

Corpses, Animals, Machines and Mannequins: The Body and Cyberpunk

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As regarded the body, I did not even doubt of its nature, but thought I distinctly knew it, and if I had wished to describe it according to the notions I then entertained, I should have explained myself in this manner: by body I understand all that can be terminated by a certain figure; that can be comprised in a certain place, and so fill a certain space as therefrom to exclude every other body; that can be perceived either by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell; that can be moved in different ways, not indeed of itself, but by something foreign to it by which it is touched [and from which it receives the impression]; for the power of self-motion, as likewise that of perceiving and thinking, I held as by no means pertaining to the nature of body . . . (Descartes, 1975: 87)

Here, in his famous *Meditations*, Descartes presents an argument for a mind/body dichotomy which remains highly influential today. Cyberpunk, too, is heavily preoccupied with philosophical issues, although many critics prefer to stress the cultural deficiencies of the genre. June Deery cites Istvan Csicsery-Ronany Jr to note of cyberpunk that it offers its readers 'a strikingly masculinist world of violent, sexist, "gangster-chic"' (1994: 45). Even devotees of the genre may find themselves agreeing with the well-known and comically reductive observation made by Lewis Shiner, himself the author of the now canonical novel *Deserted Cities of the Heart*, when he writes that the word cyberpunk 'evokes a very restricted formula; to wit, novels about monolithic corporations opposed by violent, leather-clad drug users with wetware implants' (1992: 17). However, in my view, the 'body' of texts, literary and cinematic, which comprises the genre of cyberpunk constitutes a sustained meditation, unrivalled in contemporary culture, on the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy.

Many of the more interesting questions that are asked about the body, such as to what extent it is subject of or subject to the cultural processes of signification, are sidestepped by cyberpunk. Turner (1984) and Featherstone (1982) are interested in evaluating distinctions between the interior of the body as a physical environment

and the exterior of the body as a field of cultural representation, and arguments which subsequently consider the mediation between bodies as 'things in the world' and as discursive constructs are themselves complicated by the recognition that such mediations may be compromised by the inability to establish different views of the body as absolutely opposed. It is possible that, perhaps paradoxically, much of cyberpunk's appeal lies in its Puritanical dismissal of the body. The genre's heavy reliance on prosthetics, for example, is a persistent metonymic device for representing the abandonment of 'the bonds of polycarbon and hated flesh' (Gibson, 1993a: 164), in order to privilege the genre's ultimate goal: pure mind. Bruce Sterling notes: 'Certain central themes spring up repeatedly in cyberpunk. The theme of body invasion: prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, genetic alteration' (1986: ix). Clearly, these issues all centre around the body, which features in cyberpunk not at all as a biological essence, a little more as a site for cultural enscription, but most of all as an encumbrance, dragging the mind back from the disembodied purity of cyberspatial interaction with the matrix:

the human body, in as far as it differs from other bodies, is constituted only by a certain configuration of members, and by other accidents of this sort, while the human mind is not made up of accidents, but is a pure substance. (Descartes, 1975: 76–7)

The body, for cyberpunk writers, is an 'accident', unconnected to the pure substance of mind. They are fascinated by 'enhancement'; throughout their novels the human body becomes less organic and more artificial, increasingly machine-like. In *Count Zero*, Turner notes of an actress: 'The blue eyes were inhumanly perfect optical instruments, grown in vats in Japan' (Gibson, 1987: 131). In 'The Winter Market' the narrator says of Lise: 'She couldn't move, not without that extra skeleton, and it was jacked straight into her brain, myoelectric interface' (Gibson, 1993a: 145). In *The Artificial Kid*, the narrator describes his own construction: 'My skull was sheathed with thin plates of ceramic reinforcement, and my teeth, all false, were white ceramic over a crystalline core' (Sterling, 1980: 49). The interest cyberpunk writers take in the body is of a strictly negative kind; a kind which consistently affirms, and even celebrates, the Cartesian dichotomy. Baudrillard writes, and hence the title of this article: 'Corpse, animal, machine and mannequin – these are the negative ideal types of the body, the fantastic reductions under which it is produced and written into successive systems' (1993: 114).

