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# Fantasy on the Human Surface

A study of Somatic Power-Relations and Imagination

**Master's Thesis for the Degree of Master of the Arts (Two Years) in Visual Culture**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis is to question and discuss whether the complication of power-relations created upon the present surface of the human body can be surpassed, by reconceiving the body and ultimately leaving the body behind, without the loss of Being, through the critique of art and photography. This overall query has been broken down into three questions. (1) 'Does the solution behind the uneven relationship of power between the female and the male body, involve removing the body from its present function and form, in order to transcend 'Surface Imaginations'? In doing so, this thesis will ascertain if there is a need for a new form of body. (2) 'The existent body is entangled with complexities in its visual-cultural exploit. What would the consequence be if one decided to transform the body into an embodiment deviating from the present form?' (3) 'The way in which we perceive ourselves and relate to one another as human beings, in a century marked by technological advancements, will play a deciding role for the future of the body. In what custom will we live, interact, organise and control each other if we continue to sustain this tempo of betterment?'

These questions hope to answer to the intricacies and the complex nature of somatic power-relations, and disclose whether their outcome would conflict with life itself, forasmuch as power-relations are what make us human, and establish what we believe to be meaning in life. I will conclude by acknowledging and determining if this danger of a new body, will go in hand with a possible loss of Being. For the creation of Being is interconnected with the understanding of time in relation to own identity, therefore it would subsequently become challenging to not distort these circumstances, if the Being was to exist outside a conventional body, or take on several of them.

**Keywords:** Power-Relations, Surface, Being, Trans-Humanism, Body

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## INTRODUCTION

The human skin has always been a subject of fascination. A biological material and the human body's largest organ, the skin is responsible for completely sheltering the human anatomy, and providing protection from the surrounding, outside world. It is a surface with the ability to heal in the wake of injury, yet leaving behind scars and blemishes, for one to remember when it strived to guard us. It is a surface serving a fundamental and imperative purpose of keeping us alive, from the hostilities of the foreign. The skin is the surface of the body, a body with a Being. It is a Being troublesome to define simply as a surface protecting us, with the interest of altering its safeguard for as long as there has been a Being. It has the adroitness of reinvention, out of any given crisis it encounters. This is the mark of the human Being. Our inventive and resourceful nature is our skill.

We are born inept, without instinctual abilities to sustain our existence. That privilege is claimed for animals only. Thus, the ancient Greeks created a myth regarding the origins of the human ingenuity as a part of their mythologies, because it is also a mark of the Being to leave nothing untold, no matter how unexplainable.

The narrative of this mythology follows the Gods of Olympus and their decision to create a world inhabited by creatures. The Titan, Epimetheus, was appointed the significant task of distributing abilities among the creatures, in order for nature to be balanced and sustain harmony. Each creature would be provided for, so it can preserve its own vitality, but also secure from the threat of over or underpowered in relation to other creatures. And every creature would be compensated for its weaknesses.

The day set out by the Gods for man to appear had arrived, yet Epimetheus had neglected to withhold and bestow any abilities to man. In his negligent excitement, and recklessness in his important position, he had altogether forgotten about man. Prometheus, the brother and fellow Titan of Epimetheus, was instructed by the Gods to supervise the progression of the work. To his bewilderment, he found man uncared for and Epimetheus in panic, and quickly concluded man would not be able to survive whatsoever. With time so short and the sun was already rising, man would have to take his place on earth no matter what. Prometheus feared his brother's punishment by the Gods, if they were ever to find out about Epimetheus's irresponsible actions. He therefore decided to steal abilities wherever they

