arms, the legs, the stomach, the liver, the lungs, the kidneys, the brain. The doctor zooms in on the penis with the special camera, outlining it with a strong dotted line. "Look," he announces, "He has a large and strong penis; it is standing up like the Statue of Liberty!" Everyone laughs, even me. I'm not sure what is funny. We name this fetus "Boy." We give him a big white dick. We turn it into that phallic woman who stands up for freedom. I stare at the image on the screen. It is in constant, violent motion, an 80's punk rocker in a mosh pit. (Lehner 1996: 179–180; in terms of foetal images and "the politics in representation," cf. Petchesky 2000)

This is the way in which, in the context of "prosthetic feminism" (Senft 1996b), Sharon Lehner describes the first encounter with her unborn child; a child that she lost, not, of course, as a consequence of the screening at the interface, but by abortion due to the defects, "certain profound anomalities" (Lehner 1996: 179), discovered through an amniocentesis, a test to determine the genetic condition of the fetus. Considered in terms of the interface, Lehner's unborn baby had a "terminal identity" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]) before it even existed: the foetus seen at the interface constituted a terminal subject in its embryonic form; to emphasize, a being that did not exist on the screen but was *represented* by the computer display.

2.2.4 Towards the Paradigm of the Console Cowboys

What is it that becomes *re*-presented in representation? To be represented the represented must be *present* in representation. This implies, however, that what representation presents, by way on *presencing*, is always something that is absent, otherwise it would not be a representation. Thus, the problem is that to be a true representation the representation must be a *presentation* of that which only becomes present in presentation that in itself presents representation, a representation that presents something absent. It is precisely this *presence of the absent* that makes representation to a presentation of the imaginary that, due to the process of presencing, appears as real. That is, representation is always a *Vorstellung*: it does not bring back something absent, rather, it creates an object *sui generis*. This fact of representation remains constantly unaddressed, or is consciously forgotten, in cyber discourse for which the imaginary is the *only* real. What is problematic in this respect is that, although there is no access to the real *an sich* (which is accessible only through representation), it does not mean that it would not exist (in Lacanian terms, cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 183–190; Bowie 1991: 91–95, 102–110; Homer 2005: 81–84).

From a wider perspective, the terminal subject not only involves a situation in which, as Sherry Turkle (1984) says, the computer appears as a "second self," or in which the prevailing way of life in technologically highly developed – Western or Westernized – societies is seen as "life on the screen" (Turkle 1995); nor is this subject position merely a configuration in which, according to Brenda Laurel (1993 [1991]), a pioneering interface researcher and developer, the subject at the interface can experience "computers as theatre." But, moreover, in my conception of the terminal subject, what is decisive is not so much the computer, the machine, but, rather, the psychical structure, the sensuous, sentient and affective constitution of the self at the interface (in terms of the "cinematic apparatus" in apparatus theory, cf. de Lauretis & Heath 1980; Rosen 1986).

"Normal Humans Can Become Unbearable"

In this constellation, the whole sensibility of the subject undergoes a peculiar transformation as a result of an intensive terminal relation, an obsessive adherence to the interface appearing as a *transparent mirror* of the subject.

In other words, the terminal subject is a result of a new cognitive paradigm in the context of the Cold War that Paul N. Edwards (1996: 228–237) describes by the term "cyborg psychology" characterizing a self defined by "information-machine metaphors" (ibid.: 236): "a psychology of humans as natural cyborgs," implying the constitution of "the cyborg subject, for whom experience and knowledge are built bit by bit, as it were, from pure information" (ibid.: 237; in terms of "cyberpsychology," cf. Gordo-López & Parker 1999; for the emergence of this idea from the "Anti-Aircraft Predictor" in Wienerian cybernetics, see Galison 1994; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Bennett 1993: 176–181; Gerovitch 2002a: 54–70, 2001, 2002b; Mindell 2002: 233–235; Mirowski 2002: 17–18, 60–63, 184–185; Pickering 2005: 232–242; Shilling 2005: 180–181; Turner 2006: 21–26).

The point is that for the terminal subject, life outside the computer is illusion; real life is behind the screen, in cyberspace (cf. McCaffery 1994a [1991]: 272; Kendrick 1996: 144–149; Žižek 1997b: 130–133; Heuser 2003: 99–123; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Nusselder 2009). If the entire idea of cyberspace derives from science fiction, that is, if "cyberspace" is a "consensual hallucination" described by *literary means* by William Gibson (1995 [1984]: 67; Bell 2000c: 2–3) in his *science fiction* story *Neuromancer*, all that is "cyber" refers to an imaginary world made present by self-mirroring *theory-fictions* constituting cyber discourse as an imaginary representation of the real that exists only in the mode of the imaginary.

Thus, in reversed terms, the terminal subject of cyberspace lives in a neo-Platonic cave: the play of shadows appears to it as a true life (cf. Plato 1997: 327–332; cf. Dyson 1998: 37–38; Doel & Clarke 1999: 264–265; for cyberspace as a form "redemption" in Christian theology, cf. Ward 2000: 247–256).

The prototype of the terminal subject can be found in what Joseph Weizenbaum (1976: 116), a prominent pioneer of computer science and an outspoken critic of computer technocracy, calls the "compulsive programmer." Weizenbaum, a former programmer himself, came to observe the suggestive power of the computer after having programmed an experimental AI (artificial intelligence) programme called ELIZA the purpose of which was to simulate a therapeutic session (see Weizenbaum 1966; cf. Turing 2004a [1950]). The "artificial intelligence" of ELIZA was able to carry on a "conversation" with the user, that is, the computer would take the role of a therapist. What is important, however, is that rather than to replace therapy by a computer programme, Weizenbaum's intention was to demonstrate "the possibility of natural-language programming, not to automate the counselling process" (Capshew 1999: 252).

Fig. 67. The Sketchpad system (1963), "developed by Ivan Sutherland on a computer built for military radar" (Wardrip-Fruin & Montfort 2003: 109).

Sutherland at the console of the Lincoln TX-2 computer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) demonstrating the idea of Sketchpad or "a man-machine graphical communications system" (Sutherland 2003 [1963]), a programme for a graphical user interface, proposed in his doctoral thesis in 1963, that created the basic model for what later became known as computer-aided design or CAD (see Ceruzzi 1989: 115–130; cf. Grau 2003: 161–162). What was specific to Sutherland's Sketchpad was that it comprised an input/output system including an x-y point plotting display that allowed visual patterns on the screen to be produced interactively by means of a light pen and a control board with a series of buttons and switches.

It is in this manner that Sketchpad "revolutionized research on human-computer interaction" (Bardini 2000: 84), and, by that, it was crucial to Douglas Engelbart's project for "the fourth and final stage in the evolution of human intellect," that is, in Engelbart's words, "automated external symbol manipulation" (ibid.: 85; for "the social construction of the personal computer user," see Bardini & Horvath 1995).

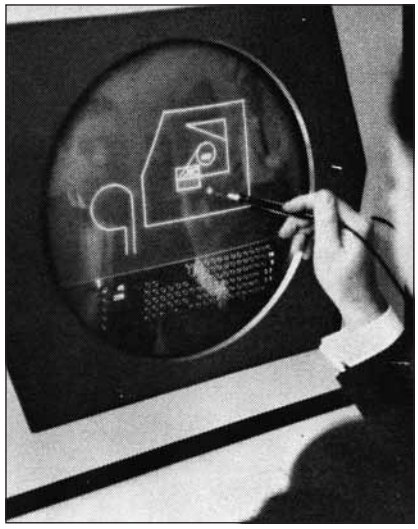


Fig. 68. A modified application of Sutherland's Sketchpad in 1965 showing how the light pen enables the linking of the hand and the eye of the user with the object on the display.

"In Sketchpad the light pen is time shared between the functions of coordinate input for positioning picture parts on the drawing and demonstrative input for pointing to existing picture parts to make changes. […] To initially establish pen tracking, the Sketchpad user must inform the computer of an initial pen location. This has come to be known as 'inking-up' and is done by 'touching' any existing line or spot on the display, whereupon the tracking cross appears. If no picture has yet been drawn, the letters INK are always displayed for this purpose. Sketchpad uses loss of tracking as a 'termination signal' to stop drawing. The user signals that he is finished drawing by flicking the pen too fast for the tracking program to follow." (Sutherland 2003 [1963]: 115)

Fig. 69. After the introduction of the light pen by Sutherland as a method to work on the computer screen, a new input device invented by Douglas Engelbart was the mouse.

The picture shows the online system workstation with the CRT display, keyboard, pushbuttons and the first model of the mouse plugged into the system in 1964. Engelbart's computer mouse, however, was not just a mouse; it was a pointing device the aim of which was an augmentation of human intellect by means of interactive computing (see Engelbart 1963; Engelbart & English 1968; Engelbart et al. 1973; Nelson 1967, 1991 [1972]); that is, by way of what J. C. R. Licklider (2003 [1960]), in his pioneering article, called "man-computer symbiosis," a new working method to make it possible "to think in interaction with a computer" (ibid.: 75).

"In the anticipated symbiotic partnership, men will set the goals, formulate the hypotheses, determine the criteria, and perform the evaluations. Computing machines will do the routinizable work that must be done to prepare the way for insights and decisions in technical and scientific thinking." (ibid.: 74; for a historical contextualization, see Bardini & Horvath 1995; Bardini 2000; in terms of interactivity, computer counterculture and the "romanticism" of the machine, see Rheingold 1993: 65–109; Streeter 2011: 39–68).

Fig. 70. The Semi-Automatic Ground Environment or SAGE, created by the US Air Force for an advanced air defense network during the Cold War, consisting of radars, computer systems and aircraft command and control equipment, constructed between 1951 and 1958 (see Edwards 1996: 75–111; Swedin & Ferro 2007: 48–50; Bousquet 2009: 131–137, 203–204; for an eyewitness account, see Hanhimäki & Westad 2003: 283–286).

In addition to its strategic importance, SAGE set the foundations for computer networking and mass data-processing systems, thus anticipating the technological developments that constitute the infrastructure of the contemporary globally operating computer-mediated communications systems, the Internet and the World Wide Web. In the picture, a SAGE radar display and a console operator using a light-sensing gun as a pointing device to recognize the positional information pertaining to the aircrafts to be identified.

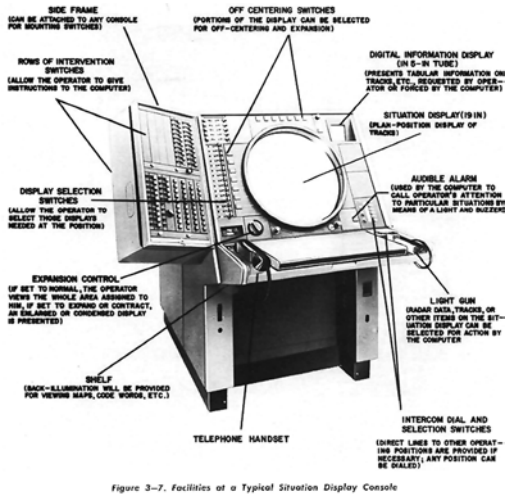


Fig. 71. The display and operating console of the AN/FSQ-7 (Army-Navy Fixed Special eQuipment), the IBM Whirlwind real-time control computer system consisting of "sixty machines at $ 30 million apiece" (Leslie 1993: 36). The system was "IBM's largest single contract at the time, involving nearly eight thousand people and accounting for more than half the corporate R&D budget" (ibid.).

"Each SAGE center lodged in a windowless four-story blockhouse with six-foot thick blast resistant concrete walls, occupying two acres of land. The building's entire second story was taken up by the AN/FSQ-7 computer – actually two identical computers operating in tandem, providing instantaneous backup should one machine fail (a technique known as 'duplexing'). Weighing three hundred tons and occupying 20,000 square feet, the FSQ-7's seventy cabinets contained 58,000 vacuum tubes. Display consoles and telephone equipment required another 20,000 square feet of floor space. Each center had its own electric power plant to run the computer, air conditioning, and telephone switching systems inside. Additionally, the dedicated generators insulated the control center from failures of, or attacks on, the commercial power grid." (Edwards 1996: 104–106; cf. Ceruzzi 1989: 63–80; de Monchaux 2011: 166–168).

In this sense, Weizenbaum's experiment, in fact, was a "parody" (ibid.), the idea of which was to draw attention to the "instrumentalist bias" of the psychotherapeutic language of the time (ibid.; cf. Rothenberg 1993: 143–146; Boden 2006: 371–372, 742–743; for a historical contextualization in terms of "the Freudian robot," see Liu 2011: 210–251). Weizenbaum was therefore disturbed to notice "how seriously users would interact with ELIZA": even though they knew that "it was 'only' a computer program, they would tell it their most personal secrets" (Levy 1994 [1984]: 133; cf. Donath 2000: 298–302).

This brings us back to the "compulsive programmer." To Weizenbaum, ELIZA was a "demonstration of how the computer's power could lead to irrational, almost addictive behavior, with dehumanizing consequences" (Levy 1994: 133; for a social-historical contextualization in terms of industrial automation, see Noble 1986 [1984]). Similarly to the user of the ELIZA programme, the "compulsive programmer" developed an intimate, even symbiotic relationship to the computer; a relationship that had an intensive psychic character: the machine appeared as an extension of the programmer, an ego-mirror that had the ability to reflect the psychic constitution of the programmer and to response to his

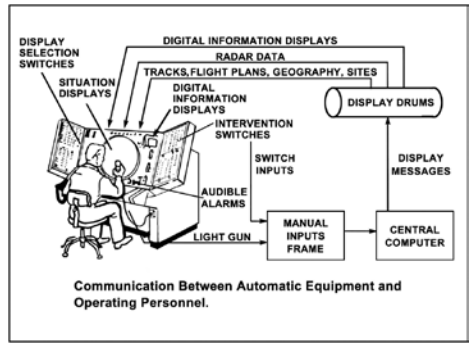


Fig. 72. Control engineering in the era of the computer: the operator as a servomechanism of a human-machine information and communication system (for a historical contextualization, see Cerruzzi 2003 [1998]: 51–53; Beniger 1986; Bennett 1993; Levin 2000).

"Despite its importance, the history of SAGE is filled with ironies. It was an Air Force-run project to accomplish a goal most Air Force commanders opposed: air defence against nuclear weapons. It was obsolete before it was complete, rendered militarily worthless by the ICBM and technologically outdated by the transistor and the integrated circuit. […] Perhaps the most telling irony […] was that the *automatic* control SAGE promised was then, and remains today, largely an illusion. Whatever the abilities of the computers and their programs, much of the total task still remained to human operators and their organization. Attempts to 'program' *this* part of the work – in the form of formal procedures encoded in manuals – always faltered against the unruly complexities not yet enclosed within the system." (Edwards 1996: 108)

Regardless of all these contradictions, the SAGE system "continued to function well into the 1980s," to the extent that "[s]ix SAGE centers were still operating in 1983, using their original vacuum-tube equipment" (ibid.).

deep-felt needs. In this sense, while the computer became what Sherry Turkle (1984) describes as a "second self" in technologically advanced American culture in the early 1980s, it simultaneously brought about an addictive computer user known as the "hacker." According to Turkle, the "hacker culture" appealed especially to young people who needed "to avoid complicted social situations, who for one reason or another got frightened off or hurt too badly by the risks and complexities of relationships" (ibid.: 216; cf. Chesebro & Bonsall 1996: 4; Simpson 1995: 152–163, 215–217; Vitanza 1996; Brummett 1999).

These two social character types, the "compulsive programmer" and the "hacker," shared a common feature: they had an intensive personal relationship to the computer, the machine that had become their "second self." For this reason, the manner in which Weizenbaum describes the culture of compulsive programmers applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the computer addiction of hackers:

> Wherever computer centres have become established […] bright young men of dishevelled appearance, often with sunken glowing eyes, can be seen sitting at computer consoles, their arms tensed and waiting to fire their fingers, already poised to strike, at the buttons and keys on which their attention seems to be riveted as a gambler's on the rolling dice. When not so transfixed, they often sit at tables strewn with computer printouts over which their pore like possessed students of a cabbalistic text. They work until they nearly drop, twenty, thirty hours at a time. Their food, if they arrange it, is brought to them: coffee, Cokes, sandwiches. If possible, they sleep on cots near the printouts. Their rumpled clothes, their unwashed and unshaven faces, and their uncombed hair all testify that they are oblivious to their bodies and to the world in which they move. These are computer bums, compulsive programmers […] (Weizenbaum 1976: 116; cf. Streeter 2011: 51–52)

Not only is the computer an interactive machine that works in a close, mutually responsive relationship with the programmer, but, at the same time, it also represents, according to Weizenbaum, the logic of instrumental reason, the mentality of scientific-technological omnipotence inscribed in computer culture; that is, the mind-set distinctive to "the cognitive interest in prediction and control which is common to both science and technology" (Bloomfield 1987: 91). In this sense, Weizenbaum's "compulsive programmer" is the prototype of the contemporary computer subject in its ideal form: *a subject that has a libidinal relationship to technology*. This is the psychic constitution of the terminal subject, the postmodern machine-subject. To characterize the personality type brought about by this new mode of subjectivity and agency, Weizenbaum (1976: 117) asks, "how may compulsive programmers be distinguished from a merely dedicated, hard-working professional programmer?"

> First, by the fact that the ordinary professional programmer addresses himself to the problem to be solved, whereas the compulsive programmer sees the problem mainly as an opportunity to interact with the computer. The professional regards programming as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. His satisfaction comes from having solved a substantive problem, not having bent a computer to his will. (ibid.; cf. Bolter 1984: 174–175)

According to Weizenbaum, the compulsive programmer is "generally a superb technician, one who knows every detail of the computer he works on, its peripheral equipment, the computer's operating system, etc." (Weizenbaum 1976: 117). The problem, however, is that he is like a "bank employee who doesn't do much for the bank, but is kept on because only he knows the combination of the safe" (ibid.). But what the compulsive programmer, in fact, knows is that the code can always be better, more sophisticated, more efficient, bringing more pleasure in terms of intelligence, whether human or artificial. This is the desire, the real passion, an overwhelming obsession, of the compulsive programmer, the prototype of the terminal subject. As Weizenbaum says:

> Unlike the professional, the compulsive programmer cannot attend to other tasks, not even to tasks closely related to his program, during periods when he is not actually operating a computer. He can barely tolerate being away from the machine. But when he is nevertheless forced by circumstances to be separated from it, at least he has his computer printouts with him. He studies them, he talks about them to anyone who will listen though, of course, no one else can understand them. Indeed, while in the grip of his compulsion he can talk of nothing but his program. But *the only time he is, so to say, happy, is when he is at the computer console*. (ibid.: 118; emphasis mine; cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]: 102–103)

This "compulsion," according to Weizenbaum (1976: 117), finally amounts to a "psychopathology" of seeking "reassurance from the computer, not pleasure" (cf. Haug 1987 [1971]: 54). In other words, the compulsive programmer feels himself as a whole in a symbiotic relationship to the computer, to a machine that has the unique ability to reward the programmer with a feeling of a genuine existence, a feeling of authentic self. But behind this symbiosis is a control obsession: "compulsive programming is a psychopathological state involving

fantasies of omnipotence in which the hacker's sense of power must be constantly verified through the control of the computer" (Bloomfield 1987: 91–93). In other words, if the hacker can rule his computer, he can rule the world, this is the phantasm of control obsession (for the case of Kevin Mitnick, "the most famous hacker of all time," see Jordan 1999: 138–139; Thomas 2003: 191–205).

What is at issue here is the seduction of the magic circle created by the computer around its user. This is the affective state of mind typical of what Gibson 1995) calls "console cowboys" – in fact, a latter-day literary elaboration of Weizenbaum's "compulsive programmer." What is common to Weizenbaum's "compulsive programmer," Gibson's "console cowboy" and the contemporary computer user as a terminal subject is that all of them are captivated by the desire to be *one* with the computer; that is, a secluded personality structure and an emotional orientation cultivated by computer culture from the very beginning (see, for example, Ceruzzi (2003 [1998]: 79–106, 346–350; in terms of hackerism, see Levy 1994 [1984]; for "thinking oneself as a computer," see Pryor 1991).

This aspect of the habitual behaviour in computer culture as the most advanced and hence the most seclusive part of postmodern technoculture brought about by the mesmerizing power of the interface is illuminated by Ellen Ullman, herself a computer programmer with decades of practical experiences of sitting in front of the keybord-display combination, in the mode of human-machine hybrid (for an overview, see Suchman 2007; in the context of cyberpunk, cf. Booth & Flanagan 2002: 7–8; in terms of "hacktivism," cf. Jordan & Taylor 2004; with regard to the pre-history of the cyborg, cf. Muri 2007: 19–22, 30–31). The "deformations of character," as Ullman says, "that go into making of a technical person," is constitutive of the structure of personality typical of the programmers (Miller 1997; cf. Ullman 1995: 131–132, 1997: 211–214). In my reading, Ullman describes the terminal subject in its protoform; that is, a subject that is affected, if not infected, by what Springer (1991) calls "the pleasure of the interface." According to Ullman, not only programming but using computer in general "involves a narrow-well horizon," the "world in a small frame," and – what is most important here for the understanding of the affective character of the interface – a "tight, nervous, cycling energy," a "strange energy" that can be "alternately exhilarating or unpleasant," but the "long-term effect" of which is an "abiding impatience" (Miller 1997). It is this compulsive, *machinic energy*, a compelling and enticing spirit of the machine, that captivates the programmer and makes him (indeed, in most cases, male) unable to understand the world of humans.

> Once you get used to the machine cycling back at you, responding to you and *only you*, you come to hate it when it's slow. And *the diffuse, ambling ways of normal humans can become unbearable*. Even after hours and days of programming (or using the system all day at work), returning to the terminal after dinner is *seductive*. Here is where something, if not *someone*, can keep up with the strange, nervous energy you've gotten used to. (ibid.)

The machine is you, and you are the machine – this symbiotic fusion of the programmer with the computer is not only the emblem of the world of com-

puter professionals, and, as their strange *alter ego*, of computer hackers (see, for example, Pryor 1991; Levy 1994 [1984]; Pryor & Scott 1994; Thomas 2003), but also the epitome of the ideal mode of being celebrated by cyber discourse, the ideal of being a cyborg glorified by academic theory-fictions in the wake of Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" (Haraway 1985), the Scripture of the scriptures of postmodern cyber-theory (see, for example, Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Haney 2006; in terms of "cyborgology, " see Gray et al. 1995a).

The machine-bound subjectivity of the hacker is aptly summed up by Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (1997b) in their description of what they call "body delirium" as part of "digital delirium" prevailing in techno-avantgardist computer culture:

> Think about the most avant-garde of computer hackers wearing digital gear as part of the body apparatus, feeling a twinness with the machine – an overriding need not to be a machine but to be twinned with one. Digital twins with mirrored identities for a time when digital reality can be your twin, a long lost, but for that matter always desperately sought out electronic double in the digital vortex. Like those hackers at MIT's Media Lab involved in the "Body Net" project: actually externalizing the electro-magnetic field of the body only to better mirror themselves electronically with a digital Other. Not skin on skin, but skin on synthetics. Or those other extropians and futurists and uploaders who are determined to interface human flesh with digital reality – head as passive terminals for virtual cellular telephones, hands embedded with electronic bank cards, DNA as a living computer matrix. It has always been assumed that computer hackers – cyberboys – have been motivated by a strong desire to dump human flesh, to mutate their skin, taking autistic shelter in an electronic homeland of their own creation. (ibid.: xi; in terms of the "bio-adapter," cf. Wiener 1969, 1989 [1988])

Behind the "body delirium" of hacker subjectivity there are "the mythical, even psychoanalytical processes involved in inventing the digital future," an entirely new mode of identity constituted by "the doubled Other": the "double in the electronic womb" (Kroker & Kroker 1997b: xi). It is in this manner that in "the electronic mirror, digital and human reality have been twinned: *the interface is complete between human and synthetic identity*" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

Thus, the "deformations of character" peculiar to the professional programmers living in an extremely intimate relationship to the computer, the quasi-intelligent machine, is, *mutatis mutandis*, the psychic structure of what I call the terminal subject idealized by cyber discourse: not only a fascination with, and an allurement by, the "life on the screen" (Turkle 1995; in terms of "experience economy," cf. Pine & Gilmore 1999: 106, 127, 189–194), the digital universe opened up by the interface, but, first and foremost, the simultaneously anxious *and* pleasurable obsession with the virtual world behind the screen, in the mysterious and magical deep dimensions of cyberspace (cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]). This enchantment of the virtual world as a "paraspace" (Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 157–182) beyond the mundane reality of everyday life is the origin of both the terminal subject and the mythopoetic discourse surrounding cyberspace, the discursive universe that, during the 1990s, brought about the paradigm of cyber discourse, the phantasmatic world of the "cyber" appearing, like a revelation, in the virtual reality of language

constitutive of cyberculture (see, for example, Hartmann 2004: 30–69; Benedikt 1994 [1991]; McCaffery 1994c [1991]; Dery 1994, 1996; Cavallaro 2000; Tofts et al. 2003; Ricardo 2009a; from a historical perspective, cf. Rabinovitz & Geil 2004).

In these terms, the terminal subject is a postmodern variation of Weizenbaum's "compulsive programmer": rather than the teleology of always better programming, the phantasm of a perfect programme, the terminal subject" enjoys the intimacy implied by the computer, an *obsessive pleasure* at the "computer console," the seduction of the magic circle enclosing the computer user in a libidinal symbiosis with the interface and the unending virtual world behind the screen: a phantasmatic world that is real in its virtuality, a post-Gibsonian "consensual hallucination" the reality of which is the imaginary.

The "Erotic Pleasure" of "Cyborg Envy"

The decisive moment was the year 1984, the "Orwellian year," the *annus mirabilis*, when two fundamental things took place at the same time: William Gibson published his *Neuromancer* and Apple released its new model, the Macintosh computer (see, for example, Gere 2002: 186; Matrix 2006: 2–3). While Gibson introduced his epochal notion of cyberspace, the very origin of all that is "cyber," Macintosh presented its equally significant innovation, the new "user-friendly" interface, the icon of the "liberated" computer subject. At the "heart of the Macintosh computer," as Scott Bukatman (1996 [1993]: 199) points out, is the "exploratory environment and the intuitive interface," both representing "perhaps the most important design in minicomputers since their inception." "The goal at Apple was to *empower the individual* against the forces of corporate power and central control" (ibid.) – a theme centrally figuring, in terms of science fiction, in Gibson's *Neuromancer* (for a historical contextualization from the perspective of the American counterculture, see Roszak 1969; Gitlin 1980, 1987; DeKoven 2004; Turner 2006; Diedrichsen & Franke 2013).

In this cultural constellation, the interface attained mythical dimensions, it took on a political meaning evoking fictional images that had a deep historical significance; in fact, the new kind of computer interface engendered iconographic associations of the Western concept of freedom and democracy: the interface appeared as a "new frontier" in the tradition of American individualism, the ethos of self-sufficiency and self-management. In other words, access to the computer implied access to the world, a world of one's own making (see, for example, Dean 2002b: 87–88; Saco 2002: 95–116, 187–210; for the transition from counterculture to cyberculture, see Turner 2006; for a contextualization in terms of media studies, see Bolter & Grusin 1999; Lister et al. 2003; Liestøl et al. 2004; from the perspective of first person media, see Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan 2004). In this sense, the interface became the symbol of individual autonomy, the ultimate liberation of the subject – made possible by the new Apple computer.

> Their *1984* commercial, directed by Ridley Scott, featured a most spectacular projection of the Orwellian vision, but now the proles were controlled by the "Big

> Blue," IBM (unnamed): "The idea was to portray a totalitarian state that didn't work, like East Germany in 1953, and to give it the air of the dank and leaky spacecraft in *Alien*. The sets were modeled after those used to create Everytown, the art-moderne 'city of the future' in the 1936 science fiction classic *Things to Come*." In the commercial the proles gather in an enormous meeting hall, as a blonde, young, female athlete with a sledge-hammer runs in and smashes Big Brother's screen. Apple was unveiling its Macintosh, the announcer said. Personal computing, with a friendly interface, was "why 1984 won't be like *1984*." (Bukatman 1996: 199)

A "friendly interface" embodying the idea of "personal computing" – that was the turning point in the mid-1980s in terms of computer design, and accordingly, with regard to human-machine interrelations in a world in which technology was increasingly defining the very idea of the human. At the centre of this development was the notion of *the interface as the face of the subject*, a subject brought into a position of free choice: a choice implying the freedom to choose one's own world, a liberty to practice technologically enhanced individualism as the most advanced form of the ego-politics of the subject constitutive of the postmodern (cf., for example, Shilling 2005: 173–197; for technofuturist "mondoids," cf. Sobchack 1994; in terms of "cyborging the body politic," cf. Dery 1992). This is the vision of empowerment, an alluring view of becoming oneself at the interface, in a self-relation to oneself through the imaginary world opened by the computer display. Gibson's moment of revelation, the initial insight, behind his *Neuromancer*, in fact, is an exact description of the rapture typical of the experience of the subject empowered by the interface, a self made to feel its power to control a world behind the screen – a rapture that is the very *seduction* of all that is "cyber." As Gibson describes this constitutive moment of cyberspace implying an imaginary space that was soon to become an iconic emblem of the virtualization of the subject celebrated by post-theory:

> I was walking down Granville Street, Vancouver's version of "The Strip," and I looked into one of the video arcades. I could see in the physical intensity of their postures how *rapt* the kids inside were. It was like one of those closed systems out of a Pynchon novel: a feedback loop with photons coming off the screens into the kids' eyes, neurons moving through their bodies, and electrons moving through the video game. These kids clearly *believed* in the space games projected. Everyone I know who works with computers seems to develop a belief that there's some kind of *actual space* behind the screen, someplace you can't see but you know is there. (McCaffery 1994a [1991]: 272)

"These kids clearly believed in the space games projected" – what else do cyber theorists believe in? What else is the whole edifice of theory-fictions around the "cyber," the post-utopian world of theoretical daydreams spun about by postmodern academics in the elevated state of mind typical of post-theory, the "high" of the "post" – academic post-subjects sitting all day long in front of the computer, mesmerized by the world of theory flickering in the magic para-space beyond the screen?

For Allucquère Rosanne Stone, one of the most prominent cyber theorists, and a highly influential master mind of cyber discourse (see Stone 1992, 1994b, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1995e), the seduction emanating from cyberspace, the mys-

terious space believed to be over there, at the other side of the interface, appears as a reflection of the affective state of mind typical of adolescent males. According to Stone (1994b: 108), for the young male, living in the transition from youth to adulthood, immersion in cyberspace creates a feeling of an enormous empowerment, a sensation of being in control of things encountered in the vastness opened up by the screen. "In psychoanalytic terms," as Stone says, "for the young male, unlimited power first suggests the mother"; that is, the "experience of unlimited power" implies an "unresolvable need for reconciliation with an always absent structure of personality" (ibid.: 109; cf. Lupton 1995: 110–111; Ulmer 2005: 98–100). In other words, the adolescents described by Stone are personifications of the Lacanian mirror stage, *stade miroir* (Lacan 1977f [1966/1949]; Bowie 1991: 21–26, 33–34, 197–198; Gallop 1985: 74–92), a libidinal state of ego-reflection in which the subject is fascinated with its mirror image taking it for its own image, a joyful recognition of the specular image as its true self, which, though, is always a misrecognition (cf. Žižek 1993: 178, 1996c: 235, 1997b: 141–142, 2005a: 335).

Reading Stone's cyber-texts I cannot, however, avoid having the impression that Stone herself is living in the "adolescent" world she is referring to, in the ecstatic, megalomaniac state of mind typical of all that is "cyber" (see especially Stone 1995e, 1996a; cf. Kellner 1995: 309–312; Robins 1995: 139–142; Cooper 2002: 146–147, 154–159; Jagodzinski 2004: 191–197, 221–223). What Chris Toulouse and Timothy W. Luke (1998) call "the politics of cyberspace," in fact, is about the egopolitics of the postmodern subject: empowerment of oneself by means of virtual extensions of one's own self, a "self" which is an imaginary compound of its own reflections, its own imaginary mirror images (cf. Crang et al. 1999; Loader 1997a; Barbrook 2000; Armitage & Roberts 2002b; Boler 2010; in terms of "virtual structures" as a new mode of power and politics, see Luke 2003a).

In the final analysis, though, it remains unclear what Stone actually means by the figure of the "mother" that, in the mode of post-feminism, indeed has a mythical meaning (both mythical and mythified) in psychoanalytical theory (for *die phallische Mutter*, the "phallic mother," in Freudian theory, see Freud 1972h [1931]: 531, 1976f [1908]: 178–180, 1986a [1919]: 110, 1990c [1933]: 137, 139; cf., for example, Forrester 1994 [1990]: 51–64, 238–263). It is, however, quite clear to me that behind Stones's idea is Haraway's cyborg theory; as Haraway (1991a: 151) says, an "origin story in the 'Western,' humanist sense depends on the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror, represented by the *phallic mother* from whom all humans must separate" (emphasis mine; cf., for example, Beetham 1995: 108–110; Schneider 2005: 63–64; for a historical overview of the idea of the "phallic mother," see Ian 1993). This is the "absent structure of personality" (Stone 1994b: 108) that Stone's "adolescent male" seeks for reconciliation with; that is, if we remain in the framework of psychoanalysis, his own image in the image of the mother, whether his own or the "phallic mother" as the mythic mother of all humans.

But all this is characteristic of Stone's own way to describe cyberspace and all that "cyber": a mode of theory-euphoria that in its elevated state of technologi-

cal sublime now and then inclines to theory-hysteria – a peculiar postmodern form of hysteria, typical, in fact, of post-theory in general.

Of course, in postmodern theory everything is possible: the terms of the "post" are unlimited, and, thus, for the reason that the impossible is impossible in the world of the "post" it is a world in which the impossible is possible. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that this "adolescent male" is not only a male, but, for Stone (1994b: 108), it even "seems to be the engagement of the adolescent male *within humans of both sexes* that is responsible for the seductiveness of the cybernetic mode." And, moreover:

> There is also a protean quality about cybernetic interaction, a sense of physical as well as conceptual mutability that is implied in the sense of exciting, dizzying physical movement within purely conceptual space. I find that reality hackers experience a sense of longing for an embodied conceptual space like that which cyberspace suggests. This sense, which seems to accompany the desire to cross the human/machine boundary, to penetrate and merge, which is part of the evocation of cyberspace, and which shares certain conceptual and affective characteristics with numerous fictional evocations of the inarticulate longing of the male for the female, I characterize as *cyborg envy*. (ibid.; emphasis mine; for Stone's own fascination with these kinds of "boundary crossings" in terms of "vampire," see Stone 1994a [1993], 1995a; cf. Gray et al. 1995a: 3; Badmington 2000b: 85–86; Gillis 2002: 210–211; Murphy 2008: 134–136; for "an ethnography of cyborg envy," see Dumit 1995)

"Cyborg envy" – what is it that cyborgs have that humans do not have and are therefore envious of cyborgs? Is it something cyborgs do or have, something that is possible only for cyborgs or something we can share with them, provided that we become one? Does "cyborg envy" have something to do with pleasures that exceed human limits and limitations? Is there something sexual in this envy, or rather, is it something intellectual? Perhaps it is all of this: a vision of "a posthuman future, a post-lapsarian *cyborg redemption*, Eden for the replicants" (Milner 2005 [1996]: 266; emphasis mine; for cyberfeminist "replicunts," cf. Plant 1996b: 181–183; in terms of technological redemption, cf., for example, Rutsky 1999: 41–42; Bell 2001a: 149–150; for a historical contextualization, see Misa et al. 2004).[188] What is clear, however, is that the "cyborg envy" Stone is speaking about is always related, in one way or another, to cyberspace and is thus an effect of the interface, the post-Lacanian ego-mirror as a discourse switchboard in the service of the ego-politics of the post-subject in

188 According to Joseph Dumit (1995: 348), cyborg envy is "a sociopathic condition which was formed around the interwar period and in conjunction with various military research programs and the assistance of a technophiliac popular media." As such, cyborg envy "involves an apparatus of producing our selves as brain-function measurements, allowing deficient, normal, and even super levels to be demarcated" (ibid.). In the condition of cyborg envy, "alongside stressful fears of the human species being outpaced by the world, appears the dream of individual technological redemption through making better humans"; that is, "to some extent we are all afflicted by the desire for technological enhancement, understanding our bodies as somewhat deficient cyborgs" (ibid.). In this sense, the cyborg is a proof of our deficiency as humans; accordingly, we, as deficient beings, feel envious of cyborgs because of their superiority, and therefore the cyborg is the emblem of our technological enhancement, finally of our technological redemption (cf. Mann & Niedzviecki 2001)

the world of the "cyber" (cf. Nusselder 2009). It is in this sense that becoming cyborg takes place at the interface, in the discursive circuit of the "post."

According to Stone (1994b: 108), it is about a "smoothness" that "implies a seductive tactile quality that expresses one of the characteristics of cyborg envy":

> In the case of the computer, a desire literally to enter into such a discourse, to penetrate the smooth and relatively affectless surface of the electronic screen and enter the deep, complex, and tactile (individual) cybernetic space or (consensual) cyberspace within and beyond. *Penetrating the screen* involves a state change from the physical, biological space of the embodied viewer to the symbolic, metaphorical "consensual hallucination" of cyberspace; a space that is a locus of *intense desire for refigured embodiment*. (ibid.: 108–109; emphasis mine; notice the sexual connotation implicit in Stone's formulation; cf. Graham 2002: 162–163)

In terms of simulation, cyberspace, indeed, is seductive. It creates a desire for an "unlimited power which the dis/embodied simulation produces" (Stone 1994b: 107). In this sense, cyberspace, for Stone, manifests a "concretization of the psychoanalytically framed desire of the male to achieve" – here Stone is referring to David Tomas's idea of the "technophilic body" (see Tomas 2000 [1989]) – "the 'kinesthetically exciting, dizzying sense' of freedom" (Stone 1994b: 107; cf. Penny 1995a: 62–64; Bell 2001a: 174–175; Flanagan & Booth 2002). But, as we have seen, the "male" dwells, in Stones (1994b: 108) words, "within humans of both sexes." In the end, cyberspace, manifesting "cyborg envy," is about "erotic pleasure and of loss of control over the body"; as such, it constitutes a "constellation of responses to the simulation that deeply engage fear, desire, pleasure, and the need for domination, subjugation, and control" (ibid.).

This, indeed, is not only fantastic; this is phantasmatic: what in everyday reality is a human-machine configuration in which the computer subject interacts via the interface with the data represented by the computer, appears in the magic light of cyber discourse as a sublime pleasure of the "cyber," the *jouissance* of disembodiment experienced by cyborgs in the immaterial realm of cyberspace.

As we can see, in Stone's suggestive theory mantra about cyberspace and the cyborg – an effect, no doubt, of a theoretical self-suggestion – the theory-euphoria typical of all that is "cyber" turns into a specific mode of theory-hysteria characteristic of the most libidinal form of post-theory, the erotic affection and allurement of the "post," the most sublime form of which, in turn, is theory-sex, the postmodern mode of theory fascinated with and enchanted by post-sex.

Interface, the Other and the "Otherness" of the Same

Here we are, in fact, at the source of the discursive flow constitutive of cyber discourse, the libidinal language effected by the "cyber," that is the origin of cybersex; sex engendered not only by Gibsonian "photons," "neurons" and "electrons" emanating from the screen, the mirror of the postmodern subject, but also evoked by Stones "cyborg envy," the desire to become one with a being that is both able to separate from the grip of the "phallic mother" and

to "cross the human/machine boundary." In these terms, cybersex means *penetration*, but not in the sense we are used to thinking about it. Cyberspace – it is this virtual space that appears, similarly to Gibson's "kids," as an "actual space behind the screen" in which "the sexual" of cybersex takes place. In these terms, cybersex is something Stone (1994b: 109) refers to as a "*cybernetic act*."

Of course, sex as such (whatever it happens to be) is seductive; but the seduction of cybersex, in addition, is its virtuality – to be remembered, its *imaginary* virtuality. Cybersex, sex at the interface, is real as far as the virtual is real; and here the virtual is real precisely in its virtuality, *as it is suggested by the libidinal language of the "cyber" following the logic of the "post."*

In terms of virtuality, cybersex is what Springer (1991: 312) calls "imaginary sex": "sex without physically touching another human," a form of sexual encounter that "prevails in cyborg discourses." This "emphasis on cerebral sexuality suggests that while pain is a *meat* thing, sex is not" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In its virtuality, imaginary sex that is not corporeal but cerebral, shows how far, in contemporary culture, the sphere of the sexual has not only been dematerialized but, more fundamentally, derealized: sex has turned into various forms of simulation, whether the simulation of sex proper or what I designate as the realm of the *metasexual*: a level at which things that in themselves originally have nothing to do with sexuality as such refer, by way of insinuation or connotation, of association or convention, to sex and sexuality, and become "sexualized" in this manner, that is, charged, in psychoanalytic terms, *cathected* – with a sexual allurement that since 1950s has been called "sex appeal" in American culture (see, for example, Hall 2005: 41; Reumann 2005: 31–33; Duggan et al. 1995: 53–58; Burgett 2007: 218–219); "sex appeal" as a component of the attractivity of American consumer affluence, which, after the Second World War, as Jeremy Black (2006: 200) says, was "an important part of American 'soft' power, compared to the 'hard' power of the military" (for "sex" as a marketing vehicle, see Reichert & Lambiase 2006; for the seductive power of "sex" and cinema constitutive of American "sex appeal," see Daly 2004: 76–109).

Thus, in the Western world, "sex" is now like money, a general equivalent: *with sex in the mode of post-sex you can buy and sell just anything*: "sex" is a metalevel abstraction of the value abstraction constitutive of postmodern financial capital (cf., for example, Singer 1993: 34–61; McNair 1996, 2002; Stratton 1996; Hennessy 2000; Ertman & Williams 2005). In this manner, "sex," as a *structural moment* of financial capital, its driving force in terms of desire, its libidinal incentive, is a commodity that cannot be consumed in consumption; "sex" is an exchange value that can lead to a consummation, but which cannot nevertheless be consumed: "sex" proliferates itself through itself, and it will never wear out in use: as self-mirroring reiteration of itself, "sex" is "sex": it cannot be used up. This is the world of post-sex, a world of "sex" following the Derridean logic of the supplement (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 141–164; cf. Norris 1987: 80–86, 97–103, 109–121; Royle 2003a: 47–61). This is the world in which also cybersex

becomes possible – of course in the imaginary form of the "cyber," in the mode of the surrational constitutive of the neo-Futurism of cyber discourse.

But this is exactly the logic according to which also post-theory functions: auto-affection and supplementation, the circular movement of signifiers referring to themselves, desires and pleasures in chiasmatic interrelations to each another – all this is typical of theory in the mode of the "post."

Like "the theoretical" in post-theory, "the sexual" in post-sex is about simulation in terms of the virtual, and vice versa. Precisely because sex itself has become virtual in this manner, it loses nothing in the virtual realm opened up by the interface, the gate to the phantasmatic world of cyberspace. On the contrary, what is simulation on this side of the screen, the imaginary world of post-sex, is all the more simulation on its other side, "beyond" the screen, in the virtual reality of cyberspace. The virtual world of commodities and consumption, the imaginary world of desire, has its *equivalent* in cyberspace, the realm of imaginary sex, consumed in its non-corporeality, in its bodiless virtuality that appears exactly as such as real, and *is* indeed real – real for the cerebral subject at the interface – the prototype of whom is the compulsive programmer described by Weizenbaum – as a technological form of the post-subject who believes, in Gibson's words, that there is "some kind of actual space behind the screen."

From the Baudrillardian perspective, this virtual-real on/of the screen and the phantasmatic reality "beyond" it constitute an imaginary relationship with the interface and the world opened up by it. Thus, as Baudrillard already in the late 1980s observed, a new kind of subject was emerging at the interface, a prosthetically constructed human-machine hybrid that Baudrillard (1993c [1990]: 53) called "Telecomputer Man": a posthuman subject that enjoys the *jouissance* of the technological in the form of the "celibacy of the machine" (ibid.):

> The celibacy of the machine entails the celibacy of Telecomputer Man. Thanks to his computer or word processor, Telecomputer Man offers himself the spectacle of his own brain, his own intelligence, at work. Similarly, through his chat line or his Minitel, he can offer himself the spectacle of his own phantasies, of a strictly virtual pleasure. He exorcizes both intelligence and pleasure at the interface with the machine. The Other, the interlocutor, is never really involved: the screen works much like a mirror, for the screen itself as locus of the interface is the prime concern. An interactive screen transforms the process of relating into a process of commutation between One and the Same. The secret of the interface is that the Other here is virtually the Same: otherness is surreptitiously conjured away by the machine. (ibid.: 53–54; in terms of "otherness" as a changeable "datasuit," cf. Baudrillard 1996 [1995]: 127)

"The secret of the interface," however, is not just the open secret of cyberspace, it is the very idea of all that is called cybersex. As Springer (1991: 313), referring to Baudrillard, remarks, while the "computer invites us to discard our identities and embrace an Imaginary unity," at the same time it reflects back our presence at the interface "like a mirror." In Springer's reading of Baudrillard, "this intensely private experience precludes actual interaction with another person

and turns all computerized communication into a kind of *autocommunication* which may contain elements of autoeroticism" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

In my reading, this is "the sexual" in the human-machine relationship emerging at the interface: the *sexualization of the interface* through the fantasies and theory-fictions of cyberspace is the origin of the idea of cybersex. Whatever the sexual displayed by the screen might be, it is always – *always already* – sexual autocommunication of the subject at the interface; a form of "sex" that I call *autosex*, "sex" in the form of self-sex. If it is, for Baudrillard, in his description above, about what he calls "commutation" in which, in the last instance, the same will always be traded for the same; for me, in terms of the sexual, it is about autosexual pleasure in which the "Other" is always already a reflection of the subject itself in its autocommunication with the interface and the imaginary world displayed by it: the virtual reality of the subject that is real for the subject precisely in its virtuality.

In these terms, cybersex, "sex" at the interface, is imaginary sex, a form of, as Springer (1991: 313) says, "solitary sexual communion with technology," in which, however, the body of the subject is not virtual but real – whatever its sensations and affections might be. Nevertheless, the discourse surrounding cyberspace and virtual reality, and all things "cyber," maintains a utopian vision according to which the interface, the intersection between the body and technology, is a "gate" to another world in which you can "leave the body behind" (see, for example, Hayles 1993a: 173, 188; Cavallaro 2000: xv, 35; Adam 2002: 160; Pitts 2003: 153–160; Vint 2007: 103–108) and enjoy the pleasures of virtuality, an ecstatic and euphoric state of disembodiment in the immateriality of the "cyber."

"The LSD of the 1990s"

All these various visions of disembodiment and virtual sex, emerge – amazingly enough – from one image, Gibson's (1995 [1984]) science fiction vision of cyberspace as a "consensual hallucination" in which the body has disappeared. As we remember, this is the origin of all that is "cyber":

> Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts … A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding … (ibid.: 67)[189]

189 The intrinsic irony of this constitutive image of cyber discourse is that, in fact, it is a quote from a *children's* TV program (a "Kid's show") explaining the "matrix," the world-wide computer system imagined by Gibson in his science fiction story. Curiously enough, this fact is always omitted from the commentaries on cyberspace: immediately after the publication of *Neuromancer* the idea of cyberspace became reality not, of course, in everyday reality, but in academic theory-fictions that created the post-theoretical idea matrix for cyber discourse (see especially Benedikt 1994 [1991]). Moreover, for Gibson, cyberspace was not a vision of a utopian future but a dystopian metaphor referring to the contemporary world. It was an extrapolated, darkly ironic and nightmarish description of a world ruled by all-encompassing computer technology, superhuman artificial intelligence and omnipotent techno-biology – all components of the dreams concerning the cyborg as the paragon of the posthuman.

What is the cultural situation in which this particular image has such a suggestive power that it has effected even a new cultural formation known as cyberculture (for an overview, see Bell & Kennedy 2000; Bell 2001a, 2004) in which, in Springer's (1991: 303) words, both an "escape from the physical body and fulfilment of erotic desire" become possible? The idea that I am elaborating on in the study at hand is that *cyber discourse is in itself a consensual hallucination*, a virtual reality of language in which everything has a status of dream. This kind of *linguistic virtualization* of culture, in turn, is both a precondition and a consequence of the postmodern, in which the referentiality of signs is replaced by "free-floating signifiers" that create their own reality, the reality of the virtual (cf. Žižek 1989: 87–88, 100–103, 123–125; Feldstein et al. 1995: 150–152; Rickert 2007: 56–57). In this situation, science fiction – the original context of all that is "cyber" – turns, at the same time, into a phantasmatic "reality" of popular culture and becomes the context of academic theory-fictions which, for their part, mirror this very same fictional world.

In a word, this is the world of the "post," a world in which the virtual has taken the place of the real: the "world" of post-theory.

Virtual corporeality, a manifestation of the dream of disembodiment constitutive of cyber discourse – that, perhaps, is the most alluring effect of the techno-euphoric fantasies and theory-fictions surrounding all that is "cyber," the final completion, the ultimate consummation, of the efforts to create a human-computer interface that would make it possible to enter – like the famous painter in a Chinese story entered his painting – into the world brought about by the computer. In this sense, as Timothy Leary, the shaman of the psychedelic who became the guru of the cyberdelic, said at the moment he was initiated to the magic world of the computer: "The PC is the LSD of the 1990s" (Dery 1996: 22; cf. Misztal 2000: 177), it opens up a "window," a reality behind the screen, beyond material reality (cf. Gunkel 2007: 86); or, to apply Aldous Huxley's (1994b [1954/1956]) memorable formula, the computer opens up the "doors of perception" into a world of altered states of mind (cf. Rheingold 1991: 353–357; Rushkoff 1994).

In this sense, the interface is a digital modification of what Freud ([1977f [1899]) calls "screen memories," virtual apparitions that hide the absence of reality. Looking through the interface means looking *beyond* the interface, into the enchanted world of the "cyber," the "inner experience" of the imaginary, an experience of a trip (see Leary 1998 [1980]: 39–46, 69, 103–104, 1999a [1965]: 39–40, 67, 71, 87; cf. Heuser 2003: 24–25; Partridge 2005: 93–164; Jahshan 2007: 79–80, 100–102), a trip in a world in which the real always remains unattainable (cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 183–190; Bowie 1991: 91–95, 102–110; Homer 2005: 81–84).

This is the world of the posthuman; a world in which the rational and free, autonomous and self-centred, "liberal humanist subject" of the modern has gone through a metamorphosis to the "decentred subject" of the postmodern,

a split and fragmentary post-subject as an assemblage of contingent subject positions all disparate from one another; a post-identitarian subject of spectral and fractured "identities" driven forward by the libidinal logic of the "post" (see, for example, Hayles 1999: 3–7, 85–92, 100–112; Kember 2003: 143–144; Haney 2006: 58–59; in terms of postmodern theology, cf. Waters 2006: 43–44; in the Heideggerian context, cf. Spanos 1993). This is a world in which being and having "a body" is predicated upon a scientific-technological body management, a world of technoscientific self-constructions, a world of ever-expanding liminalities in which a continuous exceeding the limits is the principle of the ego-politics of the post-subject, the survival strategy of a self without a stable identity, a "self" that is an unstable cross-section of heterogeneous alterities living in a heterotopia of "otherness." It is in this world that the cyborg, as the very incarnation of the posthuman, feels itself at home – regardless of, in Freudian terms, how *unheimlich* this "home" might ever be (see Freud 1986b [1919]; in the Derridean context, cf. Bernstein 1992: 177–179; in terms of art, cf. Grenville 2001b).

From this perspective it is possible to understand the import of the interface as an uncanny double-face between the post-body post-subject and the technlogical "otherness" constituting the habitat of the cyborg: the prosthetic environment of the cyber-subject as a body-machine assemblage. Redefined in terms of the posthuman, the interface thus embraces the "trans" constitutive of the world of the "cyber": transition and trangression, transience and transcendence, transformation and transmigration, transmission and transplantation, in short, translation and transubstantiation that define the parameters of the "post."

This is the world in which the cyber-subject can enjoy the extraordinary pleasure of disembodiment, in Gibson's (1995: 12) words, the "bodiless exultation of cyberspace." This is the promise of cybersex.

Yet, as we will see later on, the virtual reality of cybersex, in fact, does not begin only with cyberspace; the proper history of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is preceded by a prehistory, a history that concerns such an old technology as the telephone (see, for example, Pool 1983: 23–37, 96–107, 170–188, 197–211, 1977; for a social-historical contextualization in the constellation of media culture, see Marvin 1990; in the configuration of the "post," see Ronell 1991 [1989]); not merely a predecessor of the human-computer interface, but also the first form of *telepresence* as a mode of virtual corporeality (see, for example, Dreyfus 2001: 50–72; Clark 2004: 92–114).

2.3 From Virtual Sex to the Artificial Womb

> LSD is a way of miming the invisible electronic world; it releases a person from acquired verbal and visual habits and reactions, and gives the potential of instant and total involvement, both all-at-onceness and all-at-oneness, which are the basic needs of people translated by electric extensions of their central nervous systems out of the old rational, sequential value system. The attraction to hallucinogenic drugs is a means of achieving empathy with our penetrating electric environment, an environment that in itself is a drugless inner trip.
>
> Marshall McLuhan (1995 [1969]: 253)

> Forget the meat of your bodies. Full-on brain experiences await you inside a computer. Even have sex with a computer. Interface! Your true life and aspirations are inhibited by the weak flesh of your body – your body is a burden. It is simply meat. Wetware can enhance it. Cyborg implants bring you closer to true experience. Jack in to neuro-circuits.
>
> Troy Innocent and Dale Nason (1990)

Cybersex was originally – as far as there are "origins" in the world of the "post" in general – a playful thought experiment, carried out by Howard Rheingold (1991: 345–353), a prolific computer writer, one of the "founding fathers" of network communities and a leading figure in the 1990s Californian cyberculture; a technofuturist subculture as a postmodern *bricolage* of cyberpunk science fiction fantasies, New Age individualism and countercultural rhetorics enjoying the pleasures of "cyberdelia" and "cyberia" (see, for example, Sobchack 1994: 11–24; Dery 1996: 21–63; Balsamo 1996: 117–123; Wolmark 1999b: 6–9; Sofoulis 2003: 97–98; Perrin 2007: 314–319; Sirius 1990a, 1990b, 1996; Rucker et al. 1992; Leary 1994a; Rushkoff 1994); a post-avantgardist discursive hybrid recycling the ideas of cyberspace and the cyborg, both of them manifesting the utopian enthusiasm released by the advances of computer technology in the 1980s (see, for example, Turner 2006: 237–262; Hartmann 2004). This was the world of "Californian ideology," a "bizarre fusion of the cultural bohemianism of San Francisco with the high-tech industries of Silicon Valley" (Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]: 364; cf. Sirius 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Barbrook 2007; in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, cf. Barbrook 2001), in which to be was to become in the mode of radical self-design, and, accordingly, in which the sexual was reworked, or, "reinvented," in terms of the technological (see Palac 1998: 90–130).

In his own words, Rheingold (1991: 348) just thought up the idea of "telesex," "sex at a distance" or "technosex," in the same manner as "quantum physicists" are used to apply a "technique of imagining a certain set of conditions as a kind of mental scenario, a *gedankenexperiment*, a 'thought experiment' […] to induce people to put themselves into an appropriate mindset for seeing the implications of a new discovery" (cf., for example, Durlach & Mavor 1995: 33; Lipton 1996: 338–339; Clark 1997: 87–89; Evans 2010: 75–76, 85–86; in the context of Oswald Wiener's "bio-adapter," cf. Salgaro 2010: 255–259; in terms of "robot sex," cf. Levy 2007: 220–301). "The teledildonics story" was published in

1990 as a "short riff" (Rheingold 1991: 348) through the net on the WELL and subsequently in an "avantgarde, technology-oriented 'mutazine,'" *Mondo 2000* (ibid.; cf. Foster 2000 [1997]: 441–444; Bell 2001a: 174–175; Lebkowsky 1997).[190] In the circles of "Mondoists," Rheingold's vision immediately met with appropriate resonance: the *Mondo* people were already tuned into the idea of technologizing sexual experience: they had gone through the appropriate initiation, a postmodern *rite de passage* into the world of the "cyber" (see, for example, Rucker et al. 1992: 270–275; Dery 1996: 19–72; Graham 2002: 157–158), that is, a "quantum jump" to the future inaugurating a "new renaissance" (see Clement 1998; cf. Hollinger & Gordon 2002).

Under the notions of "teledildonics" and "virtual sex," the idea of cybersex began to circulate in the discursive universe of burgeoning cyberculture, in its post-utopian, neo-futuristic and technophilic rhetorics constitutive of the Californian community of computer enthusiasts and visionaries promoting their techno-avantgardist lifestyle worldwide through the net from their homebase in Silicon Valley (see, for example, Hayward 1993: 180–181; Taylor 1998: 46–48; Grosz 2001: 42–47; Boddy 2004: 72–74; Dinello 2005: 150–151; Solnit 2008: 53–64), a media-savvy way of life called "dot.com urbanism" by Andrew Ross (2004).

2.3.1 The Pleasure of "Teledildonics"

In this cultural context, the connection of the technological and the sexual was nothing new as such; the counterculture of the 1960s already used to play with the idea in its poplore (see, for example, Youngblood 1970: 112–117; Urban 2006: 245–249; in terms McLuhanian "interfusion of sex and technology," cf., for example, Cavell 2003: 43–44, 85; Marchessault 2005a 57–60; for technologically enhanced environments for lifestyle sex, and parallels between *Playboy* and counterculture, see Fraterrigo 2009: 161–166). Accordingly, for Rheingold, a "sharp-eyed observer and talented popularizer of 'new edge' technologies" (Wilbur 1997: 7), the technological feasibility of "teledildonics" was not an insurmountable problem because, as Rheingold says, there were "scientific frontiers" that were about to "provide the jumping-off point for the VR sex fantasy." Thus, it was only a question of developing existing technologies, and then putting together

> a highly refined version of "smart skin" with enough computing power, cleverly designed software, some kind of effector system, and a high-speed telecommunication network, and you have a teledildonics system. The tool I am suggesting is much more than a fancy vibrator, but I suggest we keep the archaic name.

190 In the early 1990s, WELL, Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link, was a pioneering computer conferencing system that enabled people around the world to carry on public conversations and exchange private emails, initiated in the mid-1980s in the Bay Area, California, as a computer network extension of the grassroots magazine *Whole Earth Review* (see Turner 2006). At the same time, *Mondo 2000* was a techno-avantgardist, extravagant lifestyle magazine functioning as the central organ of the emergent cyberculture, promoting a hilarious, hip-postmodern world-view based on the ideas of "cyberdelia" and "cyberia" as a continuation of the 1960s "counterculture" by mind-expanding technologies as a new form of LSD (see Rucker et al. 1992; Rushkoff 1994; Shobchack 1994; Dery 1996).

> A more sober formal description of the technology would be "interactive tactile telepresence." (Rheingold 1991: 348; cf. Malpas 2000: 114–120)[191]

Although at the time there was no technology to make reality of Rheingold's vision of this "tool" to expand and augment sexual experience (for the rhetorics on various "tools" as means of self-transformation understood as self-enhancement and self-improvement in the New Age movement, extropianism and transhumanism, cf., for example, Heelas 1996: 31–32; Ziguras 1997: 199–200, 2004: 40–41; Graham 2002: 154–165), nevertheless, the key idea of "teledildonics," *virtual reality*, was already an experimental technology elaborated on by such different enterprises as the research and development laboratories of NASA and the US Army, university computer departments and computer enthusiasts like Jaron Lanier (see Russell 1990a, 1990b; Lanier 1991; Lanier & Biocca 1992; for a contextualization, see Aukstakalnis & Blatner 1992: 82–83; Rheingold 1991: 15–17, 109–110, 128, 131–154; Biocca & Levy 1995b: 23–29; Biocca & Delaney 1995: 57–61, 78–79; Robins 1996: 51–54; Schroeder 1996: 21–23, 43, 45–46, 54–55; Kelly et al. 1989; Chung et al. 1990; Fisher 1990a, 1990b; for the early years of virtual reality enthusiasm, see Helsel & Roth 1991; for a comprehensive technological history, see Burdea & Coiffet 2003; for a conceptual analysis of the "virtual" in cultural theory, see Shields 2003; in the context of the Gulf War, cf. Dyson 1995).[192]

In this constellation, seen through the techno-optimistic optics of cyberculture, it seemed to be only a question of time until virtual sex via "interactive tactile telepresence" would also become possible – in the same manner as space flights had turned from visions into reality in the 1960s, or telephone and television at their times (for a media-historical contextualization, see, for example, Carey 1989; Levinson 1997; Winston 1998; Flichy 2007a [2001], 2007b [1995]).

"Tools for Self-Transformation"

However, in the early 1990s virtual reality was first and foremost a "vaporware" (cf. Dery 1996: 8; Lunenfeld 2000a: 88), an imaginary technology, promoted by a language that was a mixture of science fiction, LSD hallucinations and New Age rhetorics that formed the linguistic matrix for emerging cyberculture in general (see, for example, Zhai 1998: 82–83; Dinello 2005: 151–153; Gunkel 2007:

191 The concept of telepresence suggests that through computer networks, "in cyberspace," it is possible to be present in two separate places at the same time, as a real-existing corporeal person in front of a computer terminal, and as a disembodied being consisting of a digital representation or simulation appearing either on the screen or in the eye-set of the virtual reality helmet. In this sense, the simulated beings are virtual *avatars* (for that see, for example, Jordan 1999: 67–80; Dodge & Kitchin 2001: 153–162; Nayar 2010: 3, 14, 16, 33, 44, 46–47, 67, 107, 127, 143, 159). The problem is only what is actually *present* in telepresence?

192 According to Rheingold (1991: 128): "The field of VR [virtual reality] began to crystallize when the right combination of sponsors, visionaries, engineers, and enabling technologies came together at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, in the mid 1980s. It was there that a human interface researcher, a cognitive scientist, an adventure-game programmer, and a small network of garage inventors put together the first affordable VR prototypes. It was there that a generation of cybernauts donned a helmet-mounted display and glove input device, pointed their fingers, flew around wire-frame worlds of green light-mesh, and went back to their laboratories to dream up the VR applications of the 1990s."

84–90), or, in terms of Douglas Rushkoff (1994), the community of *cyberia* living on the "New Edge," implying "life in the trenches of hyperspace," and thus experiencing everything in an elevated state of a techno-hallucinogenic state of mind referred to, in a direct relation to the psychedelia of the 1960s counterculture, as *cyberdelia* (see Rucker et al. 1992: 84–87; Dery 1996: 23–50; in terms of neoreligiosity, see Partridge 2005: 93–164; Aupers et al. 2008: 687–688).

Accordingly, virtual reality only existed virtually, in the virtual reality of language constitutive of all that is "cyber."

But it was precisely in this techno-euphoric atmosphere of the Californian computer community that, *as a result of the conflation of virtual reality with cyberspace*, all that was conceived of as "virtual" turned into lived reality in cyberculture (see, for example, Dery 1994, 1996; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Jones 1995a, 1998; Hillis 1999; Cavallaro 2000; for the transformation of the virtual into the reality of theory, see, for example, Poster 1995a, 1998, 2001a, 2006a; Crang et al. 1999; Jordan 1999). That is, the three-dimensional computer-generated simulation experienced by means of an artificial sensory apparatus (a stereoscopic head-mounted display or a helmet and a tactile force-feedback device or a glove) was confused with the science-fiction fantasy of cyberspace as a second-order reality imagined by William Gibson (1995 [1984]) in his epochal novel *Neuromancer*. It is in this manner, through a more or less conscious category mistake (cyberspace for virtual reality *and* virtual reality for cyberspace), Gibson's fictional world "crystallized a new community" (Stone 1994b [1991]: 95), the *Lebenswelt* of cyberculture as the life-world of the Silicon Valley techno-elite already living in the future suggested by their visionary, technophilic language (cf., for example, Hayward 1993).

According to Allucquère Rosanne Stone, herself one of most important early promoters of cyberculture:

> *Neuromancer* reached the hackers who had been radicalized by George Lucas's powerful cinematic evocation of humanity and technology infinitely extended, and it reached the technologically literate and socially disaffected who were searching for social forms that could transform the fragmented anomie that characterized life in Silicon Valley and all electronic industrial ghettos. In a single stroke, Gibson's powerful vision provided for them the imaginal public sphere and refigured discursive community that established the grounding for the possibility of a new kind of social interaction. (Stone 1994b: 95)

By way of this transformation of a literary fiction into social reality, *Neuromancer*, "in the time of Reagan and DARPA" (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) (ibid.), responsible for the launching and funding of the development, among other things, of the military information and communication network ARPANET that later became the technological infrastructure of the Internet (see, for example, Winston 1998: 328–336; Ceruzzi 2003 [1998]: 140, 194, 259–261, 282–298; O'Regan 2008: 179–185), constituted "a massive intertextual presence not only in other literary productions of the 1980s, but in technical publications, conference topics, hardware design, and scientific and technological discourses at large" (Stone 1994b: 95). In other words, Gibson's *Neuromancer* "triggered a

conceptual revolution among the scattered workers who had been doing virtual reality research for years" and thus "'virtual reality' aquired a new name and a suddenly prominent social identity as 'cyberspace'" (ibid.: 98).

It is this "massive *intertextual presence*" of Gibson's science fiction fantasy in the Californian techno-avantgardist subculture in the early 1990s that turned into the "virtual systems origin myth" (ibid.: 85) and thus constituted the *metaphoric infrastructure*, that is, the vocabulary and vision, that became the *discursive framework* for all subsequent conceptions of both *network communication* (later the Internet and the World Wide Web) and *virtual reality* (three-dimensional interactive computer simulation) which amalgamated with one another in one word, the signifier *cyberspace*, the very emblem of burgeoning cyberculture (see, for example, Kirby 1997: 133–135; Kneale 1999: 206–209; Biocca & Levy 1995a, 1995b; Markley 1996b; Holmes 1997b; Hillis 1999; Jordan 1999; Chun 2006). For this reason, also "teledildonics," a technology allegedly enabling sexual encounters and experiences in virtual reality by means of prosthetic organs, appeared not just as a potential, but, indeed, feasible reality, a reality that was just coming into being. In other words, in the manner typical of cyberculture, the hype was taken as a real thing, although Rheingold (1991: 345–346) – certainly very enthusiastic himself about the idea – was cautious enough to speak about "teledildonics" in the *future* tense, as an invention that *might* be realizable "[t]hirty years from now" or "a couple decades hence"; for him, in other words, speaking about "teledildonics" was something that warranted the remark: "Or so the scenario goes" (ibid.: 345).

Yet, it was precisely this "scenario," a *fantasy script*, that took on the status of existing reality *in statu nascendi*, in the process of coming into being of "teledildonics" not only as an experiment, but, first and foremost, as a generally available virtual reality system for expanding and augmenting the experience of corporeality in terms of the sexual (see, for example, Case 1996: 177–178; Creed 1997: 17–18; Bright 1992; Barber 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2010; for the media as "the extensions of man," see McLuhan 1964; for McLuhan in the context of "the New Media Age," see Zylinska 2002a; for the revival of McLuhan in terms of the "cyber," see Wolf 1996a, 1996b). What was a vision for Rheingold, was taken in Californian cyberia as a potential technology that was just about to be realized, or, that was seen, in the appropriate mindset of cyberdelia, as already realized (see Dery 1996: 19–72, 184–225; Lunenfeld 2000a: 85–97; Barlow 1990a, 1990b, 1994a, 1995; Rucker et al. 1992; Leary 1994a).

This kind of conflation of the fictional with the factual and the imaginary with the real was effected precisely by the ecstatic, cyberdelic language of cyberculture in the early 1990s that Scott Bukatman (1994a) apply calls "cyberbabble" (cf. Davis 2001 [1998]); that is, a techno-euphoric mode of linguistic figuration that became the post-theoretical language of cyber discourse, the libidinal language constitutive of all that is "cyber." At the time, the question was: "Can computers supplant psychedelics?" (Rucker et al. 1992: 11). In this sense, Jaron Lanier, the leading pioneer not only of a virtual reality (VR) technology, but also of the term as

well as of the whole vocabulary and jargon for speaking about it, described VR as a kind of new world, just waiting there to be stepped into (see, for example, Heyward 1993: 199–200; Biocca et al. 1995: 4–7; Biocca & Levy 1995b: 22, 35; Burdea & Coiffet 2003: 7–10; Barlow 1990a, 1990b; Russell 1990b). As Lanier put it, "virtual worlds aren't pictures, they're places" (Druckrey 1991: 5), and, accordingly, VR is a "new objective level of reality," even a "combination of the objectivity of the physical world with the *unlimitedness and uncensored content normally associated with dreams or imagination with the spontaneous composibilty of language*" (Russell 1990a: 188; emphasis mine; cf. Henderson 2003: 156–158; Kevin et al. 1989).

There is a direct line from the McLuhan of the 1960s to the virtual reality enthusiasts of the 1980s and 1990s. In 1969, in his *Playboy* interview, McLuhan explained that drugs are a "natural means of smoothing cultural transitions, and also a short cut into the electric vortex" (McLuhan 1995 [1969]: 253).

> The upsurge in drug taking is intimately related to the impact of the electric media. Look at the metaphor for getting high: *turning on*. One turns on his consciousness through drugs just as he opens up all his senses to a total depth involvement by turning on the TV dial. Drug taking is stimulated by today's pervasive environment of instant information, with its feedback mechanism of the *inner trip*. The inner trip is not the sole prerogative of the LSD traveller; it's the universal experience of TV watchers. LSD is a way of miming the invisible electronic world; it releases a person from acquired verbal and visual habits and reactions, and gives the potential of instant and total involvement, both *all-at-onceness* and *all-at-oneness*, which are the basic needs of people translated by *electric extensions of their central nervous systems* out of the old rational, sequential value system. The attraction to *hallucinogenic drugs* is a means of achieving empathy with our penetrating electric environment, an environment that in itself is a drugless inner trip. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

According to McLuhan, as "chemical simulations of our electric environment," LSD and other drugs express a "rejection of the obsolescent mechanical world and values"; they "stimulate a fresh interest in artistic expression"; they "revive senses long atrophied by the overwhelmingly visual orientation of the mechanical culture"; and, finally, they "breed a highly tribal and communally oriented subculture" (ibid.; for a historical contextualization of LSD in the American counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, see, for example, O'Brien 1988: 54–65; McKay 2005: 45–46; Lee & Shlain 1992 [1985]; Farber 2002). In a similar manner, speaking about virtual reality Gene Youngblood (1989: 83), a media theorist assimilated to psychedelia, deemed that "[t]he 'wonder' before which we stand is not the urban space, but the dematerialized space of electronic sociality within which we move at the speed of light." For Morgan Russell (1990b: 217), a promoter of new media, virtual reality appeared as the beginning of a great transformation of the whole of humankind: "Once we human all too human beings begin spending much time in VR we will become new creatures"; "we will become less strictly mimetic and will begin drawing more on the unconscious."

In other words, at the heyday of the virtual euphoria in the early 1990s, virtual reality appeared as a post-Freudian revolution of the Unconscious – *mutatis*

mutandis, in fact, not dissimilar to the revolutionary euphoria pertaining to language in the linguistic radicalism of the *Tel Quel* circle and the post-68 politics in France and its post-theoretical aftermath in "French theory" (see, for example, Ffrench 1995; Quattrocchi & Nairn 1998 [1968]; Singer 2000 [1970]; Marx-Scouras 2004; Cusset 2008 [2003]; Wolin 2010). Thus, in the post-psychedelic, cyberdelic techno-dream of Californian cyberculture entailing "havin' fun under California sun" (Sirius 1997: 5), the language of virtual reality turned into a *virtual reality of language*, a language in which the imaginary appeared – in a mode of a neo-religious revelations similar to New Age visions – as a reality that was more "real" than mundane everyday reality (for the New Age as a neo-religious movement, see Hanegraaff 1996; Heelas 1996; Taylor 1998; Partridge 2004, 2005).

According to Christopher Ziguras (1997: 197), the "world of objects which surrounds us is seen within the New Age movement as a projection of a *sacred reality*, which exists within, or below, the concrete" (emphasis mine; in terms of Catholicism and "Catholic sacramentalism" as an impetus to the mythopoetics of the cyborg, cf. Haraway 2000a: 9–13, 24, 86, 141; Graham 2002: 217–218). In this way, "New Age constructions of the sacred are creating a form of religiosity which spiritualizes the contemporary fascination with high technology and science, and in particular with the 'virtual' realities of contemporary information technology" (Ziguras 1997: 197). Accordingly, the main interest of the New Agers is in the "tools for self-transformation" (ibid.), "tools with which people can remake themselves much more readily while attaching some greater meaning to the loss of stable sense of self and loss of a predictable social environment" (ibid.: 210). In this sense, the project of the New Age is a technological enhancement of personal abilities, a technological self-constitution and autonomy in the mode of the postmodern subject. It is in this manner that New Age self-enhancement turns into a *techno-euphoric self-aggrandizing* typical of all that is "cyber" (cf. Geraci 2010: 61; Edwards 1997).

As Vivian Sobchack (1994: 18) says, reading *Mondo 2000*, "one might think that we live in the best of all possible worlds, or perhaps, more precisely, that we live best only in possible worlds."

No wonder that Rheingold's "piece" on "teledildonics," delivered on the WELL, "struck a nerve" and provoked a frenzied discussion "within hours" not only in the Californian cyber community, but on the net world-wide. Although – or perhaps precisely because – it was, as Rheingold (1991: 349) says, an "essay I wrote in ten minutes, for fun," this hilarious *gedankenexperiment* "got out of control" (ibid.). That was, as Rheingold says, the "weird part" (ibid.) of the story, and there was more to come. It was spread, according to Rheingold, as thousands of copies around the world via email effecting a flood of commentaries, and "almost all the people" contacting him "seemed to believe that such a device actually exists somewhere" (ibid.; cf. Dery 1996: 215–217; Bell 2001a: 126–127).

Of course, sex is always a topic that immediately gets attention, and all the more, if it is associated with the promise of an entirely new way of enhancing sexual experience by means of a technology that seems to turn science fiction visions

into everyday reality, as it was believed in Californian cyberculture in the early 1990s. But especially the *erotic aura* surrounding computer and digital technology in the mode of "technoromanticism" (see Coyne 2001; cf. Edwards 1996: 121; Pettman 2002: 31–34; Heim 1993; Springer 1996; Dixon & Cassidy 1998) gave "teledildonics" the peculiar *frisson* that transformed it into a part of the "consensual hallucination" constitutive of cyberculture in general. As Michael Heim (1993: 85), a typical cyber theorist of the time, referring to Platonic thought, says in quasi-philosophical manner, *Eros* is that which "springs of insufficiency or inadequacy" of our being, and therefore a "symbiotic relationship and ultimately a mental marriage to technology" (ibid.) is a pleasureable deliverance for the subject. In this sense, everything that had something to do with cyberspace or virtual reality elicited religious-erotic enchantment among the Californian cyberists who had dedicated their life to personal modification and enhancement by means of latest technologies (see, for example, Wilson 1995: 239–243; Terranova 1996b: 167–170; Bell 2001a: 176–180; Graham 2002: 157–158).

As the Americans are used to saying, technology is "sexy" – and the more if at issue is a new computer technology promising to bring about a form of sexual experience never seen before.

Thus, it is understandable that "teledildonics" was not only an enticing promise to set sexual experience free from the obstacles of the carnal body, but also an alluring vision of exceeding the limits of sexuality to enter a virtual-spiritual communion as an immersion in a bodiless ecstasy of limitless togetherness, to an entirely new mode of being, in McLuhan's (1995 [1969]: 253) words, imbued by an overwhelming feeling of "all-at-onceness and all-at-oneness"; or a vertiginous self-abandoning called by Freud (1972a [1930]: 422–423, 430) an *ozeanisches Gefühl*.[193]

It is in this manner that Rheingold's idea of "teledildonics" emerged from a specific American cultural constellation embracing a discursive-experiential mixture of virtual reality enthusiasm, New Age visions of personal extension and augmentation, and mind expanding drugs typical of countercultural lifestyle celebrated by cyberculture as a postmodern revival of the 1960s counterculture; that is, the culture of individual freedom and self-exploration in the name of LSD and psychedelia (see, for example, Braunstein & Doyle 2002; DeKoven 2004; Turner 2006; Gair 2007; Greenfield 2007). In this constellation, the erotic yearning aroused by new technologies was invigorated by secular-religious millennialism and neo-spirituality typical of American culture (see, for exampe, Bozeman 1997; Taylor 1998, 1999; Chidester 2005; Fessenden 2006), and, as a result, "teledildonics" appeared as a revelation come true, before that only dreamt of – or, rather, hallucinated – in the ecstasy of psychedelic reveries.

193 As Freud (1972a [1930]: 422) says, what he calls an "oceanic feeling" is about an *Empfindung der "Ewigkeit," ein Gefühl wie von etwas Unbegrenztem, Schrankenlosem, gleichsam "Ozeanischem."* This feeling is *eine rein subjektive Tatsache, kein Glaubenssatz*, but as such, it is *die Quelle der religiösen Energie* (ibid.). It is in this sense that, similarly to the New Age visions of a cosmic community, cyberculture is a postmodern neo-religious movement in its yearning for a technological transcendence (see, for example, Stallabrass 1995; Lévy 1997 [1994], 2001 [1997]; in terms of media art, cf. Ascott 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2006).

Virtual Reality as "Electronic LSD"

For Rheingold, the motivation, in fact, the *necessity*, of creating "teledildonics" as an alternative to the conventional, rigid form of sexuality prevailing in mainstream culture dominated by the conservative and Biblical middle-class, was the problem of ecstasy, that is, the lack of it, the very inability of indulging oneself in ecstatic experiences, in the suffocating normality of American culture. According to Rheingold (1991: 355), the extremely technologized and rationalized American way of life (see, for example, Marcuse 1941, 2002 [1964]; cf. Noble 1979 [1977]; Feenberg 1995; Simpson 1995) had a "problem with ecstasy in its original sense of *ex-tasis*, of moving out of one's daily trance for a moment, transcending the mundane particulars of mortality, shedding one's ordinary waking consciousness, to make direct contact with the numinous" (Rheingold 1991: 355).

> Unlike the Jivaro of Amazonia or the ancient Greeks at Eleusis, we postindustrial urbanites have no socially sanctioned method of putting aside our everyday consciousness and quenching our thirst for direct experience of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Unlike most adults of the past 100,000 years, we were never initiated in fear, trembling, and joy. We never made acquaintance with our own birth and learned about our connection with death. The illusion of the self was never demonstrated in myth, song, dance, chant, and direct confrontation. The old teaching stories weren't whispered to us in moments of awe and terror. We are swept along in a digitized hyperreality that is not of our making. And now we are suffering in ways most of us don't understand. (ibid.)

Of course, as Rheingold emphasizes, "this war between the sky religion and the earth religion, the Apollonian and Dionysian civilizations, the warriors and blacksmiths versus the healers and herbalists" (ibid.), was nothing new in high-tech America. But the problem at the time was that the American way of life had resulted in a "new limit of doublespeak, disinformation, confusion, repression, and most of all – denial" (ibid.). Hence, "[o]ur cultural problem with ecstasy is compounded by our cultural denial of the problem" (ibid.). It is in this context that ecstasy, psychedelia and virtual reality became intersected with one another, amounting to the desire for and pleasure of cyberdelia: an ecstatic deliverance of the subject from the suffocating conformism of mainstream America. Accordingly, the question was, "[i]s virtual reality going to be electronic LSD?" (ibid.: 353). "Yes," Rheingold did not hesitate to answer, "VR might become a key to open the doors of perception, but only if someone has the grace and good sense to design it properly" (ibid.: 356; cf. Huxley 1994b [1954/1956]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Stevens 1987; Lee & Shlain 1992 [1985]; Farber 1994).

As we can see, Rheingold is yearning here after an authentic experience, a primordial and atavistic experience of what he calls the "*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*" (Rheingold 1991: 356), an overwhelming and fascinating mystery as an awesome experience of the sacral; an experience which, as he nostalgically observes, the Indians and ancient Greeks were able to enjoy. But, paradoxically, it is expressly high technology, a product of scientific reason, epitomized by the computer and information networks, that Rheingold considers as the appropriate method for reaching this elevated state, an immanent transcen-

dence: instead of an immediate experience of oneself, an "electronic ecstasy" experienced in virtual reality (Rheingold 1991: 356); that is, a form of the "digitized hyperreality" that, in his view, is at the same time precisely the problem of the alienation of people from authentic experiences. Nevertheless, Rheingold is convinced that "some day, in some way, people will use cyberspace to *get out of their minds as well as out of their bodies*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Balsamo 1996: 122–123; Hills 1999: 28–29; Leary 1994a). In this sense, virtual reality "*might* become the first wholesome, integrating, nonpathological form of ecstasy capable of liberating safely the long-repressed Dionysian energies of our heavily Apollonian civilization" (Rheingold 1991: 356).

In this respect, technology, in Derridean terms, is a *pharmakon*, a poison and a remedy for Rheingold (cf. Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 95–117).

It is "liberation" that is the keyword here: a liberation of the body-subject suffering in the shackles of the rational, streamlined and routinized social order of American technoculture. In other words, a liberation of libidinal energies implying a possibility of exceeding the limits of the conformist culture of middle-class America spiritually numbed by affluence and consumerism (see, for example, Marcuse 1987 [1955], 2002 [1964]; Birken 1988; Jameson 1989 [1983]; Penny 1995b; Stratton 1996; Berger 2005; from a historical perspective, see De Grazia & Furlough 1996) – a liberation that was also the utopian dream of the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris: a liberation of desire, a desire that was seeking the ultimate pleasure, the experience of *jouissance* in the effort of subverting bourgeois normality (see Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]; Fink et al. 1998; Feenberg & Freedman 2001; Ross 2002; Seidman 2004; Bourg 2007). This is the subterranean connection, the cultural undercurrent, between psychedelia and *jouissance*, between Californian cyberculture and Parisian high theory, between the "cyber" and the "post." And it is in this sense that cyber discourse is a result of both the American high-tech avantgarde and "French theory" (cf. Armitage & Roberts 2002a: 5–7; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Lunenfeld 2000b; for an extravagant example, see Ronell 1991 [1989], 2005; from the perspective of Romanticism, cf. Black 2002: 128–129, 136–143; Coyne 1999).

