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The Technological Body

by

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Abstract

This thesis looks at changing ideas of the body, especially in relation to technology. Using the ideas of Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Martin Heidegger and other theorists / philosophers, I enter the discourse of the body by exploring the examples of pornography, cosmetic surgery, body modification and ravers. By examining the body in contemporary culture, I argue that the body is a technology.

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Chapter 1 - Towards a Definition of Body and Technology

I want to speak to the despisers of the body. I would not have them learn and teach differently, but merely say farewell to their own bodies - and thus become silent.

“Body am I, and soul” - thus speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?

But the awakened and the knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body. (Nietzsche 34)

The body is the subject of a variety of academic writing in the arts, from sociology to cultural studies to anthropology. Academics and theorists have begun to focus on the body as an important element of identity and society. However, we have not yet come up with a theory of the body to describe adequately the connection between our bodies, our identities and our societies. Bodies, in their material nature, evade the bonds of words and theories. Bodies slip between the worlds of culture, communication, intimate feeling and personal identity. Bodies are at once social and intensely personal. And, although we may assume that everyone has a reasonably similar experience of corporality, this assumption is impossible to prove. It is exactly this concrete yet indescribable – personal yet social - nature which makes the body such an interesting subject of study and such a battleground of conflicting definitions of identity.

To complicate matters, the experience of the body is increasingly mediated by various forms of technology. From the growing use of the Internet to extend the reach of our disembodied bodies, to the increase in plastic surgery, to the

creation of designer drugs, the body is subjected to and manipulated by the technologies we create – so much so that I believe that the body itself is a technology, one which we use to create shifting identities and alternate writings/readings of who we are.

In the following chapters I examine the body in the postmodern world. I concentrate on the technological body as it emerges from pornography, cosmetic surgery and subcultural communities. In this introductory chapter, I examine a number of thinkers who have given me insights into the nature of the body and technology.



In our postmodern world, the idea that the body is central to how we understand ourselves is increasingly celebrated and discussed. In her book *Undoing the Social: Towards a Deconstructive Sociology*, Ann Game asserts that

The body provides the basis for a different conception of knowledge: we know with our bodies. In this regard the authentic of experience might be reclaimed; if there is any truth, it is the truth of the body. (192)

The body is central in our understanding of ourselves. To be embodied is to be alive. Bodies are the soil from which our thoughts and feelings emerge.

This idea of the body's truth as the foundation for the creation of identity and the source of authentic experience has often been disregarded. In fact, many western philosophical traditions and Christian sects display a consistent desire to

escape the body, to make its “truth” secondary to consciousness, thought, god or romance. In these traditions, the flesh is evil, or at best a nuisance which must be endured in order to reach the “purity of reason,” religious feeling or romantic love.

René Descartes’ thought is important in Western Enlightenment Culture; he ignores and dismisses the body. His famous quote, “*cogito, ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am) relegates the body to insignificance. Descartes did not say, “ I think because blood carrying oxygen and nutrients pumps through a mass of nerves producing a consciousness which says ‘I am.’”

In western philosophical tradition, according to sociologists D.H Morgan and Sue Scott, “bodily matters either become subservient to, or objects for, rational modernity”(2). The body is relegated to subservience because it is ultimately frightening: it breaks down, gets sick and dies. It is needy and often unreliable. For anyone trying to reach perfection, the body must be kept out of the equation. No body will ever be perfect. The truth of the body cannot be trusted. Indeed, Descartes’ famous quote arose from his rejection of bodily perceptions, which he believed were faulty and misleading. According to his philosophy, abstract thoughts and reasoning provide the only path to truth.

As Jean Baudrillard, a renown postmodern cultural theorist, points out in his book *Paroxysm*, this rational model of the world has dominated our imagination:

The human has been defined for only two or three centuries, and it was defined very intellectually, in terms of reason. Since then, the relation to the world has been through that extremely subtle organ, the brain. In other cultures the relation to the world is a relation of the whole body, caught in the cycle of metamorphoses, and in collusion with the world. (96)

This historical definition of the human as a primarily “rational” being means that it becomes necessary to control the irrational, emotional, unstable and frail body. The rational ideal, in which the body is both imagined and disciplined by the mind, expects the body to be under the mind’s control. This ideal leads us to change the external environment to minimize the cycles of change within our bodies. Baudrillard continues: “our modern, rational intelligence makes us technical beings from the very start, beings in the image of our tools and knowledge” (96). Our technology is key to modifying our material environment and disciplining the body. However, despite the efforts of the rational world and that world’s technologies, the body breaks out, a source of undisciplined pain and pleasure.

Many thinkers, including Nietzsche, were disenchanted with the rational Cartesian model of the world. Nietzsche, as one can see from the epigraph to this thesis, revealed and ridiculed the contradiction between disregarding the body and speaking from within it. Later Modernists also recognized this contradiction and began to explore bodily experiences in their literature and art. James Joyce,

who wrote his masterpiece *Ulysses* over a seven-year period from 1914 to 1921, is a perfect example of a Modernist writer choosing to reveal the “secrets” of the body. Joyce was heavily censored for this choice. Many of the passages censored from *Ulysses* attest to the early twentieth-century battle between the desire to write the body and the desire to silence the workings of the body. Samuel Coleman, United States Attorney and one of the main American censors of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, rejects some passages in the final Penelope chapter, passages in which Molly thinks about the workings of her own body. Joyce reveals the “secrets” of Molly’s body and makes them normal. The censored sections¹ of Penelope include images of Molly urinating - “make you feel nice and watery... squatting” (893), menstruating - “O patience above its pouring out of me like the sea anyhow he didn’t make me pregnant” (914), climaxing - “I never came properly till I was what 22”(911), and going to a gynecologist - “Floey made me go to the dry old stick Dr Collins for womens diseases” (915). These sections all reveal the irrational and unromantic aspects of the body. Through Molly, Joyce asserts that those aspects should not be hidden. By focusing on them, Joyce implicitly argues that the experiences of the body are an important part of human existence.

As we can see from the eventual acceptance of *Ulysses* in both the United States and Britain, western society’s view of the body shifted. In 1933, *Ulysses* was legally printed in the United States and is now recognized as a classic. As the

¹ Censorship information comes from Paul Vanderham’s *James Joyce and Censorship: the Trials of Ulysses*.

body became a legitimate object of literature, it also became a legitimate object of study for cultural theorists, sociologists and psychologists. Even political scientists have begun to assert that the body (both its experience and its control) is an important political element that has been ignored by theorists and exploited by governments. The holocaust was a particularly atrocious revelation of the way that politics and theories (in this case theories of race) control bodies.

While the rationalist image of the body as secondary has been convincingly attacked at great length, it would be unrealistic to suppose that we have completely deconstructed the mind/body binary produced by Cartesian philosophies. Some modern theorists and scientists have reacted against the “primacy of the mind” by asserting the “primacy of the body.” These thinkers cling to the body “natural” as the final signifier. The body is seen as a biological indicator of our identity; the body determines our lives and experiences. While western rationalist philosophies disregard the importance of the body, these biological determinists often assume that “biology” and “naturalness” are static and objective categories instead of culturally created ideas. These determinist theories miss the complicated balance of identity creation that exists between society and the individual, and between the mind and the body.

My thesis rests on the idea that bodies are both “given” - material, natural, and biological – and “made” – cultural signifiers, objects of manipulation, and canvases for identity. In studying the body, we should not fall into the essentialist trap of saying that our bodies ARE US, but we also should not ignore that our

bodies are us. Like doublespeak, we need to hold these contradictory assertions within our mind at all times. Any theory that disregards the fluid and often-contradictory nature of the body, cannot adequately explain the role of the body in our social understanding.

Perhaps the most revolutionary changes in our understanding of the body come from the multitude of new voices that have emerged in this postmodern world. Women, homosexuals and other socially silenced groups have begun to add their vision of the relevance and confusion of the body as subject. Sex and sexuality have come into the spotlight as those whose sex and sexuality have identified them as lesser begin to speak. The body is a major topic of these new voices. If the body has been the reason for your secondary status, you tend to notice your body and the bodies around you. People whose bodies are considered “normal” have already been assured their bodily status and can, in a sense, ignore it. But those whose bodies are marked through gender, sexuality or race are constantly aware of their bodies. This awareness is both negative, producing self-hatred and obsession, and positive, allowing a strong sense of self and difference. Those whose bodies are different tend to be more accepting of others. As I will discuss in the last chapter, being different is coveted and acceptance of differences is aspired to as people try to escape the confining conformity of a capitalist economy. The *body different* is seen by some as a worthy goal of modern life, because it represents the possibility of turning away from or rejecting a sick world. It would appear that the emergence of these new voices is

a sign that our society is more aware and accepting of the important role that our bodies play in our social understanding.

However, the idea that studies of the body have progressed - have become more free over time - is too simple. One cannot simply argue that the body was repressed and is now coming into the light. Michel Foucault is a particularly articulate critic of the idea that our experience of the body is less repressed now than it was in the past. In both the *History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish*, he dismantles these ideas of progress. Foucault discusses the way that our bodies have been, *and continue* to be, produced, reproduced and controlled by power, knowledge and discourse. Foucault's ideas are particularly important to my thesis because they uncover how the body is created by discourse and technology.

Foucault's argument in both *History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* is that discourse, surveillance and discipline have, since the classical age, increasingly been used to produce "docile" bodies. In *History of Sexuality*, he attacks the traditional hypothesis that sex and sexuality were repressed and ignored within Victorian society and are only now being brought into the light. He argues that notions of sex and sexuality were actively produced and examined during this time. These notions then became powerful tools that were used to control bodies. Ideas of sex - which Foucault would argue is what sex is - became the vehicle through which the body could be examined and "understood" by those in power. It was through this "understanding" that the body was coerced

into the “machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (*Discipline and Punish* 138).

Foucault’s arguments about the ongoing power struggles surrounding the body complicate my previous argument that Modernists like Joyce were liberating the repressed and disregarded body by revealing its “hidden” experiences. Instead, following Foucault’s line, one might argue that Molly’s stream of consciousness monologue, with its focus on the body and its sexuality creates a discourse which allows power to modify the body. Or, put another way, Joyce and other Modernists like D.H. Lawrence responded to the way that power talked about and controlled the body by *producing* a new way to talk about and control the experiences of the body. Likewise, many of the current studies of the body are, using Foucault’s language, *productive*. Scholars and professionals study and write about the body, creating ideas of what is acceptable and normal; that is, they create rules about how the body is and should be experienced. Through this productive process, control over the unruly body is internalized and individualized. If individual “control” over the body breaks down, then the body becomes abnormal - a case study, a problem or a psychosis. At this point power has obviously inserted itself onto the individual body.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault says that the idea of “the individual,” like the idea of “sex”, is a tool through which power can continue to penetrate bodies: “The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific

technology of power that I have called ‘discipline’” (194). Identity and individuality are thus produced through the social and subsequent internal disciplining of the body.

Using Foucault’s analysis of bodies and power, I will examine the extent to which “the individual” controls his or her body. Can people display their essential individuality through their body, through, for instance, cosmetic surgery or tattooing? Or is the whole idea of an essential individuality simply (re) producing a “fabricated” idea of identity? I argue that identity is a fabrication, but I also argue that it is a powerful and socially accepted fabrication, one which has spawned the identity politics of the late 1980s and has a real impact on the way people live their lives.

This idea – that identity is a fabrication which has a very real impact on people’s lives – is suggested by Foucault’s analysis of the emergence of the homosexual individual. Foucault argues that the homosexual, rather than being a natural, biological entity, was *produced* in the nineteenth century by the insertion of knowledge into the individual body. The classification “homosexual” emerged from various discourses on sexuality. Foucault argues that the discourse of the powerful “also made possible the formation of a reverse discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (101). The definition of the “homosexual” body was *produced* by the way power and knowledge worked on the body. As we can

see from the emergence of large homosexual communities and the political battle for gay marriage, this *production* has had some very real consequences for how people live and understand the world around them.

Importantly, Foucault argues that the processes of becoming aware of and producing the body through discourse are powerful. Foucault uses class struggle to illuminate this power-producing element of discourse surrounding the body. He argues that the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century did not reject the body; instead, “one of its primary concerns was to provide itself with a body and a sexuality – to ensure the strength, endurance, and secular proliferation of that body ... There is little question that one of the primordial forms of class consciousness is the affirmation of the body” (*History of Sexuality* 126). He goes on to say that the powerful can affirm the body, while the powerless cannot and are left bodiless.