could be found. So Prometheus travelled to Olympus, the home of the Gods, and stole “τεχνολογία“, (*Techne* [Eng. translate art, craft and fire]) the ability to create fire. With this, man could now survive within this new world. From that day, man has been related to the Gods. Not only as a result of the theft of ability, but also because the Gods are the only other existence able to create something from nothing. Ever since, a correlation can be found between creativeness and the Being of the human in the field of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Prometheus’s theft of a divine ability is a gift unto man, a gift to invent, however with one side effect. Because we possess the ability of invention, we have evolved for ourselves a blind hope in the body, as we cognitively believe that we will never die. We know we are mortal beings, but we do not possess the ability to fathom our end. The event of our death is too abstract for us to conceptualise, so we pull down and stare into a screen of blind hope, in which we have conceived a false idea our bodies carrying us into the eternal space of our minds. This thinking will fail us and it will ultimately be the end of us. Our own body, the only true companion we ever had, will fail its promise to keep us alive, and then what? It is a body we are obsessed with seizing the most out of, fantasising about its potential of where it might take us, and what potential we have if we alter or adjust it a little.

### *Survey of the Field*

A number of books and articles have been written regarding the topic of the crafting of Being, in relation to the body and technology. To name a few, Rolf Lindborg’s *Maskinen människan – och doktor La Mettrie*, Stefan Berglund’s *Human and Personal Identity* or Donna J. Haraway’s *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium. FemaleMan\_Meets\_OncoMouse*. However these books all delve into the issue in the view of science, and hold a technological partiality closer to the “hard sciences”, and therefore lacking an image based analysis of theory. Stephen Voss’s *Essays on the Philosophy and Science of René Descartes* notably instigates a question of the *Cartesian* ‘mind/body split’. However, this thesis does not endeavour to shift the discussion passed the *Cartesian* view of the body, and has not been included in the field of research.

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<sup>1</sup> B. Stiegler, *Technics and time, 1*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 187

## *Research Purpose*

My main contribution towards the field of visual culture is an investigation into the issues surrounding power-relations that concern the surface of the body's present state. This will lead to a discussion of whether it is imaginable to reconceive the body, surpassing its visual shortcomings, and finally leaving the body behind, and embarking towards a new understanding of the human Being.

The dilemma of power-relations concerning the surface of the present body, within the frame of this thesis, is to be understood as an uneven relationship of power between the female and the male body. This will firstly be conducted by example of the French performance artist ORLAN, and her work *Omnipresent Surgery*, to which exposes the objectification of the female, through gaze of the male, in a series of cosmetic operations, aimed to alter ORLAN's face, and imitate famous paintings of beautiful female figures throughout art history.<sup>2</sup> Following that, I will apply associated professor Rachel A. J. Hurst's concept of 'surface imaginations' as a visual-cultural term, functioning as the prism through which we observe the body.<sup>3</sup>

By reconceiving the human, this study aims to clarify this to be understood as a body without visual-cultural complications, in the form of 'surface imaginations'. For this discussion, the research will include the sociologist Nicholas Rose's writings regarding the body as a cultural construct, applying his theory of 'thought bodies'. He defines the body not as a creator of boundaries and relationships to others, but as an understanding of the self, expressed through the body.<sup>4</sup> Together with Rose, this writing will also apply Heike Steinhoff's concept of 'authentic identities', in which she view modern identity as only existing if it has been documented through social media narratives of self-actualisation.<sup>5</sup> Steinhoff also regards René Descartes *Cartesian Dualism* as a contributor to the 'western' view on the body.<sup>6</sup>

'Western' is a general term I could find myself guilty of, for using more than once throughout this thesis. When I use the term 'western', it is to refer to an understanding of the mind as separate from the body, as such a divide between mind and body, and to be

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> R. Hurst, *Surface imaginations*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015, p. 18

<sup>4</sup> N. Rose, *The politics of life itself*, Princeton New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 25-26

<sup>5</sup> H. Steinhoff, *Transforming bodies*, London, Basingstoke [u.a.], Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 6

<sup>6</sup> Steinhoff, 2015. p. 8

understood as a general definition of the manner in which western society understands the body in a philosophical domain, therefore not as an expression of the subjective point of view.