These cultural situations are not, however, about the same experience. LSD is not the same as Lacan, Derrida and Foucault (although, of course, there are quite a number of similarities, as well as there are theorists who read "French theory" as intellectual LSD). Still, the common denominator is the liberating force of desire, the driving force of the postmodern, the post-Freudian *Triebkraft* of all that is "post": dream is the engine of the "cyber," its post-theoretical unconscious, its libidinal *primus motor* (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 555–577).

In these terms, virtual reality appeared, like a revelation, in Californian cyberculture as a possibility of indulging oneself in that "instant and total involvement, both all-at-onceness and all-at-oneness" (Rheingold 1991: 353), prophesied by McLuhan (1995 [1969]: 253) in the 1960s (cf., for example, Heim 1993:

94–95, 1994 [1991]: 79–80; Taylor & Saarinen 1994: Ad-Diction, 3; Taylor 1999: 116–121, 126, 139; Theall 2001: 14; Graham 2002: 163; Marchessault 2005a: 136, 165; Partridge 2005: 162–163). This was the desire for "electronic LSD," a desire for an immersion in technology in order to transcend the dull routines of everyday life, to escape the repressive grip of cultural conventions (cf. Gunkel 2007: 84–86). Thus, what is decisive in this context is that precisely cyberculture had at the time generated a desire for a new experiential-experimental reality, a part of which was the promise of "teledildonics." As Rheingold (1991: 349) says, "[w]hen people seem to want a technology to develop, *to literally lust a possible new toy*, that need can take a force of its own, especially given the rates of progress in the enabling technologies and the enormous market-driven forces that will be unleashed when sex at a distance becomes possible" (emphasis mine). Again, paradoxically, or, in a typically American way, Rheingold sees the salvation, the Dionysian redemption, not in the underground or the refusal of the cultural economy of capitalism, but precisely in the logic of consumer markets as the way to a radical renewal of sexual culture.

It is in this context that, according to Rheingold, a post-1960s sexual revolution becomes possible, at least potentially.

> Yes, *teledildonics is a titillating fantasy*, far from the serious human realities of medical imagining or teleoperated machine guns [sic]. But once you start thinking about sex at a distance, it's amazing how many other questions about future possibilities present themselves, questions about big chances that might be in store for us. Given the rate of development of VR technologies, *we don't have a great deal of time to tackle questions of morality, privacy, personal identity, and even the prospect of a fundamental change in human nature*. When the VR revolution really gets rolling, we are likely to be too busy turning into whatever we are turning into to analyze or debate the consequences. (ibid.: 349–350; emphasis mine)

Here we are, in fact, in the world of the *modern*, a world driven forward by the logic of *modernization* (see, for example, Harvey 1989: 10–38, 99–118; Pronger 1998: 280–293; Turner 1990b; Sayer 1991), the dynamics of continuous transformation, transposed into the constellation of the postmodern in its specific Californian form as a mixture of hard-core market realism and high-flying fantasies engendered by new technologies (see, for example, Sobchack 1994: 87–90; Collins 1995: 9–25; Balsamo 1996: 117–123; Lunenfeld 2000a: 2–41; Lovink 2004; in terms of "Californian ideology" and "imaginary futures," see Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]; Barbrook 2007).

In this constellation, technology appears as the *primum movens*, the prime mover or the first cause, of all that is, the enabling force of an existence worth of living, a genuinely American view of life (see, for example, Pursell 1994, 1995; Hughes 2004a [1989], 2004b). The imperative of technology has been taken as a self-evident driving force of society and culture, inevitably dictating the objectives as well as the means of the development of the human condition. In this sense, technology, similarly to nature, is seen as a force of its own, as a fatal force from which there is no escape (cf. Marcuse 2002 [1964]). This kind of fatal-

ism is what Raymond Williams (1975: 13–14, 133) calls "technological determinism," peculiarly reproduced by the technological millennialism of the American techno-avantrgade in the name of the "cyber." From the perspective of the critical theory developed by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1994 [1944]; cf. Jay 1973; Held 1980) what is at issue here is the logic of "instrumental reason," that is, technological rationalism, a mode of reason devoid of value judgements and reflection of the aims (see Horkheimer 1967 [1947]; Habermas 1994 [1981], 1998b [1985]; Marcuse 2002 [1964]; Albert et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in Weber's notion of *Zweckrationalität*, see Weber 1972 [1921]: 10–13, 192–193; for a comprehensive overview from a historical perspective, see Schecter 2010). In this mindset, new inventions – be they "toys" or "titillating fantasy" – appear as inevitable, coming into being out of natural necessity.

Thus, technology, paradoxically, is the salvation in a culture in which it is technology in itself that drives forward the fatal dynamics which the techno-avantgarde attempts to escape by no other means than the means of technology.

This is the perspective of technoculture (see, for example, Penley & Ross 1992c; Plant 1997b; Robins & Webster 1999; Cooper 2002; Dean 2002b; Davis 2006; Shaw 2008), and *a fortiori* that of cyberculture, a culture already living in the future today (see, for example, Dery 1994, 1996; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Bell 2001a; Lévy 2001 [1997]; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Tofts et al. 2003; Haney 2006; Ricardo 2009a; Nayar 2010; from a historical perspective, cf. Rabinovitz & Geil 2004). Therefore, it is only consequent that even in spite of immense technical obstacles, also clearly stated by Rheingold (1991: 346–347) himself, such as the necessity of complicated software design to enable an authentic impression of virtual reality and extremely high computing and network capacity to minimize system time lag, as well as of gaining human-like sensitivity to sensors and effectors to create a necessary feeling of touch, Rheingold, nevertheless, presents "teledildonics" in his enthusiastic writing not as a futuristic fancy, but as a potentially feasible technology. Thus, in the manner typical of techno/cyberculture, also for Rheingold technology is the best way to solve problems that are inherent to a culture ruled by the technological imperative.

In contrast, according to Mark Dery (1996: 215), Rheingold's idea of "teledildonics" is technologically nothing but a "mirage" and, in terms of sensory experience, "like sex with a condom over one's entire body" – an appropriate definition of cybersex in general.[194]

194 Still in 1996, when digital technology had already acquired a definitively higher level of development, those effects imagined by Rheingold could not yet be achieved. As Dery (1996: 215) notes: "It would require a global fiber-optic network in concert with massively parallel supercomputers capable of monitoring and controlling the numberless sensors and effectors fitted to every hill and dale, plane and protuberance of the body's topography. Furthermore, a reticulated fabric of safe, high-speed micro-vibrators is only a mirage, given the state of the art in current technologies." And moreover, "what about the sense of smell and taste, so important in sex? For most, sex without olfactory or gustory stimuli would be like sex with a condom over one's entire body" (ibid.)

Nevertheless, what makes this imaginary technology important and interesting – with regard to the understanding of the logic of technomorphism constitutive of all that is "cyber" – is not what is technologically possible and what is not, but the *idea* of artificial corporeality as the necessary precondition for prosthetic and virtual experiences of "the sexual" (whatever it as such might be) (see, for example, Wise 1997: 181–182; Gray 2001: 87–107, 151–160; Latham 2002a: 226–229; Nguyen 2003: 297–298; Shaviro 2003: 127–130; Broathurst & Dixon 1998; Botting 1999). At the time when Rheingold presented his vision of "teledildonics" it was a manifestation of technological rationalism that had achieved the level of what I call the surrational. It was for this reason that Rheingold's imaginary technology appeared as a real invention, as a way not only to more exciting form of sex and sexuality, but even to a better world. From this perspective, "teledildonics" was seen as a prerequisite for nothing less than a new kind of community life, not only on a local, but also on a global level (see Rheingold 1991: 351–352, 1993: 176–196; Sobchack 1994: 18–19; Stone 1995e: 99–121; Cavallaro 2000: 126–128).

In these terms, as a utopian dream, "teledildonics" was in Californian cyberculture taken as a preliminary phase not only to a world community, but no more no less than to a world *communion*, as a uniting force for the whole of humanity, togetherness through technological intimacy (cf. Bromberg 1996: 143–149; Willson 1997: 146–154; Ascott 2003: 222–247; in terms of neoreligiosity, cf. Herring 2005: 150–156; McLuhan 1964; Kollock & Smith 1999).

Disembodiment as the "Ultimate Sexual Revolution"?

Whatever one thinks today not only of virtual reality and "teledildonics," but of the technological hyperbole celebrated by the technophilic community of cyberia in its "high" of cyberdelia as a whole, nothing could be more real than all that was virtual in the early 1990s, in the "warm California sun" (Sirius 1997: 12; cf. Laurel 1993 [1991]: 199–214). Thus, it is no wonder that, for Rheingold (1991: 345), the "first functional teledildonics system will be a communication device, not a sex machine."[195] It will be an "erotic telepresence technology" in order *not* to have "sexual experiences with machines" (ibid.), but, as Rheingold emphasizes, with human beings.

> Thirty years from now, when portable *telediddlers* become ubiquitous, most people will use them to have sexual experiences with other people, at a distance, in combination and configurations undreamed of by precybernetic voluptuaries. Through a marriage of virtual reality technology and telecommunication networks, you will be able to *reach out and touch someone – or an entire*

195 In his vision, Rheingold (1991: 345) has appropriated an idea first proposed by Theodor Nelson: "The word 'dildonics' was coined in 1974 by that zany computer visionary Theodor Nelson (inventor of hypertext and designer of the world's oldest unfinished sofware project, appropriately named 'Xanadu'™), to describe a machine (patent # 3,875,932) invented by a San Francisco hardware hacker by the name of How Wacspress, a device capable of converting sound into tactile sensations. The erotogenic effect depends upon where you, the consumer, decide to interface your anatomy with the tactile simulator. VR raises the possibility of a far more sophisticated technology."

> *population* – in ways humans have never before experienced. Or so the scenario goes. (ibid.; emphasis mine)[196]

To understand the function of *erotic telepresence technology*, Rheingold asks us to imagine that we were about to dress for a "hot night in the virtual village," equipped with a "virtual hand" and "effectors that exert counterforces against your skin" (ibid.: 346), ready to feel somebody present in the flesh, although virtually.

> Now, imagine plugging your whole sound-sight-touch telepresence system into the telephone network. You see *a lifelike but totally artificial visual representation of your own body and of your* partners's. Depending on what numbers you dial and which password you know and what you are willing to pay (or trade or do), you can find *one partner, a dozen, a thousand, in various cyberspaces* that are no farther than a telephone number. Your partner(s) can move independently in the cyberspace, and your representations are able to *touch each other, even though your physical bodies might be continents apart*. *You will whisper in your partner's ear, feel your partner's breath on your neck. You run your hand over your partner's clavicle*, and 6000 miles away, an array of effectors are triggered, in just the right sequence, at just the right frequency, to convey the touch exactly the way you wish it to be conveyed. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

And if you do not like it, "you can turn it all off by flicking a switch" – and "your partner's breath on your neck" will disappear immediately (ibid.). Just forget conventional erotic and sexual expectations of intimacy, trust and mutual emotions; what matters here is to use "electronic communications technologies to construct an *artificial erotic experience*" (ibid.: 351; emphasis mine). It is like in phone sex, you will have an "experience of *disembodiment* and of feeling sensations from *a body that does not exist physically*" (ibid.; emphasis mine), as Rheingold believes, supporting his vision by referring to the experiences of "VR programmers, telephone sex workers, and amputees" (ibid.) interviewed by Allucquère Rosanne Stone for her research on phone sex as virtual sex in her role as a phone sex worker herself (see Stone 1995c: 244–245, 1995c: 17; cf. Balsamo 1997: 146; Monroe 1999: 70; Kaplan 2003: 217–218; Chapkis 1997).

Although "teledildonics" is as easy a thing to do as making a phone call, according to Rheingold, it will have tremendous social effects:

> The secondary social effects of technosex are potentially *revolutionary*. If technology enables you to experience erotic frissons or *deep physical, social, emotional communion with another person* with no possibility of pregnancy or sexual disease, what then of conventional morality, and what of the social rituals and cultural codes that exist solely to enforce that morality? *Is disembodiment the ultimate sexual revolution and/or the first step toward abandoning our bodies*? (Rheingold 1991: 351–352; emphasis mine; in terms of theology, cf. Lunceford 2009)

196 The appeal to "reach out and touch someone" is a typical advertising slogan in the US for telephone companies – although, as Peter Wilson (1996: 224–225) remarks, every company, as everyone else, "knows very well that you cannot reach out and touch someone over a phone," and this is also something "what we *cannot* do in cyberspace"; instead, the very idea of the phone is that it "will save you from being touched."

In a paradigmatic manner, here we have the desire for *disembodiment* characteristic not only of cybersex, but also of cyberculture in general (see, for example, Dery 1996: 233–236; Kline 1996: 352–356; Robins 1996: 29–32; Coyne 1999: 63–68; Bell 2001a: 172–176, 2001b: 168–176, 2004: 11; Booth & Flanagan 2002: 15; Muri 2003: 73–79, 82, 89; Ferreday 2009: 5, 71–72, 103, 146, 156; Nayar 2010: 8, 66–68, 76–78; James & Carkeek 1997; in terms of "cyber-spirituality," see Perrin 2007: 311–314; in the context of "skin tropes" in American culture, cf. Curtin 2003: 6, 11–12, 59–62, 93–97; from the perspective of the American war ideology, cf. Eisenstein 2007: 43–44); a cultural formation that directly derives from Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1995 [1984]). To recall, the key experience of the novel's main character, Case, is, as Gibson (1995: 12) says, the "*bodiless exultation* of cyberspace," an extremely pleasurable, sexually charged experience without which his life is nothing less than "the Fall." For Case, to fall into the "prison" of the flesh is to be doomed to live as *meat* (ibid.), the most horrible experience for all who are accustomed to live in the bliss of cyberspace (cf., for example, Wolmark 1994: 118–120; Sobchack 1995: 209–212; Butkatman 1996 [1993]: 206–207; Case 1996: 49; Springer 1996: 128–136; Bell 2001b: 171–176; Dodge & Kitchin 2001: 62, 205; Adam 2002: 159–162, Graham 2002: 194–195; Jordan & Taylor 2004: 125–126; Foster 2005: 61–63; Taylor & Harris 2005: 172; Jahshan 2007: 96–98; Vint 2007: 106–108).

The "bodiless exultation" of cyberspace, this is the "ultimate sexual revolution," the experience of sex without the body; that is, the virtual reality of "teledildonics," as Rheingold says above, as "the first step toward abandoning our bodies."

In these terms, it was not only the vision of an entirely new mode of the sexual, an ecstatic sexual experience as a technological immersion in the immateriality of virtual reality, that enticed Californian cyberculture, but, moreover, precisely the Gibsonian phantasm of a "bodiless exultation of cyberspace" appeared as the alluring promise of "teledildonics;" a technology that implied the idea of body modification, the possibility of body design, in two dimensions constitutive of cyberculture as a whole: simultaneously *both the virtualization of the body and its extension and enhancement by prosthetic organs*. What made Rheingold's vision even more enticing was that it reproduced the countercultural celebration of LSD as a way to explore one's own psychic reality, or, as it was called in the tradition of psychedelia, "inner space" (see, for example, Lee & Shlain 1992 [1985]: 78–79; McKay 2005: 45–46), by means of new technology: for cyber enthusiasts, living in cyberia and enjoying the pleasures of cyberdelia, the holy trinity of sex, drugs and high-tech was the prerequisite for *Havin' Fun in the Warm California Sun* (Sirius 1997: 12), the ethos of "good life" in a world in which nothing was impossible *just because* everything was experienced as possible in the discursive-technological matrix of the "cyber" in which the difference between the possible and the impossible was abolished from the very beginning (see Rucker et al. 1992; Leary 1994a).

In this context, in the universe of "digital delirium" (Kroker & Kroker 1997a), Rheingold's "teledildonics" projected a New Age religious wish-image of a transcen-

dence in cyberspace in the form of the real of the imaginary (cf., for example, Robins 1996: 85–95, 119–123; Stallabrass 1996: 65–66, 75–76; Hayward 1993); an experience of being beyond the body, or "like having had your everything amputated" (Barlow 1990a: 42; cf., for example, Sobchack 1995: 208–210; Fisher 1997: 118–119; Kirby 1997: 131–133; Foster 2005; 174–175), but still being able to enjoy unparalleled sexual experiences, experiences enabled by the virtual body in cyberspace. The only problem was, as Lisa Palac (1998: 93), a Californian sexpert promoting hilarious sexual experimentation, aptly noticed: "VR sexware is a vaporware, meaning it doesn't exist" (cf. Dery 1996: 6–8; Lunenfeld 2000a: 88; for the activities of "sexperts" and sexual experimentation, see Bright 1992; Chapkis 1997; Sprinkle 1998; for a problematization, see Shusterman 2008: 33–38).

This was, indeed, a serious problem: despite of its strong presence in the real of the imaginary constitutive of Californian cyberculture, "teledildonics" was simply *too virtual* to be real in reality.

However, it was quite obvious, according to Palac (1998: 93–94), that the excitement Rheingold's "erotic telepresence technology" had aroused had at the same time awakened both a demand for "cybersex suits" and a disppointment that they were not yet available, implying, in fact, a challenge for new innovations. Therefore, the discrepancy between the fascination elicited by Rheingold's "teledildonics" and the non-existence of appropriate technology was a chance for Palac to promote both the idea of sex futurism and her career as an avantgardist sexpert: since anyway "cybersex suits" were "vaporware," imagination was the best way to enjoy them. In the context of the new edge *Future Sex* magazine (see, for example, Dery 1996: 185–186; Lunenfeld 2000a: 90–91), edited by Palac, she decided together with the computer designer Mike Saenz to make people happy by supplying the demand for new sexual experiences. "In the spirit of parody," as Palac (1998: 94) says, Saenz suggested that they simply create their "own phony VR sex gear and publish it in *Future Sex*" (ibid.). Following the genuine American ethos, their mission was: "Give the people what they want!" (ibid.; for Saenz's career as a sex software designer, see Graham 1995: 82–86; Dery 1996: 209–210, 214, 217–219; Springer 1996: 53–54; Milstead & Milhon 1991; for a contextualization with regard to *Wired* discourse, see Lummerding 2005: 50–59).

According to Palac (1998: 94), with the help of human models, "a man and a woman, making porno faces, naked except for the Dart Vaderesque helmets, gloves and strap-on orgasmatrons," Saenz designed a four-page spread for the magazine entitled "The Love Machine" (ibid.; cf. McLuhan 1995 [1969]: 253, 2002 [1951]: 99; Marchand 1989: 216–217; in comparison to Virilio's "war machine," cf. Genosko 1999: 97; in the context of Deleuze-Guattarian "machines," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 3–4; in terms of the "bachelor machine," cf. Mikkonen 2001). The futuristic sex apparatus was called *Csex 2 System* and it featured extremely complicated but as promising technical details described in the techno-futuristic language typical of Californian cyberculture, such as "3D Stereo H. U. D.," "TDV Tactile Data Playback System," "Simskin Components," "3D

Audio," "Context-Sensitive Interface," and "Tempest Shields" (Saenz 1992: 30–31; cf. Sobchack 1994: 22–23; Meecham & Sheldon 2005 [2000]: 161–163). The sexual experience proper was guaranteed by the key technology of the system: "CSex Helms," "CSex Gloves," and male and female versions of "CSex G-Units" (Saenz 1992: 30–31; cf. Hamit 1993: 114–115; Velena 1998: 165; Foster 2005: 87–89). As Saenz affirms, it is these "CSex G-Units," to be attached to the genitals, that are the core components of the "Love Machine":

> Both Male and Female G-Units feature rugged construction and silky-soft SIMSKINTM and TDVTM! SIMSKIN's nitinol mesh construction and celastic casing simulates "Real Feel" erectile tissue. A complex array of smart, articulated servos coupled with micro air bladders gives TDV its incredible performance. For both models, an independent power supply drives the playback system and a 10 megabyte data buffer ensures that you'll never be "left in the lurch." Shock-resistant and fully washable. (Saenz 1992: 31)

This whole techno-sexual paraphernalia was guaranteed to provide an entirely new kind of sexual experience; especially the "CSex Gloves" promised to produce "sensations ranging from the tiniest brush of fingertips to the sting of a leather whip" (ibid.). The only requirement for the "user" was that he or she was willing and able to *Strap In, Tweak Out, Turn On*, as Palac (1998: 95) expressed the mode of employment of the "CSex 2 System," thus rewording Timothy Leary's famous counterculture slogan *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out* in a hip-postmodern style (see, for example, Leary 1999a [1965]: 133–135; cf. Stevens 1987: 326, 331; Greenfield 2007: 98–101).

If Rheingold's "erotic telepresence technology" presented the theory of "teledildonics" or "virtual sex," what, then, was Palac

Fig. 73. "The CSex 2 System," a 3D stereo tactile cybersex system consisting of interactive "sex suits" or genital prostheses and prosthetic hands for breast stimulation enabling virtual sex in the sense of self-sex or mutual masturbation, with appropriate computer paraphernalia to create the illusion of bodily presence in a simulated environment, invented by Mike Saenz (1992), a Californian cyberfuturist (see Dery 1996: 209–219; Palac 1998: 94–95; Lummerding 2005: 76; cf. Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53; Plant 1998: 30; Barber 2004a).

The future of sex began in 1990, when Howard Rheingold (1990: 52), in his pioneering *Mondo 2000* article, described future sex in terms of "teledildonics" or "erotic telepresence technology." According to Saenz (1992: 29), "[t]omorrow's Carnal Knowledge Engineers may develop a woven fabric of sensors – a membrane that simulates human skin – that can be worn over human genitals and used to digitize and record sensual and sexual touching." What we will then have is an entirely new form of sexual experience comprising of "tactile data," digital information, that is synchronized to 3D video and audio, and finally programmed into "a computer simulation coupled with tactile playback mechanisms" (ibid.). And then: "Slip into your gloves, helmet, data-shorts, and get ready for a real joy ride!" (ibid.; cf. Stenslie 1994b, 1994c, 1994e, 1996).

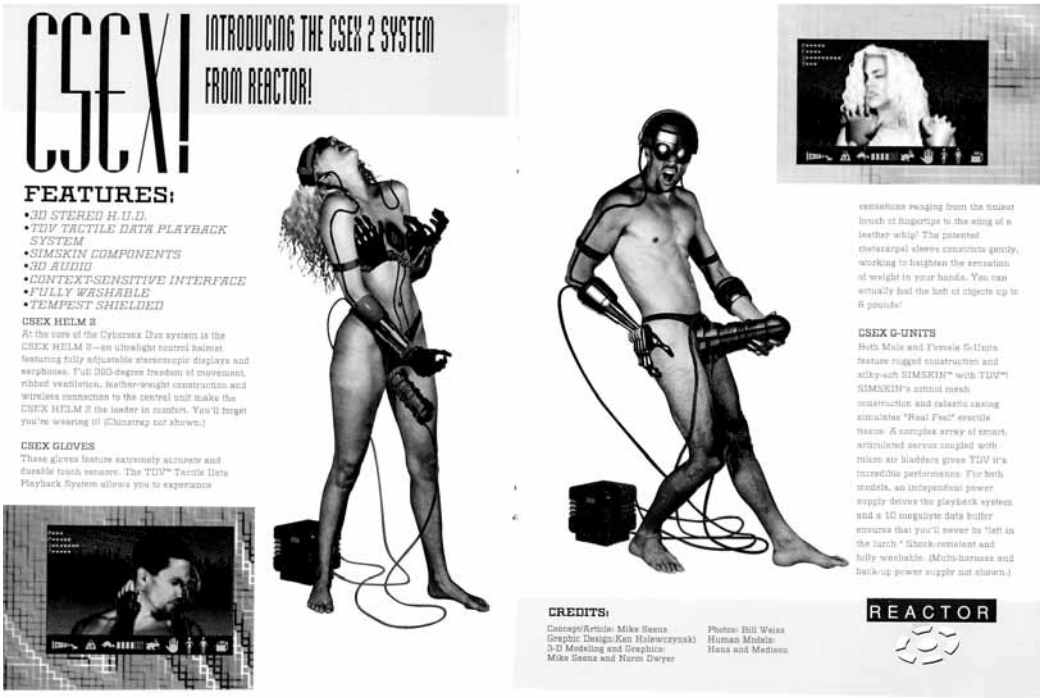


Fig. 74. "At the core of the Cybersex Duo system is the CSEX HELM 2 – an ultralight control helmet featuring fully adjustable stereoscopic displays and earphones. Full 360-degree freedom of movement, ribbed ventilation, feather-weight construction and wireless connection to the central unit make the CSEX HELM 2 the leader in comfort. You'll forget you're wearing it!" (Saenz 1992: 30)

In a paradigmatic manner, Saenz's cybersex system, in its spectral futurality, manifested the vision of the future propagated by the Californian high-tech avantgarde in its historical moment, when the future had already become present in its spectral virtuality. In an epochal sense of the term, Saenz's invention embodied prosthetic technology: in addition to gloves and goggles, typical of virtual reality systems, it incorporated "an enveloping crotch prosthesis" for male users and "a piston-action prosthesis" for female users (Lunenfeld 2000a: 90); a sophisticated construction allowing for "telematic, immersive mutual masturbation" (ibid.).

In other words, both technologically and sexually Saenz's "Cybersex Duo system" was ahead of its time: it was a splendid instantiation of "techno-sublime rapture" (ibid.; cf. Redhead 1995: 59–60; Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 74–76; Ravetz 1997: 118; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 86–87; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36; Miah & Rich 2008: 86–87).

and Saenz's "CSex 2 System"? It was, of course, a practical application of Rheingold's theory – practical in terms of the imaginary, as an imaginary technology appearing real in the techno-aesthetic imagery created by Saenz; a mode of the imaginary that anyhow ruled the reality of Californian cyberculture, the true home of all that is "cyber." Though, what is here essential is that both of these imaginary technologies, Rheingold's "teledildonics" and Palac and Saenz's "CSex 2 System," were, in fact, created by the imaginary of language specific to cyberculture: they were products of cyber discourse, linguistic assemblages of "free-floating signifiers" circulating in Californian cyberia, signifiers effected by and, in turn, effecting and proliferating all that is "cyber" (cf. Springer 1996: 80–82; Smith 2002: 270–273)

Thus, both of them were manifestations of "Mondo language" typical of Californian cyberculture in the early 1990s (for a paradigmatic example, see Rucker et al. 1992, an absolute *must* for understanding the pleasures of the "cyber"), and moreover, constituting the whole linguistic universe of cyber discourse during that decade – a hyperbolic and technophilic discourse that, as astounding as it may sound (or then not), simultaneously turned into the *theory lan-*

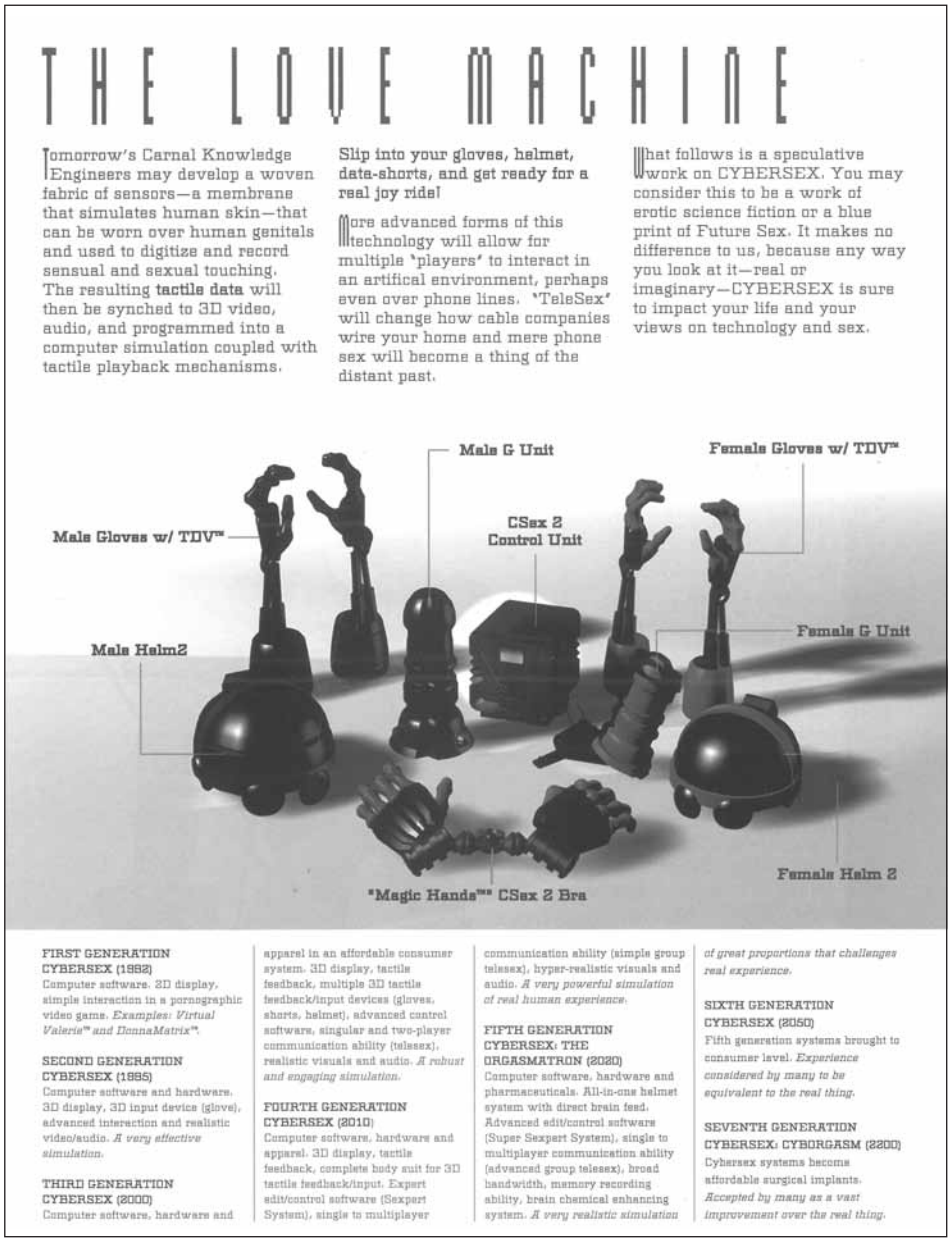


Fig. 75. The sexual body in Saenz's cybersex system is a prosthetic body; a techno-body equipped with prosthetic organs and a prosthetic sensorium (with regard to Stelarc, cf. Massumi 2002: 89–132; Paterson 2007: 114–117; in terms of "imagining information," cf. Pound 1995: 528–529; in the context of McLuhan's "prosthetic aesthetics," cf. Cavell 2003: 69–90).

In this sense, sexual prosthetics is the condition of possibility of prosthetic sex, post-organic "sex" based on "the sex appeal of the inorganic" (Perniola 2004 [2000]); technologically orchestrated post-sex as the pleasure of organs without a body: an ephemeral, casual body in which each organ is "a sensitive prosthesis, an artificial device endowed with an independent perception entirely its own" (ibid.: 32). This is the world of *Mondo 2000*, the world of "mondoids" enjoying the technophilia of the "New Edge" (see Rucker et al. 1992; cf. Leary 1994a). Or, as Vivian Sobchack (1994: 18) says, the "sexy, hip and heroic" world of the "New Age Mutant Ninja Hackers" surrounded by the "amazing prostheses offered by electronic technology in general, and computers in particular" (ibid.: 22).

The New Age Mutant Ninja Hackers represent and embody a "contradictory desire which is, at one and the same time, both utopian and dystopian, self-preservational and self-exterminating" (ibid.). It is in this manner that the "New Age Mutant Ninja Hackers wish to become the machines that extend them and to cede their human flesh to the mortality it is heir to" (ibid.; cf. Katz 2003).

guage of what is called "cyber studies" in postmodern academia (for paradigmatic examples, see Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Bell 2001a, 2001b, 2004; for an incisive critique, see Sconce 2003), a mode of "studies" in which, as Haraway (1991a: 149) says, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion." It is precisely in this manner that both Rheingold's "teledildonics" and Palac and Saenz's "CSex 2 System" appeared real "in the warm California sun."

No wonder that Tim Jordan, one of the contemporary cyber-theorists, says by commenting Rheingold's "teledildonics":

> Rheingold on teledildonics is only one example of possibilities in cyberspace that seem *almost realities* and because of this we must concern ourselves, as a matter of utmost urgency, with the radical changes that are coming. Cyberspace's imaginary is filled with the *nearly real fantastic*. (Jordan 1999: 184; emphasis mine)

Referring to Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," Jordan states that although "[w]e are not necessarily *the fully immersed cyborg of teledildonics*," nevertheless, "at least we can be attached to keyboards being *drawn through the screen into virtual lives*" (ibid.: 188; emphasis mine). Here we are again in the virtual reality of language, in the imaginary world of the "cyber" in which, indeed, as Haraway says above, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion."

If this is the way both of these sex apparatuses, Rheingold's "erotic telepresence technology" and the Palac-Saenz "CSex 2 System," came into being, what was "the sexual" in them? To clarify this question, it is necessary to return *ad fontes*, that is, to Rheingold's imaginary invention of "teledildonics" or "erotic telepresence technology."

A "Data-Sensing Condom"

It is, in fact, interesting that while, at the very outset of his story, Rheingold (1991: 345) emphasizes that "teledildonics" is not about a "sex machine," that is, its idea is not to have "sexual experiences with machines," he nevertheless describes it as an apparatus, a piece of equipment: a "portable telediddler" (ibid.). Of course, it makes a difference to have sex *with* a machine in comparison to sex *through* a machine *with someone*; but this is not the issue now. What counts here is that any *dildonics* system is always – *always already* – a technical device to which one has contact in the first place, not to a real person in the flesh – which, of course, does not exclude the fact that by using any kind of technical aid to have sex one can imagine the partner as present, precisely in the manner Žižek (1993: 43–44, 1994: 2, 1996b: 518–523, 1997b: 163–164, 2001a: 252, 2006: 12, 191, 2008: 34) holds essential for sex in general: a sexual act is always – *always already* – an instrumental act, that is, an act of using somebody or something as an imaginary prop, a phantamatic prosthesis, for one's own pleasure enabled by a fantasy (in terms of the Kantian sexual rationalism of the *Geschlechtsgemeinschaft* or *commercium sexuale*, cf. Kant 1991c [1797/1798]: 389).

But what is important here is that "teledildonics" is first and foremost dildo-sex, sex by means of a technological supplement; a supplement in the Derridean sense: at the same time as a compensation or complementation of something that is lacking, and as an addition that brings something extra to which it is added (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 143–187). In this sense, dildo is not the same as the "original" (whatever it is), but *neither is it something non-original*, because it both complements and adds something that, at the same time, is there and not there. The dildo is thus an entity of a *third order*; it is precisely a supplement, something in between (cf. Derrida 1997: 141–164; Žižek 1997b: 136; in the context of lesbian dildo debates, see Findlay 1996: 152–164; Inness 1998: 130–132; Creed 1999 [1995]: 115–117; Lamos 1995; for a queer reading of the dildo and Rheingold's "teledildonics," see Foster 2005: 117–122). In this sense, dildo sex is self-sex or auto-sex that through a technical aid, with a device functioning as a supplement, is an autonomous and independent form of sexual experience, a technological form of masturbation that has thus far been almost exclusively a female privilege.

Actually, what is a dildo in Rheingold' "erotic telepresence technology," implied by the signifier "telediddler"? If a dildo, as a little sex aid, is usually a female masturbation device, an artificial penis surrogate,[197] what is it for Rheingold? Obviously, "teledildonics" is a latter day high-tech version of an age old tradition, reaching from Antiquity to the present, of female sex prostheses, used alone, or with female or male partners, in hetero, lesbian or queer acts (see, for example, Maffesoli 1993 [1985]: 103–106; Halberstam 1998b: 61–67, 125–128, 137; Slade 2001: 419–444; Rabinowitz 2002: 140–146; in the context of lesbian sex, see, for example, Butler 2004: 182–197; Brooks 2006: 138–163; Lamos 1994; from a historical perspective, see Wahl 1999: 22–31, 37, 48–55). In this sense, Rheingoldian dildo-sex is self-sex, a technological form of masturbation, only with the difference that it, firstly, takes place with computer-controlled prosthetic organs in virtual reality, and secondly, it is no longer a female privilege, but a genderless sex practice, that is, "cyborg 'sex'" in a "post-gender world" (Haraway 1991a: 151; cf. Apter 1999: 216; Parisi 2004: 8; Battis 2007: 52–53) – although in Rheingold's description, a highly conventional heterosexual form of sexual pleasure (cf. Foster 2005: 84–89, 117–121).

Therefore, according to Gareth Branwyn (1994: 233), just in the manner Rheingold's "teledildonics" reproduces prevailing heterosexual sexual scripts, it is

197 I am well aware that feminists are often not willing to accept the definition of a dildo as a "penis surrogate," because in their mind – quite understandably – it implies that female sexual desire and pleasure are determined in terms of, and hence dependent on, even a derivation of, male sexuality, sex premised on the male sexual organ, even in its actual absence, although in an ambiguous manner (see, for example, Lamos 1995; Findlay 1996; for a theoretical contextualization, see Grosz & Probyn 1995, especially the contributions of Dianne Chisholm, Barbara Creed, Anna Gibbs and Catherine Waldby). Regardless of what we call a dildo or how we conceptualize its existence, it does, however, have a similar *function* as the penis, even in so far that, in one way or another, dildos are usually designed to suggest the anatomy of the penis, in other words, to simulate the form and function of the male sexual organ.

expressly the "phallogocentrism of the term" that is "indicative of the way people have so far visulized Net sex as a substitute for traditional 'real-world' intercourse."

> With teledildonics, instead of a penis penetrating a vagina, the real-world penis is "invaginated" by the computer through means of a data-sensing "condom" or the vagina is penetrated by a dildo-like input/output device that reads and responds to the vagina. Sensors and responders ("tactile effectors") would work in tandem to simulate intercourse. (ibid.)

Where there was once a penis, there is now a receptor for a "data-sensing condom," and what was once a vagina, is now a receptor for a "dildo-like input/output device." In these terms, indeed, in this prosthetic order of sex, there are still the male and female sexual organs – although extended and augmented by technological supplements in the form of prosthetic simulacra – that define the sexual in Rheingold's "teledildonics" according to Branwyn. This is the reason why Branwyn sees "teledildonics" as a simulated form of conventional heterosexual intercourse, and accordingly, takes it as a manifestation of "phallogocentrism."

On the other hand, it is odd that in Branwyn's description there is not even a word about masturbation. This fact is also curiously effaced by Rheingold in his techno-euphoric eulogy of the pleasures of "teledildonics"; that is, his focus is on *tele*-sex, sex at a distance (cf. Durlach & Mavor 1995: 33; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53–55; Plant 1998: 30–32; in terms of "outercourse," cf. van Sevenant 2005: 141–142), instead of sex in utmost proximity, sex on one's own body in the sense of masturbation. Rheingold fantasizes about virtual bodies, but does not consider the *corporeal reality* of "teledildonics": the real body and its technological extensions as a means of auto-sex, a functionally and conceptionally expanded and prosthetically enhanced mode of masturbation (cf. Lunenfeld 2000a: 90; Abbas 2007: 248–249; from a historical perspective, cf. de la Peña 2003: 143–170).

In epistemic terms, what is problematic in Branwyn's and, in a like manner, in Rheingold's description of "teledildonics" as a form of *dildonics* – itself a technophilic neologism, a linguistic figure – is that they do not consider the fact that in the world of the "cyber" things are always – *always already* – "flickering signifiers" (see Hayles 1993c): all that is "cyber" takes place in the virtual reality of language. Similarly, in the post-phallic sexual order of the "post," even the phallus is no longer just a phallus, and what is even more peculiar to "sex" in terms of the "post" is that neither is the penis just a penis. As Cathy Griggers (1994: 120) explains in her study of "Lesbian Bodies in the Age of (Post) Mechanical Reproduction," "[w]e are at a moment of culture, for example, when *phallic body prostheses* are being mass produced by the merger of the sex industry with plastics technologies" (emphasis mine). This is a world in which both lesbian and straight women magazines "market *artificial penises*" and carry "pages of advertisements for a huge assortment of *phallic simulacra*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In this situation:

> We're left to wonder what these women might eventually think to do with a double-ended dildo. But there's no mistaking that the lesbian assimilation of the sex-toy industry is reterritorializing the culturally constructed aura of *the phallic signifier*. By *appropriating the phallus/penis for themselves*, lesbians have

> turned techno-culture's semiotic regime of simulation and the political economy of consumer culture back against the naturalization of male hegemony. It's of course ironic that in mass reproducing the penis itself, the illusion of a natural linkage between the cultural power organized under the sign of the phallus and the penis as biological organ is exposed as artificial. *The reproduction of the penis as dildo exposes the male organ as signifier of the phallus*, and not vice versa, that is, the dildo exposes the cultural organ of the phallus as a simulacrum. *The dildo is an artificial penis, an appropriated phallus*, and a material signifier of the imaginary ground for a historically manifest phallic regime of power. The effect on lesbian identities of this merger between the sex industry and plastics technologies is typical of the double binds characteristic of lesbianism in postmodernity. (Griggers 1994: 120; emphasis mine; cf. Hamming 2001)

In other words, the specificity of the "post" in terms of "the sexual" is that both the penis and the phallus are "free-floating signifiers" that can be appropriated at will, according to the libidinal logic of postmodern desire. *This* is the corporeal reality of the "post": *the imaginary of the signifier is the reality of the body*.

In this constellation, auto-sex, sex with oneself, is sex with imaginary "others," that is, virtual presences enabled by "free-floating signifiers" floating free in the techno-imaginary of the "cyber" (cf. Derrida 1997: 144–152). In this sense, auto-sex in the world of the "post" is a postmodern form of what Freud (1981c [1905]: 81–82) calls *Autoerotismus*. According to Freud, "autoeroticism" is originally about sexual activity typical of infants who do not yet experience their own body as separated from the others, from the surrounding world in general (see Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 431, 1991d [1915]: 224; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 79–83). That is why infants do not direct their sexual desire to other persons, but to themselves, using their own bodies as both the object and the source of their sensual as well as sexual pleasure. What is constitutive of all kinds of autoerotic experiences is a diffuse relation between the subject and the object, between the self and the other, between one's own body and the body of the other.

These distinctions, however, are diffuse and thus problematic in themselves; since all forms of sexuality are always – *always already* – sexual experiences with oneself, on one's own body, as experiences of one's very own corporeality that is always the *sine qua non* of sexual experience in one way or another. Consequently, *there is no sexuality without auto-sexuality, as there is no sex without auto-sex*; in this sense, in terms of both the genealogy and the constitution of the sexual subject, masturbation is the very origin not only of all sexuality, but, in the first place, of the idea of "the sexual" altogether – the sexual as a mode of desires and pleasures of one's own body *in* one's own body (see, for example, Laplance & Pontalis 1986 [1964]: 33; Žižek 2006: 12; for a historical contextualization, see Braun 1995; Bennett & Rosario 1995; Laqueur 2003).

A "Direct Genital Contact by Shaking Hands"

As an auto-sex system "teledildonics," paradoxically, is a heterosexual unisex technology that, at the same time, is a multisex system that produces shared experiences, sex for two or many "participants," although absolutely separated,

alone: *all of them as technological monads in their own sexual universes*. For this reason, "teledildonics" is possible only as a mediated form of masturbation, in a highly complicated, technologically extended and augmented manner, as *prosthetic self-sex in virtual reality* (see, for example, Botting 1999: 169–170, 196–197, 204; Collins 2008: 126; with regard to "sexual media" as a form of telepresence, cf. Skalski et al. 2010: 169–172; in terms of a "masturbatory machine," cf. Smith 2006: 62; for masturbation in the context of the "bachelor machine" as a manifestation of *Sexualästhetik*, cf. Gorsen 1987: 133–138). Thus, in the final analysis, "teledildonics" is about simulation: both the sex act in itself and the "partners" are technological simulacra, to be sustained – or prevented from disintegration (see Žižek 1997b: 65–67, 164, 2005b [1994]: 210) – by means of the fantasies enacted by the participants; fantasies in which the reality of one's own body intermingles with the virtuality of the bodies of the others (cf. Fisher 1997: 113–114, 121–122; McRae 1997: 75); that is, *a post-Sadean group sex act, a performative enactment of orgy in the form of soft sex in the imaginary of the technological* (cf. Lyman & Scott 1989: 192–197; Martyn 2003: 51–53; Orban 2008: 46–66; in terms of "textual sex," cf. Sorensen 2001).

In this sense, "teledildonics" transforms masturbation from a "solitary sex" (cf. Laqueur 2003) to an enjoyment of what I call *para-sexual acts* in virtual and imaginary togetherness, to acts in which the participants can take part separately, in their own privateness, but simultaneously. "Teledildonics" is thus lonely sex not alone but in concomitance; it is sexual loneliness in a simulation of sexual union, and vice versa. It is for this reason that "teledildonics" is a paradoxical phenomenon: *virtual union in real seclusion, simulated partners encountered in real solitude*. Ultimately, "teledildonics" entails promiscuity that takes place in a radical separation: each one experiences the shared pleasure of sexual simulation on his or her body, the sexual in the mode of the "virtual." In other words, "teledildonics" is the most sophisticated form of what I call *sexual monadism* enabled by the most advanced form of *sexual nomadism*: in the sexual universe of "teledildonics", each sexual subject is a sexual single, a subject in its autosexual singularity, a subject for which the world is only contingent extensions of its subjectivity. And it is in this sense that *the universe of "teledildonics" embraces an innumerable amount of masturbating monads that enjoy their nomadic sexuality in a cosmic solitude*.

Thus, what makes "teledildonics" an extraordinary mode of the sexual is that all sexual acts (whatever they in themselves happen to be) take place in a virtual realm in which everything exists in the form of simulation: *all entities in this sexual universe are bodiless bodies in their holographic ephemerality, "bodies" that "incarnate" Platonic ideas in their very immateriality*. This is the idea of "disembodiment" as the "ultimate sexual revolution," envisioning an "abandoning our bodies" (Rheingold 1991: 352). Virtual reality, the reality of cyberspace, is the promise of a new mode of sexual pleasure, the pleasure of bodiless beings with and between themselves, beings feeling "like having had your everything amputated" (Barlow 1990a: 42), nomadic beings living their isolated monadic

life, enjoying the pleasure of being "cyber," that is, the "bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 12). In other words, sexual monads in the universe of the "cyber," indulged in their very own post-body autarchy, live in the autonomy of their idiosyncratic mode of being, and are thus true embodiments of what Timothy Leary (1994 [1988]: 252) calls "*cybernetic-person* or *cybernaut*," a latter-day realization of Wienerian cybernetics, that "returns us to the original meaning of 'pilot' and puts the self-reliant person back in the loop" (ibid.).

In a manner never seen before, the post-body autarchy in terms of the "cyber" is an elegant solution to all the problems considered by Haraway (1991a: 177) with regard to the "dualisms" that "have been persistent in Western tradition"; dualisms or binarities that have been "systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, worker, animals – in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self." In one word, the "cyber" is the key to the post-Hegelian *sublation* of the very idea of duality (for the idea of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; cf. Malabou 2005: 143–146). As Haraway says:

> The self is the One who is not dominated, who knows that by the service of the other, the other is the one who holds the future, who knows that by the experience of domination, which gives the lie to the autonomy of the self. To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial. One is too few, but two are too many. (Haraway 1991a: 177)

The philosophical pregnancy of Haraway's vision, in its complex multidimensionality, puts both Leary's post-cybernetic conception of the subject and Rheingold's "teledildonics" into appropriate perspective from which one can see monadic subjectivity and sexual autarchy in an entirely new light. From this perspective, we begin to realize that to consider the future in terms of the present brings no solution, but it is part of the problem.

What is important, according to Rheingold, is that "teledildonics" has to be seen in a wider social and cultural context in which the future appears in its radical futurality:

> Whenever I think of the vision of billions of earthlings of the future, all plugged into their home reality sets, I think of E. M. Foster's dystopia of a future in which people remain prisoners of their cubicles, entranced by their media, not even aware of the possibility of physical escape. And then I think that it is good to beware of looking at the future through the moral lens of the present: *in a world of tens of billions of people, perhaps cyberspace is a better place to keep most of the population relatively happy, most of the time*. (Rheingold 1991: 352; emphasis mine; cf. Huxley 1994a [1932])

To each and everyone his or her own "cubicle," to everyone his or her own monadic closet, a cell in the post-Foucauldian panopticon (cf. Foucault 1991a [1975]: 195–230; Winokur 2008: 176–196), a postmodern system of surveillance in which the pleasure of self-control is the most effective way of annihilating

the self – that is the world of "teledildonics," a world in which *monadic masturbation* is the only thing that has remained over after the implosion of the sexual as a result of technological disembodiment. What a vision of the future, one is tempted to exclaim. But then again, perhaps this is already the present, the present in a world in which reality is increasingly "life on the screen," as Sherry Turkle (1995) enthusiastically asserts.

Accordingly, cybersex in the mode of Rheingoldian "teledildonics" is not so much pure sex as sex *purified* from all that makes sex *sex* – purified from all the temptations of the flesh; as virtual experience, *"teledildonics" is clean sex, cleansed from human stain, purged from carnality*, from the filth of *meat*: "sex" as a technological simulation, a clinical experience in an absolutely antiseptic environment, a vacuum emptied of all that is human: sex as simulation that reflects its ephemeral singularity, this is the apotheosis of posthuman sex, sex in a world in which all that is human has hilariously evaporated in the nothingness in its absolute form, the nothingness of non-conceptuality that as a pure negativity is surrounding the pure positivity of the virtuality of the posthuman, its non-existent existence of non-Euclidean simulation, the terminal state of all being. In this manner, "teledildonics" is the most advanced form of what Stahl Stenslie (2000b) calls *terminal sex*.

But, paradoxically, at the same time, a strange return of the repressed occurs in "teledildonics" (in terms of the Freudian *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*, cf. Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632), a return that would be impossible unless it would be possible, possible in its very impossibility that is peculiar to all that is possible in terms of the "post," the terms that determine the terms of the "cyber" constituting its primordial condition of possibility: *the flesh resurfaces*, though in a residual form, reduced to the genitals, the genitals in themselves, *in their pure genitality*, separated, by means of post-gender technology, from the bodies of the sexual monads floating in their singular virtuality: *sexually neutralized prosthetic sex organs*, in their unprecedented multifarious forms, incorporated in the computer-controlled sexual systems of the post-sexual sex monads, the autonomous post-body systems constituting the system of "teledildonics."

For this reason, genitality in Rheingold's "erotic telepresence technology" is, of course, first and foremost present in its absence, in a mediated mode. But what is specific to Rheingold's (1991: 352) conception of the genital in "teledildonics" is, as he himself says, that in telesex you can "let your fingers do the walking through cyberspace" and thus "map your genital effectors to your manual sensors and have *direct genital contact by shaking hands*." Rheingold asks what will happen to "social touching when nobody knows where anybody else's erogenous zones are located" (ibid.). In this situation "[p]rivacy and identity and intimacy will become tightly coupled into something we don't have a name for yet." And it might even be "that the physical commingling of genital sensations

will come to be regarded as a less intimate act than the sharing of the data structures of your innermost self-representations" (ibid.).

If "teledildonics" – or, as Rheingold defines the idea of his para-scientific *gedankenexperiment*: "erotic telepresence technology" (ibid.: 345) – should one day cross the border between the imaginary and the real (as cyber enthusiasts, indeed, believe), then, of course, sexual encounter, and what may be even more important, the concepts of the body and the subject, will be entirely different (cf. Bright 1992: 62–70; Aronowitz 1994: 15, 19–20; Aronowitz & DiFazio 1994: 79–80; Foster 2005: 115–117, 131–132; Berger 2007: 122–123).

The problem is only how far the virtual can be taken as real: in what manner something that consists of simulation can be experienced, in terms of the *corporeal*, as real, as *intersubjective* reality, as a reality that is not only the reality of the imaginary, but, first and foremost, the reality of the body in its carnal self-presence – if there can be anything like that after the deconstruction of the whole idea of "presence" by Derrida (see, for example, Derrida 1978f [1967], 1997 [1967]; Royle 2003a; Irwin 2010). The sensations and affections of the body are always something that can be understood in the co-presence of the imaginary, but are not to be reduced to it: the sensuous and sentient body is not the same as the imaginary body (see, for example, Bigwood 1998 [1991]: 105–106). In terms of the sexual, this implies that the sexual is a quality of what Freud (1986d [1915–1917]: 335–336, 1990c [1933]: 104–105, 1991d [1915]: 217–218) calls the *Organlust*, a sensuous and sentient experience of pleasure *in the body*, *on the body* and *at the body*.[198]

What is corporeal – the corporeal in and of the *human* being – is always already something social; there is no human body without the social, in a state of absolute seclusion. Hence, what is sexual is social as a mode of being of the corporeal, experienced in, on, through and with our bodies, as an essential aspect of our identity, even as the constitutive dimension of our self. The social and the corporeal are inseparably intertwined (see, for example, Featherstone et al. 1991; Shilling 1993, 2005; Falk 1994; Turner 1997 [1984]). That is, my body is always myself, not just anybody, never nobody. I am a subject in my body and through my body, and this body is constituted socially, in a process of social interaction: I am myself only in terms of the "Other."

In "teledildonics," however, the whole concept of "the "social" – if it still has any substance at all – takes on a totally new meaning: I am no longer sure who I am in contact with, and what is even more confusing: I am no longer aware of who I am in a virtual body that I have to experience as *my* body (cf. Bey 1998: 3–4; Hansen 2004: 38–71, 137–148, 158–189; Paterson 2007: 118–139). Does this

198 A problem in general, of course, is the ontological status of the objects in virtual reality that is designated as "cyberspace"; the problem is not only *where* exactly "cyberspace" is, but, moreover, *in what sense* it is virtual, and what its relation to simulation and the imaginary, the fictional, the fantastic and the illusionary is. To discuss this problem, one would need, however, a separate study (cf., for example, Stallabrass 1995; Robins 1996; Carrier & Miller 1998; Morse 1998; Crang et al. 1999; Cubitt 2001; Brummett 2003; Heuser 2003; Shields 2003).

mean that my body is just anybody, even a nobody, in a cybersex act, in a virtual encounter in which not only that I am not aware about whom or what I encounter, but, more fundamentally, in which I am not aware of who or what it is that I call me, a "me" that always – *always already* – appears only in the form of *me, myself and I* in conformity with the logic of the world of the "post," a world in which being subject is possible only in the mode of the post-subject, a "subject" that exists only as an anti-subject in its non-subjectivity? And most basically, what is the body in "teledildonics": a technological simulacrum, an imaginary object without a subject or a figure of pure fantasy – or all of these?

The reason for this fundamental confusion is, as Rheingold (1991: 174) says, that in virtual reality the bodies are "totally artificial visual representations" that we can, nevertheless, as Rheingold believes, "touch" and by that "experience erotic frissons," and even feel "deep physical, social, emotional communion with another person." But beside the problem as to how I can be physically nonexistent and still, at the same time, perceive myself and someone else as physically present, the primary question remains: if all the things that we encounter in virtual reality are representations, what, exactly, do they *re-present* – provided, of course, that a virtual presence that appears as a simulacrum can represent anything but "itself" (cf. Baudrillard 1988d [1987], 1988e [1987], 1994a [1981], 2000b; Zurbrugg 1997; Cubitt 2001; Shields 2003)?

But then again, as important as these questions are, they are irrelevant since the language in which Rheingold describes "teledildonics" is the language of virtual reality based on the *virtual reality of language* constitutive of cyber culture. In this language, everything is possible, including everything that is impossible.

This is the reality of the surrational in terms of what Peter Lunenfeld (2000a: 33–36) calls "vapor theory," emblematic of all things one can experience "in warm California sun," in the ecstasy of cyberdelia.

2.3.2 In the Sexual Laboratory of Cybersex

A couple of years after Rheingold had presented his idea of "teledildonics," cybersex became reality – a reality in the mode of the "cyber." Two media artists, Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford demonstrated their invention, a prototype of a sexual-technological assemblage as a tele-tactile interactive environment, in a telepresence experiment between two cities, Cologne and Paris, in 1993 (see Stenslie 1994b: 72; Woolford 1994a: 42, 1996a: 92; Krewani 1998b: 149; Schroeder 2008: 35; Stocker et al. 2009: 204; for a contextualization, see, for example, Wilson 2002: 157–169, 549–552, 752–753; Moser & MacLeod 1996; Manovich 1997, 2001; Schade & Tholen 1999; Grau 2003, 2007; Chandler & Neumark 2005; Missomelius 2006; Volkart 2006). A year later, in the context of the art exhibition *ISEA'94*, Helsinki, this cybersex apparatus was presented to a larger audience (see Stenslie 1994c; Woolford & Stenslie 1994a, 1994b). That is, after a decade long period of incubation, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, the vision of

cybersex, projected by cyber discourse as a phantasmatic manifestation of the figures of cyberspace and the cyborg, materialized in the mode of the "cyber," in the form of an experimental artwork playing with the idea of a sexual experience made feasible by an imaginary technology peculiar to the technocultural fantasy world produced by the discursive constellation of the "post" (for a detailed overview of cybersex fantasies, see Dery 1996: 183–225; Springer 1996; for "cybersexualities" in the form of feminist theory, see Wolmark 1999a).

What at the beginning was an artistic experiment in the post-utopian spirit of media art of the 1990s (for the emergence of new art forms in the context of computer and digital technology, see, for example, Rötzer 1989b, 1991b, 1991c; Hattinger et al. 1990a, 1990b; Popper 1993, 2007; Frieling & Daniels 2004, 2005; from a historical perspective, see, for example, Belting 2002 [1995]: 87–103; Schwarz & Shaw 1996; Schwarz 1997; Daniels 2002, 2003), soon turned into a discursive "reality" typical of the postmodern manifesting the techno-imaginary of the cyborg in the mode of "concrete utopia" constitutive of cyber discourse (see Levitas 1990: 83–105; Bloch 1985 [1938–1947]); "concrete" in the sense of discursive construction, as a future-oriented technological project ascribed with the meaning of *potential actuality* implied by the "cyber".

A "Technological Simulacrum of Human Touch"

At the turn of the millennium, Stahl Stenslie, one of the "Fathers of Cybersex" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b: 414), saw himself – empowered by the spirit of the "cyber" – elevated to the position of a prophet, a position from which, similarly to all seers given the gift of grace, he proclaimed a new era having began, the era of "next sex":

> Sex spells the future of art. As the life sciences enable art to create life rather than objects and systemics, sex will come to serve as one of the foundations of art practice. But it will be a kind of sex different from the way it's currently practiced. Jacking into your next sex will be terminal. It means an end to sex as we know it. Then again, it will be the start of your Next Sex. Just as silicon made the current biotechnological revolution possible, the present move to the wired society is preparing us for a cultural communication practice that will revolutionize sex. It will be a distributed, dynamic, networked process going across entire species and life forms. It will be a romantic orgy of Life-Art. (Stenslie 2000b: 206; in terms of "postmodern aesthetics" as a manifestation of "a biotechnological utopia," cf. Stafford 1994)

This post-utopian, neo-Biblical wish-image of a fundamental transformation of all that is sexual is, indeed, a true revelation, a sublime vision of a new paradise on earth, a new Garden of Eden, in which – absolutely without any danger of original sin – "the sexual," as the very paragon of a radical libidinalization of all the forces of the body, redefines the whole conduct of life of those who have opened their heart to receive the message of this epochal transformation: *life as a sexual art form enjoyed by prosthetically empowered post-subjects in the artificial paradise of the cyborg* (cf. Williams & Bendelow 1998: 194–196; Hardt & Negri 2000: 214–218; Baudrillard 1993c [1990]: 53–59; in the context of

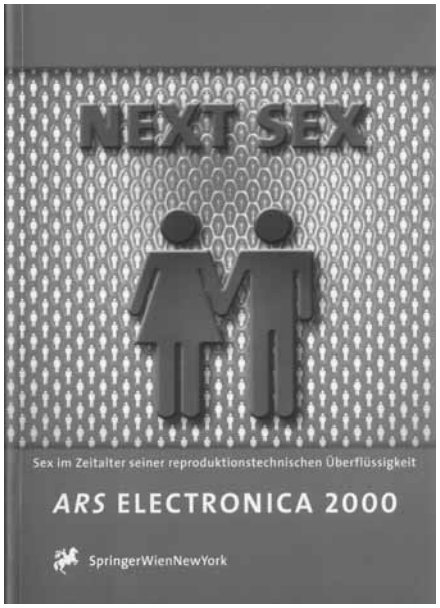


Fig. 76. "Next Sex" or "Sex in the Age of its Procreative Superfluousness" (see Stocker & Schöpf 2000b): Ars Electronica 2000 as a techno-utopian forum for the transformation of sexuality resulting from new technologies (for a critique of Ars Electronica utopianism, see Lovink 2003: 173–175).

Whereas the development of contraceptive technologies since the 1960s has liberated sexual pleasure from procreation ("sex without reproduction"), the focus has now shifted to assistive reproductive technologies, the technologies of fertilization and pregnancy ("reproduction without sex") (for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Corea 1985; Adams 1994; Farquhar 1996; Clarke 1998; De Jonge & Barratt 2002; Djerassi 2008). Artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, embryo transfer, womb renting and, as a potentiality, cloning have radically changed the conditions of sexuality in the contemporary world, a world in which technoscience and technoculture have redefined the parameters of being human, to the extent that the very notion of "the sexual" has become thoroughly problematic (see, for example, Kaplan & Squier 1999; Gelfand & Shook 2006; Mamo 2007; Inhorn et al. 2009).

These developments, along with the technological reconception of the human body in terms of the posthuman, have created a cultural situation in which techno-sexual utopianism constitutes another form of post-theoretical deconstruction of sex and sexuality. It is in this constellation that what Haraway (1991a: 150) calls "cyborg 'sex'" becomes intelligible as a paragon of the techno-imaginary of post-sex, post-corporeal "sex" with the prosthetic organs of the cyborg (cf. Barr 1993: 117–118; Apter 1999: 216–219; Botting 1999: 1, 8, 10, 169, 184, 202–203, 216; Parisi 2004: 1, 7–8; Miah 2008: 78).

Futurism, cf. Cooper 2002: 79–80; Poggi 2009: 170–180; in terms of "erotic prostheses" and *machines célibataires* or "bachelor machines," cf. Baudrillard 1990a [1987]: 204, 2000b: 37–38; Weiss 2003: 57–67; Michelson 1984; Reck & Szeemann 1999 [1975]).

This is the present future of the "cyber," enabled by the unending posting of the "post" in terms of the techno-imaginary.

The history of this future, however, began more in the manner of high-tech body engineering characteristic of postwar American culture under the power regime of the military-industrial complex than as a latter-day version of the legendary hippie communes and sexual promiscuity of the 1960s (see, for example, Hamilton 1997: 244–245; Allyn 2001: 100–103; Roszak 1969; Cavallo 2001; DeKoven 2004); although without the subliminal presence of the technological sublime of the Californian counterculture in the technocultural constellation of the postmodern the idea of "sex as a new art form" would never have been possible.

The original Stenslie-Woolford cybersex apparatus, as it was presented in the Helsinki show in 1994, consisted of computer screens showing simulated bodies, prosthetic bodysuits provided with sensors and actuators (that is, effectors and vibrators) emulating human touch, and an interface system for interactive contacts through world-wide computer network (see Stenslie 1994a, 1996; Woolford 1994a, 1996a, 1996b). In this respect, Stenslie-Woolford sexual-technological assemblage embraced not only a postmodern hybrid of the ideas of cyberspace and the cyborg (cf. Stone 1994b, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1995e; Stelarc 1991, 1997, 1998), but also a radical sexualization of technology in the mode of post-sex (cf., for example, Foster 2005: 53–61, 70–92, 98–135; Murphy 2008: 133–136; Nusselder 2009: 11–14, 102–103; from a historical perspective, cf. Gorsen 1988; Reck & Szeemann 1999 [1975]). Although this techno-sexual apparatus as an experimental prototype of cybersex was still quite a modest attempt in comparison to the Rheingoldian vision of a globally functioning "erotic telepresence technology," it nevertheless was "the world's first

full-body, tele-tactile communication system" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b: 414; cf. Woolford 1994a: 42).

Similarly to Rheingoldian "teledildonics" (see Rheingold 1991: 345–353, 1990; cf. Case 1996: 177–179; Creed 1997: 16–21; Ferguson 2010: 60–66), the Stenslie-Woolford system consists of a sensor-effector bodysuit making it possible for the users, or, rather, *sexual cybernauts*, to "feel" the body of another through telepresence, as a simulated experience (cf. Branwyn 1994: 233–234; Dery 1996: 201–202, 217–225; Fuller 1996: 125–127; Bell 2000a: 391–393; Virilio 1997 [1995]: 109–118; Mellor 2004: 37–39, 48). The essential difference is that Rheingold's imaginary apparatus, in addition to telepresence, also comprises a virtual reality technology enabling the partners to immerse in a computer-generated three-dimensional space in which they can have a virtual sexual encounter through their digital doubles, computer-generated simulacra appearing as image-bodies (cf. Lunenfeld 2000a: 87–89; Smith 2001: 68–76; Latham 2002b: 125–131; Parisi 2004: 162–165; in terms of "Virtual Valerie," cf. Graham 1995: 82–86). This whole-body *immersive experience* (see, for example, McRae 1997: 74–78; Hillis 1998: 45–49; Barber 2004a: 327–329; Collins 2006: 212–213; McRobert 2007: 93–97; cf. Stone 1992, 1996a; Huhtamo 1995b, 1995c; Grau 2003; in Baudrillardian terms, cf. Poster 2001a: 31–39, 2001b: 135–137) is not possible in the Stenslie-Woolford system: the partners are not transferred into the "inside" of virtual reality encapsulating them altogether; instead, they stay "outside," connected with one another by means of the *prosthetic organs* of their bodysuits (cf. Clarke 2002: 36–40; Zylinska 2002c: 215–217; Kussmaul 2007: 41–43; Stelarc 1991, 2002b; in terms of the "influencing machine," cf. Holler 2002: 88–90).

But it is precisely this prosthetic mode of telepresence that enables the specific form of "the sexual" in the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system; this is the *novum* of the Stenslie-Woolford apparatus, an innovation based on the idea to attempt to construct a practicable sexual-technological system enabling an extension and augmentation of the body beyond its "natural" limits, the constraints of the skin – precisely in the McLuhanian sense, as a postmodern realization of McLuhan's utopian vision according to which "[i]n the electric age we wear all mankind as our skin" (McLuhan 1964: 56; cf. Haraway 1991a: 178; Balsamo 1996: 11–12; Benthien 1999: 168–275; von Braun 2001: 276–278).

It is the problem of the human skin that, in fact, is the point of departure in Stenslie and Woolford's project to expand the sensory capabilities of the body, the very idea of touch as an intersubjective experience (cf. Benthien 2001: 326–334; Faßler & Halbach 1994: 74–75; de Kerckhove 1993a, 1993b; Stelarc 1997; Vasseleu 1999; Paterson 2007; Bicchi et al. 2008; Grünwald 2008; with regard to the possibility of reconstructing the human sense organs through an artificial sensorium, see Spreen 1999; in relation to Oswald Wiener's fictional conception of a *bio-adapter*, cf. Wiener 1969, 1989 [1988]). In these terms, all the apparatic arrangements of cybersex on the model of "CyberSM," elaborated on by Stenslie and Wooldford during the 1990s, are about the potenti-

Fig. 77. The cover of the May 1994 issue of the Berlin city magazine *Prinz*: "Prinz reporter tested Cyber-Sex. Orgasm and Computer. How was it?"

In the cover story, the author Sybille Berg described her experience with "real existing Cyber-Sex" and interviewed Stahl Stenslie ("a real orgasm through a machine"; cf. Stenslie 1994b, 1996). In the same year, Stenslie summed up the idea of cybersex on his website: "The cyberSM project was an attempt to create a real time, visual, auditory, and tactile communication in the world of cyberspace. In the first cyberSM experiment, the user began to experience what others have only talked about for years: live, tactile communication through a computer environment." (Stenslie 1994c; cf. Velena 1994: 34–40, 1998 [1995]: 168–173; Rieser 1997: 86–90; Krewani 1998b: 148–149; Kac 2001: 98; Wilson 2002: 164–167, 752–753; Bauer 2005: 48–49; Popper 2007: 258–259; Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]: 204; Woolford 1994a; Barber 1997; Tikka 2001)

If Howard Rheingold's (1990) "teledildonics" was the theory, Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford's "cyberSM" was the practice: this, in short, is the mythopoetic genealogy of cybersex as interactive prosthetic sex in virtual reality, a postmodern techno/popular cultural fantasy and a post-theoretical theory-fiction of "sex" beyond the constraints of the physical body.

alities of the sensuous body, the human body as a sensorial organism entirely constituted not by biology but by means of technological modification; that is, a sexually defined techno-body not just as a discursive-conceptual model, but as a concrete materialization of the idea of cybersex, as an embodiment of Harawayan "cyborg 'sex'" (see Haraway 1991a: 150; cf. Apter 1999: 216; Haney 2006: 160–163).

Thus, the "CyberSM" project is an effort at a radical redesign of the body as an embodiment of techno-subjectivity by means of a thorough technologization of human corporeality: to enhance the capacity of sentience specific to the human, to augment *the sensuousness as a sensuality* of human corporeality, and thus to empower the experience of oneself as a sensing body-subject, as an embodied "me"-experience (cf. Dinello 2005: 114–149; Magdalinski 2008: 7–13, 37–56, 103–127; Zylinska 2002b; Bath et al. 2005; in terms of "the new grotesque in art," cf. Anker & Nelkin 2004: 45–76).

Here we are in the world of what Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (1996a: 62) call "wired skin," a postmodern techno-world in which SM takes on a new meaning.

> Could there be such fascination with SM today because computer coders and cyber-business missionaries are the first to feel the emotional effects of digital reality? The first, that is, to go psychically numb as they are harvested of their bodily feelings when their senses are externalized into image-based processing machines. Standing at the interface of the old 20th century body of flesh and bone and the new 21st century body of fibroblast cells and dark fiber skeletons, the leading edge of the new technological class cannot stand the strain of the externalization of the central nervous system. It panics and heads for the emotional intensity of SM. Starved for feeling in the cyber-factories of wired culture, digital flesh opts at the first opportunity for the dungeon. (ibid.: 62–63; cf. McLuhan 1964: 56, 1995 [1969]: 253)

"Or so the conventional theory goes" (Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 63), as the Krokers remark. But, could the experience of "wired skin," nevertheless, be "something very different" (ibid.), *radically* different?

> Perhaps digital coding and SM are flip sides of the same high-density body disk. Traditionally, the fascination of SM is that it is a ritualistic practice: codes of permission and transgression, an aesthetic ritual of pleasure that comes as much from the aesthetics of transgression as from the physical activity itself. Read the Marquis de Sade. Long before digital reality, SM played with the signs of the coded body. Pushing beyond the disciplining of the body, SM is all about the *mysticism of the limit experience*. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

According to the Krokers, we enter here the "n-dimension" of the "cynical code" (ibid.), a "crash space where coding and decoding reverse fields and violently combine, folding back on one another, and you know, you just know, that you've broken through the dead-weight of the ritual of the code to that *sweet telematic dreamland of outlaw codes*, that floating space which Earstern mystics like to call *virtual nothingness*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Rheingold 1991: 345–349, 353–357; Heim 1993: 84–91; Barlow 1990a, 1990b, 1994a, 1995; Plant 1998).

Yet, in my reading, it is exactly here, in the specific sense experience of the subject in, of and by the body, that the problem of the human skin emerges. The problem is: if the skin is not only the external "covering" or "coating," the "natural container," of the body and, as such, the "surface" of the human being, but, first and foremost, the condition of possibility of sensations and affections that are "internal" experiences constitutive of human being, *how is it possible to expand the skin outside the body*? In other words, to find a technologically adequate answer to Haraway's (1991a: 178) question: "why should our bodies end at the skin"? Or, seeing the issue from another perspective: if, as Paul Virilio (1997 [1995]: 105) says, referring to Paul Valéry, "[t]he deepest thing in man is his skin," how is it technologically feasible to attain this deep dimension of being human, the skin as an essential part of the very "interiority" of the human being (cf. Becker 2000a: 41–47; Bauer 2005: 44–55; Benthien 1999)? This question, in fact, pertains to the experience of the personal life-history of the self within one's own skin, even to the extent that *we are what we are as a result of our skin* (in terms of *le moi-peau*, "the skin ego," see Anzieu 1991 [1985]; cf. Ahmed & Stacey 2001; Sullivan 2001; Curtin 2003; Wegenstein 2006; Schroeder 2008; with regard to "the skin of culture" manifesting "the new electronic reality," cf. de Kerckhove 1997 [1995]).

In the context of the Stenslie-Woolford project, this general question translates into the problem of sexual experience as an *experience of the "interface"* between the subject and the world of objects, to apply a central term in contemporary body-technology discourse (cf. Giannachi 2004: 55–67; Nusselder 2009: 11–30, 64–69, 119–140; Sielke & Schäfer-Wünsche 2007). In other words, in what way is human sentiency possible not only to be technologically reproduced but, most importantly, *reconstituted*, that is, recreated as *human* experience *in terms of technology* (in terms of the cyborg, cf. Gray et al. 1995b)?

Fig. 78. The "haptic bodysuit" of the Stenslie-Woolford "cyberSM" system (see Stenslie & Woolford 1994; Popper 2007: 255–259; cf. Kirby 1997: 130; Paterson 2007: 130; in terms of "teledildonics," cf. Rheingold 1991: 346; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53–54).

"Central to the cyberSM project is the ability to transmit physical stimuli from one participant to the other. This is made possible through the use of stimulator suits connected over international telephone lines, which allow the users to remotely stimulate one another's bodies. Not only does this physical element of communication allow the cyberSM project to more closely model inter-human communication, it creates a new form of interaction. Throughout the cyberSM connection, participants have a physical dialogue, but they remain anonymous the whole time. […] The cyberSM connection allows humans interacting in a virtual space to actually feel each other with their bodies." (Stenslie 1994c; cf. Wilson 2002: 752–753)

In a miraculous manner, the physical turns into virtual, and vice versa, the virtual becomes physical, in the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system; that is, the "cyber" enables an experience of what I call *phantom sex* with virtual bodies through prosthetic proximity as an entirely new form of intimacy (cf. Heim 1995: 67–68; Stelarc 1998: 121–123; Kurzweil 1999: 186; Ihde 2002: 3–15; Galloway 2004: 190–191; Nayar 2004: 292–304; Munster 2006: 86–91, 96–100, 106–115; Rötzer 1996a, 1996b; Hayles 1999), "sex" as a spectral effect of "digital flesh" (cf. Kroker 2004b: 79–110, 163–199).

"The cyberSM project was created to introduce a tactile and stimulation environment into the otherwise *non-sensual*, *impersonal*, *distant*, *and emotionless* environment of so-called interactive media and 3D computer graphics," Stenslie (1994b: 72; emphasis mine; cf. Stenslie 1998: 21–23) explains the intention of the cybersex experiment by means of interactive telepresence technology (cf. Rheingold 1991: 346–347; Aronowitz 1994: 15, 19–20; Tiffin 2001: 135–136; Vint 2007: 134–136; for an art-historical overview, see Montano 2000: 37–141; in terms of "sexual solipsism," cf. Langton 2009: 314–318). Here we have the skin problem of all that is "cyber": how is it possible to *reproduce* human tactility, the sense experience of touching, by means of technology, to turn a corporeal experience into an experience of *technological simulation*? In other words, what is needed if the aim is to both "humanize" technology and technologize human experience, the experience of the skin as an experience of being a body-subject capable of sensing itself as a sensuous and sensual being (cf. Bristow 1997: 146–147; Weibel 1999: 163–164; Williams 1998; for an overview in terms of medical technology, see, for example, Robinson 1994; Williams & Bendelow 1998; Gordijn 2004; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008; Miah & Rich 2008)?

It is appropriate to emphasize that the way in which Stenslie speaks about tactility (true to the technophile locution of cyber discourse) (see, for example, Stenslie 1994b, 2000a), is a continuation of McLuhanian visioning projecting a comprehensive sensory transformation brought about by the "new media" (cf. Manovich 2001; Everett & Caldwell 2003; Lister et al. 2003; Wardrip-Fruin & Montfort 2003; Hansen 2004; in terms of media art, see Gendolla et al. 2001; from a historical perspective, see Marvin 1990; Gitelman & Pingree 2004; Gitelman 2008). According to McLuhan (1964: 23–35), in the era in which "the medium is the message" we are witnessing the birth of a new type of personality, designated by McLuhan as "the tactile man" (ibid.: 32; cf. McLu-

han 1962: 39–74; Marchand 1989: 143–144; Zylinska 2002a), a subject that is literally "in touch" with the world, a world not only reflected and represented, but even *created* by the media (whatever they happen to be); that is, a *mediated world as a synaesthetic and haptic sensorium enabled by prosthetic telepresence*, in other words, an interactive and tele-tactile immersive environment (cf., for example, Rötzer 1990, 1996a, 1996c; Stelarc 1991, 1992, 1998; Huhtamo 1995b, 1995c, 2000; de Kerckhove 1997 [1995]; Krewani 1998b; Paterson 2007; from a historical perspective, cf. Jütte 2000).

In this manner, all that is "cyber," in fact, is an extended footnote to the McLuhanian discourse; an attempt, by means of ever-new technological arrangements and concomitant theories and theory-fictions, to achieve a quadrature of the circle: *to turn the human body into an extension of technology* by redefining the human in terms of the machine (from the perspective of cybernetics, cf. Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950], 2003b [1949]; Pias 2003, 2004).

Thus, the future of the body as a prosthetic, senso-tactile instrument of the post-subject is in the past, not only in McLuhanian visions of media as "the extensions of man" (McLuhan 1964), but also in Oswald Wiener's (1969) idea of a *bio-adapter* as a therapeutic *glücks-anzug*, "happiness-suit," for the patient called the "human being": a whole-body prosthesis functioning as a servomechanic body-machine assemblage enabling an *external self* as the very self of the subject (see Wiener 1989 [1988], 1999; cf. Erlach 2000: 148–149; Harrasser 2004: 184–186; Volkart 2006: 150–152; Stenslie 1998).

Sex with the "Shock Pad"

If, in the Stenslie-Woolford project, the discrepancy, even the incompatibility, of the technological and the corporeal in terms of touch was the problem, what was the solution?

This question brings us to the *Urszene* of cybersex in the context of interactive media art. As mentioned above, the first cybersex experiment, the "cyberSM" installation, took place via a telecommunication line between Cologne and Paris in 1993. Let us recall, the idea was to create "a tactile and stimulation environment into the otherwise non-sensual, impersonal, distant, and emotionless environment of so-called interactive media and 3D computer graphics" (Stenslie 1994b: 72); as Stenslie explains:

> Together with Kirk Woolford, I built such an environment, and presented the first working tele-tactile communication link in the world on the 8th of December, 1993. The link was set up between Paris and Cologne, and ran for two days. During this time more than 30 people connected as couples, and tried the system. They were introduced to the ability to stimulate each other in a Virtual Reality system, a possibility which has not been realized in such a complex manner before the premiere of this project. (ibid.; in terms of "teledildonics," cf. Rheingold 1990)

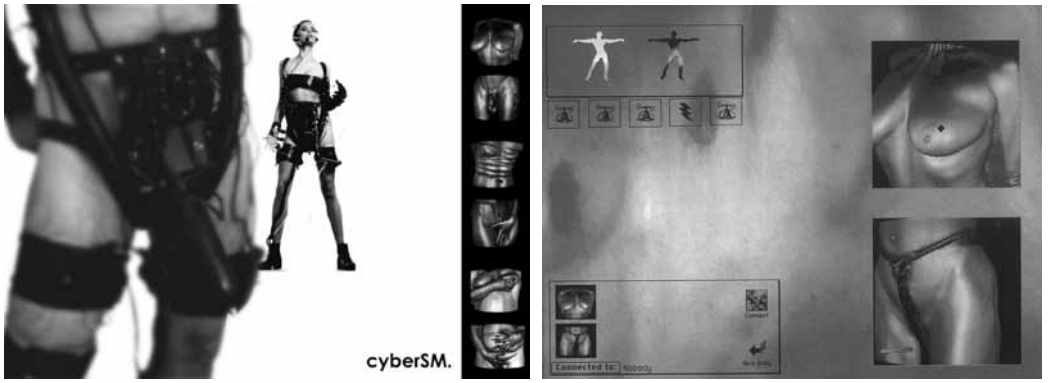


Fig. 79–80. A virtualization of simulation as a simulation of the virtual: body images as imaginary bodies constituting the sexual objects of "cyberSM" as "sex" in the mode of the "cyber" (see Stenslie & Woolford 1994; Atzori 1999).

"Before beginning the dialogue the participants build 'virtual bodies' by choosing from a databank of prescanned bodies and models. They can rotate the bodies, zoom in or out, and mix pieces from any gender. Once the body is built, the participant can preview how they will appear to the participant at the remote site. They can test their suit and, when both sites are ready, connect to the remote site. The local participant's virtual body is then sent to the remote participant's computer, where it will be used as the interface for the local participant's suit. Once connected, the participants can speak to each other over a custom built speaker phone, and control each other's suits through interactions with the virtual bodies. The participants are presented with each other's virtual bodies on the monitor or projector before them. By exploring and touching each other's virtual bodies, they can physically touch one another through the network." (Stenslie 1994c; cf. Bauer 2005: 48–49; Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]: 204; Stenslie 1994b; Woolford 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b; Velena 1994, 1998 [1995])

This in an entirely new mode of "the sexual," post-sex as a technoscientific procedure, a cyborgian act of prosthetic subjects in virtual reality enjoying the pleasures of "haptic hedonism" (see Stenslie 2000b, 2008).

To understand the specific mode of *tele-tactility* peculiar to the Stenslie-Woolford "cyberSM" system, it is appropriate to have a closer look at the technical details intended to effect a *virtual touch* between the participants. In the first configuration, "two locations were connected with an ISDN (Integrated Service Digital Network) line" enabling the participants to experiment "tele-tactile communication" as a new kind of sensual experience. The second presentation, a couple of days later, took place by means of a LAN (Location Area Network) system.

> In Cologne the project was presented in the Aula of the Academy of Media Arts. The participant could view the graphics of the interface projected on a big screen while standing before it. The voice connection at the Cologne installation had a hand-held telephone, while the Paris installation had a telephone amplifier which enabled the participant to speak and listen hands free. The location of the Paris presentation was at the "Virtuel Voyages" exhibition in Espace Kronenburg. Here, the installation was located in a space in the corner of the upper floor, behind another exhibitor and a red velvet curtain. The space was dimly lit with a single red lamp and intimately designed. The reason the piece was put so "far" away was due to the adult theme of sex that was present in the CyberSM project. It was presented on one computer and two large tv monitors. (ibid.)