Grace

In Richard Brautigan's poem *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace* (1968: 3), the world the poem's narrator dreams of is one where the human and the machine acknowledge their differences and yet live in a state of harmony.

The interaction between the human and the mechanical is also central to cyberpunk, but a brief quotation from one of William Gibson's short stories, 'The Winter Market', reveals a radically different view of the relationship: 'But she found me again. Came after me two hours later, weaving through the bodies and junk with that terrible grace programmed into the exoskeleton' (1993a: 144). While Brautigan writes of a 'loving grace', Gibson writes of a 'terrible grace'. While Brautigan envisages a world in which benign and obedient machines watch humanity at play, Gibson, and other cyberpunks, offers us a world in which machines are to all intents and purposes at war with humanity or, even more disturbingly, a world in which it has become impossible to tell the two apart. This is strikingly the case in *Blade Runner*, a film which Frances Bonner argues is not only a cyberpunk text but an exemplary one (1992: 191). Deery writes of the

fear, projected sexism, or xenophobia that we witness . . . in the film 'Blade Runner' (1982), where the anxiety is that we will not be able to tell cyborgs apart from real humans and that cyborgs will constitute a hostile and exploited group hidden in our midst. (1992: 42)

However, it could equally be argued that the film and the novel upon which it is based, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1972), are primarily interested in establishing a sense of philosophical unease, and not in depicting specific cultural anxieties. When Descartes asserts the division between mind and body he necessarily accepts a further dichotomy, this time between humans and animals. Animals play a large part in Dick's novel, but in Scott's film their role has been reduced to the brief appearance of the owl at the *headquarters* of the Tyrell Corporation (the relationship of capitalism and the body will be discussed below) and, in the 'director's cut', to the fleeting image of the unicorn, which suggests that the protagonist is also a replicant. Nevertheless, while *Blade Runner* is less concerned than *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* with interrogating philosophical hierarchies it still uses replicants primarily to initiate questions about the fundamental nature of humanity. Cyberpunk writers introduce machinery in the form of 'enhanced' humans, androids and cyborgs which complicates Descartes' satisfying binary division; an ambivalent third term is inserted and the subsequent disquieting experience, of characters in the texts and by readers and viewers of the texts, is primarily ontological.

The Human and the Inhuman

It is commonly accepted that the word 'cyberpunk', was first used in a Bruce Bethke story called 'Cyberpunk', published in the November 1983 issue of *Amazing Stories*. Certainly the word rapidly became ubiquitous when an article in the *Washington Post* dated 30 December 1984, used the word to describe the work

of several writers, in particular, William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Lewis Shiner, Pat Cadigan and Greg Bear. I want to focus on the work of the first of these writers, William Gibson, and on his 'Cyberpunk Trilogy' in particular: *Neuromancer*, *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, although I'll also be referring to his collection of short stories, *Burning Chrome*, and to Bruce Sterling's *The Artificial Kid*, as well as to Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In addition, I'll be considering the contribution made to the genre by Marge Piercy's novels *Woman On The Edge of Time* and *Body of Glass*. Overall, what I hope to do is to consider the ways in which these texts employ various manifestations of the 'body' (cyborgs, artificial intelligence, prosthetics, replicants, etc.) to interrogate the limits of humanity.

David Porush writes:

The Preservationists of [Bruce] Sterling's *Schismatrix* have it all wrong. What is it they're Preserving? When do we know we're talking to a real McCoy? What aspect of humanity makes us human? Our flesh? Our CNS? Our thoughts? Our handiwork? Where's that line over which lies inhumanity? The technology is us, man. (1992: 258)

'What aspect of humanity makes us human?' The question is a good one. So good, it's been asked a great deal; tacitly, I would argue, any time a writer introduces a cyborg, android, replicant, robot, an Artificial Intelligence Unit. Whenever the textual stress is on prosthetics, on the kind of technology that fuses blood and iron, the debate is really about the human, and its sometimes opposite, the inhuman. Philip K. Dick asks the question throughout *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In this novel a principal cause of unease for the central characters is the diminishing certainty with which the demarcation lines between animal, android and human can be agreed upon. The owner of the artificial pet centre, Hannibal Sloot, complains that one of his assistants lets a real animal die, under the mistaken belief that it's a fake. His chief mechanic replies 'the fakes are beginning to be darn near real, what with those disease circuits they're building into the new ones' (1972: 62).