Foucault’s arguments that various forms of discourse *produce* the body as an object of study and control have been criticized by some. For example, Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow, two sociologists who have written extensively about the body in society, argue that Foucault is guilty of “substituting one form of essentialism (i.e. biological) for another (i.e. discursive)” (5). However, the parallel they draw between the biological and the discursive is a false one. It is difficult to be essentialist when one is studying discourse. Like Anne Balsamo, a prominent cultural studies professor at Georgia Tech, I believe that “the relation between the body and culture is mediated through discourse” (Balsamo 23). To understand what constitutes the body’s “truths”, one must look at the discourse on

the body – the way the body is written about, imagined and produced through signs, images, and technology. Later, I look at the discourse on pornography as an example of the *produced* body, one whose “biology” has been modified and re-imagined.

Throughout this thesis, I use Foucault’s discursive understanding of the body. Foucault reveals the fallacy of regarding the body as a natural or biological entity separate from the social world of power and programming. Foucault’s insights into power reveal the way that the subject’s body is both a participant in, and a product of, ongoing negotiations for control over our bodies and the bodies of others.



I would like to focus on technology in this complicated mix of body theory. It is clear that various technologies have impacted the way that the body is formed, represented and understood. As technology becomes a ubiquitous part of our lives, there is a fundamental shift in the way that we understand the body. Through technology the body has been extended and modified.

Theoretical and practical examinations of the body in society have emerged alongside a continuing and complicated analysis of technology and its impact on humanity. In western postmodern societies, we often question the role that technology plays in our lives while at the same time accepting the insertion of technology into our everyday actions.

One of the main problems I faced in writing this thesis was arriving at a definition of technology. It is a concept which people use often, but it is, in fact, full of complexities and often means different things in different contexts.

One of the most influential writers on modern technology, Martin Heidegger, struggled to come up with a clear definition of the term. In the opening of his essay, "The Question Concerning Technology", he states that when we ask what technology is "everyone knows the two statements that answer our question. One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity" (279). However, these common-sense statements do not encompass what Heidegger calls the "essence" of technology, or the role that technology plays as a framework through which we view the world. Throughout his discussion, Heidegger reminds us that there are many philosophical ideas at stake in our use of the word technology. By using the word simply to imply a utilitarian process by which humans change their environment, we implicitly turn the entire world into a *bestand* or "standing reserve" which is waiting to be used by human technology. Rather than using technology as a way of ordering the world into something that is waiting to be used, Heidegger asserts that we should, instead, view technology as a process of "revealing" in which that which already exists is allowed to "come in being". Heidegger looks to poetics and art to see the possible ways that technology could achieve this revealing or "bringing-forth...out of concealment into unconcealment" (293). He argues that it is not

technology that needs to change, but how we see ourselves in relation to that technology and to the rest of the world.

Heidegger's definition of technology provides a good starting point for my discussion of this complex term. There are two ways to understand technology: the everyday, utilitarian, practical way - clothes (which enable us to brave the cold), hammers, cell phones, televisions, computers - and the overarching way - a framework for seeing the world. Technology is bigger than the utilitarian tools we have created; indeed, technology is the central site of our interaction with the material world. It affects how we view the entire material world, including our own bodies.

Like Heidegger, Neil Postman refuses to view technology as simply the tools we use to modify our environment. In *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, Postman discusses the ways that technology has shaped and continues to shape our ideologies and our understanding of reality. He argues that we are now in a state of Technopoly, a state where we allow technology to organize our lives and where old institutions are being dismantled by our reliance on, and acceptance of, technology. Technology is not simply a tool that we use to accomplish tasks, but an ideological framework that not only affects how we do things, but what things we do and what things we think about (124). He sees technology as fundamentally changing our perceptions of ourselves and so, changing us.

Both Heidegger's and Postman's insights into technology have influenced my thinking. Technology, in their definitions, is much more than computers and cars. While these products certainly fall into the category of technology, so do the systems which make them and the cultural practices which give them so much prominence.

Heidegger and Postman both discuss the way that technology impacts and shapes our identities. We are, as Baudrillard points out, "beings in the image of our tools and knowledge" (96). Technology is the melding of our knowledge, our tools and our being. This mixture creates new kinds of identity and individuality. In a technological world, who we are is produced rather than given, fluid rather than fixed. By recognizing the way that technology produces identity, we can see technology as an important site of shifting power relations; technology has been and continues to be used to create productive possibilities (and problems) for all sorts of people.

Another group of thinkers who has influenced my understanding of the body and technology is the group that studies and discusses cybercultures. Sadie Plant is one such theorist. Plant, a cyberfeminist who sees positive possibilities in the proliferation of technology, argues that women have had a huge impact on the networks and machines that make up our connected culture. Plant reads computing as an area where women have been able to connect to and infiltrate a seemingly male world. In other words, technology has allowed them to shift and change their identities. Throughout her book, *Zeroes and Ones: Digital Women*

and the New Technoculture, Plant uses the metaphor of weaving to describe the female's role in computing. As women weave their way into every aspect of technology, they become fundamentally more adept at dealing and working within technological culture than those men who supposedly own the technology and its product. She argues that men have objectified women into typists, secretaries and data-entry clerks, but, far from controlling women, this objectification has actually made women stronger:

This was never in the plan. He hadn't made the women into objects only to watch the objects come to life. They hadn't functioned as commodities in order to learn to circulate themselves. But if her fluid character has deprived her of all possibility of identity with herself, it is a positive advantage in a future which makes identity a liability. (109)

Far from being simple objects in the world of computing, women - in Plant's version of the world - are "dangerous guerrillas" who, through technology, have the power to break free from the structures that try to control them (234). While "given" identity is a liability, technological identity which is chosen and fluid presents possibilities for freedom.

In her discussion of technology, Plant seeks to break down what she calls the "crude model of the user and the used" which has "legitimized the scientific projects, colonial adventures, sexual relations, and even the artistic endeavors of the modern world" (77). Thus, while the stereotypical versions of women suggest

that they are the passive objects of men's desires, Plant argues women are not "commodities" because they constantly "maintain another kind of commerce, among themselves"(124). In such arguments, Plant reveals how technology (re)shapes identity and gives power.

Donna Haraway, another cyberfeminist, also speaks of the way technology provides people with unforeseen alternative identities. In her now famous essay, "The Cyborg Manifesto", Haraway theorizes that the melding of the natural and the technological has created a new kind of being, the cyborg. This new being can do away with old binaries, such as the mind/body split. The cyborg also exposes that many existing boundaries are flawed constructions emerging from these old binaries. She asserts that the boundaries between machine and human, artifice and nature are both uncertain and permeable.

The boundary-bending cyborg emerges out of new technologies to break down some of the existing mechanisms of control and domination. Haraway's cyborg is powerful because it does not rely on the existing rules of society, nor on binaries of mind/body and natural/technological. Instead, it can make its own rules in the new "world-changing fiction" that technology has produced. "The rearrangements of race, sex, and class rooted in high-tech-facilitated social relations can make socialist-feminism more relevant to effective progressive politics" (20). According to Haraway, the cyborg grows from our existing society, but it is not bound by the rules of that society. Where once people were constrained by the determinate structures of gender, biology or the physical

world, they are now free to exist as chameleon-like or, as Haraway calls them, chimeral beings who can pick and choose their identities and possibly the very conditions and structures of their lives.

It is not entirely clear how Haraway sees these cyborgs emerging. She insists, throughout her essay, that the cyborg already exists in some form: “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are all cyborgs” (2). Yet, the truly powerful cyborg, whose “reconstitution include[s] the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender” (37), is by no means a reality. Further, the power that emerges from the cyborg’s ability to mold and change identities is not stable or safe. Cyborgs are constantly in danger of being co-opted by the world that created them:

The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential. (151)

It is clear that Haraway does not believe that cyborgs are innocent, pure or true. They are the flawed, irreverent, fragmented offsprings of an awful world. However, these perverse characteristics of the cyborg are precisely what allows them to transgress boundaries and subvert systems of dominance.

Haraway’s ironic and powerful essay has become a central text in cyber-theory because it offers the hope of positive outcomes from the proliferation of

technology. Many theorists have built on her ideas, and the figure of the cyborg is often held up as a figure of hope in this technological age. Ann Balsamo, who I use throughout this thesis, is one of these theorists. She writes, rather cynically, that “the only bodies that stand a chance in postmodern culture are cyborg bodies” (32).

We have come to a point in our history where we are melding with our technology - is technology then, to be considered natural? Emerging from our natural inclination to modify our environment, technology is an integral part of what it means to be human – and, therefore, what it means to be natural.

I have drawn the following four useful precepts about technology from my examination of Heidegger, Postman, Plant and Haraway:

- 1) Technology serves some human purpose.
- 2) It acts in and upon the material world.
- 3) It is a site of power production, transfer and management.
- 4) It cannot always be separated from the “natural”; in fact, the nature/technology divide is not particularly useful when defining the term.



My argument that the body is a technology may seem extreme. But consider the following. If clothes are a technology then why not skin? Is it because that skin is “given” rather than made? Does skin become a technology if it is tanned in a tanning bed? What if it has been injected with Botox to stop it

from sweating (“Severe Underarm Sweating”)? Or what if it has been modified to reject cancer or regenerate on command?²

The boundaries between nature and technology are blurring, leading some to ask whether that boundary every really existed. If it did, it certainly isn’t adequate to describe what we now expect. Technology and discourse have pushed our expectations of what our bodies should do and how they should act into an almost science fiction world. We should be able to communicate across huge distances with a twitch of our fingers, we should be able to stay up for days, we should be able to move ourselves through great distances with little or no effort.

The body must be extended and “technologized” to live up to these expectations. As Orlan, a cosmetic surgery artist who I will discuss in my third chapter, asserts:

I think that the body is obsolete. It is no longer adequate for the current situation. We mutate at the rate of cockroaches, but we are cockroaches whose memories are in computers, who pilot planes and drive cars that we have conceived, although our bodies are not conceived for these speeds. (qtd. in Goodall 151)

While I disagree with Orlan that the body has become obsolete, I do think it has been radically mutated by our technology.

²The Advanced Cell Technology company is currently studying the possibility of using Stem Cell research “to make it possible to produce cells that have the proliferative capacity of young cells, have specific therapeutic application, and are immunologically compatible with the patient” (“Our Technology”).

Bodies themselves have become technologies, malleable and fantastic. Humans use their bodies in very similar ways to the ways that they use technologies, and they use other people's bodies in the pursuit of abstract, scientific or sexual imaginings; that is, these bodies become tools to achieve what Heidegger calls "a means to an end" (279). Bodies, like technologies, are created and modified for both utilitarian and artistic purposes. Heidegger warns us that human beings (human bodies) can be framed by technology into simply a "standing reserve": "The current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence of this" (289).

While Heidegger saw this framing of the body as ultimately negative, I look at some of the possibilities that emerge when the body is seen as a technology. When we accept the body as technology, we can begin to interrogate our use of these technologies. Rather than fearing the inevitable encroachment of "evil" technology onto the "pure" natural body, we can see the fallacy of these binaries. There is no boundary between that which is good/true/real (nature) and that which is bad/deceiving/artificial (technology).

However, there still seems to be something separating us from our technology. There are outcries against technologies that are invasive or seem to threaten the "natural" order. Technologies that alter the body are particularly controversial and threatening.³ If technology is a natural element of being human - indeed, if the body is a technology - why is there such a strong sense of fear and

³ In particular reproductive technologies, stem-cell research, genetics, teledildonics (sex in a computer simulated virtual reality).

revulsion towards new technologies that affect the body? Certainly, we fear that the pace of technology is overwhelming and it is obvious that technology is bringing unprecedented changes in our lives.

I argue that the underlying fear of technology comes out of a feeling of powerlessness, a feeling that technology is becoming a tool of control and conformity which is reaching the very core of our identities – our relationship with our bodies and the bodies of others. Anne Balsamo in *Technologies of the Gendered Body* makes a similar point: “Technological practices such as body building, cosmetic surgery, and virtual reality depend on and indeed contribute to the repression, conceptual fragmentation, and commodification of the material body” (159). Technology enables bodies to be controlled and commodified in new and often frightening ways. Free will or individual agency seems threatened in a world where bodies, our material interface with the world, can be technologically manipulated.

Balsamo’s argument is relevant to understanding our fear of technology. Technology is often used to perpetuate existing binaries and power structures: “Technologically fragmented body parts are articulated to a culturally determined ‘system of differences’ that attributes differential value to different bodies according to traditional dualistic ‘nature’” (159). It follows that old ideas about race, sexuality and gender can be (re)inscribed and made stronger by some technologies. I will explore this ideas further in chapter two.