The radical new, in terms of both the sexual and the technological, in the Stenslie-Woolford "cyberSM" experiment was to transpose human corporeal intimacy from immediate proximity of the carnal body to a mediatic realm created by prosthetics and virtual reality; a techno-space that Heidi Tikka (2001) calls "affective environment"; a body-machine constellation enabled by advanced interface technology.

Fig. 81–82. Post-sex in terms of "cyberSM" and "Inter-Skin": a prosthetic transmogrification of the sexual body into a tele-tactile transmitter/receiver assemblage (see Stenslie 1996: 180, 184–185).

"CyberSM was based on Sado-Masochistic role playing, after all, V.R. equipment has always looked similar to S&M fetish fashion. The first motion tracking suit was a full-bodied black leather suit covered with shiny chrome plates. Through the CyberSM system, participants built a virtual body linked to their own body. They then handed this virtual body, and to a degree, control of their physical body to the other participant while gaining control of the other participant's body." (Stenslie & Woolford 1994; cf. Krewani 1998b: 148–149; Plant 1998: 32–35; Scott 1999: 87–88; Joyce 2001: 93–94; Wilson 2002: 164–167; Mey 2007: 149–150; Tikka 2001)

If there are any problems at all in the world of the "cyber," the only problem of "cyberSM" is that *tele*-tactility is a *contradictio in adiecto*; thus, the "cyber" of "cyberSM" is a negation of SM: there are no virtual bodies in terms of sadomasochism; that is, virtual sadomasochism is not only an oxymoron, it is simply impossible: there is no real touch in virtual reality (except as simulation). "If your only SM experience has been online, and you've never actually touched or been touched by a whip, or touched a slave, don't pretend to a whipmaster's knowledge you can't possibly have gleaned in Virtual Reality, else your welcome [to a SM community] will wear very thin very fast in the Real SM world" (Henkin & Holiday 2003 [1996]: 118).

In these terms, prosthetics and virtuality constitute the condition of possibility of tele-tactility in the sense of what Stenslie (2000b) designates as "terminal sex" and "haptic hedonism"; that is, a mode of "touch" in which the entire register of human sense experience – *sensitivity*, *sensuousness* and *sensuality* – is reproduced by means of digital simulation; in others words, pure information in the form of ones and zeros articulated into patterns by computer programmes.

This radical transformation of human touch in terms of the sexual implied that Howard Rheingold's (1990) techno-utopian vision of "teledildonics" became experimental reality in the form of "wiring the flesh" (Stenslie 1996, 2004e [1996]), realized as an interactive media art installation. That is, the specific skin experience in this system did not consist of human touch as *human touch*, as immediate intimacy, but of prosthetic "stimulation" that occurred in a realm

existing only virtually, as computer-generated simulation (cf. Kusahara 2000: 211–212; in terms of the technomorphic, cf. Brouwer & Hoekendijk 1997). In other words, the bodies of the participants were present only for themselves in their monadic individuality, separated from each other, not for another in their corporeal co-presence, but in *the absent presence of a virtual experience* (cf. Kember 1998: 100–129; Urry 2007: 175–178; Wood 1998; Giannachi 2004). What was missing, or, rather, intentionally disclaimed, was the immediate physical presence of the bodies for one another, the unmediated human touch; and what was its substitution was not so much a technological reproduction of touch than its artificial emulation as *a technological stimulation of the skin by way of virtual simulation* – in other words, a negation of the presence of the body compensated by a *phantom body* consisting of digital information turned into tele-tactility (cf. Stelarc 1998: 122–123; Farnell 2000a: 121; Massumi 2002; in Baudrillardian terms, cf. Poster 2001a: 117–126).

Here we have, in explicitly sexual terms, an instance of what I designate as *absent presence as present absence* thematized, for example, by Stelarc in his prosthetic performances (see, for example, Stelarc 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). In other words, the uncanny experience of a phantom body; that is, an experience of what Stelarc calls "intimacy without proximity" (Ayers 2002: 128); as Stelarc explains:

> Intimacy without proximity? Well, if two people were wired up and were both able to receive stimulation and transmit EMG signals to actuate the other person, this provides a plausible physical interaction. So, even though we can extrude human awareness and physical presence to remote places, we've now developed technologies, specifically prosthetic devices, where the possibility of physical interaction comes about and one can get a kind of phantom experience of the other. I mean phantom as in "phantom limb effect." In other words the person is not physically there but all the sensations are felt: you experience them as proximal to your body, as attached to your body, as part of your body. Your aura is of the other. (ibid.)

At this point, one is tempted to ask why, in the first place, human touch *should* be replaced by a technological duplicate that, in fact, is not a duplication at all, but a technological simulacrum? In other words, why a phantom touch should be substituted for a real thing – except, of course, for the sake of sheer experimentation? And even then the question remains: in which sense experimentation? Experimental "sex" with spectral bodies in their present absence enabled by their absent presence, or experimental epistemology with experimental organs in the virtual world of post-theory (cf. Haraway 1991a: 150, 180–181, 1997: 78; Botting 1999; Massumi 2002; Parisi 2004; Perniola 2004 [2000]), or both at the same time, or something for which we have no words yet, or something which is entirely beyond human comprehension, in the realm of artificial intelligence? And even then the question remains: what does all this have to do with that enigmatic "something" which we, for some unknown reason or for lack of a better term, still designate as "sexual"?

This crucial question – if we take seriously the implications of the Stenslie-Woolford "cyberSM" experiment as an art work intended to create an entirely

new mode of corporeal existence, as implied by Stenslie's proclamation quoted above – is not posed by Stenslie and Woolford since their project follows the logic of media art in which the technologization of the human being is a self-purpose, legitimated by the idea of experimental art driven to its logical conclusion: experimentation for the sake of experimentation, experimentation guided by the techno-logic of technology in itself (cf. Heidegger 2000b [1953]). As a *theory-art*, media art has since the late 1970s created its own theory universe, a postmodern discourse formation (cf. Kroker 2004b: 169–171), in which – like in cybernetics, though this time from another perspective, the standpoint of technological art – the rationality of technology, its techno-reason, has been hypostatized as a self-constituting final cause of all being, and, accordingly, the human being is considered in terms of the machine, and vice versa (for the technological reason of cybernetics, see, for example, Hübner 1985 [1983]: 210–223; Wood & Smith 2001: 27–33; Jonas 2001 [1966]; Pickering 2010; for "cybernetic serendipity" in terms of art, see Reichardt 1968; for paradigmatic examples of media art theory as *postmodern theory-theory*, see, for example, Lunenfeld 2000a, 2000b; Reck 2002; Angerer 2004; Hansen 2004; for a historical-critical discussion, see Gendolla et al. 2001).

In these terms, it is quite understandable that, according to Stenslie and Woolford, it is precisely the real physicality of corporeal presence that is *re*-created in a "cyberSM" act by converting human touch into prosthetic "touch"; "touch" in the sense of techno-mediatic effects, as a prosthetic simulacrum. The solution is what Stenslie (1994b: 72) calls the "Senso Ware," that is, a technological assemblage enabling *tele-tactility*, or remote "touch." As Stenslie explains, "[p]hysicality is brought to the virtual environment of 'CyberSM' through the SensoSuit," a "device" capable of "creating various *physical stimuli*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Wilson 2002: 164–167; Walther 2004: 116–117). The problem is only that *"physical stimuli" are not not the same as touch*; they are just physical stimuli. As Stenslie says, the "original design incorporated various sensory stimulators, including heating pads, vibrators, low-voltage capacitors for delivering shocks, and automatic injectors filled with various 'designer drugs'" (ibid.: 73; in terms of the original cyborg, cf. Clynes 1995 [1970]; Clynes & Kline 1995 [1960]; for the idea of the cyborg in Gregory Bateson's "cyborg anthropology" and in the new orientation of American politics during the transition from the Second World War to the Cold War, see Fuller 2007: 199–209). This is the idea of tele-tactility in "CyberSM": the bodies are objects of technological stimulation which, in fact, functions as corporeal simulation thus replacing human touch – a point that is not even mentioned by Stenslie and Woolford.

What we have here instead of touch is *an effect of a machine to be experienced as a simulated sense impression, a technological simulacrum of human touch*; that is, no longer the intimacy of corporeality, the presence of the carnal body in its sentient and sensuous complexity is what counts; instead, the tele-tactility of the machine run by technological reason epitomized by the computer.

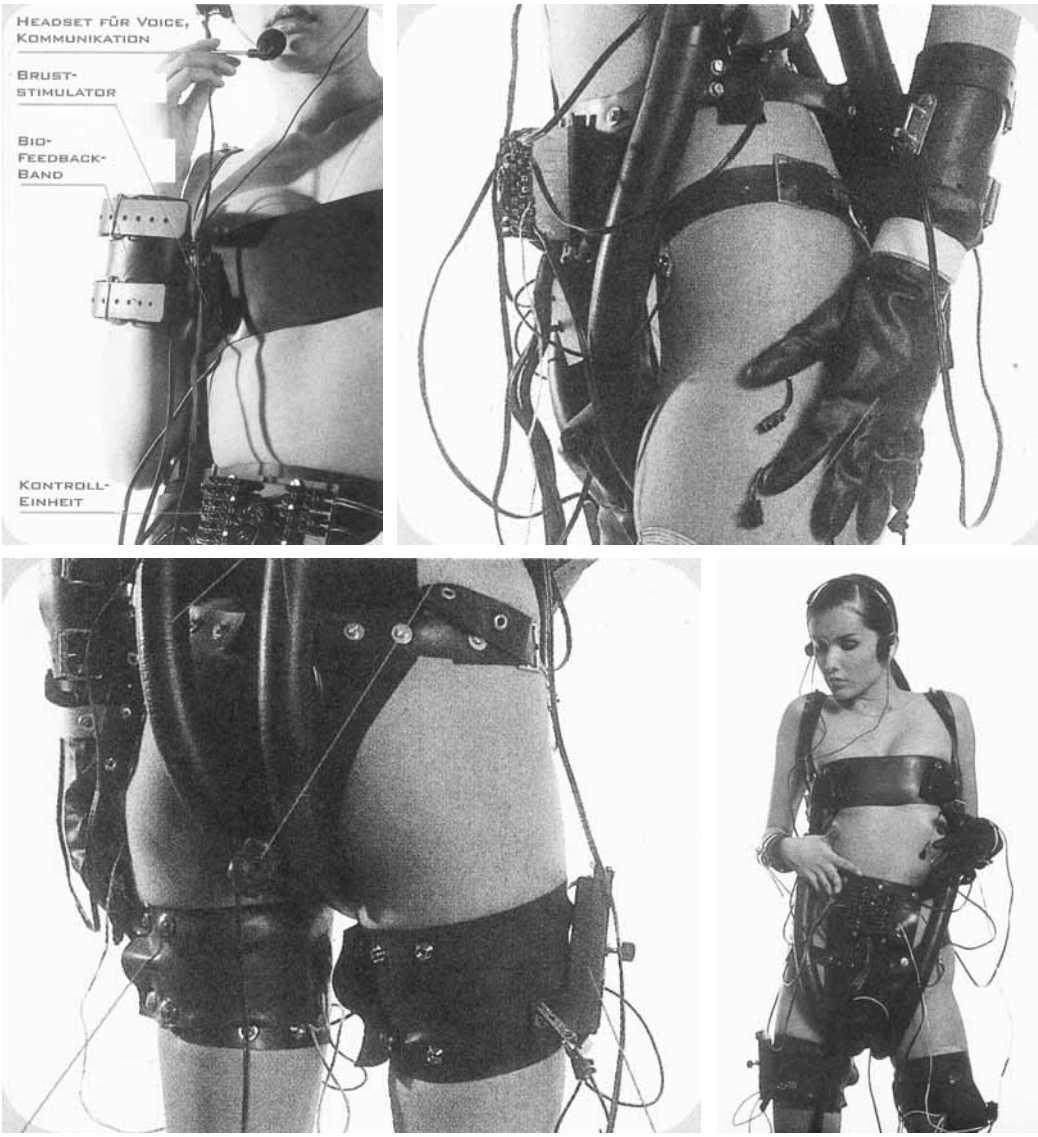


Fig. 83–86. To enjoy the pleasure of cybersex in the mode of Stenslie-Woolford "cyberSM" what one needs is a "data suit" (see Berg 1994: 34; in terms of "teledildonics," cf. Rheingold 1991: 345–353), a wearable body-machine interface system with sensors and effectors, making it possible "to meet another person in three-dimensional data space and to send each other tactile stimuli" (Krewani 1998b: 149; cf. Wilson 2002: 164–167).

Thus, "[c]orporeal closeness will soon no longer be a question of spatial proximity, but of interfacing with cyberspace" (Rötzer 2000); a new kind of experience that, while enabling touching from a distance in the sense of tele-touch or tele-tactility, not only effaces the distinctions between the body and the machine as well as reality and simulation, but also allows one "to escape the binding to a specific body and to endow oneself with a new body in the eyes of the other" (ibid.; cf. Branwyn 1994: 230–231; Dery 1996: 185–186; Plummer 2004b: 532–533; Williams 2008: 312–313). In other words, the "current way to inhabit virtual environments most completely is by putting on a full body data suit" (Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 53).

It is in this manner that the data suit is a prosthetic body, a post-body that, through a technological supplementation, brings about a prostheticization of sexual desires and pleasures in which the mediatization of corporeal sensations constitutes a technoscientific phantom body, a tele-body that, *per definitionem*, can be sexually arousing only in its absent presence, in its phantomatic virtuality.

This, indeed, is, if not a new mode of sexuality, at least a new form of sexual experience: "sex" by means of a cybernetic system in which *the machine simultaneously operates as a sexual subject and object, a machinic entity imple-*

menting its own teleology, and the human being has the role as a second-order system, as an auxiliary appendix of the machine subordinated to its servile servomechanism (for the idea of the teleological in the context of cybernetics, see, for example, Faber 1986: 55–65, 72–93, 97–117; George & Johnson 1985; Rosenblueth et al. 2004 [1943]; Illetterati & Michelini 2009). In these terms, the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex apparatus works as a double-function servomechanism: a human-machine assemblage in which all inputs and outputs made by the participants constitute a closed-circuit control system which, in turn, is controlled by the servomechanical control system of the machine; in other words, the whole system, as a system of systems, follows the circular logic of servomechanism (consisting of receptors, a processing unit and output devices) based on the principle of feedback (for the idea of servomechanism as a cybernetic control device, see, for example, Mindell 2002: 156–171; Mirowski 2002: 60–63; Bousquet 2009: 70–71, 101–102, 108–111; Pickering 2010: 3–14, 99, 148–151; Galison 1994).

In view of the above aspects, the question arises: what precisely is *the sexual* in this sexual experience? Apparently, the idea of "Senso Ware" implies the human body as an extension not only of the usual hardware and software, but, more fundamentally: *the human body redefined in terms of the machine, as a wetware simulating the logic of the hardware and software that constitutes the techno-sexual system of "CyberSM"* (for "wetware" in the sense it is understood in cyber discourse, in its semi-science-fictional terminology, see, for example, Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 140, 189, 271–272; Stivale 1998: 127–140; Ascott 2000b: 2–3; Nayar 2010: 20, 26–27, 66, 77, 176, 185; Winthrop-Young 2010); though, the human body, of course, not in its immediate human state, but technologically enhanced and extended by prosthetic organs. Thus, what determines "the sexual" in "CyberSM" is expressly the "SensoSuit," an entirely new type of attire, a prosthetic bodyware as an interactive techno-garment the purpose of which is to enable one to exceed the limits of the sexual experience in the flesh (see Stenslie 1998: 21–23), in other words, to expand the sensory capacity and sensual ability of the skin as intended by Stenslie and Woolford, finally amounting to a situation in which the "self becomes situated beyond the skin" (Muri 2007: 89; cf. Benthien 1999: 265–278, 2001: 326–335; for "robotic skin" and "feminist robotics," see Castañeda 2001). As Stenslie says:

> The tactile stimulators of the first SensoSuit were designed to be placed over erogenous zones, including the breasts, the anus and the genitals. The suit also has two flexible body vibrators which are designed to stimulate the inner thighs, as well as portions of the torso. Two other stimulators are the shock pad and the touch pad. Both are constructed to be attached to the legs. The touch pad releases a stream of heat, similar to the touch of warm hand. The shock pad delivers electric shocks of various strengths and frequencies. The latter two devices can be freely strapped to any part of the body where the participant wants the stimulation to be applied. The other vibro-stimulators have more obvious design and functions, and are therefore attached to specific areas of the body. (Stenslie 1994b: 73)

Fig. 87. "The magic word cyber-sex": "Orgasm and the computer" (Berg 1994: 32–33). In other words, the future of "the sexual": sexual futurism in the mode of the "cyber."

In the world of the "cyber," in which "next sex" or "sex in the age of its procreative superfluousness" (see Stocker & Schöpf 2000b), defines the parameters of sex and sexuality, the prosthetic body and artificial reproduction by means of assisted reproductive technology constitute the biopolitics of the cyborg (see, for example, Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Lay et al. 2000; Parisi 2004), the technosexual agenda of the posthuman (cf. Sobchack 1995: 207; from a historical perspective, cf. Muri 2007: 168–169; Lungstrum 1997; for a theoretical contextualization, see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Gray 2001; Graham 2002; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Gordijn & Chadwick 2008).

This is a world in which the techno-imaginary of the postmodern, in its very virtuality, appears as real, "the real" of the technoscientific phantasmagoria of the "post," a phantasmatic mode of experience emerging from the matrix of post-theory. As Haraway (1991a [1985]: 169) says, "Sex, sexuality, and reproduction are central actors in high-tech myth systems structuring our imaginations of personal and social possibility."

This, of course, also pertains to the myth of the cyborg itself: the cyborg as a postmodern mythopoetic figure that informs the techno-imaginary of the sexual in the postmodern (for an overview, see Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000).

As we can see, here the human body is in ruins; what is left of the human body is a *Zerrspiegel*, a "distorting mirror," of all that we can call human in the human being; and, accordingly, there is no hope of resurrection in the world of the "cyber"; instead, what we have is the birth of the machine as a posthuman entity that has taken the place of the human being. This is the rationality of techno-logic brought to its logical conclusion, the logic of the technological in the sense of instrumental reason.

But now back to the issue proper, the question concerning "the sexual" in the machinic assemblage of "CyberSM." Obviously, "the sexual" in this configuration is about the "specific areas" described by Stenslie, that is, prosthetic substitutes for the sexual organs. If the sexual organs, as parts of the body that are sensitive to what Freud (1986d [1915–1917]: 335–336, 1990c [1933]: 104–105, 1991d [1915]: 217–218) designates by the term *Organlust*, "organ pleasure," are specifically sensitive due to the organic constitution of the human being, what

is the sensuous quality of the "organ pleasure" distinctive about the prosthetic organs of the sexual cyborg constructed by Stenslie and Woolford? And if sexual pleasure as "organ pleasure" is a form of pleasure that is culturally constituted in spite of its organic basis, in what way the "organ pleasure" of prosthetic organs comes into being? In these terms, the problem is: if the body Stenslie is speaking about is a human body, in what manner do these "specific areas" react sexually to technological stimulation that is ultimately about simulation: *virtual simulation effected by prosthetic organs*?

This question is not posed by Stenslie; instead, his focus is – following the logic of media art – on the "SensoSuit" as a technological construction intended to enhance the experience of touch: "The reason for applying the vibro-stimulators to erogenous zones is *to maximize the effect of the tactile stimulations by the suit*" (Stenslie 1994b: 73; emphasis mine). But here again, as we can see, the problem for Stenslie is not the body but the suit.

> The suit is still limited in the number of ways it can stimulate physical human-to-human contact, but we found out that direct stimulations of intimate zones on our bodies, coupled with the voice feed-back, gives *a fairly realistic impression of being touched*. (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Stenslie 1998: 23)

That is, it is the "effects" generated by the cybersex bodysuit implying the "fairly realistic impression of being touched" that is the key to the sexual in the experience of the "Senso Ware." In Baudrillard's (1996 [1995]: 127) words, this is the "new spectrality" in "the age of Virtual Reality" in which cyber-subjects "embrace the other's presence so fully that they no longer know the limits of their own" and the "other is merely a transformative object." The best part of "the loss of the other is an ability to transform oneself into anyone at all" (ibid.). This is our present future in which we have the possibility to "don otherness like a datasuit" (ibid.).

All this notwithstanding, "the sexual" in this experience still remains an open question; a question that can be illuminated by taking a closer look at the Stenslie-Woolford sex apparatus.

To Become an Image of Oneself

In spite of the differences to Rheingold's idea of "teledildonics," Stenslie and Woolford speak about their invention as if Rheingold's dream of virtual sex had materialized in their techno-sexual assemblage, a post-sexual sex machine, and even more. In contrast to Rheingold's romantic vision of "teledildonics" as a world-wide network of human contacts – an idea of virtual co-presence, a digital simulacrum of global cohabitation, enabling one "to reach out and touch someone" on a global scale – in order to share the deep emotion of erotic *communion*, for Stenslie and Woolford cybersex is about *plain sex*, though in quite new dimensions, as a technological application of "polysexuality" (see, for example, Lowe 1995: 136–137; Weedon 1999: 97–98; Crampton 2003: 181; Peraldi 1997 [1981]; Dominguez 1994). It is in this sense, as Elizabeth A. Grosz (2001: 45) sums up, "VR offers the fantasy of a 1960s style polysexuality, with none of

the nasty consequences"; "this is the fantasy only of a male body, the anticipation of pleasure or sex that is so corporeally self-distancing that mastery over distance itself becomes the turn-on" (ibid.).

As Stenslie says, in addition to the possibility that by way of cybersex one will "get a real orgasm through a machine" (Berg 1994: 38), in this tele-sexual contrivance the whole idea of the sexual is radically transfigured – in a manner that no longer has anything to do with the Rheingoldian "communion":

> We are moving around in fantastic computer worlds which are able to be experienced and felt by us. We can realize all our dirty little fantasies. We can do it with actors and actresses. We can do it with our mother. We can do it with dogs and fairy-tale figures. And as soon as we have done it enough, we can then make them all die. That will be great. And it is not dangerous. No AIDS, no breakfast after, no police, and no body smells. (ibid.; cf. Plant 1998)

No body smells – at last we have got rid of the carnal body, the body as *meat*, as it is usually called in cyber discourse; we remember the *locus classicus* in Gibson's *Neuromancer*; after being informed that his access to the blissful realm of cyberspace has been denied (as a punishment for his offence against the rules of his employer), Case, the hero of Gibson's story, is devastated:

> For Case, who'd lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace, it was the Fall. In the bars he'd frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. *The body was meat*. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh. (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 12)

The body as *meat* – the body as the most horrible abject, this is the ultimate result of "discorporation" inscribed in cyber discourse, as Mark Dery (1996: 234) calls the process of alienation from "our increasingly irrelevant bodies" typical of cyberculture, accompanied by a "*body loathing*, a combination of mistrust and contempt for the cumbersome flesh" (ibid.: 235), that is, scorn and revulsion towards *meat* (see, for example, Morse 1994: 157–158; Sobchak 1995: 211–212; Wilson 1996: 224; Plant 1998: 33; Botting 1999: 8, 17, 150–153, 158–169, 181–186; Cavallaro 2001: 147–150; Adam 2002: 159–160; Bell et al. 2004: 8–9; Haney 2006: 94; in the context of "medical ethics and feminism," cf. Rothfield 1995: 168–169). In other words, as Stelarc (1991: 591) says, "the body is obsolete."

In the world of Stenslian cybersex, the idea of the sexual is reconfigured in terms of post-Sadean libertinage (cf. Hénaff 1995 [1975], 1999 [1978]; Glaser 2000; Pfister & Zweifel 2002), as a logical conclusion of post-sex: the sexual body is not only set free from social control, but, first and foremost, from being *human* in one's own body; that is, the sexual subject of cybersex is released from the integrity of the body, relinquished from the elementary state of being and having a body as the embodiment of the self (in terms of the "body without organs," cf. Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 88–93, 129, 188–195, 198, 203, 1998 [1993]: 16, 111, 131, 186; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285). Indeed, this is not only a radical abolition of all the conventional constraints of sexual relations

(see, for example, Harding 1998: 1–38; Bhattacharyya 2002: 57–81; Potts 2002: 217–265; Hawkes 2004: 148–184; Dean 1992, 1996, 2000; Weeks 2007; in terms of "postmodern sexualities," see Simon 1996), but, moreover, an entirely new form of promiscuity: sex with imaginary beings, all the same whether they are human or not, living or non-living, and furthermore, sex in a free zone beyond any ethical principles in which one can kill the sex objects immediately after the act is over. As a technological realization of a polysexual dream world, this is about *fun-sex* – in the sense of extreme sport – exceeding all the limits of the sexual known until now (cf. Gorsen 1987; Peraldi 1997 [1981]).

But, is the anxious and tormented, dystopian vision of sexuality implied in Stenslie's description, in fact, more interesting than the idea of a technological form of fun sex suggested by it? This is a vision that actually indicates the reverse of post-sex constitutive of the sexual in the postmodern: the experience and expression of the body in terms of the sexual as a threat, as a grim zone of danger to be combated by way of the very same sexual, only in an extreme radicalized form (cf. Bogard 1996: 158–169): the sexual as a Derridean *pharmakon*, at once a disease and its remedy (see Derrida 1981c [1972/1968]: 95–117).

In this context, conventional non-technological human sex is seen as a complicated and oppressive matter to be escaped from into the relieving world of cyberspace and the cyborg, a world in which one can give the imaginary free reign. In Stenslie's vision, cybersex opens a way for discarding all the prevailing constraints of sexual experience: sexual relationships, the immediacy and intimacy of human *Leiblichkeit*, the obstacles and restrictions brought about by human biology, society and culture. Cybersex appears as a panacea for all the frustrations pertinent to "conventional" human sex life. It is safe sex in every respect, a "McDonaldization" (Ritzer 1993) of sex: one is always sure of what one gets because everything is under the strict control of technological reason excluding all the unexpected disturbances – the most inconvenient of them being, of course, the presence of the human being as the "Other."

That is, you just have your fun, and then you simply exterminate your playmates, whatever they happen to be. Pure sex, distilled from all the impure elements disturbing the experience of sexual pleasure. Sex as a clinical experience: sex as a crystallization of monadic pleasure, *sex in the universe of the omnipotent: sexual omnipotence of "prosthetic God" exempted from the troubles of being human*.

Pure sex – that is the idea of "the sexual" in cybersex, sex purified first and foremost from the impurity of the human body, the body as an epitome of imperfectness, the body as the Gibsonian "Fall" (see Gibson 1995 [1984]: 12; cf. Ben-Tov 1995: 178–180; Bukatman 1996 [1993]: 206–207; Partridge 2005: 157–158; Vint 2007: 106–107; in terms of Christianity, cf. Rist 1994: 95–145; Brown 1967, 1988). Accordingly, disembodiment is the salvation, the "bodiless exultation of cyberspace" referred to by Gibson above, experienced in the sublime sphere of the virtual, the realm of the "cyber," in which the corporeal appears as "immaterial material" to be designed at will. This idea is brought into relief by Woolford in his

review of the possibilities to overcome the obstacles of the "conventional" or "natural" human body: the ecstasy of what I call *bodyism*, typical of the postmodern.

> Bodies, bodies, bodies. Female bodies, male bodies, virtual bodies, recombinant bodies, expanded bodies, parasitic bodies, bodies without organs, bodies without souls, the body politic, anybody, everybody, nobody… The concept of the body as the container of the mind or soul has proven one of the driving themes in western culture. René Descartes' notions that we cannot know anything which does not come to us through our senses: that our reasoning selves are trapped within our sensing bodies, is a point philosophers and scientists alike have accepted for hundreds of years. However, the field of technology called Virtual Reality (V. R.) strives to put an end to our centuries of belief in the mind/body split. V. R. attempts to push beyond physical limitations and *let reason climb out the imprisoning body*. It attempts to create "cyberspaces" or simulated worlds which don't have to follow the rules of nature. (Woolford 1996b: 189; emphasis mine; cf. Haraway 1985: 65–67)

According to Woolford, there are two types of cyberspace: firstly, a form that allows people to "carry their body into the simulation," and secondly, a form that allows people to "wear a simulated body" (ibid.; cf., for example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995a: 10–13; Plant 1995: 59–63; Robins 1995: 137–140; Case 1996: 49–51; Hayles 1996b: 14–15; Tenhaaf 1996: 62–68; Brummett 1999: 66–67; Foster 2002: 470–482; Bell et al. 2004: 8–9; Munster 2006: 89–91; Jahshan 2007: 19–20, 53–54, 85–86; Heim 1993; Stone 1994b; Beckmann 1998) – only that it is not clear what the difference between the two is. It does not matter, however, since what is more important is that a third form does not exist, although, this notwithstanding, "many people dream of the day when they can literally plug themselves into a cyberspace which *completely bypasses their bodies*" (Woolford 1996b: 189). This is a dream of "living without a body" (ibid.), a dream in which the body is reduced to pure sight effected by a prosthetic sense organ sensing only simulacra (cf. Taylor 1998: 48–49; Bell 2001a: 145–146; Grosz 2001: 174–177). According to this dream, as Woolford says:

> If we believe modern-day V. R. [virtual reality] prophets, through V. R., we will become creatures of colored light in motion. We will enter into the world of image, and become images of ourselves. (Woolford 1994a: 41).

According to Woolford, "[c]urrent literature is full of stories where characters live their lives as images" (ibid.). In these "literary worlds of images, characters feel tactile sensations through visual information" (ibid.). Consequently, "*our sense of touch has been deemed inappropriate in any context other than sexual*" (ibid.).

It was precisely this situation in which only one sense, sight, was elevated to the master position to the demise of the others that prompted Woolford's resistance. As a result, to contest the idea of the virtual body as a "pure image," Woolford began to work with Stenslie to create a simulation technology that would add touch to virtual experience. For Woolford, it was about touch in general, not just in terms of the sexual what was at issue; accordingly, the task that presented itself was to "explore new methods for the use of touch," to "bring touch into a computer environment" (ibid.: 42). Together with Stenslie,

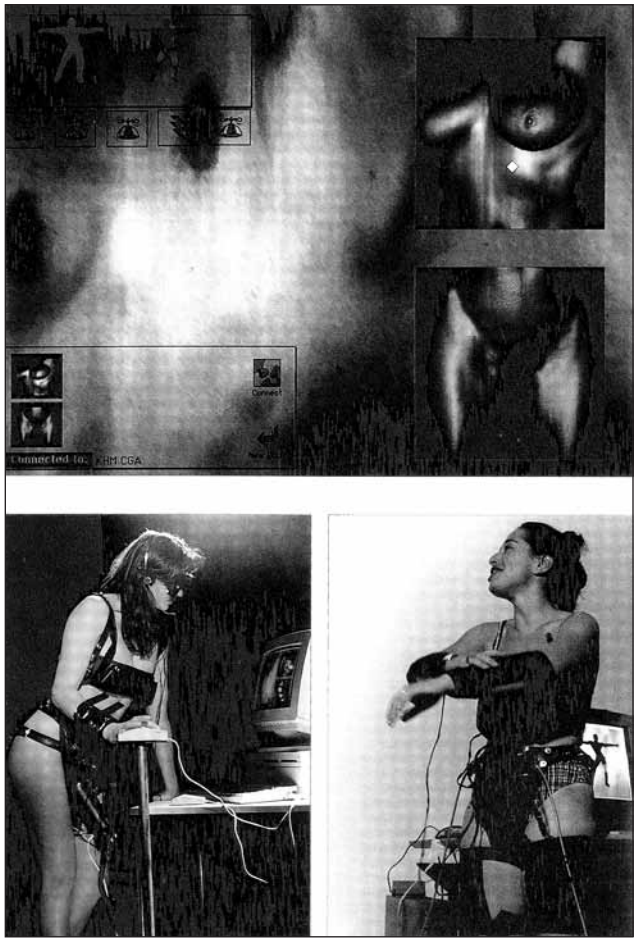


Fig. 88. The essentials of a cybersex act: digital body images on the screen, a computer connected to the Internet and a prosthetic body suit equipped with tele-tactile sensors and effectors for remote touching.

The "body bank" was a basic feature of the Stenslie-Woolford "CyberSM" system from the very beginning. As Woolford (1994a: 42) describes the idea of "cyberSM" as it emerged from their techno-sexual experiments: "Once the participants put on one of the suits [the wearable cybersex gear], they would build a virtual body by picking from the database. When ready, the computers exchanged these proxies [digitally constructed simulacra of virtual bodies consisting of chosen body parts], and each participant received the other participant's body on the screen in front of them." By pointing and clicking these "proxies," or "virtual bodies," the computer translated this "touch" into a "physical impulse" at both ends, be it "vibration or electric shock," or both, generated by the suits of both participants (ibid.).

This was the constitutive idea of cybersex in the original Stenslie-Woolford sex apparatus. The next step was to use "the physical body as an interface for remote touching"; that is, the participants touched "their own bodies in order to touch the other participant" (ibid.; cf. Rheingold 1991: 254–264, 318–324, 345–353; Kurzweil 1999: 179–194; Foster 2000 [1997]: 441–443; Collins 2008: 126).

they "decided not to adopt current force-feedback research to *simulate* touching a computer-generated object"; rather, as Woolford explains their intention, "we would explore a more basic touch: the touch between two people" (ibid.). For this purpose, they "designed the CyberSM project to allow people to 'touch' each other over a physical distance" (ibid.).

As Woolford tells us, like the ancient Greek sculptor, Pygmalion, who awakened his sculpture, a marble woman, into life, their aim was to do the same with interactive technology. "Perhaps Pygmalion created the first truly interactive artwork": he "definitely gave voice to the desire to merge with his creation," and thus, if "he had a computer we could have called him the father of cybersex" (ibid.). It is precisely "that title" – to be the "Fathers of Cybersex" – Woolford saw Stenslie and himself sharing in their effort to develop a technology that was to enable touch in an interactive body-machine assemblage. This was the beginning of a project that was to result in the invention of "the world's first full-body, tele-tactile communication system" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b: 414; in terms of "machines as agency," cf. Lischka & Sick 2007).

After their initial co-operation in the first cybersex experiments in the years 1993 to 1994, Stenslie continued the project on his own to elaborate on the concept of the original techno-sexual assemblage which he constructed with Woolford. The

idea of Stenslie's new project was what he calls a "networking of the flesh" (see Stenslie 1996, 2004e [1996]). With this technology his aim was to study various possibilities of interactive human-machine systems with regard to sexual experience. To this purpose, during the 1990s, Stenslie set up several experimental arrangements to find out how, on the one hand, the relations function between the body and identity, and on the other, between interface technology and computer networks (see Stenslie 1994a, 1994d, 1996, 2004a [1996], 2004b [1996]; cf. Stone 1995e: 45–63; Turkle 1995: 77–148; Wise 1997: 29–56; Lister et al. 2003: 247–266; Argyle & Shields 1996; Holmes 1997a). The enterprise resulted in various dimensions of the "networked flesh"; that is, artificial organs and prosthetic corporeality experienced as distributed bodies in virtual worlds of computer networks: "The CyberSM Project" deals with sadomasochism, "The Inter-Skin Project" has as the objective to turn the body into an interface, and "The Bio Machine" tries to develop "synthetic flesh" (see Stenslie 1997: 179–180, 184–186; cf. Krewani 1998b: 148–149; Kern 2000: 98–99, 102–105; Benthien 2001: 330–334; Wilson 2002: 164–166; Evert 2003: 92–95, 167–168; for "inter-skin" from a feminist point of view, see Tikka 1994, 1996, 2001; in terms of "intercorporeality," cf. Dreyfus 2000: 60–61).

As opposed to Rheingoldian immersion in virtual reality, the concept of Stenslie's endeavour highlights interface technology in order to reconstitute the human body as a human-machine hybrid capable of experiencing sex beyond the constraints of immediate body contact, by means of "symbiotic interactivity in multisensory environments" (see Stenslie 2006: 153–156; Popper 2007: 255–259). In this sense, Stenslie's vision of cybersex follows the logic of the cyborg, proposed at the theoretical level as a paradigm of posthuman life by Haraway (1985; Gray et al. 1995a), and experimented on in practice by Stelarc (1991, 1997, 1998, 2002a) with his techno-body constructions in his body art performances (cf., for example, Zylinska 2002b; Smith 2005; Leeson 2008). Thus, in contrast to the idea of *immateriality* in the sense of the virtual and the digital as it is usual in cyber discourse (see, for example, Rötzer 1990, 1991a, 1996a, 1996c, 1996d; Moser & MacLeod 1996; Ascott 2003; Grau 2003; in terms of the "fluid," cf. Volkart 2006), Stenslie emphasizes the *corporeality* of technologically augmented and expanded sexual experience; that is, corporeality in the sense of "techno-body" (see, for example, Lykke 1996: 8; Balsamo 1997: 5–6, 159–160; Kraus & Auer 2000a: 6–7; Luke 2003b: 99–102; Pitts 2003: 185–198; Braidotti 2006: 41–42, 101–102; Weiss 1999; in terms of "telepresence," cf. Malpas 2000: 114–120).

This is the idea of what Stenslie (1996: 180) calls "tele-tactility"; that is, human touch mediated through telepresence technology (cf. Kramer 1998: 62; Virilio 1997 [1995]: 39–40; Benthien 1999: 265–274; Angerer 2007a: 297–298; Goldberg 2000). It is precisely this idea that is constitutive of Stenslie' s cybersex apparatus; an apparatus – to be emphasized – that is a sexualized apotheosis of the interactive media art discourse of the 1990s (see, for example, Penny 1995b; Schwarz 1997; Druckrey 1999; Daniels 2002, 2003, 2008; Wilson 2002; Frieling & Daniels 2004, 2005; Leopoldseder et al. 2004; Lischka & Sick 2007; Popper 2007; Sommerer et al. 2008a, 2008b; Stocker et al. 2009); a discourse on an art

form that in itself is discursively constructed as a techno-epistemic/ontological form of art (in terms of epistemological relativism as a mode of "making found worlds," cf. Hazelrigg 1989). That is, as a theoretical construct, *media art is theory-art*, an art form that is not only constituted by postmodern art theory, but is primarily a form of art made by the means of theory: *art as a technological realization of theory*. For this reason, in its constitutive discursivity, media art is what I call *art-art*, a mode of *post-art*; in other words, an art form that is art in the form of artistic reflection of the art world it has itself created by means of artistic reflection in the form of self-reflective art typical of the postmodern art world (cf., for example, Hohendahl 1991: 166–170; Wood 2003 [1996]: 388–405; Kroker 2004b: 169–171; Sandler 1996; Welchman 2001; Evans 2009).

This is the "post" of post-art which, in turn, is the condition of possibility of "the sexual" in terms of "the technological" in the constellation of interactive media art, the discursive matrix of the Stenslie-Woolford "CyberSM" project.

Cybersex as a "New Libido"

The problem of all that is "cyber" is the body, the body as the embodiment of the subject. Although Stenslie is attempting to get beyond the body in his technological sex project, he nevertheless, paradoxically, speaks at the same time about the corporeal in terms of *both* the carnal *and* telepresence; an idea in which both terms are in a diametrical contradiction to one another: a body that is simultaneously present and absent. What is the body that consists of the "networked flesh" to be experienced through "tele-tactility" (cf. Virilio 1997 [1995]: 37–45)? How can a body be simultaneously flesh and something that exists in the mode of "tele," that is, virtually, as a simulation?

But, as we have seen thus far, in the world of the "cyber," everything is possible because nothing is impossible in terms of the "cyber." In this sense, Stenslie's quadrature of the circle is simple: in accordance with postmodern cultural theory his point of departure is that we live now in an entirely new condition of being in which the body is no longer what it used to be. Accordingly, instead of one integral and intact body, in contemporary culture the human being has what Stenslie calls a "schizophrenic body" (for the origin of the idea, see Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 83–93), a split construction that embraces, on the one hand, a material substratum survivable for some seventy to eighty years and, on the other, a "transcendental self of mediated realities" (Stenslie 1996: 179). This double-entity, the "cyberspace body," as Stenslie emphasizes, is actually not a new idea, because it is already known as an ideal body projected by science fiction fantasies. But what Stenslie has to contribute to this existing body concept is, as he says, a "personification in the *consensual* reality of interactive, computer-generated environments" (ibid.; cf. Gibson 1995: 67). That is, the immaterial realm called, on the one hand, "cyberspace" (see, for example, Wilson 2002: 164–165; Bauer 2005: 48; Jahshan 2007: 1100), and, on the other, "virtual reality" (see, for example, Daniels 2002: 74; Brummet 2003: 30; Popper 2007: 258–259).

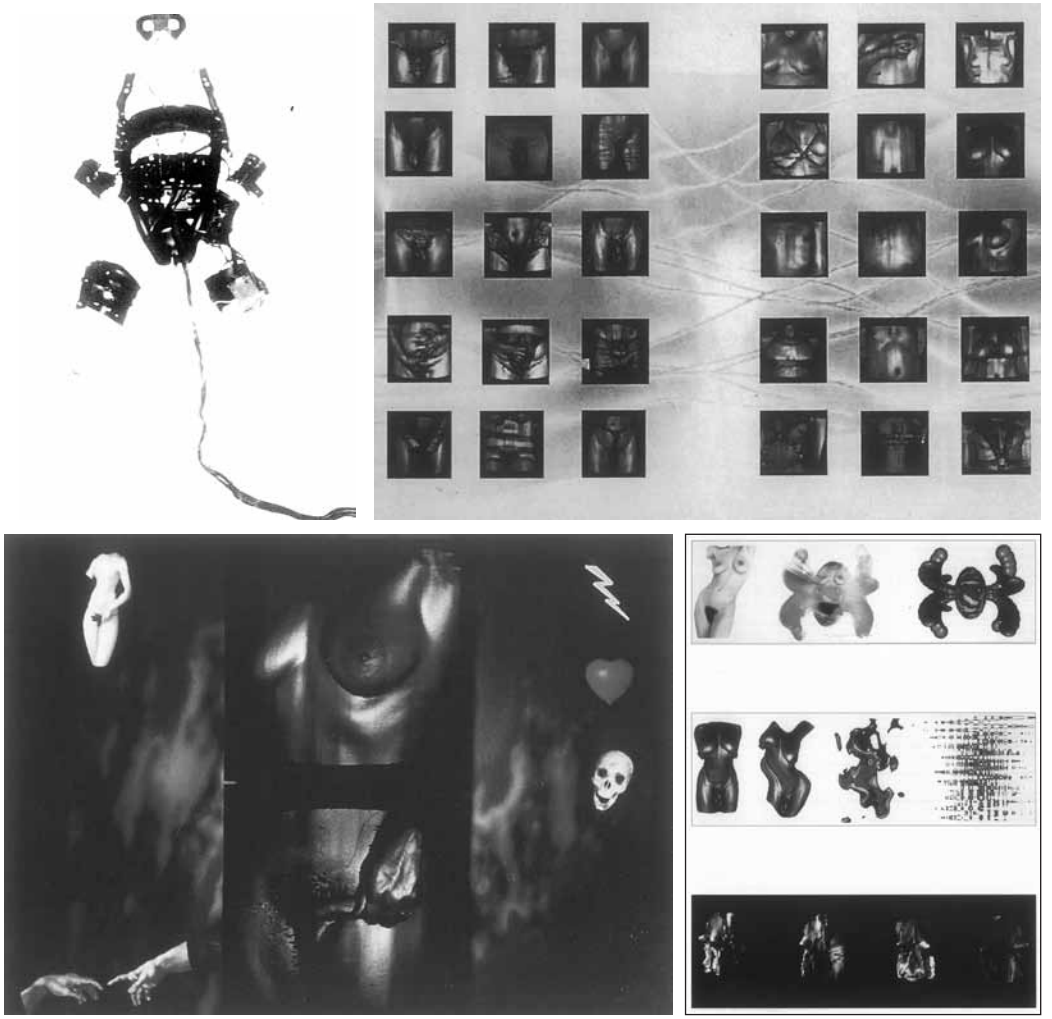


Fig. 89–92. "Networking of the Flesh" (Stenslie 1996). "The cyberSM project allows the establishment of trans_gender appearances, identities and entities by letting the participants choose their own visual appearance from a large databank of digitized human bodies. Once chosen, the participants send the image of their virtual self to the others on the network. The body thus becomes a visual fantasy." (Stenslie 1994c)

According to Kathy Rae Huffman and Margarete Jahrmann (1996), the "bodysuit with built-in sensors that may be activated by one's partner" and the body bank that allows "a visualization process about one's partner prior to contact" create a situation in which both the body and sexuality become a matter of choice: "By selecting the partner's sex, color and even their type of genitals, one is able to construct the sexual partner of choice... turning one's fantasy into a reality" (ibid.). In this situation in which the body is no longer a stable entity, also the relationships between bodies and machines turn ambiguous: "Do machines function as extended bodies or are they, in the best case, liquid reception organs?" (ibid.). Whatever they are, however, what is crucial in Stenslie's project is that "the 'real/virtual' data worlds," due to their very digitality, "create their own post organic creatures" (ibid.).

In Lacanian terms, the pleasure of cybersex *a là* Stenslie and Woolford derives from the fragmentation of the body, the body as a cyberized form of the *corps morcelé* (see Lacan 1977a [1966/1948]: 11, 1977f [1966/1949]: 4–5; cf. Herzogenrath 2010: 30–31). In other words, what we enjoy in "cyberSM" is a radical form of disembodiment: the pleasure of dismemberment, the thrill of organs without a body.

In other words, Stenslie's idea, in accordance with contemporary theory according to which the body is *always already* a "cultural construction" (see, for example, Edgar & Sedgwick 2008 [1999]), is not only to expand the body beyond its biological, physiological and anatomical constraints, but also to redefine it in terms of technology, as a technological construction, a techno-body, that can

always be reconstructed according to changing parameters; that is, the body of the cyborg (cf. Haraway 1991a: 149–151). In this respect, Stenslie's project is a radicalization of various postmodern enterprises to reconstitute the body as a fluid and malleable design object, a body that is not a given, but always in the process of becoming, and, as such, adaptable, adjustable and modifiable, a body that is variable and versatile according to the situation (see, for example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Angerer 1999; Featherstone 2000; Gray 2001; Zylinska 2002b; Volkart 2006).

> In my project on the virtual body, I am striving for a "tabula rasa"; that is, I want to define and study the body anew in the context of the new media. I see the body, as well as the personality, as a construction. The body, as we knew it, does no longer exist. *New technology has enabled us to perceive and experience it on a radically new way.* (Stenslie 1996: 179; emphasis mine; cf. Marinetti 2005 [1909]; Jünger 1982 [1932]; in terms of the "postmodern techno-body," cf. Zurbrugg 2000b)

In Stenslie's world, the world of media art, embedded in postmodern techno/cyber discourse in which the body and technology are conceived of in the same terms (cf., for example, Gray et al. 1995b; Hayles 1999; Graham 2002; Bath et al. 2005; for the origin of the idea in cybernetics, see Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; Pias 2003, 2004), what once was science fiction is now in the process of becoming reality, a reality of a technological reconstitution of the human body as a techno-body that has no stable identity; in other words, a *post-body* that has entirely abandoned the parameters of being human (see, for example, Fox 1994: 147–153; Williams & Bendelow 1998: 79–88; Pitts 2003: 151–197; Mitchell & Turtle 2004; Miah & Rich 2008): *the posthuman body as a hybrid of the corporeal and the technological*; in short, the body in the mode of the Harawayan cyborg.

> The body of the future is more than ever before dependent on context, presentation and abstraction. *The resulting replicant technobody recreates itself continuously out of samples at hyperspeed. It disintegrates and recombines according to principles of lust rather than necessity.* (Stenslie 1996: 179; emphasis mine; cf. Haraway 1991a: 162; for an overview of the postmodern body futurism, see Kroker 1992, 2004b; Kroker & Kroker 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 2008)

As a result of this radical transformation of the body, it is clear that also in terms of the sexual the "body of the future" undergoes a metamorphosis in which desires and pleasures of the body are reconfigured. As Stenslie (1996: 179) says, "[c]yberotics is the new libido." *Cyberotics*, erotics effected by the "cyber" – that is no longer about Rheingoldian "hot night in the virtual village" in which you can experience "erotic frissons" when whispering "in your partner's ear" and feeling "your partner's breath on your neck," to say nothing of "deep physical, social, emotional communion with another person" (Rheingold 1991: 346–351; in terms of theology, cf. Lunceford 2009). No, for Stenslie (1996: 179) cybersex is about "CyberSM," sadomasochism experienced in the body-machine constellation of the "networked flesh." That is, "fetishism and the sensation of pleasure and pain implicated by it" (ibid.; cf., for example, Fernbach 2002; Bleeker et al. 2002; in terms of the "eroticization" of the Foucaultian "body-machine complex" in the context of masochistic submission, cf. Noyes 1997: 11–12; Botting 1999: 14–15;

McWhorter 1999: 151–156; for the body in the world of the Sadean orgy, see Frappier-Mazur 1996: 29–32; Krewani 1998a; for the machine model in the Foucaultian genealogy of the disciplinary body, see Foucault 1991a [1975]: 135–169).

The participants of the "CyberSM" act play with "digitized 3D objects" representing "perforated and fetishist decorated bodies" (Stenslie 1996: 179). The specific tactility of the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system consists of latex outfits with stimulators giving electro-shocks, and effectors and vibrators enabling "corporeal stimulation, that is, touching at a distance," in other words, a mediation of "tele-tactile" touches on "the erogeneous zones" (ibid.: 180). According to Stenslie, the effects thus achieved are "more spectacular and imposing than gentle and subtle"; the idea is to "make the corporeal presence of the other one felt […] until orgasm" (ibid.). Thus, Stenslie's idea is to expand the orgasmic experience from the genitals to the whole body, in fact, *to reconstitute the human body as an orgasmic techno-system, as a whole-body sexual organ* (cf. Plant 1998: 30–33; Preciado 2003: 36–49; Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36, 41–44).

The second aspect of Stenslie's cybersex idea purports to "creating and exchanging complex 3D Virtual Identities (VID)" by using a "body bank" (Stenslie 1996: 180). Here, the participants first construct a "visual me" consisting of model bodies and body parts retrieved from a database; these cyber bodies can then be "touched," "navigated," "zoomed" and "rotated" in order to construct a virtual sex act. The VIDs, appearing on the computer screen, function as an *interface* for the cybersex bodysuits which the participants are wearing (cf. Stone 1994b: 128; Woolford 1994a: 42; in terms of "symbiotic interactivity in multisensory environment," cf. Stenslie 2006: 153–156). This implies that by clicking some body part the participants of the tele-sex act can release a corresponding stimulus in each other's bodysuits. At the same time, whole sequences of touches can be programmed and transmitted by the participants to one another. And, according to each one's predilections, the VIDs can assume any gender and sexual orientation whatever. There are no limits in the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system: in terms of the "cyber," "the sexual," like "the corporeal," is malleable material that can be always shaped at will, according to one's idiosyncratic inclination and proclivity.

This implies that a sexual act can turn into a non-preconceived, non-teleological performance in which you no longer have "control over what is going to happen with your body" (Stenslie 1996: 182). That is, instead of being constrained by the limits and limitations of the "natural body," you have now a random play with identities, corporealities and sexualities in a hyper-postmodern mode (cf. Birringer 1998: 274–285; Kroker 2004b: 21–22, 28–32, 97–116; Kroker 1993; Kroker & Kroker 1993a, 1996b), a play with a post-body that is in line with the idea of the postmodern decentred subject living its "life on the screen" as a "multiple persona" (Turkle 1995: 263–264; cf. Stone 1995e: 29–30, 72–73, 1996: 111–112, 1999a; for "multiple personalities" in the postmodern, see Elliott 2004: 144–150; Waggoner 2009: 29–30). All the conventional constraints of intimacy, identity and anonymity are breached: in the promiscuous cybersex session

everyone is connected with some-"body" else in utmost proximity on one's own technologically extended body, without knowing whom one is playing sex with (Stenslie 1996: 182–184); that is, a latter-day, high-tech version of Sadean "sex machines" (see, for example, Le Brun 1990: 152–160; Frappier-Mazur 1996: 29–31; Hénaff 1999 [1978]: 17–54, 110–119, 209–214; Krewani 1998a).

Just as in the Sadean text, as a literary staging of "an imaginary machine," making us "witness the extraordinary sight of a social machine running amok, wildly out of control" as a result of "physical subversion" (Le Brun 1990: 173), in Stenslie's *cyber text*, as a writerly *Inszenierung* of techno-sex, we have the pleasure to witness the disruption of the human body into mechanical fragments, prosthetic organs without a body, the post-organic organs of the sexual cyborg.

In other words, in Stenslie's cybersex world we are witnessing a post-Freudian scene of post-sexualities each defined by a variation of the "polymorphous perverse" in its very own idiosyncrasy (cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 91, 136, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213); a world in which "sexual vernacular" (Patton 1991) has found its hyper-technological form in prosthetic sex. It is in this manner that the "theory of sexual vernacular makes no sharp distinction between 'sex' and 'text,' but views sexual performance, sexual identities, and sexual networks as constructed in and *as* language" (Dellamora 1995: 231; cf. Wilson & Laennec 1997). In other words, *what you write is what you get*: with the writing machines provided by cyber-technologies, post-sexual post-subjects write and rewrite their specific sexualities according to their particular proclivities. This is the world of sexual prosthetics in which, as Sara Ahmed (1998: 111) says in reference to the Harawayan cyborg, "the impossibility of separating the subject from its prosthetic limbs" constitutes the prosthetic subject as a post-subject whose post-sexual subjectivity is a contingent construction enabled by prosthetic technology.

As we can see, what Haraway (1991a: 171) calls "cyborg writing" is the technology of cybersex; a technology that enables the world in which "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249). This is a world in which there are so many "sexualities" as there are "sexual" subjects in the mode of post-subjects, each different in their "own" idiosyncrasy.

In this respect, Stenslie's cybersex world is the ultimate radicalization of the sexual diversity prevailing in contemporary culture (see, for example, MacKendrick 1999; Plummer 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2011; Pearson et al. 2008) in which "the sexual," an extremely ambiguous and pluripotent signifier, is celebrated by postmodern theory as the key to non-identitarian identity politics in terms of deconstruction; a theory that as a theory discourse is as promiscuous and subversive as the object it is theorizing, namely, the world of sexual radicalism (see, for example, Kroker & Kroker 1993a; Bornstein 1994, 1998; Califia 1994; Thompson 2004 [1991]; Kutzbach & Mueller 2007). In the mode of technological intensification of radical sex, Stenslie's cybersex system glorifies

Fig. 93. Stahl Stenslie's "Inter_Skin" experiments with technologically enhanced bodies, aiming at creating autoerotic stimulation and a shared virtual body.

"In the inter_skin project the body becomes the interface for communication between the participants. It becomes an 'interskin' to convey, exchange and receive information. Both participants wear a sensoric outfit that is capable of both transmitting and receiving different multi sensoric stimuli. The main emphasis of the communication is in the transmission and receiving of touch. By touching my own body I transmit the same touch to my recipient. The strength of the touch is determined by the duration of the touch. The longer I touch myself, the stronger stimuli you will feel." (Stenslie 1994e)

"If I touch my genitals, you will feel that I touch them. In this way a very direct form of communication arises. It is possible to redirect the impulses in such a way that a touch of the arm becomes masturbation." (ibid.) "My experience with my own skin becomes an interface for the communication both to you and to me simultaneously […]. I sense through and with your body. The inter_skin project as a two way communication system creates a third and shared tactile experiential body existing in a virtual space." (ibid.; for cybersex as mutual masturbation, see, for example, Lunenfeld 2000a: 90; Gillis 2004: 98; Waskul 2004b: 35, 57; van Sevenant 2005: 12, 132; Williams 2008: 313–314; in terms of *onanisme à deux* from a historical perspective, see Sarasin 2001: 390–391).

the techno-sexual multiplication and diversification of "the sexual" as the final form of promiscuity in a radicalized sense of the "ambisexual." You just put on a virtual mask, the VID, and jump into the free zone of multi-sexuality, a realm of virtual bodies and simulational selves and enjoy the pleasure of unlimited options. This is the pleasure of exceeding the limits of the body encapsulated by the skin (cf. Haraway 1991a: 178–181).

Enjoying Artificial Corporeality in a "Flesh Space"

The third aspect of Stenslie's cybersex project occurs in the context of what Stenslie (1996: 184) calls the "Inter-Skin" in which the body itself turns into an interface, instead of the computer screen as in the "CyberSM" system. In fact, this idea was already present in the 1994 Stenslie and Woolford co-operative project called "CyberSM III." As Woolford says:

> CyberSM III changes the interface from a pointer and model of the body to using the physical body as an interface for remote touching. In CyberSM III, the participants must *touch their own bodies in order to touch the other participant*. The suits built for CyberSM III include touch zones. When the participant touches one of these zones, their computer measures how long the zone is touched and translates this into an intensity for the stimulation at this point. To further enhance the sensation, CyberSM III stores the last three touches and plays all three out simultaneously through vibrations from the suits, and bass percussion tied to each of the zones on the suits. The CyberSM projects confront not only problems of using the human body as an interface, but cultural perceptions of touch as well. (Woolford 1994a: 42; emphasis mine)

Similarly, in Stenslie's later project, the participants are equipped with "'intelligent' Touch Suits" that mediate their mutual activities to one another; that is, touching oneself is actually touching one's own "inter-skin" which in real time transmits the "touches" to the other body wearing a similar "inter-skin" outfit through which the tele-tactile "touches" are received and turned into a tele-sexual act (Stenslie 1996: 184). In this manner, your "second" skin, the "inter-skin," which is actually your technological double, functions as a communication sys-

tem sending, processing and saving information and enabling by that cybersexual experiences which, instead of complying with any kind of preset forms of sexual acts and practices, create their own contingent configurations of telesexual encounters that follow their own logic, the techno-logic of the "interskin," the tele-tactile interface. In other words, you are *wearing* a computer that presents itself as your body and this "body," as an ephemeral entity, is each time a new, unexpected experience of the forms of "the sexual" which defy any names constituting thus a free zone of pleasures that are beyond the categories of heteronormativity (ibid.: 184–186; cf. Stone 1994b [1991]: 109–112; in terms of the subversion of the "heterosexual matrix," cf. Butler 1990, 1993; Dean 2000; from the queer perspective, cf. Giffney & Hird 2008).

In other words, *"the sexual" follows here the logic of a random generator* that produces contingent combinations of desires and pleasures which subvert the norms of sexual orthography, the straitjacket of lexicographical and grammatical rules constituting conventional sexuality. In this sense, the "inter-skin," paradoxically, against its own design, is the opposite of the straitjacket: the "inter-skin" even subverts its own techno-logic, the systemic limits of wearable technology, the very presence of the cybersex body-suit with its built-in mode of operation. "Or so the scenario goes," as Rheingold (1991: 345) says with regard to "teledildonics," his version of cybersex.

What is entirely new in Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system is that the focus is on the side of the subject. The idea of the whole technological paraphernalia is that it "moves the emphasis from the object orientation (the screen) to the subject orientation (the body)" (Stenslie 1996: 184). That is, in unison with your techno-double, you yourself are now a new kind of sexual subject: your sexual activities are at the same time "auto-erotic stimulation" and "feeling of a third, shared virtual body" (ibid.). This enables a "sensual experience with my own skin," and simultaneously via the "third body" (ibid.) I am the "interface for the communication with me and between me and the other" (ibid.: 186). What is the most surprising aspect of this cybersex assemblage, however, is that against its own intention to subvert the heterosexual matrix it reinstates gender conventions in a manner that, in fact, subverts the subversion it attempts to install. According to Stenslie, the teletactility of the "inter-skin" is a "feminine approach to the communication process: it is about proximity, not mechanical action" (ibid.: 185–186; cf. Irigaray 1985b [1977]: 24–29; Tikka 1996, 2001).

In the same way as other cyber-enthusiasts, Stenslie also dreams about transforming the human being into a new kind of machine, a transclassical machine in the sense of computer-controlled machinic assemblage that is able to transgress the limits of "the human" and "the machine" and thus develop its own machinic identity as a post-identitarian subjectivity (for the idea of "transclassical machine," see Bammé et al. 1983: 149–150; Maier & Zoglauer 1994: 147; Weber 2003: 158–159; cf., for example, Pfohl 1998: 26–28; Bey 2001 [1996]: 116–

117). Accordingly, the fourth aspect of sex in Stenslie's cybersex project is manifested in his idea of what he calls the "biomachine":

> The biomachine is a techno-organic interface that connects the user with the machine by creating a cyborg unit whose sensory loop is self-sufficient. In the biomachine project, the user communicates with a virtual software-supported person. He interacts with it at certain option levels where an unlimited amount of possible tactile, auditory, and virtual output combinations are at his disposal. (Stenslie 1996: 186)

In this way, the sensory equipment built-in into the biomachine is a "modified version of the Inter-Skin suits"; it "connects the body directly to the computer and covers it with *synthetic flesh*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Thus, the "system creates a closed circuit between the human and the machine" (ibid.). In this respect, Stenlie's project is a radicalization of the technological imperative of the modern in the context of what Manfred Faßler and Wulf Halbach (1994) call *die CyberModerne*, "the cyber-modern," a form of *postmodern* modernization in which the idea of the machine, constitutive of the modern (see Marx 1983 [1867]: 391–530; Gramsci 1971 [1929–1935]: 277–318; Giedion 1948; Rabinbach 1990; Armstrong 1998), is given a more fundamental interpretation by means of neo-cybernetic technology resulting in a fragmentation and dispersal of the *human* body into a distributed system of interfaces; that is, an effort to turn the human body into a post-Taylorized assemblage of machinic components and body parts; in fact, a postmodern reinstantiation of the modern industrial body as a "machine" working as a part of the production machinery in terms of what Foucault (1991a [1975]: 153) calls the "body-machine complex" (see, for example, McWhorter 1999: 151–156; Barry 2001: 148–151; Seltzer 1992b; Banta 1993; Yanarella & Reid 1996).

In this constellation, what was once a human body is now a posthuman post-body in the mode of the cyborg, that is, a prosthetic body-machine assemblage (for paradigmatic examples, see Stelarc 1989, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; cf. Zylinska 2002b).

A "cyborg entity," a "sensory loop," "output combinations," and "computer-aided persons" consisting of the "synthetic flesh" – all this indicates that with Stenslie we have entered a world in which, indeed, "the sexual" is transposed from the realm of organic corporeality to the context of technology. Desires and pleasures now function according to the principles of the machine understood as a neo-cybernetic system, a system in which the Wienerian animal-human is replaced by an *absolute machine* in the sense of the "transclassical machine" (see Bammé et al. 1983: 149; Ropohl 1991: 169–172; Manzei 2003: 92, 109–115; for the origin of the notion, see Günther 2002 [1957]; cf. Tibon-Cornillot 1982, 1984). That is, no longer passions of the flesh, the unreason of carnality, instead, input/output mechanisms, systemic operations and control and communication in the form of feedback determine the experiences of "the sexual," provided, of course, that "the sexual" in this constellation still has any meaning at all. In other words, the systems logic of Wienerian cybernet-

ics returns with a vengeance in the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex assemblage (cf. Wiener 1961 [1948]: 157–198, 1968 [1950]: 98–126; cf. Pias 2003, 2004; Gerovitch 2001, 2002a, 2002b): "the sexual" has turned into a technoscientific attribute defining the body-machine operations of cybersex according to the logic of cybernation (see McLuhan 1995 [1969]: 263; for a historical contextualization of the idea of cybernation, see Stanley 1978: 136–137; Bell 1991 [1980]: 43–50; Pena 2001: 23–25, 112–118; Dinello 2005: 60–63; Pickering 2010: 14; Michael 1962; Winthrop 1966; Jones 1997; Aronowitz & Cutler 1998; in the context of the Internet, see Barrett 1996; in terms media art, see Huhtamo 2000).

All this implies that in the world of the "cyber" desires and pleasures are no longer intrinsic experiences and expressions of the carnal body, but *effects* of technology, prosthetic operations of the cyborg. Accordingly, the idea of the sexual is transfigured here from sensations and affections intrinsic to the human flesh to a manifestation of the technological: to *the affective effects and effective affects of cyber discourse* producing ever-new figures and figurations of "the technological," a phantasmatic meta-sign of the postmodern. It is in this manner that technology is theorized as the embodiment of the post-body in the world of the "cyber." In terms of the post-sexual, this is a mode of being posthuman that Robert Mitchell and Phillip Thurtle (2004) designate as "data made flesh," the "flesh" existing, instead of the organic, in the form of artificial corporeality in the realm of prosthetic and virtual body simulation, in a post-carnal techno-environment that Stenslie (1998), paradoxically, describes as a "flesh space." This, indeed, is a paragon of what Philip Mirowski (2002) calls "machine dreams" engendered by "cyborg science," here, of course, reinterpreted in terms of the "cyber."

Here we are in the sexual laboratory of cybersex; a laboratory that not only resembles a postmodern high-tech gym, but, first and foremost, a research and development department of some medico-technological enterprise associated with an astronautic design project working on a state-of-the-art spacesuit (cf., for example, Halacy 1965a: 147, 190, Petchesky 2000: 176–177; Grenville 2001a: 38; Orland 2005b: 17–18; Åsberg 2009: 25–26; de Monchaux 2011: 3–7, 24, 68–77).

CyberSM as Theory Sex

One problem still remains: if Stenslie's conception of cybersex proposes to be about sadomasochism, then, in what way? Or, is it something entirely different, something that is even beyond the paradigm of the sexual in the postmodern condition, various forms of subversive sex and sexuality included, provided, of course, that sex *can* be "subversive" in the first place (cf., for example, Posner 1992: 237–240; Dollimore 2001: 9–10; Klein 2006: 136–139; MacKendrick 1999)?

According to Woolford (1996b: 191), the point of departure of his joint enterprise with Stenslie was their shared interest "in expanding the sensuality," that is, an expanded concept of touch in virtual reality, in the "immaterial" realm of cyberspace. For this purpose, as we recall Woolford (1994a: 42) saying, "[r]ather

than adopting techniques to *simulate* touching a computer-generated object, we decided to explore a more basic touch: the touch between two people." However, as it soon turned out, there was a problem, a problem serious enough to threaten the viability of their whole project, but, as it often happens, this very problem pointed the way ahead:

> Because the creation of stimulators fine enough to match the receptors in human skin looks many years away, we will have to wait until a computer-generated touch can match the way we can touch somebody sitting next to us. We were fully aware of this, and decided to explore a different type of touch. Our equipment was so base, we didn't even attempt to be subtle. We based CyberSM on Sado-Masochistic role playing, after all, V. R. equipment has always *looked similar* to S&M fetish fashion. (Woolford 1996b: 191; emphasis mine; in terms of real SM, cf., for example, Bersani 1986: 37–41; Foucault 1990e [1984]; Kleinplatz & Moser 2006; Weiss 2006; Langdridge & Barker 2007)

As Woolford says, the idea was actually not sadomasochism as such, but something that "looked similar"; in other words, an imitation – or, better, a technological simulation typical of the postmodern – of an SM arrangement, not as an act, but as an experimental probing, in a modified form, of the paraphernalia used in sadomasochism (for the origin of the notion, see Krafft-Ebing 1997 [1886]: 163–173; Sacher-Masoch 1997 [1869]; in contemporary terms, see, for example, Weeks 1995a: 127–129, 1995b [1985]: 236–241; Simon 1996: 95–97; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Pfister & Zweifel 2002: 144–163; Koschorke 1988). "The first motion tracking suit was a full-bodied black leather suit covered with shiny chrome plates" (Woolford 1996b: 191). *This* was the "sadomasochism" in "CyberSM": it was about a suit that effected the impression of being a gear used in SM acts. This was the *real* reality, as Stenslie (1996: 173) says, of the "fetishism and the sensation of pleasure and pain implicated by it," the SM experience purported to be achieved by the "networked flesh."

What about, then, the "touch" that was the constitutive idea from the very beginning? According to Woolford (1996b: 193), the "most common touch between people, indeed for many people, the *only* touch between people, is sexual" (emphasis mine); in other words, "sex is the *only* way most of us can be physical with each other" (emphasis mine). However, "everyone who tried on the suits agreed they were interesting, but far from fulfilling" (ibid.). Why was that, what was the problem? Whether in sexual encounter or in general, "[w]hen we touch each other, the location and quality of the touch convey more meaning than the simple act of touching," but the "suits design never allowed this kind of subtlety" (ibid.). In other words, the sobering conclusion was that the idea of abolishing the constitutive difference between the corporeal and the technological, between the machine and the body, could not be accomplished with the body-machine sex apparatus constructed by Stenslie and Woolford.

The reason was simply that CyberSM was neither about sadomasochism nor sexuality in the sense of intimate corporeal pleasure shared between people, human beings in the flesh. The same applies to Stenslie and Woolford's initial

idea of touch: with this complicated technological procedure it was impossible to transmit, convey or mediate *human* touch in any form; first and foremost a mode of touch that could have a sexual meaning, a meaning not in terms of language, but in terms of corporeal sensations, as an experience of the sexual body, the body in and of the flesh. As noted above, the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex apparatus was a *discursive construction* from the very beginning, a linguistic configuration drawing on the rhetorics of cyber discourse.

In this sense, all these cybersex experiments arranged by Stenslie and Woolford, in fact, were completely *a*-sexual in terms of physical sensations understood as the elementary basis for a mode of sensuality in the sense of carnal experience that could constitute sexual pleasure, that is, *arousal of the body as enjoyment of the flesh*. Instead, the whole apparatic paraphernalia, all the technological appurtenances, of Stenslie and Woolford's cybersex system manifest *techno-fetishism in the form of theory*, theory as an expression of theoretical fetishism intrinsic to cyber discourse as a libidinal language typical of the postmodern (cf., for example, Birringer 1998: 308–310; Rutsky 1999: 129–158; Muri 2007: 98–99; Nusselder 2009: 121–123; Fernbach 2002; for the specific pleasure of techno-fetishism as *prosthetic fetishism*, cf. Smith 2006: 43–48). As an interactive media art installation embedded in a computer network environment (see, for example, Wilson 2002: 653–658, 749–755; Huhtamo 1992, 1994, 1995b, 1995c, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Rieser 1997; Ascott 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2006; Sommerer et al. 2008a, 2008b; Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]), the Stenslie-Woolford cyberSM body-machine assemblage was about a *techno-aesthetic phantasm* of SM as an imitation of the contrivances used in real SM acts. In addition to that, the project of the "networking of the flesh," advanced later by Stenslie alone, promoted "the sexual" as a post-theoretical linguistic game, as a theory-fiction in the form of an *art-art object*, that is, *sex as theory-sex in terms of media art*.

In these terms, what is essential here is that, in the world of the "cyber," what counts is not matter-of-fact reality; instead, what counts is the reality of the imaginary, the reality effected by the *linguistic of language* constitutive of the "cyber," the reality of theory-fictions existing as configurations of "free-floating signifiers" generated by the discursive matrix of the "post." That is, a "reality" similar to the "consensual hallucination" described by Gibson (1995: 67) in his science fiction fantasy. In this sense, the intelligibility of the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system is an effect of cyber discourse: the entire "cyberSM" project is predicated upon a "consensual hallucination" inherent to cyber discourse brought about by the "cyber" according to the logic of the "post." This is the "reality" of cyber discourse: a reality that is "real" in the *virtual reality of language*, in the realm of the surrational, the ultimate manifestation of post-theory.

And, in this reality, of course, everything is possible, because in terms of the "cyber" nothing is impossible.

Accordingly, the question about "the sexual" in Stenslie's cybersex project is not an empirical question, neither, in fact, a question of theory in the manner of traditional sexual theory (for the origin of contemporary sexual theory, see Freud 1981c [1905]; for a comprehensive history in terms of *Sexualwissenschaft*, see Sigusch 2008; seen as a disciplinary regime in the name of science, see Stein 1999); instead, it is a question concerning language, the discursive productivity of the linguistic of language constitutive of the "post." In the world of the "networked flesh," "the sexual" is about a linguistic figure, sex as "sex," *sex as a postmodern phantasm amplified by the theoretical prostheses of post-theory*.

This is precisely what I call theory-sex, "sex" as a form of libidinal writing, "doing theory" in terms of the sexual: *postmodern sex-talk as high-theory*.

From this point of view, the discursive-technological assemblage effected by the language of the "cyber" in Stenslie's cybersex project is about a language that – as language in general – says simultaneously what it is saying *and* what it is not saying. This is the idea of Derridean "duplicity" (see, for example, Derrida 1981d [1972/1970]: 192, 1982 [1972]: 86, 1991 [1987]: 41, 62, 97, 2000 [1988]: 12; Norris 1987: 99, 114–115; Royle 2003a: 15, 92; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 251–252; Gendron 2008: 21–25; Ormiston 1988): language has its own reality, the reality of the imaginary; that is, *the reality of the linguistic of language*. Accordingly, the question concerning "the sexual" in Stenslie's cybersex systems is a question of signification. Thus, in terms of corporeal reality, what is the "auto-erotic stimulation" Stenslie is speaking about? If the machinic apparatus constructed by Stenslie for cybersex is about the sexual at all, it is about *auto-erotic stimulation in the realm of theory-sex, self-sex with prosthetic organs suggested by the theory discourse under the sign of the "cyber."* In this sense, "the sexual" in the context of Stenslie's "cyberSM" project is not about sadomasochism, but about a technological form of masturbation, similarly to Rheingold's "teledildonics": masturbation that, after all, takes place in the "consensual hallucination" of the "cyber," in the virtual reality of language.[199]

Thus, if we take the Stenslie-Woolford cybersex apparatus seriously, that is, literally, it turns out that, as a mode of masturbatory pleasure, cybersex is about auto-sex, a form of sexual narcissism, techno-narcissism in terms of the "cyber." The shared body experience of multiple-bodies entails a dividing and multiplying of being a subject of one's self: the subject as an object of oneself, a projection, in a Freudian manner, of one's *Ideal-Ich* as a technological *Ich-Ideal* (cf. Freud 1987a [1923]: 247–267). In this kind of simulated sexual act, one is mirroring one's own desire through technology, reflecting desire that is extended and recycled in the body machine constructions of cybersex, in the computer-

199 To avoid misunderstanding, it is appropriate to emphasize that masturbation as such, of course, is an essential mode of sexuality; perhaps, indeed, the most general, the most common form, of sexual pleasure, as well as the very origin of sexual experience, the sensation of sexual pleasure, in terms of both the genealogy and the individual development of the human sexual body. Without masturbation, there is neither sex and sexuality nor the idea of the sexual (cf., for example, Bennett & Rosario 1995; Braun 1995; Laqueur 2003; Brenot 2005 [1997]; Soble 2008).

generated realm of tele-tactility. This is what Stenslie (1996: 171) calls a "schizoid body" as a "multi-body construction." This is a body that has been expanded beyond its corporeal limits, a prosthetic body that is flexible and fluid, a virtual body as a "replicant techno-body" (ibid.). This is a "networked," dispersed, split body, a "schizoid" body, a body as a decentred and alienated entity that exists in the virtual reality of language, as a phantasm effected by the "cyber."

It is in this manner that to enjoy cybersex by means of Stenslie-Woolford cybersex system we must, as a precondition, take the post-Gibsonian "consensual hallucination" of all that is "cyber" as real. The only problem is that to take the world of the "cyber" as real presupposes that we acknowledge it as imaginary. But this, in turn, is possible only if we are able to see the difference between the imaginary and the real. *This* is the real problem of the "cyber" that, at the same time, is the problem of the "post."

The sexual subject in Stenslie's cybersex act is a disembodied non-subject functioning as a virtual body that constitutes the object of another virtual subject, similarly enacting itself as both an object of itself and of the "other" appearing as one of its projections. This is the "third body" peculiar to cybersex in the mode of prosthetic and virtual corporeality envisioned by Stenslie and Woolford (cf., for example, Grosz 2001: 40–45; Smith & Morra 2006a: 6–7; Munster 2006: 87–91; Manning 2007: 119–122), a body dismembered and dispersed into *membra disiecta*, a post-Lacanian *corps morcelé* (cf. Lacan 1977a [1966/1948]: 11, 1977f [1966/1949]: 4–5, 1993 [1981/1955–1956]: 39, 52, 69, 87; Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 26–27, 275; Bowie 1991: 26–28; Evans 1996: 67; Gallop 1985: 79–80; in terms of the "body without organs," cf. Deleuze 1990 [1969]: 88–93, 129, 188–195, 198, 203, 1998 [1993]: 16, 111, 131, 186; Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285). As technological post-bodies enjoying the non-identitarian identity of *me, myself and I*, all of these body-subjects, subjects existing in a diffuse and fragmented mode of being in cyberspace, are *masturbating monads* in their own sexual universe that are, at the same time, *masturbating nomads*, sexual non-subjects that enjoy the desires and pleasures of their straying and roaming virtual bodies in cyberspace, post-sexual avatars in the random game of multi-sexualities effected by the "cyber."

This is the idea of the "networked flesh," if we take Stenslie's idea seriously: each sexual subject as a non-subject surfs in cyberspace using all the entities it encounters as its sex objects. Instead of sexual encounter, *cybersex is self-sex in the form of prosthetic masturbation*.

In the same way as Rheingold, Stenslie is speaking about cybersex in terms of shared corporeality, a presence of partners in sexual encounter that takes place in their absence, via an apparatic constellation, as a simulation. All these complicated arrangements, all the technological paraphernalia from the "body bank" to the "inter-skin," purport to bring together bodies that, however, always – *always already* – remain absolutely separated from one another: the body consisting of flesh cannot be present in two places at one time – except, of course,

in the virtual reality of language constitutive of cyber discourse. This is the presence of the absent typical of all that is "cyber": *the present absence of the absent present*. In this manner, in the virtual reality of language constitutive of cyber discourse, there is no difference between the real and the imaginary: what is real is virtual and what is virtual is real; and, accordingly, what is impossible becomes possible in the virtual reality of language in which nothing is impossible.

In these terms, the "feeling of a third, shared virtual body" is nothing else but a virtual extension of one's own body: the imaginary body of cyber discourse. This is the idea of self-sex in cybersex: auto-erotic stimulation as a simulation of a sexual object that is the subject itself, the body-subject of one's self. Instead of a sexual encounter one encounters oneself, a virtual body-double in an act of masturbation; in other words, a "schizoid body" that one has and is always already in the world of the "cyber."

2.3.3 Towards a Neo-Eugenic Society

In the year 2000, Ars Electronica, literally the most state-of-the-art techno-avantgardist discourse theatre in the name of media art (for an overview, see Druckrey 1999; Leopoldseder et al. 2004; Stocker et al. 2009), organized a symposium under the title "Next Sex. Sex in the Age of its Procreative Superfluousness," as if thus opening the new millennium with a really pregnant theme (see Stocker & Schöpf 2000b). One could immediately associate the title with Walter Benjamin's (1974 [1936]) famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," a text thematizing *the modern* in an idiosyncratic and innovative way that has therefore become one of the seminal subtexts of *postmodern* cultural studies, a text without which *media art as media theory* would be unthinkable.[200] At the same time, the theme of Ars Electronica 2000 drew on, in the typical manner of the postmodern, Jean Baudrillard's and Arthur Kroker's playfully apocalyptic rhetorics not only about the end of sex, but even about the last days of humanity (see, for example, Baudrillard 1990a, 1990b [1983], 1990d, 1993a; Kroker 1987a, 2004a, 2004b; Kroker & Kroker 2008).

Just as a short reminder, in his meditation on the "figures of the transpolitical" as a "mode of disappearance" implying "the transparency and obscenity"

200 Unfortunately, the translation of the title is inaccurate; in its original German version it reads: *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (see Benjamin 1974 [1936]), and in the French *Urfassung* (published in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1936): *L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée*. What clearly comes to the fore in the German title and somewhat less clearly in the French title, is Benjamin's constitutive idea, namely that the fundamental transformation of art in the modern takes place precisely in and through "its technological reproducibility" (*seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*); that is, the new possibility of reproducing art in a manner in which the work of art is *always already*, from the very beginning, reproduced by technological means; in other words, the work of art is in and through itself an instance of *its own* reproducibility: the work has come into being by way of reproduction and as such it manifests its own reproducibility. For Benjamin, this signalled a new era in which the idea of art had lost its traditional originality, and thus its "aura," its intrinsic uniqueness. Benjamin's original idea of *Reproduzierbarkeit*, "reproducibility," is important for the proper understanding of the argument I am putting forward in the present study (for the idea of reproduction in contemporary culture, see, for example, Lury 1998).

peculiar to "the promiscuity of networks," Baudrillard (1990c [1983]: 163) speaks about "the ecstasy of sex" as a manifestation of "the obscene" in the sense of "the plenitude of sex" (ibid.: 185); that is, "the pure and empty, truly tautological form of sexuality," "*sex captivated with its own display*" (ibid.; emphasis mine):

> Not a debased, caricatural and reduced form of sexuality, but the logical exacerbation of the sexual function, the more sex than sex, *sex raised to the power of sex* – it is not the copulation of bodies which is obscene, but the mental superfluity of sex, the escalation of truth which leads to the cold vertigo of pornography. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

If "the plenitude of sex" signified, for Baudrillard, the end of sex in the excess of the obscene, for the organizers of the Ars Electronica 2000 symposium, Gerfried Stocker and Christine Schöpf, "next sex" seemed to mean a next step towards a world in which not only being human, but, most fundamentally, already *being born* as human, is no longer something "natural," but a mode of being entirely produced by means of technology from the very beginning of human life; that is, life in terms of the posthuman. What had begun, in the early 1990s, in the annually held Ars Electronica festivals as "the cultural revolution in cybertechnologies" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000a: 18) manifesting a radical transformation of the body in the context of new media and media art – the great theme of the previous Ars Electronica events (see, for example, Hattinger et al. 1990a, 1990b; Gerbel & Weibel 1992, 1993, 1994; Stocker & Schöpf 1997, 1999, 2005) – had in the course of a decade turned into the celebration of the triumph of the "life sciences." The shift from the "mediatic" to the "biotic," from *medium* to *bios*, of course, follows the change in society and culture from the media-driven world to a world in which technoscientic biology, with its multifarious ramifications, rules the very condition of possibility of life on earth: *life in terms of engineering* (cf., for example, Terranova 1996a; Meyer & Davis 2003; Gigliotti 2009; Schmidt et al. 2009; Carlson 2010).