At the same time, Rick Deccard, the bounty hunter who is paid to kill replicants, and whose own name is punningly similar to Descartes', is told by his boss that the test he is using to distinguish humans from replicants, the Voigt-Kampff test, is by no means infallible:

'The Lennigrad psychiatrists', Bryant broke in brusquely, 'think that a small class of human beings could not pass the Voigt-Kampff scale. If you assessed them in line with police work you'd assess them as humanoid robots. You'd be wrong, but by then they'd be dead.' (1972: 33)

Descartes writes:

if there were machines bearing images of our bodies, and capable of imitating our actions as far as it is morally possible, there would still remain two most certain tests whereby to know that they were not therefore really men. (1975: 44)

The first of these tests is speech, which Dick ignores, taking it absolutely for granted that this test has been rendered invalid by technology. Dick's Voigt–Kampff test, with its intimations of Fascism, is a parody of Descartes' second test:

The second test is, that although such machines might execute many things with equal or perhaps greater perfection than any of us, they would, without doubt, fail in certain others from which it could be discovered that they did not act from knowledge, but solely from the disposition of their organs; for while reason is a universal instrument that is alike available on every occasion, these organs, on the contrary, need a particular arrangement for each particular action; whence it must be morally impossible that there should exist in any machine a diversity of organs sufficient to enable it to act in all the occurrences of life in the way in which our reason enables us to act. (1975: 45)

The Voigt–Kampff test is designed to demonstrate levels of empathy, the one quality which it is believed the androids cannot fake. However, the novel makes it quite clear that intelligence can find out a way of simulating empathy, and that people who cannot empathize are not necessarily replicants. On several occasions the author points up Deccard's own inability to empathize with the replicants, and then stresses Deccard's realization of the paradoxical position this places him in. In *Blade Runner*, the replicant, Rachel, bitterly asks Deccard if he has ever taken the test himself. The implication is clear: if he took it, he would fail. In the novel, John Isodore, omitted from the film, has a vision of the bounty hunter tracking down and killing the replicants in a manner which stresses his 'inhuman' nature:

He had an indistinct, glimpsed-darkly impression: of something merciless that carried a printed list and a gun, that moved machine-like through the flat, bureaucratic job of killing. A thing without emotions, or even a face; a thing that if killed got replaced immediately by another resembling it. And so on, until everyone real and alive had been shot. (1972: 120)

It is noticeable here that the words 'real' and 'alive' are used to refer to the replicants, who are, as is also stressed in *Blade Runner*, more 'human' than the humans who chase them.

The Trilogy

This preoccupation with the human and the inhuman is central to William Gibson's trilogy. Bruce Sterling refers to *Neuromancer*, the first volume, as 'the quintessential cyberpunk novel' (1986: xi). John Christie lists a number of reasons why *Neuromancer* should be valued:

Not only [for] its narrative drive but the meticulous superficiality, the comic-book characters, the texture of multi-media reference, and the central representational invention, cyberspace itself. Ideologically too, its postulating the replacement of the hegemonic state apparatus by multinationals, its cultural pluralism, its abandoning of the book while retaining text and image,

and its analytical interest in degenerative and pathological forms of capital all rendered it appealing to a late 1970s–early 1980s critical and ideological avant-garde whose label was postmodern. (1992: 173)