The uncertain relationship between the mind and the body – the abstract and the physical - that exists within western societies creates a disjuncture in our understanding of ourselves. This rift is sometimes healed but often intensified by technologies. In modern society we see the emergence of tools that attempt to shape the body to bring it in line with the mind's idea of itself. The abstract ideal of how the body should look, feel and act begins to be realized through technology. But we continue to experience the separation. The rift, or space, between the mind and the body can be manipulated by others, because this space is so intimate and so scary. The fear is that the individual will not be able control the rift; and that we, as individuals, will, therefore, lose the ability to choose what our relationship with ourselves will be. This disjuncture can often be seen in people's discourse about sex.

The sexual body is also an obvious site of the intersection between technology and the body. For the generations that grew up with the pill, the sexual body is always already technological. Sex is almost completely separated from its "natural" purpose of procreation. While the desires that drive us to have sex may be biological, the actual act is usually recreational and is often a way to produce or solidify our identities. Sexuality is an important part of our human bodily experience. "To think and talk about sexuality is first of all to think and talk about bodies" (Valverde 29). The inverse is also true: to think and talk about the body and the body's identity is to talk about sexuality.

Not only are sex and sexuality important to the way we identify ourselves and others, they are also central sites of power negotiations. As Foucault points out:

Sexuality appears as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality. (*History of Sexuality* 103)

Foucault asserts that sexuality precedes sex, and, in fact, that the “technologies of sexuality” created our idea of sex. These technologies of sexuality intersect and interact with power and are ultimately productive, in the sense that they extend the reach of power into our lives.

Sex is not a natural and pervasive force which we must discover and control, but rather “a complex idea that was formed inside the deployment of sexuality”; therefore, “it is precisely this idea of sex *in itself* that we cannot accept without examination” (152). Foucault maps the history of the individual confession as one of the main tools through which various forms of power produce and control sexual bodies: “thoughts, desires, voluptuous imaginings, delectations, combined movements of the body and the soul; henceforth all this had to enter, in detail, into the process of confession and guidance” (19). Through confession and endless explanation, sex - and through sex the body -

was produced by discourse.

This proliferation of discourses about the sexual body is ongoing. Technological culture is focused on sex and sexuality, which can be seen in the proliferation of sexualized video games, teledildonics, and pornography. But many cyber-theorists do not examine this aspect of cyberculture. In *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, David Bell looks at a number of ways that we represent the body in cyberculture and in culture in general. Yet his survey of embodiment issues only briefly touches on the role of sex in body theory. I would go so far as to say that sex is central in this “hotly debated terrain of contemporary culture – the question of embodiment” (137). One of the main reasons we (re)body ourselves in the virtual world is to discuss, reproduce and proliferate sexual pleasure and discourse.

Virtual reality and cyberspace take advantage of the dual mental / physical nature of sex, and this makes us uneasy. While we attempt to rid ourselves of our bodies (what William Gibson famously called the useless meat) by entering the “virtual world”, we, nonetheless, carry our bodily desires with us into that new world. We find ways to appease our desires by making our own and others’ bodies into technologies or tools for our desire. Pornography is one of the obvious examples of bodies as technology.

Beauty, like sexuality, is a site where we can see the boundaries between the human body and technology blurring: it is a site where the body itself often works as a technology. Modifying the body to create beauty is a distinctly human

trait: “ the action of decorating, adorning or modifying the body ... is seen as that which separates humankind from the animal kingdom” (Polhemus 14). Therefore, it is an inherently technological action.

One of the texts which informed and inspired this thesis, *Torture Garden: A Photographic Archive of the New Flesh*, is a visual exploration of new ideas of beauty and sexuality, through modifying the body. The text (and associated website) consists of images of people playing with and displaying their bodies in shocking and thought-provoking ways. In the introduction to this text David Wood precisely describes the shifting boundaries that my thesis explores:

These individuals are exploring and expressing in different ways current obsessions with the boundaries of the body and body fluids in relation to sexuality and beauty. They question and reflect the interface between the body and technology. They explore the disappearing boundary between the body and its adornment. (5)

The members of this subculture embrace the idea that the body is a technology, one which has been created and continues to be created by melding and mutating the animal and the machine. They “use” their bodies as a way to question established boundaries between the inside and the outside, the technological and the natural, difference and identity.

Chapter 2 – Pornography

Pornography uses the body as a tool. It proliferates and encourages the use of these bodies-tools to create pleasure through power. Thus, pornography is a perfect example of a medium where the body has become a technology. But, just as technology is more than simple tools, pornographic bodies are not simply objects. Instead, pornography is a site at which bodies are imagined and produced through desire and fantasy. Pornography is a medium in which the “biological” body and the “discursive” body intersect, creating bodies that are framed by technology and desire.

Although we may be born with some “natural” desires (like the desire to interact and procreate), I think most of our sexual desires and patterns are learned – and pornography is one of the ways that we learn about what is sexy and desirable. Many theorists recognize the increasing power of pornography and they often see this power as ultimately negative. They criticize the ideologies that the pornographic industry perpetuates as creating perverted or distorted ideas of sex.

Pornography has met resistance from a wide variety of people. Feminists, conservatives, and religious leaders have condemned pornography for differing reasons. Part of the anger and fear surrounding pornography is exactly this effect of making the body (especially the female body) into a tool for (usually male) pleasure. Academic writings on pornography often discuss these uneven power relations and the implicit objectification inherent in the medium.

Part of the controversy surrounding pornography, is that there is no clear definition of the word. Pornography is not simply a record of sexual acts. Representations of sexual acts appear throughout history in every available medium. Some of the most famous works of art and literature have distinctly pornographic or erotic intentions. Some religious and mythical stories use sex to instruct or simply entertain. However, the modern pornography industry is a relatively recent development, as is the attempt to draw a concrete line (however impossible) between artistic representations of sex (erotica) and pornography. In the western world, pornography has become a legal and social concept, which has little to do with actual sex or eroticism. It has also become a distinct and separate medium in both its aesthetic and in the way that it is consumed and understood by the user.

Like many controversial words, pornography tends to be defined differently depending on the agenda of those defining it. In some literature, it is defined as representations whose sole purpose is to incite sexual arousal. The current legal understanding of what constitutes pornography – and therefore what can be examined and regulated as such – emerged from a series of court cases, and mainly revolves around the idea of obscenity. However, obscenity is also a word which has no clear definition. Legally, in order for a work to be deemed “obscene”, it must meet the following three-part test:⁵

⁵ The following definition is taken from an American decision. However, the Canadian definition is similar and took much of its spirit from the American one (Hildebrand). Also, because of the increased use of the Internet for distribution of pornography, national borders are less important than they once were. Most pornography in Canada is made in the United States and is therefore governed by American laws.

- (a) whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interests;
- (b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and
- (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. (Tyre)

Thus "obscenity" is a floating term, generally meant to include anything that is purely sexual and offends the community in which it is disseminated. Just who this "average" person is or what "community standards" are, however, is unclear.

The feminist anti-pornography perspective argues that pornography is not simply work that "appeals to prurient interests", but also work based on gender inequality that promotes the dehumanization and objectification of women. In *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, Helen Longino posits a definition for pornography:

I define pornography as *verbal or pictorial explicit representations of sexual behavior that, in the words of the Commission of Obscenity and Pornography, have as a distinguishing characteristic 'the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female... as a mere sexual object to be exploited and manipulated sexually.'* (28)

Pornography, in this definition, has everything to do with gender, power and consumption and not that much to do with sex.

Andrea Dworkin represents a particularly radical standpoint on pornography and sexuality. Emerging from the feminist movement of the early seventies, Dworkin persuasively attacked the pornography industry, arguing that it is the most extreme example of the degradation of women in a patriarchal society. Dworkin died on April 9, 2005, leaving a legacy of powerful radical feminist writings and thought. Her writings about the body and sexuality challenge the idea that male/female intercourse is a “natural” act devoid of power relations and cultural meanings. In her book *Intercourse*, she argues that the act of intercourse itself is a way to (re)produce power structures along the lines of gender.

Dworkin collaborated with Catherine MacKinnon to write *In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings*. In this book, MacKinnon and Dworkin argue that the entire pornography industry is abusive to women, and that it perpetuates and reaffirms male desires to dominate and rape females. They argue that pornography makes women into consumable objects of the male gaze, and that this objectification robs women of their humanity and free will. Implicit in their analysis is the idea of false consciousness – women are either directly or hegemonically forced to revel in and reproduce their own suffering.

To survive, you learn shame and how to cover it with sexual bravado, inefficacy and how to make it seductive, secrecy and the habit of not telling what you know until you forget it. You learn how to leave your body and create someone else who takes over when you cannot stand it

any more. You develop a self who is ingratiating and obsequious and imitative and aggressively passive and silent – you learn, in a word, femininity. (96)

This creation of the “feminine” through pornography highlights the productive aspect of the medium. MacKinnon and Dworkin argue that women’s bodies, and therefore their identities, have been produced by men through the discourse of pornography. However, according to this analysis, pornography produces female bodies that are always powerless, victimized and unable to assert their own “essential” identities.

Proximus Media, Inc. is an example of a company that makes internet pornography which displays many of the qualities that anti-pornography feminists detest. Proximus is based in Reno and, like many pornographic companies, does not provide much company information. They are the founders and maintainers of wildxxxfantasies.com, girltryout.com and qmov.com. Qmov is their largest endeavor and offers “350 hours of daily updated adult movies ... all in super dvd quality and optimized for both fast and slow internet connections!” (qmov.com). Qmov is a “hardcore” site which offers a variety of movies including titles like “7 Cock Whore”, “British Ass Slut”, “To [*sic*] Horny to Talk”, “Bouncing Teen Jugs”, “Violent Birthday” and “Banged Redhead Teen”. The site is representative of mainstream hard-core internet pornography. Most of movies follow a relatively similar pattern of aggressive oral, vaginal and anal penetration ending in facial cum shots. Despite the apparent violence and coercion in the many of the movies

there is almost always a reference to the fact that the female participants are enjoying themselves, “She loves that and begs them for more!” (qmov.com).

Qmov’s movies appear to produce exactly the kind of “feminine” bodies that MacKinnon and Dworkin discuss. These women are represented as enjoying being used as objects of male pleasure. In the majority of the qmov movies, women’s bodies are framed as objects to be watched, opened, penetrated. The power dynamic is almost always male gaze (subject) upon female body (object).

However, like most sites of power negotiation, this creation of the “docile” female object is complicated. There are competing levels of power at play in these movies. There is, undoubtedly, a power that comes from being an object of desire – to be desired means to have power over those who desire you.

In her essay “Objectification”, Martha Nussbaum explores the process of objectification. Her analysis shows its complexity and comes to the conclusion that “objectification of a kind, can be a source of joy” (314). She argues that much of the repugnance we feel towards objectification in pornography comes from the “context and circumstance” (289), and that all sexual encounters lead to some form of objectification:

One cannot manage to see the other person as anything but a tool of one’s own interests, a set of bodily parts that are useful tools for one’s pleasure, and the powerful urge to secure one’s own sexual satisfaction will ensure that instrumentalization (and therefore denial of autonomy and of subjectivity) continue until the sexual act has reached its conclusion. At

the same time, the keen interest both parties have in sexual satisfaction will lead them to permit themselves to be treated in this thinglike way by one another, indeed, to volunteer eagerly to be dehumanized in order that they can dehumanize the other in turn. (297)

The reciprocal agreement to be “treated like a thing” creates sexual pleasure, just as pornographic images of “bodies as things” creates sexual pleasure.

However, even this more nuanced analysis of the power dynamic within pornography and sexual relationships continues to rely on the limiting binary of object/subject. Nussbaum argues that during the sex act people become simple objects, “dehumanized.” She assumes that there is some real “human” which is perverted and destroyed in the act of sex. But surely we are never “truly human.” We are always partial, fragmented: always negotiating, even within ourselves, the constructed boundary between being a thing and being a person. Bodies in pornography are both objects and subjects, often moving between these two positions. There is always the possibility that these object will “come to life”, and become subjects. Like the popular culture dream of robots coming to life, bodies in pornography are always suggesting their power. The female object is not powerless simply because she is an object. Objects can and do have power. “He hadn’t made the women into objects only to watch the objects come to life. They hadn’t functioned as commodities in order to learn to circulate themselves” (Plant 109).

AdultFriendFinder (AFF) is a website where “real” people choose to “objectify” themselves for pleasure. Many would view the site as “pornographic,”⁶ as its main purpose is to display pictures and ideas in order to help people find sexual partners. The site allows people to upload and display pornographic pictures of themselves in the hopes of finding sexual partners. This kind of personal pornography has exploded with the growth of the internet. AFF describes itself as “a ‘clean, well- lighted place’ where men, women, couples, gays, lesbians, TGs (transgenders), can openly explore and safely expand their sexuality”(“The Adult FriendFinder Story”). The “objects” on AFF⁷ are constantly asserting their subjectivity. Both the men and the women on the site use their object (bodies) to connect with others. The images of their bodies are representation of who they are (subject). The increase in sites like AFF suggest that the feminist anti-pornography activists have missed the complicated pleasure that emerges when people blur the boundary between the object/subject binary.