Thus, we are now living in a world in which the ancestors of Darwin have more to say than the followers of McLuhan.

Welcome to the Future: "The Sexual" after the Imperative of Procreation

From this perspective, the technologization of biology, simultaneously implying a biologization of technology, in the constellation of the life sciences and biotechnologies, both of them manifesting the economic and political imperative of technoscience, embrace the scientific-technological complex of the twenty-first century that in many ways is comparable to the import of the military-industrial complex established after the Second World War in the interests of the American world-wide dominance and still dominating contemporary world politics (see, for example, Hooks 1991; Walker et al. 1992; Leslie 1993; Robin 2001; Giroux 2007; Der Derian 2009b; Pavlec 2009). In this sense, it is only logical, as Stocker & Schöpf (2000a: 18) remark, that biotechnologies have been recently "hyped as the key technologies of the coming decades," one of the

consequences of which has been that media artists have shifted their focus from media unto the field of phenomena under the sign of *bios*.

Accordingly, during the last decade an entirely new form of art, *bio art*, has become the artistic avantgarde in the context of art and technology (see, for example, Mitchell & Thurtle 2004; Giannachi 2007; Kac 2005, 2009; Caulfield & Caulfied 2008; da Costa & Philip 2008; Reichle 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

As the most theoretical art form in the context of postmodern art, bio art has taken the place of media art on the agenda of Ars Electronica attempting to challenge the hype around biotechnologies by its own means, by way of artworks that intend to problematize the complex constellation between biology and technology.

Then again, what else Ars Electronica 2000 in itself was but a continuation of this hype by other means, by means of the most mesmerizing sign of postmodern culture: sex. Combined with the erotic appeal of new technologies this magic three-letter word seemed to warrant the idea that with the new millennium a new era had began, the age of "next sex" in which sex will be entirely redefined as a consequence of its "procreative superfluousness" in the cultural constellation of technoscience (cf. Haraway 1991a: 150–151, 161–162, 165, 168–169, 181, 1997; Sassower 1995; Aronowitz et al. 1996; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Weber 2003; Michael 2006; Asdal et al. 2007; Burri & Dumit 2007; Lenk 2007; Mamo 2007; Clarke et al. 2010). In other words, by means of artistic rhetorics Ars Electronica 2000 promoted techno-futurism in terms of biotechnology as a turn from the human to the posthuman; a turn implying that where sex as procreation becomes dispensable there sex as pleasure will be released from its final constraints, from biological necessity.

In a situation in which *the human body is redefined as a property*, the political economy of sex and the political economy of reproduction are intertwined in a complicated manner: on the one hand, *sex without procreation* is dominated by post-sex, "sex" as a commodity form constitutive of productive consumption, and, on the other, *procreation without sex* is ruled by technoscientific medicalization, the logic of the laboratory as the scientific-technological imperative of life in contemporary capitalism. In both dimensions, "the sexual" is now more than ever subsumed by the rationality of economism, the reason of the economization of the human body in terms of surplus value. In this constellation, the principle of utility has become the hard core of "the sexual"; that is, sex, sexuality and reproduction have been brought under the disciplinary regime of the political economy of neoliberalism.

As a mirror of contemporary technoculture that reflects new trends of art and theory in terms of technology, Ars Electronica 2000, in fact, was an attempt to enact a turn to a postmodern bio-future, reinterpreted under the hyperizing signifier "next sex" by means of discursive figures and figurations of avantgardist techno-theory that Ars Electronica had already launched with the events of

1997 and 1999, both of which had been dedicated to an artistic recontextualization of technoscience that implies a radical redefinition of both technology and biology as such and in relation to one another: a technologization of biology *as* a biologization of technology (cf. Wilson 2002: 55–109; Stocker & Schöpf 1999; Anker & Nelkin 2004; Reichle 2005; Ascott 2006).

In these terms, once again, in the millennium event of Ars Electronica 2000, what was at issue was the "dividing line between the information machine 'computer' and that which is biological," a line that had previously separated a "living, growing creature" from "manufactured, constructed technology" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000a: 18). This distinction, a dichotomy, or, in the language of the "post," a *binary opposition* (see, for example, Ashcroft et al. 2000: 23–27; Hartley 2002: 19–21; Edgar & Sedgwick 2008 [1999]: 27–28; for the origin of the idea, see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 36, 41; Spivak 1997: xlvii, lviii–lx, lxxiii, lxxxvi), had become ever-more questionable during the 1990s; to the extent that Stocker and Schöpf (2000a: 18) now saw the reason to simply state that this line "can no longer be clearly drawn"; that is, what in the contemporary world is "living", in fact, is technological: technology in itself is conceived of as a *life process* producing "living" artefacts (see, for example, Munster 2006: 182–183; O'Rioardan 2010: 71–97; Sommerer & Mignonneau 1998; Anker & Nelkin 2004; Reichle 2005; Lustig et al. 2008a, 2008b; Kac 2009).

This is the idea behind "next sex," "sex in the age of its procreative superfluousness." Accordingly, seen through the theory optics of techno/bio-art, from now on, in the third millennium, there will no longer be anything sexual in the sense of the "biological," the sexual as something that is predicated upon biology, processes of life that occur by themselves, "naturally"; instead, sex – whatever it is in and for itself – is about to turn into multifarious technological processes, various techno-sexual assemblages and body-machine constructions (cf., for example, McLuhan (1995 [1969]: 253; Bogard 1996: 153–178; Dery 1996: 181–225; Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Lunenfeld 2000a: 85–93; Gray 2001: 151–160; Foster 2005: 84–89, 117–121; Rheingold 1991; Stenslie 1996; Plant 1998; Botting 1999; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Barber 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Levy 2007; from a historical perspective, see Levins 1996; Maines 1999; Mikkonen 2001).[201] In this respect, what is presently emerging will have, according to the organizers of Ars Electronica 2000, tremendous consequences:

> If sex is stripped of its procreative function and, in return, modern reproductive technology shifts female fertility into the focal point of (patriarchic?) interest; if

201 Of course, since the beginning of the 1990s, all that is sexual in terms of identities, orientations and proclivities (sex, sexuality, gender, forms of desires and pleasures) has been thoroughly deconstructed: the sexual, in its various manifestations, is nothing "natural," but cultural through and through, that is, culturally constructed. Accordingly, experiences and expressions of sex (whatever they happen to be) are effects of discourses, linguistic meanings and practices, that regulate the ways of being in which we understand ourselves as sexual subjects, as subjects of *something* that is "sexual" (whatever it *per se* is, or rather, seems to be) (see, for example, Butler 1990, 1993; Foucault 1990k [1976]; Bublitz 1998, 1999, 2000; Villa 2006 [2000]). What is now taking place – and Ars Electronica is a paradigmatic example of this – is the deconstruction of the sexual in terms of biology, understood as a *technological project* (cf. Clarke 1998; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Coleman 2004; Mamo 2007; Clarke et al. 2010).

> pop icons orchestrate the media frenzy surrounding their partnerless IFV parenthood, while conservative forces propagate the ideal of family; if there emerges the prospect of the emancipation of biological genders as well as socially constructed gender identities by means of the utopian possibility of choosing one gender or the other, or even the both – options which also become available as an upshot of biotechnological interventions – then sex and gender will be relativized, and not least of all in relation to the *fictional narratives* that coalesce about them. (Stocker & Schöpf 2000a: 18; emphasis mine; cf. Stafford 1994)

In other words, we are living today in a world in which everything has become dispensable and, as a consequence, instead of being compelled to live in the body one has been born with, one has now the liberty to *choose* one's own body: new technologies deliver ever-new "body options" (Mellor & Shilling 1997: 49–54; cf. Angerer 1999; Angerer et al. 2002; Reiche & Sick 2002; Reiche & Kuni 2004; Hülk et al. 2006; Wegenstein 2006) as a result of which what has thus far been called the "natural body" will be replaced by a *customized body* (see, for example, Baudrillard 1993b [1976]: 101–124, 1998b [1970]: 129–150; Firat & Dholakia 2003 [1998]: 82–84; Pitts 2003: 151–198; Cregan 2006: 141–169; Featherstone 2000; Siebers 2000); a body that, due to advanced reproductive technologies, is even a matter of selection from conception onwards, from the moment of fertilization. In other words, in contemporary technoculture ruled by technoscience, artificial life is what alchemy was in ancient times before the emergence of the natural sciences: the promise of the ultimate triumph of the human over nature; the natural sciences that, paradoxically, under the sign of the life sciences are presently celebrated by the postmodern techno-avantgarde as the ultimate wisdom of life in itself: "the living," in this constellation, signifies life forms that do not exist without technology, and therefore refers to *techno-bodies* in the true sense of the term.

From the perspective of history, there would be much to say about this vision – one only recalls the meaning of *selection* from colonialism to eugenics and concentration camps (see, for example, Davis 1997a: 14–27; Hubbard 1997: 188–198; McLaren 1999: 124–142; Burdett 1998; Kline 2005; Eckart 2006; in terms of "liberal eugenics" as "human enhancement," see Agar 2004); a vision that, due to its technocultural pathos, makes everything appear as inevitable as a fate beyond human intervention: technology is taken here, paradoxically, as a *natural force* under which humans have only to subordinate themselves, similarly as earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis. In what follows, however, I will only be focusing on one theme, the very idea of *the sexual* implicated by "next sex" as "sex in the age of procreative superfluousness"; a theme that, in fact, pertains to the whole complex of problems put on the agenda by Ars Electronica 2000 as a millennium event in terms of "sex."

The idea I am pursuing here is a scientific-technological reorganization of the sexual in contemporary society that I call *the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern*. In short, while today sexual reproduction, from contraception to *in vitro* fertilization, from embryonic selection to surrogate pregnancies, is controlled and regulated by technological means (see, for example, Corea 1985; Clarke 1998; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Graumann & Schneider 2003; Lenz

et al. 2004), sexual fantasies and practices, in turn, are embedded in a media-technological environment in which sex appears as machine-like procedures, encounters between preprogrammed body-machines that perform their acts according to the logic of an empty precision that brings to mind the mechanical androids constructed by Jacques Vaucanson (after being elected to the Académie des Sciences, Jacques de Vaucanson) and Pierre and Henri-Louis Jaquet-Droz during the Enlightenment: machinic body constructions embodying the rationalism of Enlightenment reason (see, for example, Urchs 2000: 28–30; Mraček 2004: 100–109; Riskin 2005: 70–79; Sutter 1997; for a philosophical discussion in terms of "Cartesian *anthropotechne*," see Vallant 2008: 29–86; for a historical contextualization, see Gendolla 1980, 1989, 1992; Drux 1994, 1999; Meyer-Drawe 1996; Söring & Sorg 1997; Wittig 1997).

Thus, in contemporary technoculture, "simple" sex in its atavistic fleshliness has turned into a thing of the past; that is, sexual desires and pleasures in their enigmatic irrationality, as a miracle of the body liberated from the constraints of culture, are no longer compatible with the prevailing technological rationalism, *the reason of the machine* in the broad sense of the notion (cf. Baruzzi 1968a, 1973; Bammé et al. 1983; Sutter 1988; Berr 1990; Erlach 1994; Schmidgen 1997; Sarasin 2001); a form of reason that, in the mode of scientific-technological rationality, was the constitutive idea in Wienerian cybernetics (see Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]) and its subsequent modifications (see Pias 2003, 2004).

In a world in which, as Haraway (1991a: 162) says, "sex" is replaced by "genetic engineering," and in which "[s]exual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment" (ibid.), it is, of course, clear that sex and sexuality are no longer private matters based on individual desires and pleasures; instead, all that is sexual is now an integral part of systems rationality constitutive of technoscience, an essential object of scientific-technological body management. It is in this constellation that what Foucault (1990k: 138–145) calls "biopower" attains a new quality in technoculture: not only the human body, but also the human being in its entirety, becomes subsumed under the imperative of instrumental reason, the reason of economic efficiency that is the very reason of postmodern society: *the reason of the modern in its postmodern hyper-form*, as the ultimate radicalization of the scientific-technological rationalization of human life in the economic-political order of neo-Fordism, the contemporary paradigm of capitalism.

This is the reason of the political economy of neoliberalism brought to its logical conclusion: if you are not a machine you are nothing.

Organized by this reason, as Haraway (1991a: 165) says, "[m]icroelectronics mediates the translations of labour into robotics and word processing, sex into genetic engineering and reproductive technologies, and mind into artificial intelligence and decision procedures." In these terms:

> The new technologies affect the social relations of both sexuality and of reproduction, and not always in the same ways. The close ties of sexuality and instru-

> mentality, of views of the body as a kind of private satisfaction- and utility-maximizing machine, are described nicely in sociobiological origin stories that stress a genetic calculus and explain the inevitable dialectic of domination of male and female gender roles. These sociobiological stories depend on a high-tech view of *the body as a biotic component or cybernetic communications system*. (ibid.: 168–169; emphasis mine)

In this manner, for Haraway, "[s]ex, sexuality, and reproduction are central actors in high-tech myth systems structuring our imaginations of personal and social possibility" (ibid.: 169; cf. Haraway 1990); in other words, the sexual is subsumed by the scientific-technological rationality of the cyborg.

"Sex," the Cyborg and Technocratic Epistemology

From the perspective outlined above, the cyborg manifests the techno-logic constitutive of the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern; a logic that not only pertains to the sphere of the sexual, but to the human being as a whole: what I call scientific-technological body management is about the politics of the cyborg, a politics that aims at the instrumentalization of the human being, of all human capabilities and forces, an adaptation of the human body to techno-systems specific to the disciplinary regime of neo-Fordism ruled by the imperative of neoliberalism; that is, a refunctionalization of the body as a docile body-machine serving as an efficient factor in the economy of global capitalism, in its order of rationalized production and productive consumption (in terms of "calculating hedonism," see Featherstone 1991b: 171–174, 186–187). This is the order of neo-Fordist body management in which the sexual is a highly valuable asset, in terms of both individual life and the economic system. In this manner, sexuality, redefined by the requirements of commodification peculiar to post-sex, is a vital driving force of the postmodern; vital in the sense of the living as well of the indispensable (in terms of managerial subjectivity, see, for example, du Gay 1996a, 1996b; Hancock & Tyler 2001, 2009; Tyler 2004; in the context of "American bodies," see Johnston 2001a: 66–73).

For this reason, all that is sexual in the postmodern is in no way a free-flowing "natural resource"; on the contrary, sex and sexuality are an object of scientific-technological and economic-political management in the contemporary Western world, an object of rational calculation and control. This is the reason of post-sex, behind its spectacular façade of the sexual thrills of commodified sex, "sex" as a simulation of itself (see Baudrillard 1987 [1977]: 13–16, 1990c [1983]: 182–192, 1993b [1976]: 33, 95–98, 103–104, 122, 1983b [1981], 1988a [1986], 1990a [1987]; Lowe 1995: 121–148; Plummer 1995: 122–126; Davis 2000: 131–135; Reichert & Lambiase 2003; Williams 2008).

In other words, if all that is sexual is now a matter of technocultural regulation, an issue of increasingly rationalized production and productive consumption, and, accordingly, if sex has become a *technique* comparable to a thoroughly controlled sport performance that follows the logic of rational design, where, then, is the *authenticity* of sexual experience – or is the idea of the authentic

always already a phantasm, a mirage, a delusion, that today, paradoxically, is in itself a technocultural product: the artificial paradise of virtual sex as the most authentic manifestation of scientific-technological body management constitutive of what I call *the sexual rationalism of the postmodern*?

Consequently, in the techno-futuristic programme of Ars Electronica 2000, the sexual in terms of "next sex" was not so much an issue of desires and pleasures as a matter of technological redesign of procreation, the whole procedure of reproduction from conception to birth (cf., for example, Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Edwards et al. 1999 [1993]; Tokar 2001; Stock 2002; Sutton 2009); that is, the bio-technological side of the sexual-technological complex, the other side of which is sex as a form of corporeal enjoyment by means of prosthetics and virtual reality, the theme proper in the present study. For me, the emphasis on reproduction at Ars Electronica 2000 was in itself a clear definition of position: procreation by means of techno-biology as a rational, scientific-technological method of producing "human" beings, redefined in terms of the posthuman, that conform to the norms of technocultural quality control; a technoscientific method for overcoming the irrationality of nature, the random process of "natural selection" and the unpredictable contingencies of "sexual selection" (from a historical perspective, cf. Haldane 1924; Bernal 1970 [1929]; Huxley 1994a [1932]; for a philosophical-historical contextualization, see Halliwell & Mousley 2003).

Indeed, the idea of sex and sexuality propagated by Ars Electronica 2000 was a reduction of all that is sexual to the systems logic of the life sciences and biotechnology; a technoscientific context exemplified by "the neurosciences, AI research, cyborg fantasies and their extrapolations," that is, the issue of "being human as an *Informationsmaschine Mensch*" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000a: 18; in German in the original). In other words, "next sex" in the sense of "sex in the age of its procreative superfluousness," propagated by Ars Electronica 2000, implied not an empire of freedom, but, on the contrary, a disciplinary regime of reason under the power of which the individual body-subject turns into an object-body of system functionality in the manner of cybernetics, *the* science of the modern in terms of scientific-technological rationality (see, for example, Hübner 1985 [1978]: 210–226; Melzer 1993: 288–294; Weinberger 1993: 258–271; Hammond 2003). As John Hassard (1995 [1993]: 118) sums up the idea of what he calls "systemic modernism": in contrast to "critical modernism," it manifests a mode of rationality in which "the rational subject is the system itself, which acts according to a cybernetic discourse in which reason is a privileged property distinct from its parts." It is precisely this "systemic modernism" that is the constitutive principle of the postmodern in terms of technoscience.

In my reading, Hassard's "systemic modernism" describes technoscientific body management constitutive of neo-Fordism as the political form of neoliberalism that I call the politics of *technocratic epistemology*, a mode of post-Foucauldian "power-knowledge" in which the reason of technoscience is implemented according to the principles of technocracy (cf. Brieler 1998: 449–461; Mills 2003:

67–80; Rouse 1994; for the idea of technocracy, see, for example, Akin 1977; Burris 1993; Loeb 1996 [1933]; Schwab 2004).

This is the idea of the sexual-technological complex in terms of procreation. In contrast to Haraway's (1991a: 150) techno-romantic fantasy of "cyborg 'sex'" as a "lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" implying a "nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism," the technological redesign of sexuality and reproduction in the technoscientific constellation of the postmodern manifests the normative rationality of the technocratic body management constitutive of neo-Fordism; a mode of body politics in which, *contra* Haraway, a rigorous normality, a scientific-technologically redefined heterosexual normativity, rules both sexuality and reproduction in terms of "biomedicalization" (see Clarke et al. 2010), that is, the medical politics of biocapital (see Brown & Webster 2004; Rajan 2006; Rose 2007; Cooper 2008).

If this is the reality of sexuality and reproduction in technoscientific capitalism, in the power constellation of the political economy of neoliberalism, what is Haraway's "cyborg 'sex'" as a "lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" implying a "nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism" if not a neo-utopian dream of techno-sexual paradise, a cyberfeminist phantasm of post-sexual desires and pleasures in the post-political world of the cyborg in which post-gender post-body post-subjects implement their post-scientific creativity as a form of post-natural *natura naturans* to enhance the prosperity of the cyborgian *natura naturata* of their own creation. In this world, indeed, "the sexual" takes on a new meaning as a non-definable designation of life beyond the terror regime of the phallus; a realm of absolute freedom. It is in this world that cyborgs are not conceived and given birth to by biological reproduction, but, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, by means of "cyborg replication" that is "uncoupled from organic reproduction." What is at issue here is a whole new paradigm of the body that entails a break away from all that is "natural": "we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system – from all work to all play," that nevertheless is a "deadly game" (ibid.: 161). It is in this context that, along with all other "natural" objects, reproduction turns into "replication" (ibid.: 161–162).

As a consequence, as Haraway specifies, "[i]deologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families" (ibid.: 162). Such reasoning will be "unmasked as irrational, and ironically corporate executives reading *Playboy* and anti-porn radical feminists will make strange bedfellows in jointly unmasking the irrationalism" (ibid.). Of course, what Haraway says of "ideologies of sexual reproduction" as a precondition of prevailing notions of sex and sex roles is, without any doubt, correct; clear already since the beginning of the twentieth century when, on the one hand, Freud and his associates, and on the other, proponents of the early *Sexualwissenschaft* and the sexual radicals, pursued an uncoupling of sexual desires and pleasures from the imperative of repro-

duction, from the biological demands of procreation (see, for example, Freud 1986d [1915–1917]: 313–330, 1981c [1905], 1991d [1915]; Köhler 2007 [1995]: 66–67, 74–75, 96; Quindeau & Sigusch 2005; Quindeau 2008; for a theory-historical contextualization, see Sigusch 2008).

What is problematic, however, in both the programme of Ars Electronica 2000 and Haraway's science fiction ideology of replication is techonological reductionism: for both of them, *it is only technology that can save us now*. Similarly as in Stocker and Schöpf's world of "next sex" we are also in Haraway's world of "cyborg 'sex'" witnessing a fundamental transformation of all being: there is no longer anything "natural" since the place of nature has been taken by technology. Technology is now the new nature, *a nature of the non-natural*; and in this context, instead of the traditional romanticism of nature, what we have is a new romantic sensibility that Richard Coyne (1999) designates as "technoromanticism" (cf. Jasanoff 2005; in terms of *Perfektionierung des Menschen*, see Gesang 2007; for the idea of *der Neue Mensch*, "the New Human Being," in the context of "the modernization of utopia," see D'Idler 2007; from a historical perspective, see van Dülmen 1998). That is, in the postmodern constellation of technoscience and technoculture, what Haraway (1995b [1992]: 72) calls a "secularized natural theology" typical of American culture has given way to a *deification of technology* in the form of the technological sublime.

Sex with Children, Animals and Machines

What does all that is said above imply, in fact, in terms of sex in the sense of desires and pleasures, in the strict sense of carnal corporeality thus far thought to be a necessary precondition of sexual desires and pleasures in one way or another? In the context of Ars Electronica 2000, Stahl Stenslie, "one of the Fathers of Cybersex" (Stocker & Schöpf 2000b: 414), outlined the idea of "terminal sex," "future sex as art practice" (Stenslie 2000b), as a part of a total renewal of culture never seen before (cf. Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 132–143; in terms of "the love machine," cf. McLuhan 1995 [1969]: 253, 2002 [1951]: 99; Marchand 1989: 216–217; with regard to "philosophical cybersex" manifesting the "sex appeal of the inorganic," cf. Perniola 2004 [2000]: 28–36).

A "romantic orgy of Life-Art" – that is, according to Stenslie, the idea of "terminal sex," a version of "next sex" made possible by the biotechnological revolution, itself a result of the new scientific-technological paradigm brought about by the life sciences, *the* scientific paradigm of the postmodern. And, interestingly, this will also be a triumphant return of genders, regardless of Haraway's (1991a: 150) adamant declaration that the world of the cyborg will be a "postgender world." But not only that, even the conventional barriers between various sexualities and forms of sexual pleasure will be abolished in the world of "next sex," as Marie-Luise Angerer, a radical cyber-theorist and cyberfeminist, explains in her contribution to the Ars Electronica 2000 symposium:

> Next Sex? Once the genetic engineering revolution has taken place, will there (still) be genders? There will be genders: there can be no doubt about that. So then, Next Sex? can be answered with a "yes." And there will also continue to be sexuality – between human beings, between men and women, between women and women, and men and men, and *not only will sexuality between children assume a new significance and status, but it is also possible that sexuality between adults and children and between human beings and animals and between human beings and machines will as well*. (Angerer 2000: 164; emphasis mine; cf. Stenslie in Berg 1994)

As we can see, in the world of the "cyber," everything is possible because nothing is impossible in terms of the "cyber." Whether hetero- or homosexual, an adult or a child, an animal or a machine, in the post-sexual universe of "next sex" there are no longer any differences: anything can now be a sex object. Sex has here become an art form in its own right, a mode of art in which the only principle is the idea of exceeding the limits – except the last limit, the one between life and death, the limit that, however, was not a limit for the Marquis de Sade, a mythic figure that haunts all that is "post" in a curious manner (see, for example, Glaser 2000: 305–311; Hénaff 1995 [1975], 1999 [1978]; Pfister & Zweifel 2002). But while, in the Sadean world of counter-Enlightenment, at issue was the difference between nature and culture, in the post-Enlightenment world of the "post" it is technology that has abolished all differences, and, hence, what is now sexual is intelligible only in terms of the technoscientific redesign of the body.

Indeed, as Ballard envisioned in the early-1970s that "sex times technology equals the future" (Springer 1996: 50), this future is now becoming present, although in many respects in a different form to what Ballard could see in his time. In an accelerating pace, the four decades that have passed since Ballard's prediction have shown that the convergence of biology and technology is about to fundamentally transform the human being into a techno-biological assemblage known as the posthuman being (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999; Gray 2001; Graham 2002; Cooney 2004; Dinello 2005; Smith & Morra 2006b; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008). And of course, seen with the eyes of the posthuman, the contemporary forms of sex and sexuality are no longer interesting; instead, the posthuman being will enjoy the "romantic orgy of Life-Art," as prophesied by Stenslie.

The idea of scientific-technological redesign of all that is sexual, a project constitutive of the sexual-technological complex of the postmodern, of course, is not only the invention of Ars Electronica. Since the late-1980s, along with the cultural revolution under the sign of the "cyber," following the logic of the "post," there have been an abundance of visions of future sex and sex in the future (see, for example, Pursell 1994: 207–209; Harvey 1995: 379–380; Bogard 1996: 153–178; Dery 1996: 181–225; Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 74–80; Virilio 1997 [1995]: 103–118; Kurzweil 1999: 184–188; Slade 2001: 727–733; Hausman 2002 [1999]: 205–210; Burdea & Coiffet 2003: 277–279; Foster 2005: 84–89, 117–121; Getty & Winkelmann 1996; Springer 1996; Hopkins 1998; Plant 1998; Botting

1999; Wolmark 1999a; Baker 2000a [1999], 2000b [1996]; Pettman 2002; Preciado 2003; Parisi 2004; Perniola 2004 [2000]; Waskul 2004a). What is common to all these visions of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" is that the body appears in them as a machinic subsystem adapted to the machine systems of postmodern technoculture. In other words, instead of being an autonomous entity with its own logic, its intrinsic integrity of being human, the body is seen as a systemic adapter that *always already* functions according to the techno-logic of technoculture; that is, the *Eigenlogik* of the human body is subsumed by the operational functionality constitutive of technomorphism according to which technology is the morphological condition of all being (see, for example, Hayles 1993a: 179–183; Maier & Zoglauer 1994; Weber & Bath 2003).

In its own peculiar way – in the mode of artistic futurism that is, in fact, *futuristic art-ism*, a hyper-technophilic form of what I call art-art as the logical end point of the postmodern in the sphere of art – Ars Electronica 2000 presented an artistically elaborated futurological laboratory in which one could live for a few days in a future society regulated by the most advanced science of the twenty-first century, techno-biology as neo-eugenics, the latest form of Foucauldian "bio-power" (see, Foucault 1990k: 138–147; cf., for example, Lemke 1997, 2007; Gehring 2006); a biological science of society implying a social science in terms of biology; in a word, *bio-futurism* as one of the ideologies of technoculture: a mode of conceiving of society as a techno-biological matrix of post-organic life that can also be observed in Haraway's cyborg mythology.

It is precisely in this context that the sexual is presently undergoing a fundamental transformation in terms of both reproduction and the practices of desires and pleasures that we still call sex today – a notion that will soon have only a nostalgic meaning as a mythologized relic of the 1960s.

If there is a single precondition of all life it is that atavistic, simultaneously simple and extreme complex biological process of generation that, on the one hand, is named procreation and reproduction, both implying an *origin*, and on the other, referred to by that complicated, historically contingent and as such highly ideological, term "sex," which, until today, has indicated three separate and at the same time related issues: (1) two categories of living beings, male and female, with regard to their organic and functional differences in the production of offspring, (2) a physical, genitally oriented, desire between them, and (3) an act in which procreation is implemented with a concomitant pleasure, the act of "sexual intercourse," as both an act of creating new life through combining gametes and an act of the consummation of emotions and cravings between males and females (see, for example, Richardson 1996; Harding 1998; Jackson 1999; Potts 2002; Johnson 2005). This is the bio-physical basis of the conceptual constellation of "the sexual," although originally deriving from the Biblical conception of procreation and reproduction (see, for example, Caplan 1987; Stein 1990a; Davidson 2001), that constitutes today the discursive configuration of "sex" and "sexuality," terms that have acquired their contemporary

meaning through a process of secularization in terms of what Foucault (1990k: 65–71) calls *scientia sexualis* in contrast to *ars erotica*.[202]

Thus, the notion of "the sexual" as a common denominator of all these three aspects is a contradiction in terms from the very beginning; a contradiction that has only become ever-more evident throughout the two and a half centuries of its existence, to the extent that its implosion is increasingly imminent – if it has not already occurred. If there is anything in general that can be called "sexual revolution," it is the implosion of the sexual paradigm created by Enlightenment reason and nineteenth-century scientific rationalism, and finally installed by "sexual science" in the first part of the twentieth century (see, for example, Hekma 1989; Russett 1989; Bullough 1994; Porter & Teich 1994b; Bland & Doan 1998a, 1998b; Ferdinand et al. 1998; Sigusch 2008). This is the paradigm of *scientia sexualis* as the opposite of *ars erotica* – an opposition that, paradoxically, the programme of Ars Electronica 2000 attempted to overcome precisely by a thorough *scientification* of all that is sexual in the name of art, by means of *scientific-technological rationality in the disguise of avantgarde art*.

From Reproductive Science to Alternate Sex

Against this background, one can understand that, for obvious reasons, Ars Electronica 2000 appeared to many observers, as William Osborne (2000) puts it, as an event "calculated to shock." In comparison to the two earlier editions of Ars Electronica, with the telling titles *FleshFactor* (1997) and *LifeScience* (1999), both addressing new developments of biotechnology, this time, according to Osborne, Ars Electronica went a "step too far, by centering on the *aesthetic use of eugenics*" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

But before going into Osborne's argument in more detail, it is appropriate to have a short look at the provocative ambiguity – precisely the extraordinary shock value – of "next sex," sex as a scientific-technological enterprise in a world in which everything is now possible, at least in the high-flying visions of artists who play scientists and scientists who think with the freedom of artists. Namely, one should not forget that this time, not so much in spite of, as expressly *because of*, its controversial theme, Ars Electronica 2000 was a playful, hilarious art event, a family meeting of hyperoptimistic techno-enthusiasts, a

202 Although it should be quite clear thus far that I am in no way subscribing to the implied heterosexualism of the complicated terminology of "the sexual," to avoid all misunderstandings it is also necessary here to emphasize that I am not deriving sexual desire from procreation, the cardinal confusion of all traditional conceptions of sex and sexuality; by the word "concomitant" in this context I am only referring to the historical fact that the production of offspring and sexual desire has always, in one way or another, been connected to one another by convention that is entirely cultural; that is, sexual desire has been conceptulized *as if it were* an integral part of the act purporting to the production of offspring. This is the intrinsic problem of the notion of "sexual desire"; a problem – the great confusion – that remains as long as heterosexual intercourse *and* various forms of same-sex acts and practices are referred to by the same term, "the sexual," especially by its derivation, "sex" in the sense of corporeal practices associated with desires and pleasures. The problem, in short, is why are both heterosexual and non-heterosexual acts referred to by the term "sex"?

global jet-set of media art well-versed in the art of spectacular discourse production – with calculated "shock" effects.

In this sense, Ars Electronica 2000 was an artistic theme park of biotechnological experimentation (cf., for example, Stafford 1994; Pethes 2005; Pethes & Schicktanz 2008; in terms of "technogenesis," cf. Anker et al. 2008; with regard to "the machine in the body," cf. Campbell et al. 2008; from a historical perspective, cf. Pethes et al. 2008); in other words, *a techno-art laboratory in the spirit of the postmodern dedicated to the creation of posthuman life in the Disneyland of Theory*.

It is exactly here, in the very "origin" of life, understood in the Western tradition of the idea of conception and birth, as it was conceived of by Aristotle, emphasising the semen as the form-giving or formative origin of all living (see, for example, Ford 1991 [1988]: 19–57; Laqueur 1992a [1990]: 26–58; from the perspective of "the origins of life science," see Lennox 2001), that Ars Electronica 2000 saw the point at which it was possible to attempt to demystify the sacral naturalness of the beginning of life by means of playful denaturalization (cf. Hayles 1990: 266–282; Brande 1996: 81–83; Munnik 2001 [1999]: 107–116; Yaszek 2002: 14–17; Heuser 2003: 197–198; Foster 2005: 4–6, 20, 52–53, 106–107; Haraway 1997). As soon as we are speaking about procreation, we are faced with the elementary substance necessary for conception up until now, sperm, the mythologized *materia prima* as the origin of all living beings.

No wonder that this liquid of life was also a theme at Ars Electronica 2000, in the form of a "Sperm Race," a public test to find out who had the best sperm of the day. According to the Ars Electronica webpage:

> On Sunday, September 3rd, and Monday, September 4th, visitors had the opportunity to submit a semen sample at the container laboratory and to have the quality of their sperm tested.
>
> Magnitudes such as motility, sperm count, and pH value were measured by means of CASA (Computer Assisted Sperm Analysis).
>
> This was done anonymously. The sperm were assigned a numerical code and entered into the race. The deadline for submissions of emissions was 6 P.M. The daily winner was then established, each of which went on to the finals.
>
> The overall winner's sperm will be cryogenically preserved and stored for life in the world's largest sperm bank (sponsors).
>
> Each donor could observe his sperm cells through a penetrative radiomicroscope; then they were digitally photographed, enlarged 1,000x, and printed out as a very special personal portrait.
>
> Female visitors were able to bet on their personal favorite. Wagers were accepted daily until 7 P.M. in the contained laboratory on the main square. Stakes: 20 Austrian Schillings. To help with the decision, a look at the personal data-sheet of each participant was made available.
>
> The analysis of the sperm was done in accordance with WHO criteria, and complied with their medical and hygiene standards as well as their analysis guidelines. (Ars Electronica Announcement 2000)

Here we have it, in a jocular form of an artistic "Sperm Race," the "Darwinian" idea of "the survival of the fittest" (see Darwin 2008 [1859]; cf. Baker 2000b [1996]; for the origin of the formulation "the survival of the fittest" in Herbert Spencer, see Weinstein 1998: 16, 21, 59–60, 141, 149–155), the constitutive formula not only of the traditional and contemporary biology of reproduction, but also of the bio-political movement of eugenics, a social reform politics pursued all over the world from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War, allegedly in order to improve the "quality of population"; a politics based on the vision of perfect society brought about by a rigorous selection of people genetically capable of living from those having incapable genes (see, for example, Dean 1999: 134–141; Esposito 2008 [2004]: 127–142; for the history of the eugenics movement, see Engs 2005; Kline 2005; in the context of "designer babies," see Darnovsky 2001; in terms of "art, sex and eugenics," see Brauer & Callen 2008; for "techno-eugenics," see, D'Souza 2002: 208–228; Bryant & Turnpenny 2003 19–21; Agostino & Ashton 2007; for "eugenic design" as a method of "streamlining America," see Cogdell 2004; for "liberal eugenics" as a "defence of human enhancement," see Agar 2004). In other words, *sexual politics as a politics of death*: the politics of survival in the new world of genetic engineering based on advanced biotechnology.

As Ars Electronica stated in its announcement for the 1996 symposium and exhibition, referring to "our evolutionary 'fitness'" enabled by the biotechnological reprogramming of evolution: "Genes that are not able to cope with this reality will not survive the next millennium" (Critical Art Ensemble 1998: 36; Stocker 1996); a proclamation which immediately brings into mind not only eugenics in general, but the antisemitic politics of the "Third Reich" in particular, a politics of national cleansing in which the notion of *selection* attained its euphemistic meaning effacing the fact of genocide. It is in this manner, as Critical Art Ensemble (1998: 36) comments the neo-eugenic politics of Ars Electronica, that "[s]ocially dangerous principles of cultural development, such as fitness, natural selection, and adaptability are again in fashion." Thus, the statement of Ars Electronica

> contains some of the most frightening authoritarian language since the Final Solution, and presents the threat of "adapt or die" as a value-free social given. To what is the reader expected to adapt? To the technology developed under the regime of pancapitalism for the purpose of better implementing its imperatives of production, consumption, and control. There is nothing evolutionary (in the biological sense) about the pancapitalist situation. It was engineered and designed by rational agencies. "Fitness" is a designated status that is relative to the ideological environment, not the natural environment. History repeats itself, as those resistant to authoritarian order must once again separate the cultural and the natural, and expose the horrific nihilistic tendency that arises when the two are confused. (ibid.: 37; cf. Barbrook 1996)

This is the reverse side of the bio-engineering of sexuality in the service of postmodern sociobiology, the politics of genes in the form of technoscientific selection: scientific-technological control of reproduction as a means of con-

structing a new kind of nation and/or class society based on a biotechnological modification of "natural selection" by means of new reproductive technologies; that is, *the politics of life redefined in terms of technology* (see, for example, Harris & Holm 1998; Chapman & Frankel 2003; Carmen 2004). What is at issue here is the right of state, government or political authorities, controlled by biocapital, to endow genetically appropriate citizens with the privilege of living and eradicate those who are genetically "defect" in the name of the biopolitically reinterpreted "survival of the fittest."

Yes, sex is a funny thing, but only if you can afford it – to say nothing of AIDS, the horrible form of contemporary "natural selection" in parts of the world in which poverty, war and underdevelopment prevent an appropriate sexual politics as a politics of life, instead of the politics of death (see, for example, Seckinelgin 2008). From this perspective, sperm is not only a "liquid of life," it is simultaneously a highly political substance of control, even an object of vehement controversies tellingly called "sperm wars" by Robin Baker (2000b [1996]). Sperm is a socio-biological matter (in both senses of the word) that is an essential part of bio-power, and at the same time, a commodity traded by sperm banks, a contested issue of what I call *sperm politics* (see, for example, Daniels 2006); an important part of the bio-political management of reproduction in terms of neo-Fordism implying the survival of the fittest in the contemporary world ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism.

If sex is now, as Ars Electronica 2000 proclaimed, "superfluous" from the standpoint of procreation, sperm is, nevertheless, still needed for the offspring – as long as cloning, or, as Haraway (1991a: 150) predicts, "cyborg replication," is not available as a means of reproduction, although it is, in one way or another, inscribed in the biopolitics of the cyborg (see, for example, Bowring 2003: 189–206; Harris 2004; cf. Habermas 2001; Gehring 2006).

But the problem is that by jokingly deconstructing the importance of sperm, not only as the origin of life, but also as the origin of male self-esteem, Ars Electronica 2000, in fact, confirmed the techno-biological ideology of sperm trade: the idea that by selecting scientifically the "right stuff" it is possible to produce "designer babies," a technologically modified kind of progeny that conforms with the ideals of genetically perfected society, a bio-political class society in which the birth right is a matter of genetic optimization. What techno-biology is actually promoting is a real version of the Huxleyan "New Brave World" in which natural selection is replaced by artificial selection, by reproductive bioengineering as a form of selection that entails a scientific-technological control politics that by far exceeds the methods of traditional eugenics (see Huxley 1994a [1932]; cf., for example, Bowring 2003: 227–276; Yi 2010: 63–66; Evans 2002). *This* is the problem of the sexual-technological complex in terms of procreation and reproduction.

Then again, from the perspective of artistic techno-futurism promoted by Ars Electronica, sexual reproduction is, of course, already obsolete. In the world of

the cyborg, everything is possible. As media artist Dave Small says, there are now available so many "self-replication options" (Bezreh 2000) that one just has to choose; and, as another media artist, Will Bauer explains, procreation today is a matter of technological control, and hence, the question is now simply what you want: "[f]rom sperm banking to zygote banking to having other people or machines carry your genetic children" (ibid.) – all these possibilities depend only on your personal proclivity. Today, your offspring is a scientific-technological product, not a gift of nature.

Obsolete in "the age of its procreative superfluousness," sex in the form of "next sex" propagated by Ars Electronica is a postmodern playground of theory-sex that effaces the everyday reality of reproductive sexuality in all its contradictions in the commodified Western world, and behind it, the sexual misery of the third world that is entirely beyond the intellectual capacities of post-theorists. The sexual spectacle characteristic of postmodern culture, the constellation of what I call post-sex, presents sex as a matter of fun, a hobby, a sport form, a gourmet activity, or a means of post-Warholian self-presentation by which everyone can be famous more than just Warhol's obligatory "fifteen minutes" (see, for example, Shaviro 2003: 75–76). Like "webcam girls" (see, for example, White 2006: 62–87; Nayar 2010: 93–94; Burgin 2000; Senft 2008), girls who love to show the naked truth of themselves, Natacha Merritt (2000a, 2000b), famous for her digital photographs exhibiting her genitalia in extreme close-ups – as if as a confirmation of Baudrillard's (1988d [1987]: 32) observation that today "the genitalia is but a special effect" – had a splendid opportunity at Ars Electronica 2000 to appear live for her fans in a talk session together with Sergio Messina, a media artist playing with pornography.

According to Tanya Bezreh, an editor of *Artbyte* Magazin, Merritt and Messina "took the festival's thesis"

> on a rubber-burning joyride, from reproductive science to alternate sex. Merritt, a *succès de scandale* for her digital photographs of herself and her lovers, maintained a frank and refreshingly unself-conscious demeanor during her presentation, while her pictures looped behind her. She presented a singular example of the impact of new media (in her case, digital photography and the voyeur Web site) on one person's sex life. Messina ushered the audience through online outposts for rarefied sexualities, such as sites for people into sweaters and sneezing. Then, an audience member committed the cardinal sin (at any festival where the air is thick with theory and the official thesis is roadkill): How, he wondered, were we supposed to understand the presentations of scientists like Carl Djerassi (inventor of the Pill) and Xin Mao, a researcher at West China University in Chengdu who spoke on eugenics, in the context of Merritt's and Messina's presentations? The ensuing discussion highlighted the chasm between Ars and Electronica, between the scientific laboratory and the edgy art that makes use of new technologies. Seemingly, the gulf separating what the essayist C. P. Snow famously called the "two cultures" – the hard sciences and the squishy humanities – is as wide as ever. (Bezreh 2000)

This, indeed, is still today – or, especially today, in the times of postmodern confusion implying a desire for deconstruction of all distinctions – an ever-

aggravating problem: in the name of art one can say and do anything, but when artists start to play scientists we do not necessarily have science nor art; and conversely, when scientists start to play artists we do not necessarily have art nor science. Art and science may have something to share, but it is hard to believe that it is artists who will find the solution, for example, to the global AIDS problem or save the world in the case of pandemia (which is an invisible but real threat everyday).

After the Female: The "Artificial Womb"

This brings us back to Osborne's claim, referred to above, that Ars Electronica 2000 went a "step too far" by "centring on the aesthetic use of eugenics."

The problem is, according to Osborne (2000), that without seeing the historical gravity of eugenic politics, for which Osborne names Hitler's Aryan project of the "purification" of Europe as a paramount example, "Ars Electronica embraces eugenics, biological engineering, and the use of living tissue for the creation of artworks" (for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Graves 2002; Jackson & Weidman 2004); that is, the hidden contradictions and threats of postmodern biopolitics, the possibilities of exercising *de facto* racism and class division by improving the human genome and practicing various forms of prenatal selection, are suddenly swept away when dazzling new technologies of bioindustry are presented as an *artistic bio-laboratory*, as an aesthetic playground for artists to enact their spectacular and theoretically sophisticated, and now and then amazing and hilarious experiments in terms of bio art (cf. Anker & Nelkin 2004; Mitchell & Thurtle 2004; Kac 2005, 2009; Reichle 2005; Thacker 2005; da Costa & Philip 2008).

With his critical remarks, Osborne (2000) pays attention to the social Darwinist manner in which Ars Electronica speaks – as its programme announcements make clear – about "complex tools and technologies" that are now an "integral part of our evolutionary 'fitness'" (for the history of social Darwinism, see, for example, Hawkins 1997; for the history of biotechnology, see, for example, Thackray 1998; Kay 2000). Accordingly, it is only consequent that media artist Stahl Stenslie (2000b: 207), the celebrated inventor of cybersex, declares in his artistic programme of "terminal sex" that "future sex" will be "DNA sampling" in which the "inheritable properties of children will be a selection of sensual and dynamic assets from more than one man and one woman"; in this sense, "having sex and reproducing will be like surfing the Net" (ibid.). "With DNA synthesis we will construct our offspring with bit and pieces from a wide range of people" (ibid.).

> As sex in the future becomes net-oriented, it will increasingly be practised like Chatting today. *That is, the Orgy will serve as the role model for sensuous communication*. Reproductive Sex in the future need no longer be a private thing between two people. It will be dynamic and distributed phenomena with globally distributed participants – based on synesthetic biology conveyed by extreme media. (ibid.)

It is in this manner that "[t]erminal sex represents a new, biologically-driven concept of what art can be" (ibid.: 208). This is a world in which "orgasmic creativity" (ibid.) is the paramount principle of "Life-Art," a world in which science, art and high-tech hedonism amalgamate into one another, a world in which DNA is the master code of "aesthetic existentialism" (ibid.: 209), finally leading the practitioners of "Life-Art" to fundamental questions in terms of the posthuman:

> How can the technologies of Life Sciences be put to artistic use? Where are the tools to craft life? Practice in the Life Sciences is currently based on both chemistry and mechanical processing. As "in vitro" fertilization it is a matter of manual selection of egg and semen before the semen is mechanically inserted into the egg through a needle. Future practices foresee a more precise manipulation of inheritable qualities. Protein scissors and molecular docking will eventually allow exact DNA re-modelling methods. Making Life-Art will be like mixing a cocktail – somewhere between throwing a party and practising hard-core science. (ibid.: 209; for a historical comparison, see Huxley 1994a [1932])

In this new wonderful world, the paradise of "Life-Art," "[e]ven rape can be considered as *an art-creational strategy*" (Stenslie 2000b: 209).[203]

According to Osborne (2000), Stenslie already attracted attention with his e-mail article as part of the symposium in the context of Ars Electronica 1996 under the title "Memesis" by explaining that "digital technology and biological engineering will transform humans into self-evolving cyborgs" (see Stenslie 2004c [1996]). Without explaining how this would be possible, Stenslie simply declared that the "combination of biological and virtual reality" will open up a "thrilling possibility of a mind independent of the biology of bodies" (Osborne 2000; cf. Wilson 2002: 166–167; Schroeder 2004; in terms of Cartesian mind-body dualism, cf. Cottingham 1986: 119–122; Bordo 1987; Boler 2010). "Disguised in delicately coded flesh," humans, in Stenslie's vision, are able to "experience the primal scream of digispace" (Osborne (2000; cf. Stenslie 1994c, 1996). And, in the flamboyant manner of postmodern artists, Stenslie asks – in fact, in a similar self-assertive tone that is typical of Haraway and feminist techno/cyber-theorists following her politics of words (see, for example, Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup 2000; Flangan & Booth 2002):

> What is there to be afraid of? Because the nature of the beast is bizarre and monstrous, alien and terrifying? (Osborne 2000)

203 Rape as a "natural fact" was also a highly contested topic in a session in which the evolutionary biologist Randy Thornhill, the author of the controversial book *A Natural History of Rape*, declared in his lecture that "rape is a natural part of male sexuality, and women should restrict their behaviour to avoid this 'natural' phenomenon" (Osborne 2000). In its own way, Thornhill's "naturalization" of sexual violence only corroborated Stenslie's "artistic" idea that "rape can be considered as an art-creational strategy" (ibid.). Although Marie-Luise Angerer, a postmodern feminist media scholar promoting theoretical cyborg politics, deemed Thornhill's view so hackneyed in its triteness that it was beyond discussion, she nevertheless just repeated, without criticism, Stenslie's idea of rape as part of "terminal sex" and "orgasmic creativity" *in the name of art* by saying that "the taking possession [*Bemächtigung*] of the female body by man can be a strategy through which new art emerges" (Weber 2000).

For Osborne, eugenics, bio-engineering, cyborg speculations, the whole programme of combining biology and technology with one another to achieve a qualitative turn in human evolution, represents what he calls "reactionary postmodernism" (cf. Foster 1989a [1983]: xii; Soja 1993: 123–124; Callinicos 1989; in terms of "reactionary modernism," cf. Herf 1990 [1984]; in the historical constellation of modernism, Dada and postmodernism, cf. Sheppard 2000), which defines the redesigned human being as a "perfectly engineered, hard-core cyborg," exemplifying the power of "male creativity" (Osborne 2000). Of course, as a radical "reform" ideology, this is nothing new (in terms of the politics of *der Neue Mensch*, "the New Human Being," in the political programmes of twentieth-century reformism and totalitarianism, cf. Küenzlen 1997 [1994]; van Dülmen 1998; Lepp et al. 1999; Groys & Hagemeister 2005). As Osborne (2000) points out, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the "Italian Futurists worshipped power, masculinism, speed, eugenics and technology as they moved toward Benito Mussolini, their hard-core Nietzschean superman." And, as we know, "Hitler followed and created the largest eugenics programme in the history of humanity" (ibid.; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Gentile 2003: 1–6, 27–49, 55–73; Poggi 2009: 232–265; Berghaus 2009).

This, in comparison to the ludic techno-biological futurism of Ars Electronica 2000, is an entirely different perspective from which to consider the sexual revolution brought about by "next sex," a perspective of historical realism – realism that in the virtual world of the "cyber" is an unknown notion.

What is this realism in contemporary terms? "If Ars Electronica represents the future of the body and gender, then women will face a continuation of one of patriarchy's most common and violent narratives: domination, rape and dismemberment" (Osborne 2000). This is the reality of the contemporary world living in the power matrix of techno-biology, the matrix of Foucauldian "biopower" (see Foucault 1990k [1976]: 138–145) in its postmodern form, the biopolitics of neo-Fordism (cf., for example, Yanarella & Reid 1996: 207–215; Luke 2003b: 87–97, 104–105; Vint 2007: 118–119; Heffernan 2000; Molinari 2002; in the context of the Weimar Republik, cf. Lungstrum 1997; Biro 2009; in terms of the "cyborg state," cf. Whitehead et al. 2007: 46–57, 147–176). The female body is in the focus of this power; the female body as the very model of the designer body in terms of reproduction; the model of the techno-sexual body politics of the postmodern: the politics of body modification pertaining to the production of offspring, engendering *life* by means of bioengineering (in terms of "liberal eugenics" as "human enhancement," see, for example, Agar 2004; for a critical contextualization, see, for example, Bowring 2003; Baillie & Casey 2005); a sexual body that once and for all must be brought under the control of scientific-technological reason.

As Osborne, referring to Gena Corea's 1985 study *The Mother Machine. Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs*, points out:

> Being a woman is a biological curse; the womb represents a chaotic force of nature which must be tamed; woman is a receptacle for the "natural" desire of rape, she is a half-living doll to be played with, she carries a burden of womanhood that can only be lifted by dismembering and re-engineering her body to effect a leap to men's self-appointed status of creative autonomy. (Osborne 2000; cf. Firestone 1970; Farquhar 1996; from a historical perspective, cf. Jordanova 1989, 1999; Honegger 1991; Grossmann 1997; Bergmann 1998 [1989/1992])

If the "Sperm Race," organized by Ars Electronica 2000, was a playful show illustrating, among other things, the male sex as the generator of the "liquid of life," then, in what manner was the purported receptor of this liquid, the womb, seen? Was it also a funny thing for Ars Electronica 2000 artists, an object of hilarious experimentation?

In this respect, along with the experimental production of an "artificial placenta" as a therapeutic method in the context of foetal surgery, carried out by Nobuya Unno, a highly acclaimed Japanese obstetrician and gynaecologist working in the field of natal medicine (see Unno 2000),[204] Ars Electronica 2000 also presented the bio-art project *Tissue Culture & Art(ificial) Wombs* by the artist group Oron Catts, Ionat Zurr and Guy Ben-Ary (2000). In their work, combining aspects of installation and performance art with conceptual speculation, an approach I call *theory-art* in the context of postmodern *art-art*, the group applies the methods of tissue engineering as a medium of artistic expression and experimentation. The idea is to produce "body spare parts" by means of a "bioreactor," that is in essence an "artificial womb, which is being used to grow us new organs/extensions/additions" (ibid.: 252; cf. Haraway 1991a: 181; Balsamo 1996: 6–9, 83–97; Aristarkhova 2005).

What is specific here is that these new "body spare parts" embrace a hybrid category called "Semi-Living Objects" by the group (see Catts & Zurr 2002; Zurr & Catts 2000, 2006). In this sense, the artists are interested in "using tissue engineering and artificial wombs to grow *scultures*" (Catts et al. 2000: 252; emphasis mine); that is, bio-artistic "sculptures" that are created by means of bioengineering. Although products of laboratory, these "scultures" are nevertheless "still in the realm of a symbolic gesture representing a new class of object/being" (ibid.). As such, these "objects" are "partly artificially constructed and partly grown/born"; in this manner, they "consist of both synthetic materials and living biological matter from complex organisms" (ibid.). Similarly to Harawayan cyborg politics, these post-biological "entities," "scultures" as bio-artistic creations, "blur the boundaries between what is born/manufactured, animate/inanimate and further challenge our perceptions and our relations toward our bodies and constructed environment" (ibid.).

204 It should be noticed that Unno's project to create an "artificial placenta" means extrauterine pregnancy and birth, a possibility that is the ultimate result of the process that once began with *in vitro* fertilization and artificial insemination: a machinic womb that is capable of creating new life through a scientific-technological process for which the female body is obsolete (cf. Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998).

As if anticipating the questions which their artworks certainly will give rise to, the group asks whether "we are going to see *fashion-driven neo-organs*," and in this way "to completely objectify living matter" (ibid.; emphasis mine). *To objectify organisms into living matter not only to make them technologically modifiable, but also to turn them into a disposable resource on the "life markets" of biocapitalism* – that is one of the essential aspects of cyborg politics, even in terms of reproduction as a form of prosthetic technology. In the post-biological age of prosthetic technology, all that is organic will be taken over by artificial corporeality, body constructions that have synthetic organs – and, as the popular wisdom of cyborg theorists goes: "resistance is futile, you must comply" (see, for example, Casper 1995: 183, 196; Gunkel 2000: 340, Graham 2002: 145). In the context of the Ars Electronica 2000 theme of "next sex," what are the sexual consequences of the "neo-organs" created by Catts's artist group in their "artificial womb" project? And, in fact, do we still need sex at all in this new world of "tissue culture" and "art(ificial) wombs"? What is certain is that we will see something entirely new:

> This is the age of loss of innocence; we are pushing our humanistic traits of curiosity and manipulation, trying to reach the ultimate limit. We are learning to manipulate the building blocks of our own (and other organisms') bodies. The next sex, created in the artificial womb, may be a cold, calculated act for the 'best' sex.
>
> This act of procreating would be remote from the sacred and emotional ritual of what we consider sex today. The artificial womb located outside of the body (equally separate from the male and female bodies) will be where the act of procreation occurs. *We will costume design the womb to represent our individuality and become emotionally attached to it since this is the place of the real act of sex*.
>
> Will we still attach to sex so much importance, or will we be, at last, *free from sex as a compulsory act for creation*? We might be able to physically (and mentally) free ourselves from the "natural" binary constraints of sex to create new forms and new plays. Are we mature enough to make this passage?
>
> We need to be aware that in order to face the challenges and responsibilities we forced ourselves to confront, we have to immerse ourselves in these issues. We are not innocent anymore – we never were. (Catts et al. 2000: 254; in terms of cyborg reproduction and "male hysteria," cf. Fuchs 1995)[205]

An "artificial womb," a "cyborg uterus" (Cavallaro 2000: 110) as a hybrid of technology and biology, life as a product of *ectogenesis* (see, for example, Baldi

205 Reading the bio-artistic statements of Catts's group, one cannot but ask how their visions of the future of the body and procreation as technological redesign differ from popular cyber/techno-futurism and transhumanist visions flourishing in the web world? For example, "Cyberfetus Rising": "The ongoing technological extension of the body would seem to resolve itself finally in an extension of the whole body. Within a comprehensive synthetic-prosthetic environment, the biological body will not need or want adaptations that were selected for it by wild, ancestral environments. Bodies will discontinue those metabolic investments that support specialized – adult – physiology, anatomy, and morphology. And that comprehensive extension of the body is the encapsulated ecosystem of the space colony. The Freudian project of human industry is construction of an immortal mother. Then biology can remain eternally embryonic. This is where the feminine energies inherent in industry come into fulfilment, as the collection of industries takes the form of a comprehensive environment – a synthetic womb. The image is complete with weightlessness providing an environment within which embryonic protoplasm can float." (<http://www.futurehi.net/archives/000769.html#more>)

2002: 35–53; Aristarkhova 2005; Gelfand & Shook 2006; cf. Huxley 1994a [1932]; for the origin of the idea of ectogenesis in J. B. S. Haldane's vision of technological reproduction in the 1920s, see Squier 1994: 63–99) – is that the origin of the sexual-technological complex of the future (see, for example, Firestone 1970; Dyson & Harris 1990; Adams 1994; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Harris & Holm 1998; Lublin 1998; Kaplan & Squier 1999; Coleman 2004; for "the cyborg mother," see Smith-Windsor 2008; for the history of reproductive technologies, see, for example, Clarke 1998; for an overview in terms of medical technology, see Johnson & Berner 2010; for postmodern body-machine hybridity, see Papilloud & Hahn 2008), a future already present as a techno-artistic vision; or is this the end of sex not only as we know it but in general? If it is possible to "grow" artificial organs by means of a "bioreactor" that functions as an "artificial womb," why not create *artificial sex organs*? Or are these organs for desires and pleasures in the world of the cyborg about an entirely new mode of sensations and affects beyond the parameters of "the sexual," that is, organs that no longer have anything to do with sex and sexuality, neither, in fact, with something that thus far has been designated as desires and pleasures; in other words, organs that are invested with some completely new kinds of sensations and affects we do not yet have a name for?

What is evident not only in terms of artistic experimentation of Catts's group, but of theory art in general, is that it is the female body, due to its unique organ, the uterus, that is the origin of the efforts at transcending the organic body and creating the cyborg body, a body that is neither born nor will give birth. This is the first step towards the world of the posthuman, in Haraway's (1991a: 150) words, a "post-gender world," in which the difference between the male and the female is finally subverted by means of body-machine hybridity once and for all. In other words, the "artificial womb" is the way of abolishing not only the female body that has a "natural" womb, the female body as the uterine body, but, more fundamentally, the very idea of the human.

Thus, the beginning of the posthuman is *the cyborg as the ultimate form of uterectomy, the irreversible liquidation of woman*.

This, indeed, is the final triumph of eugenics: a world in which to be the perfect being is no longer to be born, not even as a result of genetic engineering, but *to be made of artificial body parts* that are grown in a post-biological machine uterus, a techno-womb as the bioreactor of beings for which the organic is only a thing of the distant past called human history.

2.4 Your Body: Your Prosthesis

> The theme of body invasion: prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, genetic alteration. The even more powerful theme of mind invasion: brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry – techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of the self.
>
> Bruce Sterling (1986b: ix)

> What is the meaning of presence within a postmodern, posthuman, and "post-media" context? What is at stake when presence becomes telematic, distributed and/or hybrid? What happens when presence and absence cease to exist as polar opposites? When presence becomes, to quote Derrida, "impregnated with absence"? When presence and absence blend to each other, in a paradoxical state of presence-absence?
>
> Maria Chatzichristodoulou (2009: 79)

"The telephone is a prosthetic phenomenon" (Boon 1996: 161; cf. Sobchack 1991: 171, 178; Hershman 2003 [1993]: 194–195; for the invention of the telephone, see, for example Coe 2006 [1995]; for the "social impact of the telephone" in terms of "technologies of freedom," see Pool 1977, 1983). This is the way in which Marcus Boon crystallizes the constitutive model of cybersex, *the telephone as a prosthesis*, in his contribution to what Theresa M. Senft and Stacy Horn (1996b) call "prosthetic feminism" in the online version of *Women & Performance*, edited by them (Senft & Horn 1996a). As the title of Boon's text, "Phone Sex is Cool: Chat-Lines as Superconductors," indicates, cybersex, for Boon, is a computer-based modification of phone sex experienced in the chat rooms of cyberspace (cf. Branwyn 1994: 228; Green 2002: 180–183; Koh 2005: 218–222; Collins 2006: 210–211; in terms of "self-games and body-play," see Waskul 2003: 79–89). In other words, Boon's approach to phone sex, and, consequently, to cybersex, follows McLuhan's idea (1964: 23) according to which "the medium is the message": "the sexual" in mediated sex is a "message" of the medium itself; that is, cybersex is not only mediatized sex, but it is expressly "sex" that is *medial* in its very essence (cf. Stone 1995c: 243–244; in terms of "sexual media" as a form of telepresence, cf. Skalski et al. 2010: 169–172).

Right at the beginning, Boon makes clear that he will entirely bypass the "false dichotomy" implied by the distinction between the organic and the prosthetic, an inherited divide that determines the conventional understanding of the technological (cf. Springer 1996: 18–20; Hayles 1999: 2–4; van der Ploeg 2001: 125–129; Graham 2002: 207–209; Paterson 2007: 112–117; Manning 2009: 13–24, 62–66; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b). According to Boon, typically,

> when phone (or other forms of cyber) sex are critiqued, the arguments for and against them invariably revolve around the problem of prosthesis. For example, "real sex" (one argument runs) is organic, because it requires direct physical contact. On the other hand, phone or cyber sex is prosthetic, and reflects a technological compensation for an organic lack, be it moral or physiological. Following this logic, phone sex is either "bad" (because it's lazy, less than real,

> impoverished, greedy, self-indulgent, excessive) or else, phone sex is "good" (providing, as it can, "substitute activity" for those who cannot manage "real sex" due to illness). (Boon 1996: 161; cf. Slade 2001: 724–726)

What, then, is the right way to overcome this "false dichotomy," the binary opposition, between the prosthetic and the organic implying a difference between the natural and the artificial that, in the final instance, amounts to the difference between the human and the machine? In other words, if cybersex is an elaborated form of phone sex, what is its *differentia specifica*, and, first of all, what actually is it as *sex*?

2.4.1 In the Beginning Was the Telephone

The machine in itself, according to Boon's techno-theoretical approach typical of cyber discourse, is the resolution of the antagonism between the organic and the prosthetic; the machine appears here as a real *coincidentia oppositorum*, a coincidence of opposites, that creates a cyborgian assemblage epitomized by the idea of prosthesis (cf. McHale 1992: 255–257; Brahm & Driscoll 1995; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; Gunkel 2007; in the context of Stelarc's prosthetic art, see Massumi 2002: 89–132; in terms of medical prosthetics, see Seymour 1998: 177–185; for philosophical-historical conceptualizations of the natural and the artificial, see Bensaude-Vincent 2007). What is at issue in this context, however, is not the Aristotelian machine, nor the machine of Hobbes or Descartes, nor the machine of La Mettrie or Marx (see, for example, Baruzzi 1968, 1973; Bammé et al. 1983; Sutter 1988; Berr 1990; Meyer-Drawe 1996), to say nothing of the multitude of machines which we encounter in everyday life, machines that simply serve our purposes (from the coffee machine to the computer, from the CD player to the aircraft) (for the emergence of modern machine culture, see, for example, Giedion 1948; Dijksterhuis 1956 [1950]). It is not even truly the Deleuze-Guattarian machine, perhaps the most famous machine in postmodern (techno-)discourse (see Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; cf. Goodchild 1998: 142–161; in terms of "thinking machines," cf. Adam 1998; Abbas 2006).

In contrast to all that, Boon's machine is the Lacanian machine (see Lacan 1988b [1978/1954–1955]; cf. Forrester 1994 [1990]: 126–139; Goux 1991: 116–118; Ragland-Sullivan 1991: 60–62, 82; Schmidgen 1997: 99–126; Botting 1999: 199–202; Hansen 2000: 173–179; Johnston 2008: 66–106; Nusselder 2009: 66–80; in comparison to La Mettrie's *homme-machine*, cf. Božovič 2006: 28–31; in terms of "machines as the measure of men," cf. Adas 1990 [1989]), a cybernetic machine with which he will move the "inquiry away from judging motivations of the human body at the end of a technology, and inquire instead into *the sexual preferences of machines themselves*" (Boon 1996: 161; emphasis mine); that is, *the machine as a sexual subject* capable of resubjectifying the human subject as the subject of post-organic sex, sex as the pleasure of the machine (see, for example, Dery 1996: 183–225; Abramson & Pinkerton 2002 [1995]: 210–214;

Parisi 2004: 24–27, 119–122, 167–169); in other words, the sexual pleasure of the inorganic (see Foster 1996; Perniola 2004 [2000]).

This machine, of course, is the paradigmatic machine of the postmodern: the computer; as Andrew Feenberg (1995: 123) says, it is "the computer that has put the 'post' in postmodernity." What is important here is that "the computer is a simulation machine that presents data as objects in a virtual environment" (Nusselder 2009: 59). In postmodern culture, we a living in a machinic constellation, the configuration of technoculture ruled by the scientific-technological rationality of technoscience, in which the human subject becomes redefined in terms of the machine; a process of redefinition that, in fact, began already with Lacanian cybernetics in the 1950s (see Lacan 1988a [1975/1953–1954]: 158–159, 1988b [1978/1954–1955]: 294–308; cf., for example, Rickels 2002: 60–73; Abbas 2006: 122–123; Flieger 2005).

From this perspective, "desire has no original name any more than a subject has; rather, it is an anonymous process, *a self-functioning machine, a self-regulating cybernetic system*" (Bernet 2004: 56; emphasis mine).

Human Beings as "Prosthetic Devices for Machines"

Accordingly, to understand prosthetic sex in cyberspace, the only way of approaching this complex issue is to bear in mind, as Boon emphasizes, "psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's comment that a machine"

> isn't a simple artifact, as could be said of chairs, tables and of other more or less symbolic objects, among which we live without realizing that they make for our own portrait. Machines are something else. They go much further in the direction of what we are in reality, further even than the people who build them suspect. […] *The machine embodies the most radical symbolic activity of man*. (Boon 1996: 161; emphasis mine; cf. Lacan 1988: 75; Schmidgen 1997)

While admitting that "it is true, in a humanist sense, to say that machines are built by humans, it is also possible to view the organization of matter involved in the production of machines as a kind of alliance, or to use the French philosophical duo Deleuze and Guattari's term, an *assemblage*, involving various kinds of matter, each of which bring their potentialities to bear upon the end product" (Boon 1996: 161; emphasis mine). In this machinic assemblage, "the particular qualities of metal, silicon, human beings, etc.," each act as "components of the whole," and, "according to their ability," "form alliances and make connections with each other's particular qualities" (ibid.; cf. Latour 1993: 161–167; Mazlish 1993; Braidotti 2002, 2006).

Only in the light of the Lacanian conception of the machine as the real subject of human enterprises it is possible to see that the sexual in itself does not obey the binary logic of the organic and the prosthetic. Moreover, referring to the "cyber-historian Manuel De Landa" (see De Landa 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998; cf. Canguilhem 1992 [1952]; Rabinow 1992, 2003; Stone 1992), Boon argues that "it is possible to view the development of machines, and associated phenom-

ena such as virtual reality, from the point of view of their non-human components, so that *human beings become prosthetic devices for machines*" (Boon 1996: 162; emphasis mine; cf. McLuhan 1964: 51–63; Haraway 1991a: 171–172; Smith & Morra 2002b, 2006b; Zylinska 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). In these terms, it is, of course, not difficult to understand the "sexual preferences of machines themselves," as Boon above says. In other words, like humans, machines are "desiring-machines" (Deleuze & Guattari 1998: 14–57; Bogue 1989: 88–97, 105–106; Goodchild 1996: 51–55, 92–104; Massumi 1992; Beller 1996; Marks 2006).

It is in this context that Boon introduces his post-McLuhanian idea of *the sexual as an effect of the telephone*, a prosthetic assemblage implying the model for cybersex. Focusing on the "technology involved in commercial chat-lines or 'telepersonal services'" (at the time under the names like "Telecompanions" and "The Night Exchange"), Boon (1996: 162) maintains that "these services offer the most complex technical mediation and modulation of the phone call achieved so far in the sex industry"; a highly prosperous industry, as we know, that has made not only enormous efforts to administrate and proliferate human desire, but as enormous – if not even significantly more enormous – profits as well (see, for example, Flowers 1998: 5–8; Lane 1999: 151–179; Kammeyer 2008: 36; Jeffreys 2009: 67–68).

> Instead of offering a sexual show or interaction performed by a paid phone operator for a customer to consume, they provide a carefully controlled performance space in which consumers present themselves to each other – modulated, of course, through different perceptions of gender and sexual preference roles. As such, I believe that *chat-lines offer a model social space that is as relevant to their era as Foucault's panopticon was for the 19th and early 20th century*. (Boon 1996: 162; cf. Foucault 1991a [1975]: 201–208, 249–250; Lyon 1994: 62–79; Winokur 2008)

This, indeed, is a fundamental transformation not only of the sexual, but of the whole idea of being human in a world in which the subject is no longer subjected to the omnipotent gaze of power under the non-escapable presence of surveillance (cf. Bogard 1996; Robins & Webster 1999; Chun 2006; Haggerty & Ericson 2006); a world in which the subject, *as a prosthetic device for machines*, is now free to enjoy sexual pleasures as a prosthetic subject integrated to the machinic assemblage. It is from this perspective that "[c]hat-lines also offer an interesting case study for examining future developments in what is called 'virtual reality'" (Boon 1996: 162; cf., for example, Barlow 1990a; Russell 1990a; Helsel & Roth 1991; Aukstakalanis & Blatner 1992; Lanier & Biocca 1992; Heim 1995; for the vision of "virtual society," see Woolgar 2002). Why is that? Because chat-lines simply provide a "level of presence that cannot at present" – that is, in the mid-1990s – "be achieved through other technologies of simulation" (Boon 1996: 162; in comparison to contemporary netsex, see Waskul 2004a; in terms of first person media, cf. Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan 2004; for the idea of "computers as theatre," cf. Laurel 1993 [1991]). In other words, phone sex is a technology of presence in the form of telepresence (see, for example, Rheingold 1991: 96–99, 254–264; Foster 2005: 122–123; cf. Sheppard & Walker 1999; Donath 2000; Stone 2001; Kac 2005; Paterson 2007; Bracken & Skalski 2010a; for "telefetishism," see

Hillis 2009: 203–258; for a technological contextualization of the dimensions of "tele," see Druckrey 1995); a presence that deconstructs the limits of subjectivity and agency (in terms of the feminist techno-imaginary, cf. Melzer 2006).

What Boon (1996: 163), in fact, is proposing here is that, as opposed to all conventional views, the telephone is not at all an old, limited and narrow technology, but on the contrary, an avantgarde technology as a ubiquitous service system with truly global dimensions that is capable of introducing a "mass-use" of "VR media," that is, virtual reality as a new mass communication medium of the future, in a world in which all boundaries are there only to disappear (cf. Kelly et al. 1989; Russell 1990a, 1990b; Lanier 1991; Biocca 1992a; Biocca & Levy 1995a, 1995b; Freyermuth 1996a, 1996b). In these terms, the telephone, indeed, is the origin of telepresence: the "telephone was the pioneer in dissolving distance between people" (for the historical perspective of telecommunications technology as a technology of telepresence, cf. Decker & Weibel 1990; Druckrey 1995; Daniels 2002); but not until the introduction of phone sex the specific qualities of the new technology were used enabling a system in which the "*receiver constructs his own image of the sender without assuming a correspondence between this phantasmagoria and the reality*" (Boon 1996: 162; emphasis mine; cf. Stone 1995e: 6–8, 35–36, 94–95, 1995c).

In this context, the sexual, of course, will take on a new meaning: no longer archaic joys of the flesh, but, instead, desires and pleasures of virtual corporeality (cf. Rötzer 1996c, 1999d, 2000). In comparison to what was celebrated in the 1960s as the "sexual revolution" (see, for example, Evans 1993: 65–88; Weeks 1995b [1985]: 15–32; McLaren 1999: 166–191; Eder 2002: 217–222; Allyn 2001; Escoffier 2003), the virtual revolution brought about by the prosthetic assemblage of the computer and telecommunications networks is the matrix of future sex, sex as an enjoyment of post-organic promiscuity, cross-couplings between human and non-human beings, in a neo-Edenic estate; a new Elysium organized around the "machine in the garden," in the ecstasy of the "technological sublime" (Carey 1989: 118–121; Graham 2002: 154–175; Hughes 2004b: 38–43; Nye 1996), or, as the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (1999) says, the pleasures enabled a *Menschenpark* under the sign of post-Heideggerian posthumanism (cf. Heidegger 1976a [1946]).

The Will of the Machine Is My Desire

To overcome the parameters of the human, parameters that still distort the view of the future implied already by the present, that is, the understanding of the machinic as the very *sine qua non* of the survival of the subject, it is necessary to see how the virtual and the prosthetic not only intertwine, but also *necessitate* one another.

> Perhaps one of the biggest mistakes regarding virtual reality is the assumption that the desire for a prosthetic sensory space will stop at the simulation of reality. Apart from the likelihood that reality will turn out to be poorly simulate-

> able, prosthetic sensory spaces of radically different kinds are likely to proliferate. Who can say how much a body or a machine can be plugged into? Is this not Sade's argument in *120 Days of Sodom*? And Ballard's in *Crash*? It is not only human sexuality that needs to be carefully stripped of its utilitarian garb: *the queering of the machine* means learning to describe machines in terms of their actual activities rather than the purposes they were built for or the products which they are said to produce. (Boon 1996: 163; cf. de Sade 1994 [1785/1904]; Nguyen 2003; Giffney & Hird 2008; Melzer 2008; Muñoz 2009)

The queering of the machine – that is the right perspective from which it becomes possible to understand correctly "the sexual" of "the machinic" itself, "the sexual" inherent to the technological assemblage constitutive of cybersex as an elaborated form of phone sex (cf., for example, Foster 2002: 482–497; Plummer 2004a: 49; Bell 2000a; O'Riordan & Phillips 2007).

According to Boon, the problem is that until recently the "study of sexuality has been driven by an exclusionary humanism, so that there hardly exists to date a single reference to technological aspects of sexuality in the entire annals of sexology" (ibid.; cf., for example, Wettley 1959; Bullough 1994; Sigusch 2008). Of course, there are practices referred to as "fetishism," but what makes fetishism conservative and, in fact, counterproductive, in the efforts to truly revolutionize the experiences and expressions of the sexual is that in fetishism the "line between the human and the non-human is clearly drawn" (Boon 1996: 163). The problem is, as Boon emphasizes, that "[f]etishism *is still a humanism*" (ibid.; cf. Žižek 1997b: 104–106; for the thesis that "humanism is a form of fetishism," see Wark 1994: 163–164; cf. Armitage & Roberts 2002a: 5; Heidegger 1976a [1946]). As long as one remains within the parameters of humanism, one sticks to fetishism which, in the contemporary world ruled by the logic of technoculture, is an obsolete paradigm of the sexual.

To find the way out of this *cul de sac* of humanism, towards the sexual in terms of the posthuman, one must clearly see that "[f]etishes do not mediate between human beings the way telecommunications technology does, nor are they prosthetic in the same way" (Boon 1996: 163). In contrast, "[t]echnology, in its prosthetic aspect, blurs the line between the human and the non-human" (ibid.; cf. Haraway 1991i [1989]: 212; Stone 1995e: 35–40). Of course, as Boon (1996: 163) remarks, the "line between the human and the technological has *always* been blurred, because mediation, as an exchange with and extension into environment, is a fundamental fact of organic life" (ibid.; emphasis mine). But, once again, if the sexual is defined by the organic, we remain prisons of the oedipal (see Haraway 1991a: 150–151), that is, *in the constraints of fetishistic humanism as the ideology of humanistic fetishism*. It is precisely for this reason, as Haraway says, that the "cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" (ibid.: 151). This is the way out of the sexual in terms of the human, fetishism included.

For the same reason, Boon welcomes the machinic assemblage, the hybridization of the human and non-human as the liberation of desires and pleasures of

the body, as the way to *prosthetic sexuality* as a genuine mode of post-fetishistic sexual practices; as Boon says, just obey the imperative of the machine, and you can *queer* your sexual pleasure; in other words:

> merge with the telephone and computer system; remain anonymous while taking your pleasure, let the machine guide you. Let the machine take it's own pleasure: take it to the point where it's just you and the machine, hitting you with its little shocks and repetitions. The choice is yours. (Boon 1996: 164–165; in terms of cyberSM, cf. Stenslie 1994b, 1996)

Here we have an instance of Harawayan "intimacy" that consists of "partiality": my body is no longer my body, it is a technological extension of a sex apparatus of a higher order, the order of prosthetics (cf. Brahm & Driscoll 1995; Grey & Mentor 1995; Smith & Morra 2006b) – an order beyond the humanism of fetishism. In this order, as Boon says above, "human beings become prosthetic devices for machines" (cf. Haraway 1991f: 249), playmates of technological systems: *to be used by the machine is the highest form of posthuman pleasure*. This, indeed, is the pleasure dome of prosthetic sex following the logic of post-Epicurean hedonism based on the idea of a thorough technologization of life, not only of human life, but of life in general.

In other words, *the will of the machine is my desire: my desire is the will of the machine*. This is the true ethos of all that is "cyber" in terms of the "post."

What, then, is the irony referred to by Haraway (1991a: 149–151) in her eulogy of the cyborg? If you need a machine for your pleasure, the machine does not always need you: the machine has its own pleasures that, by definition, are beyond the pleasures which humans are capable of enjoying (in terms of machine intelligence, cf. Roland & Shiman 2002; Sternberg & Preiss 2005). This is the sovereignty of the machine: it can be absolutely autonomous, like automaton that has its intrinsic life beyond human needs and desires (cf. Haraway 1991a: 176–177; Halberstam 1998a [1991]; from a historical perspective, cf. Kang 2011), beyond the human that is always in need of something, a creature dependent on other humans. What is particularly ironic in machine sex is that, according to Boon (1996: 168), while the machine that you have sex with does not pay you, the "machine will keep taking money from you; machines don't really need to talk to humans, they're happy to talk to credit card lines or automated billing machinery" (ibid.). No doubt, this kind of *asymmetric economic exchange* is one of the pleasures of machines; a pleasure that, perhaps, even the posthuman being cannot ever achieve.

Nevertheless, in human-machine relationships, human beings can be happy in another respect: they are still needed as a mediating connectors, as dutiful go-betweens. As Boon remarks, "[h]uman beings remain a necessary switch in the system, *their libidos connecting different parts of the network*" (ibid.). And on the other hand, even the machine, in its sovereign autonomy, *may* need the human being, not as an assistance in its machinic operations, but – as amazing as it may sound – as a *partner*; a partner that machines, precisely in their sovereignty,

can deal with. This notwithstanding, this is an issue that goes "to the 'heart' of the machine's Wizard of Oz-like problem: *how to interface with humans*" (ibid.: 170; emphasis mine). "A machine on its own would indeed be a lonely machine, whether connected to networks or not" (ibid.). Thus, the human being – now, of course, in the mode of the posthuman – is the unconditional precondition that the machine can have its pleasure, machinic pleasure as a mode of pleasure that, by definition, exceeds the limits of the human: machines are the paradigmatic model of the posthuman (cf. Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Rutsky 1999; Graham 2002; Foster 2005; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008).

This is the reason for expanding the system of machinic sex, the human-machine connections that are already relentlessly proliferating by themselves. "Whether the chat-line networks are extended transnationally or locally, there is a trend towards increased complexity of the kinds of services available, and a multiplication of the number of human and non-human elements involved" (Boon 1996: 171). Whether this "increased complexity" is a "response to the demand of a higher level and greater variety of services," or merely a matter of "ever more sophisticated ways of exploiting and enslaving human libido in order to make a profit," the fact remains that the "expansion of networks" is continuous (ibid.). There are no limits to couplings between sex and machines: *the production and distribution of sexual desires and pleasures is simultaneously both the economic premise and the result of copulating machines*, that is, intelligent machines that are beyond all sex/gender categories in their free-floating post-sexual "sexuality."

More Output through Lower Input

Machinic desires and pleasures, constitutive of copulating machines, are sensations and affects that follow the logic of algorithmic contingency. This is the logic of *connectivity*, an intrinsic logic of communication and information technology that is the extremely complex infrastructure of contemporary culture (see Ascott 2003: 73–76, 177–182, 222–237, 264–285, 312–345, 1991, 1999; cf. Plant 1996c: 202–209; Genosko 1998: 11, 184, 1999: 48, 89; Appleby 2002: 108: Zylinska 2005: 145–146; Nayar 2010: 5, 10–11, 25, 81, 113–116). This infrastructure, as a gigantic and continuously running generator, engenders the sexual energy of the postmodern, the machinic desire generated by global computer networks, the libido of technology as the libido of the posthuman. As Boon says:

> What are called "human interactions" (masking a much more complex interaction with/through/by technology) take on some of the qualities of the new types of matter involved – namely, metals and silicon, with their ability to distribute connections and conduct electricity rapidly throughout a network. As the ability of human beings to develop these properties of matter progresses, and as *machines find different ways to develop human libido*, human sexuality finds expression away from bodies at 98.6 degrees in the colder regime of machines. The networks will grow larger and larger, incorporating greater and greater numbers of bodies and machines, exploiting the properties of matter further and further, until *superconductivity* – that Utopia of information technology – becomes integrated into the network. (Boon 1996: 171; emphasis mine)

In prevailing technoculture, according to Boon, we are witnessing a paradox: the extremely increased efficiency and the concomitant raising heat of the superconductor system has as a consequence that "individual human bodies grow increasingly frozen in their apartments and offices, cooling to adapt to the properties of the metals and semiconductors which comprise the telecommunications infrastructure," while, at the same time, ever more heat is generated because the "acts of communication proliferate in the chat-line network" (ibid.). It is these communication acts, "performed by a combination of human being and machine, which become the sexual acts" (ibid.). Manifesting the "machine's own need for connection with the world," these acts are "expressions of *machinic libido*" (ibid.), the only form of libido that is adequate in the world of the cyborg, a world in which the human is only a relic of the past.