Neuromancer is, essentially, a ‘caper’ novel. It tells the story of how a gang of humans is assembled and manipulated by an Artificial Intelligence, Wintermute, in order that it might combine with another Artificial Intelligence, Neuromancer, to form a new order of being entirely. Of course, this is not as easy as it sounds, because attempts have been made to limit the powers of the Artificial Intelligence. The Turing Police are constantly looking out for unacceptable levels of computer activity and then quickly moving in to shut the computer down. The construct known as the Dixie Flatline tells the protagonist, Case, what it thinks is happening. It is, more or less:

My guess, Case, you’re going in there to cut the hardwired shackles that keep this baby from getting any smarter. . . . See, those things [the AIs] they can work real hard, buy themselves time to write cookbooks or whatever, but the minute, I mean the nanosecond, that one starts figuring out ways to make itself smarter, Turing’ll wipe it out. *Nobody* trusts those fuckers, you know that. Every AI ever built has an electromagnetic shotgun wired to its forehead. (Gibson, 1986: 159)

The computer is important to cyberpunk; indeed its very existence is a generic constant. However, it is not only as hardware that the computer is important. Gibson himself said, in an interview with Larry McCaffrey, published in *The Mississippi Review*:

On the most basic level, computers in my books are simply a metaphor for human memory. I’m interested in the how’s and why’s of memory, the ways it defines who and what we *are*, in how easily it’s subject to revision. (Landon, 1992: 156)

This is a major concern in Philip K. Dick’s ‘We Can Remember It For You Wholesale’, and in *Total Recall*, the film based upon it. If we *are* anything, Dick seems to suggest, we are our memories, but if these can be implanted what guarantee is there of our identity? Or, more existentially perhaps, always assuming identity and existence are separate phenomena, what guarantee is there of our existence? The question returns us to Descartes. In *Total Recall*, despite the mutant Quarto’s claim to the protagonist that ‘a man is defined by his actions, not by his memories’, there is a strong suggestion that human beings are not so easily persuaded of this. It is worth noting that the mutant is also, by definition, not human, and although he can therefore be viewed as a source of greater than ordinary wisdom, he might also be seen as necessarily lacking a *true* understanding of what it is to be human.

Gibson’s trilogy raises the same concern, as throughout *Neuromancer*, *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* ‘computers actively rival human memory, offering virtual cyberspace constructs that effectively compete with human memories of

“reality” (Landon, 1992:156). This is also a feature of *Blade Runner*, both versions. In the first version Rachel is ‘given’ Tyrell’s niece’s memories, in the director’s cut Deppard realizes that the police have access to his memories, which means they have had some hand in *implanting* them. In Bruce Sterling’s *The Artificial Kid* the protagonist is actually created through memory transfer. In *Neuromancer*, Wintermute accesses parts of Case’s memory and sends them back to him in holographic representations which can be manipulated to suit Wintermute’s purpose. The way in which such fictions consider the end of private memory, a feature of our humanity, suggests links with an earlier dystopian text, George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Orwell’s book, however, is considerably more *physical* than Gibson’s, more human. Running through all cyberpunk texts is a fascination with the ways in which the flesh is inessential, irrelevant; there is a disdain for the too, too human flesh. This is how Gibson describes what happens when Case has his ability to work in cyberspace destroyed by toxic drugs administered to him for stealing. The language is theological:

For Case, who’d lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace, it was the Fall. In the bars he’d frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh. (1986: 12)

Later in the novel, forced to *physically* travel, he thinks: ‘Travel was a meat thing’ (1986:97). Again, in ‘The Winter Market’ the narrator notes of Lise; ‘she threw away that poor sad body with a cry of release’ (1993a:164). As the trilogy progresses, the language becomes even more overtly theological: ‘the Wig had become convinced that God lived in cyberspace, or perhaps that cyberspace *was* God . . .’ (1987:173). In *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, during a discussion about the precise nature of cyberspace, one of the characters asks: ‘the matrix is God?’ (1988:138). The body’s accidental and ultimately unnecessary corporeality is stressed throughout Gibson’s work. Closely linked to this is the preponderance of prosthetics than appear throughout the trilogy. Again and again Gibson, and other cyberpunk writers, introduce characters who are, partially, sometimes for the most part, constructed, not quite ‘real’. On the opening page of *Neuromancer* we read: ‘Ratz was tending bar, his prosthetic arm jerking monotonously. . . . The antique arm whined as he reached for another mug. It was a Russian military prosthesis, a seven-function forcefeed manipulator, cased in grubby pink plastic’ (1986:9).