Yet, the feminist anti-pornography movement represents an important moment in society’s understanding of pornography. They taught us to see pornography not as the outcome of a simple “natural” or biological imperative, but rather as a site of power and discourse which produces certain kinds of bodies. However, as Lynne Segal points out, “problems and contradictions come

⁶ Indeed it follows the legal procedures of a pornographic site including a 2257 Notice which ensures that all “models” are over eighteen.

⁷ And there are a lot of “objects” on AFF. The site had 19,719,838 Active Members as of August, 2005 (“The Adult FriendFinder Story”).

thick and fast the instant we look more closely at any one of the premises of anti-pornography feminism” (6).

One of the main inconsistencies in the feminist anti-pornography movement is the way that its members understand the connection between biology and sexuality. They argue that masculinity and male sexuality are biologically determined while femininity and female sexuality (at least in relation to men) are learned or culturally determined. In her article “A Feminist Overview of Pornography,” Wendy McElroy sums up this assumption:

To them [anti-pornography feminists], the only feasible explanation is that men and women are separate and antagonistic classes, whose interests necessarily conflict. The root of the antagonism is so deep that it lies in male biology itself. For example, in the watershed book *Against Our Will*, Susan Brownmiller traces the inevitability of rape back to Neanderthal times when men began to use their penises as weapons. (2)

According to these arguments, while male sexual aggression is biologically determined, female submission is most definitely not. Instead, the submissive female is imagined as a construction of patriarchal culture embodied in pornography and other male cultural texts. In this analysis men are “natural” aggressors and women “unnatural” victims. This binary is both contradictory and paralyzing. There is no way to escape the logical conclusion of such an argument - indeed, MacKinnon and Dworkin have come to the conclusion that, because males are “naturally” aggressors, all intercourse is rape. While this statement may

represent an interesting and radical theoretical standpoint, it is ultimately unproductive.

To many, male arousal is seen as a “natural” response to pornography. Statements such as “we’re biologically programmed to respond to the sight of people having sex” (Marriott 2) are often used to explain the attraction to and proliferation of pornography. But any idea of “naturalness” is suspect, especially when dealing with something as technological and manmade as pornography. Perhaps it is true that, in some primal period, watching sex would arouse people, but this is both unproven and uninteresting (it is certainly true that animals watching other animals having sex do not inevitably become aroused). By intending to arouse, pornography does arouse – but this is as much culturally determined as it is biological. Some people are aroused by watching balloons pop (see www.balloonbuddies.com). We have no idea whether the “natural” state of human sexuality includes being aroused by pornography, because a “natural” state of human sexuality does not exist. Sex and sexual desires are inextricable from the technologies and ideas that surround them.

MacKinnon and Dworkin’s analysis makes some very strong assumptions about the nature of biology, desire and sexuality – but perhaps the key point they make is about the “reality” of pornography. They argue that pornography is not a set of ideas or expressions about sex, but that it *is* sex: “Pornography is masturbation material. It is used as sex. It therefore is sex” (101). Pornography is thus inscribed with a reality and a power that reaches beyond the borders of the

magazine or computer screen. Its production of sex is not simply a representation or interpretation; it is reality, and it reflects, in a one-to-one way, the reality of sex in people's lives. MacKinnon's and Dworkin's assertion that pornography *is* sex works to support their agenda against the industry in particular and patriarchy in general. If the sex represented in sites like qmov is *real* sex, then there is obviously a very uneven power dynamic between the genders.

Again, their arguments are too simplistic for my liking. Pornography is not purely representational nor is it actual sex. It is a combination of the manufactured and the real. In her essay "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up," Allucquere Rosanne Stone discusses how we use technology to make the body into an abstract idea which mediates between desire and culture. "The body" – represented through texts and tokens – has become separate from "the subject." Technology is extremely important in this separation. Consistent re/mediation of physicality makes the body and bodily desire into cultural tokens. While Stone uses Virtual Reality and telephone sex operators to illustrate her point, it is just as easily applied to the pornographic industry. Pornography uses the cultural token of the body – the technology of the body – to create arousal. Pornography is fantasy manifested on bodies. It straddles and complicates the boundary between reality and fantasy, nature and artifice.

It is impossible to clarify the exact relationship between the sex we see in pornography and "actual sex." The act of filming or photographing sex changes the act itself. In a lot of pornography, bodies are props. They are positioned in

specific ways to achieve certain representations of sex; they are shaved, posed and manipulated to produce the effect of sex. The actual pleasure or pain of the bodies involved is unimportant to the effect that is produced. Whether the actors in pornography are coerced, willing, drugged or completely involved is often inconsequential. The bodies, the movements, and the male orgasm (because it can be witnessed) all build toward cultural understandings of desire that are (re) produced in every clip.

Most pornography is not simply arousing material; rather, it is material that is created, marketed, consumed and self-identified as pornography. The producers of pornography tend to follow particular patterns. These patterns certainly presume arousal, but also presume a certain audience who will use the material in a particular way, and who will understand the codes of desire implicit in the material. Viewers understand the technological framework encompassing the pornographic body. The fantasy of the ever-willing female and the ever-hard male are cultural tokens used to create pleasure and to make money. The capitalist necessity of selling pornography to the widest possible audience means that the medium must portray the body in certain ways. Because of this explicit commodification, pornographers do present a rather limited version of sexuality.

Amusing Ourselves to Death, Neil Postman's analysis of technology, particularly the technology of the television, can be used to illuminate some of the problems that plague current pornographic representation. He makes a compelling argument that our current image-based, consumer culture deprives

society of the ability to analyze itself meaningfully. Postman argues that television, with its appealing commercials, teaches “that short and simple messages are preferable to long and complex ones; that drama is to be preferred over exposition, that being sold solutions is better than being confronted with questions about problems” (131). Like commercials, mainstream pornography must get its message across quickly and simply. Computer pornography reinforces, with much more force, the images of pornography. Like commercials, it teaches with short and simple messages that sex is about orgasms and easy gratification; that communication and language are not part of sex; that bodies should be used and forgotten.

The consumer nature of Internet pornography require that sex be represented in ways that are easily consumable and constantly pushing limits. Compared to older types of pornography that are text-based or revolve around erotic stories and circumstances, Internet pornography must get immediate attention. It must reduce sex to the “money-shot.” In this way, Internet pornography- rather than being a representation of our sexual desires - (re)shapes and produces those desires. Sexual bodies become a product, and sexual relationships become a form of consumption. Rather than a sexuality which exists in time and space, the Internet encourages people to view sex as just a way to achieve orgasm and gives no sense of how fulfilling or meaningful an orgasm could be. In this way, pornography is an example of what Postman (who is actually talking about human inventions) calls “improved means to an

unimproved end” (6). Making everything faster does not necessarily make everything better; this is especially true about sex.

These negative, commercial aspects of pornography are not separate from the elements of culture that seek to limit and control pornographic desire. It is quite possible that the pornography industry has actually become more commercial and profit-driven as feminists and conservatives decry it. Constant attempts to make pornography into something evil and repugnant actually make it easier to sell. Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, explores this *productive* connection between the repression of sexuality and the easy commercialization of it in the late 1800s:

All this made it possible to canalize and to recover by a whole series of intermediaries the enormous profits from a sexual pleasure that an ever-more insistent everyday moralization condemned to semi-clandestinity and naturally made expensive; in setting up a price for pleasure, in creating profit from repressed sexuality and in collecting this profit, the delinquent milieu was in complicity with a self interested puritanism. (280)

By making pornography into something that is separate from everyday life - something which is supposed to be repugnant to the majority of the people the majority of the time - the anti-pornography movement made it into something which is coveted and expensive.

Pornography does, in fact, produce pleasure. Part of what makes pornography so appealing is its “reality”. Through it we are able to see something that is usually hidden. Forms of hair removal and internal cameras are some technologies that pornography uses to reveal the hidden aspects of the body. Through this constant drive to see more, pornography proliferates the idea that it is through sex and the sexual body that we will see our true selves, selves which are usually hidden or repressed.

The body, then, becomes a tool or technology which allows us to find our identity. Pornography is not only about what Foucault calls “Bodies and Pleasure”; it is also about power, control and finding the ever slippery “truth” about sex. It is part of the process by which sex becomes “an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality – that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility” (*History of Sexuality* 155). Pornography is one of the many lines of identity that intersect at an “imaginary point” called sex. We learn who we are through sex. Perhaps it is this form of identity creation which is really at the heart of pornography: a desire to display and create our identity or idea of the “self” through the most basic technology we have, our bodies.

Pornography should not be examined purely as a revelation of hegemonic consumer control or patriarchal domination. Power acting on bodies produces pleasure and desire. Pornography is a good example of this production of

pleasure. Pornography is the ultimate example of what Foucault calls *scientia sexualis*. In this view, the mechanisms of sexuality have the “double impetus” of pleasure and power. The pleasure that come of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light: and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing, or resisting. (*History of Sexuality* 45)

The bodies/technologies in pornography are participating in this dance of power.

The pornography industry does not simply produce for profit a “top-down” aesthetic standard of the sexual body. Ideas of how the body should act sexually exist within a historical and political web of power and identity. This web is formed and shaped by our desire to control our bodies and the bodies around us. As Foucault points out, bodies have never been unbound; they are constantly constrained and controlled by various forces: “But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it, they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (*Discipline and Punish* 25). While pornography does control and shape bodies, the desire for this control and shaping exists both internally in the minds and hearts of those who participate,

and externally, in cultural understandings of how bodies are supposed to look and interact.

Pornography is an obvious site of technological bodies, but it is impossible to pin down who controls or directs actions against or onto pornographic or modified bodies. While anti-pornography feminist theorists argue that these body industries are direct actors in a patriarchal power struggle, the lived experience of those who participate in pornography often reveals a much more complex and identity-based set of power struggles. Women involved in pornography often speak of the control that it gives them over their bodies and their identities. As Lynne Segal, a feminist who does not oppose pornography, says, “speaking for themselves, both individually and collectively, some sex workers have described why they choose the work they do and the type of control they feel it gives them over their lives”(Segal, 9).⁸

Likewise, women who use pornography are not simply buying into a male idea of femininity. They use it to create their own sexual identities. Loretta Loach, in her article “Bad Girls: Women Who Use Pornography”, found that many women believe that watching and interacting with pornography “enables them to confirm existing desires and try out new ideas. In other words, it gave them power” (270). Men are not the only ones who derive pleasure and power from pornography.

⁸ See also the International Union of Sex Workers (“Recommendations for Political Policy”).

Pornography is one of the ways we produce identity and pleasure through the technology of the body. In a postmodern surface-world, where ideals of humanism and truth are no longer a viable way to create identity, mediums like pornography are increasingly powerful.

To my mind, Internet pornography exemplifies some of Donna Haraway's ideas. Like the cyborg who is "monstrous" but full of potential, pornography is "monstrous" but also provides a space in which bodies can express their sexuality in new ways. Like the cyborg, pornography can be "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian and completely without innocence" (4). In contrast, Dworkin, who considers the desire for intercourse as an obsessed passion, believes "the price paid for the obsessed passion is an erosion of innocence; innocence being in the end, only hope" (*Intercourse* 36). Her definition of innocence as hope means that those who are not innocent are hopeless. The cyborg, however, embraces the loss of innocence and sees hope in that loss. She recognizes the desire for innocence as what it is - some dream of purity that she will never attain and will, therefore, always keep her cold and wanting, unable to connect and live, blind and powerless.

Pornography is a powerful medium through which to communicate new ideas about sexuality, desire and identity. The established power lines of gender do not disappear in pornography, but they can be questioned. New forms of pornography are emerging, which display different kinds of sexuality and allow

people to experience it not as a rigid biological necessity or as a simple process of consumption, but as an exploration of choices about what creates mental and physical desire. By choosing which form of sexuality excites or interests them, viewers are able to establish their sexual identities in new ways.

Rather than trying to erase the productive power dynamic that looking and being looked at create, perhaps we should try to release it from the constraining structure of biology and gender. Those who use and act in pornography are cyborgs. As Donna Haraway points out, “cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. Gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depth” (180). Rather than limiting ourselves to seeing pornographic technology as just another method of controlling or suppressing bodies and their sexuality, we can see its possibilities for being a productive and integral force where bodies and minds can explore the intersection between biological and mental desires – between reality and representation.