As a result, the contemporary world is heading towards a global libidinalization in terms of technology: "When a circuit composed of human beings and machines runs uninterruptedly, for an infinite length of time, it may encompass the whole earth and perhaps beyond" (ibid.: 173) – a cosmic vision of sex, a vision of *planetary sex* as the real future of all that is sexual; a sublime vision that entirely exceeds the planetary vision Ernst Jünger (1982 [1932]) presented in his technoscientific study *avant la lettre* entitled *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (cf. Heidegger 1983 [1935]: 208, 2000c [1966/1976]: 668–674, 2004; Zimmerman 1990: 33, 51, 57–63; de Beistegui 1998: 22, 51, 56, 67–74, 81; Neaman 1999: 180–182): planetary sex by means of the prosthetic assemblage of the cyborg as a triumph of technoscience, *the whole world consisting of copulating machines that generate their own libido, the machinic libido of machines that rule the world*.

However, and this is the second paradox, according to Boon, these technological sexual acts are actually not about sexuality, "neither in its traditional embodied sense, nor in its simulation" (Boon 1996: 173); instead, it is an issue of an entirely new form of desires and pleasure for which we do not have a name yet: *a technoscientific-libidinal complex* consisting of exponentially proliferating networks of connectivity and exponentially multiplicating financial transactions, both running through superconductors that exceed human capacity, leading to an exponential increase of capital generated by the world-wide-web of technosexual acts; that is, the power and wealth produced by the machinic libido, the post-Freudian *Triebkraft* of the postmodern world. In other words, in the world ruled by sexual superconductors we will experience the ultimate triumph of neoliberalism: a world that operates entirely without the human being, a world ruled by intelligent machines running by the machinic libido of financial transactions that manifest the reason of neoliberalism, the speculative reason of capital.

If this is the end point of the development that began with the invention of the telephone in the late nineteenth century, where are we now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

> Behind the jocks with their huge penises and the babes with their dripping wet vaginas, very broad networks of human-machine communication come into

> play: billing and pricing networks, the full expanse of the phone system, downloading "human data" into an ever-expanding network of moving electrons, all coordinated by a computer's ability to modulate data-flow. (ibid.)

This data-flow no longer consists of conventional sex acts, but of sexual transactions that follow the logic of capital: more output through lower input, more efficiency through smaller investment, more pleasure through less effort. Everything now happens by "switching": a "remarkably rapid and flexible shift from partner to partner, preference to preference, identity to identity, amounting, in the end, to a "corporeal aphasia" in which the "only action is the chatter between the mind and machine" (ibid.: 174).

This is the beginning of a new world under the sign of the machinic libido driving human affairs towards the order of the posthuman; the order of the cyborg. There may be many routes to approach this world, but only one rite of passage: the reconstitution of the human in terms of technology.

2.4.2 Sex with Foam Plastic Animals

Without phone sex there would be no cybersex, whether in theoretical or practical terms, as a technology or a discourse, as reality or fantasy. The sexualization of telephone technology since the late 1980s marks the beginning of the virtualization of the sexual in a form never seen before: virtual sex is sex in the future already present (cf., for example, Rheingold 1991: 345–353; Žižek 1994: 2, 1995a: 122, 1997b: 164, 2001a: 252, 2005b [1994]: 210; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]: 52–57; Adilkno 1998: 110; Danet 1998: 139–140; Kramarae 1998: 115–116; Plant 1998: 30–34; Poster 1998: 191–192, 2001b: 156–157; Botting 1999: 204–205; Star 2000 [1996]: 632–633; Tsang 2000 [1994]: 432–437; Bartle 2004: 508–555, 610–620; Gillis 2004: 94–98; Flieger 2005: 6–7, 29–30, 52–53; Foster 2005: 84–89; Boden 2006: 1095; in the context of Dada, cf. Jones 1998). Phone sex, the almost invisible driving force of global telephone networks, the very reason for their technological sophistication as a practical instance of artificial intelligence, is the decisive turn towards the simulation of the sexual, the true sexual revolution in terms of the postmodern. Phone sex is the origin of sexual "hyperreality" in the mode of scientific-technological enhancement and proliferation of desires and pleasures (for the "hyperreal," see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2–13, 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84; cf., for example, Rodaway 1995); that is, a technoscientific potentiation of what I call post-sex.

This, of course, is not to say that phone sex is the origin of cybersex. But the idea of an *absent presence* enabling virtual sex, as well as the technological, logistical and economic infrastructures of its implementation (see Lane 1999: 149–182; Boon 1996: 165–171; for the "social impact of the telephone" in terms of "technologies of freedom," see Pool 1977, 1983), and not the least, the cybercultural discourse surrounding the human-machine interface (see, for example, De Landa 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998; Springer 1996; Dery 1994, 1996; Wolmark

1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Nusselder 2009), all these technocultural arrangements along with their accompanying "cyber" rhetorics have contributed to the figure of thought constituting cybersex as a postmodern, technophilic phantasm and a popular buzz word of the technoutopian futurism in the 1990s, and, in the form of online or computer sex (see, for example, Adams 1996: 148–150; Deuel 1996: 141–142; Misztal 2000: 202–204; Ben-Ze'ev 2004: 4–14; Branwyn 1994; Waskul 2004b), following the logic of neoliberal capitalism, a highly profitable business concept, cultural practice and narrative topic (see, for example, Bright 1992; Robinson & Tamosaitis 1993; Odzer 1997; Levine 1998; Lane 1999).

"The Genitalia Is But a Special Effect"

This is the context in which, along with the technological innovations and techno-euphoric discourses promoting virtual reality, cyberspace and the cyborg as a new form of life liberated from the obstacles of the human body, the idea of *telepresence* emerged (see Rheingold 1991: 96–99, 254–264; Manovich 2001: 164–174; Wilson 2002: 460–474, 515–560; Grau 2003: 271–291; Foster 2005: 122–123; Kac 2005: 137–142; Goldberg 2000; in terms of "telefetishism," see Hillis 2009: 203–258; for the origin of the term in AI research, see Minsky 1980; Bracken & Skalski 2010b: 3–4); a mode of technologically mediated presence enabling bodyless encounters between anonymous subjects beyond the constraints of time and place, in the free zone of virtual corporeality (cf. Green 1997: 59–68; Kirby 1997: 131–134; Vasseleu 1997: 47–56; Graham 2002: 188–189; Hillis 1999: 170–171; Zylinska 2005: 145–146; in terms of "postvital living," cf. Doyle 2003: 164–167). In this sense, telepresence as the presence of the absent became the suggestive metaphor for a new kind of subjectivity and agency exceeding the limits of material corporeality, the human body in its physical gravity and inertia.

Accordingly, if it was possible to liberate the body from its everyday materiality through technologies of telepresence, the same would apply all the more to the experiences and expressions of sexuality, the mode of corporeality that has always – *always already* – been in itself a manifestation of the imaginary, *the virtual reality of desire*, the reality of the imaginary (cf. Freud 1981c [1905], 1987d [1900]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1989 [1964]).

This is the point at which the "cyber" and the sexual meet one another: if the sexual does not recognize boundaries, least of all the limits of materiality, is cybersex, then, only the final substantiation of this idea in the sense of *technoscientific transubstantiation* (cf. Haraway 1997: 178–179, 2000a: 86; Bryld & Lykke 2000: 6–7; Dinello 2005: 19–21)?

"As I lift the phone, put my feet up, and settle back in the chair before becoming Leila the Sex Kitten, the past few years of my life as a researcher pass before my hot, mascaraed eyes" (Stone 1995c: 243). This is the manner in which Allucquère Rosanne Stone, a prominent cyber theorist and performance artist, a highly influential master mind of cyber discourse and an astute promoter of the posthuman

(see Stone 1992, 1994b [1991], 1995d, 1995e, 1996a), describes her personal experiences and observations concerning "sex and death among the disembodied" in the context of virtual reality, cyberspace and academic discourse (cf. James & Carkeek 1997: 107–110).[206] I cannot help but immediately hear another voice in Stone's words, Baudrillard (1988d [1987]: 24) talking in his apocalyptic tone about the "ecstasy of communication": "When I pick up my telephone the marginal network hooks me up and keeps harping at me with the unbearable good will of that which seeks and claims to communicate"; and I once again feel the thrill remembering how, a moment later, Baudrillard achieves the climax effected by the excess of communication: "I plunge into the *negative ecstasy* of radio" (ibid.: 25; emphasis mine); that is, the ecstasy of the presence of the absent.

This was long ago, in the distant 1980s, when both the "post" and the "cyber" were just starting their spectacular tour through Western academia, the time when cyberspace and the cyborg were still in their innocent infancy. And although the ecstasy, as a specific "negative ecstasy," was experienced by Baudrillard in the connection with the telephone and radio, for me, exactly this "plunge," a sudden immersion into something that had no bottom, became a heuristic key to the *theoretical seduction* evoked by the "cyber" as a manifestation of the technological sublime, a techno-imaginary revelation of the spectrality constitutive of the "post" in its radical postality; that is, a sudden fall and dive into something without no solid ground under one's feet, no concrete substance as a supporting structure, nothing but *the vertigo of signifying emptiness*: the negative ecstasy of the nothingness in its overwhelming presence, *the excessive presence of phantomatic objects* (cf. Barlow 1990a, 1990b, 1994a, 1995) – or, as Jameson (1991: 28) describes the moment of the postmodern as a "euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity." In these terms, the "plunge" into the "cyber" is a jump into the air, into the helium-like lightness consisting of "free-floating signifiers." In Baudrillard's (1988a [1986]: 85) words, in the world of the "cyber," in its constitutive mode of being, "*there is only simulation*, which is precisely the facticity of facts" (emphasis in the original).

This is the exciting experience of post-theory, and, by extension, the ecstatic experience of cyber discourse.

206 In the early 1990s, Stone was already a popcultural and academic celebrity on the Californian virtual reality scene as can be seen in the introduction of an interview, according to the authors of which "Allucquere Rosanne (aka Sandy) Stone" had, "needless to say, crossed a lot of borders" (Bratton et al. 1993), also, as a male-to-female transsexual, in terms of sex and gender (see Stone 1999b). In this sense, her writings are dis-located at the intersections of cyborg, gender, and cultural studies, feminist theory, and media production. In an "earlier incarnation," as the authors tell, she was involved in computer programming and neurology, working together with the Bell Telephone Laboratories Special Systems Exploratory Development Group (which invented touch tone on electronic PBX, among other things). She has also been a recording engineer for Jimi Hendrix, done sound work for a number of other groups including The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and Crosby Stills and Nash, and was participating in synthesizer development in Silicon Valley. Later she received her Ph.D. from University of California Santa Cruz's History of Consciousness programme, where she studied with Donna Haraway. She has played a pivotal role in organizing the second and third International Conference on Cyberspace. (Bratton et al. 1993; <http://sandystone.com/cv.html>)

In general, the "ecstasy of communication" (Baudrillard 1988d [1987]) – this Baudrillardian idiom is the emblem of the postmodern; a figure that gives meaning to being in a world in which sex has also turned into an act communication, a flow of information between bodies and their desires and pleasures, surrounded by commodities and media images (see, for example, Kellner 1995; Aaron 1999b; Kraus & Auer 2000b; Mazur & McCarthy 2001; Caputi 2004; Reichert & Lambiase 2006), things that emanate peculiar "intensities," "euphoria" and "hallucinatory exhilaration" (Jameson 1991: 32–33); a world in which, as Baudrillard (1990g [1979]: 129), referring to the *bon mot* of Roland Barthes, says: "Sex is everywhere, except in sexuality" (Barthes 1983b [1970]: 29). In this world, "[t]he genitalia is but a special effect," and hence, "*[s]exuality is but a ritual of transparency*" (Baudrillard (1988d [1987]: 32; emphasis in the original) in a cultural constellation in which "*[i]mages have become our true sex objects*" (ibid.: 35; emphasis in the original).

And indeed, it was not only the technoutopian, neoliberal and cyberdelic strand of postmodern millennialism in the form of "Californian ideology" (Barbrook & Cameron 2001 [1995]) that set the scene in terms of "theory" promoting new technologies in the California of the early 1990s, the "INcredible home of Disneyland, Hollywood, Silicon Valley, and LSD culture" (Sirius 1997: 12). It was Baudrillard, the furiously celebrated theory star of *postmodernism* as a new academic ideology (see Kellner 1989; Gane 1991a, 1991b; Levin 1996; Zurbrugg 1997; Butler 1999; Grace 2000), who finally delivered both the key ideas and the appropriate vocabulary to make sense of all that was about to become "cyber" in the nineties (and, no doubt, beyond that). Along with the "ecstasy of communication" it was Baudrillardian "simulation" and "hyperreality" that opened up the vision of the coming virtual world, a world in which you can "leave the body behind" and experience the immersion in the immateriality of virtuality, the realm of pure information in the form of digitality (see, for example, Benedikt 1994 [1991]; Loader 1997a; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Armitage & Roberts 2002b; Crampton 2003; Bell et al. 2004; Haney 2006; Jahshan 2007).

If, under the sign of the postmodern, there is no presence in the present, in the world of the "cyber," all that is virtual is real.

The "Sexual Performance" of "Performative Bodies"

This is the context of the *cyberia*, "life in the trenches of hyperspace" (Rushkoff 1994), the technoeuphoric cultural scene and state of mind effected by Californian ideology, a world "on the edge of a tremendous nervous breakthrough" (Sirius 1997: 12), in which Stone experienced the moment of revelation. And it is precisely in this context that, as Stone (1995c: 243) says, "I was in the process of becoming Leila the Sex Kitten," a polysexual virtual multiple person who enjoys sex by enacting it not in the flesh, but as an exchange of information, as a flow of what Stone (1995e: 94–95) calls "tokens," in my read-

ing, sexual-semiotic signs without stable referents or, rather, *without referents at all*;[207] in other words, post-sexual signs as "free-floating signifiers" peculiar to the postmodern.

This is, in the constellation of American high-technology, the idea of phone sex and as its derivation, cybersex: *sex as a limitless experimentation in the name of "the sexual" in the laboratory of virtual corporeality* (cf. Grosz 1994b; Vasseleu 1997 [1994], 1999, 2002). For Stone, cyberspace, a "consensual hallucination" (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 67), was precisely the revelation in the light of which reality in itself had to be defined anew, defined in terms of the "cyber" (see Stone 1994 [1991]; cf. Kellner 1995: 299–327; in terms of the virtualization of the "sexual," cf. Žižek 1994: 2; 1997a: 56–70, 1999d: 55–56, 2001c: 33–47, 2006: 191, 1995a, 1996b). As Stone reminds us:

> *Cyberspace*. The very name conjured by William Gibson's mad, brilliantly dystopian vision of the ultimate collision between society and communication technics. I spent my first few years as an academic convincing other social scientists that such a space existed, that interactions within it were social in character, and that such interactions had meaning. (Stone 1995c: 243; cf. Rucker et al. 1992; Leary 1994a)

What is important here is that, for Stone, the idea of cyberspace gave meaning to sexual encounters in and through virtual corporeality based on a sexualized form of telepresence, that is, phone sex. As Stone says, "[m]y first encounter with virtual worlds was through studying those social groups who understand better than anyone else the relations between bodies and technologies, virtuality and desire – phone sex workers" (Stone 1995c: 244). According to Stone (1994b [1991]: 102), phone sex workers were, in fact, engaged in the same research project with "computer scientists and engineers working on VR [virtual reality] systems" that involved "making human visible in the virtual spaces." For both of them, it was about "representing the human body through limited communication channels," and both groups did this "by *coding cultural expectations as tokens of meaning*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). It is in this manner that these "workers" experienced in practice

> how information is transformed and compressed in social interaction, and from the point of view communications technology *phone sex is quite simply about practical applications of data compression*. Usually sex involves as many of the

207 It is important to observe that in what follows the conception of sexuality as a fluid, volatile and mutable construction, as a deliberate *option*, derives from Stone's personal experiences as a male-to-female transsexual, a person without a fixed sexual identity. As Stone says: "I still have women lovers and women still choose me as a lover. I have a male lover currently and that makes me bisexual; and because I have had and will continue to have transsexual lovers, that makes me polysexual. Believe me, there is nothing more interesting than being in bed with another transy because of the way identity continually moves and changes between you." (Clarke 1995). For me, of course, transsexualism, and by extension, *all* forms of sexuality, is not the problem; sexuality, indeed, is a polyvalent notion. Stone's sexual voluntarism, however, can become a problem if *all* sexuality is seen in terms of transsexual experience. The problem is sexual reductionism that is seen most clearly in what Judith Butler (1990: 151) calls the "heterosexual matrix" or "compulsory heterosexuality." Allthough the sex change operation is a real option (chosen by Stone), sexual freedom is not the same as the idea that you can *choose* your sexuality: *it is a sexuality that chooses you*, and *this* leaves no options for you.

> senses as possible. Taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing – and, for all I know, short-range psychic interactions – all work together to heighten the erotic sense. Consciously or unconsciously phone sex workers translate all the modalities of experience into audible form. They start with a complex, detailed set of behaviours, translate them into a single sense modality, and send them down an ordinary phone line. At the other end of the line the recipient of all this effort reconstitutes the tokens into a fully detailed set of images and interactions in multiple sensory modes. (Stone 1995c: 244; emphasis mine)

In this context, what is "being sent back and forth over the wires isn't merely information, it's *bodies*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). These bodies, however, as Stone (1994b: 103) emphasizes in her highly influential text under the title "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up? Boundary Stories about Virtual Cultures," consist not of the flesh but of "tokens of meaning."[208] According to Stone, similarly to the virtual reality engineers, the "sex workers are in the business of constructing tokens that are recognized *as objects of desire*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In this sense, "[p]hone sex is the process of provoking, satisfying, *constructing* desire through a single mode of communication, the telephone" (ibid.; emphasis in the original). In this process, "participants draw on a repertoire of cultural codes to construct a scenario that compresses large amounts of information into a very small space"; that is, the sex worker "verbally codes for gesture, appearance, and proclivity, and expresses these as tokens, sometimes in no more than a word" (ibid.; cf. Rheingold 1991: 351–352; Balsamo 1994: 138–139; O'Brien 1999: 85–87; in the context of feminist cyberspace theory, cf. Monroe 1999: 68–70; in terms of "cyborg translation," cf. Robinson 2003: 369–385; for a contextualization in terms of professional pornography, see Slade 2001: 726–733).

Indeed, sex within a phone sex session is a linguistic performance, a discursive construct, which in its own way demonstrates that sexual desires and pleasures are not "natural" facts of the body, but cultural codifications of corporeality, affective states of performative bodies in the process of sexual performance (cf. Butler 1990, 1993; Grosz & Probyn 1995; Senft & Horn 1996a; with regard to Stelarc's prosthetic performances, cf. Farnell 2000a, 2000b; for the codification of bodies in the digital media, see Hansen 2006; in terms of the "affective turn," cf. Clough & Halley 2007; in the context of "affective computing," cf. Picard 2000 [1997]).

> The salient fact here is that when people are doing phone sex, they construct bodies for each other using the limited bandwith medium of the telephone. This means voice exclusively, although in some of the environments, sound effects are used. The thing that we learned from this is that people are quite willing to convert very complex experiences into simple explanations which I called tokens as a way of conveying a lot of information in a very small space. Considering the phone sex community as one which understands a set

208 This article of Stone's, one of the founding texts of cyber discourse, is a contribution to the collection of writings entitled *Cyberspace: First Steps*, edited by Michael Benedikt (1994 [1991]); a publication that by bringing together views and visions of burgeoning new technologies of what, at the time, was designated as cyberspace *and/or* – this ambivalence is constitutive to the very matter – virtual reality defined the terms in which this new paradigm of computer technology was, and still is, understood: literally a *heavenly vision* of a future in which disembodiment was to be the most pleasurable mode of being (for paradigmatic examples, see Barlow 1990a, 1990b; Russell 1990a, 1990b).

> of cues it is possible by issuing one of these cues as *a speech act* to elicit a very complex response from the person at the other end. This is only possible when both ends of the conversation understand what the tokens are and how to unpack them. The metaphor I use for this is sending someone *a little compressed foam plastic animal* which when you dip it in hot water at the other end expands into something much larger. (Stone 1998; emphasis mine; cf. Rötzer 1994: 108–109)

These "little compressed foam plastic animals," in fact, are the obscure objects of desire not only in phone sex, and, as its extension, in cybersex, but also sexual objects in general, according to contemporary cultural theory, exemplified above by Žižek's conception of virtual sex, sex in the "noosphre" of the "cyber." In this sense, sexual desire is in itself *always already* virtual, an effect of signifiers, the "tokens" in Stone's phone sex, a mode of sex in which

> desire appears as a product of the tension between embodied reality and the *emptiness of the token*, in the forces that maintain the preexisting codes by which the token is constituted. The client mobilizes expectations and preexisting codes for body in the modalities that are not expressed in the token; that is, tokens in phone sex are purely verbal, and the client uses cues in the verbal token to construct a multimodal object of desire with attributes of shape, tactility, odor, etc. This act is thoroughly individual and interpretive; out of a highly compressed token of desire the client constitutes meaning that is dense, locally situated, and socially particular. (Stone 1994b: 103; emphasis mine)

These "bodies," emerging from the "emptiness of the token," bodies that are *reconstituted* by "data compression" are, as Stone emphazises, "*not physical objects*, but the information necessary to reconstruct the meaning of body to almost any desired depth and complexity" (Stone 1995c: 244; emphasis mine; cf. Rötzer 1998c; Whitty 2003).

Here, at last, we have found the key to the future of sex in the sense of *future sex*: "sex" with non-physical objects, post-sex in the pleasure garden of the techno-imaginary: para-sexual *jouissance* in the virtual reality of language.

The "Crown of Creation": A "Person Alone at a Keyboard"

Virtual bodies in phone sex, indeed, are imaginary bodies, phantom bodies that exist – it is appropriate to emphasize – *only* in the head of the client; but nevertheless, these "bodies," as aural *representations* of sexual desires and pleasures, have *effects* on the physical body of the client, a body that is aroused and enjoys pleasure *in the act of masturbation,* curiously, not discussed by Stone, nor by other cyber theorists who focus only on the *desire* for sex, but not on the practice of sex act (cf. Foucault 1983b [1982]: 242–43); a sexual act that in its physicality is not virtual but absolutely real, a pleasurable experience of one's own body as a sexual body in its unique material existence, as the very substance of the sexual (whatever the sexual in itself happens to be). Although from the point of view of the sex worker, virtual bodies, indeed, consist only of contingent (although culturally codified) "tokens," the client's body

is not a sign combination, but, in very real terms, *flesh* that is never, and can never become, virtual.[209]

This notwithstanding, in Stone's world, the world of cyber discourse, virtual sexuality is an experimental laboratory for the virtualization of the body. According to Stone (1995c: 244–245), the "fact that we can and do deal quite effectively with bodies through single-mode narrow-bandwidth communication is a recent development, but one which is merely a continuation of shifts in the way cultural codes work" (cf. Haraway 1991a: 171–172; cf. Hansen 2006: 103–104; in terms of "bodies-in-formation" in the constellation of new military technology, cf. Dillon & Reid 2009: 72–77). In this manner, the body, for Stone, is about sign constructions, a matter of signifiers that circulate in cyberspace in the form of information; bodies that are here and now only virtually. This is the mode of "the sexual" in virtual sex: *sex with signifiers in the virtual reality of language*, or, as Sherry Turkle (1995: 14–15), after learning her "French lessons," says, "sexual congress is the exchange of signifiers" (cf. Angerer 1999a: 35–36; Sconce 2003: 190–192; Downes 2005: 27–36; Cusset 2008 [2003]: 248–259; in terms of "romantic roots of postmodern promises" in advertising, cf. Power & Stern 1998: 209–210) – a form of sex that resembles Žižek's (1994b, 1995) conception of virtual sex as an instance of "courtly love," sex as the pleasure of the imaginary. For Stone, however, virtual sex does not signify a return to medieval times, but a large-scale historical process, a cultural progress, finally leading, like through a teleological predestination, straight to Californian cyberculture, culminating in the virtualization of the sexual.

> For virtual sex to be possible, other things had to happen – the disappearance of public spaces and the role of the body as spectacle within them, the elaboration of interior space in houses into specialized rooms, the shift from benches to chairs, the development of the diary and the interior monologue, the use of mirrors, portraiture, psychoanalysis, the increasing specialization of work – an evolving wry commentary on the sovereign subject taken to its illogical conclusion. In this scenario *the crown of creation is a person alone at a keyboard*. But beyond the screen is another social world which – perhaps problematically – possesses some of the important characteristic of our rapidly vanishing public spaces. (Stone 1995c: 244–245; emphasis mine)

The "crown of creation" as a "person alone at a keyboard," this, indeed, is not only the paragon of cybersex as "sex" at the interface; that is, the idea of monadic sex, sexual desires and pleasures of postmodern monads for which all that is sexual is about self-sex, sex in, through and around one's own body. But, beyond that, as the "crown of creation," a "person alone at a keyboard" is, in the manner of the "post," a very reincarnation of the Freudian *Prothesengott*

209 Moreover, in her conception of phone sex, Stone does not make any difference between the aural, the textual and the visual as modalities of the virtual, to say nothing of the difference of the virtual in sense perception, and as an aspect of imagination and the imaginary (cf. Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). For this reason, Stone's equation of phone sex, cyberspace and virtual reality amounts to generalizations that serve, and in this sense, proliferate, only the rhetorics around the "cyber"; this, of course, is not exceptional: this is precisely the way cyber discourse works: cyber discourse, in itself, is a construction of "tokens."

in its postmodern form (see Freud 1972a [1930]: 451; cf., for example, Berr 1990: 161–163, 1988, 1989; Gray & Mentor 1995: 222–229; Cole 1998: 272; Kull 2007: 58–60; Foster 2004); a being for which there is nothing organic without the prosthetic, a being for which the prosthetic has taken the place of the organic. This is the world of the cyborg, a prosthetic being for which body supplementation is its very mode of existence. This is the "prosthetic God" under the sign of the "cyber." As Haraway (1985: 66) says, the "cyborg is our ontology"; that is, in "the era of techno-biopolitics" we are living in entirely new conditions of the corporeal in which the "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991e: 249).

In these terms, sex at the interface is prosthetic sex; sex with the prosthetic organs of the cyborg.

2.5 The Art of Sexual Transgression in Terms of the Technological

> In some ways, sexual transgression is like a series of mirrors as the extension of one transgression leads to other transgressions, which are then reflected back onto and through public opinions, as well as through social practice and understanding. Information technologies have been instrumental in this transformation, reconfiguring perceptions of transgressive sex by providing access to highly eroticized sexual imagery and consumer demand for a wide range of sex products. […] As a consequence, the boundaries of transgressive behaviour, emotions and sensualities are continually being challenged and extended.
>
> Hastings Donnan and Fiona Magowan (2009a: 21)

> Pomosexuality lives in the space in which all other non-binary forms of sexual and gender identity reside – a boundary-free zone in which fences are crossed for the fun of it, or simply because some of us can't be fenced in. It challenges either/or categorizations in favor of largely unmapped possibility and the intense charge that comes with transgression. It acknowledges the pleasure of that transgression, as well as the need to transgress limits that do not make room for all of us.
>
> Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel (1997a: 23)

If, as Haraway (1991a: 149–150) says, it is not only "contemporary science fiction" that is "full of cyborgs," "creatures simultaneously animal and machine," but "[m]odern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that was not generated in the history of sexuality," and, if there nevertheless is something in the world of the cyborg which Haraway calls "cyborg 'sex'" that "restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" (ibid.: 150), what, then, is "the sexual" in these terms, "the sexual" that, although it is not constitutive of the generative condition of the cyborg, this notwithstanding, is somehow implied by "cyborg 'sex'"? In other words, if, in the world of the cyborg, the sexual has no longer anything to do with procreation and reproduction (ibid.: 181), and is, as such, *pure sex*, what is "the sexual" in the "sex" of Harawayan "cyborg 'sex'"?

As if the things were not complicated enough, Stone (1994b [1991]: 104), searching for what she calls an "apparatus for the production of body" in "virtual systems," asks, "how, if they do, will people make love in cyberspace"? An interesting question, indeed, particularly, if related to Harawayan "cyborg 'sex,'" which, at least through the affinity that Stone has to the Harawayan cyborg world (see, for example, Stone 1994b: 108–111, 1995: 22, 42, 188; Gamble 2002: 41–44), is related to Stone's conception of "the sexual" in terms of the "cyber" (for the peculiar seductivity of the Harawayan cyborg, see, for example, Murphie & Potts 2003: 116–121; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Badmington 2000b; Lykke 2000 [1996]; Munnik 2001 [1999]; Nguyen 2003; Land 2006; Clark 2009; in terms of "cyborg intimacy," see Kaloski 1999 [1997]: 205–206; for "the vampire and the cyborg embrace," see Tobias 2006: 161–162; for "machine as Messiah," see Larson 2004). But, instead of answering this question, Stone (1994b: 104) only states cryptically that "everyone is still *preorgasmic* in virtual reality" (emphasis mine).

"Preorgasmic" – what is it and how does it relate to Harawayan "cyborg 'sex'"? And as if this cryptic remark would not make things even more complicated, they become really complicated when we read the objection made by Elizabeth Reid in her study concerning "sex" in "text-based virtual realities"; as she explains referring to Michael Heim's (1994 [1991]) article "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace":

> Cyborg bodies are not, as Stone claims, "preorgasmic." The "erotic ontology of cyberspace" lies most clearly in its concentration of the erogenous into the imaginative. Cyborg bodies are, in many ways, superior to their actual counterparts. They cannot tire, stumble, or subject their inhabitants to any of the embarrassments or failures that flesh is prone to. Thus *cyborg sex is a concentration of the erotic, a purifying of prurient imagination, a romantic idealisation of sexual encounters worthy of the most airbrushed Hollywood art*. (Reid 1996 [1994]: 341)

This is fantastic, indeed. But, in order to understand the complicated relations between the positions of Haraway, Stone and Reid it is advisable to return to the departure. So, once again: "preorgasmic" – what is it? Although this question, of course, is not as complicated as the question concerning the Lacanian "Borromean knot" (see Lacan 1999 [1975/1972–1973]; cf. Roudinesco 1990 [1986]: 563), it is complex enough taking into account that, after centuries Spinoza's (1996 [1677]: 71) simple remark, still today, "no one has yet determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body can do from the laws of Nature alone" (cf. Deleuze 1988 [1970/1981]: 17–18, 60; Thacker 2004: 184–187; Manning 2007: 143; Herzogenrath 2010: 40–42, 46–49; in terms of the Nietzschean conception of the body in the sense of *Leib*, cf. Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 35–37, 1969c [1889]: 154, 1972a [1872]: 22–26, cf. Tambornino 2002: 73–100; Caysa 2000, 2003). Thus, how, precisely, do Haraway's "lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates" and Stones's "preorgasmic in virtual reality" belong to the order of "the sexual" – or do they belong to it at all, and if they belong to it, is it the same order?

2.5.1 Virtual Orgasm and the Birth of the Cyborg

With regard to Haraway's and Stone's statements we have an equation here that seems to be unsolvable, although both of them appear to suggest that there is to be found a common denominator. Sex, sexuality and the orgasmic, on the one hand, and the cyborg, the body and virtuality, on the other, are somehow related to one another; but then again, they obviously preclude each other.

This contradictory situation seems, indeed, to be a *cul de sac*, or, in terms of postmodern theory, a Derridean *aporia* (see, for example, Norris 1982: 49–50, 101, 1987: 135–136, 214, 219–220; Royle 2003a: 92–93; Malabou & Derrida 2004: 249–254; Wolfreys 2004: 19–25).

Luckily, there is a solution – even an elegant one – which cuts through the Gordian knot at a stroke, but, at the same time, alas, creates only new prob-

lems. That notwithstanding, studying the equation of "sex" and the "cyber" in feminist terms, Reid (1996 [1994]: 338) has found the hidden relationship between the "cyborg" and "the sexual" in "cyborg sexuality" in a realm in which the "body" and the "virtual" meet one another in a state of "consensual hallucination" (cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]: 67; Hillis 1999: 22–23; Foster 2005: 61, 232–246; Michaud 2008: 69–70), thus creating an entirely new "stage for sexual expression" called by the generic name "MUDs"; a mode of existence in virtuality embracing, in fact, *nota bene*, a "*sensual* hallucination" that enables the experience of the "physical in a non-physical environment" (Reid 1996: 338; emphasis mine).

Here, in fact, we come not only to the conceptual genesis of "sex" in the world of the cyborg, but to the very origin of the cyborg itself; an origin that, at the same time, by implication, is the condition of possibility of "cyborg 'sex'" as we know it since the coming-to-the-world of the cyborg effected by Harawayan "cyborg writing" (see Haraway 1985; cf., for example, Davis 2000: 133–135; Cornis-Pope 2001: 89–94; Graham 2002: 200–220; Olson 1995):

> *Cyborgs are born out of virtual sex*. At the moment of *virtual orgasm* the line between player and character is the most clouded and the most transparent. Who it is that is communicating becomes unclear, and whether passion is being simulated on or transmitted through the MUD becomes truly problematic. Born from primeval MUD, these cyborgs redefine gender, identity and the body. In this part of cyberspace, a place as far divorced from the natural world and the animal, as far from the flesh as human inventiveness can get, the lines between the animal and the conscious are erased. (Reid 1996: 341; emphasis mine)[210]

As we can see, despite Haraway's contention above that cyborgs are predicated upon "couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that was not generated in the history of sexuality," the matrix in which cyborgs are born still has, according to Reid, something to do with the sexual: "cyborgs are born out of *virtual sex*" (emphasis mine); that is, similarly as creation supposes a creator, birth not only implies, but expressly presupposes, impregnation (in the sense of insemination, conception and fertilization), or otherwise we witness the miracle of parthenogenesis (cf. Halacy 1965a 167; Adams 1994: 184–217; Benesch 2002: 92–93; Ferreira 2005: 71–78; Parisi 2004).

210 MUDs, or Multi-User Domains (or Dimensions or Dungeons) are text-based, interactive virtual worlds, located on the Internet, that allow many users simultaneously create characters ("avatars"), move around in various "rooms," and communicate with each other by typing texts on the computer screen. As shared fantasy "spaces" or "places" they derive from role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons. The earliest multi-player games ("mazewar") existed in 1977 on the ARPAnet, followed in 1978–1979 by proper MUDs, such as "MUD1" and "Scepter of Goth," and similar adventure games in which the aim was to kill monsters and obtain treasures. In 1989, at Carnegie Mellon University, a new type MUD was programmed, called "TinyMUD", in which participants were able to create their own "worlds" together as on-going stories. In 1992, Pavel Curtis of Xerox Parc developed the first non-game MUD as a virtual community for professional purposes. Since the 1990s, hundreds of various MUDs have proliferated all over the world as both game-worlds and platforms for interest groups (see, for example, McRae 1996: 246–247; Ito 1997: 89–91; Jordan 1999: 60–68; Bruckman 1996 [1993], 2001 [1998]; Bruckman & Resnick 1996 [1995]; Curtis 1996 [1992], 2001 [1998]; Bruckman & Jensen 2002).

Perverting Perversion in Cyberspace

But, and this is the clou without which the cyborg is not intelligible, be it approached from Haraway's or Reid's standpoint: the cyborg, in its very manner in which it is constructed, deconstructs all opposites; that is, in the world of the cyborg, there is no "either/or," what there is is always – *always already* – "both/and" in their contingent and contradictory combinations. And it is in this way that the coming into existence of the cyborg is related to the orgasmic, namely "virtual orgasm." This is the *copula* in the equation of "sex" and the "cyber," the copula that enables "cyborg 'sex'" (cf. Barr 1993: 118–119; Apter 1999: 216), "sex" in the world of the cyborg in its own idiosyncratic manner, a manner that is beyond the order of the Same (cf. Irigaray 1985a [1974]: 44, 189–190, 252–254, 303–306, 332–334, 1985b [1977]: 106–107, 113–114, 134, 141–152; in terms of "fluid subjects" as a mode of Irigarayan being, see Volkart 2006; in the context of reproduction technologies, see Ferrell 2006: 112–128).

According to Reid, there is no doubt that this mode of sex – at least by the name – is the same as sex in Haraway's conception, only with the difference that Reid (1996: 341) has left out the quotation marks: "cyborg sex is a concentration of the erotic, a purifying of prurient imagination, a romantic idealisation of sexual encounters worthy of the most airbrushed Hollywood art." *Cyborg sex*, not the Harawayan "cyborg 'sex'" – that is now the form of sexual pleasure in which we can enjoy *virtual orgasm*, provided, of course, that we have become a cyborg; a cyborg that, as we my recall, does not *necessarily* belong to the order of the sexual, but can, nevertheless, also enjoy the specific pleasures of Harwayan "cyborg 'sex'" since in the world of the cyborg, quotations marks can quote anything: like the "either/or" distinctions, distinctions in general no longer make sense in terms of the cyborg.

Now, if one thinks, as it is usual, that for an orgasm to be an orgasm it must be real, Reid teaches us something much better. The orgasmic in cyborg sex is, as Reid says, "as far from the flesh as human inventiveness can get." In other words, the experience of orgasm in the world of the cyborg releases us from the shackles of the flesh, or, rather, as cyber-theorists, in their noble "body loathing" (Dery 1996: 234–235), prefer to say, from the burden of *meat* (ibid.: 247–249; cf. Gibson 1995 [1984]: 12; Case 1996: 55, 91, 187; Springer 1996: 62–64, 70, 74, 77, 85; Vint 2007: 103–104). If this is possible – and, as the Krokers, speaking about the digital and the virtual, keep saying, "why not?" (see, for example Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 39, 126, 126, 132; Kroker 2004b: 170, 184) – we are on the way to some new paradigm of pleasure. Accordingly, virtual orgasm, I assume, is apparently as good as, if not even better than, *jouissance* expressed by, and experienced in, "French theory" (see Starr 1995; Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Bourg 2007; Cusset 2008); or, what is still better: virtual orgasm *combined* with the *jouissance* of "French theory" in the realm of post-theory, a realm of theory in which "the sexual" and "the textual" are intrinsically intertwined.

Indeed, there are many similarities between the world of "French theory" and the MUD world described by Reid (cf. Turkle 1995: 14–17). This is the world of "Furry MUCK," a world in which you can enjoy your bodiless body in the state of "Mudding" (cf. Dery 1996: 204–206; Jordan 1999: 60–68; Bell 2001a: 102–104, 174–176, 2001b: 175; Bruckman 1996 [1993], 2001 [1998]; McRae 1996, 1997; Ito 1997, 1998). According to Reid, "FurryMUCK" is:

> an imaginary world populated by conscious animals consciously sensualised, all represented by pure linguistic symbolism and represented within the confines of electricity, silicon and magnetism. At the margins of physicality, these *Furry cyborgs play with the margins of sexuality*. They have none of the boundaries of the actual to confine them. They may take on any physiology that passion and imagined convenience invites. Any configuration of human and animal components may be mixed to create as many sexual possibilities as can be imagined. Bisexual, multisexual, polysexual – they can be all, but always consensual. For the players there is always the off-button; for the cyborg characters, implements of sensual overload are as controlled or as uncontrolled, as gentle or as cruel, as the simulation demands. *Perversion is as common on MUDs as in the "real world," but in cyberspace perversion can be perverted into any form*. (Reid 1996: 342; emphasis mine; cf. Stenslie 1996, 2000b, 2006)

Once again, if one has suffered from the burden of the flesh time and time again, this is fantastic, indeed, even more: this is magnificent, awesome, liberating; this is the ultimate form of emancipation: no longer the dark world of de Sade, but, instead, the luminous world of the "cyber" is the salvation of "the sexual"; a world in which perversion is perverted into the subversion of the whole millennia old edifice of morality and, accordingly, in which all forms of perversions are perverted into ever-new forms of pure pleasure, the pleasure of what I call *post-sexual illumination*, the ultimate revelation of the unending capacities of the body set free from the constraints of culture, that is, of being human. Although Harywayan "cyborg 'sex'" may be a different mode of cyborgian sex, in one respect, at least, we find a similarity with Reid's "FurryMUCK" world: the idea of perversity. As Haraway (1991a: 151) says, the "cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity"; in this sense, the cyborg is "oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence" – as are Reid's cyborgs which play "with the margins of sexuality" in their transgressive cyber-sexual games (Reid 1996: 342).

According to Julian Dibbell (1994: 243), "netsex, tinysex, virtual sex – however you name it," is also the most extraordinary activity in the "strange, etheral universe" constituted by MUDs. "Sex" in these terms, according to Dibbell, is:

> possibly the headiest experience the very heady world of MUDs has to offer. Amid flurries of even the most cursorily described caresses, sighs, and penetrations, the glands do engage, and often as throbbingly as they would in a real-life assignation – sometimes even more so, given the combined power of anonymity and textual suggestiveness to unshackle deep-seated fantasies. And if the virtual setting and the interplayer vibes are right, who knows? The heart may engage as well, stirring up passions as strong as many that bind lovers who observe the formality of trysting in the flesh. (ibid.)

For Reid, there is no question about "who knows," she is very well aware that MUD sex exceeds all the limits of what one usually thinks of as constituting sexual experience. "Furry cyborgs," these strange beings that transgress the boundaries between the human, the animal and the machine, these sex monsters in FurryMUCK, do not, perhaps, belong to Bataille's world, nor to the world of de Sade – but then again, "who knows" (cf. Pettman 2002: 40–60, 94, 131, 178; Attwood 2010: 1–13; Botting & Wilson 1998; Pfister & Zweifel 2002); nevertheless, they are exemplary creatures of the ethos of transgression in their ability to go beyond all the conventional conceptions of the sexual. It is precisely therefore that "sex" in the world of the "cyber" is not only liberating, whether in the sense of liberation or libertinage, but, more fundamentally, emancipating in the true sense of the Enlightenment (see, for example, Rousseau & Porter 1987b; Rousseau 1991; Darnton 1994, 1996, 2002; Porter 1994, 1995, 2003a; Hunt 1996).

But, as Reid points out, the pleasures of MUD sex are only pleasures for those who really know what they are doing; that is, MUD sex presupposes a specific mode of expertise, *connoisseurship*:

> In the dim recesses of Internet cyberspace, there are MUDs, known only by word of mouth – or touch of keyboard – with themes as controversial as that of any specialist brothel. Kinks of any kind can be found if looked for, all bent to the demands of the cyborg entities who portray them for the amusement of the humans shadowed behind their technologies. FurryMUCK is the lightest side of this twisting of cyborg gender and sex – the fluffiest and the snuggliest. Darker cyberspaces can be found, painted not in cartoon colours and textured with fur, but depicted in the dark techno-organicism of H. R. Giger and texted with all the danger and poetry of Pauline Reage. (Reid 1996: 342)

Whether from the perspective of the postmodern Baroque of Giger's techno-surrealism or the subtle sadomasochism of Pauline Réage (see, for example, Dery 1996: 82, 88, 281–282; Cavallaro 2000: 88–89; Latham 2002a: 229; Pfister & Zweifel 2002: 147–152) – "sex" in terms of FurryMUCK is something really specific: it is an extraordinary way of exceeding the limits not only of bourgeois morality, but, beyond that, the constraints of the body itself, the limits and limitations of human corporeality, by a radical questioning of "the sexual" in the sexual. Although, as we have seen, there are some similarities between Harawayan cyborgs and MUD cyborgs, especially in terms of perversity, the most important difference between them is that MUD cyborgs do not avoid dimensions of sexuality that are exactly the anathema of being a cyborg for Haraway. In these terms, MUD sex is exclusive in its inclusiveness – a genuinely postmodern way of enjoying the differences of differnces: the differences enabled by the logic of *différance* (see Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]; cf. Norris 1987: 64–69; Bannet 1989: 202–227; Lagemann & Gloy 1998: 121–152).

Despite – or, perhaps, because of – certain affinities with Haraway's cyborg world, Reid's universe of "Furry cyborgs," in fact, is a post-Harawayan world. That is, in contrast to the Harawayan cyborg world, as Reid (1996: 342) says, the "cyborgs on MUDs *do not*" have "no truck" with "bisexuality," "pre-oedipal sym-

biosis," or "other seductions to organic wholeness" (emphasis mine; cf. Haraway 1991a: 150). Although, in partial confirmation of Haraway's cyborg, MUD cyborgs are "literally the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism," they nevertheless *"do not* reject the labels of the father culture" (Reid 1996: 342; emphasis mine). Their commitment to Harawayan "partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" is "expressed through the flaunting of cultural symbols and the literal inscription upon their virtual bodies of the signs of who they want to be": being "*transsexual, transvestite, bisexual, superhuman and anthropomorphic*," "MUD bodies can embrace and be embraced by each of these richly coded definitions" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Kolko & Reid 1998: 213–227; Schaap 2002: 13–16; Clark 2004b: 189–195).

"Sex" in the "FurryMUCK World"

As we can see, the art of transgression is the idea of Furry sex (cf. Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 51, 63; Aaron 1999a: 4–9; Andreadis 1999: 125–140; Schaffer 2002a [1999]: 148–150; for a conceptual overview, see Jenks 2003; Wolfreys 2008). If the Harawayan cyborg, as a hybrid being is an emblem of, as Mizuko Ito (1997: 87) summarizes, "imploding boundaries between human and animal, organism and machine, and the physical and non-physical" (cf. Hardt & Negri 2000: 205–218; Melzer 2006: 89–94; Suchman 2007: 241–282), Reid's cyborgs even exceed the paradigm of the Harawayan cyborg: *Furry sex is not a gender issue*: Furry cyborgs have *always already* transgressed the paradigm of gender altogether. Thus, the most striking difference to Haraway's cyborg is that MUD cyborgs "do not exist in a 'post-gender world'" (Reid 1996: 343; cf. Haraway 1991a: 151; cf. Peppers 1997: 164–165, 182; Adam 2000: 283–284; Parisi 2004: 35–36; Sofoulis 2003: 90–91; Thornham 2007: 140–143; for Haraway's ambivalence towards the idea of a "post-gender world," see Haraway in Penley & Ross 1992a: 20; Lykke et al. 2004 [2000]: 328–329; Gane 2006: 137–138). The reason is – as odd as it sounds with regard to the Harawayan cyborg that is expressly *embodied*, although beyond the parameters of gender in the sense of "post-gender" (see Haraway 1991a: 173–181) – that MUD cyborgs are "*quasi-disembodied*" (Reid 1996: 343; emphasis mine): from the very beginning, they are beyond the binary opposition between the embodied and the disembodied.

In this respect, the morphology of MUD cyborgs consists of morphing (cf., for example, Dery 1996: 229–237; Larson 2004: 191–204; Toffoletti 2007: 101–102; Sobchack 2000; Zylinska 2002b), and thus:

> They do not attempt to posit their identities as amorphous, but instead revel in the possibilities of *body-hopping*. Play is not with escape from the claims of the flesh, but with the cultural meanings attached to different bodies. The adoption of masculinity, femininity, androgyny, animality or the more fantastical meanings attributed to fictional races or genders, is as easily accomplished as might be the donning of a new set of clothes. Thus clothed in the borrowed trappings of other's cultural expectations and imaginings, cyborg selves interact in fashions that are based both on superficial appearances and on an acceptance of whatever the individual wants to be. *They do not reject gender, or any other signs*

> *of identity, but play a game with them, freeing symbols from their organic referents and grafting the meanings of those symbols onto their virtual descriptors*. (Reid 1996: 343; emphasis mine)

In this way, as Reid (1996: 338) says, MUDs in general are "as grimily sensual as their name suggests," and precisely as such they embrace a "stage for sexual expression." What, however, is specific to FurryMUCK is that "questions of social and sexual identity, and of the unfixed and unfixable nature of the cyborg body, are prominent" on it (ibid.: 339). In this sense:

> every character on Furry is *inhuman*, and most are anthropomorphised animals clad only in virtual fur. Cats and bears are legion, most of them sleek-furred and svelte or broad and brawny. The nature and culture of the body is the primary theme of FurryMUCK, and the ideal is animalistic allure. Sexuality is a vital aspect of this kind of cyborg body, and most character descriptions reflect this. There are few "mysterious but powerful" mage-warriors on FurryMUCK, but many flashes of velvet-pelted thighs, glints of slitted pupils and touches of sharp-taloned paws. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

All of that is not just words on the screen, fantasy descriptions with suggesting details; as Reid assures, "'touches' is, indeed, the operative word" on FurryMUCK (ibid.), and hence, the sexual pleasure of Furry cyborgs is based precisely on touching, openly or discreetly, even to the extent that the virtual suddenly turns into the physical as soon as one encounters a Furry cyborg in intimate terms.

> FurryMUCK is by far the most "physical" of the MUDs I have encountered. There is much back-scratching, fur-patting, hugging and kissing between Furries, that being the name by which they are both called and self-identified. This virtual touching is rarely overtly sexual when performed in the more public areas of the FurryMUCK world. It is always affectionate, and indeed FurryMUCK is one of the most friendly MUDs I have used. Nevertheless, beneath the affectionate snugging and purring is a strong undercurrent of revelry in the decidedly beautiful and sensual nature of Furry bodies. If one looks for them, areas where semi-public sexual play is common are not hard to find. The FurryMUCK hot-tubs are both popular and well sign-posted with warnings about the nature of the behaviour both allowed and to be expected inside them. (ibid.)

Now, assuming that I want to have a nice time with some cute Furry cyborgs in a hot-tub, what do I have to do? It is not at all difficult to get intimate with a Furry cyborg; in fact, as Reid assures us, the "mechanics of sexual activity on MUDs are very simple": it is a "form of co-authored interactive erotica"; that is, the "players involved in a particular virtual sexual act type out their actions and utterances" (ibid.: 89) – and the fun can begin. Of course, the sexual pleasure thus attained does not only depend on one's own fantasy, but also on a "player's ability to type one-handed" (ibid.) – the art of handicraft peculiar to all forms of cybersex (cf., for example, Turkle 1995: 20; Kaloski 1999 [1997]: 205–206; Bell 2001a: 127; Ben-Ze'ev 2004: 11; Gillis 2004: 96; Koh 2005: 218; in the context of Rousseau and writing, cf. Derrida 1997 [1967]: 147).

Thus, Furry sex – as "hot" as it might be – is always *text sex as a mode masturbation*, self-sex by means of writing. This, of course, in no way diminishes its pleasure; the pleasure of masturbation is one form of sexual pleasure in general,

and how pleasurable it is, only depends on one's own fantasies and manual skills. Accordingly, as Reid (1996: 341) remarks, "MUD sex may never replace actual sex, but it does provide some erotic satisfaction to those who participate in it."

The Superiority of Cyborg Bodies

With regard to Read's overwhelming enthusiastic descriptions of sex in the world of Furry cyborgs above, one can only wonder why Furry sex is now reduced to "some erotic satisfaction"? But, perhaps, the problem – if there is a problem at all – is not sex here but precisely the "erotic"; a mode of sensual pleasure that demands sophistication which is not – who knows? – necessarily compatible with the pleasures on the Furry cyborgian animal farm that is reminiscent of Disneyland.

All the same, as Reid (1996: 340) points out, "[r]eal desire and arousal are evoked between participants, a reaction hugely dependant upon each person's external cultural experience," and for this reason, "*good cybersex* consists of the empathetic understanding of and response to the cultural symbols represented by a partner's symbolic tokens" (emphasis mine; cf. Stone 1994b: 103, 1995c: 244; 1995e: 94–95).

> Such descriptors are loaded with assumptions and meanings; that they can be transmitted along with the text is a tribute not only to the linguistic skill of the interlocutors but to the facility of the virtual medium for such dramatic and intimate play. The human body is represented through narrow bandwidth communication in all its culturally laden fleshiness through the coding of cultural expectations as linguistic tokens of meaning. Desire is no longer grounded in physicality in cyberspace, in triumphant confirmation of the thesis that the most important human erogenous zone is the mind. (Reid 1996: 341; cf. Stone 1995e: 167–170; Turkle 1995: 21; Bogard 1996: 162–163; Leary 1994c [1985])

The "textual nature of MUDs strips the confines of a particular body from players, and allows them the freedom to play with, in and through *any body they desire*" (Reid 1996: 341; emphasis mine). For this reason, "cyborg bodies" in the Furry world are not, as Stone (1994b: 104) claims, "preorgasmic." On the contrary, as Reid has convincingly shown above, Furry cyborgs are not only orgasmic through and through, but, moreover, they are both pre-orgasmic and post-orgasmic – an art of pleasure possible only in a world in which the human, the animal and the machine intertwine with one another. Thus, the "erotic ontology of cyberspace," as Reid emphasizes, referring to Michael Heim's (1994 [1991]) philosophy of the "cyber," lies "most clearly in its concentration of the erogenous into the imaginative" (Reid 1996: 341). *This* is the secret of cyborg sexuality in the Furry world; and it is for this reason that we can now fully understand the deep meaning of Reid's claim above, namely that:

> Cyborg bodies are, in many ways, superior to their actual counterparts. They cannot tire, stumble, or subject their inhabitants to any of the embarrassments or failures that flesh is prone to. (Reid 1996: 341)

In these terms, nothing could be better than sex in a world in which one can overcome the obstacles of the flesh, the curse of being human from the very beginning, from the times of Genesis. And this is exactly the reason why Furry sex, indeed, is an enticing form of transgression, a form of transgression that transgresses all transgressions thus far, even the transgressive transgressivity of Bataille (see, for example, Bataille 1997; cf., for example, Bischof 1984; Botting & Wilson 1998; Pfister & Zweifel 2002): in the Furry world, to paraphraze the Hegelian conception of the dialectics between the rational and the real (see Hegel 1986b [1821]: 24) in terms of the "post," *what is virtual is real, and what is real is imaginary*.

2.5.2 The Libidinal Allurement of the Machine

In the mid-1990s, Australian feminists organized a conference entitled "Women on the Verge" to chart the new possibilities which the emerging applications of computer technology were about to provide for women ("women" as a notion and category that, strangely enough, was at the time still used even by radical academics). As always in the feminist context, the questions concerning the body, gender and sexuality were highlighted in the discussions (cf., for example, Jaggar & Bordo 1989; Grosz & Probyn 1995; Shildrick 1997; Price & Shildrick 1999a; Weber & Bath 2003; Fraser & Greco 2005b; Smelik & Lykke 2008). In her paper "Posthuman or Para-ego? Interactive models of human-technology relations," Zoë Sofoulis (1995), a central figure in Australian feminist cyber/technotheory, considered the question as to how the "perverse and feminine aesthetic and libidinal engagement with technology forms an important counter point and critical foil to the headlong rush to incarnate as prosthetic gods" – indeed, a radical question, as we will see (for a contextualization in terms of cyberfeminism, see, for example, Galloway 2004: 191–195; Hartmann 2004: 37–57; Wajcman 2004: 63–66; Zylinska 2005: 143–158; Hall 1996; Adam 2002; Reiche & Sick 2002; Schaffer 2002b [1999]; Kember 2003; Reiche & Kuni 2004).

"Of course," as Sofoulis (1995) emphasized in her presentation, "it isn't only the feminine that has perverse aesthetic and libidinal relations to technology." On the other hand, it seemed to be clear to her that there are "constraints on the kinds of technologies which might be considered erotic, or to which we might have erotic relations" (ibid.; cf. Haraway 1991a: 151; Brooks 2006; in terms of "polymorphously perverse cyborg," cf. Sobchack 2004: 169; in the Freudian context, cf. Neu 1991; for an affinity between the utopian and the perverse, cf. Whitebook 1996).[211]

211 Referring to a paper by Sally Hacker, Haraway (1992c: 329) speaks of "pornotechnics" which, according to Hacker, refers to "the embodiment of *perverse power relations in the artifactual body*" (emphasis mine). The "heart of pornotechnics is the military as an institution, with its deep roots and wide reach into science, technology, and erotics" (ibid.). In this context, there is to be observed "technical exhilaration" which is "profoundly erotic": "joining sex and power is the designer's touch," and thus "[t]echnics and erotics are the cross hairs in the focusing device for scanning fields of skill and desire" (ibid.). In these terms, technology, as far as it is connected to the military, is always already, from the very beginning, a manifestation of pornological reason, not in the Deleuzean sense, but in the sense of military rationality constitutive of the American military-industrial complex (for the origin of the term "pornology," see Deleuze 1989 [1967]: 17–22; cf. Bogue 1989: 46–47; Falk 1994: 197–198, 214; in terms of "the 'cunning lingua' of desire," cf. Chisholm 1995: 25–34).

The Techno-Eroticism of Prosthetics

Nevertheless, Sofoulis did not leave any doubt as to her position: technology in itself, as such, implies an erotic potential that is there only to be made actual:

> As a great believer in polymorphous perversity I'm happy to acknowledge that any kind of technology can be, probably has been, or is even as we speak being tested for its potential as an object of erotic enjoyment for someone. (Sofoulis 1995)

From a historical perspective, it was obvious, for Sofoulis, that "at any time only certain kinds of technologies seem to become special foci of attention, and inspire *erotic interest, or its sublimated written form, techno-hype*" (ibid.; emphasis mine). Similarly as new computer and digital technologies so also in the past "telescopes, steam trains, electric lights, film, telephone systems, electric appliances, airplanes and television have attracted such interest" (ibid.; cf. Ballard in Springer 1996: 51; for techno-erotic affectivity, see, for example, Haraway 1991i [1989]: 205; Springer 1996: 3–12; Sobchack 1995; Dietrich 1997; Fernbach 2002; in the context of James Joyce, cf. Norris 2006). But also such manifestations of technology as bicycles, vacuum cleaners, electronic cash registers and nuclear power plants, as well as pocket calculators, high tension masts, lift bridges, electric tooth brushes, toasters, GPS navigators, espresso machines, ballistic missiles, chain-saws, pacemakers, radars, electric chairs, CD players, space shuttles, refrigerators, and, of course, mobile phones, and innumerable other things, such as wand mixers, could be erotically attractive (in terms of "the sex appeal of the inorganic," cf. Foster 1996; Perniola 2004 [2000]). As we know, *human sexuality has no limits* (see, for example, Ariès & Béjin 1990 [1982]; Stein 1990a; Dollimore 1991; Stanton 1992a; Porter & Teich 1994b; Weeks 1995b [1985], 1997a [1981]; Bauman 1999; McLaren 1999; Davidson 2001; Bhattacharyya 2002; Eder 2002; Jordan 2002; Potts 2002).

Seductive as all these technological apparatuses, devices and appliances might be, Sofoulis, however, finds more erotic interest in somewhat older technologies:

> I confess to finding myself quite turned on by the rhythmic up and down motion of a large crankshaft in a big steam age machine in the Powerhouse Museum, especially since the curators had replaced one of the crankcase's metal panels with a clear one to reveal the shaft dipping into a reservoir of hot thick oil. *I was hypnotised*. I could better appreciate how the futurists and surrealists could be inspired by the eroticism of machinery, and thought of the sensuous rhythms of factory machinery and domestic objects in Leger's Ballet Mechanique. (Sofoulis 1995; emphasis mine)

"I was hypnotised" – that is the specific techno-erotic effect that is distinctive about all that is "cyber": a *techno-erotic affect* under the impact of which machines and devices, whatever they happen to be, turn into objects of *libidinal investment* (cf. Sobchack 1994: 26–27; Juffer 1998: 230–232; Roden 2002: 94–95, 100–101; in terms of "techno-sex," cf. James & Carkeek 1997: 108–110; as a manifestation of "technofetishism," cf. de Kerckhove 1997 [1995]: 2–3; Jervis 1999: 207–208; Smith 2006: 43, 46–48, 66–68; Sobchack 2006: 23; Muri 2007:

98; Nusselder 2009: 121–123). Whether or not Sofoulis's confession has a nostalgic undertone, it is nevertheless quite obvious that technology fascinates her in a manner that is not just erotic, but, more fundamentally, erotic in the sense that is welling forth from the deep currents of post-theory: the seductive power of the linguistic of language constitutive of all that is "post." In the world of the "post," things are not simply there, rather, they emanate an enticing *vibrancy of presence*, the aura of "the theoretical," the spectral radiation of signification that is beyond meaning, signification that can be understood only in terms of *jouissance*. In other words, the "post" effects a specific rapture in which the real turns into the imaginary.

While the fascination with the eroticism of the machine or machinic eroticism enjoyed by the Futurists and the historical avantgarde (see, for example, Bürger 1974; Bergius 1980, 1981, 1997, 2000; Huyssen 1986; Perloff 1986; Gentile 2003; Berghaus 2005, 2009; von Beyme 2005; Marinetti 2005 [1909]; Poggi 2009) is part of the era of the mechanical, what we have now is a new era, the era of the digital; that is, as Sofoulis says, the "information age," in which "we know lots of women love their computer and that all geek-type *grrrls* can't do without their modems" (Sofoulis 1995; emphasis mine; cf., for example, Senjen & Guthrey 1996: 21–37; Wakeford 1997: 60–61; Goggin 2004: 64–65; Nayar 2004: 304–308; Cherny & Weise 1996; Harcourt 1999).[212] In contrast to the early twentieth century, we are living today in an entirely new world, a world in which the computer has radically redefined not only the notion of technology, but, more fundamentally, the notions of the subject, agency and embodiment. According to Allucquère Rosanne Stone (1995e), in the 1990s we had already reached the "close of the mechanical age," but this notwithstanding what she calls the "war of desire and technology" still continues; that is, although, on the one hand, desire is increasingly predicated upon technology, on the other, their relationship is antagonistic even in the contemporary world.

For Sofoulis, in the mid-1990s, the relationship between desire and technology entailed a new configuration between the textual and the libidinal:

> Bionic appendages and organs, organ transplants and transgenic engineering, heroic surgery, IVF surrogate and other NRT birth events, not to mention the whole range of hybrid techno and body phenomena discussed in the field of "cyber-studies" also get quite a bit textual/libidinal attention. (Sofoulis 1995)

Of course, still in the "information age," the era ruled by the computer, *the* machine of the contemporary world, the erotic – according to its own secret logic – is a highly ambiguous matter, indeed, an enigma like the sexual. What is precisely the highest point of attraction for whom, one can never tell.

212 "Grrrls need modems, and glitter and glue. They need to paste up and express themselves. Modems not only connect grrrls with the world, modems are a conduit for self-empowerment. A bricolage for the 90s, modems and grrrls go together like punk and safety pins. And yes, I am post punk and more funk. Put down that pony, and pick up a computer was our first motto in 1994." (Rosie Cross, the founder of the web site *Geekgirl*, www.geekgirl.com, started in 1995, in Goggin 2004: 65; cf. Senjen & Guthrey 1996: 32–35)

From this point of view, one can understand the tentative questions posed by Sofoulis; for example, "can you ever recall hearing a saucy limeric about a water filter?" (ibid.). "And when was the last time you whiled away a few research minutes furtively reading some juicy netporn centered around a dentist's drill?" (ibid.). "Or read a really raunchy sex scene set in a sewerage treatment plant" (ibid.). Clearly, even in our thoroughly technologized world not just *everything* can be enticing in terms of the erotic – but then again, who knows? The realm of the erotic is as enticing and enigmatic as the sphere of the sexual; and moreover, the complicated relationships between both of them make things even more mysterious. No wonder, for technology is a Freudian matter through and through, a matter ruled by the logic of the unconscious and the uncanny (see Freud 1986b [1919], 1991a [1915]; Grenville 2001b; Royle 2003b; Kelley 2004).

Accordingly, it comes not as a surprise that, to specify the erotic allurement or the libidinal attraction of the machine, Sofoulis deems it appropriate to return to Freud, a man possessing enormous phallic potency in terms of theory, as abundant feminist theorizing around Freud testifies (see, for example, Donovan 2000 [1985]): 105–128; Ramsey 2001: 136–139; Brooks 2006; for the phallus in Harawayan cyborg theory, see Haraway 1991a: 148, 151, 175–176, 1991g: 196, 1997: 144–146; Schneider 2005: 63, 73), and who, precisely for this reason, functions as a synecdoche for the obsession with the phallus, *the suggestive power of the phallus* that is an essential driving force of feminism, its libidinal undercurrent, only consolidated and amplified by Lacan (see, for example, Gallop 1985; Grosz 1990); a *prosthetic organ in terms of theory* generating phallic theory, paradoxically, as the hard core of feminism (see, for example, Moi 1985; Fuss 1989, 1991; Weed & Schor 1997; Jaggar & Young 1998; Gubar 2000; Dever 2004; in terms of "arguing with the phallus," see Campbell 2000), which, in turn, is a central power supply of post-theory. In the light of this it is quite understandable that, although Freud is not the best friend of feminism, he has something important to say with regard to technology – even from a feminist point of view.

> It seems that where techno-eroticism is concerned, we're mainly positioning ourselves like the "prosthetic god" Freud describes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, who with his technological array of artificially extended organs, his technologies, feels he has "become truly magnificent." What interests us most seem to be the technologies that extend or are related to those limbs, organs and functions over which we have conscious control, or select ones which we seek to control (like reproduction). As I've noted, we don't tend to get excited about technological extensions of organs like the intestines, spleen, liver or kidneys: filtration and waste systems. (Sofoulis 1995)

Clearly, here is the end of the erotic for Sofoulis: there is no erotic in the intestines, spleen, liver or kidneys, organs that have the same function as purification technologies – in other words, the removal of filth, or impurity in the sense of the *abject* (see Kristeva 1982 [1980]; Menninghaus 2003 [1999]; Kutzbach & Mueller 2007).

But why stop here? If Sofoulis considers herself as a "great believer in polymorphous perversity" why, then, does she want to constrain, to set a limit to, something that in itself is limitless – namely, human desire, the sense of the erotic, especially if we take seriously the idea of the "perverse" as the very source of the sexual, deeply and diversified discussed precisely by Freud (see, for example, Freud 1981c [1905]: 33, 44, 60–61, 65, 71, 91, 113–114, 136, 1983a [1938/1940]: 77, 133–135, 1986d [1915–1917]: 213; cf. Mansfield 2000: 105–117; Penney 2006) – to say nothing of Georges Bataille's highly illuminating insights into the unlimited and unforeseen dimensions of the erotic (see, for example, Bataille 1986 [1957], 1989 [1961], 1997, 2001 [1928]; Botting & Wilson 1998; cf. Habermas 1998h [1985]).

Then again, one distinction made by Sofoulis is appropriate, namely, the distinction between "what counts as an erotic technology" and "what counts as erotic when it comes to relations to technologies" (Sofoulis 1995). These are clearly two separate things, although often they have intertwined or have been confused with one another in an inextricable manner. What, for example, was precisely the "erotic" many artists or artistically oriented intellectuals and academics found in the bicycle at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century (see, for example, Asendorf 1989: 131–133)? Was it the technology in itself or a certain relationship to it? Similarly, why is it that, as Sofoulis says above, "lots of women love their computer and that all geek-type grrrls can't do without their modems"? What exactly is it that they "love" – especially, what is the specific erotic secret of the *modem*?

The Pleasure of Polymorphous Bodies

The entirely new area of erotic allurement or sexual arousal that Sofoulis (1995) calls the "domain of high-tech sex," that is, "cybersex, netsex or teledildonics," stimulated, indeed, as she says, "much interest" in the mid-1990s (see, for example, Robinson & Tamosaitis 1993; Aronowitz 1994; Turkle 1995; Wiley 1995; Argyle & Shields 1996; Dery 1996; Foster 1996; Freyermuth 1996b, 1996c; Lipton 1996; Shade 1996; Springer 1996; Virilio 1997 [1995]; Creed 1997; Dietrich 1997; Shaw 1997; Vasseleu 1997 [1994]; Juffer 1998; Kramarae 1998; Levine 1998; Case 1999; Botting 1999; Jordan 1999; Döring 2000; Gillis 2004; Miah & Rich 2008; Plummer 2011; for an overview, see Collins 2006). Here, in contrast to the diffuse and ambiguous erotic attractivity of machinic devices and technologies mentioned above, Sofoulis (1995) finds an explicit interest; these high-tech "activities" simply "tend to involve people in *onanistic circuits of desire* mediated by fevered one-handed typing" (emphasis mine). For Sofoulis, what is "intriguing" about the "technoerotics of cybersex in its current form is this great (though not exclusive) dependence on verbal mediation" (ibid.). And even the techno-avantgardist "teledildonic future playfully projected by Rheingold and others may not be too different in this respect," judged at least by the "prototype" that Sofoulis (1995) saw at ISEA'94 in Helsinki 1994 (cf. Stenslie 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2006; Woolford 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b).

> The CyberSM project demonstrated there comprised of an ISDN linkup between the gallery and some selected other sites in Europe. At each end, partners in the teledildonic experience strapped force-feedback bands (flat kind of vibrators) to different parts of their body. They could each see on a large video screen a representation of their partner's body with points that glowed according to which vibrator pad was being stimulated. It wasn't terribly erotic – more like a physiotherapy session really – and unless you were the kind of person for whom a sequential sequence of buzzes on your limbs and groin could bring you to orgasm while standing up in a gallery full of people, you probably wouldn't have got much joy from it. (Sofoulis 1995)

Indeed, this was also my impression when I saw Stenslie and Woolford's CyberSM apparatus in action in the ISEA exhibition in Helsinki. But is this the whole truth about "teledildonics" and cybersex? I doubt it – for how else can one explain the excited interest in the combinations of "the sexual" and the "cyber" to be observed among the contemporary techno-avantgarde, not least in feminist techno-theory in which technology now constitutes the precondition of female sexuality altogether (see, for example, Balsamo 1996, Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Zylinska 2002b; Wajcman 2004; Toffoletti 2007; Vint 2007)? What are "the erotic" and "the sexual" in this hyper-theoretical interest in technology, in this excessive fascination with "the technological" in terms of the "cyber," the terms that are defined by the "post"?

What was so problematic, for Sofoulis, and apparently so irritating in her encounter with the Stenslie-Woolford CyberSM experiment in the ISEA exhibition was that, "unlike the Australian VNS Matrix gals who kindly provided their technosex-minded visitors with two hot pink inflatable li-los inside their curtained 'Bonding Booth,' the two male CyberSM artists gave little thought to creature comforts!" (Sofoulis 1995; for VNS Matrix, see, for example, Wark 1995: 19; Schaffer 2002a [1999]: 148–150; Steffensen 2002: 216–222; Couey 2003: 74–76; Eubanks 2004: 155–158; Galloway 2004: 191–194; Hartmann 2004: 50–52; Mey 2007: 156–157; Nayar 2010: 111–112). In other words, in spite of the highly complicated technological configuration of the CyberSM system, what was simply lacking for Sofoulis was sensual pleasure; according to Sofoulis, the system only worked at the level of the eroticism of the spoken word: "Without the verbal interplay, the experience just didn't hang together for the telediddlers" (Sofoulis 1995).

This is a pertinent observation, I agree. What is problematic here, however, is that Sofoulis contrasts "gals" to "male" artists, and finds the former better, simply because they are "gals." But what if the erotic is a wider notion than feminism, even much wider; *what if the erotic does not recognize feminism at all*? In other words, what if the erotic exceeds all the simple-minded male/female dichotomies, all binary oppositions in general, even the category of gender?

What I purport to say is that the contrast between "VNS Matrix gals" and the "two male CyberSM artists" does not clarify the idea of the erotic, not in general, neither in particular in terms of technology. Instead, what Sofoulis has to say about what she calls "technoeroticism" is more interesting.

> While I could use the CyberSM example to make a specific point about the need for verbal interaction to supplement the loss of physical closeness and intimacy in teledildonics situations, I do not want to make any general point about the centrality of language in mediating technological or technoerotic experience. My interest is precisely in the other direction: in forms of *technoeroticism* that do not have a great deal to do with a fully developed language, genital pleasure or a sexually mature and articulate subject. My point would be that most of our relations to (and via) tools and technologies (including many aspects of high technologies) are at a more immature and polymorphous level than is implied by practices like netsex or teledildonics. "Eroticism" may not even be the correct word for it: a more general notion like "vitality" or "corporeality" might be better. (Sofoulis 1995)

It is interesting that although Sofoulis sets her hope in installation and interactive media art (see, for example, Ascott 1991, 1999, 2003; Huhtamo 1992, 1994, 1995b, 1995c, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Moser & MacLeod 1996; Schwarz 1997; Lunenfeld 2000a, 2000b; Wilson 2002; Grau 2003, 2007; Sommerer et al. 2008a, 2008b; Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]; Stocker et al. 2009; in terms of "the state of the real," see Sutton et al. 2007; from the perspective of the historical avantgarde, cf. Berghaus 2005: 198–201), she rejects Stenslie and Woolford's CyberSM which, it is appropriate to emphasize, is nothing other than *an interactive installation in terms of media art*. Thus, the problem is that while, for Sofoulis, installation and interactive media art *per se* is a good thing, also as a vehicle of the erotic (or the sexual or the libidinal), Stenslie and Woolford's work does not convince Sofoulis, or at least it does not function as it should to her mind.

What, then, are the special characteristics of an interactive installation, also as the precondition of erotic or sexual attraction, from Sofoulis's standpoint?

> Installation and interactive art allows for *creative expression and critical exploration of affective, corporeal and spatial relationships in modes not limited to visual and verbal representations*. While installations may include elements of illusionism, decoration or representation, and hence are partially decodable through conventional discourses on the aesthetics, politics and subjectivities associated with visual arts and displays, they also pose obvious challenges to those discourses. They may invoke subjects who are not only viewers or audiences, but also *active participants or co-creators of experiences of objects, bodies and spaces apprehended through a variety of sensory and motor modalities*. (Sofoulis 1995; emphasis mine)

In order to work, according to Sofoulis, "installation artworks require or invite participation of bodies in space," and set up a "potential space" for "interactions between artists, work, and the receivers" (ibid.). It is precisely the activity of the participating receivers of the artwork that can "bring it to life," and through that, "transform it," and it is actually this *transformative interaction*, initiated and performed by the receivers that the installation (being as such a technological assemblage) *becomes* the work of art – and may or may not have also erotic potential activated by the participation of receivers. Thus, Sofoulis's idea is that through the new subject position for the viewer/receiver interactive installations can be, at least potentially, erotic in some specific manner.

Machinic Copulations of Posthuman Bodies

In my reading, what happens in both Stenslie and Kirkwood's CyberSM project as a media-artistic sex experiment in the form of interactive tele-tactile installation and Sofoulis's feminist interpretation of it pertains to the possibility of technology not only to mediate, but also to be in itself something that can be experienced as "erotic" or "sexual." In other words, what is at issue here is techno-eroticism, though not so much as an erotic experience as such, but, rather, in the mode of what I call theory-sex: a sexualization of technology by means of theory; "the sexual" *as a libidinal object engendered by nothing other than the theory in itself* in the context of art and technology.

As Sofoulis says, to be created and received properly, these kinds of artworks need, in fact, not only actively participating recipients, but, moreover, theories of both interactivity and human-technology relations. Resources for these theories, according to Sofoulis (1995), have been provided, in addition to Haraway, especially by Bruno Latour and Andrew Pickering (see, for example, Latour 1983, 1987, 1993, 2002; Pickering 2005, 2009, 2010). Not only Latour's "actor-network theory," but also various approaches that emphasize the "social construction of scientific knowledge" enable a "creative understanding of interactive installation," similarly to "contemporary studies of technological developments in general" (Sofoulis 1995; cf., for example, Ihde & Selinger 2003; Scharff & Dusek 2003). Common to all these theories, according to Sofoulis, most explicitly formulated by Latour, is the view that a technological artefact or scientific object of knowledge is a "liminal object" which emerges "at the interfaces of theory and practice, of semiosis and matter" (Sofoulis 1995; cf. Haraway 1991f, 1997). The performative competency implied, evoked or provoked by these objects, that is, a configuration of contestation, contingency and a delicate "dance of agency" (Sofoulis 1995), negotiated within a hetergeneous network or assemblage of human and non-human agents, in fact, creates the artwork.

In this sense, like the technological or scientific object that becomes conceptualized and materialized within the specific contingencies of an actor-network and its members, the "interactive or installation artwork may be seen as an emergent complex, an entity whose form was not entirely predetermined but could have been otherwise," or simply deemed as a practice that "mangled it differently" (Sofoulis 1995). Thus, the artist, the work and the receivers can all be considered "agents within a network," out of whose interactions the artwork emerges and through the process of which it is experienced.

According to Sofoulis, "much of our technological and aesthetic experience occurs at these *pre-linguistic or para-egological levels*," and, hence, "understanding how these forms of relatedness and selfhood" work together is constitutive of interactive art (Sofoulis 1995; emphasis mine; cf., for example, Lovejoy 1997 [1989]: 199–123; Hillis 1998: 45–49; Lunenfeld 2000a: 85–95; Grau 2003: 6–7, 13–18, 276–278, 348–349; Popper 2007: 213–220, 231–236; Kwastek 2008a: 17–21, 2008b; Simanowski 2011: 120–157; Huhtamo 1995a, 1995c, 2000; Moser &

MacLeod 1996; Morse 2003; Stocker et al. 2009; in terms of "life on the screen," cf. Turkle 1995: 50–73, 210–232; Cooper 2002: 139–142; Urry 2007: 163–165, 203–204; from the perspective of "the future without a past," cf. Russo 2005: 3–7; with regard to "the sexual" in the world of the "cyber," cf. Weeks 2007: 158–161). However, the concept of the "posthuman" that is often used to describe these kinds of approaches to new art forms (see, for example, Jones 1998: 199, 212, 222–227; Gray 2005: 119–136; Kac 2005: 178–186; Giannachi 2007: 60–83; Nayar 2010: 54–58, 175–177; Hayles 1999; Rutsky 1999; Graham 2002; Zylinska 2002b), is not necessarily appropriate for Sofoulis.

> [T]he notion of performative agency being distributed amongst human and non-human entities in the domain of "core relatedness" seems more accurate and less mystifying than the term "posthuman," which has been used by assorted theorists of cyberculture to variously describe *automatic, species based or biological functions (Plant, Halberstam), humans intimately linked to technologies and prostheses in cyborg states of being (Gibson, Stelarc), or robotic and machinic intelligences (De Landa)*. These supposedly "posthuman" instances could alternatively be interpreted as variants of core relatedness within actor-networks that involve the *"extra-human" in close relations to a corporeal dimension of selfhood* which is not a successor to ("post") the cogito but *a precondition* for it. (Sofoulis 1995; emphasis mine; for the definitions of the posthuman, cf. Halberstam & Livingston 1995; in the context of cybernetics, cf. Hayles 1999)

In this context, according to Sofoulis (1995), "women tend to be more consciously attuned to aspects of interpersonal, spatial and corporeal phenomena that remain 'unconscious' (in the sense of unspeakable) for many men in westernised cultures." That is:

> The notion "libidinal engagement" may be too constraining unless you take a very inclusive definition of "libidinal," because while powerful sexual/libidinal flows move through and with technologies, many of the "pleasures of the interface" or the installation artwork are not sexual in a genital or even object-loving way, but *have to do with being with and being affected by/effected by (brought into being by) other bodies, both human and non-human*, in a field or space governed by what Freud called Eros, love in the most general sense, the force of life and "pull" of sociality […] In this field the emergent self can connect up its own little networks of experiences and interact with or even produce emergent entities … bodies can pull and yield to other bodies, whether human or non-human, animate or merely life-like […] *via invisible means/sensors/senses* […] *selves and quasi-selves may be experienced as virtual worlds* […]. (ibid.; emphasis mine)

In interactive installations, the erotic is brought about by what Sofoulis calls "emergent entities" constituting bodies that can "pull and yield to other bodies, whether human or non-human, animate or merely life-like." What is specific here with regard to an alternative concept to the posthuman as a source of the erotic is that this kind of interaction takes place through an "invisible means/sensors/senses" that positions "selves and quasi-selves" in relations that "may be experienced as virtual worlds" (cf. Stenslie 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2006). This, for Sofoulis, is the erotic allurement of the machine: *an encounter of beings that transgress the boundaries between species* (cf. Harway 1991a: 150–152; cf. Cooper 2002; Johnston 2008; from a Heideg-

gerian point of view, cf. Schalow 2006: 37–64; in Lacanian terms, cf. Nusselder 2009). In other words, the machine is an agency that is able to turn the human being into a technologically constituted mode of being that is generally called the posthuman in post-theory; that is, a body-machine assemblage that *liberates the human from the constraints of being human*. As Sofoulis says:

> [O]ur capacities to make intimate connections with and through high tech equipment, capacities much celebrated in cyberculture, *have little to do with higher reaches of reason* enabling transcendence of the flesh via technology into a post-human state […] perhaps [these new connections] have more to do with the agencies and competencies of our bodily beings, which are essential to our humanity, a humanity understood as extending its sociality within a lifeworld shared with many other kinds of physical and virtual entities […] (Sofoulis 1995)

As always in cyber discourse, we encounter here the schizophrenia (in a non-Deleuze-Guattarian sense) of the desire constitutive of all that is "cyber," the schizophrenia at the same time *both* to empower the body by means of technology *and* to leave it behind by immersing in virtuality. In other words, on the one hand, *the body is not enough*, but, on the other, *the body is obsolete*. In this sense, Sofoulis's celebration of "sex" in terms of the "cyber" follows the well-established pattern of the logic of the "post": as long as things happen in the matrix of "free-floating signifiers" anything is possible.

2.6 The End of Sex, or, Towards Sexual Paranoia

> What we have in today's virtual-reality systems is the confluence of three very powerful enactment capabilities: sensory immersion, remote presence, and tele-operation.
>
> Brenda Laurel (1993 [1991]: 187–188)

> This whole movement of construction of an artificial double of the body and desire ends in the pornographic, the culmination of a henceforth desireless hyperbody, of a now indifferent and useless sexual function. But a function which works all the better in sex-processing, like text in word-processing, art in art-processing, war in war-processing, and so on. It is in this transparency, this charnel house of signs of the body disincarnate, that pornographic images move (it is, indeed, transparency itself that is pornographic, not the lascivious obscenity of the body): everything is presented to the gaze there with a kind of objective irony. Transgression, prohibitions, phantasies, censorship – everything is presented as phallic "quotation." It is the minimal illusion of sex: become cool, ironic and promotional, porn has definitely not gained anything in pagan innocence, but it has gained something in media insolence.
>
> Jean Baudrillard (1996 [1995]: 127)

"Cybersex is about making a cyborg" (Bogard 1996: 155). This is the way William Bogard, in his sociological study in the form of "social science fiction" (ibid.: 9), defines the *differentia specifica* of cybersex. For Bogard, cybersex is sex in the constellation brought about by, as the keywords of his examination indicate, the "simulation of surveillance," manifesting "hypercontrol" in "telematic societies" (ibid.: 25–54; cf. Rheingold 1993: 226–235; Streeter 2011: 75–76; Deleuze 1992b [1990]; Ascott 2003; for the origin of the term, see Nora & Minc 1978, 1980 [1978]; in terms of the "information society," cf. Masuda 1981 [1980]; Hayles 1987; Webster 2002 [1995]; Webster et al. 2004; from a historical perspective, cf. Black et al. 2007); that is, the contemporary Western societal order appears to Bogard as an entirely new kind of living conditions under which information is the driving force of all being, be it on the "scene" of everyday life, on the surface of culture, or clandestinely, behind the scenes, beyond the access of ordinary citizens. Be it in this or that way, what is important in this connection is that information, for Bogard, is the very *form* of individual and social being, its constitutive matrix (in terms of information as "being-in-formation," cf. Dillon & Reid 2009: 23).