Later, Linda introduces herself to Case in a particularly cyberpunk way: ‘She held out her hands, palms up, the white fingers slightly spread, and with a barely audible click, ten double-edged, four centimetre scalpel blades slid from their housings beneath the burgundy nails’ (1986:37). *Count Zero* opens like this:

They set a slamhound on Turner's trail in New Delhi, slotted it to his pheromones and the colour of his hair. . . . Its core was a kilogramme of recrystallized hexogene and flaked TNT. . . . Because he had a good agent, he had a good contract. Because he had a good contract, he was in Singapore an hour after the explosion. Most of him, anyway. . . . It took the Dutchman and his team three months to put Turner back together again. They cloned a square of skin for him, grew it on slabs of collagen and shark cartilage polysaccharides. They bought eyes and genitals on the open market. (1987:9)

The narrator of *Burning Chrome* describes how Chrome herself touches his own partially artificial body: 'And her hand went down the arm, black nails tracing a weld in the laminate, down to the black anodized elbow joint . . . her palm against the perforated Duralumin' (1993a:205). It is possible to see this reliance on prosthetics as both metaphorical and as political, economic. Carol McGurk notes of Philip K. Dick's novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*: 'Eldritch's prosthetic eyes, arm, and teeth are the three stigmata of Dick's title – visible and outward signs of his spiritual perversity and horror' (1992:114). In Gibson's work, though, it could be argued that the emphasis on such things as prosthetic devices and lens implants indicates not symbolic corruption but consumer desire, linked to the great American belief in reinventing the self. For a price, usually a large one, Gibson's characters can, piece by piece, replace themselves.

Inevitably, therefore, there are a number of references throughout the trilogy to the existence of organ banks; places where it is implied the donors might not always have been dead before their organs were removed. Ratz says to Case in the opening pages of *Neuromancer*: 'Now, some night, you get maybe too artistic; you wind up in the clinic tanks, spare parts' (Gibson, 1986:11). This is an issue also raised in Marge Piercy's utopian/dystopian novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and in the specifically dystopian *Body of Glass* (1991).

Feminism and Cyberpunk

When Connie, the protagonist of the earlier novel, attempts to travel through time to her utopian future she finds herself instead in a dystopian world, a parallel universe similar to that portrayed in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Both of these parallel worlds may evoke considerations of Descartes' 'evil genius', who was capable, Descartes theorized, of creating another world, a false one specifically designed to fool the philosopher into believing it was the 'real' world. Novels featuring parallel worlds can raise interesting questions about the nature of 'reality' – it is often, simply, a consensual agreement, and not at all a verifiable, ontological truth. In *Neuromancer*, cyberspace is actually described as 'a consensual hallucination' (Gibson, 1986:12). Connie is informed upon her arrival in the dystopian

future that 'poor people are not like people. They're walking organ banks'. Moments later she is also told: 'The multis [multinationals] own everybody' (Piercy, 1976: 291). It is clear that the nightmare world only glimpsed by Connie in *Woman on the Edge of Time* provides the background for the entire later novel, which is set in 2059. Peter Fitting refers to 'the dialogue with cyberpunk in Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* [the American title of *Body of Glass*]' (1994: 5) Vara Neverow writes that

as [Piercy] herself observes in the Acknowledgements of *He, She and It*, chapter 15 of *Woman on the Edge of Time* predated and anticipated the male-dominated genre of cyberpunk and therefore her uses of the discursive conventions of the genre are pre-emptive rather than imitative. (1994: 19)

Deery is equally emphatic: 'In *He, She and It* Piercy rewrites not only utopias but also cyberpunk . . .' (1994: 45).