Nina Sellar's and Stelarc's work will shed light on the difficulties of considering a new kind of human through their artwork *Blender*, reviewed by the writer Julia Clarke, giving voice to concerns with a container as a stand-in for the human body. The blurred lines between technology and the human, sparks the concern regarding the disturbance of the human identity and exposes a need for a debate.<sup>7</sup> Another artist working within this field is Natasha Vita-More. Her work *Primo Posthuman*, is a body alike to its current resemblance, however updated in every way possible, internally, with the ability of skin able to conform to surface imaginations. However, in contrast to *Blender*, this body simulates a conventional human being. The reason being for social purpose. A defence mechanism against being marked as an outsider.<sup>8</sup>

### *Research Question*

The aspiration of the thesis, is to discuss whether complications of power-relations created on the present surface of the human body, can be surpassed by reconceiving the body and finally leaving the body behind, without a loss of Being, through an inquest of works of art and photography.

This overall question will be broken down into three questions, (1) 'Does the solution behind the uneven relationship of power between the female and the male body, involve removing the body from its present function and form, in order to transcend 'Surface Imaginations'? (2) 'The existent body is entangled with complexities in its visual-cultural exploit. What would the consequence be if one decided to transform the body into an embodiment deviating from the present form?' (3) 'The way in which we perceive ourselves and relate to one another as human beings, in a century marked by technological advancements, will play a deciding role for the future of the body. In what custom will we live, interact, organise and control each other if we continue to sustain this tempo of betterment?'

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<sup>7</sup> J. Clarke, 'Corporeal Mélange: Aesthetics and Ethics of Biomaterials in Stelarc and Nina Sellars's Blender', *Leonardo*, vol. 39, 2006, 411.

<sup>8</sup> G. Dvorsky, '7 bio artists who are transforming the fabric of life', *io9.gizmodo.com*, (web blog), 24 Juni 2013, <http://io9.gizmodo.com/7-bio-artists-who-are-transforming-the-fabric-of-life-i-558156053> [accessed 2 April 2016].

## Theory

The philosopher Judith Butler created the debate regarding the defining of contours and movement of the body, as originating from the world of materialism, and therefore materialism will be an effect of power. Butler understands the creation of identity as an inner process, forming the identity of the individual and not the influence of culture and norms.<sup>9</sup> The historian Michel Foucault saw the matter of relations between bodies as relational. According to Foucault, power exists only when it is put to use or exercised by a person, it is not something constant, but in constant movement.<sup>10</sup> Foucault also saw the advantages of power. Power produces social relations, knowledge and subjectivity. This ‘power knowledge’ constructs the self, but is also a constructor of social control. As a result, we are policing our selves to conform to society, to not be excluded. In *Discipline and Punish – The birth of the Prison*, Foucault focuses on the concept of ‘docile bodies’. The ‘docile bodies’ explores why some may have power over other bodies without physical contact.<sup>11</sup> However, theorist and cultural critic Jean Baudrillard viewed power in another light. He observed power as only existing because we constitute it, since it produces a ‘fata morgana’ of a stable and predictable future.<sup>12</sup> He did not visualise the production of social relations through power as something positive, but rather as a creator of social control and deterrence, which he established in ‘The Beaubourg Effect’.<sup>13</sup>

Contemporary photo artist Juno Calypso forms the empirical material for afterthought in her self-portrait, *A Dream in Green*. The photo-artwork explores the creation of seduction, whilst looking for a fantasised better self.<sup>14</sup> The latter part of the thesis will concentrate on issues surrounding the understanding of the philosophical Being, in this case, the human leaving the body behind and continuing its path within a symbiotic relation with another host.