Chapter 3 - Cosmetic Surgery

The pornographic and cosmetic surgery industries reveal the technological body in similar ways. They both envision a body and then create it through technological manipulations. They are both fantasies that manifest themselves upon the flesh. The proliferation of pornography emerges from the fantasy of the perfect sexual body while cosmetic surgery offers the possibility of the perfect aesthetic body. Cosmetic surgery is another way for people to control their experience of the world by controlling their bodies with technology. In the collection of essays called *Body Modification - Theory, Culture & Society*, Julie Clarke asserts that “more and more our identity is linked to image, and that image is inherently linked with technology” (185). Like our sexuality, our appearance is one of the significant ways through which we understand who we are, and appearance has always been excessively important in a culture obsessed with images and cultural representations.

Cosmetic surgery is not simply an individual, narcissistic pursuit of the perfect body; instead, it is a direct example of cultural values working on and producing the technological body. It is a way of erasing or forgetting the given/

natural body and existing within a world where minds, technology and society make “reality”. Like pornography, cosmetic surgery reveals our desire to use technology to control and to modify the materiality of the “natural” body as well as our belief that we can modify our identity by modifying or controlling the body.

The emotional damage of not looking like the ideal woman or man is powerful. Despite a cultural perception that appearance should not matter, our external form has a huge impact on how we are treated and how we feel about ourselves. In *Shame and Body Image*, Barbara McRarland and Tyeis Baker-Baumann state, “little girls learn very early that being attractive is connected to pleasing and serving others, which will, in turn, secure love and acceptance” (99). According to them, women are much more prone to modifying their appearance to secure love and acceptance, and it is true that women are more likely to get cosmetic surgery. Perhaps women are more likely to use cosmetic surgery because they are already used to seeing their identities as shifting and fluid.

Cosmetic surgery is not purely a feminine issue. Men are also judged on their appearance, albeit with different criteria. The increase in steroid use and the emergence of surgeries for pectoral enhancements and penile enlargement reveals that cultural perceptions of femininity are not the only source of the desire to manipulate our appearance.⁹ The appearance of the physical body matters to both genders, both economically and socially. It is especially important to look young

⁹ According to *Oprah*, “Men are getting tummy tucks, breast reductions and even their butts enlarged. The most popular procedure for men: Liposuction” (“The Latest In Cosmetic Surgery”).

and vigorous. As Mike Adams, a columnist for NewsTarget.com (a health news website), points out:

A lot of men think if they simply appear younger, with black hair, younger-looking skin, a facelift and a nose job, they can stay in their current job or have better job prospects.

Sadly, they may, in fact, be right, because many employers do tend to judge people on their appearance, even if it's not conscious. Sometimes the perception of a person's ability goes along with their hair color, apparent youth or apparent level of fitness, even if those don't correlate with their actual job performance. (1)

The cosmetic surgery industry is a technological manifestation of the social importance of bodily appearance.

Cosmetic surgery is a growing industry, and it is increasingly being used to correct perceived flaws in the appearance of the body. It relies on a specific set of social insecurities and desires, many of which flow out of representations of bodies in various media outlets like pornography. Cosmetic surgeons nip, tuck, augment and otherwise transform "healthy" bodies for aesthetic purposes. Unlike most biomedical procedures, cosmetic surgery does not seek to heal diseased or sick bodies. Instead, cosmetic surgery claims to heal "self-esteem" problems through external modifications. This claim radically changes the way that the body is understood: "the cosmetic surgeon's gaze doesn't simply medicalize the female body, it actually redefines it as an object for technological reconstruction"

(Balsamo 57).

Cosmetic surgery is often presented as a way to “fix” some problem with the appearance of the body, a way to bring that body in line with our cultural ideals of youth, beauty or naturalness. In “Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Plastic Surgery,” an advertisement reads, “Plastic surgery, when it’s done well goes unnoticed. It should improve your looks without drawing attention to itself. The ideal result always looks natural. Healthy. Beautiful” (qtd. in Balsamo 72). This statement implies that these characteristics (youthful, natural, healthy, beautiful) are absolute and unchanging. There is no recognition that ideas of what constitutes a youthful, natural, healthy, beautiful body change according to cultural and aesthetic values. For example, during most of the nineteenth century, a pale female body was considered healthy and beautiful. Over time this perception shifted and it was the tanned body that was considered “healthy and beautiful.” As one can see from the emergence of a large tanning industry and the prevalence of tanned bodies on television, these cultural perceptions have a clear impact on people’s lives. By invoking abstract and powerful notions like “naturalness” and “beauty”, the technologies of tanning and of cosmetic surgery construct an idea of how the body should look regardless of its structure and age.

Cosmetic surgery is both fascinating and disturbing because it blurs the distinction between the “natural” and the modified body, and it does so in a way that hides the modification. The most effective cosmetic surgery is meant to blend in – it should make the modified person look and feel like the “best of the

normal”. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule; huge breast augmentations, usually done by those in the sex industry, are obviously not meant to blend in. But these are rare cases. According to Marsha Vanderford in *The Silicone Breast Implant Story*, “the majority of these women [who had breast implants] were not hoping for Dolly Parton sized breasts, but to erase the emotional damage of being flat chested in a world that favors well-endowed women” (60).

Cosmetic surgery, through technology, claims to be able to produce the perfect “natural” body. However, these created bodies are, of course, not natural at all. In fact, cosmetic surgery often reduces the “natural” capabilities of the body. For example, large breasts represent fertility and the ability to breast feed. Biologically, breasts are primarily reproductive organs. However, the fact that breast enlargements do not increase fertility and often threaten a women’s ability to nurse a child does not seem to matter. In this sense, cosmetic surgery is for appearance only. A women appears to be more fertile – and that is what matters both to her own sense of self-worth and to the men who find her modified body more attractive. In this case, breasts have become what Jean Baudrillard would call “simulacra” – they represent something that no longer exists. And the basis of the attraction is now a sign without a signified.

In her groundbreaking book. *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf attacks this constructed ideology of naturalness and beauty. She argues that beauty (which she likens to an Iron Maiden) is an internalized ideal which confines and controls women. She sees this “beauty myth” as an all-encompassing power system

created by a capitalist patriarchy to keep women subservient and create record profits. She argues that by making women obsessed with their appearance, patriarchal society is able to perpetuate itself, despite the past advances of the feminist movement. Wolf especially attacks what she calls the “Surgical Age”, an age which “calls healthy bodies sick in order to invade them” (237).

While Wolf makes some excellent (and often frightening) points about cosmetic surgery, some of her arguments are overstated. She is so intent on finding the patriarchal / capitalist perpetrator behind the cosmetic surgery industry that she disregards some of the other more difficult and *productive* reasons for the practice. Like the anti-pornography feminists in the previous chapter, Wolf views cosmetic surgery industry as preying on women, using their insecurities and desire for love to trick them into modifying their bodies. However, she misses the terrible freedom that cosmetic surgery offers - the freedom to escape one’s given, natural body and become someone else.

There has recently been an explosion of television shows about the cosmetic surgery industry. *Extreme Makeover*, *Nip and Tuck*, MTV’s *I Want a Famous Face* and *The Swan* all use cosmetic surgery as the basis of their programs. *Oprah* and other talk show also often take cosmetic surgery as a topic. Popular Magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* are full of stories about cosmetic surgery.

Some, like Wolf, might argue that the cosmetic surgery industry has fueled this media interest in order to sell their services. However, the American Society

of Plastic Surgeons is conflicted in its attitudes toward the messages presented by the media.

Plastic surgery should not be viewed as an avenue to transform a person's looks or life. Rather, plastic surgery can help refine and/or improve on someone's natural appearances. Of particular concern is the young impressionable audience watching these shows who are already self-conscious about their body image. ("New Reality TV Programs Create Unhealthy ...")

What draws people to these shows, perhaps, is a fascination with our ability to transform the body technologically.

In *The Swan*, the fetishization of appearance and technology is taken to a new level. The show describes itself as "the most unique competition ever devised". In the new tradition of "reality" television, the program asks "normal" people to participate in a highly constructed competition. In *The Swan*, women - assumably the ugly ducklings - send in photos and letters explaining why they "need" plastic surgery. The most deserving entries are contacted and two of these women are brought onto each show to compete with each other. The women are introduced to a panel of "experts", including a dental surgeon, a cosmetic surgeon, a physical trainer and a therapist. These experts dissect the contestants and "transform" them through a combination of dental and cosmetic surgeries, exercise regimes and "self-esteem therapy". At the end of the hour-long show - a show which has been put together out of clips recording the process of

transformation - the two contestants are judged on “beauty, poise and overall transformation” and the winning woman goes on to the “swan pageant” where she will compete for “hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and prizes”.

The show plays into many of the stereotypes about women and appearance. The women are often filmed while they are crying or expressing deep fears about their self-worth. Despite the presence of the “therapist” on the panel, the majority of the program is about the external and technological transformation of the contestants. And the underlying message of the program is that women will feel better about themselves if they are beautiful.

Throughout *The Swan*, technology is presented as the means through which the “transformation” will occur. As each “expert” describes the changes that they will perform, the contestants’ bodies are shown floating above a blue grid background. Problem areas are highlighted as the camera zooms in on specific body parts. This section of the show is very reminiscent of popular culture representations of future technologies (especially *Star Trek*).

At no point in the program are the risks of cosmetic surgery mentioned. While we do see the women wrapped in bandages and crying from the pain, we are constantly reassured that this is a “normal” part of the process. Turning the body into technology is work, both for the doctors and the participants.

The Swan uses psychological jargon to justify the women’s desire or need for “transformation”. The women are presented as having the agency and power to change themselves from within. However, the whole point of the show is the

external transformation, which is made possible through technology. Technology and the men who know how to use it are, therefore, the heroes of the show. They have not only triumphed over the flawed bodies, but have created within the women an internal identity transformation. By the end of the show, women are for the first time “comfortable in their own skin”.

The doctor’s knowledge contains the bodies, caresses them with its scalpel, opens them up for all to see. The patient works with the doctor to create something new and fabulous - a technological miracle. The patient and the doctor (re)produce a fantasy of the body, a fascination with the body. This fantasy allows the patient to really “understand” herself for the first time.

Foucault asserts in the interview “BODY/POWER” that “mastery and awareness of one’s own body can be acquired only through the effect of an investment of power in the body” (para 8). In *The Swan*, the investment of the “panel of experts” into the patient’s case makes the body known in a way that was never possible before. The fact that this process is happening on TV makes it even more spectacular. *The Swan* is a spectacle of power that rivals the violence in Roman colosseums.

And such a spectacular display of power is bound to produce opposition. Indeed *The Swan* has met with much resistance - so much so that the show has now been cancelled. A survey of some of the comments about the show, posted on a popular website reveal that viewers found it disturbing (see Appendix 1). These comments show not only the viewers’ disgust, but also the way that a new discourse

has emerged in the wake of these shows. People are driven to speak out against the enactment of power on the body. Foucault speaks of such moments: “suddenly, what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in that same body” (“BODY/POWER” para 10).

The Swan is an uncomfortable show to watch and if it is taken as “reality” it presents a sad state of affairs. If people need to change their appearance through such drastic measures in order to feel comfortable in their own skin, then the body really has become secondary to a desire to fit in and be accepted. However, *The Swan* is not reality - like pornography it is a hyper-representation. It is an elaborate fantasy constructed to reveal bodies being manipulated, bodies caught in the play of power and knowledge.

This play of power and knowledge is not closed or one-sided. In fact, opposition is emerging to combat the power of the cosmetic surgeon. This opposition asserts a new ideal that people should look different, that they should be individuals, not “cookie-cutter” versions of beauty. As some of the viewers of *The Swan* write, the body should be imperfect, “flawed” and “not plastic”. It is obvious from such comments that these people are not totally immersed in the “beauty myth”. They are, however, totally immersed in the creation of the body - the discourse of what a body should or should not be. Like *The Swan* they are technologizing the body, by laying their lines of discourse on it and into it and by participating in the struggle to contain and understand it. Through this process, the unmodified body also becomes framed

by technology. It suddenly exists as an authentic identity (I do not surgically alter my body - I am *natural*).¹⁰

Well before the spectacle of cosmetic surgery television emerged, the French artist Orlan used the power of cosmetic surgery to create performance art. She revealed and reveled in the power struggles that surround the idea of altering the body. Her most famous piece, entitled *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan* (see images below),¹¹ began in May 1990. Over five years she underwent a series of cosmetic surgical operations modeled on images of Venus, Diana, Europa, Psyche and Mona Lisa. In her article, “An Order of Pure Decision: Un-Natural Selection in the Work of Stelarc and Orlan”, Jane Goodall explores Orlan’s artwork and experimentations. Goodall asserts that Orlan’s goal in *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan* was to transform herself into a new being - to give herself a new identity:

With the culminating alteration to the shape of her nose at the next operation, yet to be performed, the estrangement of the face will be sufficiently marked to warrant the claim that she has, indeed, transformed her identity. The plan then is to hire an advertising agency to devise a new name for her and lodge a court application for a new set of identity papers. (Goodall 159)

Orlan calls her transformations art and claims that they are deeply inspired by art history and historical ideas of beauty. However, beauty is not the aim of her art; instead, she is trying to create a new form of identity, one which is not based on her organic or god-given appearance (Goodall 157).