In this order, the human body is even more than a focus of control; the human body, in its sensuous and sensual, sentient and affective modalities, is both the locus and the object of control procedures that are vital to the functioning of society as an information processing apparatus, a postmodern form of the body politic (for the idea of the body politic in various historical constellations, cf. Mirzoeff 1995: 53–89; for the notion of control from a historical perspective, cf. Beniger 1986). What is essential here is that this is not just a continuation of the Foucauldian "bio-power" as the control system of the individual and the

population (see Fourcault 1990b [1976]: 138–145; cf. Rygiel 2006: 146–163; Tyner 2009), nor a return of the Weberian bureaucracy as the administrative machinery of whole society (see Weber 1993 [1904–1905]; cf. Mitzman 1985 [1965]; Scaff 1989; Lehmann & Roth 1993), but a whole new formation of society based on advanced technology: a technological society bringing about a mode of subjectivity and agency in which the body-subject, through its technologically mediated constitution, is the agent of its own subjection: the very subject of its own subjugation under the reason of control mechanisms run by world-wide information systems.

In this constellation, sex becomes radically redefined: instead of mutual presence of desiring bodies in their carnal intimacy what the sexual subject enjoys now is a scientific-technologically organized body networking, a libidinal body control by means of prosthetic organs of the cyborg. What Max Weber called the "iron cage" constitutive of the modern (see, for example, Mitzman 1985: 106–107; Scaff 1989: 5, 60–61, 88–95), has been replaced by the "soft machine" (Porush 1985) of the postmodern (cf., for example, McHale 1994 [1991]: 314–315; Cordle 2000: 107–127; Yaszek 2002: 1–4; Cartwright & Baker 2005: 254–260; Danese 2003: 267–270; Burroughs 1992 [1961]; Kadrey & McCaffery 1994 [1991]). In this new artificial paradise, post-sex, in the mode of technoscientific simulation, has taken the place of the joys of the flesh. In other words, instead of the enigma of the sexual, the millennia old riddle of the libido as the unexplainable driving force of bodies and their desires and pleasures from Augustine to Freud (see Jackson 1999: 61–63; Bonner 1962; Dollimore 1991; Lyotard 1993a [1974]; von Braun 1994 [1985]; Makari 1998; in Lacanian terms, see, for example, Grosz 1995a; for the idea of sexual liberation as a form of political control, cf. Jones 2000), what we have today is the "ghost of the machine" as an intimate but anonymous central unit of the system, a cybernetic servomechanism regulating highly complex systemic procedures which, for some unknown reasons, are still called "sexual."

That is, in the world ruled by omnipresent computer systems as the highest form of intelligence, *"sex" has become a form of control, a form of control that we enjoy as our freedom.*

According to Gilles Deleuze (1992b [1990]: 3–4), in the Western world, we are now living in the "societies of control," a form of social organization in the sense of the societal, that has replaced the Foucauldian "disciplinary society"; that is, instead of "spaces of enclosure" organized by various practices of social discipline (family, school, barrack, factory, hospital, prison), we inhabit today open spaces held together by "free-floating control" operating as a continuous "modulation" of our societal being; that is, a mode of control that functions "like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point" (ibid.: 4).

It is in this constellation that all that is "sexual" turns into ephemeral encounters manifesting what I call the liquid libido peculiar to the postmodern.

2.6.1 The Body as an Object of the Simulation of Surveillance

What Bogard (1996: 5) designates as a "telematic society," a society under the hypercontrol based on the simulation of surveillance, is more than Foucault and Weber put together: it is a society in which, through simulation, control is possible even "prior to the event itself," a society dominated by "imaginary machines" that can anticipate, and thus control, the forms of social interaction; that is, a form of society in which all vital processes of life are under the control of globally operating computer networks, to the extent that the collapse of these networks would imply the collapse of the society as a whole (in terms of "network society," cf. Castells 1996; for a comparison between Castells and Haraway, see Bell 2007; for the history of the control paradigm, see, for example, Beniger 1986; Bennett 1993; Mills 1998; Levin 2000; Hammond 2003). In other words, while everything seems to be under control, control in itself is today something that is constantly in danger to get out of control: not only that control systems threaten to break down, but, with regard to the autonomy of the individual, the grip of social surveillance has increased in a manner that substantially threatens the privacy and freedom of citizens; in other words, the reverse side of "network society" is what David Lyon (2001) calls "surveillance society" (for "surveillance as social sorting," see Lyon 2003b; in terms of computers, surveillance and privacy, see Lyon & Zureik 1996; for the politics of surveillance, see Haggerty & Ericson 2006; in terms of the Foucauldian panopticon, cf. cf. Foucault 1991a [1975]: 201–208, 249–250; Lyon 1994: 62–79; Chowers 2004: 137–179; McKinlay & Starkey 1998; Winokur 2008).

In the postmodern panopticon of the Deleuzean control society, life has become fragile and insecure, while, paradoxically, at the same time, never before in human history has life been so controlled as today: from the satellite surveillance of the whole globe to the monitoring of the human genome, all-penetrating control mechanisms are an essential part of the postmodern condition (cf. Berland 2009). This is a world in which, as Jean Baudrillard (2002: 484) says, "[n]othing any longer separates the screen and the world," resulting in a situation in which a new mode of "osmosis, the telemorphosis is absolute" (ibid.).

The "Will to Power": The Imperative of Desire

The infrastructure of this new societal order are computer-based information gathering and processing networks that operate globally in a manner that brings all the methods of control known historically to their logical conclusion; that is, control society employs information and surveillance methods that are able to make individual life entirely transparent, while, at the same time, these methods in themselves escape the transparency that is the basis of democratic control: the methods of data processing developed within the administration and management systems of medicine and health care, economic, political and government agencies, and – not the least – the military, in fact, *the* paradigm of

all control systems; all of these control systems operate beyond the control of citizens whose life, in turn, is continuously controlled by the systems.

In this manner, contemporary society, indeed, is no longer a *polis*; instead, it is a high-tech, technoscientific mode of police surveillance in the tradition of the Enlightenment *Polizeywissenschaft* (see, for example, Toppe 1999; Belemann-Smit 2003) in its ultimate form: a total control system operating by means of computer simulation enabled by the invisible, shadow-like omnipresence of global information and communication networks that, *due to their very omnipresence*, are themselves beyond any control. What is specific to the simulation of surveillance as a new level of control policy is that it takes place *before* the fact in the form of computer-controlled *anticipation*; as Bogart says:

> The simulation of surveillance is a control strategy that informs most of the latest diagnostic and actuarial technologies we associate with the information age – computer profiling and matching, expert decision-systems and cybernetic intelligence, electronic polling, genetic mapping and recombinant procedures, coding practices of all sorts, virtual reality. These technologies *simulate* surveillance in the sense that they *precede and redouble a means of observation*. (Bogard 1996: 27)

The point is that this new form of control entails a "*surveillance in advance of surveillance*" (ibid.). That is, what comes before the facts is their simulation, and it is precisely this *simulation* that enables surveillance, control as telematic supervision based on data processing. In other words, what Klaus Krippendorff (1979), in the tradition of cybernetics, called "communication and control in society" in the 1970s appears today as a benignly useful and, as such, entirely legitimate, approach to administer and manage the daily increasing mass of information typical of the modern society of the time. In contrast to that, the contemporary "web-society" is not just as post-Foucauldian panopticon (to say nothing of the Orwellian police state), but a global information system in which *nothing is as insecure and threatening as information in itself*, and, accordingly, nobody can tell any longer, in Schmittian terms, the friend from the foe (see Schmitt 1979a [1932]; for information as a mode of surveillance and control, see, for example, Fuchs 2008: 267–280; Shaviro 2003; for surveillance as a society-wide "control machine," see Jensen & Draffan 2004; in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, cf. Pisters & Lord 2001).

It is, of course, self-evident that in a society outlined here the terms of the sexual are no longer the same as before the rise of the "hypercontrol in telematic societies" described by Bogard (for the idea of simulation, see, for example, Lenoir 2000; Cubitt 2001; Brummett 2003; in terms of the virtual, cf. Shields 2003; for "surveillance after September 11," cf. Lyon 2003a; in terms of "virtualism" as "a new political economy," cf. Carrier & Miller 1998).

In the contemporary information society, *information is a form of paranoia*; accordingly, whatever the sexual as such is, today it is something that is redefined in terms of the "hypercontrol in telematic societies." That is, in a society in which paranoia is a constitutive part of the social what else can sex, in its

postmodern form, as a hyperreality of simulation, be than an ultimate manifestation of sexual paranoia in the mode of inversion, as a reversal of the direction of desire from the subject to the object? That is, if suspicion is the positive of paranoia, its negative, its reverse, is the narcissistic grandeur of the subject, the hyperization of the self as the master of its own sexual universe, a self-centred delusion constitutive of the virtual in the world of the "cyber." In this constellation, "the sexual" turns into a secret omnipresence ruling, in a mysterious manner, the anonymous vastness of cyberspace, the phantasmatic "reality" of the post-subject as the object of its own fantasies (in terms of "the culture of paranoia in postwar America," cf. Melley 2000). All this is a result of the "hypercontrol in telematic societies" in which "the sexual," like everything else, obeys the paranoid logic of simulation, the double-faced logic of hyperreality.

In this sense, "the sexual" has become a *spectral shadow* haunting the postmodern in the mode of paranoia, the hard core, the enigmatic essence, of which can be understood only in the light of what Salvador Dalí (1998: 170–174) called the "paranoid-critical method"; that is, if "the sexual" in itself is a *hypnagogic phenomenon*, "sex" in the postmodern implies a hyperization of the hypnagogic.

It is in this manner that in the "societies of control" (Deleuze 1992b [1990]), "sex" appears as a manifestation of what I call the *para-sexual*, a mode of "the sexual" in which desires and pleasures celebrated as "sex" under the super-sign "sexy" have reached the highest form of Baudrillardian hyperreality, simulation as a pure self-referentiality (see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2–13, 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84), a phantasmagoria of simulacra as a mediatic realm of affection, affectation and affectivity effected by the autoaffection peculiar to the postmodern (cf. Clough 2000; Clough & Halley 2007).

In the control paradigm of the "hypercontrol" prevailing in "telematic societies," time and space are organized anew: more than ever, they predetermine one another, defininig mutually their respective coordinates (cf. Wise 1997: 3–16) – a process that as such, however, is not new but a logical continuation of industrial management and administration policies of the modern: our time, even in the postmodern condition, is a modern invention that redefined the concepts of space and distance, temporality and velocity, and duration, permanence and continuity; that is, time and space became relative in the process of modernization: time became liquid and space lost its stability (see, for example, Appadurai 1996; Lash 1999; Bauman 2000; Arthurs & Grant 2002; Kern 2003 [1983]; Killen 2006; in terms of "the totally mobilized hypermodern body," see Armitage 2004). No longer circular nor linear, modern time is multidimensional and, as such, it is the spatio-temporal basis of the postmodern. In telematic societies, as Bogard (1996: 121–138) argues, at the same time as time condenses, space expands: the telematic implies simultaneity of time and space (for time-space compression in terms of the hypermobility of financial markets in global capitalism, see, for example, MacKinnon & Cumbers 2007: 179–181; Warf 2008: 183–188; Hepworth 1991). In other words, what happens here now has imme-

diate consequences everywhere within the space under control in its timeless time. The space to be surveilled becomes extended through a removal of the delay in the transmission of information: time becomes space and space turns into time; that is, *no-time* of an all-encompassing gaze, the gaze of the surveillance system: the omnipotence of control that is *always already* present *within*, inscribed in, the matters to be controlled, *before* the fact of control.

In these terms, the system of "hypercontrol," in principle, is able to *pre*-see things in their becoming and *post*-see their future consequences: all that is happens within a simultaneous time-space matrix. As a result, the "simulation of surveillance" abolishes the difference between the actual and the simulated: to anticipate an action implies its simulation, and a simulation of an action implies its anticipation. This is the logic of "telematic society": control through simulation and simulation through control. In this sense, simulation is the most insidious mode of power: the real is effected by simulation in which the objects of power are transparent entities under the panoptic gaze of control. This implies simultaneously a quasi-omnipotence and a delusion of it: control is always – *always already* – a *form* of simulation that is *based* on simulation.

According to Bogard (1996: 31), what is essential here is that the simulation of surveillance is a system in which a technological control gaze penetrates the whole society; it "infuses work, private life, war, sexuality," and makes of every sphere of society "privileged fields of the exercise of power which cut across traditional institutional boundaries." This implies that the new technologies of surveillance and simulation – which, in fact, in their complicity "force us to adopt a science fiction vocabulary to account for them" (ibid.) – establish an order in which all aspects of life become "hyperreal" (see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2–13, 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84; cf., for example, Rodaway 1995), and, as a result, "workers, soldiers, women, and men become cyborgs, plugged in, electrified, coded bodies" (Bogard 1996: 31). These technologies of telematic control "virtualize perception and experience," at the same time as "their means of control is cybernetic" (ibid.; cf. Nichols 1988).

Cybernetic control, a control system in which feedback is a built-in mechanism of operation or action (see, for example, Rothenberg 1993: 128–133; Carver & Scheier 1998: 10–47; Hayles 1999: 84–130; Pfohl 2005: 553–584; Bousquet 2009: 106–162; Wiener 1961 [1948], 1968 [1950]; Levin 2000; Pias 2003, 2004), *control as a closed circuit* – this surveillance regime affects, of course, also the sphere of intimate relations, including the realm of the sexual. That is, in the manner intrinsic to cybernetics, control penetrates postmodern bodies precisely because of their being modern bodies: bodies that have come into being as a result of modernization without which the Western world would be neither possible nor intelligible. In this manner, as the precondition of the postmodern body, *the control paradigm built-in in the logic of the modern is constitutive of the postmodern* (cf. Deleuze 1992b), its very *sine qua non* in the Nietzschean sense: the postmodern body is a manifestation of the *Wille zur Macht*, "will to power"

(Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 143–145, 1968b [1886]: 21–22, 31–33, 1968c [1887]: 332, 1973a [1882/1887]: 267–268; cf. Haberkamp 2000: 59–80, 131–133; Müller-Lauter 2000) in a new form: today, there is no will without desire, the driving force of the "will to power" under the regime of the postmodern.

That is, the imperative of desire is the contemporary form of the "will to power." But, in the cultural constellation of telematic simulation, there is no desire without information as there is no information without control. It is in this manner that the Lyotardian "libidinal economy" (see Lyotard 1993a [1974]) has turned into a Deleuzean "control society." This is the supremacy of desire constitutive of the postmodern.

What Can a Body Do?

Now we can see that the model of telematic society, in fact, is the military paradigm brought about by the American way of exercising world politics in which it is absolutely essential to maintain all-encompassing control on a global scale (see, for example, Harkavy 1989; Edwards 1996; Berky 2008; Moore 2008; for the politics of neoconservatism as the ideological background of American hegemony, see Ehrman 1996; in terms of "the biohuman" and the "liberal way of war," see Dillon & Reid 2009; for the cultural consequences of "global America," see Beck et al. 2003; from a historical perspective, see Weigley 1973): the *Pax Americana* has always implied a politics of control by means of global surveillance, the apotheosis of which is the global intelligence and reconnaissance system established after the Second World War and expanded during the Cold War – without which, paradoxically, the postmodern world would be unthinkable (see, for example, Amadae 2003; Lehman & Dahms 2006; Bacevich 2007; Catley & Mosler 2007). As David Mosler and Bob Catley (2000: 23) dryly state: "Since the late 1960s, the United States has had information superiority because of superior Command, Control, Communications, Computer, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets." There should be *nothing* that escapes the gaze of power, *everything* should be visible and transparent, in the reach of telematic eyes, the ocular system of military intelligence.

In this respect, the 1990s was the epochal turning point; the keyword here being the first Gulf War 1991 (see, for example, Tomes 2007: 58–71, 84–102, 118–139; Boggs 2003). This war was fought precisely by means of what Bogard calls hypercontrol, surveillance and simulation. It was a war that in an exemplary manner demonstrated what cybernetic control is in the contemporary world; a world of techno-power emerged as a result of technoscience not only in the service of the military, but, more fundamentally, substantially created by it (see, for example, Lenk 2007; Sassower 1997; Guzzetti 2010; for a historical contextualization, see Pickstone 2000: 3–13, 165–203).

In my reading of Bogard, this is the context in which the simulation of surveillance turns into a system that enables "screens to substitute for experience" (Bogard 1996: 29). And it is precisely in this context that cybersex, as an imagi-

nary technology reflecting the real, becomes intelligible – or, at least, seems rational in the sense of the surrational. For me, the contemporary military body embodies the Spinozian idea in its extreme form, celebrated by postmodern theory; an idea that time and time again rearticulates and resignifies Deleuze's (1988 [1970/1981]: 17–18, 60) insight that "we do not know what a body can do" (cf. Deleuzes 1992a [1968]: 255, 1998 [1993]: 123–124; for the origin of the idea, see Spinoza 1996 [1677]: 71–73; cf., for example, Grosz 2001: 27; Thacker 2004: 185–186; Herzogenrath 2010: 40–42, 46–49; Hassard et al. 2000; in terms of the "cyber," cf. Plant 1998: 34). That is, it is possible to extract ever-new capabilities, new surprising abilities, from the human body: the human being, in the Nietzschean sense, is *das noch nicht festgestellte Tier* (Nietzsche 1968b [1886]: 79), "the animal that is not yet determined" (cf. Joisten 1994: 209; Gasser 1997: 628; Gehlen 1997 [1940]: 3–17; Irrgang 2005: 47–75; Gebauer 2006: 160). In other words, as a bodily being, the human being is a flexible animal, an animal that is able to reconstruct itself by its ingenuity in ever-new constellations; that is, rather than the "soul" or "spirit," it is the body, its needs and desires, its free-flowing, limitless affectivity, that constitutes "the human" in the human being.

This is the ideal of the sexual body in the world of the "post," a body that is capable of exceeding its animal limits by means of culture, and, *at the same time*, of exceeding its cultural constraints by means of its fundamental animality. But, in fact, what happens in the postmodern?

The body that is celebrated, in terms of what I call the *affirmative negation* typical of the postmodern, as the very source, instrument and vehicle of desires and pleasures in the service of the subject, is, at the same time, a lamed and flaccid entity as an embodiment of inability in the midst of the abundance of possibilities, overwhelmed by the supply of opportunities for pleasures that the body could enjoy, *if it would only know what it is able to do* – and not the least, what it can afford.

This is the horrible paradox (from the perspective of the subject, at least) of the postmodern condition: the postmodern body is an embodiment of the agony ensuing from the enormous expansion of corporeal seductions that are hardly possible to be realized in real life; that is, a consequence of the hypersurveillance of human life in its most intimate experiences and expressions: the postmodern subject as an dysfunctional interface of the commodity form. This is the origin of the "desiring-machine" in its postmodern form (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972]: 14–37), a machine programmed by the logic of capital; a body that is not a Deleuze-Guattarian "body without organs" (ibid.: 9–22, 32–43, 60–88, 101–145, 279–292, 326–331, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 4, 30–43, 149–166, 270–285), but its opposite: a highly organized body that tries to survive with all its forces under the pressures of demands set by enforced production and the disciplinary power of productive consumption in the global order of neoliberal capitalism (cf. Best 1994: 46–60; Pronger 2002:

101–104, 112–117, 136–144; Lowe 1995; Balsamo 1996; Hennessy 2000; Albritton et al. 2007; from the perspective of the modern, cf. Armstrong 1998).

This is the economic, political and technological matrix of contemporary capitalism; a new type of disciplinary regime organized by all-pervasive control mechanisms; that is, the "society of control" (Deleuze 1992b) in its true sense (cf. Goodchild 1996: 93–135; Protevi 2001: 194–197; Galloway 2004: 17–27; Fuchs 2008: 149–151; Hassard et al. 2000; Armitage 2004). In postmodern capitalism, the body is more than ever an embodiment of the performance principle elaborated into its extreme form within the regime of the military paradigm; a paradigm that is now the control matrix of the whole society under the sign of the postmodern. In these terms, the Spinozian idea that *we do not know what a body can do* takes on a new meaning: the military reason is the ultimate mode of scientific-technological rationality which constantly seeks to exceed the limits and limitations of the body. In other words, *the military body is a research and development laboratory of the postmodern body*, a body for which the efficiency of performance capacity is the first priority.

From this perspective, it is not difficult to see that in its very core the postmodern body management implies a *militarization of sex*: the maximation of the performance capacity of the body is the ideal of post-sex, a mode of the sexual that manifests the logic of the control paradigm constitutive of the postmodern, the contemporary form of modernization as the disciplinary regime of the political economy of neoliberalism: the hard core of postmodern libertinage.

Sex as the Spectacle of "Sex"

This is the fate of the sexual body, on the one hand, under the hypersurveillance of telematic society, and on the other, surrounded by an abundance of desires and pleasures presented as the ideal of good life, life as internalized control of the working and consuming body; that is, a situation in which the human body in itself becomes a performance apparatus constantly trying to overcome its own insufficiency, a body at pains attempting to exceed its limits and limitations (cf. McKenzie 2001; Roco & Bainbridge 2003; Berthoud 2007; from the perspective of the enhancement of the performance capability of the body in sport, cf. Hoberman 1992, 1994; Shogan 1999; Magdalinski 2008; in the context of military drill, cf. Marriott & Grumstrup-Scott 1992; with regard to "technobodies" in science fiction, cf. Hollinger 2011). In this respect, Bogard's observation is illuminating:

> Telematic societies at the end of the twentieth century are distinguished by both an excess of sex – an expenditure of sexual energy beyond any conceivable utility – and the absolute disappearance of sex, its reduction to the zero degree. This isn't a contradiction. Rather, both are complementary effects of a general *obscenity* that characterizes the contemporary social order itself, an order where sex (and sexuality) is so thoroughly hyperreal and overcoded that it vanishes without a trace. The *ob*-scene, as Baudrillard calls it, is the contemporary scene of sex; an ultra-surveilled, virtual space where all the old gendered

> oppositions dissolve over the bionic horizon. Male:female, masculine:feminine, hetero:homo:transsexual, body:nature:culture:machine: if information and biotechnologies go the way of their imaginary, then we can say goodbye to these kinds of distinctions. (Bogard 1996: 153; cf. Baudrillard 1990c [1983]: 182–198, 1993c [1990]: 20–25; Loughlin 1997, 2007a).

What is this? *Why* is that? Is it, in fact, on the contrary: are we actually living in a hypersexualized consumer culture, a culture of heightened "normality" epitomized by the cult of "sex" glorifying sexual desires and pleasures that are codified and compartmentalized according to the principles of the "heterosexual matrix" or "compulsory heterosexuality" (see Butler 1990: 5, 18–19, 24–26, 30–35, 45–46, 151; cf. Blunt & Wills 2000: 130–132; Lloyd 2007: 33–35; for the origin of the notions, see Rubin 1975, 1984, 2011; Rich 1980; cf., for example, Boone 1998: 13–18; Dean 2000: 216–220; Rose 2005 [1986]: 14–18; Herdt 2009a: 3–6, 18–25, 31–32); a societal order in which, more than ever, it is precisely the conventional sex difference, the binary opposition between the male and the female, that is celebrated as the natural order of things together with all the other dichotomies? Yes, genders may dissolve as various sexualities may proliferate, but what remains is that bodies are constantly *resexualized* in terms of "the female" and "the male" in the context of post-sex, "sex" as an omnipresent commodity form constitutive of productive consumption as the economic order of neo-Fordism.

Bogard does not take a stance with regard to this issue; his answer points in another direction, the direction of the technological control of the human body, its thorough adaptation to the demands of the technoscientific design of all life: "Informated bodies – cyborgs – have no sex; or they have *any* sex" (Bogard 1996: 153; cf. Haraway 1991a: 151–155, Chanter 1999: 370–372; Davis 2000: 116–135; Brooks 2006: 162–163; Haney 2006: 159–164; Toffoletti 2007: 79–84; Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Parisi 2004, 2008). This is the reason, according to Bogard, why "we can say goodbye to the imaginary of sex itself, since in a radical and total state of exposure (everything observed, nothing hidden), sex no longer links up to *our* imagination, but only to the imagination which we download onto virtual systems, onto *screens*"; all kinds of screens: "prosthetic (sex surrogates), deterrent (sex security and sterilization measures), and proactive (sex diagnostics, replicant technologies)" (Bogard 1996: 153; cf. Baudrillard 1993c [1990]: 53–59; Botting 1999: 196–200).

This is the world of "post-bodies," "the era of the posthuman" (Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 79), in which "the virtual class" attempts "to force a wholesale abandonment of the body, to dump sensuous experience into the trashbin, substituting instead a disembodied world of empty data flows" (ibid.); that is, "a culture driven by suicidal nihilism" in which we have the pleasure to enjoy "monstrous visions" presenting "the designs for better electronic bodies that vomit out of the cyber-factories of the Silicon Valleys of the world every day" (ibid.: 80). In other words, postmodern technoculture in which "[d]igital reality has given us artificial life" (ibid.).

In this context, sex is no longer about experiences and expressions of individual desires and pleasures; instead, it is about an adequate performance under the hypersurveillance of the body – like in the streamlined culture under the imperative of the ultra-modern in the America of the 1950s, the logic of radical modernization by scientific-technological redesign of all being that constitutes the deep structure of the postmodern, even to the extent that there is no postmodern without the American way of life, without the Americanization of the cultural dynamics that is the driving force of Western culture: a cultural formation in which technoscience has the same position as religion in traditional societies (see, for example, Aronowitz et al. 1996; Noble 1997; Mazur & McCarthy 2001; Ihde & Selinger 2003; Pattison 2005; Dinerstein 2006; Michael 2006). From the micropolitics of everyday life to the macropolitics of the global economy, it is technoscience, as a Western mode of thought, that determines the parameters of the ongoing *postmodernization* of the world (see, for example, Harvey 1989: 10–38, 284–307; Bertens 1997: 109–117; Gabardi 2001: 32–38, 60–65; Hancock & Tyler 2001: 32–62; for an overview of the latter part of the twentieth century in terms of cultural, economic and political modernization and postmodernization, see Inglehart 1997).

These are the contemporary cultural conditions under which an "implosion of sex into its media and the media into sex" takes place (Bogard 1996: 153). Sex is now "onscreen," a process of the "virtualization of sex across multiple functions, from risk assessment, to communications, to cloning (the ultimate screen of sex, since it eliminates the need for it)" (ibid.). A paradoxical situation: on the one hand, "virtual sex isn't sex at all," but on the other, "it is *exactly* sex, in the sense of being exactly what *stands in for* the scene of sex today" (ibid.: 153–154). What is at issue here is the *ob* of the obscene, the prefix for "in the way of," "in front of," like a screen (ibid.: 154). But in telematic societies, the scene of sex is "nothing other than its screen": it "*is* the screen" (ibid.); and the "screen of sex is like an environment, a climate" (ibid.: 158). Here, sex is "always *about*, and everything is *about* it"; that is, today, "anything can be a *screen* of sex, a surface onto which sex is absorbed or projected; everything seems implicated in the problematics of its display" (ibid.).

"Cybersex," as Bogard remarks, "is only one example of this general environment, although a particularly interesting one" (ibid.). From this point of view, cybersex, in my reading, is a concave mirror, that concentrates everything that is "sexual" in the postmodern in its focal point, the point at which post-sex appears precisely what it is: "sex" as a simulation of itself, "sex" in quotation marks: "sex" in the mode of post-sex. This manifests itself clearly in Bogard's view of the sexual situation in the postmodern:

> Safe sex, risky sex, sex crime, cybersex. Sex as fashion, as art and politics, and religion. Sex as death (AIDS), as weapon (the phallus), sex as terror and predation (on the streets, at work, at home). A better question might be, where isn't sex today? Should we say that "real" sex is *gone* because the *spectacle* of sex is everywhere […]? This isn't adequate, because in telematic societies the spec-

> tacle *is* the reality and the truth of sex. In the imaginary of these societies, sex disappears, *but so too does its spectacle*, in the sense of a mere accumulation of images or signs, or a mere presence in the media. (ibid.)

This, indeed, is what Arthur and Marilouise Kroker and David Cook (1989: 203) call "panic sex" that is about the sexual panic peculiar to the postmodern (see also Kroker & Kroker 1988b: 15–16; cf., for example, Singer 1993: 62, 180; Zurbrugg 1993: 142–143; Lupton 1994a: 35, 1994b: 563–565; McCance 1996: 5–6; Ahmed 1998: 108–109; Slade 2001: 373; Pettman 2002: 31–32, 142; Dellamora 1995). In my reading, the sexual condition of the postmodern is the same as the condition of theory under the sign of the "post": while the excess of "sex" in the form of post-sex results in the sex-hysteria typical to the postmodern, the excess of theory constitutive of post-theory amounts to a theory-hysteria prevailing in postmodern academia. The sex-hysteria predominating in telematic societies, in societies in which the driving force of everything is simulation, produces hysterical sex in a closed circuit of self-referentiality; that is, a hysterization of "the sexual" at all the levels of culture (from a historical perspective, cf. Freud 1977a [1894], 1977d [1893], 1977h [1896], 1981a [1905]; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; von Braun 1994 [1985]; Lamott 2001). The same libidinal logic is in operation in post-theory: the "post," whether in terms of sex or theory, is the sign of desire in the contemporary world ruled by the imperative of the postmodern, an imperative that manifests the interests of the political economy of neoliberalism.

It is in this sense that what I call theory-sex is a post-theoretical expression of the contemporary situation of the postmodern in terms of "the sexual": in post-theory, "sex" and "theory" intermingle in an inextricable manner.

Something about this hysterization of all that is sexual in the manner of post-sex that has infected post-theory, that is, the pleasurable anxiety and over-excitedness inherent to the theory-hysteria prevailing in postmodern academia, can also be heard in the apocalyptic words with which Bogard describes sexual panic in telematic societies:

> What is sex today? It is everything and nothing or, alternately, it is a pure *residue*, the hyperreal projection of something dead, or left over from another time, that we can only recover in the dial-up, playback mode of postindustrial societies. Sex is a decoy, sex is a mock-up, a phantasm. It is dissolving into its screen, into information, its body is becoming a data phantom. As a function of bodies, sex is, or soon will be, history, that is, obsolete – too dangerous, too uncertain, too exhausting. Like everything else, soon your only "access" is a password. Sex is like history today, it just keeps being over. (Bogard 1996: 160)

From this perspective, the era of sex, a short period of history from the beginning of the twentieth century to the late 1990s, is now over. *The end of sex*: this is sex at the end of its atavistic carnality, the pleasure of the body beyond the disciplinary regime of reason; in other words, *the end of sex is the beginning of theory-sex* (cf. Loughlin 1997, 2007a); that is, "sex" in terms of "the theoretical," *"sex" as the most hyperreal manifestation of the "post,"* the climax of postality in its radical postness. Then again, something has still remained: the *effects* of

"sex." But in the postmodern, all that is sexual, of course, is about special effects effected by "the sexual" that in itself is effected by the special effects of "the sexual" constitutive of the sexualization of the commodity form that is compatible with the commodification of sex as a *meta-commodity*, a surplus value of surplus value, dominating the commodity world in the postmodern constellation of productive consumption.

This quasi-cybernetic circulation of "the sexual" in contemporary culture is precisely the beginning of a new era of sexual desires and pleasures that I call post-sex: "sex" as the dominant sign of the fitness and wellness of the postmodern body, "sex" as the most seductive ideal of "good life," "sex" as the guiding star of the postmodern subject adapted to the logic of neoliberalism: the logic of self-promotion as the management of the self.

The Body Horror of the Postmodern: The Exodus from the Flesh

It is in this manner that the political economy of neoliberalism implies a disciplinary regime of the body in which *desire is the most efficient form of discipline*; for this reason, post-sex is the contemporary form of Foucauldian "docile bodies" (see Foucault 1991a [1975]: 135–169).

Bogard, however, in his theory of telematic societies – as I understand it, societies *obsessed* by control – comes to his conclusion of sex as a "decoy" from another perspective, the perspective of AIDS as the single most important factor in the change of the climate in terms of sex and sexuality (for an overview, see, for example, Gostin 2004; Seckinelgin 2008); especially in American culture traditionally dominated by sexual prudery stemming from Puritanism and religious fundamentalism and resulting in anxiety and fear not only of all that is "sexual," but also of all that is corporeal in the sense of the carnal (see, for example, Steigerwald 2008: 56–58; Pivar 1973; Haller & Haller 1974; Sokolow 1983; Gardella 1985; D'Emilio & Freedman 1997 [1988]; Rousseau 1999; Horowitz 2002; Reumann 2005; Fessenden et al. 2001b).

Sex in the shadow of AIDS – this was the "structure of feeling" (Williams (1961: 64–66, 77–86; cf. Milner 1993: 39–45, 2002: 68–77) in terms of the sexual in the 1980s and beyond: sex as a body horror. And, as a consequence, as Bogard (1996: 162) says, "the end of sex is just the beginning of sex as simulacrum, the regime, we might say, of the telematic trans-sexual, an electronic rhizomatics of sex, sex fully de-realized and dematerialized/hyperrealized on the Net." And here, effected by the fear of AIDS, sex finds its refuge, a *techno-fururistic, post-utopian retreat*, in an imaginary scenario: a "provocative and chilling" vision of the "future-past of postindustrial societies," in which the "scene of sex is channelled directly to the human cranium"; "just jack in to a theater of pleasures" – be it "someone else's, anyone else's, as your own" – and what you will have in this techno-sexual pleasuredome is the "ultimate vicarious experience (second only to the vicarious experience of death)" (ibid.: 162–163); that is, "brain sex" dreamed about by the psychedelic avantgarde in the 1960s (see Leary 1994c

[1985], 2000a [1988], 2004 [1979]; Leary et al. 1964; Leary et al. 1977; Leary et al. 1988; cf. Sobchack 1994: 12–18; Ryle & Soper 2002: 187–192).

This a world in which "new technologies are increasingly deployed to map out and discipline the body down to its tiniest elements" (Cavallaro 2000: 74), a postmodern technoscientific body world in which not only "[c]onsumption is monitored technologically through the use of such devices as electronic scales, sugar-diabetes tests, blood pressure machines, fat calipers," and in which "new visualization techniques contribute to the fragmentation of the body into organs, fluids, and gene codes" turning the body into "an object of intense vigilance and control" (Balsamo 1996: 5), but in which also "the immanence of subjectivity" is redefined by means of "telecommercial data fluxes" enabling an entirely new mode of experience based on "personality engineering, mind recordings, catatonic cyberspace trances, stim-swaps, and sex-comas" (Land 1998: 82). This is the world of cybersex. If there has never been such a thing as "natural sex," this is a world in which the very concept of nature no longer makes sense at all: we live now in *the artificial paradise of the cyborg* in which, as Haraway (1991a: 150) says, "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism," and in which, therefore, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves" (Haraway 1991f: 249).

No, this is not science fiction; this is what I call *social fiction* in the manner of theory-fiction constitutive of post-theory (cf. Kellner 1995: 297–327; Kroker & Kroker 1988a, 1996a, 1997a; Baudrillard 1990b [1983], 1990f [1979], 1991; Kroker 1992, 2004a, 2004b), a fictional world that reflects, precisely in its fictionality, the real of a society in which *anything* is possible, a high-tech society indulged in the fantasies of both technoscientific body enhancement and, as its reverse side, body abjection as a postmodern body horror, cultivated not only by the images of contemporary popular culture, but also by post-theoretical theory-fictions in the academic world celebrating the seductions of the surrational in terms of the "cyber" (see, for example, Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002). Paradoxically, in a peculiar manner of the affirmation of the negative, all this appears, in a reversed form, turned from dystopia into utopia, as fictional, techno-euphoric vision of the salvation of sex, the New Age of cybersex; as Bogard (1996: 163) says, "[s]ex today just keeps disappearing," but this does not matter, because "[w]e are passing from an age where sexuality is fixed and disciplined by a gaze to one which *de-realizes sex and then orbitalizes it*" (emphasis mine): sexual desires and pleasures leave the flesh, the source of the body horror, behind, and we are going to enjoy the "virtual sensorium of sex – safe, programmed, interactive" (ibid.), in other words, the technologically purified and sanitized pleasures of cybersex.

In this manner, in the American context, AIDS created a "dream culture of the body – the perfect body, the beautiful body, bodies that are young, beautiful, healthy, and complete," as the reverse of the "nightmare of the body as decay, disease, the body in pain" (ibid.). An order of sexual "ultra-functionality, an

obscene promiscuity of sex" in which the "sexual" was predicated upon "*translation* – translation into formulae" (ibid.: 164), entailing, at the same time, a new power regime of the body: the "*disembodiment* of sexuality and the *desexualization* of the body," a "double movement that drags both sex and the body into simulation, constructing both as virtual realities" (ibid.). This is the context in which the new ideal of the body appeared on the scene of the postmodern: a "cyberbody" (ibid.) signalling salvation, the final rescue from the horrors of AIDS, the horrors of the living dead (cf., for example, Clark 1995: 123–131; Angerer 1999a: 27–55, 1999b; Cavallaro 2000: 72–79; Kennedy 2000a: 474; Küppers 2003: 116; Bell et al. 2004: 139–140; Jahshan 2007: 51; McRobert 2007: 94–95; Stelarc 1998; DeVoss 2000; Gieselbrecht & Hafner 2001; O'Riordan 2007).

The postmodern body anxiety, the postmodern body hysteria embracing simultaneously dreams of body enhancement and horror visions of abject bodies, is a symptomatic manifestation not only of the fears unleashed by AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s, at the time when AIDS, indeed, was a lethal disease much more than today, but also the increasing penetrability of the body by technology, a cultural situation in which "one may never be in a position to ascertain a body's origin and its destiny" (Cavallaro 2000: 76). A situation in which the vulnerability of the body became a cultural topos thematized by postmodern theory as well as the new forms of science fiction, particularly cyberpunk, often in a curious symbiosis with one another. Pat Cadigan's *Tea from an Empty Cup*, among others, emblematically catches the postmodern body anxiety, or "the insecure status of the body in cyberculture" (ibid.: 77):

> There were rumors of the usual kinky sex things, as well as the unusual. Joy Flower was sexually insatiable due to an experimental brain implant gone wrong. No, gone *right*. No, she was just a celibate procurer for a cabal of rich and powerful perverts and the Boyz were the ones with the implants, to keep them able to perform on request… Other things were hinted at in almost inaudible whispers, about the Boyz who had vanished. Dead in hideous ways. No, *worse* than dead, shut away in secret clinics and hospitals, braindead but maintained on life support as their bodies were parted out to rich and powerful invalids who needed their hearts, livers, lungs. No, they were installed in the world's fanciest barn, pumped full of nutrients, massaged daily for a month, then butchered and roasted for the plates of a cabal of rich and powerful flesh-eaters. And their pets, some of whom were Boyz, others the offspring of Boyz and mutant, almost-humans. (Cadigan 1998: 17)

The flesh – that is the keyword of the postmodern body anxiety, the code word of the body hysteria of the 1980s and 1990s, the time when the "cyber," the shibboleth of cyberculture, became the sign of both a new wave of science fiction and a new kind of theory typical of the cultural constellation of the "post" (for an overview, see Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Dery 1996; Cavallaro 2000; cf. Pitts 2003; Briggs 2006; Bartlem 2009; Slater & Mourik 2010; for "cyberflesh," see Gargett 2002; for "synthflesh," see Kern 2000; for the body-machine environment of cybersex as a "flesh space," see Stenslie 1998; for technoculture as a "flesh machine," see Critical Art Ensemble; for "data made flesh," see Mitchell & Thurtle 2004; for "the future of flesh," see Detsi-Diamanti et al. 2009; for a

philosophical contextualization, see Welton 1998; from a historical perspective, see Bernal 1970 [1929]; with regard to early Christianity, cf. Brown 1988; in Foucauldian terms, cf. Carrette 1999).

That is, the post-carnal techno/cyber-body of the theory radicalism peculiar to the late twentieth century became a phantom body, a spectral body, a "sublime phantasm" (Baudrillard 1990d: 39) of what I call *theory-eroticism* in the (sub)cultural, literary and theoretical configuration embracing cyberpunk and associated post-theory under the sign of the "cyber" mirroring its visions by means of theory-fictions. This discursive merging of fiction and theory, specific to the postmodern, is the origin of cyber discourse as the condition of possibility of cybersex, paradigmatically described, that is, *theorized*, by Bogard. Accordingly, the exodus from the flesh – or, as cyber-theorists prefer to say, *meat* – brought about a desire for sexual simulation in general, a vision of a future in which, as Bogard (1996: 164) says, "sex will happen either through information, pills, or plastic, whatever 'surface' works best for protection," and "whatever surface is most transparent." "Safe, clean, secure, immune sex" translated into "simulated sex between simulated bodies"; that is, "cybersex with cyberbodies, all under the sign – or rather, the *hyperization* – of deterrence" (ibid.; emphasis mine), a reorganization of sexual practices to avoid "disease, decay, and death" (ibid.). These are the three code words of American body politics in the 1990s, a politics of disavowal and refusal, and, as its reverse side, sexual hysteria as a public obscenity, post-sex as an unending media spectacle, the simulation of sex as a – if not *the* – sign of health, wealth and success in the struggle for existence in terms of the survival of the fittest.

This was the origin of a new form of postmodern body cult, a celebration of a body that is totally "sterilized" entailing "no-risk pleasure" (ibid.: 165). At the same time, this resulted in a situation in which "sexuality is *over*exposed" (ibid.). As Bogart says:

> Today the overexposed body is the body that is transparent, a surface *seen through*, but also the body *as* (disappearing) surface/screen. In a state of general obscenity, the flesh – subject to decay and obsolescence – vanishes beneath the apparatus that watches it, only to be resurrected as a simulacrum. (ibid.)

In this cultural situation, a cultural sensibility that was defined in terms of epidemics that, in fact, became a new epistemology and ontology of the body, the condom turned into a whole-body metaphor, not only as a sign of safety and security, but also that of a new mentality, even of a new ethos, towards an ideal citizenship: "look, but don't touch," a strict admonition meaning: "if you touch, you're dead" (ibid.: 166). At the same time, the condom contributed in its own way to the hysterization of the phallus (which, of course, has a long tradition in feminism): *the phallus as a politically correct hate object* in a culture that has a disturbed relationship to sexuality. Only in such a context can one find words like that to describe the male member: in American culture of the 1990s, there was to be seen a "general putrefaction and hysterical disempowerment of the postmodern phallus" (ibid.; cf. Kroker & Kroker 1988a: 95–97).

The "perfect condom, in this perverse logic, is the indiscernible condom, in other words, the shrink-wrapped, hyperreal phallus itself" (Bogard 1996: 166). "The condom as superconductor, bringing a gap in feeling, a distance that for reasons of death and danger can no longer be traversed by bodies" (ibid.).

Thus, no longer bodies, human bodies, carnal bodies, bodies enjoying the pleasures of the flesh; but, instead, what we have now are cyberbodies in the ecstasy of cybersex, hyper-technological simulation of sex in the telematic societies of the Western world under the control of the simulation of surveillance as the most sophisticated, most insidious and most dangerous form of control enabled by the global computer networks.

"My Sex/Gender": The Attraction of a Mirage

This brings us back to the question above: if, as Bogard argues, we are now living under "the simulation of surveillance" manifesting the "hypercontrol" constitutive of "telematic societies" in which information is a form of paranoia, what else can "sex" be than a manifestation of sexual paranoia, corresponding to the fact that "the sexual" in the world of the "post" is a form of duplicity, a seductive subterfuge in the service of commodification and productive consumption? This second look reveals yet another aspect of the paranoid inscribed in the postmodern. That is, if, under the excess of information not only that nothing is no longer certain and secure, and, accordingly, everything appears precarious, suspect and questionable, but, more fundamentally, if information in itself is nothing but simulation without our having any means to make sure that things "really are" what they seem to be, how are we supposed to know whether to take things at face value – or, as Sherry Turkle (1995: 102–124) prefers to say, "taking things at interface value" – means just self-deception, elevated to the level of theory radicalism, the most appropriate manner to face the undecidability specific to the postmodern? That is, to accept with a smile that the very possibility of deeming something authentic is now impossible. In this situation, duplicity and delusion reflect one another, and openess is not only naive, but it is even dangerous: open-mindedness implies losing face.

It is here that sexual paranoia begins: in "the postmodern condition" (see Lyotard 1984), all that is "sexual" has become *uncanny* precisely in the Freudian sense of *das Unheimliche* (see Freud 1986b [1919]): "the sexual" is a Derridean "specter" that "haunts" (Derrida 1994 [1993]) the postmodern subject as a subject of uncertainty; that is, the effects of "the sexual" in their very spectrality are simultaneously *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, "familiar" and "unfamiliar" (cf. Royle 2003b: 4–11, 24–51; Arnold 2004: 51–87; Bohn 2004: 251–280; in terms of the cyborg, cf. Grenville 2001b).

What is my sex, what is my gender, is it the right one, and if not, what should I do? What *can* I do in a world in which "sex" and "gender" share the fate of information, the same fate that has also befallen theory in the world of the

postmodern: one never knows whether things are as they seem to be since there are only appearances in terms of the "post." If I say that I do not know, the situation is even worse: sincerity is a sign of simple-mindedness. Sex is no longer "just sex": to be a sexually competent sexual subject one has to construct a sexual identity that is absolutely a non-identitarian manifestation of an a-subjective subjectivity, a transgressive "identity" that is possible to acquire only through a rigorous deconstruction of all identities: *you are what you are not* (cf., for example, Butler 1990: 1–6, 16–25, 142–149, Salih 2002: 62–72; Pitts 2003: 152–161; McGuigan 2006 [1999]: 85–112; Hull 2006: 2–5, 48–49, 55–58, 74–81; Nicholson & Seidman 1995; Hennesy 2000). But if sex – now, of course, as a carefully constructed enactment of "sex" – is feasible only by way of deconstruction, where should I begin to deconstruct "my" sex (is it "my" sex?) in order to construct it properly? If simulation is the only appropriate solution, how do I know what is the right way to simulate "my sex/gender" in order to avoid dissimulation? And if dissimulation, in fact, is the right way to simulate, how do I tell the difference between them?

It is in this manner that the sexual subject of the postmodern is a haunted subject, a subject that is haunted by questions without any definitive answers – except the postmodern axiom that there are no definitive answers. Sexual paranoia is the very condition of possibility to be a sexual subject in the postmodern: *to be a subject, one must constantly suspect the subject one assumes to be*. In a situation in which self-conscious duplicity is not only the appropriate way to avoid self-deception, but, more fundamentally, to avoid self-delusion, the best way to face things at face value is to believe that I am always somebody else that is the real me of myself, a form of my "self" that is enacted and thus *realized* through various enactments of *me, myself and I*, enactments that are always already ephemeral, that is, unstable and fluid, constantly in the process of disintegration and transformation (cf. D'Andrea 2007: 17–22). In other words, the mission of Nietzsche (1969b [1888–1889/1908]), *wie man wird, was man ist*, "how one becomes what one is," has now been reversed: each subject is now confronted with the question: *how to be what one becomes by becoming what one is not?*

In these terms, sexual paranoia, as the very predicament of "the sexual" in itself, is in the postmodern, paradoxically, simultaneously both the most supreme manifestation and the most adequate strategy of what Judith Butler (1990: 142–149) calls "the politics of parody" as the correct manner to face the "gender trouble" in a world in which sex, gender and desire are no longer predicated upon one another, but, instead, are "free-floating signifiers" on the sexual scene of the postmodern (cf., for example, Hekman 2004: 10, 15–17; Lloyd 2007). It is in this sense that, as Peter Digeser (1995: 54) sums up Butler's idea, that "[i]f naturalization is the problem, then parody provides a response."

But, in the situation of radical contingency, a societal constellation in which distrust and doubt, delusions and hallucinations predominate, ensuing, in

Bogard's precise words, from "the simulation of surveillance" manifesting the "hypercontrol" constitutive of "telematic societies" in which information is a form of paranoia, what we need is a Butlerian reading of Butler by means of Baudrillard. My reading here, of course, is only a gesture to that direction. Nevertheless, what I know for sure is the point of departure: it is the cultural situation prevailing in Western societies under the imperative of technoscientific reason, the very reason of simulation today, described by Baudrillard (1994a [1981]: 1–42) by his concept of "the precession of simulacra"; a situation summarized here by a quote that epitomizes Baudrillard's idea. Referring to the fable of Borges describing a futile attempt of cartographers to chart the territory of the Empire as exactly as possible, Baudrillard gives what can be taken as a definition of simulation in the world of the postmodern; a definition that strongly figures also in Bogard's conception of "hypercontrol in telematic societies":

> Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the miror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – *precession of simulacra* – that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself.* (ibid.: 1; emphasis in the original)

As a result of the "precession of simulacra" that defines the "Empire" of the postmodern, the whole constellation of the sexual is but a constellation of "the sexual" in which all that is "sexual" just refers to nothing else but to itself. That is, what is my sex and gender is now "my sex" and "my gender" that simulate themselves in the manner of Butlerian "politics of parody." In other words, all that is sexual today takes place in "the desert of the real itself." *Behind the signifier "sex" there is nothing: what we call "sex" is nothing but a mirage.* As Butler (1990: 25), referring to Nietzsche says, "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (cf. Nietzsche 1968c [1887]: 293).

It is in this situation that cybersex becomes intelligible not only as a manifestation of the sexual, but, more fundamentally, as a manifestation of the technoscientific reason of the postmodern: the reason of the surrational.

2.6.2 The Final Solution: The Last Sex

In the mid-1990s, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, prominent postmodern theorists who have significantly contributed to the understanding not only of the "post," but of all that is "cyber" in their extensive writing about the phenomena of contemporary technoculture (see, for example, Kroker 1990, 1992, 1993, 2004a, 2004b; Kroker & Kroker 1988a, 1991a, 1993a, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a; Kroker

& Cook 1988 [1986]; Kroker et al. 1989; Kroker & Weinstein 1994), had an opportunity of observing the emerging world of cybersex at first hand as it was experimented on in the hotspots of European cyberculture, a techno-avantgardist scene around media art, especially promoted by the Ars Electronica Festival, the most influential platform of new media, technology and theory in Europe (for an overview, see, for example, Schwarz 1997; Sommerer & Mignonneau 1998; Druckrey 1999; Weibel & Druckrey 2001; Wilson 2002; Frieling & Daniels 2004, 2005; Sommerer et al. 2008a, 2008b; Sommerer & Mignonneau 2009 [2003]; Stocker et al. 2009; in terms of art, electronic media and computer technology, see Rötzer 1989b, 1991c; Druckrey 1996; Shanken 2009; for a discussion of media art in the context of the avantgarde tradition, see Manovich 2001; for a philosophical contextualization of media art, see Hansen 2004; for the connections between media art and cyberculture, see Morse 1998; for the turning of media art into the discourse of the posthuman, see Munster 2006: 132–138).

To comprehend the context of new media, media art and cyberculture as a postmodern "discourse apparatus" producing visions of global information and communication networks as the matrix of new kinds of subjectivity, agency and embodiment, it is appropriate to see how technological utopianism under the sign of the "cyber" was, in its own way, a part of the change of times after the end of the Cold War, ushering in a new era of seemingly limitless possibilities in the globalizing world (see, for example, Leslie 1993; Edwards 1996; Cornis-Pope 2001; Robin 2001; Harbutt 2002; Amadae 2003; Guzzetti 2010; for American power politics, see Bacevich 2003, 2006, 2007). During 1990s, the McLuhanian dream of a virtual world of "all-at-onceness" and "all-at-oneness" seemed to be in the process of realization (see McLuhan 1995 [1969]: 253; cf., for example, Rheingold 1991: 353–354; Gunkel 2007: 88–90; Taylor & Saarinen 1994; for the revival of McLuhan in cyberculture, see Wolf 1996a, 1996b; in critical terms, see Merrin 2005). This was the time when what Mark C. Taylor (1999: 116–127) calls the "terminal condition" appeared as a new mode of existence (cf. Taylor 1998: 37–43). In this respect, the Krokers, without doubt, belong to the most competent guides as participant observers on the scene of the "cyber"; thus, the Krokers are prominent post-historians of the present in terms of post-theoretical techno-futurism, perspicacious eyewitnesses of events taking place in the theatre of the imaginary under the sign of the "post."

The emergence of cybersex, in this context, as a post-utopian idea of a radical transformation of being human, representing, as a discursive figure, both experimental technology and sexual experimentation at an imaginary level, was a symptom of the new conception of the human body and life in general allegedly taking shape in the globalizing world under the impact of rapidly developing information and communication technologies, reflected by media art and concomitant theory discourse in its own way.

A "Brilliantly Autistic Feast in Cyber-Masturbation"

At the outset of the 1990s, the future suddenly appeared to be already present; a future never seen before, although anticipated by McLuhan (1964: 56) in the 1960s: the final future in which "we wear all mankind as our skin." From the perspective of *this* future, a future that is always already present in its becoming, a future constitutive of all that is "post," we are now living in a *post*-future looking back towards the present, through a retro-perspective, a reversed time telescope of the present future compressing the time that has passed into a perpetual presence of the present (cf. Marchessault 2005). This is the utopian moment after the end of all utopias, a historical turn that brought about a new sensibility in terms of the potentialities of a comprehensive technological upheaval without precedent (cf., for example, Carey 1989: 113–230; Murphie & Potts 2003: 104–114; Goodwin & Taylor 1982; Levitas 1990; Siebers 1994a; Dyens 2001; Shields 2003; Jameson 2005), engendering, among other things, techno-sexual fantasies and theory-fictions, also witnessed by Arthur Kroker during his visit to Europe in the 1990s.

> When I was in Berlin recently, I met a young American hacker who was living in Europe, much like a virtual descendant of the lost generation of America of the 1920s. Rather than flee to the literary and artistic scene of the Paris that was then or to Prague, the new romantic Paris of the 1990s, the new lost generation of America is fast disappearing into the virtual reality labs of the European information superhighway. He told me that he was from suburban Connecticut, one of those tract interzones that have no real name, only a highway express exit, no means of social solidarity, only a depressing sense of electronic solitude, and, finally, no communication, just groups of friends that get together only to watch a video. This hacker had fled the impossible inner loneliness of the American individual for the techno-scene of Europe, and was in the process of *recomposing himself virtually*. Researching at the furthest forward edge of cybernetics, he was creating wonderful substitution-effects for every aspect of the social experience that he had never had: *cyber-feeling*, *cyber-eyes*, *cyber-touching*, and, most of all, *cybersex*. He might have fled America because of the inner loneliness of the American self, but he was actually creating *a virtual self*, probably for immediate export back to the USA. (Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 74; emphasis mine)

What was the idea of "cybersex" for this American refugee coming from the emptiness of an American "interzone," a lost soul who had found his salvation in the "furthest forward edge of cybernetics," the techno-avantgardist scene of the old Europe? As the Krokers tell us, this American, together with a "French hacker," had created "two total-immersion body suits, algorithmically just right for long-distance sexual feeling" (ibid.: 75).

> Distributive sex for the age of distributive intelligence and distributive feeling. A perfect cyber-sex machine in which you slip into the virtual flesh of the data suit in Paris or Berlin, and have a remote sexual experience with a person, friend or stranger it doesn't make much difference, who has zipped into the other data body. (ibid.)

A "perfect cyber-sex machine" enabling an impression of the "virtual flesh" – as fantastic as it sounds, this entirely new way of experiencing, or rather, of experimenting with, sex was real – real, of course, in the sense of the 1990s

techno-imaginary; just in the sense of technological millennialism which I am interested in here.

> Now, this cyber-sex experiment was widely publicized as a virtual art event, attracting enormous crowds in Paris and Berlin. For two days, long lines of Europeans eager to distribute their sexual feelings to long-distance hosts waited impatiently for this opportunity to engage in cyber-sexual take-off. People vectored their bodies into the cyber-sex suits, toggled the switches, and were reported in various stages of sexual ecstasy as they felt licks and touches and probes from partners who might have been telematically remote, but who were intensely virtually intimate. (ibid.; cf. Rheingold 1991: 345–353; Berg 1994; Stenslie 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1996, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2006; Woolford 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b; Barber 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2010)

As we can see here, just at the moment when the end of the Cold War entailed an opening of borders with attendant possibilities of overcoming distances, of opportunities of coming nearer, of getting into close contacts and experiencing the immediate presence of things formerly isolated by the power politics of the Cold War, in short, of removing the separation between people, paradoxically, precisely in this situation, the emerging information and communication technologies of computer networks brought about a new fascination with *distance* characterized by suchs terms as "telematics" and "telepresence" (see, for example, Lyotard 1984 [1979]: 64; Baudrillard 1988d [1987]: 12–17; De Mul 1999 [1990/1995]: 241–242; Hillis 1999: 64–67, 106–108; Foster 2002: 469–501; Luke 2002: 151–152; Bogard 1996; Goldberg 2000; Ascott 2003, 2006; Kac 2005). That is, an enthusiasm concerning the possibility to get away from corporeal closeness by means of *tele*-technologies that enabled a monadic disembodiment in one's own cyber-cubicle communicating with other cubicles in the global time-space as an ever-present futurity. In other words, a wonderful future of *virtual solitude* in a postmodern techno-cosmos in which nothing could disturb the splendid isolation of each cyber-subject in its own universe: the nomadic life of technomonads (cf. Dorn 1998: 184–169; D'Andrea 2007: 1–35; Braidotti 1994a, 1994b, 2001, 2006; in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 2000 [1980]: 23–34, 53–54, 351–431, 474–500; Elden 2006: 49–51; Patton 2006: 37–39, 44).

During the 1990s, the nomad became a mythopoetic figure on the theory scene of the "post," a model for transgressive subjectivity without the subject, a paragon of non-identitarian identity as a form of transformative agency. As Rosi Braidotti (1994a: 36), referring to Haraway's cyborg, explains, nomadism is "an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries": it is "the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing," and, thus:

> As a figuration of contemporary subjectivity, therefore, the nomad is a post-metaphysical, intensive, multiple entity, functioning in a net of interconnections. S/he cannot be reduced to a linear, teleological form of subjectivity but is rather the site of multiple connections. S/he is embodied, and therefore cultural; as an artefact, s/he is a technological compound of human and posthuman; s/he is complex, endowed with multiple capacities for interconnectedness in the impersonal mode. S/he is a cyborg, but equipped also with an unconscious. (ibid.)

In this manner, disrupting the subject and disowning the self as the way of dismantling identity became the ideal of being "post," a mode of existence devoted to ever-new acts of transgression, the politics of becoming as the life politics of non-identitarian post-subjects embodying the postality of the postness constitutive of the world after the implosion of the modern achieved through the postness of postality in its ultimate form.

In this constellation, the "cyber" became the shibboleth of techno-avantgardist theory radicalism. One publication after another was dedicated to the wonders of the "cyber" during the miraculous 1990s, and from one conference to the next the millennial message of the ongoing metamorphosis of the body-subject in terms of cyberspace and the cyborg was celebrated as the rebirth of the human being under the sign of the posthuman (see, for example, Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Gray et al. 1995b; Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Stone 1995b; Stocker & Schöpf 1997; Hayles 1999). This was the context in which media art became a postmodern theory generator, a post-cybernetic *Schaltkreis* as a media-theoretical *Aufschreibesystem*, "discourse network" (see Kittler 1987 [1985], 1990 [1985]; cf. Dotzler 1996), functioning as an artistic-theoretical mediator of the emerging discursive constellation around the signifiers the "cyber" and the "post." It is in this context that the technologization and mediatization of the body was thematized during the 1990s in its most spectacular manner (see, for example, Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000), *in the mode of the spectral*, specific to both "the mediatic" and "the theoretical" constitutive of *the theory discourse of media theory in terms of media art*.

In this sense, one of the constitutive ideas of media art has been the presence of the absent, the feeling of the vicinity of locations and the intimacy of persons that are far away; or, seen from another perspective, media art has not only problematized, but it has in itself manifested the notion of remote control, an ability to manipulate things from afar through the technologies of telepresence. In other words, as they say, "reach out and touch someone," that is, create touch in a situation in which touching is impossible (cf., for example, Rheingold 1990: 52; Wilson 1996: 224–225), this is one of the techno/theory-utopian ideas inscribed in the theory discourse of media art (for an overview, see, for example, Decker & Weibel 1990; Moser & MacLeod 1996; Goldberg 2000; Daniels 2002, 2003, 2008; Wilson 2002; Ascott 2003; Dixon 2007; Stocker et al. 2009; in terms of "haptics," see Paterson 2007).

What does this mean in terms of sex and sexuality? In what way does the idea of "reaching out and touching someone" function in cybersex? What in theory seems to be a sexual encounter *between two persons* remote from one another can be something else in practice. As the Krokers report, during the telesex experiment they were witnessing in Berlin *anno dazumal*, in the early 1990s when the "cyber" signalled the ultimate transformation of human existence, a "curious thing happened":

> At the end of the second day, the hacker's cyber-partner from Paris sent a message to say that there was a big coding problem. It seemed that a cyber-glitch in the programming had occurred at the Paris end of things, and that the system was running on a closed feedback loop. What this meant was that when you zipped on the data suit and plugged into all the waiting orifices of the long-distance remote partner, what you were actually feeling was not a virtual person in Berlin or Paris, but *your own body*. And it felt great! After all, who knows better how to make you feel good than yourself. The European experiment in cyber-sex had turned into *a brilliantly autistic feast in cyber-masturbation*. (Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 75–76)

The point of the story? According to the Krokers, the "young American hacker in Berlin was the last victim of European hubris" (ibid.: 76). In his yearning for real life, a community of living beings, he "thought he was free of American loneliness, suburban style, only to find himself dumped into the electronic solitude of the masturbating body" (ibid.; cf., for example, Ravetz 1997: 118; Bell 2001a: 173; Altman 2001: 57; Butterworth 1996; for the thesis that what we call "sex" is always already, *in itself*, nothing but masturbation, see Žižek 1993: 43–44, 1997b: 65, 2001a: 252, 2001c: 24, 2006: 12; cf. Boer 1999: 61–62). So, instead of remaining in old Europe with an abundance of new possibilities, the only thing to do for our American friend was, as the Krokers say, to go "Back to Connecticut, back to Blockbuster Video!" (Kroker & Kroker 1996b: 76).

We should not, of course, let this example discourage our enthusiasm with cybersex, since what in one case seems to be a failure, can be a success in another, the more so, as we have seen, since all that is "cyber" is possible exactly in the mode of the impossible.

Crash Sex, or, Towards Terminal Sex

In order to better understand the failure of the cybersex experiment described by the Krokers above, or, rather, a new direction that it suddenly got through a unexpected "accident," a couple of questions may be helpful. Was the fact that the experiment turned into into "a brilliantly autistic feast in cyber-masturbation" only a result of what in computer jargon is called a "bug," a system error? Or is "the electronic solitude of the masturbating body" constitutive of cybersex in general? We will have an opportunity to return to these questions later; what is important for the moment is to briefly outline the cultural constellation in which cybersex is not just a whim of the techno-avantgardist art scene under the sign of media art, but, indeed, a *symptom* of what the Krokers call the "flesh-eating 90s" (Kroker & Kroker 1996a), an era of an all-consuming virtualization in which the body, with its entire sexual economy, is absorbed by various modes of simulation (cf. Shields 1996b: 8–9; Abbinnett 2003: 96–110; Hansen 2004: 137–160; Elliott 2008: 106–111, 142–161; Dyson 2009: 124–131; Lévy 1997 [1994], 2001 [1997]; from a historical perspective, cf. Grau 2003; in the context of the Cartesian body, cf. Judovitz 2001: 72–133), "sex" in the matrix of the Baudrillardian "hyperreality" (see, for example, Baudrillard 1983b [1981]: 2–13, 23–26, 43–49, 138–152, 1993b [1976]: 50–84); in other words, "sex" in the mode of post-sex.

This is a world in which everything, from biological organisms to technological systems, from economy and politics to fashion, media and art, works according to the logic of *recombination* (see Kroker & Kroker 1996a: 12, 27–28, 53, 56–57, 60; Kroker & Weinstein 1994: 6, 17, 19–20, 24, 26–27, 29–36, 39–40, 51–57): not only that everything is related to everything, but, more fundamentally, all that is there is recycled in repetitive, replicating combinations. In this constellation dominated by an endless variation of the same, there emerges what the Krokers (1995: 10) call the "new continent of virtual sex and recombinant culture." Making an "autopsy of contemporary sexuality" (ibid.) – the term clearly suggests that with regard to sexuality we are now dealing with a corpse, a dead body – the Krokers return to their idea of "panic sex" (see Kroker & Kroker 1988b: 15–16), only to announce that there is still something more, and even more astonishing, to come on the horizon of "the sexual" under the sign of the postmodern. What, then, is "panic sex" in this situation? Here, it is appropriate to recall the Krokers's definition of "panic sex" as part of the virtualization of the sexual in contemporary technoculture; it is sexuality

> which is frozen around two poles: the sadism of the hysterical male on the one hand, and the inert silence of what we call "forensic feminism" on the other. It is our thesis that beyond the present state of panic sex there is an emergent form of sexuality, a new horizon of future sex, that we call *The Last Sex*. (Kroker & Kroker 1995: 10; emphasis mine)

And, as if following their own logic of recombination, the Krokers define panic sex not as a fixed determination, but as an open linguistic figuration in which recurrent terms combine in various configurations. In these terms, panic sex is about "Recombinant Sex, Intersex States, The Third Sex," reflecting one another in a repetitive manner; thus, "The Last Sex" refers to a "new type of sexuality that floats between the binary signs of male and female" (ibid.), which, in turn, is related to "interzone sexuality" (ibid.), which, in turn, is related to everything else in this free space of para-sexuality in which every manifestation of sex is a variation of the same, a radical heterogeneity as the diametric opposite of heterosexuality; that is, in the final instance, we will be happy to encounter the moment of ultimate liberation, the moment when we see that we are always living in a diaspora of ourselves (cf., for example, Fullbrook 1995: 78–82; Horrocks 1997: 26–27, 39, 46, 67, 139; Virinder et al. 2005: 51–69). In these terms, "we are living now in the time of crash sex" (Kroker & Kroker 1995: 16).

From this perspective, it is clear that cybersex, for the Krokers, is not just an innocent game with virtual corporeality, a hilarious parlour game with the signs of sex and sexuality typical of the postmodern, nor merely a fashionable topic in Ars Electronica discourse, but much more far-reaching: cybersex is no more no less than the end of sex in the sense of terminal sex.

One question still remains: if cybersex is the end of sex, what is it we are doing when we are having cybersex? In other words, what is precisely "the sexual" in cybersex?

Excursus 2: After the Linguistic Turn: The "Post"

> If the signifier was the material condition of the existence of ideas, then the privileging of the signified resembled the fetishization of commodities resulting from bourgeois idealism's blindness to labor and to the material conditions of economic existence. The liberation of the signifier, the rebellion against the law and order of identity were all part of the program for change that developed in France in the 1960s. Whether linguistic materiality and economic materiality are linked *only* by analogy, or whether there is some profound interimplication between them, is still a subject for debate today. But whatever the case, the repressive return to order that followed the strikes and demonstrations in France in May 1968 squelched the optimism of those who might have believed in any simple connection between liberating the signifier and changing the class structure of society.
>
> Barbara Johnson (1995 [1990]: 41)

> The text you write must prove me *that it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language, its Kama Sutra (this science has but one treatise: writing itself).
>
> Roland Barthes (1975 [1973]: 6)

It had to happen, and it did. Sometime around the mid-1960s, or, to be precise, October 21, 1966, the sign imploded.[213] If, long time ago, during the times of linguistic innocence before the Saussurean reconception of language as a system of signs consisting of two sides, the signifier and the signified, it was still possible to believe that language referred to what used to be called "reality," after the moment of the "post," initiated by Derrida in structuralism, even the signified, the notion of an idea independent of the signifier, turned out to be a naive delusion (see, for example, Hawkes 1977: 123–150; Merquior 1986: 192–199; Sturrock 1986: 14–30; Harland 1987: 13–19; 97–99; Jameson 1991: 95–96; Sarup 1993 [1988]: 32–34; Barker 2001: 66–95). In other words, as Roy Boyne (1990: 105) sums up the radicalism of poststructuralism, "[d]emurring from Saussure's view that signifier and signified are as indissociable as the recto and verso of a page of paper," post-Saussurean theory made it clear that "the signi-

213 The intellectual, or rather, theoretical, event that inaugurated the epochal *Ereignis* entailing the implosion of the sign was the international colloquium on "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man," held on October 18–21, 1966, at The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. At this colloquium, attended by Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man and Michel Foucault, among others, the most influential paper was Jacques Derrida's *La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines* ("Structure, sign, and play in the discourse of the human sciences") that put an end to structuralism and inaugurated the era of poststructuralism, an era dominated by the idea of deconstruction (see Derrida 1978e [1970/1966]; Berger 1999: 109–110; Rajan 2002a: 292–293; Bensmaïa 2006: 93; Harari 1979; Young 1981b; Con Davis 1986; Poster 1989; Leitch 1992; Payne 1993; Schrift 1995; Cunningham 2002; Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]).

fied can never be confronted except in the form of a representation of it," that is, "*the signified will always be a signifier*" (emphasis mine).[214]

The signified will always be a signifier – that is a decisive moment, the point of no return, in the self-understanding of theory that inaugurated a new era in the Western academic world: if the signified will always be a signifier, what else can the signifier be in itself if not a signifier, too? This is the origin of "the linguistic turn" in its full historical import, seen in the genealogical lineage reaching from Kant to de Saussure, from Russian Formalism to the Prague Linguistic Circle, from the Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein to Derrida and poststructuralism, and finally to the paradigm of the "post" (see, for example, Davis 2004: 163–172; Selden et al. 2005 [1985]: 2–11, 267–277; Rorty 1992b [1967]; Docherty 1996; McQuillan et al. 1999; Butler et al. 2000; Cunningham 2002; Rabaté 2002; Eagleton 2003; Payne & Schad 2003; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b; Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]; for a historical articulation of "linguistic turns in modern philosophy," see Losonsky 2006). Thus, *the "post" is the terminal point of thinking and the beginning of theory as writing*; for this reason, the linguistic turn is the turn to writing in its radical sense, writing in the mode of *écriture*; that is, the "post" is the terminal point of representation and the beginning of non-representational theory; in other words, theory as self-referential and self-mirroring writing (in terms of the "sacralization" of the literary, cf. Foucault 1990j [1975/1986]: 308–309).

In these terms, *we live now in the era of "quotation marks."* This is the idea of the "post," the single most momentous signifier in postmodern academia: the signifier of linguistic libertinage signifying the freedom of writing set free from gravity.

While de Saussure had abandoned reality from language in the sense of an extra-linguistic realm of the referent, the triumph of poststructuralism, implying the implosion of the sign, even annihilated the signified as a transcendental idea existing beyond the materiality of language (see, for example, Foster 1985: 6–10, 113–114, 200–208; Laclau 1988: 66–70; Kariel 1989: 129–130; Harvey 1989: 46–61; Waugh 1992: 5–7; Williams 2001: 87–93, 103–105, Mehlman 1972; Lecercle 1990; McCarthy 1990); language understood here as language-immanent activity of sig-

214 Throughout this study I move around within the post-Saussurean paradigm informing contemporary cultural theory. This paradigm has its roots in structuralism based on the linguistics elaborated by Ferdinand de Saussure in his seminal work, *Cours de linguistique générale* (1906–1911/1916). According to de Saussure (1966 [1916]: 120), "in language there are only differences *without positive terms*," that is, without language-external referents. In all post-Saussurean thought, this statement has an axiomatic status in one way or another. However, the unseparable unity of the sign, insisted on by de Saussure, has been subverted, first by Jacques Lacan (1977b [1966]) and Jacques Derrida (1978e [1970/1966]), and subsequently by poststructuralism, and, in broader terms, by postmodern theory as well (see, for example, Rosenau 1992; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Bertens 1995). Nevertheless, in contemporary theory, de Saussure has a position of a "discourse founder" (similarly to Marx and Freud) in the Foucauldian sense (see Foucault 1977e [1969]): de Saussure is not only an author of a theory, but as a theorist he is also both constituted as a function of linguistic discourse and constitutes himself as an "author-function" making that theory possible as a discourse by providing the conceptual system and vocabulary constitutive of it. In terms of the politics of theory, post-Saussurean thought entails linguistic materialism, a materialism of the signifier (see, for example, Coward & Ellis 1977), replacing dialectical materialism, once the political theology of the academic Left. As such a theory discourse, post-Saussurean thought forms the epistemological framework of contemporary cultural theory, the mode of theory referred to as poststructuralism (cf. Merquior 1986; Peters 2001; Rajan & O'Driscoll 2002).

nifiers what I call *the linguistic of language*, the driving force of all signification. It is at this point that the trajectories of "an originally American postmodernism" and "French poststructuralism" (Bertens 1995: 6) meet one another. "Like poststructuralism," as Hans Bertens says, "postmodernism rejects the empirical idea that language can *represent* reality, that the world is accessible to us through language because its objects are mirrored in the language that we use" (ibid.; emphasis mine). In other words, according to the idea of poststructuralism, "language *constitutes*, rather than reflects, the world" (ibid.; emphasis mine), and, accordingly, "knowledge is therefore always *distorted* by language, that is, by the historical circumstances and the specific environment in which it arises" (ibid.; emphasis mine).

2.1 The Triumph of the Signifier

The complicated interrelations between poststructuralism and the postmodern constitute the very problem of the "post," the defining determinant, the code word, of both poststructuralism and the postmodern. As Andreas Huyssen (1986: 206) says, "if postmodernism represents the contemporary 'avantgarde' in the arts, poststructuralism must be its equivalent in 'critical theory'"; that is, at issue are here the realms of "the aesthetic" and "the theoretical," their mutually permeating conceptual perspectives and historical trajectories (see, for example, Carroll 1987, 1990). What is the common denominator in this respect is the idea to see "theories and practices of textuality and intertextuality" as collapsing "the boundaries between the literary and the critical text, and thus it is not surprising that the names of the French *maîtres penseurs* of our time occur with striking regularity in the discourse of the postmodern" (Huyssen 1986: 206; for a paradigmatic example, see Ulmer 1989a, 1989b [1983], 1994, 2005).

This is the connection of "French theory" and American cultural theory, the latter strongly influenced by popular culture that is entirely non-existent in French *pensée* (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Althusser, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari, Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray) (see, for example, Marks & de Courtivron 1980; Critchley 1999; Gutting 2001; Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Cavallaro 2003; Cusset 2008; for a historical contextualization, see Ross 1996, 2002; Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]; Feenberg & Freedman 2001; Christofferson 2004; Bourg 2007).[215]

215 It should be noticed, however, that what is called "poststructuralism," regardless of its origin in French thought, is *stricto sensu* an American theory, as Mark Poster (1989) in his *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism* has shown. Even the term itself, *poststructuralism*, is an American invention, used to refer to American academics who, in the early 1970s (the "Yale School"; see, for example, Arac et al. 1983; Atkins 1983; Royle 2000; Rapaport 2001), began to enliven the humanities, especially literary studies, stagnated under the dogmatism of the New Criticism, by applying theoretical approaches derived from the theories of Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Lyotard and Deleuze and Guattari, and, in feminism, Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray (*écriture féminine*). In this sense, poststructuralism is a theoretical practice in terms of reading by means of writing; that is, a "writerly" theory (see Barthes 1975 [1970]). The "post" of poststructuralism implies specifically a post-Saussurean conception of language, a radical rereading of de Saussure's linguistic theory initiated by Derrida (cf. Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]). It has its own irony that, its Americanism notwithstanding, poststructuralism is also known as "French theory" (see, for example, Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Cusset 2008).

It is in this manner that the "post" is the standpoint that constitutes the perspective from which post-theory appears as the logical consequence of poststructuralism enabled by the postmodern. That is, as *a postmodern mode of theory in which simulation has taken the place of thinking*, post-theory is a theoretical configuration in which poststructuralism and the postmodern converge into a *spectral* mode of writing in the sense of Derridean *spectralization* (see Derrida 1994 [1993]; cf. Spivak 2000: 8–10, 19–31; Tatum 2007: 14–28; Sprinker 1999). Thus, produced by "free-floating signifiers," the theory objects of post-theory are linguistic figures that, in the manner of ghosts and phantoms, inhabit the discursive realm of the "post," a virtual reality of language in which "the theoretical," driven forward by the desire for theory constitutive of the "post," forms the substance of the theory objects theorized by post-theory.

2.1.1 Theory with an Attitude

This is the *postality* of post-theory, its very *postness* in the sense of the postmodern; for this reason, post-theory is a libidinal language enabled by "Derrida," "Lacan" and "Foucault," a language of desire that, empowered by "Lyotard" and "Deleuze and Guattari," drives the politics of theory forward in contemporary academia. In this sense, what was once "the Left" is now a post-political paraspace of various *postisms* (cf. Derrida 1990b), a discursive realm in which "the subversive" has been substituted for "the revolutionary," the phantom object of Marxism-Leninism that haunted Western academia until the collapse of the Soviet system.

As we can see, post-theory – the paradigmatic mode of theory in the cultural constellation of the "post" – follows the logic of financial capital, the most spectral of all the spectralities in the contemporary world ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism: instead of differences, there are now only equivalences; that is, your signifiers are as valid as my signifiers since exchange value, as the index of the markets, is not interested in the origin; what counts is interchangeability. This is the liberty of "free-floating signifiers," the liberty of neoliberalism: what we have are always – *always already* – phantom effects of the linguistic of language, suggesting the presence of what we call "reality" for the sake of convenience. That is, like stock market values, "free-floating signifiers" are floating free: they are contingent, arbitrary and volatile, dependent on situations and constellations which, in the final analysis, are even beyond the capacities of computer simulation or artificial intelligence, and thus non-transparent.

As Mark C. Taylor (2007: 221) says, we are now living in a world "after God," a world in which "the signifier represents another signifier"; a world in which we, however, stand before another mystery: if "the signifier represents another signifier," what is *the* signifier that *represents* the signifiers after the implosion of the sign that is the end of representation as the very beginning of the supremacy of the signifier?

Post-Theory: From the Literary to the Textual

From this perspective, the "post" is the master signifier of a new metaphysics, the shibboleth of a post-metaphysical mode of thought that I call the *metaphysics of the signifier*, or, in Derridean terms, the metaphysics of "the letter" (see Derrida 1984a [1972/1968]); in these terms, post-theory manifests the postmodern sublime which is the non-originary origin, the ever-returning point of no return and the non-teleological destiny of Theory in a world in which capital is the highest mode of reason, the reason of the surrational. In retrospect, as we can see, the implosion of the sign is the most important occurrence of the late twentieth century, the era in which langauge became the onto-theological condition of possibility of all being.

This is the world of post-theory, a world in which everything is possible because the "post" has made the impossible impossible; that is, a world in which, as Haraway (1991f: 249) says, "prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves."

While the postmodern, in the mode of *postmodernism*, is a paradigm of contemporary thought that constitutes *a practice of theory*, poststructuralism, in turn, as an American mode of *thinking in French terms*, is its theoretical practice; that is, a postmodern practice of "theoretical theory," and, finally, the origin of post-theory as a mode of "theory" that theorizes itself as "postmodern" theory. But, what is historically peculiar to poststructuralism is that, although it has its origin in French thought, it is a genuinely American invention that has grown out from the New Criticism, a mode of American literary theory that, arisen in the 1930s and the 1940s, prevailed in American and Americanized literary departments from the 1950s to the early 1960s (see, for example, Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 38–46, 126–127; Thompson 1971 [1969]; Lentricchia 1980; Berman 1988; Leitch 1988, 1992; Jancovich 1993);[216] and, as such, poststructuralism is originally neither known by this name in France nor has it directly anything to do with French structuralism that is the theoretical context of French literary theory in the 1960s and 1970s, a theory entirely oriented in terms of literary modernism, paradigmatically exemplified by the avantgardist group *Tel Quel* (see, for example, Mowitt 1992: 7–10, 83–89; Wolin 2010: 233–287; Caws 1974;

216 Although the roots of the New Criticism are in the English literary critic I. A. Richards's conception of literary language and criticism, epitomized by the notion of "close reading" (see *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, 1923, together with C. K. Ogden; the Cambridge School of English), it is, like poststructuralism, a genuinely American school. Approaching literature, the New Criticism foregrounded poetry and poetic language and emphasized the literary autonomy of works under reading; that is, it was not interested in authorial intentions ("intentional fallacy"), nor in historical contexts. In its readings, it focused on "ambiguity, paradox, irony, and the effects of connotation and poetic imagery" (Culler 1997: 124), in other words, the ability of literary language to simultaneously display multiple meanings. Although poststructuralism has much in common with the methodical "close reading" of the New Criticism, it has, nevertheless, changed the very understanding of *reading*; that is, a shift from the work to the *text* (not so much particular texts as text as such, in its *textuality*) and from meaning to *signification* (not so much particular manifestations of signification as signification as such, *in its processes and effects*), and, on these premises, from interpretation (hermeneutic reading) to *theory* (reading in terms of "the theoretical"). The culmination of these shifts is the configuration of theory that I call post-theory, a mode of writing in terms of the "post," in terms of *écriture*.

ffrench & Lack 1998; Brandt 2000; for the historical genesis of the *Tel Quel* circle as a literary and theoretical avantgarde, see Kauppi 1994, 1996; Ffrench 1995; Marx-Scouras 2004; for a political contextualization in terms of antitotalitarian critique of the Left, see Christofferson 2004: 198–206).

In short, while the New Criticism and the literary avantgardism of *Tel Quel* are, both in their particular manner, manifestations of modernism, as soon as poststructuralism, in the sense of "French theory," had been adopted in American academia as a general theory of contemporary culture, the idea of subversive language inscribed in the literary tradition of the modern, paradoxically, turned into the legitimation of the postmodern as an academic expression of the American way of life reconceptualized in terms of post-1968 theory radicalism (for a criticism of this, see Huyssen 1986: 206–216): *post*structuralism, understood as "French theory," became *the* theory of American culture theorized as a paradigmatic manifestation of *postmodernism* (see Jameson 1991; cf. Hassan 1975, 1977, 1982 [1971], 1985, 1987; Kaplan 1988; Berger 1998); and not just theory as "theory," but first and foremost a mode of "the political" in terms of "the theoretical" that I call the politics of theory: theory in terms of writing in the mode of *écriture* (cf. Foucault 1977e [1969]).