The plot of *Body of Glass* is quite uncomplicated. In order to preserve Tikva, a Utopian community under threat from the predatory ravages of the surrounding capitalist communities, a scientist, Avram, attempts to create a cyborg but experiences difficulties until he is helped with the programming by a woman, Malkah. A cyborg called Yod is the result. Here, Piercy seems to be challenging the traditional nomenclature of Science Fiction. Most readers would view Yod as an android, a robot rather than as a cyborg. Conventionally, a cyborg is the physical bonding of human and machine; a robot or android is an artificial construction. This is not the only occasion in the novel when Piercy challenges generic conventions. Donna Haraway argues for the cyborg as a 'fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings' (1990: 581), and in *Body of Glass* Yod and Malkah's grand-daughter, Shira, become lovers. (Although *Blade Runner* might be considered to have established a well-known precedent for this type of relationship, Deccard's affair with the replicant Rachel is less radical than it might at first appear, as Rachel has no termination date programmed into her circuitry, thereby conferring quasi-human status upon her. In the 'director's cut' it is suggested that Deccard himself is a replicant.) Avram forces Yod to go out on a suicide mission and Yod kills him before being destroyed himself. The novel raises a number of issues, perhaps most strikingly the legitimacy of violence against oppression and the ways in which a masculine preoccupation with logic renders human life nightmarish. In addition, as occurs throughout cyberpunk fiction, the mechanical is used to interrogate the status of the real. When Yod confesses to Shira that his artificial nature causes him unease, she replies:

Yod, we're all unnatural now. I have retinal implants. I have a plug set into my skull to interface with a computer. I read time by a corneal implant. Malkah has a subcutaneous unit that monitors

and corrects blood pressure, and half her teeth are regrown. Her eyes have been rebuilt twice. Avram has an artificial heart and Gadi a kidney. . . . We're all cyborgs, Yod. You're just a purer form of what we're all tending toward. (1991: 203)

Indeed, as occurs in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the artificial creation is revealed to be more human than the beings that made him.

Neverow notes the importance of the body in *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *Body of Glass*:

In both novels, the cultures that honor embodiment cherish the physical self for its vulnerable uniqueness, while the cultures that endorse incorporation value the body only for its fragmentary parts and functions: for organs harvested from unwary donors, for the severed hand that can access credit, for the alienated sweated labour of the underclass, for sperm, eggs, ovaries, wombs, procreative products and services severed from their humane contexts. (1994: 24)

Clearly, *Body of Glass* is similar in this respect to Gibson's novels, where body parts are routinely bought and sold in the marketplace. Gibson's dystopias are centred around cultures which endorse incorporation rather than embodiment, while Piercy's overtly feminist novels endorse embodiment over incorporation. It is obviously possible to argue that, by virtue of their reproductive capacities, women are the ultimate instance of embodiment. Despite the array of traditionally masculine plot lines and images which appear throughout cyberpunk: leather, drugs, violence, crime, technology, etc. . . ., the really *macho* aspect of cyberpunk lies in its complete lack of interest in biological reproduction.

Where Piercy contrasts the brutal world of unchecked capitalism with peaceful Utopian communities, where childbirth and woman are valued, Gibson contrasts his depiction of an equally brutal and rapacious capitalism with acts of aggressively masculine, financially motivated individualism. Fitting is condemnatory of Gibson's glamorization of violence and crime and suggests that it is invidious because 'survival and success were the characters' only motives'. He contrasts Piercy's *Body of Glass* and finds this much more to his liking: 'In Piercy, there are again criminals and data thieves, but Riva understands her illegal activities as political, part of the ongoing struggle against the domination of the multis, and not some exhilarating form of self-realization' (1994: 8). While this is clearly true, although whether it makes Piercy's work 'better' than Gibson's is a moot point, it is equally clear that the attitude Gibson and other cyberpunk writers have toward capitalism is by no means unequivocally celebratory. In this respect, cyberpunk narratives function as satire – their authors are more than half in love, gazing with rapt fascination at what they hate. It was suggested earlier that cyberpunk progressively abandons the body in order to privilege the mind; at the same time these narratives feature characters who launch sustained attacks on the multinational companies that have all but replaced nation states or governments as we in the West know them. What hostile

readers of cyberpunk see as the genre's celebration of masculine greed and outlaw *chic* is actually a parallel attack on the 'body'; this time in its purest capitalist sense.