The research formulated to start this discussion will explain the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s concept of the ‘Dasein’ (to be there). The thought process behind this concept

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<sup>9</sup> J. Butler, *Bodies that matter*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 9

<sup>10</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 21

<sup>11</sup> M. Foucault and A. Sheridan, *Discipline and punish*, London, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 136

<sup>12</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and simulation*, Michigan US, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 23

<sup>13</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 61

<sup>14</sup> N. Frizzell, ‘I sounded like I was having the best sex’: Juno Calypso’s one-woman world tour of honeymoon hotels’, *The Guardian*, 2 July 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/02/juno-calypso-tour-honeymoon-hotels> [accessed 3 April 2016].

illustrates that no one else can die in your place, and mortality is what one cannot foresee.<sup>15</sup> One understands that they are dying and we acknowledge that throughout our life. However, it is disguised as forgetting and therefore the nature of death is one of blocking out. The ‘Dasein’ will therefore always try to flee time, because it is concerned about its own Being, and as a result, it will try and invent itself out of its own destiny.<sup>16</sup> The science fiction films *Gattaca*<sup>17</sup> and *Bladerunner*<sup>18</sup> serve as examples of societies, in which the screening of genes and runaway technology illustrate what might happen if people lived with the knowledge of when they were going to die, if they die at all.

The philosopher Bernard Stiegler critiques and comments on Heidegger’s concept of ‘Dasein’ in *Technics and Time I*. He concurs with Heidegger’s argument, that technology will make it possible for us to invent for ourselves a longer lifespan. However Stiegler critiques the same technology will also make it possible for man to surpass being mortal and to view technology as the apparatus to prolong our life. This is the mortal way of thinking.<sup>19</sup> The critique of Heidegger from Stiegler is significant to this thesis, because it explores the complications of expanding life of the human Being.

In addition, the art historian Hal Foster discusses the complicated human relationship with technology, in what he calls ‘*the double logic of the prosthetics*’. He does so with the use of Hans Bellmer’s *Die Puppe*, illustrating traumatic feelings towards a future machine and industrialised based Nazi Germany, yet at the same time forms a shield against the traumatic experiences from the First World War.<sup>20</sup> The thesis will in the end explore the relatively new term ‘Trans-Humanism’. Professor Peter Manley Scott and Professor Celia Deane-Drummond define the term by focusing on the cognitive function as the vehicle for human identity.<sup>21</sup> This term also builds on a source for a new host for the cognitive processes, but what a new host is, is up for interpretation. The illustrative empirical material is delivered by myself in the form of a photograph from my practice as a documentary photographer. The image show a Transgender woman named Jasmine, together with her former, but no longer

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<sup>15</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:21:50

<sup>16</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), Running time: 00:23:35

<sup>17</sup> *Gattaca*, Andrew Niccol, USA, Columbia Pictures, 1997, (DVD)

<sup>18</sup> *Blade Runner*, dir. Ridley Scott, USA, Warner Bros., 1982, (DVD)

<sup>19</sup> Stiegler, 1998, p, 16

<sup>20</sup> H. Foster, *Prosthetic gods*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2004, p 109

<sup>21</sup> C. Deane-Drummond & P. Scott, *Future perfect?*, London , T & T Clark, 2010, p. 2

inhabited persona to illustrate the relationship between identity and body in relation to ‘trans-humanism’.

### *Method and Empirical Material*

With the use of photography and artwork in collaboration with theory, is an orderly practice in the field of visual culture and art theory. For instance, Gillian Rose refers to Lynda Nead’s suggestion that artwork will function as a discourse, and a specialised form of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> This is the reason why this thesis will include artwork as an integral part of its analysis, to work together with the theory, since the artwork forms the method of which the theory is brought to life. Altogether, the imagery assists in understanding the analysis and therefore presents new layers of meaning. It will employ examples of artwork from artist working in the field of creating bodily identity. Therefore, this study will conduct analysis as a fusion between the use of art theory, philosophy and visual analysis.