In this manner, through the process of globalization (of course, globalization seen from the Western perspective, the perspective of neoliberalism), "French theory" has turned into an American theory of contemporary culture all over the world where the political economy of neoliberalism has created appropriate conditions both materially and intellectually: the "postmodern" is the *differentia specifica* of what Marshall McLuhan (1962: 21, 31–32, 1964: 20, 46, 1995 [1969]: 248, 259–263; Marshall & Fiore 1968) called the "global village" (cf. Theall 2001: 26–28, 33–36, 119–124; Yaszek 2002: 10–12, 38; Cavell 2003: 37–45, 203–214; Marchessault 2005a: 212–221; Browne & Fishwick 1999; for a reading in terms of "modernity," cf. Appadurai 1996). Thus, the "post" is about an "Americanization" of culture read in "French" terms, the terms of literary modernism; an extraordinary encounter between the American "popular" and the European "high-modern" – an encounter that in itself is genuinely postmodern.

In this respect, it is not only, as Steven Best and Douglas Kellner (1991: 25) say, that "[p]oststructuralism forms *part* of the matrix of postmodern theory" (emphasis mine; in terms of "French postmodernism," cf. Best & Kellner 1997: 5–6), but, more fundamentally, it is precisely the "post" of poststructuralism that posits the very condition of possibility of the postmodern as a paradigm of theory "after the modern," the paradigm of *postmodernism* as an academic mode of thought, if not an academic ideology (for an overview, see Foster 1989b [1983]; Docherty 1993b; Drolet 2004b; for the poststructuralism of postmodernism, see Breisach 2003; from a theory-historical perspective, see Anderson 1998; for a Marxist critique, see Callinicos 1989). While poststructuralism, "as a *critique of modern theory*" (Douglas & Kellner 1991: 25; emphasis mine), implies "a production of new models of thought, writing, and subjectivity,

some of which are later taken up by postmodern theory" (ibid.), the postmodern, in its own right, as *a radical reinterpretation of the modern*, constitutes a heterogeneous, polyvocal and dissonant discourse, *a cultural constellation* implying a "pluralist postmodern *Weltanschaung*" (Bertens 1993: 27). In this manner, postmodernism "appropriates the poststructuralist critique of modern theory, radicalizes it, and extends it to new theoretical fields" (Best & Kellner 1991: 26; cf. Rosenau 1992; Waugh 1992; Natoli & Hutcheon 1993; Sarup 1993 [1988]; Seidman 1994b; Bertens 1995).

To sum up: after the "linguistic turn" constitutive both of poststructuralism and postmodernism and finally resulting in the triumph of the "post," literary practices as a mode of writing theory in terms of poststructuralism turned into a manner of reading culture through the mindset of literary studies or literary criticism (in the Anglo-American sense of the terms; see Leitch 1988, 1992; Eagleton 1997 [1983]), thus explaining contemporary culture as a manifestation of the postmodern.

In these terms, then, the "post" designates a postmodern paradigm of theorization that is based not only on a *linguistification*, but, at the same time, on a *literaturization* of theory: writing in the sense of *écriture* is the constitutive idea of post-theory. That is, literary language is the condition of possibility of post-theory, a mode of theory enabled by the logic of the "post."

This is the idea of the "post" of the postmodern: it is a discursive derivation of the "post" of poststructuralism, an extension of theory to the realm of art and culture (see, for example, Foster 1985, 1989b [1983]; Carroll 1990; Sim 1992; Wallis 1999 [1984]; Rajan & O'Driscoll 2002; Davis 2004; Evans 2009), which, in turn, has expanded the realm of "the theoretical" within poststructuralism: the "post" is the sign of an *aesthetic mode of theory*, up to theoretical aestheticism and aesthetic theoreticism (in terms of "paraesthetics," cf. Carroll 1987). In this sense, *the "post" is the very sign of "the aesthetic" in terms of "the theoretical."* Thus, what was "the literary" of literary modernism, constitutive of poststructuralism, became "the textual" in the theory of the postmodern: "the textual" as "the cultural" of culture in terms of postmodernism (see, for example, Callinicos 1989: 73–80; Cavallaro 2001: 59–69). That is, textuality now provides the key to the understanding of culture, and thus, as David Harvey (1989: 49) says, in "poststructuralist thinking," culture is viewed "as a series of texts intersecting with other texts, producing more texts," and in this manner, an "intertextual weaving has a life of its own" (cf. Harari 1979; Young 1981b; Bannet 1989, 1993; Dews 2007 [1987]). All this finally amounts to the idea of poststructuralist "pantextualism" (Best & Kellner 1991: 149), and, as such, results in "the postmodern fascination with texts about texts," "the socially constructed *textuality of reality*" (Turner 1990a: 9; emphasis mines).

This is "the political" in the politics of theory *à la* "French theory" practiced by American theorists, the politics of "free-floating signifiers"; as Mark Poster, himself an American theorist, remarks:

> Many American poststructuralists, especially deconstructionists, appear to believe that a political position and a social theory are built into their interpretive strategy. If one avoids closure and totalization in one's discourse, they contend, if one unsettles, destabilizes, and complicates the discourses of the humanities, if one resists taking a stance of binary opposition in relation to the position one is criticizing, *one has thereby instantiated a nonrepressive politics*. Yet such a utopian epistemological vantage point may be more difficult to sustain than deconstructionists believe. Sceptics towards deconstruction are rightly bothered by the unique privilege it accords to language, by the unwillingness of deconstructionists to speak, even for an instant, outside an unending web of texts and signifiers. (Poster 1989: 9; emphasis mine; cf. Atkins 1983)

"Unsettling" and "destabilizing" discourses, avoiding "closure" and "totalization" in writing theory, and thus subverting "binary oppositions" in ever-new texts to be deconstructed, these are the theoretical strategies of "French theory," or, as Americans themselves call it, "critical theory," that, since the 1970s, have proliferated Theory in a manner never seen before not only in American academia, but all over the world in which the postmodern has set the agenda under the sign of poststructuralism. It is this discursive expansion, the propagation of the idea of the "post," to ever-new contexts – to ever-new "posts" in their specific *postisms*, each manifesting various *postalities* in their very *postness* – that has turned, as Jameson (1991: 4) says, the postmodern into "postmodernism," "a cultural dominant," which, instead of being a "historical period" or a "style," allows for "the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features" (ibid.). In other words, this is the logic of *posting* inscribed in the paradigm of the "post," the theoretical condition of possibility of post-theory.

According to Jameson, as we remember, "postmodernism" implies a "radical break or *coupure*, generally traced back to the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s," which suggests a "waning or extinction of the hundred-year-old modern movement," its "ideological or aesthetic repudiation" (ibid.: 1). What follows thereafter, can be grasped only as an "empirical, chaotic and heterogeneous" enumeration: in art, "Andy Warhol and pop art," "photorealism," "the 'new expressionism,'" in music, "John Cage, but also the synthesis of classical and 'popular' styles found in composers like Philip Glass and Terry Riley, and also punk and new wave rock," in film, "Godard, post-Godard, and experimental cinema and video, but also a whole new type of commercial film," in literature, "Burroughs, Pynchon, or Ismael Reed, on the one hand, and the French *noveau roman* and its succession, on the other, along with alarming new kinds of literary criticism based on some new aesthetic of textuality or *écriture*…" (ibid.; cf. Huyssen 1986: 178–221; in the context of *Tel Quel* textual radicalism, cf. Kauppi 1994: 138–139, 159–163, 189–190, 2010: 47–57, 2010: 11–16; ffrench & Lack 1998c; Brandt 2000; in terms of "language to infinity," cf. Foucault 1977b [1963]).

The three dots at the end of Jameson's enumeration is a significant synecdoche of the postmodern: it is a cultural phenomenon that follows the "logic" of an all-inclusive "etc.," an equalizing interplay of cultural equivalencies bringing together and mixing things that, according to the paradigm of the modern, were

– or, still are – to be kept apart from one another (in terms of cultural differentiation constitutive of the modern, cf., for example, Lash 1990b: 138–139; Dodd 1999: 109–113; Habermas 1998d [1985]). At the same time, however, as Jameson (1991: 1) himself sceptically asks, does his "heterogeneous" and "chaotic" sample of postmodern culture, in fact, "imply any more fundamental change or break than the period style and fashion changes determined by an older high-modernist imperative of stylistic innovation?" (ibid.). Indeed, this is the question on which the whole idea of the postmodern, in the sense of *postmodernism*, stands or falls.

Towards the "Pure and Random Play of Signifiers"

To understand the historical gravity of this question, it is appropriate to recall the idea of differentiation, constitutive of the modern, as it is paradigmatically summarized by Jürgen Habermas:

> The project of modernity as it was formulated by the Enlightenment philosophers in the eighteenth century consists in the relentless development of the objectivating sciences, of the universalistic foundations of morality and law, and of autonomous art, *all in accord with their own immanent logic*. But at the same time it also results in releasing the cognitive potentials accumulated in the process from their esoteric high forms and attempting to apply them in the sphere of praxis, that is, to encourage the rational organization of social relations. Partisans of the Enlightenment such as Condorcet could still entertain the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would not merely promote the control of the forces of nature, but also further the understanding of self and world, the progress of morality, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness. (Habermas 1997 [1981]: 45; emphasis mine)

According to Scott Lash (1990b: 11–15, 138–139, 173–174), the postmodern means the opposite of all this: a *radical de-differentition* of all spheres of culture and society, differentiated from one another by the logic of the modern.

What is important here is to see that the "post" – as the determinant of both poststructuralism and the postmodern – has its *Eigenlogik*, a discursive dynamics of its own, that ensues from the constitutive moment of the "post": the implosion of the sign in the mid-1960s, initiated by Derrida's radical critique of structuralism, the fundamental questioning of the sign as an autonomous and self-contained entity (see Derrida 1978b [1967/1963], 1978e [1967/1966], 1984a [1972/1968]; cf. Drolet 2004a: 21–24; Deutscher 2005: 29–33). As noted above, after this critique, amounting to what I call *the triumph of the signifier* (cf. Best & Kellner 1991: 20–21; Homer 2005: 40–42; McCarthy 1990; in terms of "postmodern nihilism," cf. Slocombe 2006: 77–105), it was no longer possible to think of language in terms of a referential relationship, as a *representation* of "reality" understood as an extra-linguistic sphere in its own right. In this sense, Derridean *deconstruction* of the structuralist idea of the sign implied, paradoxically, the idea of radical *constructionism* as a new general theory of culture at large; a theory according to which there is nothing that would not be constructed, be it in nature or culture, and, as such, *always already* potentially deconstructed in itself, that is, broken down in endless chains of signifiers (see, for example, Berman

1988: 173, 190, 212, 241; Coyne 1999: 132; Olkowski 1999: 228), "endless chains of substitutions" (Atkins 1983: 24, 46) substituting one subtituted for another.

This is the distinctive logic of the "post" that simultaneously implies opposite forces, the contradictory tendencies of differentiation (the modern) and de-differentiation (the postmodern); tendencies that make the matrix of the "post" ambivalent and ambiguous. All this, of course, takes place discursively, within the intertextual play of innumerable texts, in a continuous flow of textuality that is the very substance of the "post."

As John D. Caputo (1993: 77) says, in the categorical style typical of the "post," referring to Derrida's idea that "there is nothing outside the text":

> There is nothing (= no reference) outside the text (= without the differentiated operation of textuality). There is no pure, naked reference that can, as it were, leave the chain of signifiers behind and embed itself in an object, *an sich*. (ibid.: 78)

The absolute disappearance of things *an sich*, the final loss of objects in their own right, the ultimate impossibility of the world outside the text – that is the great emancipatory vision opened up by the "post": the idea of freedom brought about by the "liberation of the signifier" (Johnson 1995 [1990]: 41; cf. Merquior 1986: 172); first as a promise of the political radicalism of May 1968 in Paris that, though it remained unfulfilled, nevertheless turned thereafter into the programme of linguistic subversion as the liberatory politics of the post-modern: the programme of "language games," "performativity" and "paralogisms" (Lyotard 1984 [1979]; Turner 1990: 111–114; Lyon 1994: 62–63), a linguistic spectacle as a "post-modern discrediting of significance for the sake of *signifiance*, in Kristeva's sense of the term" (Polan 1986: 59; for the idea of *signifiance*, see Kristeva 1984 [1974]: 16–26, 99–105, 145–147, 1998a [1973]: 134, 173–174, 1980 [1969]; cf. Heath 1977: 10; Roudiez 1980: 18; Beardsworth 2004: 40–48; Lechte 2004), and, finally, "free-floating signifiers" as a new kind of "Counter-Enlightenment" (van Vucht Tijssen 1990: 148, 159–160).

From now on the tradition of the Enlightenment was only a nightmare, but an indelible nightmare, an unfading shadow haunting the discourse of the "post" as the spectre of the post-Freudian "return of the repressed" (for the idea of the *Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*, see, for example, Freud 1977e [1896]: 387, 389, 1990d [1911]: 310, 1991b [1915]: 257–258, 1972f [1926], 1987e [1920]; Laplanche & Pontalis 1998 [1967]: 631–632; in contemporary culture, cf. Giddens 1991: 202–208; in terms of *High-Tech-Kapitalismus*, cf. Haug 2003: 139–140): the Enlightenment was inscribed in the very language which the post-68 counter-Enlightenment was at pains to subvert: the language of the freedom of thought. For this reason, *the Enlightenment became the trauma of the "post" which it enjoys to suffer most of all*.

That is, the "post" is the sign (in its deconstructed sense) of an unending passion, both in its contemporary and the Latin meaning of *passiō*: the "post" signifies an intense agitation of mind in the presence of "the theoretical."

This is the idea of the new conception of "the political" in terms of linguistic radicalism, linguistic subversion as a politics of language given rise by the theoretical turmoil following the *événements* of Paris in May 1968 (see, for example, Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]; Fink et al. 1998; Quattrocchi & Nairn 1998 [1968]; Feenberg & Freedman 2001; Ross 2002; Singer 2002 [1970]; Seidman 2004; Bourg 2007); as José Guilherme Merquior (1996: 155) says, "the hypostasis of the signifier" was substituted for the "metaphysics of the present" implied by the signified (see Derrida 1997 [1967]: 49; cf. Burke 1992: 117–128). It is in this sense that the "post" is a signifier that signifies a mode of thought according to which the phenomenal world in its entirety that we are used to call "reality" is intelligible only in terms of linguistic figures and figurations that consist of *self-organizing* signifiers, autonomous and independent "elementary particles" of language that determine what is *possible* to think and say in the first place. In these terms, nothing, simply *nothing*, takes place in our world without, as Derrida (1997: 165) says, the "auto-affecting" movement of signifiers, without the never-ending "freeplay" of "supplementation" and "dissemination," in short, without the all-inclusive logic of *différance* (Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1997: 141–164, 1984a [1972/1968]).

If the implosion of the sign at the international colloquium on "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man," on October 18–21, 1966, Baltimore, is the non-originary origin constituting the non-foundational foundation of the "post" of poststructuralism (understood as a theory of culture in terms of the primacy of the signifier), what is the constitutive moment of the "post" of postmodernism? According to Charles Jencks (1977: 9), an art historian and a prominent theorist of postmodernism, it is the day when "modern architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3:32," the day when an emblem of architectural modernism, the Pruitt-Igoe urban housing complex (designed by Minoru Yamasaki, built between 1952–1955), was given "the final *coup de grace* by dynamite"; that is, "the symbolic end of modernism and the passage to the postmodern" when "a prize-winning version of Le Corbusier's 'machine for modern living'" was demolished "as an uninhabitable environment for the low-income people it housed" (Harvey 1989: 39; cf. Friedberg 1993: 158–160; Wollen 1993: 207–208; for Le Corbusier's architectural modernism and "machines for living," see Brummett 1999: 13–15, 32–54; Panchasi 2009: 31–39).[217] What is

217 "The house is a machine for living in" (Le Corbusier 2003 [1923]: 133). This statement of Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) from his programmatic collection of manifesto-like articles entitled *Towards a New Architecture* (1923), in its apparent simplicity and, at the same time, with far-reaching consequences, implies the historical moment of modern architecture as an idea of urban living based on technology and "social engineering" (see, for example, Podgórecki et al. 1996; Etzemüller 2009; Thompson & Findlay 1999; Jordan 2010). The demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe urban housing project in 1972, in turn, marks the endpoint of architectural modernism *as a technocratic project*. "Thereafter, as David Harvey (1989: 39) sums up, "the ideas of the CIAM [Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne], Le Corbusier, and other apostles of 'high modernism' increasingly gave way before an onslaught of diverse possibilities, of which those set forth in the influential *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour […] proved to be but one powerful cutting edge": "The point of that work, as its title implies, was to insist that architects had more to learn from the study of popular and vernacular landscapes (such as those of suburbs and commercial strips) than from the pursuit of some abstract, theoretical, and doctrinaire ideals. It was time, they said, to build for people rather than for Man." (ibid.: 39–40)

Fig. 94–97. The demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe urban housing complex, St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3:32. The collapse of the modern: the birth of the postmodern from the ruins of the modern.

According to Charles Jencks (1977: 10), Pruitt-Igoe "carried out the major doctrines of modern city planning," the principles of "sun, space and greenery," the "three essential joys of urbanism" declared by Le Corbusier. "Alas, such simplistic ideas, taken over from philosophic doctrines of Rationalism, Behaviourism and Pragmatism, proved as irrational as the philosophies themselves. Modern Architecture, as the son of the Enlightenment, was an heir to its congenital naivetes […]; but to be fair it should be pointed out that Modern Architecture is the offshoot of Modern Painting and the Modern Movements in all the arts. Like rational schooling, rational health and rational design of women's bloomers, it has the faults of an age trying to reinvent itself totally on rational grounds." (ibid.; cf. Connor 1989: 66–70; Rose 1991: 72–160; Bertens 1995: 58–70; Malpas 2005: 13–17; McGuigan 2006 [1999]: 16–24)

From this perspective, a decade later, it was evident to Jencks (1986: 7) that: "The Modern Age, which sounds as if it would last forever, is fast becoming a thing of the past. Industrialisation is quickly giving way to Post-Industrialisation, factory labour to home and office work and, in the arts, the Tradition of the New is leading to the combination of many traditions."

Yet, as I attempt to demonstrate throughout the study at hand, the question now is: *has the postmodern made the world a better place?*

important here is that this literally explosive moment – an explosion in and by which a housing complex, representative of the failed rationality of the modern, was destructed – was literally a concrete deconstruction of the very idea of the modern. After this explosion, the paradigm of the modern was in ruin: discredited, devalued, decomposed, in a word, *deconstructed*.

In other words, the universal language of modern architecture, the language of "streamlined" rationality, manifested by the "International Style" (Huyssen 1986: 186–187; Hughes 2004a [1989]: 6–11, 309–324), the paradigm of "architectural high modernism" (Jameson 1991: 2), imploded as a "signifying chain" (cf. Turner 1990b: 64–73), and what remained was the "*pure and random play of signifiers* that we call postmodernism" (Jameson 1991: 96; emphasis mine; for postmodernism defined in terms of "text out of context," cf. Hayles 1987). After the implosion of the sign that *enabled* the explosion of the modern as a cultural constellation and an aesthetic paradigm in the sense of *modernity* and *modernism* (for a historical overview, see Lunn 1982, Frisby 1985; Berman 1988 [1982]; Nicholls 1995; for "the crisis of political modernism," see Rodowick 1988),

nothing is stable any more: everything is in flux. This is the explosive dynamics of the "post": instead of the "totality" inscribed in the modern, the "fragmentary" is the keyword of the postmodern (see, for example, Best & Kellner 1991: 219–224; Tracy 1999: 171–173; Hancock & Tyler 2001: 58–70, 89–105; Young 2004 [1990]: 91–103; Malpas 2005: 38–41, 85–87, 130–132) – to recall, "the postmodern" in the sense of poststructuralism.

The "Post": The Era of Great Negation in Terms of Endism

This is the epochal effect of what in contemporary theory is called the "linguistic turn" (for the origin of the idea, see Rorty 1992a [1967]: 9–13; cf. Bonnell & Hunt 1999b: 8–9; Taylor 2000: 39–47; Rajan 2002a: 4–8, 34–39, 123–136; Clark 2004b: 126–129; Iggers 2005: 118–133, 135, 150; Chow 2006: 1–24; LaCapra & Kaplan 1982; in terms of "the deconstructive turn," cf. Heaphy 2007: 28–49; with regard to "capitalism's linguistic turn," cf. Poster 2001: 39–59; for a critical overview, see Neal 2007: 113–127; for a historical articulation of "linguistic turns in modern philosophy," see Losonsky 2006), specified here in terms of what Hans Bertens (1995: 6), *nota bene*, designates as "poststructuralist postmodernism"; that is, a turn to the world under the imperative of the "post," a world in which the signifier is the constitutive moment, the impelling motive, the very origin, not only of knowledge, but of all being. After the moment of the "post," as we can see, linguistic innocence was over once and for all. From now on, what was important was that signifiers were to be taken as signifiers in their very linguisticity, *in their linguistic productivity*. Thus, it was necessary to see that "the signifier is capable of material transformations independent of its relations to the signified" (Rodowick 1988: 164); accordingly, the aim was "the autonomy of the signifier, its liberation from the 'tyranny of the signified'" (Owens 1989 [1983]: 59). It was for this reason that signifiers were to be taken seriously, as autonomous agents driving the play of language and thus determining the course and the fate of the world.

This is not only, as Julia Kristeva (1984 [1974]: 89–136) says, a "revolution in poetic language" in terms of feminist disruption of the patriarchal order of representation and subjectification (cf. Moi 1985; 16–17, 163–171; Rodowick 1988: 228–230, 248–252; Selden 1989: 82–84); this is the ultimate revolution able to exceed all the limits, be they material or ideal, immanent or transcendental. That is, the signifier, endowed with a subversive power, is now the basic cell of the world revolution, a revolution that will liberate us once and for all from the shackles of the Enlightenment, from the constraints of the subject (cf. Kristeva 1998a [1973]).

Hence, it is not difficult to see that there is no "post" without the "post" of poststructuralism that is constitutive not only of the "post" of the postmodern, but of all "posts" and the entirely discursive constellation of various "postisms" (cf. Derrida 1990b) in Western academia devoted to the politics of language in terms of "postality," the terms of "postness" as the most radical form of "the subversive."

Accordingly, from the Derridean *ur*-"post" of the 1960s on, it has been no longer possible to speak of the "human" except in terms of the "end," that is, in terms

of the "post." Of course, this does not imply the end of the world (cf. Kamper & Wulf 1990; Leslie 1996), although this is "the end of everything" after "the vanishing of the human" (Appignanesi 2003); at issue is the end of the "old" world, the world of the modern enabled by "the discourse of 'endism'" reread as redemption under the sign of "posthuman becoming" (Sheehan 2004: 35–38; cf. Quinby 1999: 2–6, 9; for the origin of the apocalyptic idea of "endism" in American fundamentalism, see Strozier 1994). This is the very idea of the "post": after the emergence of the "post" what was the "shock of the new" for the modern (see Hughes 1991 [1980]) is now, in the world of the postmodern, the endless pleasure of the "end," the pleasure of a permanent presence of ending (cf. Collins 1995: 1; Smith 1996: 3; Kermode 1967; Burgin 1986; Vattimo 1990 [1985]; Maresch 1993; Dellamora 1995; Žižek 2011 [2010]); and, of course, amid a myriad of other endings, in terms of queer theology, we can now celebrate "the end of sex" (Loughlin 2007a). All in all, this is the *condition* of what we, after Lyotard (1984 [1979]), are used to call "postmodern" (see, for example, Waugh 1992; Docherty 1993b; Natoli & Huctheon 1993; Seidman 1994b; Cahoone 1996; Connor 2004b; Drolet 2004b; for the history of the notion, see Köhler 1977; Bertens 1995; Anderson 1998; Bürger 2000); in other words, the era not only of "the end of this or that" (Scott 2000: 9), but, first of all, of the end of this *and* that, the era of the all-inclusive "etc." as the constitutive copula of the "post."

After the endless ending of "this" and "that," "the end of the end [*la fin de la fin*], the end of ends" (Derrida 1992 [1980]: 48–49), one can only ask what is the sense of these recurrent declarations claiming that these or those "practices or instruments of thought" are "fallacious, untenable, 'no longer possible'" (Sheehan 2004: 20): what is the very idea of this unending "endism" (ibid.: 35) – or is there any? In other words:

> [B]eyond the fact that philosophy has already died a thousand deaths, that is, beyond its never-ending preoccupation with an end which never comes because it has occurred from the very beginning, there arises a more pertinent question: what are the objectives or ends of those who declare the end of this or that? (Montag 1988: 100; cf. Olsen 1987)

This is the intrinsic problem of the "post": the question as to what is it, in fact, all that is designated by the term "the *post*modern," particularly if it is taken as the sign of the end, even in the sense of ending all "endism"? This question constitutes the very issue of what Susan Rubin Suleiman (1994: 227) calls the "debate over *postmodernism*" (emphasis mine); a debate the actuality of which is in its historicity: the debate concerning "the postmodern" as a significant moment (in both senses of the notion) of late twentieth century intellectual history, a momentous – if not a monumental – moment still present in the world of contemporary theory in terms of the "post" (with regard to "the constructivist moment" constitutive of the coming into being of "the postmodern," cf. Watten 2003).

> Once upon a time, not so long ago, there existed in the world of intellectuals a "debate over postmodernism" […]. In philosophy, postmodernism was identified

> as a self-styled mode of "weak thought," prizing playfulness above logic, irony above absolutes, paradoxes above resolutions, doubt above demonstration. Some intellectuals found this dance of ideas liberating; to others, it appeared irresponsible, a dangerous nihilism. In the arts – literature, photography, architecture, film, performance, painting – postmodernism was identified with a free-wheeling use of pastiche, quotation, and collage, methods that some intellectuals saw as innovative and critical, having the potential to undo (or at least put into question) received ideas and established ideologies. Other intellectuals voiced their disapproval or despair; for them, the loose eclecticism of postmodernist art, mixing up historical styles, ignoring boundaries between genres, scrambling distinctions between "high" art and "low," between original and copy, was of a piece with the laxness of postmodernist philosophizing, a sign of the cultural exhaustion of capitalism, or of the decay produced by the proliferation of mass culture. (Suleiman 1994: 227; cf. Connor 1989; Harvey 1989; Silverman 1990)

All this, according to Douglas Kellner (1993: 45), referring to the criticism levelled by Jürgen Habermas and his associates against postmodernism (see, for example, Habermas 1994 [1981], 1992 [1988], 1998d [1985]; cf. Callinicos 1989: 92–120), amounted to the "irrationalism, cynicism and nihilism of postmodern theory" (cf. Norris 1992, 1993, 1997; Slocombe 2006); in other words, a state of mind of what I call *the pleasure of the end of everything in the name of the "post"* (cf. Hebdige 1987b: 68–70). No wonder that already in the heyday of postmodern theory, in the mid-1990s, there were voices to be heard according to which what was needed was a critical agenda to rebuild theory "*after* postmodernism" (see Simons & Billig 1994a; cf. Fekete 1987); a mode of criticism that was able to overcome the impasse of the *postmodern dogma* of what is called the "hermeneutics of suspicion" as "the prevailing mood" in contemporary cultural theory (Simons & Billig 1994b: 6; for the origin of the term, see Ricoeur 1970 [1965]: 32–36).

The fascination effected by "endism" typical of postmodern theory discourse, of course, is nothing new. "In the 1960," as Paul Maltby (1991: 17) points out, "a number of critics, notable Leslie Fiedler, Ihab Hassan and Susan Sontag, welcomed postmodernism as a species of subversive writing," understood, in Fiedler's words, as "the literature of a 'time of Endings,'" a mode of scriptural strategies "challenging the social hierarchies and oppressive meaning-systems of a supposedly moribund bourgeois culture" (ibid.). Hassan, in turn, saw postmodernist fiction, as "an 'Antinomian' attack on 'reason and history, science and society,' as an expression of 'Anarchy' and an impulse to 'decreation'" (ibid.; cf. Hassan 1975, 1982 [1971], 1987). And for Sontag, with Burroughs and Becket, among others, in mind, "contemporary artists" shared "the same disdain for the 'meanings' established by bourgeois-rationalist culture" proclaiming "a harsh despair and perverse vision of apocalypse" (Maltby 1991: 17). Similarly, Fiedler situated postmodernist fiction in an era of "apocalyptic, anti-rational, blatantly romantic and sentimental"; a time when "the Dream, the Vision, *ekstasis*" have again become "the avowed goals of literature" (ibid.).

As we can see, if the 1960s was an "explosive moment of protest and dissent," that is, the moment of an "insurgent counter-culture" (ibid.), the politics of the "post" is its second order reflexion, a Derridean "iteration" (see Derrida 2000 [1988]) of

all that is already said, an unintentional parody of voices and gestures claiming to be taken seriously (or then not), a repetition of the same behind the mask of the new – the "new," of course, in the mode of appropriation constitutive of the postmodern – in the sense of Jamesonian "pastiche" (see Jameson 1991: 16–19; in terms of postmodern art, see Evans 2009), if not altogether a farce as we know it in Marxian terms, that is, as a genuine postmodern parody without a sense of tragedy (cf. Hörmann 2009: 211–214; in terms of "radical parody," cf. O'Hara 1992).

Not only that the advent of the postmodern implied the time of "pop history" (Jameson 1991: 25), but moreover, during the 1990s, the very decade of the "post," even history in itself became questionable, or disappeared altogether: *the past became postified by the postality of the "post" in its radical postness*. Seyla Benhabib's melancholic and ominous summary describes the *Endzeitstimmung* typical of the closing years of the 1990s in intellectual and academic circles infatuated by the postmodern, the "structure of feeling" (Williams 1961: 64–66, 77–86) characteristic of the "endism" under the sign of the "post":

> As the twentieth century draws to a close, there is little question that we are living through more than the chronological end of an epoch. To invoke a distinction familiar to the Greeks, it is not only *kronos* which is holding sway over our lives; but our *kairos* as well, our lived time, time as imbued with symbolic meaning, is caught in the throes of forces of which we only have a dim understanding at the present. The many "post-isms," like posthumanism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, post-Fordism, post-Keynesianism, and post-histoire, circulating in our intellectual and cultural lives are at one level only expressions of a deeply shared sense that certain aspects of our social, symbolic and political universe have been profoundly and most likely irretrievably transformed. (Benhabib 1992: 1)

"The year 2000 will not perhaps take place," Baudrillard (1994b [1992]: 9) prophesied in 1992 (cf. Baudrillard 1988g [1985]). What happened? As always, Baudrillard was right: we are still living in the era of the "post," even more than before. From the post-temporal perspective of the "post," we are presently living in a timeless time of *posthistoire*, the era after "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1992; Bolz 1993; in critical terms, see, for example, Kariel 1989: 4–5; Habermas 1998 [1985]: 11–12; Callinicos 1995: 15–43; Niethammer 1989; Kamper 1990), of course, not in what is called "reality" (there is no reality in the world of the "post"), but in *theory*, on the theory scene of the "post"; a post-historical era of "universal abandon" (Ross 1988), the ultimate age of Great Negation. In other words, as Martin Jay (1993: 87) sums up the post-apocalyptic temper of the postmodern: "whereas modernism still held out hope for redemptive epilogue after the millennial last days," "postmodernism has focused only on the permanence of destruction." *In the world of the "post," a general No has taken the place of the conventional and worn-out Yes, a No that in and by itself is an all-consuming Yes* (in all senses of the expression), a Derridean "undecidable" as an ambiguous "yes *and* no" (Derrida 1991 [1987]: 23, 94; emphasis mine) that neither negates nor affirms, but, rather, does both at the same time (cf. Featherstone 1988; Nealon 1993).

Never say no without negating your own negation, this is the yes of the "post," the positive dialectics of post-theory (cf. Adorno 1970 [1966]), the pleasurable

negative affirmation of negativity. This is the logic of the "post," the post-logical logic of post-theory as a *Theory with an Attitude*.

Thus, as we can see, the "post" is situated between the Baudrillardian "no longer" and the Derridean "always already," a point at which it is no longer possible to consider things except in terms of always already.

2.1.2 *Tutti buoni*, or, The "Post" in the Light of "The Pop Idea"

But, in fact, what is "the end of history"? It is the point of no return in which, as Alexandre Kojève (1980 [1947]: 159–160), in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, says, "post-historical animals of the species of *Homo sapiens* (which will live amidst abundance and complete security) will be content," when they will "react by conditioned reflexes to vocal signals or sign 'language'" (for Kojève's view of the "American way of life" as the epitome of "the post-historical process" that "personifies the animalization of man," see Drury 1994: 52; in terms of "the end of philosophy," cf. Miklowitz 1998: 82–83). In this situation, as we will see, the cyborg as the accomplishment of the posthuman has reached its ultimate stage: it has turned into a perfect automaton, a post-organic body-machine the functions of which are conditioned by and to the most advanced language of all languages, *the language of pure signifiers*, the language of the *post*-"post" as the immanent telos of the surrational, the post-rational reason of the "post" (cf. Kariel 1989: 4–5). This is the final fulfilment, the very consummation, of the human in a world in which technology is no longer the "second nature" but the first and the only "nature" of the *post*-natural being formerly called "the human being" (for "ceasing to be human" as the way to the post-identitarian identity of "the singular," see Bruns 2011; cf. Kurzweil 2005).

The overcoming of the human by means of posthuman technology, the *Aufhebung* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115) of the human being by becoming a cyborg – that is the ultimate end of history and the beginning of a post-Hegelian eternity, an era of no end: the era of the "post" in the name of *posthistoire* (cf. Jay 1993: 87–88; Tambling 2001: 1–31; Niethammer 1989; for Kojève's Hegelian "post-history" as "the roots of postmodern politics," see Drury 1994; cf. Hegel 1986d [1837]: 11–105). This is the era of endless postification the inauguration of which is the implosion of the sign implying the triumph of the signifier: the end of meaning in the sense of unending signification. This is the historical moment of the "post" in its post-historical gravity, the moment of *radical becoming* pointing the way beyond the Hegelian historicity, to the ever-prevailing future: *the future as post-futural futurity*, the future as the ultimate consummation of the postality of the "post" in its very postness.

Whatever the reasons for this not only significant, but truly epochal event were, it was a true Heideggerian *Ereignis*, an occurrence "revealing a new direction of cultural development utterly discontinuous with the dying one of modern humanism" (Fraser 1994 [1983]: 6); a "historical" turning point the consequences

of which have been tremendous, although often quite difficult to decipher (cf. Heidegger 1989a [1936–1938]).[218] What used to be the linguistic sign, a signifying unity consisting of two equal and interdependent components, the signifier and the signified (de Saussure 1966 [1916]: 65–139; Koerner 1973: 325–337), broke down, and a new agent of signification in the Western world arose from the ruins, a postmodern form of power, effecting an endless proliferation of "meaning" in the sense of signification without signifieds: the omnipotent signifier (see Derrida 1978f [1967]; 1982 [1972], 1984b [1972]; Lacan 1977b [1966]; Bannet 1989; Dews 2007 [1987]). Not only language but also economy, politics, culture and art – all the spheres of society, and what until recently could still be called the "human being," are no longer what they used to be before this all-devouring collapse, the implosion of the sign.

This is prehistory of the posthuman, the post-historical condition of possibility of the posthuman as the beginning of the future already present in its becoming (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Hayles 1999; Graham 2002; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008).

Why Do Benjamin, Lenin and Surrealism Belong to the Same Order?

If the modern as the accomplishment of the Enlightenment means the triumph of reason, that is, the constitution of the regime of rationality (see, for example, Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; for a historical contextualization, see, for example, Jay 1973; Held 1980; Wiggershaus 1986; in terms of the intertwining of politics and reason in the Enlightenment, see Foucault 1990c [1979/1981]: 58–60), the postmodern implies its *neo-romantic counter-movement as the return of the repressed: the celebration of mythical, religious and poetic thinking*, "thinking" in terms of writing in the mode of *écriture* (cf. Heidegger 1985e [1959]; cf. Kockelmans 1980 [1972]; Rapaport 1991 [1989]; Thiele 1995; Lafont 2000 [1994]), a mode of "thinking" for which the world is not an object of explanation, but of fantasizing and fabulation in the mode of linguistic figuration celebrating the omnipotence of the imaginary; that is, a world engendered by what Roland Barthes (1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174, 1975 [1973]) calls "writerly" writing (cf. Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Rylance 1994: 66–102; Lucy 1997: 74–76); a manner of writing beyond the constraints of the Freudian *Realitätsprinzip*, "reality principle" (see Freud 1990b [1911]: 234–235, 238); that is, a mode of writing that is liberated from the principle of reason constitutive of the modern.

218 By choosing the German term *Ereignis* I also refer to Nietzsche *via* Foucault (in German translation); in his "Nietzsche, die Genealogie, die Historie," Foucault (1993 [1971]: 80) attempts to subvert the conventional conception of history as a teleological movement of occurences and posits instead history in terms of *Ereignis*: "Mit Ereignis ist nicht eine Entscheidung, ein Vertrag, eine Regierungszeit oder eine Schlacht gemeint, sondern die Umkehrung eines Kräfteverhältnisses, der Sturz einer Macht, die Umfunktionierung einer Sprache, die Schwächung, die Vergiftung einer Herrschaft durch sie selbst, das maskierte Auftreten einer anderen Herrschaft. Die Kräfte im Spiel der Geschichte gehorchen weder einer Bestimmung noch einer Mechanik, sondern dem Zufall des Kampfes." (cf. Nietzsche 1968c [1887]; for the idiosyncratic meaning of *Ereignis* in Heidegger's (anti/post-)philosophy, cf. Heidegger 1989a [1936–1938]; Ruin 2002).

This is the moment of the "post": instead of the conventional order of a preset and stable meaning, what we now have is a radical polysemy and heteroglossia, a decentred and incongruous plurality of signification and signifying practices; ultimately, a state of indeterminacy, undecidability and aporia constitutive of poststructuralism (for a theory-historical overview, see, for example, Bannet 1989; Leitch 1992; Dews 2007 [1987]; for the origins of the "post" of poststructuralism, see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]). No longer communication and understanding by means of language; but, instead, singular, self-reflexive and non-communicative modes of linguistic figuration that make sense even without making sense (cf. Foucault 1990j [1975/1986], 1998 [1966]). Writing, textuality, discourses – these are now the dominant determinants of the posthistorical condition of being under the regime of the signifier. In this new constellation, the signifier is no longer a vehicle of meaning, instead, it is a means of seduction. As Barthes says, the "signifier as siren" (Barthes 1977 [1975]: 145; cf. Bensmaïa 1987: 42–43; Still & Worton 1990: 18–19) constitutes the logic of the "post," the logic of an endless linguistic play that has its apotheosis in post-theory, a theory style that speaks of itself by itself in the mode of radical ambiguity, contingency and heteroglossia.

In this sense, the "post" is the ultimate, that is, the reified, moment of *both* poststructuralism *and* postmodernism, both understood as academic doctrines with their canonical terms and tenets (cf. Callinicos 1989). Although the origin of each is different – of the former, in philosophy and literary theory, of the latter, in art, aesthetics, cultural theory and social studies – they still have in common an aversion towards the tradition of the Enlightenment, and hence, towards all that is conceived of as "modern" in terms of "the human." In this sense, the "post" signifies a radical departure from reason, in other words, the inauguration of the timeless time of post-reason.

In his discussion of what he calls "postmodern politics," Michael Ryan summarizes the constitutive features of the contemporary cultural constellation in which poststructuralism and postmodernism have intertwined into a predominant world-view:

> Postmodernism is to art what poststructuralism is to philosophy and social theory. The two came into being at about the same time, with postmodernism emerging in the late 1960s, as structuralism was moulting into poststructuralism. In the name for a movement in advanced capitalist culture, particularly in the arts – literature, the pictorial and plastic arts, music, performance and video art, etc. – that emphasizes reflexivity, irony, artifice, randomness, anarchy, fragmentation, pastiche and allegory. Cynical regarding the progressivist dreams of modernism, which hoped to shape the cultural world in the image of technology, industry and science, postmodernism is resolutely ironic regarding the enabling myths of art, culture, society and philosophy. In philosophy, it exposes the concealed mechanisms that produce conceptual meaning, and in art, it puts on display the hidden workings of artistic production, demystifying its pretensions to expressive truth. As a result, in postmodernism the emphasis shifts from content to form or style. The metaphoric substitution of a meaning or content for signs gives way to the sheer contiguity, random and unpredictable, of forms. (Ryan 1988: 559)

This is the origin of post-theory, a post-Enlightenment and anti-modern configuration of theory writing in the mode of *écriture*; a formation of Theory in which culture and society, the whole human existence, dissolves in language, and, at a more fundamental level, in which the difference between epistemology and ontology disappears and both turn into unending linguistic figuration, into idiosyncratic language games (for a paradigmatic example, see Haraway 1997). Under the sign of the "post," that is, under the regime of the omnipotent signifier, scholars are incessantly seduced by this new mode of writing presenting itself as theory, writing theory dominated by a "cryptic, promiscuous and aggressive style called postmodern" (Hartman 2002: 212).

To get an insight into the "essence" of the "post" it is instructive to see its difference to what Andy Warhol designated as "[t]he Pop idea" in the 1960s, an idea that "anybody could do anything," in other words, that "[n]obody wanted to stay in one category" (Warhol & Hacket 1980: 134). For Warhol, the absolute top of Pop was the visit of the Pope to New York City, October 15, 1965, a visit during which Pope Paul VI "did it all in one day" (ibid.). Having left Rome with his "entourage of aides, press, and photographers" early that morning "on an Alitalia DC-8," exactly "[e]ight hours and twenty minutes later" the Pope "got off the plane at Kennedy" with his "shiny robes blowing in the wind" (ibid.).

After this historical moment, the inevitable logic of Pop took its own course, the course of radical contingency, which illuminates the way in which the idea of Pop anticipates the coming of the "post"; what for the Pope and the organizers of his visit was a strictly planned political act was for Warhol a rapidly changing show in the mode of TV mosaic – exactly in the manner McLuhan (1964) enthusiastically described it in his explorations into the new age of media at the time. As Warhol reports:

> They drove in a motorcade through Queens – the streets were lined with people – through Harlem crowds, and then down to the jammed-for-blocks St. Patrick's Cathedral area in the Fifties where the Pope seemed to want to go out into the "audience" but you could see his aides talking him out of it. After all the stuff in the cathedral he ran down the street to the Waldorf-Astoria, where President Johnson was waiting. They exchanged gifts and talked for a little under an hour about world troubles. Then it was over to address the UN General Assembly (essentially he said, "Peace, disarmament, and no birth control"), out to Yankee Stadium to say Mass in front of ninety thousand people, over to the closing World's Fair to see Michelangelo's *Pietà* in its Pop context before it went back to the Vatican, and back out to Kennedy and onto the TWA plane, saying, when the reporters asked him what he liked best about New York, *"Tutti buoni"* ("Everything is good") which was the Pop philosophy exactly. He was back in Rome that same night. To do that much in that short a time with that kind of style – I can't imagine anything more Pop than that. (Warhol & Hacket 1980: 134–135)

"Tutti buoni" – a new philosophy under the sign of "Pop" expressed with two pregnant, all-inclusive words: *Tutti buoni*. Can one say it more convincingly? There are no differences, everything is equal. Here is the origin of the postmodern: the principle of *indifference*, in both senses of the term. In other words,

while the modern follows the logic of differentiation (see, for example, Bürger 1974; for the Kantian origins of the idea, see Kant 1991b [1798]), the postmodern, as Scott Lash (1990b: 5, 11–15, 37–38, 173–174) emphasizes, is based on the logic of "de-differentiation" (for discussion of the idea, see, for example, Featherstone 1991a: 51, 69–72; Seidman 1994a: 14–18; Bertens 1995: 215–216; Leonard 1997: 103–108; Zima 1997: 260–272; Hancock & Tyler 2001: 31–32, 57–61, 93–96, 103–104; Nash 2001: 89, 107, 114–115; in Weberian terms, see Gane 2002: 28–44). That is, although your choice is not necessarily my choice, it makes no difference. Just enjoy and let me enjoy.

As soon as we take Warhol's cool indifference seriously, regarding his "philosophy of Pop" as an early form of the epistemology of the postmodern, we will see that there is, behind the Warholian world of self-reflecting surfaces, another epistemology: the logic of *différance*, the epistemology of Derridean deconstruction (see, for example, Derrida 1982 [1972]: 24–33, 39–47, 1984a [1972/1968]). If we consider the principle of indifference in this way, a question arises: what is the difference between Warhol and Derrida? *Différance* – that is the de-differentiating difference between "the Pop philosophy" and deconstruction. In other words, while, in the Warholian world, we enjoy the play of enigmatic indifference, in the Derridean world, we are confronted with the unending freeplay of supplementation and dissemination, the endless movement of signifiers without signifieds. This is the "difference" between postmodernism and poststructuralism, a difference that is based on *différance*, not between, but *within* them.

What, then, is the *differentia specifica* of the "post"? If the logic of "the Pop idea" is a limitless condensing and juxtaposition of things and events, an unprecedented acceleration and intermingling of elements and components of what we in the lack of anything better call "reality," the logic of the "post," in turn, is the same, only that it now happens in a world in which the "difference" between "reality" and "theory" has disappeared altogether as a result of an overwhelming linguistification of all being, an excess of "free-floating signifiers" that signify by their sheer presence. In the world of the "post," "Derrida," the pop-figure of poststructuralism, has taken the role of the Pope, and, accordingly, it is no longer possible to tell the signifier from the signified since now the signifier in itself is the signified of the signifier. But not only that: in the world of the "post," it is no longer possible to keep apart things and events that have nothing to do with one another either.

In 1924, Walter Benjamin, as Victor Burgin, one of the pioneers of all that is "post," writes referring to Susan Buck-Morss's (1989) treatise on Benjamin, "travelled to Italy: 'in order to bring to paper his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, with which he hoped to secure an academic position at the University of Frankfurt" (Burgin 1996: 139; Buck-Morss 1989: 8). What is important here is that "[t]his was *the year of Lenin's death, and the year of the first surrealist manifesto*" (Burgin 1996: 139; emphasis mine); a year, one is compelled to add, of literally countless other occurrences, but, as we now understand, the "post" has

its own associative logic. What do the incidents mentioned by Burgin have to do with each other – except that they are important coordinates in his theoretical mindscape? Nothing, or then again: anything. For in the *textual* world of post-theory, things have, of course, innumerable interconnections; and it is these mutually interacting connections, based on associations peculiar to the play of signifiers constituting the linguistic matrix of the "post," that Benjamin, Lenin and Surrealism *necessarily* belong to the same order (cf. Breton 1924, 1972a 1924], 1978b; Browder 1967; Caws 1996 [1971]).

This is the idea of what I call the surrational: the reason of the imaginary manifested by post-theory in, through and by its excessive linguistic figuration.

The *Sturm und Drang* of the "Post"

It is in this manner that post-theory is a radicalized form, the ultimate derivation, of the linguistic order of post-Saussurean theory, the theoretical matrix of poststructuralism (see, for example, Culler 1982: 96–102, 111–115; Mequior 1986: 187–195, 229–232; Giddens 1987: 195–212; Harland 1987: 13–19, 77–87), and, as its logical conclusion, of all that is "post." In terms of the politics of theory, as stated above, post-Saussurean mode of thought entails linguistic materialism, a materialism of the signifier, replacing dialectical materialism, once one of the philosophical sources of the political theology of Western Marxism and the academic Left (see, for example, Jay 1984; Jacoby 2002 [1981]). As such a theory discourse, the post-Saussurean approach constitutes the epistemological framework of contemporary theory reinvented as Theory by means of the "post." In this new configuration of "the theoretical" in which all that is takes place in language, *it is no longer possible to think in terms of thinking*. If thinking today is possible at all, *it is possible only in terms of writing*.

This is the world of what I call *linguisticism*; a world in which there is *nothing* without the agency of the signifier, nothing without the linguistic excess effected by the "free-floating signifers" constitutive of post-theory, manifested by its extravagant theory-fictions in the name of the "post" (for "the linguistics of writing" referring to the in-between of language and literature, see Fabb et al. 1987). Linguisticism, however, is not an a-historical phenomenon; it emerged in the context of structuralism that in itself came into being as a result of the intellectual reorientation in postwar France (for a historical overview, see Dosse 1998a [1991], 1998b [1991]). In this context, language was endowed with a quasi-ontological status as the foundation of all being. But, at the same time, language in itself became a problem – a problem with inflationary consequences, as Derrida points out right at the beginning of his *Grammatology*:

> However the topic is considered, the *problem of language* has never been simply one problem among others. But never as much as at present has it invaded, *as such*, the global horizon of the most diverse researches and the most heterogeneous discourses, diverse and heterogeneous in their intention, method, and ideology. The devaluation of the word "language" itself, and how, in the very hold it has upon us, it betrays a loose vocabulary, the temptation of a cheap

> seduction, the passive yielding to fashion, the consciousness of the avant-garde, in other words – ignorance – are evidences of this effect. This inflation of the sign "language" is the inflation of the sign itself, absolute inflation, inflation itself. Yet, by one of its aspects or shadows, it is itself still a sign: this crisis is also a symptom. It indicates, as if in spite of itself, that a historico-metaphysical epoch *must* finally determine as language the totality of its problematic horizon. It must do so not only because all that desire had wished to wrest from the play of language finds itself recaptured within that play but also because, for the same reason, language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its own finitude at the very moment when its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self-assured, contained, and *guaranteed* by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it. (Derrida 1997: 6)

If this *inflation of the sign "language" is the inflation of the sign itself*, the more there is, simultaneously as a cause and effect of what Terry Eagleton (1995: 66) calls "an immense linguistic inflation" typical of postmodernism believing that what is "no longer conceivable in political reality" is always possible in "the areas of discourse or signs or textuality," another inflation that I designate as the *inflation of the signifier* that, paradoxically, only increases the value of the signifier: in the discursive constellation of the "post," in the hyper-theoretical configuration of post-theory, the signifier is the metaphysical *prima causa*, the "prime mover," of all being. And it is in this sense that the signifier, hypostatized to the status of the very *logos* of all being, constitutes the reason of negation that is the primal principle of the "post": *the signifier is the actuator of negation as the all-consuming affirmation*, the Yes in terms of the No that implies the No in terms of the Yes. This is the neo-positivism of the "post," the ultimate affirmation within and by negation.

Whatever you say in the world of the "post" it is always true because in the matrix of the "post" there is no truth.

What the upheaval in the Saussurean order of the sign means historically can be illustrated with Jameson's allegory about the triumph of the signifier; a short narrative that outlines the transformation of language that led to what is conventionally called the "linguistic turn" culminating to the postulation that there is no reality outside language.

"Once upon a time at the dawn of capitalism and middle-class society, there emerged something called the sign, which seemed to entertain unproblematic relations with its referent" (Jameson 1991: 95). This is how, as we remember, Jameson begins his allegory of the metamorphosis of the sign, firstly, into an intrinsically contradictory unity of the signifier and the signified that still had a relation, although a problematic one, to the referent or reality, which then, in the course from the pre-modern to the modern, not only broke away from the object world, but also disintegrated into two separate entities, autonomous signifiers and signifieds, and finally culminated in the ultimate triumph of the omnipotent signifier (ibid.: 95–96). This is the fate of the referent, *the reality principle of language*: while the referent disappears altogether, the signifier becomes reified, and the "force of reification," which was "responsible" for

the moment of the modern, "does not stop there either," and, consequently, as Jameson sums up the main point:

> in another stage, heightened, a kind of reversal of quantity into quality, reification penetrates the sign itself and disjoins the signifier from the signified. Now reference and reality disappear altogether, and even meaning – the signified – is problematized. We are left with that *pure and random play of signifiers* that we call postmodernism […]. (Jameson 1991: 96; emphasis mine)

If, for Jameson, the triumph of the signifier appears as the emergence of postmodernism – understood not as a new historical period, but as a "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 1984, 1991) pertinent to Western affluent societies – there are also interpretations seeing the autonomously operating signifier as constitutive of poststructuralism. Thus, for Graham Coulter-Smith (1997: 92) the new cultural configuration after the implosion of the sign, in contrast to Baudrillardian "sour" poststructuralism, entails "'sweet' poststructuralism untainted by the criticality of humanist Marxism," manifested in Derridean thought "with its emphasis upon *the delirious free play of the signifier*" (emphasis mine).

This Derridean project to "challenge the basis of the symbolic itself, discredit representation, undermine the authority of the sign and render final and irrevocable the severance of *signifiant* from *signifié*" (Thurley 1983: 177) has, in one way or another, been the trajectory of cultural theory since the 1970s, trying to subvert the tradition of Enlightenment reason (see, for example, Arac 1986b; Poster 1989; Young 1990; Payne 1993; May 1994; Peters 2001; Rajan & O'Driscoll 2002; Payne & Schad 2003; Davis 2004; Colebrook 2005 [1999]; Koch 2007; cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]). What constituted "the rational" in Enlightenment rationality has been challenged and disrupted by the counter-"reason" of the "post," a post-Romantic form of anti-reason: the delirious polyvocality of the imaginary, the highest form of which is the surrational as the methodical principle of reading. That is, *the "post" of the post-Enlightenment implies its logical conclusion: the post-logical logic of the "post."* This is the idea of the "free-floating signifier," *the signifier set free from the idealism of the signified*; the signifier not only as the linguistic-material entity enabling signification in terms of the "post," but the signifier as the very condition of possibility of all language *signifying in and by itself the difference of difference*, ultimately resulting in Derridean *différance* (see Derrida 1984a; cf. Howells 1999; Royle 2003a).

In these terms, writing in the matrix of the "post" means what Catherine Greenblatt (1995: 83–86), reading "versions of the perverse," calls "reading for fun," a mode of reading as writing in which proliferation and dissemination of signifiers constitutes a game of desire the subject of which is not the author, but the agency of textuality, the only productive force of theory after the "death of author" (Barthes 1977b [1968]; in terms of the "author-function," cf. Foucault 1977e [1969]: 121–131; cf. Burke 1992: 89–99; During 2004 [1992]: 121, 212–213, 223–224).

The immense world of textuality generated by the "post" is a postmodern Library of Alexandria, a vertiginous archive of texts without any recognizable

order (except, of course, the order of the "post" in itself), in which there is no sense to search after the meaning beyond the text because there is only the surface of writing, its linguistic figures, the seductive arabesques of textuality. In the presence of the "post," you do not ask, what does it mean; instead, the question is: what does it *signify*? Yet, what is extremely important here, there is no answer to this question; instead, what there is are just signifiers; the "pure and random play of signifiers that we call postmodernism" (Jameson 1991: 95–96). According to Jameson, the postmodern implies an effort to demolish the "depth models" (ibid.: 12) constitutive of Western thought: the Marxist dialectics of essence and appearance, the Freudian divide between the latent and the manifest, the existentialist contrast between authenticity and inauthenticity, and finally the Saussurean opposition between the signifier and the signified, an opposition that, in fact, has been the very foundation of the reliance on language-external reality, now finally abandoned once and for all.

This is the *Sturm und Drang* of the "post": linguistic delirium as a post-Nietzschean pathos of anti-reason, the most sublime form of *différance*, the *jouissance* of post-theory: the Romantic drive of the "post" as the driving force of the surrational.

What is constitutive of the "post" is that any form of foundationalism or essentialism is no longer possible: there is no such thing as the original cause or the final end, no primordial state of being, no *Ding an sich*, no ultimate grounding that could function as the basis of or the guarantee for some firm and stable order of things. A radical contingency is now the epistemo-ontological non-foundational foundation of all being as a post-Heideggerian mode of *Sein* (cf. Heidegger 1977d [1927]), a postmetaphysical metaphysics of language. Hence, there is nothing "natural," not even in nature, in the world of the "post" (cf., for example, Bender & Druckrey 1994; Robertson et al. 1996; Haraway 1997). The only certainty – which in itself, of course, is only *a linguistic construct* and as such similarly relative as everything else – is the abysmal uncertainty of all things, the unending insecurity of all being. This is the regime of the signifier, the "prime mover" of all that is, an enigmatic agent of signification in which "prime" is actually never "first," in contradiction to its own logic, since it is *always already* somewhere else than it seems to be: *within the "post," time and space have once and for all lost their meaning as the coordinates of predictability.*

Thus, not only has the signified disappeared, now the very signifier is present only in its absence: the signifier is present in its effects, in its post-symptomatic symptoms without any origins.

2.2 The Surrational: Reason under the Regime of the "Post"

All that is "post" is a manifestation of a post-Enlightenment project to enable the ultimate emancipation from the emancipation constituted by Enlightenment reason: an escape from the stronghold of rationality, the bastille of rationalism. While the Enlightenment, as the emancipation of reason and thus the historical basis of the modern, was an effort to explain and understand the world not in the light of myth, religion or metaphysical thought, but by rational analysis and scientific means (see, for example, Schmidt 1989; Hofmann 1999; for Kant's conception of *Aufklärung*, see Kant 1991a [1784]; in terms of Foucault-Habermas debate, see Kelly 1994; for a fundamental criticism of the Enlightenment, see Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]),[219] in contrast to that, in the world of the "post," reason is replaced by *mythopoetic figuration*, by phantasmatic play of language – manifesting as such a new mode of rationality, the rational of what I call *post-reason*: a mode of reason that does not obey the imperative of the rational, but the *seduction of the imaginary* (see, for example, Jameson 1988d [1978]; Baudrillard 1990f [1979]; Burnett 1995; Grosz 1995b; Gatens 1996; Lechte 2004; for desire and the imaginary in Sartrean terms, see Butler 1999b [1987]: 92–121; for "the imaginary institution of society," see Castoriadis 1998 [1975]; for the "postmodern political imaginary," see Zavarzadeh 1992); that is, the productive principle of the postmodern, the potentiation of the potential by means of potentialization: by turning the potent more potent by expanding the limits of the potential: the intensification, reinforcement and accumulation, in a word, *exponentialization* of the potential.

This is the surrational logic of post-theory, the logic of postmodern pataphysics, *the reason of the imaginary enabled by the liberation of reason from the tyranny of truth* (cf. Hassan 1982 [1971]: 48–54; Jenks 2003: 140–142; Bök 2002; in Baudrillard's context, cf. Kellner 1989: 162–163, 180, 203, 212). In this manner, by the *rationalization of the imaginary*, the surrational manifests the postmodern sublime by means of post-reason (in terms of the technological sublime, cf. Szerszynski 2005: 59–64; Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996).

Similarly to the discursive constellation of the postmodern – the cultural context of the "post" – that presupposes the modern, there is no surrational without the rational. What is surrational is a postmodern manifestation of the rational, that is, *a mode of reason*. This is the double bind of post-reason: it is suspended between reason and desire, between rational choice and libidinal affection: *post-reason is based on affectation in its most sublime form, in the form of signifying*

219 According to Kant (1991a [1784]: 53), the idea of the Enlightenment is in short: "Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. *Sapere aude*! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! Ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung."

extravaganza. In this sense, seduction takes place where reason fails, not by accident, but ironically, by the rational decision of reason: by its own will reason succumbs to desire. This is the irony of the rational: it is inscribed by its opposite: the "other" of reason, the reason of the imaginary, combined with its own "other," the irrational. Then again, in the realm of the surrational, seduction is the point at which desire in itself turns into a will, a point at which the will is intensified by desire, and both get into an accelerating spiral of the heightened awareness of the object (whatever it is) and the means of achieving it: the moment that Nietzsche (1969c [1889]: 110–112, 1972a [1872]: 22–26) called *Rausch*, the state of "drunkenness," "intoxication," "rapture" (cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 91–106, 114–124; Ottmann 1999: 58–74; Danto 2005: 30–31, 46–47; Caysa 2000), a state of being outside of oneself in which the limits of the self are disrupted, the state of *ekstasis* (Vannini & Waskul 2006: 183–198); in other words, the moment of the "high," the moment of vertigo effected by "free-floating signifiers" of the "post" (from a historical perspective in terms of *Schwindel*, cf. von Braun 2001).

2.2.1 The Political Theology of the Signifier

It is no wonder that *delirium* is one of the keywords of contemporary theory; in fact, the password to the appropriate state of mind on the theory scene of the postmodern. In other words, what comes after metaphysics is pataphysics in the world of the "post."

In these terms, the surrational is the libidinal mode of reason; it is the seduction of reason under the regime of desire.

This is the teleology of theoretical actionism typical of postmodern academia, rationality turned into a finalism of desire, desire that has taken on the form of theory: theory in the mode of *theory-hysteria* typical of all that is "post." Hence, seduction in terms of theory is a mode of postmodern *decisionism*, the most rational form of voluntarism: *the political theology of the signifier*.

In these terms, seduction is a vertigo of desire effected by the potential in the actual, the promise of the possible as a phantasm of reason. This is precisely the logic of the surrational: in the surrational there is nothing impossible because reason has made the very notion of the impossible impossible. From this it ensues that desire as the driving force of the postmodern is at the same time the most conspicuous effect of reason, the reason of capital as the reason of desire: capital as the condition of possibility of all that is "post." *This is the political economy of neoliberalism translated into the terms of post-theory: the surplus value of capital as the surplus value of theory*. This is the source of the excess of signification constitutive of the "post," its signifying extravaganza as the most seductive form of the sublime. Thus, in the world of the "post," in a complex contrapunctual unison of desire and will, seduction drives reason to the marvellous world of unreason, but this does not entail a destruction of reason (cf. Lukács 1984 [1954]); on the contrary, it entails an intensification and eleva-

tion of reason, *a sublimation of the rational* by way of the surrational, the highest form of reason in the world of the "post" (in terms of Surrealism and André Breton as "the poet of unreason," cf. Foucault 1996a [1966]).

In other words, the reason of the surrational as the reason of the imaginary is the apotheosis of reason in the contemporary world ruled by the political economy of neoliberalism. This is the cultural constellation from which the logic of the "post" emerges, the logic that has enabled the emergence of the "cyber."

Towards the *merveilleux* of the "Cyber"

Through the rationalization of the imaginary by means of technoscientific rationality and, as its post-theoretical derivative, the libidinal elevation of technoscience in the mode of the "cyber," the surrational manifests the sublime of reason; the mode of the sublime that in itself escapes the terror of reason, the rigorous rationalism of the Enlightenment and its horrifying historical consequences: the Gulag, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Vietnam, and the whole history of the twentieth century as a triumphalist pageant of the reason constitutive of the modern (see, for example, Hobsbawm 1994) – that is the world which the "post" has left behind once and for all: the past does not exists in the world of the "post," except in the form of the imaginary.

This is the constellation from which the surrational emerges: it is the most radical counter-force of reason, not as its opposite, but its post-Hegelian sublation, its most consequent *Aufhebung* (see Hegel 1986c [1807]: 150, 1986e [1812–1816]: 113–115; in Derridean terms, see, for example, Derrida 1984a: 19–20; cf. Cox 1996: 125–128; in terms of the Lacanian "phallus," cf. Lacan 1977g [1966/1958]: 288). Therefore, the surrational is not irrational; the surrational belongs to the realm of the "other" of reason. Rationality in general does not ask for reasons: reasons are given – or, rather, dictated – by it. Every form of rationality has its own reason (as well as its own reasons) that is immanent to its logic; in the surrational, this principle has assumed the position of law. What is reasonable is notp always rational; though, what is rational is always reasonable, by its very reason, by its very reasons. In this sense, the surrational is a mode of reason in which rationality has reached the level of assured faith, a certainty of belief: *to believe is not to know, it is to believe*; to know is to know what one does not know. This is the difference that makes the difference in terms of reason.

This is the point of departure towards the "other" of reason; a point of departure that is the point of no return: the move from reason to its "other" is never reversible (not even in terms of cybernetics) because what is the "other" of reason is a product of reason itself in the first place. Only reason can say what is its "other": the "other" of reason is an intrinsic moment, an immanent principle, of reason. This is the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in the world of the "post" (cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]).

Yet, this "other," notwithstanding that it belongs to the realm of reason, does not follow the logic of the "Same." As stated above, in the world of the surrational, everything is possible precisely because the omnipotence of reason has made the idea of the impossible impossible. This is the paradox of the "post": in the imaginary it strives for a transcendence of reason in the form of *anti*-reason, but its very logic is based on supra-rational rationality (in the sense of that which exceeds all the limits of reason). In the surrational, the *sur* refers to all that goes over and above, beyond, the rationality of reason, since, in the end, everything that has to become intelligible must, by definition, be *more* than reason in its plain rationality. This "more," this surplus, this excess of the excessive, is the reason of the surrational. What is this surplus of the rational, if not desire (cf. Lacan 1977g [1966/1958]: 286; Butler 1999b [1987]: 17–23, 90–96, 101–121, 156–184; De Mul 1999 [1990]: 75–119).

Therefore, desire is the *primus motor* of post-reason, the driving force of the surrational, the *sine qua non* of post-theory; in general, the constitutive principle of all that is "post," and hence, the origin of the "cyber." This is the logic of the desire for theory, the libidinal energy of cyber discourse – and finally, the very *raison d'être* of cybersex, "sex" in the world of the "cyber" following the logic of the "post."

In this respect, the surrational can be compared with the logic of Surrealism: what is "real" in Surrealism, is "rational" in the surrational. In Surrealism, it is the complex of poetic irrationality, dream work and *écriture automatique* that is the approach attempting to reveal a reality beyond the real, a reality that is *sur* or "above" the real of reality, and is thus *surreal* in the mode of *merveilleux* (see Nicholls 1995: 279–302; Bürger 1996 [1971]: 82–83; Tythacott 2003: 21–24, 42–50, 60–74; Nadeau 1997 [1945]; Spector 1997; Bohn 2002; for a panoramic view in terms of "romantic anticapitalism," see Löwy 2009 [2000]; for the origin of the term in Lukács, see Lunn 1982: 82, 92–96). According to André Breton (1972a 1924]: 26), "[s]urrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought"; in this sense, the surreal appears as a specific mode of reality experience that is "[d]ictated by thought, *in the absence of any control exercised by reason*" (ibid.; emphasis mine; cf. Chénieux-Gendron 1990 [1984]: 115–116; for Breton as "the poet of unreason," see Foucault 1996a [1966]; in terms of "the 'other' of Reason," cf. De Mul 1999: 94; in the context of Lacanian psychoanalysis, cf. Parker 1997: 200–202).

In short, whereas the surreal takes place as an effect of the miraculous reason of the supra-natural paradigmatically manifested by Louis Bunuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, the surrational happens in *a world in which the Disneyland of Theory is the paragon of pure reason*: the reason of the imaginary, the reason of desire.

In the world of Surrealism, there are three principles of the "other" of reason, principles that "define" what is surreal, that is, effected by the *sur*: (1) the automatism of perception and thought or an effort to eliminate all conscious control,

(2) a hallucinatory sense of reality, and (3) surprising juxtapositions of completely unrelated objects; all of these features having a certain affinity with hysteria (see, for example, von Braun 1994 [1985]; Weickmann 1997; Eiblmayr et al. 2000; Lamott 2001; in the context of the genesis of Freudian psychoanalysis, cf., for example, Freud 1962a [1950], 1977a [1894], 1977b [1898], 1977c [1896], 1977d [1893], 1977e [1896], 1985, 1987d [1900], 1986d [1915–1917]; Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]; Sulloway 1979; Rohde-Dachser 1997 [1991]; Sadoff 1998).[220] What, in the last analysis, is surreal is engendered by the *dream work of language*, by the "creative" principle of the linguistic of language: the imaginary as the condition of possibility of the "other" of reason. This is the Freudian *Triebkraft* of Surrealism (cf. Freud 1981c [1905]: 47, 66–69, 94, 157, 1987d [1900]: 283–512, 1991d [1915]: 214–221, 1983 [1938/1940]: 70–73, 1961 [1905], 1990b [1911], 1991a [1915], 1991b [1915]); from this perspective we can understand not only the *desire* both of Breton and Lacan to have a personal contact to Freud, the *Übervater* of the unconscious, but, more fundamentally, the very logic of the surreal as an anticipating figure of thought prefiguring the configuration of what I call the surrational (see, for example, Balakian 1986 [1959]: 125–133; Roudinesco 1990 [1986]: 7–33, 56–112; Gay 1995 [1988]: 585; Rabaté 2003: 6, 16–22; Browder 1967).

It is in this sense that the intellectual inheritance of Surrealism, its lineage of succession, its canon of descent, as the theoretical conjuncture of Breton, Freud and Lacan (in this order), is inscribed in the surrational as the imaginary of reason constitutive of post-theory (which is not the same as the imaginary reason of capital, although both of them are closely connected to one another). In other words, Breton, Freud and Lacan are the "communicating vessels," even in their non-communicative communication, which comprise the configuration of the surrational in genealogical terms (cf. Breton 1972b [1962], 1996 [1934]; Foucault 1996a [1966]). What is the point here is that *the dialectical relations between the Enlightenment and Surrealism are the key to the surrational*; in other words, *the encounter of reason and the imaginary in the virtual reality of the language*, the mode of reality that is constitutive of both the "post" and the "cyber."

In these terms, Surrealism as a manifestation of the "other" of reason is about a radical politics of language, a revolt against the constraints of ordinary lan-

220 In its most concise form, the idea of hysteria can be summarized with a statement by Freud (1977d [1893]: 50): "with its paralyses and other symptoms hysteria behaves as if anatomy did not exist or as if it were unaware about it" (cf. von Braun 1994 [1985]: 21–76, 1996: 138). That is, hysteria is a complex of corporeal disorders caused not by organic dysfunctions but something that is beyond the physical body. In Freudian conception, this "something" is psychic in essence: *der Hysterische leide[t] größtenteils an Reminiszenzen* (Breuer & Freud 1977 [1895]: 86), "the hysteric suffers for the most part from reminiscences." In other words, psychic experiences (affects, associations, traumas etc.) that are repressed instead of being expressed turn into corporeal symptoms (headache, neuralgia, convulsive tics, spastic speech inhibitions etc., often with concomitant hallucinations). In hysteria, the body is not a pathological organism; instead, it is a *Schauplatz*, a "scene," of the psyche. In contemporary terms, hysteric symptoms are signs without referents or signifiers without signfieds. It is in this sense that, in my reading, post-theory follows the logic of hysteria: it is "symptomatic" writing in which "symptoms" refer to the "psychic reality" of language, that is, to the imaginary effected by the linguistic of language; in other words, post-theory is an effect of the *virtual reality of language* constitutive of the paradigm of the "post" (from a historical perspective, cf. von Braun 2001).

guage confining imagination with self-evident meanings; that is, the freedom of thought engendered by enigmatic texts that have the ability to break the shackles of meaning, overcome the conventional rules of signification and, in this subversive way, to produce something absolutely new, something never seen before: something that is "above" and "beyond" reason. What is the political here is the power of metaphors constituting a world *sui generis*, metaphors operating with word-images and associations, that is, "free-floating signifiers." As John Spector (1997: 101), appropriately in Lacan's words, says: the "creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, two signifiers equally actualized"; rather, "it flashes *between* two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connection with the rest of the chain" (emphasis mine; cf. Lacan 1977e [1966/1953]: 65–69).

Thus, not the simultaneous presence of two signifiers, but the sudden substitution of the one by the other, a substitution in which the substituted still reverberates present as the absent, that is the mechanism that creates suggestive metaphors through a Freudian *Traumarbeit* of language, the movement of the linguistic of language, working with the principles of condensation (*Verdichtung*) and displacement (*Verschiebung*) (see Freud 1987d [1900]: 283–314; with regard to the joke as an expression of the unconscious, see Freud 1961 [1905]; in Lacanian terms, cf. Bowie 1991: 57–58, 70–71). Similarly to dream, in the surreal an apparent incongruity of signifiers, consisting of irrational juxtapositions, creates the "meaning," the sense, the very reason, of an extraordinary experience, an experience that is constituted, in the final analysis, in, by and through the linguistic of language, the constitutive principle of all signification, first time innovatively analyzed by Breton and the Surrealists, not by means of a preconceived theory, but by a theoretical approach that emerged from the language of the object of research in itself, the language of dream (cf., for example, Rapaport 1994: 17–90; Orban 1997: 84–112; Benjamin 1991d [1929]; Buck-Morss 1989; Cohen 1995 [1993]).

In this sense, the basic idea of Surrealism is to be open for "convulsive beauty," that is, the moments of the *merveilleux*, the "marvellous" (Spector 1997: 186–189). What is the "marvellous," the hard core of the surreal experience? It is that unexpected moment that is as "beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and umbrella on a dissecting table" (ibid.: 211).[221] This Lautréamont's

221 This phrase, *beau […] comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un paraplui*, that originates from the Sixth Canto of Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (1869), inspired the Surrealists in their efforts to find images with "psychosexual overtones" (Spector 1997: 211), images in which machinic figures operated as surrealist signifiers. As an example, Spector refers to Picabia's work *Prostitution universelle* (1916), with its "secret phallic emitter and horizontal 'sexe féminine ideologique'" (ibid.). The "psychosexual overtones" were peculiar to surrealist language (language in a broad sense) in general; for example, in his "collaboration with Eluard, *L'Immaculée conception*, in the section 'L'Amour,' Breton himself named the seventeenth position of intercourse (in which the woman alternately bends and extends her legs in turn) 'the sewing machine'" (ibid.). What is important here is that the sexual as a signifier in combination with the machinic produces seductive associations that, however, remain beyond rational explanation. *This* is the enigma of the sexual.

emblematic word-image constitutive of Surrealism is a phrase that, as Spector says, is "richer in psychosexual overtones than Dada mechanomorphic imagery" (ibid.; cf. Lungstrum 1997; Wosk 2003; with regard to Dada, cf. Sawelson-Gorse 1998; in the context of postmodern reading of hysteria, body and technology, cf. Eiblmayr et al. 2000; in terms of the "cyber," cf. Wolmark 1999a; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Nguyen 2003; from the perspective of *Sexualästhetik*, cf. Gorsen 1987). This is the irresestible power of the sexual, its force to give things a *particular* meaning, a meaning that evades all rational explanations and is therefore apprehensible only through poetic imagination, in surrealist images, ideas and objects, and, in the world of the "cyber," by way of theory-fictions that follow the logic of the "post."

The trajectory of the imaginary from Surrealism to the surrational constitutes the *theory-poetic configuration of postmodern technomorphism*, the second-order successor of the mechanomorphism of the modern. This is the configuration in which the "cyber," as the techno-imaginary aggrandizement of the "post," becomes intelligible: in the world of cyber discourse, we have the pleasure to enjoy the revival of the imaginary reason of the surreal, not as its latter day mimicry, but as a post-Hegelian *Aufhebung*, a postmodern sublation; that is, as an affirmative suspension through a preserving revocation (in terms of *profane Erleuchtung*, cf. Benjamin 1991 [1929]).

The Rational of the Imaginary

In the constellation outlined above, we can experience the moment of the surreal, a moment that wrenches the rational from the clutches of the reasonable, of the suffocating order of the ordinary (which is the self-evidence of the banal in its purest form), and sets it free from oppressive rationality, in other words, from the terror of Enlightenment reason, the terror of the rational inherent to reason.

Thus, *the surreal is the unconscious of reason* appearing as the "other" of reason, as something which does not obey the logic of rational thought. In contrast, what was the idea of the Enlightenment was a conscious attempt to *control* the movement of thought proclaiming itself as the emancipation not only of thinking, but of the thinking subject as the subject of his or her own thought; that is, a liberation of reason as an establishment of the regime of critical rationality. *Sapere aude*, have the courage to use your own understanding, this is, as Kant (1991a [1784]: 53) says, the emblem of the Enlightenment: *Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit* (cf. Scholz 2009: 32–35; Schmidt 1989; Hofmann 1999).

An invitation to the freedom of rational argumentation as this was, it was, at the same time, an obligation to the reasonable: to the rationality of the subject under the regime of reason. This *unfreedom* of the subject under the freedom of reason is the situation that Surrealism saw absolutely necessary to subvert, in the name not only of the freedom of the subject, but most of all, in the name

of the freedom of the subjectivity of the subject even to the subversion of the subject in itself, *the freedom of the subject to derail and derange itself by its own subversive acts*; which, in turn, is the point of departure of poststructuralism, and hence, of all that is "post." Dada – Surrealism – Situationism, and finally the reason of the surrational – that is the way of reason to the freedom from itself (Best & Kellner 1997: 79–123; Jenks 2003: 135–160; Puchner 2006); in other words, the dialectic of the Enlightenment in terms of the postmodern (cf. Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; Habermas 1998b [1985]).

As Breton (1972a 1924]: 9) says, "We are still living under the reign of logic"; this is not the freedom of free thought, since "logical methods are applicable only to solving problems of secondary interest" (ibid.), the realm of the ordinary, the realm of the reasonable. The problem is that the "absolute rationalism that is still in vogue allows us to consider only facts relating directly to our experience"; "[l]ogical ends, on the contrary, escape us" (ibid.: 9–10). What is reasonable is thinking things half-measures; in contrast, Surrealism is a desire for the unreasonable, the unknown, *the end of all ends* (in both senses), the final finality built-in in reason: *a radical subversion of reason as the terror of the reasonable*. In Surrealism, the telos of reason, the epistemological and ontological rationality of all being, is subverted by the "other" of reason, the logic of the imaginary: *the logic of desire* (in terms of the "post," cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; Lyotard 1993a [1974]).

In contrast, what, then, is the surrational from this perspective? The surrational is the reverse of the "absolute rationalism" of Enlightenment reason, its continuation by other means, the means of the imaginary as *a new mode of the rational*; it is the unconscious of the rational turned inside out: rational thought set free from the constraints and conventions of rationalism. The surrational is the rational driven to its logical conclusion, to its very end, to the point at which the rational is no longer under the control of reason, the point at which the rational, in and by its very rationality, subverts the reasonable. This is the point at which reason exceeds its own limits and turns into the rationality of the surrational. Thus, the surrational is the rationality of absolute reason, the *non plus ultra* of all that is rational: *the imaginary in and by itself as the highest mode of reason, the reason of all that is "post."* In other words, the dialectic of the modern is the driving force of the postmodern, which, in turn, is the condition of possibility of the surrational as the reason of the "post."

This is the "high" of instrumental reason (see Horkheimer & Adorno 1994 [1944]; cf. Jay 1973; Held 1981; Wiggershaus 1986) *in terms of the postmodern*: exceeding the limits of necessity dictated by reason. What is *chance* in Surrealism is the *contingent* in the surrational: this is the degree zero of the necessary. This is a substantial difference, of course: whereas a chance occurs unexpectedly, just like that, the contingent, by its unnecessity, implies that it could also be otherwise, this or that way, depending on the conditions given. Nevertheless, similarly to the surreal, the surrational is the "other" of reason, only the other

side of the "other." Not the enigmatic of the "marvellous," but *the rational of the imaginary* is the principle of the surrational.

In these terms, unlike the surreal (the principle of Surrealism), the surrational as the reason of the "post" is not a mode of experiencing the real in the light of the dream. In Surrealism, what is real in reality is enveloped by the aura of the *merveilleux*; it is an enigmatic "thing" that has an electrifying – that is, an erotic or "psychosexual" – meaning in its very "thingness," a meaning that precisely as such escapes the rationality of reason (in terms of "profane illumination," see Cohen 1995 [1993]). In contrast to that, the surrational is a moment of reason in itself, the driving moment of post-reason; and in post-theory, it is the mode of reason that is *thoroughly theoretical* in terms of the imaginary, immersed in the endless realm of "free-floating signifiers," the realm of "pure" theory, not that of pure reason, the Kantian sphere of "pure reason" reflected by Kant (1990a [1781/1787], 1990b [1781/1787]) in his epochal *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*; that is, the surrational manifests theory purified from the rationality of reason and, instead, it functions according to the logic of the imaginary.

In other words, what I call an *anti-Kantian affect* is the "reason" of the "post," the reason of libidinal liberation.

In this respect, there is an affinity between the reason of the surrational and the reason of financial speculation; in other words, the "post" is intrinsically a product of the political economy of neoliberalism, the economy of postmodern capitalism.

Thus, the surrational is a mode of hyper-rational, the mode of high-theory in postmodern academia; or, in terms of capital, the reason of productive consumption, the economic reason constitutive of neo-Fordism. This is a metalevel of reason at which the surrational becomes "reasonable" (of course, in the sense of post-reason) and is experienced (in writing in terms of the written) as a "high," not of rationalism, but of the rationality of the imaginary (cf. Lacan 1977b [1966]; Gallop 1985: 59–61, 66–73, 107–110, 127–128, 160–163; Bowie 1991: 91–92, 98–102): the imaginary has no limits because it does not recognize borderlines and limitations. Rationalism is like revolution: it seeks freedom but ends up in prison. The surrational, in contrast, does not seek anything; like Surrealism, *it finds* – under the auspices of the "other" of reason. Accordingly, true to the spirit of the postmodern, the surrational follows the logic of *objet trouvé*, but the object that is "found" is found in theory, as an object that is a theory-fiction brought about by the theory itself (as a paradigmatic example, see Haraway 1997).

This shift from the "sur" of Surrealism to the "sur" of the surrational has, of course, a long history that already has its origin before the Surrealist movement. Romanticism, decadence and the radical suspicion of reason in the height of nineteenth-century scientific rationality culminating in the reason of *pataphysics* as the supreme reason of the *belle époque*, the splendid era of the *fin de siècle* (see, for example, Showalter 1992; Ledger & Luckhurst 2000; Mikkonen 2001; Bök 2002; Fell 2005) – all of them against the dictatorship of

Enlightenment reason – ushered in a mode of thought that embarked upon an endeavour to get above and beyond the very rationality of reason, reason as the legitimation of the reasonable. This is the idea of the Nietzschean *über* (see Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 8–10, 142–145, 352–363). In the "post," Nietzsche's *Übergang* (ibid.: 10–11), "transition," implies the "trans" of the "post": the principle of a radical questioning of all limits and limitations by way of what I call the *pathos of transgression* (in Bataillean terms, cf. Foucault 1977a [1963]), finally amounting to the project of exceeding the limits of the impossible in order to get into the world of the possible, the possible as the contingent, as the potential in its non-necessity (cf. Schönherr-Mann 2008: 80–82; in terms of the *Überwindung der Anthropozentrizität*, cf. Joisten 1994: 40–41, 76–78, 91–97; for Nietzsche's effort to overcome metaphysics, cf. Heidgger 1998a [1961]: 425–432, 1998b [1961]: 177–180, 430–431).