¹⁰A perfect example of this stance is t-shirts with “100% natural” printed across the chest.

¹¹All photos reprinted with the generous permission of Orlan.

Unlike the participants of *The Swan*, Orlan already accepts the body as technology. At one point during her procedures, she announced to the audience viewing the surgery via satellite, “this is my body, this is my software” (qtd. in Goodall 153). Only by embracing the idea that the body is technology can Orlan take control of that technology and shape it. While her work is disturbing, it has quite a different feel from *The Swan*. She is not trying to live up to the “perfect” and “natural” body. She is asserting that such a body does not exist, that it is a fantasy which changes with changing cultural perceptions. While Naomi Wolf desires to rid us of such a fantasy, Orlan wants to play with it, subvert it, use it, make it into something which reveals the instability of our sense of self.

Cosmetic surgery is not only about the desire to shape and change our external body. It is also about a fear of aging and death. Cosmetic surgery prolongs youthfulness and allows us to ignore the approach of death. Notably, the death of the body is one of the most persistent bodily experiences we try to

control with technology. Death itself stands as the final frontier of the technological body.

It is no wonder that the various powers that work in and around the body are so obsessed with avoiding aging and death. We desperately seek technologies to keep our body/machines alive and running. Death represents the end of the self, that “fictitious atom” (*Discipline and Punish* 194) into which so much time and energy had been expended. The technological body is constantly (re)produced in order to resist death.

In Don Dillilo’s novel *White Noise*, the main character, Jack, and his wife, Babette, are obsessed with their fear of death - so much so that Babette tries an experimental drug (Dylar), which claims to cure the fear of death. After their entire family is exposed to an “airborne toxic event”, Jack becomes increasingly paranoid about his mortality. His calm and philosophical friend, Murray, approaches this fear with a perfectly postmodern answer:

“Put your faith in technology. It got you here, it can get you out. This is the whole point of technology. It creates an appetite for immortality on the one hand. It threatens universal extinction on the other. Technology is just removed from nature.”

“It is?”

“It’s what we invented to conceal the terrible secret of our decaying bodies. But it’s also life, isn’t it? It prolongs life, it provides new organs for those that wear out. New devices, new techniques every day. Lasers, masers, ultrasound.” (285)

The “appetite for immortality” that technology creates is housed in the individual body. Because our identities are so inextricably tied to our bodies, the desperate hope that technology will prolong those bodies grows exponentially. This fear means that we allow and even ask for even greater insertions of technology and power into the body.

Chapter 4 - Body Modification and Ravers

The first duty of man is to become artificial.
(Oscar Wilde, qtd. in *Torture Garden* 15)

Corrupt yourself before someone else does.
(Unknown)

I have read pornographic and plastic bodies as players in the struggle to control bodies using various forms of technology and social discourse. In these struggles, technology and social control appear to have the upper hand – imposing on the body a regulated set of ideas of what it should be and how it should act. In contrast, the sub-cultural groups I will look at in this chapter claim that their forms of body play are able to circumvent the normalizing forces of social control.

I look at two sub-cultures, body modifiers and ravers. Both of these groups use the technological body to alter perceptions and challenge existing ideas about the human and the human body. Body modifiers argue that body play strengthens individuality and enables a return to a primitive or original body. Ravers argue that dancing and taking drugs creates PLUR (peace, love, unity and respect). While I will argue that these arguments often rest on fallacies, I do see these subcultures as powerful; their power emerges from their desire and willingness to experiment with and embrace the technological body - their mutative possibilities.

These experiments (mutations) are ultimately specific and local in both their deployment and their outcome: they almost always lose their power when

those experimenting try to explain themselves in discourse. Because of the seemingly insurmountable divide between the experiences of the body and representations of those experiences, social movements based in bodily experience often have a healthy dislike for discourses which try to capture and explain their actions. Later in this chapter, I will discuss this uneasy balance between experience and representation.

These movements are technological at their core. Body modifiers use various tools like tattoo guns, branding irons, needles and medical technology. Certain body modifications, such as tongue splitting and implants, have been deemed “medical procedures” because of their use of medical technology. Body modifiers also use the Internet extensively to connect with one another and build professional and personal communities. BMEzine, for example, is a huge site dedicated to body modification. It has over 20,000 members who contribute personal stories and pictures of their modifications.

Ravers are also technological. They, too, have huge online communities and use the Internet to communicate about parties and to rally against legal proceedings. They also use biomedical technologies, especially “designer drugs” like Ecstasy, 2CI and methamphetamines. Most importantly, they create and support electronic or techno(logical) music. This music is created and disseminated using a wide variety of tools and technologies. It is a “new” form of art which combines human creativity with technological tools.

I believe that it is not only their tools that make these sub-cultures technological, it is also their integration of technology into human processes of creativity and experimentation. Their activities blur the line between what is human and what is technology. They implicitly ask, “what is a human?” Does pushing ink into our skin make that ink us? Does dancing all night to beats which become our heartbeats make electronic music us? The Raver’s Manifesto explicitly makes this connection: “the thunderous, muffled, echoing beat is comparable to a mother's heart soothing a child in her womb of concrete, steel, and electrical wiring” (see Appendix 2). These subcultures respond to the ubiquitous and often threatening world of technology with acceptance. Rather than turning away from this technology, they embrace it and merge it with their bodies. While their actions may seem dangerous or self-destructive, they are an indication of the direction of our technological world where people, especially young people, will seek to experiment and experience all of the possibilities available to them.

For the past two or three hundred years, western culture has frowned on body modification (although it was fashionable in some small Victorian circles). Often, studies of tattooing and piercing mainly focused on the criminal or psychopathic nature of those who modified their bodies. For example, in 1892 Cesare Lombroso, an Italian criminologist and physician, wrote, “tattooing is an atavistic or primitive trait, which is only to be found in the lower classes of society, amongst peasants, sailors, labourers, shepherds, soldiers and especially

criminals” (257). Until recently, those who felt the urge to modify their body joined circuses and sideshows or hid their modifications.

During the early 1980s, contemporary forms of body modification began to make inroads into mainstream North American culture. Since this time, the practice has spread throughout the affluent postmodern world, especially among younger people. Small tattoos and piercing have become commonplace and piercing and tattooing parlors can now be found in almost every city in the world. Where once body modification was seen as the domain of the demented, the criminal or the savage, it is now a stylish form of rebellion. Tattoos and other body modifications are also often used in popular culture as elements of a futuristic / technological future.

The contemporary resurgence of body modification practices is due, in part, to some highly vocal groups of body modifiers who felt that their body modifications were art, and should be respected as such. They argued that their modifications should not relegate them to the categories of freaks or psychological deviants. The most celebrated of these groups were the modern primitives, who pointed to the global and historical occurrences of body modification and play, especially in so called “primitive” cultures. This group describes body rituals as fundamentally human practices that allow for both spiritual and cultural growth. They also believe that body modification is a way for the individual to create and nurture his or her identity.

The manifesto of the modern primitive movement was published in RE/Search Magazine issue 12, in 1989. This *Modern Primitives* issue of RE/Search followed in the footsteps of earlier, more underground or fetish-based magazines, like Body Play and PFIQ (Piercing Fans International Quarterly). *Modern Primitives* explores the increase in body modification in contemporary culture. It interviews body modification icons such as Anton LaVey (author of *The Satanic Bible*), Genesis P-Orridge (creator of the Temple of Psychic Youth), ManWoman (Swastika Artist) and Fakir Musafar, arguably the most famous member of the contemporary body modification movement. Fakir, an advertising executive turned body performer, believes in a “body-first” approach to identity and spirituality. He coined the term “modern primitive” in 1979 to describe contemporary body modifiers. He has been the subject of numerous films and books and he often speaks at Universities and conferences about his modifications and his philosophies (“About Fakir Musafar”).

A book with a very different perspective from *Modern Primitives* is *Bodies Under Siege* by psychologist Armondo R. Favazza. *Bodies Under Siege* was also written in the late 1980s. The book focuses on the psychology of “self-mutilation” and body modification. *Modern Primitives* and *Bodies Under Siege* are in conversation with each other. Fakir wrote the epilogue to *Bodies Under Siege* – “Body Play: State of Grace or Sickness?” And much of the text in *Modern Primitives* attempts to convince the medical and psychological community that body modification is not a sickness.

Bodies Under Siege is a collection of case studies and descriptions of people who have mutilated or modified their bodies. These case studies are broken down into four regions of the body: the head and its parts, the limbs, the skin and the genitals. Unlike RE/Search's *Modern Primitive* issue, *Bodies Under Siege* does not celebrate body modification; it medicalizes it. *Bodies Under Siege* is a medical / sociological exploration of the practice, often focusing on extreme or "psychotic" examples. However, unlike previous medical explorations of body modification, *Bodies Under Siege* does mitigate its negative perception of the practice by recognizing the spiritual and social power of particular (especially historical) forms of body modifications. Although there is now a library of texts devoted to the topic of body modification, *Bodies Under Siege* and *Modern Primitives* represent a crystallizing moment in the on-going movement of body modification from a secret to a celebrated practice.

Unlike body modifiers, the raver movement has not been widely studied by psychologists, nor did it produce a "vanguard" of thinkers to spearhead the movement. In fact, the raver community prides itself on its lack of leaders and the way that its philosophies travel by "word of mouth." However, the rave movement emerged during the same period as the modern primitives and there has been some communication between the two movements. Genesis P-Orridge in particular was active in both cultures: "it was during the late-eighties that groups like Schroom and Genesis P-Orridge's Psychic TV began throwing all-night dance parties" (Fritz 33). While there is some debate over where exactly the first "rave" was held, it is commonly accepted that the movement began in Europe

(probably in Spain) in the early 1980s and then spread to American urban centers like New York and Detroit.

The closest that the raver community has to a discourse or philosophy can be seen in the “Raver’s Manifesto” (see Appendix 2) - a document that has circulated on the internet for over ten years. In keeping with the raver philosophy of anonymity and equality, the author is unknown. Like the *Modern Primitive* issue of RE/Search, the “Raver’s Manifesto” seeks to dispel myths about the movement and define the philosophy behind rave culture: “We are not criminals. We are not disillusioned. We are not drug addicts. We are not naive children... We are one massive, global, tribal village that transcends man-made law, physical geography, and time itself” (see Appendix 2).

These three texts give us a good starting point from which to explore the two subcultures. All three texts make assumptions about how the body is and should be experienced in the modern world. I am most interested in how these texts use specific notions of individuality, unity and the natural / primitive body to try to find the body’s “truth”. They all reveal how the technological body has been produced by these ideas.

The modern primitives use the idea of the individual to explain their practices. In the introduction to *Modern Primitives*, V. Vale and Andrea Juno lay the groundwork for the rest of the magazine. The last paragraph, summing up their case for body modification, is critical:

All such activity points toward a goal: the creation of the “complete” or integrated man and woman, and in this we are yet prisoners digging an

imaginary tunnel to freedom. Our most inestimable resource, the unfettered imagination, continues to be grounded in the only truly precious possession we can ever have and know, and which is *ours* to do with what we will: *the human body*. (5)

Their case rests on five assertions, all of which are alluded to in this final paragraph:

1. The goals of body modification are freedom, imagination and individuality.
2. Freedom, imagination and individuality are natural and positive desires.
3. There are external forces that seek to limit our natural inclination to increase freedom and imagination.
4. It is only through the body that we can retain and increase our individuality, freedom and imagination.
5. We each own our individual body.

These five assumptions emerge from and reinforce implicit ideological assumption about what a “true” human is. The passage highlights the humanist tone of the modern primitive movement. The modern primitives see themselves as part of the great progression of mankind.

Both *Bodies Under Siege* and *Modern Primitives* use a similar approach to explore the topic of body modification. They both look at individual cases, focusing on the individual experiences of those who modify their bodies. Furthermore, both frame these experiences within a larger philosophy about the place of the human in the world. The texts attempt to discern the reasons for the

practice of body modification, and both assume that body modification is a response to, or indicator of, cultural conditions. Through their focus on individual cases and experiences, both of the texts implicitly argue that the modified body is an external reflection of an internal self. The body is “a canvas”, “a vehicle” or “the teepee covering the soul” (*Modern Primitives* 151).