The Body and Capitalism

Jameson describes the cityscapes of *Blade Runner* and of Gibson's novels as:

the interfusion of crowds of people among a high technological bazaar with its multitudinous nodal points, all of it sealed into an inside without an outside which thereby intensifies the formerly urban to the point of becoming the unmappable system of late capitalism itself. (1994: 157)

It was implied earlier that words like 'headquarters; and 'corporation' are clearly derived from a perspective which takes the body as a referent, but in both Piercy's and Gibson's novels the correlation between the body and the organization, between the organic and the inorganic, is mocked. The multinationals own everybody, or nearly everybody, in cyberpunk novels. The Corporation is, in a sense, the ultimate body and this is why so much of the criminal activity in Gibson's novels is directed against it. One of the most dominant images in *Blade Runner* is the building that houses the Tyrell Corporation. Faceless, inhuman, the multinationals create the world in which lone wolf operators like Case, Bobby Mewmark and Artificial Jack live and work and, in some cases, die. Rosemary Jackson suggests that: 'The modern fantastic is characterised by a radical shift in the naming, or interpretation, of the demonic' (1988: 21). The demonic, the truly inhuman, in the texts I'm considering here is the global, multinational corporation, a body not made of flesh but of money, and the Faustian characters who are at the apex of the corporate structure.

In *Count Zero*, Joseph Virek appears to Marley via hologram, and says: 'You must forgive my reliance on technology. I have been confined for over a decade to a vat. In some hideous industrial suburb of Stockholm. Or perhaps of hell' (Gibson, 1987: 25). There is, surely, something irresistibly comic about someone who has been in a vat for more than ten years being snobbish about the suburb he 'lives' in. In a phrase strongly reminiscent of an observation made in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Marley then realizes 'with an instinctive mammalian certainty that the exceedingly rich were no longer even remotely human' (Gibson, 1987: 29).

Excepting Piercy's work, cyberpunk's relationship to the body is hostile, twice over. Philosophically, the body is trivialized in order to privilege mind and, culturally, the Corporation is subject to a series of raids accomplished by individuals or hastily assembled gangs of criminals. Despite cyberpunk's reliance on and fascination with technology, the genre is deeply conservative and anti-technology, implacably hostile to any further erosion between the human and

the mechanical. In the 'face' of increasing mechanization, cyberpunk's Cartesian privileging of mind allows its readers to reassert their supremacy over the machine. While Turner argues that human beings both have bodies and are bodies, cyberpunk narratives suggest that machines may have minds, but human beings *are* minds.

Although it seems reasonable to note that cyberpunk queries the concept of humanness by opposing it with the inhuman, Gibson's trilogy does become increasingly preoccupied with reaffirming the importance of the body, indeed, of humanity. The titles say a good deal. *Neuromancer* is, after all, an eponymous novel but the protagonist, so to speak, is not Case, but an Artificial Intelligence. Count Zero is an alias, a *nom de guerre*, but the subject is not an object, while in *Mona Lisa Overdrive* the human is fully reinstated. *Virtual Light*, Gibson's new novel, published in 1993, is the most socially mimetic of any of Gibson's novels. It is a conventional dystopia set in San Francisco in 2005 and it utilizes a female character, Chevette, to once again dramatize the conflict between the individual and the brutal power of 21st-century capitalism, a conflict which is also central to such dystopian films as *Total Recall* and *Robocop*.

Rosemary Jackson has suggested that the modern fantastic is the form of literary fantasy written within the secularized culture produced by capitalism. It is ironic to think that if capitalism is responsible for the modern fantastic, then the modern fantastic is more than happy to bite the hand that feeds it, and to bite the hand, moreover, with a prosthetic mouth.

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