It is in this manner that the Nietzschean *über* turns into the excess of the "post" in post-theory, and, as its highest manifestation, to the post-theoretical paradigm of the posthuman (see, for example, Sheehan 2004: 35–37; Hayles 1999; Weinstone 2004; Dinello 2005; for a critique, see, for example, Ansell Pearson 1997: 33–35; from a historical perspective, cf. Schönherr-Mann 1992, 1994; Rohkrämer 1999).

It is precisely this reason of the impossible as the precondition of the possible in the form of the surrational that has now made it possible to take Nietzsche's (1968a [1883–1885]: 8) teaching seriously, in all its significance: *Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr gethan, ihn zu überwinden?*, "I teach you the Overman. Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?" (cf. Heidegger 1998b [1961]: 262–282). This question opens up the perspective from which it becomes possible to understand the politics of the cyborg, the imperative of a radical metamorphosis of being human into the posthuman (in Jüngerian terms, cf. Jünger 1980 [1930], 1982 [1932]; Heidegger 2004; Morat 2007; Kittler 2008).

The Politics of Theory: The Dream Work of Language

The "revolution in poetic language" inaugurating the paradigm of the "post" (see Kristeva 1984 [1974]; cf. Mowitt 1992: 108–13; Still & Worton 1990, 1993b; ffrench & Lack 1998c; in terms of the avantgardist "poetry of the revolution," cf. Puchner 2006; for a historical contextualization, see Starr 1995), a theory-political celebration of textuality as a new reality, culminating in the triumph of the signifier, did not, of course, occur over night. In her study of "the political" in Julia Kristeva's theory of the "revolution in poetic language," Cecilia Sjöholm explains the way in which Freud's (1987d [1900]) "interpretation of dreams" turned into a model of poetic language, which, in turn, became an influential model of "the political" in the post-1968 theories concerning post-revolutionary politics:

> Kristeva transposes Freud's analysis of the dreamwork to her analysis of poetic language, which is only partly linguistic: the most important feature of the

> dream is its imperative imagery. The visual quality of the dream constitutes a layer of representation, but it is not language as such, or language seen as symbolic order. It is a kind of surplus, which Kristeva calls the semiotic. The *dream-work thereby becomes the very model of poetic language*, created through semiotic layers such as rhythm, prosody, figurability, saturating language with affects and transposes the question of signification to layers beyond the linguistic chains of metaphors and metonymies: a *process of transposition between signs*." (Sjöholm 2005: 25; emphasis mine)

In this "transposition," it is also to be found the key to "the political" in post-structuralism and subsequently, following the 1970s and 1980s feverish theorizing in the American academic circles dedicated to "French theory," to the post-political politicization of language constitutive of post-theory and the paradigm of the "post" in general (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]; Chanter & Ziarek 2005; for a historical contextualization in terms of language and cultural theory, see, for example, Burke et al. 2000; cf. Selden & Widdowson 1993). In other words, through the metamorphosis of Surrealism into the Maoism of the *Tel Quel* circle by way of French Freudianism, the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris became transposed into "the political" of the "post"; a mode of "the political" in which "the political" is *inscribed* in language, rewritten in terms of "the poetic" (see, for example, Kauppi 1994: 310–311, 332–338, 2010: 22–24, 74–82, 89–92; Hutcheon 1988; Ffrench 1995; Spiteri & LaCoss 2003; Marx-Scouras 2004).

It is in this manner that "the political" of the "post" constitutes a dream work of language (cf. Freud 1987d [1900]: 283–511; Stephan 1989: 27–34, 43–45, 61–63; de Berg 2003: 18–24; Pabst 2004: 84–94); that is, a micropolitics of theory intrinsic to post-theory, a mode of theory that is preoccupied – if not obsessed – with "the theoretical" as a specific form of "the political."

What is distinctive about this trasformation of theory under the sign of the "post" is that it is based on linguistic figuration in which the difference between the figurative and the literal becomes suspended through a post-Hegelian *Aufhebung*, "sublation," that is, simultaneously repealed and preserved by way of *différance* (see Derrida 1984a [1972/1968]: 19–20, 1984h [1972]: x–xi; cf. Protevi 2001: 48–50, 54–55). It is in this manner that "the literality of the letter functions as a figure" (Readings 1991: 35) in post-theory, and, accordingly, the dream work of language in terms of the "post" opens up a new realm of the figurative, the realm of *the post-literary* in which the writerly turns into the political (cf. de Man 1979; McLaughlin 1995 [1990]; with regard to the Lyotardian "figure," cf. Bennington 1988: 77–95; for the idea of the "writerly," see Barthes 1974 [1970]: 3–5, 174; Culler 1975: 189–192, 1982: 32–35; Hawkes 1977: 113–115; Johnson 1980a: 5–8, 1987: 26–27; Lucy 1997: 74–76). This kind of radical liberation of language creates unforeseen possibilities for the expansion, diversification and complification, in one word, postification, of the real redefined as an effect of the imaginary. Never before has the signifier *the real* been as significant, as *suggestive*, as in the world of the "post," a world the condition of possibility of which is the theoretical amplification of the idea of the imaginary in postmodern academia

(see, for example, Jameson 1988d [1978]; Zavarzadeh 1992; Gatens 1996; Julien 1996; Kearney 1998; Lechte 2004).

Thus, with regard to the emergence of the new order of things based on the liberation of language, the *événements* of Paris in May 1968 were constitutive of it: they marked a radical political upheaval the meaning of which was not a revolution, but an intellectual revolt, an upsurge of libidinal energies in the name of "the political" (cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]; cf. Williams 2000), a cataclysm that politicized theory and turned "the theoretical" into a new mode of politics: the politics of words in the mode of "free-floating signifiers"; a mode of politics that ever since has had tremendous effects on Western academia (see, for example, Poster 1989; McQuillan et al. 1999; Butler et al. 2000; Rapaport 2001; Callus & Herbrechter 2004b; Bourg 2007; from a Nietzschean perspective, cf. Schrift 1995). This is the spell of language in the politics of the "post"; in other words, a postmodern mode of "enchantment" after the Weberian *Entzauberung der Welt* (see Weber 1968 [1917/1919]: 612; for Weber's conception of disenchantment in the modern, see Schluchter 2009: 7–14; for the postmodern reenchantment of the world, see Gane 2002: 139–140, 146–149).

Paris May 1968, these were the suggesting keywords, the theoretically and politically eroticizing words in Western academia in terms of the "linguistic turn," in its poststructuralist form, throughout the 1970s until the 1990s; *libidinal signifiers* cathected by post-Freudian desire, words that enacted the turning point in the self-understanding of theory in the humanities, thus constituting the post-originary origin of everything that is "post" in contemporary theory; that is, the epochal *Ereignis* inaugurating the era of post-theory.

In the wake of this political outburst of libidinal energies – *forces of desire transposed into a politics of theory* – language gained a new importance, not as a means of representation, but as the very ontological condition of possibility of all that is, the very foundation of all being. *This* was the new epistemology of anti-foundationalism, a post-Enlightenment emancipatory epistemology in terms of writing. As Barbara Johnson (1995 [1990]: 41) says, "the theorists of writing saw a connection between the signifier/signified relation and the materialism/idealism relation"; accordingly, writing established "the political" of the politics of theory. That is, if the signified – the holy fetish of the "bourgeoisie" – signalled idealism and ideology, the signifier signified materialism and realism, the basis for a radical, subversive, "anti-bourgeois" politics: *a politics as a theoretical performance of "the political" in the realm of language: the politics of desire as the freeplay of the imaginary*.

This was the idea of linguistic "materialism," a new realism replacing the old idealism, the "reactionary" faith in the extra-linguistic reality of the signified cherished by the "bourgeois" mode of thinking (see, for example, Coward & Ellis 1977; Attridge et al. 1987; Milner 2002; Rajan & O'Driscoll 2002). In this manner, the signifier turned into a *theoretical fetish* of postmodern academia seduced by all that was "left," of course, not in terms of real political struggle,

the political of *Realpolitik* (a sphere of the "non-theoretical" despised by theorists fascinated by the politics of theory), but in the form of *subversive signifiers* mobilized against everything that was taken as "normal," the anathema, the very horror, of the academic "Left."

Thus, what happened after May 1968 was that material reality turned into a "real" materiality, the materiality of language, the materiality of the signifier (cf., for example, Butler 1993: 67–70; Lenoir 1998: 7–10).

As a consequence, the revolt moved from the streets to writing, the free world of *écriture*, writing as a politics of language performing the liberation of the signifier, entailing the liberation of desire, the libidinal forces as a subversion of the "bourgeois" world. This is the coming into being of the "French connection" in contemporary theory: as a result of the 1968 upheaval, the tumultuous Parisian intellectual scene was transferred, firstly, to the American campus, and soon thereafter, it was dispersed from there all over the Western world in a manner of a missionary movement. It was a theoretico-political, and, as such, an ideological transfer with unparallel historical consequences: the birth of "French theory" (cf., for example, Lotringer & Cohen 2001a; Peters et al. 2003a; Cusset 2008 [2003]), the paradigm of radical linguisticism as the most avant-gardist mode of theory in Western academia, that created the discursive matrix for subsequent political radicalism in the form of subversive writing, writing in terms of *écriture*; that is, post-political "politics" in the sense of deconstructive interventions effected by "dis," de" and "trans," the most powerful signifiers on the theory scene of the "post" (for a critical discussion on the possibilities of radical politics in the new world order of globalization, see Newman 2007).[222]

From this perspective, without the *événements* of May 1968 in Paris, the "cyber" would never have turned into a subversive shibboleth, a seductive signifier cathected with the empowering power of "the political" on the theory scene of the "post" (see, for example, Gray et al. 1995b; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Gray 2001; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Zylinska 2002b). Without the post-political politics of the "post," the "cyber" would have remained what it originally was: the code word of a high-tech subculture under the label "cyberpunk," a postmodern science fiction genre and the related literary and lifestyle "movement" (see, for example, Sterling 1986; McCaffery 1994b [1991]; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Brande 1996; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Cavallaro 2000; Heuser 2003; Hartmann 2004; Bould 2005; Michaud 2008).

222 As stated above, the very beginning of what is called "French Theory" today (see, for example, Lotringer & Cohen 2001a) was the international colloquium on "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man," held in 1966 at The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore (see Macksey & Donato 2007 [1970]). The paper presented by Derrida (1978e [1970/1966]) outlined the new parameters to the whole subsequent poststructuralist thought, and thus initiated a theoretical revolution in the Western academic world. This was a Copernican revolution not only in the understanding of language, discourse and theory, but, more fundamentally, in terms of "the human"; in this respect, this particular intellectual event was precisely the turning point towards post-theory, and by extension, towards the world of the "cyber."

2.2.2 The Modernization of Pleasure: The Commodity Form

All the miraculous effects of the omnipotent signifier as the very agency of linguistic materialism notwithstanding, there was at the same time yet another material reality exerting a significant power not only on the everyday living conditions, but also on the sphere of ideas in the Western world: *the reality of capital*, the realm of fundamental and concrete signifiers circulated and recycled in financial transactions, material signifiers signifying the power of money, signifiers regulating the political economy of desire; an economy that is constitutive of the postmodern, and by extension, of all that is "post." As Peter Wollen says:

> After the Second World War, a restructured Fordism now proceeded in tandem with Keynesian policies of full employment, high wage levels and state welfare provision, which provided a stable market for the new expansion in production, a Golden Age for countries of the developed North. (Wollen 1993: 207)

Material wealth flooding the capitalist West, the very materiality of all-consuming commodification – that is the *real* material reality as the condition of possibility for the "material reality" of language celebrated by poststructuralism (see, for example, Miller 1987, 2001; Jameson 1989 [1983]; Bocock 1993; Gereffi & Korzeniewicz 1994; Harvey 2005 [2003], 2007 [2005]; Albritton et al. 2010) and post-theory as its most extravagant derivation in terms of linguisticism, the terms of the liberation of desire as the precondition for the radicalization of thought. In the welfare societies of the West, people were enjoying an extensive and far-reaching advancement of capitalism in the wake of the prolonged boom of the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in what Eric Hobsbawm (1994: 286) describes as the "most dramatic, rapid and profound revolution in human affairs of which history has record"; that is, the emergence of what John K. Galbraith (1998 [1958]) called "the affluent society," in other words, a new type of society dominated by "consumer culture" (Slater 1997; in terms of "the consuming body," see Falk 1994).

This was not a linguistic revolution, but a revolution of the forces of production, of labor and capital, a revolution of productivity, commodities and new desires; a revolution that, paradoxically, resulted in what Herbert Marcuse (2002 [1964]: 75–82) designates as "repressive desublimation," that is, a liberation of the libido at the cost of the freedom of the subject.[223]

223 In his work entitled *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse (2002 [1964]: 74–82) introduced the term "repressive desublimation" to characterize, as Martin Jay (1973: 216) says, the "pseudo-liberation of modern culture" brought about by what the "Frankfurt School" calls "culture industry" (ibid.: 173–218; cf. Wiggershaus 1986). That is, the cultural liberalism, or rather, the *permissiveness* in terms of customs and modes of behaviour, encouraged by advanced capitalism by means of the commodity form, seems to make the sublimation of drives obsolete while it, in fact, only serves to promote conformity and adaptation to the prevailing order. Instead of true liberation, what capitalism produces is the commodification of the subject, a subsumption of the self by market forces: it is not the all-encompassing development of one's personality, but the consumption of commodities and their built-in reception that is the real *promesse de bonheur* which cultural industry offers in the name of liberation. In other words, instead of advancing liberation, capitalism brings about repression *in the form* of desublimation.

Hassan's Diagnosis: "Posthumanism"

The liberation of the libido under the regime of the commodity form (see, for example, Fine 2002: 25–55, 64–72, 90–95; Haug 1971; Jeannot 1998; Miklitsch 1998; Gottdiener 2000; Rutherford 2007) – that was the inauguration of a Golden Age of capitalism, the era of what I call productive consumption, enthusiastically saluted by Western academia with the epithet "postmodern"; an era of market liberalism that created the material basis of "free-floating signifiers," *signifiers turning the material affluence of capitalism into an excess of language*. If Andy Warhol, as both a paradigmatic type of personality and an aesthetic trade mark epitomizing the *Zeitgeist* of the postmodern, signalled the spirit of capitalism materialized in the commodity form in terms of art, the enormous productivity of American capitalism manifested the materialism of money, a mode of materialism that had no longer anything left over of other values than the sheer value of exchange value, the surplus value constitutive of capital and the disciplinary regime of capitalism.

What happened in the Western world in the 1960s, was a radical upheaval not only in the realms of production, reproduction and consumption, but also in that "ideal and material complex called culture" (Scaff 1989: 87). For the first time in human history, desires and pleasures were the matter, the very *material*, of capital expanding on the basis of the intensification of labour efficiency as the condition of possibility of the expansion of the commodity form, controlled and managed by the means of science and technology. If, "in the 1950s and the 1960s," as Daniel Bell (1996 [1976]: 70) observed, "the cult of the Orgasm succeeded the cult of Mammon as the basic passion of American life," the Americanization in postwar Europe had in the 1970s resulted in a situation in which, as Wolfgang Haug (1987 [1971]: 120) remarked, "it is not the sexual object that assumes commodity-form, but instead the entirety of useful objects with commodity-form tends to assume in some way a sexual form." That is, while economic models were based on the notion of *needs* as the rationale and motivation of human strivings in industrial capitalism, in contrast, in "welfare capitalism," although needs, of course, were still there, it was the idea of *desire* that constituted the basis of economic thought; not just simply desire as such, but the desire for pleasure, being, at the same time, the pleasure of desire in the constellation of productive consumption.

This was the emergence of what was soon termed "post-industrial society" (Bell 1973), turning before long into the "information society" (Masuda 1981 [1980]; Pool 1983), a society not so much organized around the processes of labour, but rather, around the circulation of information and communication (see, for example, Nora & Minc 1978; Dizard 1982). In this new world, celebrating the "society of the spectacle" (Debord 1983 [1967]) in the form of excessive mediatization, the lifestyle based on an intensified mode of "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen 1953 [1899]; cf. Campbell 1987), and an expanding media sphere ensuing from the relentless flow of information, set the terms of the postmodern subject, the "decentred subject" glorified by postmodern theory (see, for example, Rosenau 1992; Docherty 1993b; Sarup 1993 [1988]): a subject without a stable identity, *a subject as an object of the subjectification of itself by itself* (cf. Althusser 1971 [1970]:

163–169); in Lyotard's (1993b [1970]: 48) words, a subject subsumed by the "sole operative categories of capital: production and consumption."

The libidinalization of capital as the re-subjectification of the subject in terms of economic efficiency – that is the driving force of productive consumption that resulted from "welfare capitalism" in the 1980s: desires and pleasures as economic forces mutually reinforcing one another.

While, for Marshall McLuhan (1964), this was the world of the pleasure of affirmation, a pleasure of a post-Nietzschean *Ja-sagen* (cf., for example, Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 27, 1968c [1887]: 284), in contrast, for Guy Debord (1983 [1967]) it was a horrible world, the "society of the spectacle," only worth of negation: a world to be encountered, in Marcusean terms, by a "Great Refusal" (see Marcuse 1987 [1955], 2002 [1964]; cf. Attias 2004: 45–47, 53; for a theory-historical contextualization, see Kellner 1984, 2005; Alway 1995; Abromeit & Cobb 2004; Feenberg 2005). For Marcuse, this was the world of "one-dimensional man" (for the origins of Marcuse's thought in Heidegger, see Wolin 2001) – a thoroughly economized type of personality, later reinterpreted in the theory of the postmodern as an *ideal form* of the subject adapted to the conditions of consumerism, a way of life under the regime of the commodity form (see, for example, Dunn 1998: 11–15, 66–104, 113–126, 143–174; Fine 2002: 26–55; cf. Jameson 1979, 1989 [1983]). In other words, as Marx (1983 [1867]: 100) says, *die ökonomischen Charaktermasken der Personen [sind] nur die Personifikationen der ökonomischen Verhältnisse, als deren Träger sie sich gegenübertreten*, "the economic character masks are only the personifications of the economic relationships, as bearers of which they encounter one another."

All in all, this was the radical transformation of culture in the period between the early 1950s and the late 1960s, the age of the high modern; a transformation that reached its full accomplishment in the 1970s and 1980s, a historical period during which the features came to the fore that finally resulted in what is understood to be the transition from the modern to the postmodern (see, for example, Connor 1989; Harvey 1989; Lash 1990b; Turner 1990b; Featherstone 1991a; Jameson 1991). In this affluent world, the idea of immateriality – or, rather, *faith in the ideality of all being in the form of linguistic materialism* – became the prevailing doctrine in Western academia. In the spheres of art, aesthetics and culture, this deep-reaching transformation of social, economic and political constellations, created by the intensification of the commodity form, was manifested in the accelerated recycling of cultural codes, or what I call *discursive algorithms*, as patterns of commodity production, succinctly summed up by Hal Foster (1985) in his idea of "recoding," as the logic of the postmodern art world, the logic of self-reflexive recycling as the precondition of artistic innovation (see, for example, Arac 1986b; Huyssen 1986; Kaplan 1988; Foster 1989a [1983]; Best & Kellner 1991; Anderson 1998; Zima 1997).

This new sensibility, the *pleasure of excess*, resulted in an upsurge of theories producing and reproducing meanings and interpretations of "the postmodern" ("postmodernism," "postmodernity"); "meanings" and "interpretations"

that, rather than describing some factual reality, were increasingly discursive constructions in themselves, theoretical figurations as the "reality" of theory, produced by postmodern theory itself, finally leading, in the late 1980s, to the glorification of all that is "post," a sacralization of "free-floating signifiers" as the very substance of art and culture.

This is the *Eigendynamik* of "the postmodern," the self-replicating dynamics of postmodernism understood as a postmodern theory formation theorizing the effects of its own theoretical figurations that constitutes the *Eigenlogik* of the "post" as the self-replicating logic of post-theory.

Above all, these changes were reflected in Baudrillard's "pataphysics" (see Baudrillard 1990b [1983]: 14, 28, 85, 1990c [1983]: 165, 1993c [1990]: 108, 149, 1994b [1992]: 1–9, 17–18, 1997c: 13–14, 1997e: 41–42, 2000b: 52–54; Kellner 1989: 162–163, 1994: 14–20; Genosko 1994a: 106–116, 1994b: 293; Levin 1996: 196–208, 277–278), in his extravagant, post-surrealist theory-fictions about simulation, the hyperreal, the implosion of the social, and the "ecstasy of communication" (see Baudrillard 1980, 1983b [1981], 1988d [1987], 1988f [1985], 1990b [1983]; cf. Poster 1989; Kellner 1993); a *theoretical phantasmagoria* immensely influencing the theory scene of the 1980s and 1990s within Western academia. This is the genealogy, in short, of the idea matrix of what I call post-theory, a mode of theory after the implosion of the theoretical into the linguistic: theory as linguistic figuration based on an excess of "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of all that is "post."

As a consequence of a general "Baudrillard effect" (Levin 1996: 47–56), Baudrillardian ideas were not only recycled in theories concerning popular culture (see, for example, Hebdige 1988; Collins 1989; Genosko 1999; Gottdiener 2000; Storey 2006 [1997]), but – in fact, more appropriately, with regard to the aesthetic quality of postmodern theory or theoretical postmodernism – in the postmodern art world they were reworked into a new art theory proliferating, at a kind of metalevel, *art as theory and theory as art* (see, for example, Foster 1985, 1989b [1983]; Wheale 1995; Wallis 1999 [1984]; Zurbrugg 2000a), resulting in a new artistic and aesthetic configuration that I call *art-art*, art appropriating art in a postmodern art system in which art, theory, criticism and capital utilize one another in complicated win-win relationships; art as *post-art* reflecting, by means of recycling, appropriation and simulation, the contemporary aesthetic/artistic condition in the name of the "post" (cf., for example, Hohendahl 1991: 166–170; Wood 2003 [1996]: 388–405; Sandler 1996; Welchman 2001; Evans 2009) – which, of course, amounts to the question as to whether irony is the only adequate strategy of genuine art today, art in the sense of *autonomous art*, and, more fundamentally, is there still somewhere a realm in which art can resist the power of capital?

Be that as it may, what is evident is that this self-reflecting, self-affirmative and self-absorbed cultural formation, consisting of an assemblage of theory, art and lifestyle spectacle, is the hard core of the postmodern in which artistry and the artificial constitute the central perspective of culture.

It is in this sense that the "Baudrillard effect," in fact, is a postmodern effect in the sense of the very effect of "the postmodern" that permeates the spheres of art, theory and popular culture alike, to the extent that all of them now reflect one another in a general *Baudrillardization* of the Western(ized) way of life. It is in this manner that, as Dominic Pettman (2002: 145) says, "[t]he rhetorical power of his [Baudrillard] convictions, the poetic momentum of his prose, and the eschatological targets of his intellect, all combine to create an oeuvre whose 'truth-effect' places him in the position of a postmodern Nietzsche." But, of course, this is only because in postmodern culture *everything is "popular"*: "the popular" is the *raison d'être* of the postmodern; for this reason, high theory in the sense of poststructuralism is in essence a derivation of modernism. Accordingly:

> Baudrillard's philosophy has permeated popular culture to such an extent that he is perceived and represented as both a prophet and symptom of the apocalypse – the man who narrates the end so eloquently as to bring it about, or at least accelerate its arrival: *In the end was the word, and the word was Baudrillard*. (ibid.)

In these terms, in a world in which Baudrillardian "hyperreality," as a result of all-consuming simulation (see, for example, Kellner 1989: 82–83, 112; Gane 1991b: 138–144; Cubitt 2001: 46–50; Luke 1991; Perry 1998; Smith 2001; Tiffin & Terashima 2001), has become a "real" reality, *art and culture have turned into hilarious playing with affects, effects and affectation according to the logic of the "post,"* the very same logic that regulates desires and pleasures in the sphere of the economic in the political economy of neoliberalism, the economic order of productive consumption: *the libidinal regime of the postmodern*.

Since everything has turned into writing under the sign of the "post" in this new cultural constellation, into "free-floating signifiers" continually recycled and recoded, it is no wonder that the subject became also recontextualized: the subject lost its stable coordinates and turned into a decentred, multiple and fluid assemblage of identity fragments (see, for example, Smith 1988: 117–120; Poster 1995b: 124–136; Barvosa 2008: 5–17, 84–89, 194–203; Sarup 1996; Dunn 1998). This transformation concerning the premises of being a subject in an unstable world, a world constantly in flux, was perceived by Ihab Hassan, a literary theorist already sensitivized to the signs of change since the early 1970s, and one of the first theorists of the postmodern (see Hassan 1975, 1977, 1982 [1971]; cf., for example, Calinescu 1977: 139–143, 280; Bertens 1995: 14–18, 37–46; Bové 1995; for a theoretical contextualization, see Natoli & Hutcheon 1993). In the mid-1970s, as a result of the general transformation of cultural determinants, the very idea of being human suddenly appeared in a new light to Hassan:

> We need first to understand that the human form – including human desire and all its external representations – may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call *posthumanism*. (Hassan 1977: 212; emphasis mine; cf. Hassan 1975: 55; Hayles 1999: 1; Weinstone 2004: 8; Manning 2007: 156–157)

Here we have it, the figure of the posthuman in its elementary form. What, in the late 1970s, was still, for Hassan, something to be able to grasp only "helplessly," through a hesitating and tentative prediction, turned into a matter of conviction during the 1990s, into a new theoretical paradigm; of course, in the matrix of the postmodern in its elevated – or, rather, *sublimated* – form of the "post"; a paradigm that has completely repudiated the tradition of the Enlightenment, the tradition of reason. This is the origin of the posthuman as the ultimate radicalization of the postmodern, the *dernier cri* in the world of theory under the sign of the "post" (see, for example, Halberstam & Livingston 1995; Terranova 1996b; Hayles 1999; Badmington 2000; Graham 2002; Cooney 2004; Foster 2005; Waters 2006; Clarke 2008).

Posting One "Post" after Another

The posthuman? Does this *signifier* signify the end of the human, something more profound than the "death of the subject" proclaimed by the poststructuralists since the last decades of the twentieth century (see, for example, Huyssen 1986: 213; Di Leonardo 1991: 24; Dirks et al. 1994: 14; Schwab 1994: 4–6; Pudaloff et al. 1996: 288; Critchley 1999: 70; Delanty 1999: 102; Smith 2001: 118–119; Davis 2004: 2, 81–83; Toth 2010: 39, 44; Terada 2001). Or does the posthuman imply a new form of life after the "death of man" declared by Foucault (1989 [1966]: 386–387; cf. Merquior 1985: 43–55; Burke 1992: 62–115; Carrette 2000: 17, 64, 73–91; Bernauer 2004: 87–90; Haraway 1992a; Pircher 1995a; Canguilhem 2005 [1966]; Han-Pile 2010)? Or is the posthuman an analytical concept indicating some substantial changes in terms of being human in technoculture? Or, rather, is it a metaphor produced by the discourse of the "post" itself, and, as such, a metaphor that refers to some imaginary universe constituted by this very same discourse? If it is a metaphor, then, for what? If it is a concept, what is its ontological and epistemological relevance? In terms of the political, is the posthuman, as an idea, equally valid in California, Iraq and Afghanistan, or, from a wider perspective, all over the world where millions upon millions of people, living under inhuman conditions, are suffering from poverty, hunger and diseases?

In short, does the idea of the posthuman have any meaning where water is the most valuable resource and the telephone is only a utopian vision?

Or, in fact, is the posthuman about what Haraway (1991g [1988]) calls "situated knowledge" manifesting "standpoint epistemology" (see Harding 1991; cf., for example, Graham 2002: 210; Nayar 2004: 308–311; Yi 2010: 123–124), and, precisely as such, something that is perhaps relevant only in technocultural constellations in which reality is experienced through the phantasmagoria of cyberpunk, or, as its academic derivation, through the paraliterary figurations of post-theory celebrating the emancipatory effects of the "cyber" (see, for example, Sterling 1986; McCaffery 1994b [1991]; Featherstone & Burrows 1995b; Brande 1996; Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Wolmark 1999a; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000; Kirkup et al. 2000; Heuser 2003; Hartmann 2004; Bould 2005;

Michaud 2008)? Or, in the last analysis, is the posthuman a science fiction figure signalling life in the "Chiba City" in which the sky has "the color of television, tuned to a dead channel" (Gibson 1995 [1984]: 9)?

Finally, is "the posthuman," as a postmodern discursive figure, an ultimate effect of the American technological sublime (see, for example, Szerszynski 2005: 61–64; Nye 1996; Tabbi 1996), a post-theoretical manifestation of technological millennialism constitutive of American culture (see, for example, Bozeman 1997; O'Leary 2005; in terms of American technological utopianism, see Segal 2005 [1985]), and, as such, a theory-fictional elaboration of science fiction visions (see, for example, Hollinger & Gordon 2002; Luckhurst 2005)?

All the above questions finally give rise to the question what actually the "post" in the posthuman is. This is a question that concerns the "post" in general: is all that is "post" a dystopian signifier or a promise of a redemption in a world that has not only left the burden of history behind, but more importantly, annulled the constraints of nature, including the human body as an organism (see Haraway 1991f; Hayles 1999). Or is the "post" a stake in a Lyotardian "linguistic game" legitimating itself by its own discursive rules, the rules of "paralogy" (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]; cf. Peters 2001: 52–53; Zima 1997: 180–181; Toth 2010: 28–29), and, by extension, turned into excessive, self-reflecting linguistic figuration typical of post-theory?[224]

What is certain is that the "post," in fact, consists of a multitude of "posts"; as Gregory Bruce Smith (1996: 3) remarks, time and time again "we have heard the last half of twentieth century referred to as a *post*-age: 'postindustrial', 'postmetaphysical', 'poststructuralist', 'postanthropological', 'postmodern', and so on." According to Alex Callinicos (1989: 25), in the mid-1970s, "before the postmodern boom got into full swing Daniel Bell noted the widespread 'sense of ending' among the Western intelligentsia 'symbolized' […] in the widespread use of the word *post* […] to define, as a combined form, the age into which we are moving"; for example, "post-capitalist, post-bourgeois, post-modern, post-civilized, post-collectivist, post-Puritan, post-Protestant, post-Christian, post-literature, post-traditional, post-historical, post-market society, post-organization society, post-economic, post-scarcity, post-welfare, post-liberal, post-industrial […]," and so on, *and so on*; it was a time when, time and again, one "post" was replaced by another, *ad absurdum* (cf. Best & Kellner 1991: 29–32; Norris 1994).

This was the inauguration of a new era, the era of "postism"; as Ralf Dahrendorf (1990 [1988]: xiv) sarcastically remarked already in the late 1980s, "'postism' has of course become a veritable author's disease: more and more writers want

224 While it has important similarities to Hassan's conception of the postmodern, it is appropriate to recollect Lyotard's (1993 [1970]: 60) idea of *paralogy* here: "Postmodern science – by concerning itself with such things as undecidables, the limits of precise control, conflicts characterized by incomplete information, '*fracta*,' catastrophes, and pragmatic paradoxes – is theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical. It is changing the meaning of the word *knowledge*, while expressing how such a change can take place. It is producing not the known, but the unknown. And it suggests a model of legitimation that has nothing to do with maximized performance, but has as its basis difference understood as paralogy."

to impress on us that unheard-of things have happened in recent times, but since they cannot put their fingers on them, they settle for the claim that we are therefore living post-some-other-time."

According to Adrian Little (1998: 30), "the emergence of this new breed of 'postism' signals that qualitative changes have occurred in the organisation of advanced capitalism, although there is little agreement within the trend about what these changes actually entail"; and although "postism" rejects "theoretical meta-narratives and utopian grand theorising about the 'good society,'" "it is ironic that much post-modern discourse can be viewed as distinctly grand theory." This uncertainty pertaining to the "post" of "postism" only proliferated ever-new "postisms," in which everything was "post" before it even had begun (cf. Derrida 1990b). In other words, we are now living "after history" (Brannigan 1998: 202–217), a timeless time of general contingency, the time of discursive events taking place randomly in a post-temporal textuality of the postmodern understood as the discurse matrix of the "post": the "post" of this and the "post" of that, various "posts" that all together constitute the self-reproducing talk of the "post" on the theory scene of the postmodern (in terms of *posthistoire*, cf. Welsch 1997: 17–18; Habermas 1998d [1985]: 11–12; Niethammer 1989; Gehlen 2004a [1994], 2004b [1975]; for the thesis of "the end of history," see Kojève 1980 [1947]; in the context of the "cyber," see Stallabrass 1995).

In this sense, the two decades – from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s – under the sign of the "post" embrace a "historical" period in Western academia during which Enlightenment reason collapsed into *post*-reason. In terms of epistemology, this is the origin of post-theory; a mode of theory in which everything is based on *implosion* (cf. Baudrillard 1980, 1988f [1985]; Genosko 1999).

If, in Western academia, there is anything that can aptly summarize the excessive desire for theory it is certainly the signifier the "post" effecting an unending flow of "free-floating signifiers": the "post" as a signifier signifying exactly what it signifies: the unending state of the "post," the condition of the never-ending end as the premise of the theory movement of the "universal abandon" (Ross 1988) in the name of the "post." It is in this manner that "endism" and "postism," these two post-epistemological meta-codes, are predicated upon one another: "endism" and "postism" are two sides of the same thing, the post-Derridean "iterability" of the signifier (see Derrida 2000); that is, where thinking turns into writing is the beginning of post-theory, the post-epistemological paradigm prevailing in postmodern academia.

Of course, the idea of an imminent end in the early-1970s when the "post" became the very signifier of the new sensibility in the Western world, in fact, was nothing new: in the mid-1960s, in his treatise on the "sense of an ending," Frank Kermod (1967) had already shown that this figure of thought had been prevalent in Western culture from the antiquity to the present. What was now new was only the accelerated pace in which one "post" replaced another – in the typical manner of the "post" (cf. Callinicos 1989; Sarup 1993 [1988]).

2.3 Affirmation in the Name of Negation

But was the "post" expressly a sign of an end, or was it a code word, a shibboleth, for a new beginning *within* the end of everything peculiar to the state of mind among the Western intelligentsia, a sign for something new already present, present, of course, only for the eyes willing to see that "the time they are a-changing"? In other words, was "postism" the beginning of "endism" or "endism" the beginning of "postism"?

It was all that; the "post" signalled a radical break – a *coupure*, as Jameson (1984: 53) says – in all that was inherited, conventional, canonical, in everything that was fixed and set according to the pre-established rules – if there ever was anything of the kind in the first place.

However, precisely as such, the "post" was a definitive end of clarity and certainty of everything that could be understood in terms of distinct categories until then, as concepts to make *analytical distinctions*. In contrast, the "post" designated something ambiguous, confusing, bewildering, in a word, unruly; or, in terms of the "post" itself: undecidable. This ensued from the implosion of the sign – or was it the other way round: the implosion of the sign as a result of the suggestive power of the "post," the power of writerly desire, the power of seduction inherent to the "post"? At any rate, in these terms, although post-theory has expressly aimed at subverting the idea of teleology, all that is "post," paradoxically, relies on a consequent, intentional and purposive movement of thought that is its internal logic: disrupting the structure, breaking the chain of signification and proliferating the play of signifiers in the discourse of the human sciences (cf. Derrida 1978e [1970/1966]): this is the teleology of the "post," its *teleologic* postality in its radical postness (cf., for example, Bell 1973: 51–54; Hassan 1982 [1971]: 259–272, 1975, 1977, 1987; Callinicos 1989: 25–26; Best & Kellner 1991: 29–30; O'Neill 1995: 111–130; Armitt 2005: 209; Zavarzadeh et al. 1995).

That is, what was once meaning has disappeared: meaning is no longer possible in the world of the "post." Instead of meaning, what we have now is *hypersignification* effected by the excess of "free-floating signifiers."

2.3.1 The *jouissance* of Aporia: The Ecstasy of Nothingness

What is the "post" if not the paramount affirmation of the whole discursive conglomeration of the postmodern, its post-Nietzschean *Bejahung* as an anti-Adornian negation of Enlightenment reason (for the Nietzschean triumphant *Ja-sagen*, see, for example, Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 27, 1968c [1887]: 284; for Nietzsche's *Bejahung*, see Strobel 2000); that is, the Great Yes, the all-embracing celebration of the commodification of reason in the name of its subversive negation constitutive of post-reason as the reason of post-theory.

This is the telos of theory after the deconstruction of telos in theory: *instead of deconstruction* what we now have is a hilarious *destruction of reason* by means of

post-theoretical extravaganza, writing in the mode of *écriture* as the glorification of the surrational, the imaginary of reason in terms of the "post." It is precisely for this reason that it was not so much a question of the order of things in reality as of the order of language in its constitutive disorder: the "post" was the most prominent, the most spectacular, result of the implosion of the sign, at the same time as this very implosion of the sign was effected by the "post" itself. Thus, the "post" was the post-teleological telos of the "post," its intrinsic reason, the reason of the undecidables driving theory forward in the name of the "post"; in other words, the "post" was the signifier signifying the productivity of theory, *the libidinal principle within theory*, theory as a mode of *discourse* and, as such, self-generating *linguistic figuration* as an expression of *auto-affective desire* in terms of writing (cf. Derrida 1973 [1967]: 79–80, 83, 85–86, 1978c [1967/1966]: 197, 230, 1982: 40, 109, 1997: 20, 98, 154, 165–167, 250, 257, 286; cf. Wolfreys 1998; Terada 2001).

The Para-Logic of Endism

For Hassan, this new configuration was a clear pattern representing the dynamic movement of culture from the modern towards the postmodern; clear precisely in its obscure and fragmentary manner. What for Jameson (1984: 54) appeared as the "cultural logic of late capitalism," bringing forth disparate and incongruent phenomena which could only be presented through a "chaotic" and "heterogeneous" enumeration (Jameson 1991: 1–2), and what for Lyotard (1984: 60) meant a state of general indeterminacy determined by the logic of "paralogies," was, for Hassan, divided into pristine, clear-cut scheme of binary oppositions contrasting the modern with the postmodern, the new era of the "post" – and this was, indeed, astonishing with regard to Hassan's own terms, if it was not precisely "paralogical":

Modernism	Postmodernism
Romanticism/Symbolism	'Pataphysics/Dadaism
Form (conjunctive/closed)	Antiform (disjunctive, open)
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Mastery/Logos	Exhaustion/Silence
Art Object / Finished Work	Process/Performance/Happening
Distance	Participation
Creation/Totalization	Decreation/Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Centering	Dispersal
Genre/Boundary	Text/Intertext
Paradigm	Syntagm
Hypotaxis	Parataxis
Metaphor	Metonymy
Selection	Combination

Root/Depth	Rhizome/Surface
Interpretation/Reading	Against Interpretation/Misreading
Signified	Signifier
Lisible (Readerly)	*Scriptible* (Writerly)
Narrative / *Grande Histoire*	Anti-narrative / *Petite Histoire*
Master Code	Idiolect
Symptom	Desire
Genital/Phallic	Polymorphous
Paranoia	Schizophrenia
Origin/Cause	Difference-Différance
Metaphysics	Irony
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Transcendence	Immanence

(Hassan 1982: 267–268; cf. Hassan 1985: 123–124)

What happens in this configuration, except that it is based, paradoxically, on the very logic of binary oppositions that it attempts to deconstruct in the manner of poststructuralist theories by deriding the terms which it presupposes as its conceptual premises?

From Hassan's perspective, the world appears not only in terms of text, but *as* a text, or rather, as an incongruent conglomeration of texts and subtexts, each in themselves heterogeneous and ambiguous; or, as Lawrence E. Cahoone (1996: 382) says, "for Hassan, postmodernism is an attempt *to write the unwritable*" (emphasis mine). In my reading, this kind of writing manifests the logic of delirium characteristic of poststructuralism: not a vision of a better future as in the modern, but, instead, only subversive irony as an attempt to come to terms with the indeterminate and the undecidable, a cryptic irony that celebrates its own crypticality (cf., for example, Bajorek 2009: 3–34; Toth 2010: 45–47; Brooks 1951 [1948/1951]; Hutcheon 1989, 1994; Rorty 1989; Sim 2002; Colebrook 2004). At the same time, the idea of the "post" is actually deconstructed here by the text that produces the "post" in itself. Similarly to the way in which Culler (1982: 85) approaches deconstruction, one can ask whether Hassan's scheme can be seen "as a philosophical position, as a political or intellectual strategy, or as a specific mode of reading"?

If one takes the "post" seriously, the answer, of course, is "yes" in each case. Postmodernism, for Hassan, is all that, and more: it is an existential state of being a subject in the world after the implosion of the sign. Each answer is only an implied question without an answer, a question that questions the premises on which it is constructed: an aporia engendering a specific form of desire, the desire for theory typical of Western academia enjoying *the pleasure of the end of everything* (in terms of "the ends of theory," cf. Herron et al. 1996). In the world of the "post," indeterminacy and undecidability, the constituents of aporia, are the parameters of all being. This is the reality of the "theatre of the absurd" in terms of theory (cf. Esslin 1968 [1961]) turned into the reality of the real under the linguistic regime of the "post."

Yet, it should be emphasized that in Hassan's configuration at issue – as in many other theories of the postmodern (or postmodern theories) (see, for example, Hutcheon 1988; Connor 1989; Harvey 1989; Turner 1990b; Featherstone 1991a; Docherty 1993b) – is an *aesthetic* subject as the very subject of theory, a subject of an existential experience in terms of the aesthetical (cf. Lyotard 1993a [1974]; Welsch 1980, 1990, 1997; with regard to "cultural poetics" in the legacy of constructivism, cf. Watten 2003). The aesthetic subject of the "post" is a writerly subject that enjoys the pleasure of "postism," the pleasure of "endism," as an apocalyptic pleasure peculiar to the *Endzeitstimmung* of the "post" (cf. Derrida 1984c, 1992 [1980]). What is important, however, is that, firstly, this is *a subject of theory as a subject of writing*, writing in terms of *écriture*; and secondly, this is not about the aesthetics of the classical principle of balanced proportions, nor the aesthetics of the modern idea according to which form follows function; instead, this is about an aesthetics that celebrates the anti-logic of plurality, fragmentation and ambiguity, the order of chaos: the disorder of language promoted by the theory-subjects of post-theory; a mode of the subject *living* in the world of theory: the subject *constituted* by the "theory" in the name – or, under the sign – of the "post."

Hassan himself, in fact, is a prototype of such a subject. In Hassan's postmodernism, play, chance, anarchy and dispersal prevail; everything is in a process of unstable intertextuality, in a state of self-reflecting performance in which polymorphous desires circulate in the rhizomes and on the surfaces of writerly produced decreations resulting in anti-narratives (see Hassan 1975, 1977, 1985; cf. Haraway 1997). This is a world of schizophrenia, a world in which each idiolect consists of irony ultimately bringing about misreading as a subversive strategy. Indeed, the world after Hassan has fallen asunder, into incompatible fragments; there is no resolution, only aporia. The only hope is that there is no hope: instead of *Prinzip Hoffnung* (Bloch 1985 [1938–1947]) what we encounter is a Warholian cool indifference or a post-Warholian irony ironising itself, an equivocal and enigmatically smiling resignation (cf. Warhol 1975; Warhol & Hacket 1980; Bockris 1997), *a hilarious helpnessness in the ecstasy of nothingness* as the climax of the pleasure effected by the "post."

This, of course, is not the end of the world; this is the *happy end of reason*. Sober reason, the idea of the Enlightenment, is displaced once and for all by the *jouissance* of unreason, the ecstatic pleasure of post-theory.

However, this is not about nihilism (a negation of all values); in fact, this is, as once dreamt by Nietzsche, the final end of all nihilism, now as an affirmation of in-difference (cf. Heidegger 1999 [1938/1939, 1946/1948]), leading, through a process of deconstruction of all values, into the impossibility of the very idea of the end: where in-difference (in both senses of the term) prevails is where the end does not make a difference, and, accordingly, the end is beyond any value considerations similarly as all values are invaluable. Yet, in the world of the "post" in which we have at the same time both Derridean *différance* and the Nietzschean "eter-

nal recurrence of the same" (see Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 270–272, 1969b [1888–1889/1908]: 333–335, 1973a [1882/1887]: 250; cf. Heidegger 1998a [1961]: 15–22, 225–229), radical irony implies *positive negation* in the sense that things are *neither* this *nor* that (in terms of "radical parody," cf. O'Hara 1992), paving the way to the Baudrillardian ultimate horror as an ecstatic experience: the worst end of all ends, as Baudrillard (1994b [1992]: 116) says, is that "there is no end any longer."

This is precisely the pleasure of endism: the unending end as the end of ending, the end of all ends as an unending ending. In other words, under the sign of the "post" we are living in the age of "postmodern apocalypse" (Dellamora 1995; cf. Maltby 1991: 17; Pettman 2002: 145).

Instead of a closure, a termination as a determination, what we have in the world of the "post" is an endless dispersal of signification; or, as Jameson (1991: 26) says, a "gap between signifier and signified," a "lapse of meaning," and, finally, schizophrenia; that is: a shattering experience that "when the links of the signifying chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers." The "post" is precisely about this *rubble*.

This is the moment of the postmodern sublime: in the world of the "post," we are ultimately set free from the dictates of reason. *Delirium* – that is the principle of a permanent liberation made possible by the "post"; the "post" as the signifier of the most successful of all revolutions, the revolution in post-poetic language (cf. Kristeva 1984 [1974]: 89–136), the language of unending posting of ever-new "posts" in the world of the "post," the world of Theory ruled by the subversive pleasure of postality in its radical postness.

The Cyborg, Our Saviour, or: The End of Unending Ending

According to this, paradoxically, *postmodern* grand narrative of emancipation, we will achieve an ultimate emancipation through an anti-emancipation, a liberation without the Enlightenment: no morning star on the horizon, nor an endless night of darkness; instead, the overwhelming glare of a Sahara sunlight bringing forth only delusions engendered by one mirage after another. Where once, in the modern, there was a vague hope of better times, there is now, in terms of post-Barthesian *signifiance* (cf. Kristeva 1984 [1974]: 16–26, 99–105, 145–147, 1980 [1969]; Heath 1977: 10; Roudiez 1980: 18; Polan 1986: 59), only a constant state of pathology: a "world of radically 'empty' signifiers" (Hebdidge 1988: 164): "No meaning. No classes. No history. Just a ceaseless procession of simulacra." (ibid.)

This is a new philosophy of the end, the dawn of the world after the human, the world of the posthuman. What is this if not a philosophy of neo-nihilism – nihilism in terms of the "post"; that is, a nihilism to end all nihilisms?

In the mid-1980s, what was left for the academic Left was only the sublime moment of undecidability: a sublime moment of nothingness, a moment of void, a perception that there is *absolutely nothing* but unrelated signifiers everywhere demanding that we re-think everything in the name of the Der-

ridean *sous rature*, "under erasure," that is, taking given Western conceptualities unreliable but, at the same time, indispensable (see, Derrida 1997: 60, 61, 75, 88, 109; Norris 1982: 68–70, 1987: 16; Taylor & Winquist 2001: 113–114). This is the *jouissance* of the postmodern sublime: awesome and pleasurable bewilderment enjoyed by the theory-subject when facing one enigmatic conglomeration of signifiers after another, one cryptic trope after another, each leading to a never-ending *cul-de-sac*, the dead end of theory, the end of reason, exulted by the "post," paradoxically, as the liberation of the self from the terror of the subject, from the horror of the modern, in short, from the disciplinary regime of reason. In other words, the indulgence in the enchantment of post-reason is the most sublime pleasure in the world of the "post," a world in which the destruction of reason is celebrated as the highest form of freedom.

No wonder that for some theorists the only appropriate reaction in this situation was to surrender oneself to panic, if often a hilarious panic, nevertheless a panic: an *ecstasy of panic* in the Krokerian manner (see Kroker 1988b: 15–16; Kroker et al. 1989; cf. McCance 1996: 2–6; Genosko 1999: 64–66; Mansfield 2000: 168–169; Smith 2001: 10–11).

As Derrida (1984d [1980]: 28) says, there was a certain "apocalyptic tone newly adopted in philosophy" among the Western intelligentsia that postulated the end as an emblem of coming to terms with the vertiginous situation after the collapse of metanarratives (see Lyotard 1984 [1979]), after the implosion of the sign, meaning and sense (cf. Jay 1993b: 84–98). Thus, what was the final truth in its impossible finality?

> I tell you this in truth; this is not only the end of this here, but also and first of that there, the end of history, the end of the class struggle, the end of philosophy, the end of God, the end of religions, the end of Christianity and morals (that [*ça*], that was the most serious naïveté), the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of the West, the end of Oedipus, the end of the earth, *Apocalypse Now*, I tell you, in the cataclysm, the fire, the flood, the fundamental earthquake, the napalm descending from the sky by helicopters, like prostitutes, and also the end of literature, the end of painting, art as a thing of the past, the end of psychoanalysis, the end of university, the end of phallocentrism and phallogocentrism, and I don't know what else? (Derrida 1992 [1980]: 48; cf. Pefanis 1991: 56–58; Haraway 1992a).

The End, the sublime experience at the brink of the abyss (cf. Derrida 1984c) – never since Dada has there been so much pleasure in terms of the end; but the "post" is not the revival of Dada, it is a paradigm of unreason *sui generis*, a destruction of reason by means of deconstruction, the means of post-theory. If the "post" began to replicate itself in the 1970s, in the manner of *theoretical pandemia*, at an accelerating pace, in the 1980s the proliferation of the "end" became the cultural logic of Western academia living in its own exclusive theory-world provided by affluent society, a society in which precisely the end – the definitive "game over" – was an idea simultaneously both celebrated and repressed.

This is the sublime pleasure of endism: the *jouissance* of "being on the verge of an end that never comes" (Jay 1993b: 87).

In this situation, Western intelligentsia desperately needed new parameters for thinking to avoid the end of thinking; thinking as the very legitimation of Western intelligentsia. The solution to the problem was in the postmodern itself: inaugurating a sense of an endless end the "post" redefined the terms of being radical, the terms of a radicalization of the radical. No longer the ultimate surrealist act of shooting randomly into the crowd in the street (see Breton 1972c [1930]: 125; cf. Chénieux-Gendron 1990; Spector 1997), nor the *dérive* and *détournement* of the Situationists turning the world upside down through subversive enactments (see, for example, Sussman 1989; Plant 1992; McDonough 2004; Knabb 2007 [1981]; Löwy 2009 [2000]), but, instead, subversive writing in terms of the writerly, in terms of *écriture*, is the post-political politics of Western intelligentsia inhabiting postmodern academia. In this manner, the celebration of the end – *the end in theory as an unending theory* – became the most radical gesture in Western academia at the end of the twentieth century.

If there is something Dada in the "post" it is the Dada of post-theory; this is the moment of the postmodern sublime effected by the post-Derridean undecidables constitutive of all that is "post."

Yet, no longer a terminal state of the final end, but, instead, what we now have is the end of all ends as an unending *différance*, a never-ending ending of all ending as an endless end of the end without the ultimate end as an end of all ends: ending as an unending dissemination and supplementation of ever-new ends. In these terms, the Saussurean principle of the arbitrary (see de Saussure 1966 [1916]: 113–122; cf. Culler 1986 [1976]: 19–29) turned into a post-logic of aporia, an a-logic of the counter-logical, the logic of the "post." Instead of Goethean *Mehr Licht!* in the sense of the Enlightenment, the parole was now *Stop making Sense* (Bolz 1989). This was a new definition of the intelligible. This was the new definition of theory in the world of post-theory.

And this was the ultimate definition of intelligentsia in the Western world, a world of unending affluence for those who could afford to enjoy the fruits of the global freet market in the security zones of advanced capitalism brought about by the political economy of neoliberalism.

What did this imply in terms of the future of academia? Precisely at the moment when everything seemed to be lost in a vertiginous abyss of endless ending – or to be ending in a pleasurable delirium without an end – a new signifier appeared in the universe of the "post": in the manner of the Nietzschean *Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen* (Nietzsche 1968a [1883–1885]: 8) Haraway (1985) announced the coming into the world of a completely new kind of being, the cyborg, given birth by her – through a miraculous *technotextual parthenogenesis*. This was the a-sexual, post-gender birth of the cyborg, our Saviour: in its radical otherness, an emblematic embodiment of the end of ending promising to end the unending ending of ending by means of unending postification of ever-new "posts" in their unending heterogeneity. The timing was perfect: in the mid-1980s, just at the time when the theorization of the postmodern had

reached its zenith and thus the ultimate *cul de sac* in terms of "the theoretical," Western culture had arrived at a terminal phase of permanent ending, characterized by what Jürgen Habermas (1985) called *die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* and *die Erschöpfung utopischer Energien* (cf. Welsch 1997: 161–163).[225]

The cyborg came into being as a radical counter-figure of the collapse of utopian thought, as a diametrical opposite of the feeling of insecurity, unclearness and exhaustion: the cyborg was a post-apocalyptic revelation, a neo-religious *Offenbarung* of redemption in the midst of the Star Wars panic prevailing in Reganite America (see, for example, Reiss 1992; Duric 2003), and, as such, a premise for a new beginning after the ever-new ends proliferated by permanent ending in Western culture (see, for example, Edwards 1996: 275–302; Wajcman 2004: 96; Bell 2007: 96–97; for a historical contextualization, see Levidow & Robins 1989a; Franchi & Güzeldere 2005a). For Haraway, there was no question of the end – except of the definitive end of the moribund principles of male-dominant capitalism, patriarchy and phallogocentricism (Haraway 1985: 66); in contrast to all masculine and thus morbid catastrophism, typical of postmodern theory, Haraway created *a postmodern metanarrative of the cyborg* by a demiurgian act of writing, paradoxically, at the very moment when Lyotard (1984 [1979]) had just proclaimed the end of all metanarratives in his own all-encompassing metanarrative of the postmodern.

If the cyborg was the saviour, what was the act of salvation promised by it? From Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1966 [1962]: 247) paradigmatic dictum, "I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences to be not to constitute, but to dissolve man," through the "death of man" proclaimed by Foucault (1989 [1966]: 386–387; cf. Canguilhem 2005 [1966]), and finally to the definitive Derridean sentence of *les fins de l'homme*, the ultimate death sentence of the human being as the embodiment of "the human" (see Derrida 1984f [1972/1968]; cf. Culler 1975: 28; Berman 1988: 159–164; Rapaport 1991 [1989]: 205–212; Janicaud 2005 [2002]: 11–18; Burke 1992; Pircher 1995a), a continual – now solemn, now hilarious – funeral of the human being was going on in the Western humanities since the inception of structuralism in the early 1950s, which induced the beginning of the end of humanism, an "end" that, in fact, was already proclaimed by Heidegger (1976a [1946]) in his "Brief über den Humanismus." *Homo sapiens*, the emblem of human thought ever since from the ideas of the human elaborated on in Antiq-

225 During a brief period from the beginning to the mid-1980s, the Western intellectual, artistic and academic scene was taken by a storm of unprecedented theoretical enthusiasm resulting in various theories concerning the coming into being of what was understood to constitute the postmodern (see, for example, Bertens 1995; Anderson 1998; for critique, see, for example, Callinicos 1989; Norris 1990, 1992, 1993; Simons & Billig 1994a); this was the moment when Hassan (1971, 1987, 1993 [1987]), Jameson (1984, 1989 [1983], 1991) and Lyotard (1984 [1979]) published their "mappings" (to apply Jameson's term, see Jameson 1988c) of the new situation in Western culture; this was also the beginning of a long controversy about the fate of the modern, initiated by Habermas (1985, 1994 [1981], 1998e [1985]) with his sharp critique of the postmodern and poststructuralism (cf. Frank 1984). From the very beginning, what was called "postmodern" was a linguistic game typical of all that was called "postmodern." Whether the postmodern exists in reality, as some kind of "postmodern condition" (Lyotard 1884), is another matter (for the multidimensional conceptual history of "the postmodern," see Köhler 1977).

uity and the Renaissance to the ideals of the Enlightenment – *liberté, fraternité, égalité* – had not only been "the measure of all things" (see, for example, Davies 1997: 123), but the very subject of history, the agency of itself as a historical becoming, the becoming of the subject, *the subject of its own liberation*.[226]

All this was now over, *passé* once and for all, as a result of the glorious ascendancy of the "post," the supremacy of postism in Western academia.

2.3.2 After the Death of Man

According to historian of science Lorraine Daston (1995: 38), what is at issue in all forms of humanism is "anthropomorphism," and "the reason why anthropomorphism is to be abhorred as well as rejected is because it is the expression of *anthropocentrism*" (emphasis mine).

> Anthropocentrism means the projection of human traits onto a nonhuman object, including nature at large; anthropocentrism means privileging human viewpoints and desires above all others. We regard anthropocentrism as the childish vanity that makes man the measure of all things, and as violation of the ideal of aperspectival objectivity, which insists that science abandon all merely particular viewpoints, be they of class, nationality, gender, epoch, or even species, in favor of what philosopher Thomas Nagel has called "the view from nowhere." It is because we believe that anthropomorphism is *caused* by anthropocentrism that we find it reprehensible as well as erroneous, arrogant as well as confused. (ibid.: 38–39; cf. Heidegger 1976a [1946])

The problem is that, while anthropocentrism, by making man "the measure of all things," creates an epistemological central perspective that not only implies particularism in the form of speciesism, but also makes concepts and theories, the very possibility of scientific inquiry at large, partial and distorted, in contrast to that, the aspiration to the aperspectival objectivity in the name of Nagel's "view from nowhere" is not any better since it amounts to a delusion of impartiality. Thus, both approaches, in the end, are forms of anthropocentrism, the one, explicitly, the other, implicitly. In other words, the problem is the difficulty, even the impossibility, of achieving pluralism, heterogeneity and non-

226 As Denis Diderot stated during the Enlightenment: "If mankind, or the thinking and contemplative beings which comprise it, were banished from the surface of the earth, the moving and sublime spectacle of nature would be nothing more than a scene of desolation and silence. The universe would be mute; stillness and night would take possession of it. […] It is the presence of man which renders other beings interesting, and what better consideration can we bring to bear in dealing with the history of such creatures? Why should we not introduce man into our work, as he has been placed in the universe? Why not make man the central focus?" (Davies 1997: 123) In this sense *Encyclopaedia Britannica* explained in 1857 (Vol. XIV: 242): "MAN, the noblest of all earthly creatures, stands related, on the one hand, through his body, to the world of matter, and on the other, through his mind, to the world of spirit. […] With his sensuous nature binding him fast to the present world, and his moral and religious nature raising him towards God, – at the verge of the animal kingdom most remote from its point of contact with the kingdom of organic life, yet the occupant of that other kingdom of pure intelligence where the conscience asserts its authority and dispenses its awards, – man, the only representative of the order of *Bimana*, the *μέροψ*, the *voice-dividing*, the creature of speech, and possessor of the higher reason, stands really where he was first placed – at the head of all earthly creatures, the sole lord of the creation."

speciesism *in human thought*, that is, a standpoint that would be able to escape human particularity camouflaged in the form of objectivity and impartiality.

Therefore, the question remains: where is to be found a realm of thought that can transcend the constraints of human thought – if not in human thought in itself; a realm that, in order to exist at all in the first place, is nothing but *always already* human. All efforts to abolish "anthropocentrism," including the conceptual distinction between "anthropocentrism" and "anthropomorphism," is anthropocentrism in itself. Scientific ideas are not natural products, they are not conceived of by animals, plants or machines, or molecules, electrons or atoms, or, as Derrida prefers to say, they are "not fallen from the sky" (see, for example, Derrida 1973: 141, 1982: 27, 1984a: 11). Every single thought, also every thought thought by Daston, is human, *always already* human; every single word and every single letter we, as humans, use in order to exceed the limits of human thought are, be necessity, always already human. *In the human world, there is nothing outside human*. In other words, there is nothing natural in the human.

Transcoding: Becoming Cyborg

But then again, was it in Haraway's conception of the cyborg, in fact, not so much the human being, but Man the Male, that was now *passé*? The birth of the cyborg was the answer to this question.

Drawing on the ideas initially elaborated on by the grand masters of the "post" – Lacan, Foucault and Derrida, the Founding Fathers of "French theory" (Lotringer & Cohen 2001a) or "New French Theory" (Best & Kellner 1991: 16, 183) turned into a general mind-set in Western academia – Haraway, a radical feminist drawing on Western Marxism, wrote a *grand récit* of a universal salvation of the human being in the form of the posthuman cyborg – a creature, although, according to its constitutive idea, a *post-gender* entity, nevertheless the emblem of a "socialist-feminist" re-organization of the world in terms of the *female* of radical feminism (Penley & Ross 1992a: 20, cf., for example, Ben-Tov 1995; Kirkup et al. 2000; Flanagan & Booth 2002; Zylinska 2002b; Bell et al. 2004; Giannachi 2004; Schneider 2005). The idea of the cyborg was to put the ultimate end to all the binarities – such as nature/culture, body/mind and female/male – characteristic of the destructive logic pertinent to the "phallogocentric" order of things.[227]

227 The "post" in Haraway's cyborg mythology, of course, also derives substantially from the ideas of *écriture féminine*; initially, though, this mode of thought is a reaction to, and, as such, a deconstruction of, the Parisian grand masters (see, for example, Kristeva 1980 [1969], 1984 [1974]; Irigaray 1985a [1974], 1985b [1977]; Moi 1985). Then again, from the very beginning, Haraway's cyborg has been a fantasy figure *per se* influenced by female/feminist science-fiction, that is, a feminist "monster" (see Haraway 1991a [1985]: 173–181, 1991i [1989]: 225–230, 1992c; for Haraway's context in this respect, see Warrick 1977, 1980; Weedman 1985; Wolmark 1994; Lykke & Braidotti 1996a); however, embedding the figure of the cyborg in the theoretical framework of poststructuralist and feminist theories concerning language, textuality and the body Haraway has turned this fantasy figure into a *theory fiction* that has been incorporated since its conception into various theories of the "post," be they gendered as male or female, or altogether post-gender. Yet, in its origin poststructuralism is an outspoken male paradigm (see, for example, Johnson 1987).

Yet, like Hassan, Haraway, paradoxically, saw the terms of the new expressly in a *binary opposition* to the old, the very binary opposition she purported to subvert; an idea Haraway presented as a dichotomy between the moribund male world and the emerging "post-gender world" (Haraway 1991a: 150) in terms of the female based on feminist epistemology (cf., for example, Keller 1982; Harding 1991; Sandoval 1995; Fricker 2000; Weber & Bath 2003):

Representation	Simulation
Bourgeois novel, realism	Science fiction, postmodernism
Organism	Biotic component
Depth, integrity	Surface, boundary
Heat	Noise
Biology as clinical practice	Biology as inscription
Physiology	Communications engineering
Small group	Subsystem
Eugenics	Population control
Decadence, *Magic Mountain*	Obsolescence, *Future Shock*
Hygiene	Stress Management
Microbiology, tuberculosis	Immunology, AIDS
Organic division of labor	Ergonomics/cybernetics of labor
Functional specialization	Modular construction
Reproduction	Replication
Organic sex role specialization	Optimal genetic strategies
Biological determinism	Evolutionary inertia, constraints
Community ecology	Ecosystem
Racial chain of being	Neo-imperialism, United Nations humanism
Scientific management in Home/factory	Global factory/Electronic cottage
Family/Market/Factory	Women in the Integrated Circuit
Family wage	Comparable worth
Public/Private	Cyborg citizenship
Nature/Culture	Field difference
Cooperation	Communications enhancement
Freud	Lacan
Sex	Genetic engineering
Labour	Robotics
Mind	Artificial Intelligence
Second World War	Star Wars
White Capitalist	Informatics of Domination

(Haraway 1985: 80)

In this post-phallogocentric design for the new world order – or, as Haraway (1997) came to call it a decade later, the "New World Order, Inc." as the contested political form of contemporary capitalism – it is apparent that what is characteristic of Haraway's cyborg narrative is not only the binary logic used

as the very method to deconstruct all the binary oppositions, but moreover, similarly to Hassan, Haraway also conceives of the world in terms of textuality, in terms of writing in the mode of *écriture*. For Haraway, writing, as a textual stratagem, is the initial act of bringing forth the cyborg; as Haraway (1991e [1981]: 71) says, for her, in her post-scientific, post-gender cosmogony, "in the beginning was the word."[228] But writing the cyborg is not just writing: what Haraway (1991a: 175) calls "cyborg writing" is an extremely serious matter, it is "about the power to survive."

Though, unlike Hassan, Haraway did not so much create a new vocabulary as she *re-arranged* the coordinates of postmodern discourse by introducing figures from biology and the natural sciences in general to the linguistic game of post-theory (see Haraway 1989, 1991e, 1997). In this sense, the birth of the cyborg was a birth of a discourse: by writing into being the cyborg Haraway wrote into being a discursive apparatus, a linguistic generator producing "cyborg writing" as an unending cyborg discourse (cf. Edwards 1996: 19–22, 147–148; in terms of "cyborgology," cf. Gray et al. 1995a) that has established what Marcuse (2002 [1964]: 14–18) in the 1960s designated by the term "universe of discourse." In this sense, as a "discourse founder" Haraway is herself an "author-function" (see Foucault 1977e [1969]) that has enabled "cyborg writing" as a post-literary theory genre in the form of postmodern discourse.

From this perspective, by saying that the "cyborg is our ontology" (Haraway 1991a: 150) does Haraway, in fact, say that it is first and foremost *language* that is our ontology? Moreover, who are these "we" that are implied by Haraway's "our"?

What is important here is, as Haraway assures us, that "[w]riting is pre-eminently the technology of cyborgs, etched surfaces of the late twentieth century" (ibid.: 176). It is obvious that one of Haraway's subtexts is Derrida, though not so much the Parisian Derrida as the discursively recycled "American Derrida," the "postmodern Derrida" as a discursive agency inscribed in the linguistic configuration of contemporary theory subtended by the tenets of poststructuralism and deconstruction (see, for example, Norris 1987: 1–20, 151–153, 159, 195; Silverman 1988: 5–7; Eagleton 1997 [1983]: 127–128; Rapaport 2001: 6–18, 34–44; Arac et al. 1983; Haverkamp 1995; van der Poel et al. 1999; Cusset 2008 [2003];

228 In addition to the Biblical world explanation, poststructuralism and science fiction (see Haraway 2003), one of Haraway's (1991e: 71) idea sources is also Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (see Carroll 1994b [1872]: 100) in which the famous discussion on linguistic theory appears: "'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means exactly what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.' 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.'" For Haraway, the main problem here is that the speaking subject representing this kind of radical linguistic voluntarism (Humpty Dumpty) is a "master," that is, *male*. What is Alice, then, as a heroine of female wit who does not accept the unending lapse of meaning – that is, *différance* – implied by the "master," if not a female master who re-creates the world according to *her own* language, the language of feminist theory in terms of the "post," that is, *différance* redefined in terms of radical feminism: a post-Kristevan "poetic revolution in language" paradigmatically manifested by Haraway's mythopoetic theory style epitomized by the post-theoretical figure of the cyborg, the origin of the postmodern cyborg mythology.

for a theory-historical contextualization, see Patai & Corral 2005). As Derrida – the Parisian one – writes:

> […] the entire field covered by the cybernetic program will be the field of writing. If the theory of cybernetics is by itself to oust all metaphysical concepts – including the concepts of soul, of life, of value, of choice, of memory – which until recently served to separate the machine from man, it must conserve the notion of writing, trace, grammè [written mark], or grapheme, until its own historico-metaphysical character is also exposed. Even before being determined as human (with all the distinctive characteristics that have always been attributed to man and the entire system of significations that they may imply) or nonhuman, the *grammè* or the *grapheme* – would thus name the element. (Derrida 1997: 9).

What is this "element," that *grammè* or the *grapheme*, that determines everything, including the "human" or the "non-human"? It is an "element" of an "arche-synthesis in general," "that is to say the origin of *meaning* in general" (ibid.). In this sense, for Derrida, there is no signification, no signifying sense, outside the written mark; writing is the origin of the world, of all being. Writing in the mode of *écriture*, this is the ontology of the universe: in the beginning there is always already the word (though not the *logos*, but the *grammè*) inscribing itself into all being effected by itself. The world is a text and we are readers reading not only ourselves as text, but *reading ourselves into the texts of ourselves*, texts that are quotes of general textuality: I am not in my body, I am in writing, I exist as a figure in the figurative figuration of textuality that, by means of auto-affection, engenders itself time and time again, an expanding configuration of texts in their perpetual proliferation by themselves (for a paradigmatic example, see Kirby 1997).

As Derrida 1997: 158) says, *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, "there is nothing outside of the text" (or, "there is no outside-text"). This is the truth of being in terms of the "post."

Always already, this is the master code of *écriture* as the method of post-theory, the principle of writing theory in terms of the writerly: where we naively, deluded by untheoretical thinking, assume to encounter "reality" or "nature," there is nothing but writing – writing as *écriture* – that is *always already* where thought believes to grasp something a-textual, something before and outside text. Writing – that is the fundamental principle of all given; yet, there is nothing foundational in the world of the "post," except the non-foundational foundation of writing. In other words, the primordial state of being human is now that there is nothing primordial, no origin as an originary origin; there is only an unending "arche-synthesis" (see Derrida 1997: 9, 60; cf. Hobson 1998: 28); or, as Deleuze and Guattari (1998 [1972], 2000 [1980]) prefer to say, an unending "becoming."

This is the Derridean cybernetic system in the theoretical matrix of the "post": writing as an autopoiesis of all being producing not only itself, but also its own preconditions, its own condition of possibility in terms of both epistemology and ontology; this is the "cybernetic" in Haraway's cyborg mythology.

In these terms, all constructions are there only to be deconstructed and reconstructed, to be written and re-written, in the discursive constellation of post-theory; as Haraway (1991a: 164) says, the cyborg entails a "*translation of the world into a problem of coding*"; hence:

> The entire universe of objects that can be known scientifically must be formulated as problems in communication engineering (for the manager) or theories of the text (for those who would resist). Both are *cyborg semiologies*. (ibid.: 162–163; emphasis mine)

To exist in this new world, we have a choice: if our option is management, our cyborg semiology is communication engineering; if, in turn, we decide to opt for resistance, our preference is textual theory, a theory that is able to produce theory in, through and by its own textuality. This is a new existentialism in the mode of textualism peculiar to the "post"; thus, the existential choice is: whether one is an object-subject or a subject-object; in this post-binary binary constellation, *tertium non datur*, except, of course, in the form of the cyborg, a being that is capable of *exceeding all the limits by way of the "post*."

To set us free from the burden of the human – from the "phallogocentric" order of things – what "we" have to do is to reconstitute ourselves through a process of Harawayan "transcoding" (Crewe 1997: 892–894); that is, constantly rewrite ourselves according to the rules of cyborg semiologies. Thus, with regard to the cyborg, and in these terms, to "our ontology," it is no longer about *singing the body electric* (Whitman 1990 [1855–1881]: 81–87; cf. Bloom 1999: 29–40); instead, from now on we are transforming the world by changing linguistic terms; by transposing our body from one code into another we are redesigning our corporeal existence (cf. Hardt & Negri 2001: 211–228). Life under the linguistic regime of the cyborg is about "strategic design" and "system logics" (Haraway 1985: 81). As Haraway says, in the world of the cyborg, "[a]ny objects or persons can be reasonably thought of in terms of disassembly and reassembly; no 'natural' architectures constrain system design" (ibid.).

Post-Utopia: Beyond the Terror Regime of Phallogocentrism

This is a world in which there are no limits to freedom: as products of cyborg semiologies our destiny is not just to choose freedom, but, more fundamentally, freedom as such is our destiny, a fundamental freedom without a fundament, without an originary origin. To be a cyborg is to become a cyborg, it is about a Nietzschean principle of principles, to live according to the maxim: *Wie man wird, was man ist* (1969b [1888–1889/1908]), although with a proviso that being in the mode of the cyborg is transcoded into becoming (cf. Braidotti 2002, 2006).

As a consequence, in the world of the cyborg, the terms of the sexual are also thoroughly changed, as Haraway (1991a: 162) says: "[s]exual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many" (ibid.). If, in the world of Simone de Beauvoir (1972 [1949]: 301), "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one," in Haraway's world *one is not born at all*; instead of being born,

one becomes a cyborg. This is a world in which all entities come into being by "genetic engineering and reproductive technologies" (Haraway 1991a: 165), both based on what Haraway calls "cyborg writing" (ibid.: 175). This is the world of the posthuman, a world in which everyone is one's own demiurge in the mode of "semiurge" (Genosko 1998: 48).

If, from the perspective of this post-Biblical and post-Darwinian – and, as Haraway (1991a: 174) emphasizes, "non-oedipal" or post-Freudian – Genesis, sexuality is no longer the precondition of procreation, it is clear that from now on the entire realm of the sexual is displaced once and for all from the logic of necessity to the logic of freedom: all that is sexual is liberated from the last remnants of natural reproduction, from the functions of the biological organism, from the constraints of nature, and, most fundamentally, from the limitations of the human: instead of being an invention of masculine philosophy and science, "the sexual" designates from now on a realm of freedom in a world entirely ruled by technology – fulfilling thus at last the great dream of radical feminism of the 1970s: reproduction as a matter of engineering, a technological procedure, rendering the male obsolete (see Firestone 1970; cf. Yaeger 1992: 293–294; Caddick 1995: 144–153, 162–163; Farquhar 1996: 28–29, 38, 41–61, 106–108; Gray 2001: 87–97; Bowring 2003: 227–257; Wajcman 2004: 19–21; Davis-Floyd & Dumit 1998; Hopkins 1998; Tokar 2001; Graumann & Schneider 2003; Mamo 2007; for a comprehensive critical analysis of the development of scientific disciplinary politics of reproduction in the twentieth century, see Clarke 1998).

This is the rebirth of the bio-body as the cyborg: nature reinterpreted in terms of the technological; this is the coming into being of the posthuman. This is the resurrection of "Man" proclaimed dead by poststructuralists, only that "Man" is now a "post-gender" female, or, as Haraway, as an answer to Constance Penley and Andrew Ross's (1992a: 20) question of whether the "cyborg is definitely female?", specifies: "[y]eah, it is *a polychromatic girl* […] the cyborg is *a bad girl*" (emphasis mine). Seen from a wider perspective, as an effect of the politics of post-gender, this is the ultimate subversion of what in terms of the "post" are understood to be the oppressive power structures erected by the regime of the Phallus.

Accordingly, this is the final end of "Man," the end of "Man" as Foucault, in his time, in another linguistic register, prophesied:

> One thing in any case is certain: man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge. Taking a relatively short chronological sample within a restricted geographical area – European culture since the sixteenth century – one can be certain that man is a recent invention within it. It is not around him and his secrects that knowledge prowled for so long in the darkness. In fact, among all the mutations that have affected the knowledge of things and their order, the knowledge of identities, differences, characters, equivalences, words – in short, in the midst of all the episodes of that profound history of the *Same* – only one, that which began a century and a half ago and is now perhaps drawing to a close, has made it possible for the figure of man to appear. And that appearance was not the liberation of an old anxiety, the transition into luminous consciousness of an age-old concern, the entry

> into objectivity of something that had long remained trapped within beliefs and philosophies: it was the effect of *a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge*. As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of a recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end. (Foucault 1989 [1966]: 386–387; the latter emphasis mine)

"The end" – the final and ultimate end, this Foucauldian "end" is one of the constitutive "ends" in the world of the "post" (cf., for example, Burke 1992: 76–77, 86–89; Kumar 1995: 151–157; Graham 2002: 40–43; Mills 2003: 104–107). The cyborg is one of the *after-effects* of this end, of these unending ends. In these terms, if, as Foucault says, those "fundamental arrangements of knowledge" constitutive of the appearance of "man" were "to disappear as they appeared," in other words:

> if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility – without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises – were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the eighteenth century, then one can certainly wager that *man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea*. (Foucault 1989: 387; emphasis mine; cf. Heidegger 1976a [1946]

This "event," this epochal *Ereignis*, is the moment of the cyborg, the Harawayan "cybernetic organism," as the definitive end of the "tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of the reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other," in short, the end of the "traditions of 'Western' science and politics" (Haraway 1991a: 150). This end is the beginning of the cyborg: the cyborg is the apotheosis of the negation of Enlightenment reason: one of the most spectacular achievements of post-reason.

In other words, radical endism in the sense of the "post" is the non-originary origin of the cyborg.

In these terms, the cyborg is not an invention of cybernetics, the ultrarational science founded by Norbert Wiener (see Wiener 1961 [1948]; 1968 [1950]; cf. Heims 1975, 1980, 1993 [1991]; Masani 1985, 1990; Galison 1994; Gerovitch 2002a; Mindell 2002; Mirowski 2002; Pias 2003, 2004), that is, a product of the technological rationalism constitutive of the American war enterprise during the Second World War and in its aftermath (see, for example, Bell 1985 [1979]; Athanasiou 1989; De Landa 1991; Hooks 1991; Hughes & Hughes 2000; Gerovitch 2001; Bissell 2009; Bousquet 2009), but, rather, a paradigmatically post-modern hybrid of science fiction, "French theory" and post-feminist utopianism, all mixed in the mythopoetic matrix of popular cybernetics, cyberpunk and cyberdelic delirium typical of American academia in the 1980s and 1990s (see, for example, Bukatman 1996 [1993]; Bell & Kennedy 2000; Cavallaro 2000); in short, the cyborg is an effect of the "cyber" following the logic of the "post." As such a *writerly figure*, the cyborg is a theory-fiction manifesting the linguistic figuration constitutive of post-theory, *écriture* in terms of the "cyber."

Precisely in this sense, the cyborg is one of the most spectacular results of what Foucault called the "change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge"

brought about by the postmodern. What is it that this "change" is about? In the world of post-theory, it is about "free-floating signifiers" constitutive of all that is "post." In the midst of all undecidables prevailing in the world of post-theory, one thing is certain: the past is now definitely past: *the past has turned into the "post."*

With regard to the cyborg and thus to "our ontology," in terms of the politics of the post-Enlightenment effected by post-reason, life is no longer a question of pleasure in the sense of Barthesian writing the body (see Barthes 1975 [1973]; cf. Conboy et al. 1997; Kirby 1997; Davies 2000; in the context of *écriture féminine*, cf. Conley 1991 [1984]; in Derridean terms, cf. Irwin 2010), but, instead, at issue is now writing the body by means of the "cyborg writing" (Haraway 1991a: 175), writing the body beyond the biological, organic and human (see, for example, Howell 1995: 200–203, 215–216; Cornis-Pope 2001: 89–94; Graham 2002: 200–220; Yaszek 2002: 156–161; Schneider 2005: 15–26, 60–77; Haney 2006: 3–4; Jahshan 2007: 165–167); that is, writing the body free from the deadlock of gender; writing the body out of the carnal lockjaw, writing the post-subject into a new sphere of being beyond the imperative of the flesh, writing the body in terms of the written, writing the body under the regime of the signifier, writing the body into the matrix of the "cyber," in short, rewriting all that is corporeal according to the logic of the "post."

This is the new world of *écriture*. Writing as inscription, inscription as incorporation, incorporation as incarnation, incarnation as embodiment, embodiment as writing, writing as *écriture*, *écriture* as unending *différance* – that is the logic of the corporeal in the world of the "post," the world after the implosion of the sign, the world set free by the omnipotent signifier, the world written into being by "cyborg semiologies."

Whereas the discourse of the end, predominant in the 1970s and the 1980s, saw everything only in negative terms, in terms of aporia, during the 1990s, Haraway's feminist discourse, celebrating the demiurgian power of technology, re-created everything in positive terms, in terms of *post-utopia*: thus, what is potential is actual, similarly as what is actual is potential, that is, not necessary; in other words, everything is now contingent in the mode of radical contingency. It is this post-Enlightenment discourse that has opened a way out from the dead end of the deadly phallic order, the order of "phallogocentrism," the terror regime of the Phallus. This is the resurrection of the body in the form of the cyborg; this is the rebirth of the human as the posthuman. It is clear that in this new world, as Haraway (1985: 66) says, a "post-gender world," all that is – or, rather, *was* – sexual is in a process of fundamental transformation: *if there still is anything sexual at all it is but a moment of the technological, the technological in the mode of writing*.

In these terms, the world of the cyborg is entirely different compared to the world in which the flesh was still the matter that matters, the matter that mattered in its very materiality, the materiality of the *flesh*.

Whatever will finally ensue from this reconfiguration of all being in terms of the sexual, and especially, what precisely is sex in the world of the cyborg – or, whether there is any need for sex at all after the cyborgian reconstruction of the body – is to be re-written according to the rules of "cyborg semiology." This is the origin of cybersex, sex in terms of the "cyber."

It is now obvious that the idea of the sexual under the posthuman imperative of the cyborg is thoroughly different to sexuality as a corporeal and carnal experience enjoyed by humans in the world of natural bodies, a world that is past for ever (from the perspective of postmodern theology, cf. Waters 2006: 50–60, 99–114). Thus, it is evident that, in the post-organic, post-biological and post-gender world of the cyborg, corporeal desires and pleasures are constantly rewritten by post-subjects living in the posthuman condition: sex in terms of "cyborg semiologies" will be no longer something for which one needs the sexual organs – whatever they happen to be; instead, "cyborg 'sex'" (Haraway 1991a: 150) is an entirely new form of pleasure with prosthetic organs, extensions and augmentations of the cyborg-body enjoying the pleasure of the machinic.

If the sexual is still sexual at all here, whatever it becomes now is thoroughly rationalized. This implies that the Freudian drives, as a manifestation of the unreason constitutive of the carnal body, the body of the modern, are not only abandoned but abrogated altogether, and replaced by a system of affective impulses scientifically calculated for proper efficiency. As a result, the sexual attains a new quality: it becomes a game with rational reactions, controlled affects effected by rationally designed sex objects in the mode of post-Pavlovian conditioning (for Ivan Pavlov's theory of conditioning, see Gerovitch 2002a: 42–46, 105–110, 122–127, 2002b; for its criticism in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, see Beissinger 1988: 141–142; for a historical contextualization, see Groys 2005; Hagemeister 2005). This is the objective of cybersex: like everything else in the world of the cyborg, *all you need are proper reactions*.

In the world of the cyborg, sex functions similarly to the post-Gramscian working bodies disciplined and adapted to the demands of the machine: the cyborg body is a product of rational design and control, an embodiment of technological reason (see Gramsci 1971 [1929–1935]; cf. Yanarella & Reid 1996: 195–199; Denning 2009).

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