One of Armondo Favazza’s main arguments in the introduction to *Bodies Under Siege* is that self-mutilation has been used by many cultures for ‘promoting healing, spirituality and social order’ (226). According to both Favazza and the modern primitives, mutilating actions, when they are culturally sanctioned, produce important cultural meanings. These cultural meanings are often central to the tribe’s existence or understanding of itself. Favazza points to the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians, an eight-day ritual, which cumulates in the Gazing-at-the-Sun dance where warriors are suspended from a pole by wooden skewers shoved through their flesh. This ceremony is important to the whole tribe. The “entire tribe cooperates in its performance, for it is the entire tribe that benefits from the suffering and self-mutilation of the dancers” (12). In this historical instance, body modification creates a social cohesion that has little to do with the individual. The ritual mutilation of the dancers is a way to form a truly human society, one which becomes cohesive through a shared experience.

Favazza also points to the flagellant cults of the fourteenth century and to major spiritual figures like Jesus who chose to be mutilated to save the world from its sins. These examples give some sense of the depth and power of self-inflicted pain across many histories and cultures, but they also highlight the

essential social nature of past body modification rituals. Favazza argues that body modification was used as a form of social or tribal release, a release which made an unstable world feel more stable:

Examination of the rituals presented in this book reveals that they serve an elemental purpose, namely, the correction or prevention of a destabilizing condition that threatens the community. A few examples of destabilizing conditions are diseases; angry gods, spirits, and ancestors; failure of boys and girls to accept adult responsibilities when they mature; conflicts of all sorts, for example, male-female, intergenerational, interclass, intertribal; loosening of clear social role distinctions; loss of group identity and distinctiveness; immoral or sinful behaviors; ecological disasters. Self-mutilative rituals serve to prevent the onset of these conditions and to correct or “cure” them should they occur. The rituals work by promoting healing, spirituality, and social order. (226)

The ritual of the body in pain can be a force in translating and organizing the material world. Through the shared experience of self-inflicted suffering, people feel that they have some control over the external world. Self-mutilations, in these examples, create a sense of power and order in a chaotic world. Pain is chosen rather than inflicted. The “choice” to suffer pain means that the entire tribe lives more completely and its members are more connected to each other.

Despite Favazza’s compelling arguments about the social role of body modification in past societies, his views on contemporary versions of body

modifications are generally negative. He participates in the discourse of pathologizing, calling contemporary body modification “deviant-pathological self-mutilation ”(45). He argues that because current body modification is done outside of any cultural framework, it is an individual form of psychosis, which should be and can be “cured” through psychology and science. Despite Favazza’s assertion that body modification was, in the past, a social act, he focuses on modern case studies about individuals’ internal lives in order to learn the “truth” about their actions. For example in “The Genitals” section, Favazza explores castration as individuals’ desires to “rid themselves of the guilty part of their body” (203). In one such instance, a man “had long struggled with homosexual desires and said that he attempted castration to humiliate himself and expiate some of his sins” (202). Favazza does not explore the social nature of this struggle against homosexuality, for he believes that it is the internal workings of this particular individual which is the problem. This focus on the individual allows Favazza to view modified bodies as specific instances where the individual’s ability to discipline his or her body has broken down.

Ravers, while less interested in the “individual” than in the creation of a sense of unity, do share many of the humanist beliefs of the body modifiers. They view their parties as an expression of “true” and free humanity. For example, an excerpt from a public notice after a well-established rave-night was shut down in London reads:

We intensely dislike and react non-violently against all attempts to dictate opinion. We believe profoundly in the freedom of the spirit and the liberty

of mankind to work out his own salvation and to be himself in his own way. We demand for ourselves the freedom to follow our own stars and we stand out for a like liberty for all mankind. *We are those who are real.*
Love. Magic. Freedom. (“Megatripolis”)

Like the introduction to the *Modern Primitives*, this passage assumes a very specific set of ideas about humanity, reality and freedom. This club was shut down mainly because the police and government of the United Kingdom saw the club as promoting the use of drugs. As we can see from this passage, ravers feel that they should be free to experience drugs. Just as the modern primitives believe that their bodies are theirs “to do with what we will,” ravers believe that they should be allowed to do what they want to their own bodies.

Ravers use a wide variety of drugs to create their bodily experiences; LSD, mushrooms, pot, ketamine, GHB, methamphetamines and most commonly, Ecstasy, are all found in the rave culture. Ecstasy, or MDMA, is structurally similar to methamphetamine and the hallucinogen mescaline. Ecstasy was originally patented in 1913 by the German chemical company Merck. It was supposedly to be sold as a diet pill and was later tested as a psychiatric drug. Ecstasy directly manipulates the body; it works by delaying the uptake of serotonin in the brain so that users have an excess of serotonin making them ecstatic, childlike and “connected.”¹²By changing the physical body, Ecstasy

¹² Drug information is from erowid.org, a detailed site about recreational drugs. Erowid is often used by the raver community and shares many of the same principles about drug use: “We imagine a world where people treat psychoactives with respect and awareness; where people work together to collect and share knowledge in ways that strengthen their understanding of themselves and provide insight into the complex choices faced by individuals and societies alike” (“erowid.org”).

radically alters the perception of the self and the relationship of that “self” to the world - at least for the time that the users are high.

In the raver community, there is a widespread belief that those who have not had the experience of raving or taking drugs are missing some fundamental aspect of being human. Terrence McKenna, a spoken-word artist who is active in the rave culture, made this belief clear at his *Alien Dreamtime* performance, a multi-media event recorded live at the Transmission theater in San Francisco:

To go from birth to the grave without having a psychedelic experience is, to me, as creepy a notion as to go from birth to the grave without ever having a sexual experience. It means you led a life of self-chosen infantilism and ignorance. (*Alien Dreamtime*)

Fakir Mustafa makes a similar argument about body modification. In his mind, experiencing body play is a fundamental part of being human:

So, we have a world full of people with middle aged bodies and child-like interiors – people who’ve never had a rite of passage or initiation. Some people instinctively know this, and if society won’t give them a rite of passage, they’ll invent one. (*Modern Primitives* 11)

The people who “instinctively know” that humans need a painful rite of passage or a psychedelic experience, are, of course, better (more adult) in this formulation. They have discovered what it means to be human and, against all taboos, they have chosen to grow up and be truly human.

The “body natural” is, thus, only a starting point for both the modern primitives and the ravers. One does not become a person simply by having a

human body. Instead, one must experience this body in a particular and intense way. One must experience pain or ecstasy:

What is the body? The only time you can start to figure that out is when you start piercing, tattooing, playing with it, modifying it... that short instant when the needle is going through your flesh, you may have a realization of who you are. (Fakir qtd. in *Torture Garden* 24)

Raving also creates “true” instants: “ It is in that very instant [of raving], with these initial realizations that each of us was truly born” (see Appendix 2). This move gives both groups a powerful advantage over those who simply exist within their bodies. Both assert the primacy of the technological modified human body.

As well as defining the “real” way to experience life, these forms of body play represent a need to assert difference and uniqueness in a postmodern world of simulacrum. The modern primitives believe that by focusing on the body (and the modification of that body), individuals can escape a world of confinement and insincerity:

In this postmodern epoch in which all the art of the past has been assimilated, consumerized, advertised and replicated, the last artistic territory resisting co-option and commodification by Museum and Gallery remains the Human Body. (*Modern Primitives* 5)

Body play is “grounded on living skin, so its essence evokes a poignancy unique to the mortal human condition” (*ibid*). Thus it is the essence of body modification which makes it important - not *what* it says, but *how* it speaks. It speaks through the body, through pain, through experience and through the commitment of

permanently marking one's body. Body modification is a mode of communication in which the experience itself carries the meaning.

For ravers "truth" also comes from intensified experience. It comes from dancing to a point of exhaustion and from continuously stimulating the senses. Ravers dance all night, often reaching a trance-like state. The levels of exertion vary from person to person, but it is common for people to be in a frenzy of movement, sweating, smiling, sometimes even crying. The ears, the eyes and muscles are all engaged in the creation of an altered state and the physical experience of this altered state allows the raver to escape from the insincerity of the postmodern world (see Appendix 2).

In both of these cultures it is the experience that is important: the heaving and the sweating, the pulsing nerve endings, the itching skin, the shallow breaths, the suffering. "Truth" arrives through the sensation of a needle pushing through a skin and the heady drunken aftereffects of pain. Or "truth" arrives in the rush of pleasure as a baseline pounds through the body. These experiences are not powerful because of the discourse surrounding them. They are what Foucault calls the *Ars Erotica* where "truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience", which "would lose its effectiveness and its virtue by being divulged" (*History of Sexuality* 57). But unlike the *Ars Erotica* of the past, these feelings happen through technology.

There are, of course, problems with the dream of the free and universal body. These understandings of the body's "truth" is hierarchical. These hierarchies exist throughout the modern primitives' and ravers' philosophies. The

movements simply reverse the order imposed on them from the various civilizing technologies like those of the medical community and those of social control. These groups reject the idea that those who participate in body modification rituals or drug experiences are sick or psychotic. In so doing, they are, in fact, reversing the binary of the sick versus the healthy body and asserting that they are healthy and natural. This reversal does not provide a way out of the repressive binaries. In fact, it often re-affirms these binaries. Like the homosexual identification discussed in my introduction, these subcultures, “demand that [their] legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which [they were] ... disqualified” (*History of Sexuality* 101).

Both the ravers and the modern primitives believe that their actions provide a way to return to the primitive or tribal body. Like Favazza, the modern primitives use examples like the Sun Dance to highlight the importance of body modification throughout history. However, unlike Favazza, they assert that one can return to the purity of the primitive experience by modifying the body. Again we see a common hierarchy (civilized over primitive) reversed in order to privilege one group over another.

The modern primitive movement assumes that there is a “pre-civilized” body to which we can find our way back through modification rituals. The tribal/modified body is the state of origin. The primitive body is idealized. To the modern primitives, “primitive” means, “original , as opposed to derivative;

primary as opposed to secondary; radical” (4). The modern primitives believe that it is always possible to get to the root of life through the body. As Victoria Pitts, an academic who studies and writes about the body modification subculture, points out, “modern primitives invert hierarchies of ethnicity by valorizing the ‘primitive’ as politically, culturally, and spiritually superior” (126). While the modern primitives do include the word “modern” in their name, the majority of their philosophies revolve around this idea of the “primitive” body.

The raver community has a similar philosophy. They, too, believe that they are tapping into experiences which are timeless and radical. Many ravers use the expression “Neotribalism” to describe the movement. A rave is a way to return to the unity of a tribal experience: “We are one massive, global, tribal village that transcends man-made law, physical geography, and time itself. We are The Massive. One Massive” (see Appendix 2). By reaching back through time to explain themselves, these subcultures appeal to give Enlightenment or Humanist principles - individuality, autonomy, progression, agency and unity.

In order to assert their individual return to the radical and perfect primitive body, modern primitives use existing “civilized” ideas about individuality and identity. In past “primitive” cultures, the body represented our link to the world, and by cutting, tattooing, and otherwise modifying that body we believed that we could change that world, making it more stable or more dangerous. In a rational and scientific world, we have lost a belief in the body and its magical relationship with the group and nature. Ideas about a monotheist God,

science or the essential human have continually defined our relationship with the material world. The vision of the body as contiguous to, and impacting on, our material environment does not fit into scientific or rational paradigms. We cannot simply negate the powerful conditioning of rational ideals.

It is impossible to reclaim the primitive body. The very idea that our bodies are our own is a modern idea: in non-industrial societies the body does not belong to the individual but is, instead, a continuation of the tribe and the natural world. Contrary to these subcultures' view of themselves as primitive, they are, in fact, derivative and secondary: they are responding to the contemporary body – a body that has already been created, modified and written upon; one which has already been imagined and shaped by rational ideas and tools.

To the modern primitives, “complete or integrated” identity consists of a series of individual choices. This is a postmodern idea, influenced by a wide variety of ideas - none of which is “natural” or “primary” - about what it means to be an individual. In modern and postmodern society, body modification cannot be a simple return to the primitive body. That would entail the dissolution of the individual and a group understanding of the experience of body modification. In fact, rather than using body modification to symbolize membership in a group, many current body modifiers use the practice to assert their difference from mainstream normality. Though tattoos and piercing may signify a loose membership in an “alternative” group, this membership is secondary to the individual modifier's rejection of normal society. The primary motivation is to escape, rather than join, another group of humans.

In primitive cultures, tattoos were social instruments: signs of specific things, such as clan and family relationships or stage of maturity. Such tattoos could be read and understood by the group. Now the pictures and icons to be tattooed on the person are handpicked and even hand designed by the person. Their meaning is private; they are not meant to be read by society. As one of the modern primitives asserts, "I wanted work that was abstract in the sense that it wasn't rigidly symbolic of any religious or cultural references" (*Modern Primitives* 77). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there has been a rise in tattooing which is not supposed to mean anything except to the individual that has been tattooed.

The assumption that the body had a primitive and "natural" starting point and that, through a combination of courage and rebellion, the modern primitives and ravers have emerged to show us the true way to live in our bodies, sounds a lot like the repressive hypothesis which Foucault refutes in *The History of Sexuality*. The body of the modern primitive or the raver is not returning to a "natural" human state which has been repressed by "unnatural" civilizing forces. Instead, members of these groups recognize and use the power that has already been invested into the body. These subcultures actively participate in the power structures which surround the body, and through this participation, produce new ideas and rules about how to live. By modifying the appearance and experience of the body, these subcultures make it more discursive and constructed. Their actions are complicated and technological, not simple and primitive.

Body modification and raving is something other than the affirmation of humanness, and something other than a way to expose the internal and essential elements of a human being. It is a necessary experimentation, using the body nimbly and strangely to open the eyes of those blinded by the rigorous pursuit of their own unfounded truths. Body modification is pastiche upon the body which uses both the cultures of the past and the ideas of the present to create the technological body of the future.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

As a final step in revealing and examining the technological body, I would like to revisit the four precepts of technology that I set out in the opening chapter and apply them directly to the body as described and explored in the first four chapters of this thesis.

- 1) Like technology, the body acts in and upon the material world. The body is our primary vehicle for interaction with the material world. Without the body we have no interface with the material world. Without it we could not speak, we could not express ourselves; in fact, we would not exist.
- 2) Like technology, the body serves some human purpose. Of course, the body is never purely our servant. It has a life of its own and often serves its own “natural” purposes. The body often rules us with its ever present needs and desires. However, the idea of human purpose is the precept of technology that most illustrates the changing view of the body that this thesis explores. While the body has its own will, new technologies work to bend that will to mirror socially constructed mental desires. The body becomes technology when we shape it to suit our purposes.
- 3) Like technology, the body is a site of power production, transfer and management. As I have shown throughout this thesis the body is a central site of power struggles. Pornography especially highlights this play of power on and through the body. However, the body has not always been such an obvious site of power relations. In *Discipline and Punish*,

Foucault asserts that “the classical age discovered the body as an object and target of power” and thus began the writing of “the great book of Man-the-Machine”(136). The body began its transformation into a technological object during the classical age. It was during this time that the body became secondary to the mind and rationality. The technological body is a lasting remnant of the mind/body binary created during the time of Descartes.

- 4) Just as technology cannot always be separated from the natural, the body cannot always be separated from technology. The natural body no longer exists; it is intimately and forever connected to the technologies that created and shaped it. The body is an “illegitimate fusion of animal and machine” (Haraway 176). The body in the technological world reveals the fallacy of the “natural” as a category.

Throughout this thesis I have struggled to see where technology intersects with our bodies and how these intersections affect our definition of ourselves. The body actually works as a technology. Our brains imagine the shape of the world in a particular way and we create our technological bodies to model that world. How we imagine the world is therefore incredibly powerful. Our current historical moment is one in which competing ways of imagining the world are multiplying and interacting. Where once people lived their entire lives within one belief system, one system of “truth”, there are now multiple belief systems. This multiplicity makes identity creation unstable. Where once identity was a solid

thing given to you at birth from your nation, your tribe and your god, identity is now a floating point. Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, comments on identity in this new world:

In those circumstances, bereft of authority and faced with nihilistic despair, there is nothing to do but start from scratch with what remains: a rebellious bundle of bodily and psychic needs, a deep urge to survive and transcend, a treacherous and indispensable language. (38)

In a world where identity or “self” is not a given, the body and its desires become paramount. We use the body as a platform for our particular ideas of truth. We create the idea of identity and then use it to help us understand who we are. Like magpies hoarding bits of shiny metals, we construct our identities with ideas from the past. Nietzsche reminds us our lives are immersed in a “treacherous and indispensable language.” Like our bodies, this language is given. While we busily construct ourselves out of bits of the past, we are not free from the constraint of our given bodies or language.

I have used the ideas of Michel Foucault to highlight the fluid nature of cultural ideas about the body. He enabled me to see the body as a technology that has been produced by discourse and power. He asserts, rightly, that traditional theories of the body do not take into account the nature of power and the ways that it is used and manipulated. Those who do not recognize the different ways that power operates are in danger of becoming complicit in existing power

structures. Even ideas of “the self” or the individual are suspect, since they too arise out of totalizing theories of the progressive human.

Tony Davies is a current literary theorist who has similar ideas. He looks at the individual, not as an established fact, but as a creation of particular historical moments. Like Foucault, Davies asserts that the individual is not a “natural” category. In *Humanism*, Davies speaks of the creation in the 1960s of the “free-standing self-determining person with an identity and a name that is not simply a marker of family, birthplace or occupation but is ‘proper’ –belonging to you alone” (16). Davies recognizes the inherent dangers of past forms of totalizing identities on which humanism rests. On the one hand, humanism has offered a way to celebrate the human, but, on the other, it created systems of domination and imperialism: “All humanisms, until now, have been imperial. They speak of the human in the accents and the interest of a class, a sex a race. Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not ignore” (131). Davies’ modifier “until now”, means that he does see a way out of this paradigm of humanism, without abandoning humanism altogether. His way out is to recognize the Other, not only as existing, but as an essential feature in our ability to see ourselves as humans.

Body modifiers attempt to make themselves the Other, but not in the negative way that the word is often used (a way to make oneself better by comparison with what they are not). Rather, this form of Othering is a way to see the lack in the idea of a whole self, a self which can exist simply by being. They

seek to make their skin different and in doing so they align themselves with those whose bodies have marked them. If our identity is defined in opposition (I am this because I am not that) then body modifiers use their markings to become what they are not. A white man who chooses to tattoo himself is making a statement of difference and he must learn to live in the social world with the burden of his self-imposed difference. If much of the discrimination and imperialism of humanism has come from the rejection of the body of the Other, then, perhaps, this “Othering” of one’s own body offers a way to understand and accept those whose bodies are different from our own.

Likewise, in rave culture, homosexuality is accepted, even valorized. The raver community has historical connections to the emergence of a strong homosexual community. In particular, “house” music - one of the most popular and energetic forms of techno(logical) music - began in American gay clubs. Again we see the sub-culture internalizing the Other (in this case the homosexual). By embracing the Other in this way, these postmodern subcultures may represent the possibilities of acceptance and multiplicity.

Donna Haraway’s ironic dream of the cyborg reveals the need to transgress the limiting binary of the self and the Other. To become a cyborg one must find the space between.

Certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals - in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self. 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. (177)

Identity cannot be autonomous because autonomy may lead to oppression. The cyborg needs to accept and encompass the Other without becoming insubstantial. The technological body seeks this possibility. Through the material reality of the body, one can experience the real, the self. Through the discursive and technological (re)creation of the body, one can experience the Other.

Simply existing is not enough, nor is it enough to follow the rules laid out by culture about how the body should act or feel. If the body is a technology, then the question becomes not how to preserve the purity of the body nor how to make the body more perfect, but rather how do we look at this technology; how do we frame it? If the body is a technology, then that technology can be changed. If we see with open eyes that the body is not something natural, innocent and pure, but

always something constructed, created and produced, then perhaps we can start to produce something better.

There are many more fascinating examples of the way that the body is being (re)imagined to reflect and question abstract ideals. As we plod forward into the future the body will continue to be (re)imagined and (re)produced. The technologies that I have looked at will become more entrenched and will increase with every new generation.

There is no way to get rid of our technology, and there is no way to get rid of our technological bodies. These material realities are where our internal monologues are grounded; in fact, these material realities are our only truths. The body is not simply the vehicle for the completed soul, the pure self; it is the continuous material of life and, like us, it is incomplete, imperfect and modifiable. The one certainty there is about the body is that it will always be with us. Let those who think otherwise “say farewell to their own bodies - and thus become silent” (Nietzsche, 34).

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Appendix 1

Viewers comments about *The Swan*

<http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/swan>

Matt

Fox has had some gd shows but “The Swan” is absolutely disgusting because of the pageant aspect. They have shown a few people who had disfigurements and traumatic situations and I am happy to see those people helped. But I saw a disproportionate amount of “average looking” women being made over into this “cookie cutter” Hollywood look when they looked fine to begin with. Why does everyone need to be emaciated looking, small nosed and big overly white teeth to look attractive? This is sick! Can this show now!

Amanda

The Swan makes all normal average americans think they dont look like they should. The show makes the viewers think every woman needs to be skinny and “wrinkle-free”. This gives everyone a feeling of less value and self confidence.

Karli

The fact that this show even exists sickens me. It is time that the media stopped putting pressure on women to be physically flawless and came to grips with reality-no one is perfect and no one should be. Imagine what this will do to the self-image of future generations...

Alice

“The Swan” is the worst reality show on the planet. These poor women who actually look very nice are being turned into plastic representations of today’s standards of beauty. And then they go on the beauty pageant...and guess what? The losers STILL aren’t beautiful enough. It’s horrible.

Benjamin

the Swan promotes an image of what everyone is supposed to look like in this country and that is just wrong..the world needs all types of people so if anyone out there is sick of people all trying to look the same please boycott this show. I for one do not find vomiting your lunch or visible bone structure to be attractive but I guess Americans are so damn stupid that we are all trying to look the same

Appendix 2

Raver's Manifesto

<http://www.livingart.com/raving/articles/article11.htm>

Our emotional state of choice is Ecstasy. Our nourishment of choice is Love. Our addiction of choice is technology.

Our religion of choice is music. Our currency of choice is knowledge. Our politics of choice is none.

Our society of choice is utopian though we know it will never be.

You may hate us. You may dismiss us. You may misunderstand us. You maybe unaware of our existence.

We can only hope you do not care to judge us, because we would never judge you. We are not criminals. We are not disillusioned. We are not drug addicts. We are not naive children...

We are one massive, global, tribal village that transcends man-made law, physical geography, and time itself.

We are The Massive. One Massive.

We were first drawn by the sound. From far away, the thunderous, muffled, echoing beat was comparable to a mother's heart soothing a child in her womb of concrete, steel, and electrical wiring.

We were drawn back into this womb, and there, in the heat, dampness, and darkness of it,

We came to accept that we are all equal. Not only to the darkness, and to ourselves, but to the very music slamming into us and passing through our souls: we are all equal.

And somewhere around 35 Hz we could feel the hand of God at our backs, pushing us forward, pushing

us to push ourselves to strengthen our minds, our bodies, and our spirits.,

Pushing us to turn to the person beside us to join hands and uplift them by sharing the uncontrollable joy we felt from creating this magical bubble that can, for one evening, protect us from the horrors, atrocities, and pollution of the outside world. It is in that very instant, with these initial realizations that each of us was truly born.

We continue to pack our bodies into clubs, or warehouses, or buildings you've abandoned and left for naught, and we bring life to them for one night.

Strong, throbbing, vibrant life in it's purest, most intense, most hedonistic form.

In these makeshift spaces, we seek to shed ourselves of the burden of uncertainty for a future you have been unable to stabilise and secure for us.

We seek to relinquish our inhibitions, and free ourselves from the shackle's and restraints you've put on us for your own peace of mind. We seek to re-write the programming that you have tried to indoctrinate us with since the moment we were born.

Programming that tells us to hate, that tells us to judge, that tells us to stuff ourselves into the nearest and most convenient pigeon hole possible. Programming that even tells us to climb ladders for you, jump through hoops, and run through mazes and on hamster wheels.

Programming that tells us to eat from the shiny silver spoon you are trying to feed us with, instead of nourish ourselves with our own capable hands.
Programming that tells us to close our minds, instead of open them.
Until the sun rises to burn our eyes by revealing the dis-utopian reality of a world you've created for us, we dance fiercely with our brothers and sisters in celebration of our life, of our culture, and of the values we believe in:
Peace, Love, Freedom, Tolerance, Unity, Harmony,
Expression, Responsibility and Respect.
Our enemy of choice is ignorance. Our weapon of choice is information. Our crime of choice is breaking and challenging whatever laws you feel you need to put in place to stop us from celebrating our existence.
But know that while you may shut down any given party, on any given night, in any given city, in any given country or continent on this beautiful planet, you can never shut down the entire party.
You don't have access to that switch, no matter what you may think. The music will never stop.
The heartbeat will never fade. The party will never end.
I am a raver, and this is my manifesto.