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<sup>22</sup> G Rose, *Visual methodologies*, London, Sage, 2001, p. 142

## CHAPTER 1: OBSERVING THE BODY

This chapter will discuss and demonstrate the paradigm of the uneven relationship between the female and the male body in western culture, through an analysis of the French artist ORLAN, and her work '*Omnipresent Surgery*', with the use of Rachel A. J. Hurst's concept of the 'surface imagination' as a visual cultural term functioning as the prism through which we observe the body. This analysis supports the idea that a solution to the uneven relationship of power between the female and the male body, is to remove the body from its present function and form to surpass 'surface imaginations', and establish if there is a need for a new form of body. To support the analysis, I will research Hanna Westley's study of John Berger's interpretation of the problematic, posed for female artists in self-representation as well as Stuart Jeffrie's article '*ORLAN's art of sex and surgery*'.<sup>23</sup>

### *1.1 Fantasies of Surgery*

Hurst defines our fantasies of the beautiful human as a defence mechanism against what we imagine and desire from the other. The other being what we cannot have, or do not have, but wanting to have is what Hurst defines as the 'surface imagination'<sup>24</sup>, in other words, our desired mental representation.

The existence of the 'surface imagination' creates a prism of inherited socio-cultural understanding of the appearance of the body. Inherited refers to the western cultural legacy taken over and continued by present individuals but conceived by the ones who came before. Socio-cultural in this context refers to a society with a traditional western view on the body as a vessel of flesh carrying the soul. This idea is a prism we spectate our body through, in order to measure it and classify it according to other bodies.

Hurst further describes the character of the beautiful body as a 'mutable body promised and fantasized through the surface imagination of cosmetic surgery is first and foremost a controllable body'.<sup>25</sup> What we ideally want is not a beautiful body from nature, rather a body that looks naturally beautiful although crafted by man, this is an idea of the body as infinitely transformable and under control, since the fantasy of the beautiful belongs to nature, and not to

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<sup>23</sup> S. Jeffries, 'Orlan's art of sex and surgery', *The Guardian*, 1 July 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jul/01/orlan-performance-artist-carnal-art> [accessed 5 April 2016].

<sup>24</sup> Hurst, 2015. p. 18

<sup>25</sup> Hurst, 2015, p. 19

the world of surgery and technology. Hurst describes how people who undergo cosmetic surgery often report that their life has changed significantly; even if the alteration of their body is not visible to the people they know or interact with.<sup>26</sup> A little change to the body, even if it is not visible to the public can have a considerable effect in the mind of the upholder, because we always imagine ourselves from the outside in and not the inside out.

Therefore, the project of beautification becomes one of fixing the body instead of resting in it, and being content with what one has. Beauty becomes a project and a process with an end. A goal that cannot be reached without operations or other alterations by the hand of man. If we follow Hurst's identification of beauty, it becomes clear that it is a myth to presume beauty comes from simply being happy in life and content with one self.

According to Hurst, there is a clash 'where the socio-cultural realm of the ideals and norms and the psychical realm of fantasy and seduction meet'.<sup>27</sup> The individual is aware of the interventions that have to be made. But the intervention has to be disguised in order to imitate natural beauty, for the socio-cultural milieu to stay in the fantasy of beauty, belonging to the realm of nature and the natural.

What Hurst outlines is the body beautiful, because it is aesthetically optimised via etherisation, and that is to take action, to create control. Being beautiful is not internal or a feeling but an external practice on the outside of the body. Since cosmetics comes from the Greek word Σύμπαν (Cosmos), meaning order, or control. It seems fitting that humans perceive order and control as aesthetically pleasing. And as long as humans focus on controlling the surface of the body, we will not move beyond the inherited view of the body, an idea which ORLAN critiques in her work, combining the practice of art and cosmetic surgery.

## ***1.2 ORLAN and the Inherited View on the Female Body***

ORLAN is a French performance artist, who lives and works in Los Angeles and New York. The French performance artist ORLAN adopted her artist name in 1971, which she always writes in capital letters, for the simple reason that nobody else will spell their name that way. ORLAN is one of the most famous French artists within the contemporary art world. Her work has been produced in a range of mediums, however her best known work *Omnipresent*

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<sup>26</sup> Hurst, 2015, p, 19

<sup>27</sup> Hurst, 2015, p, 21

*Surgery*, employs the use of scientific and medical technics, such as surgery and biogenetics.<sup>28</sup> ORLAN uses cosmetic surgery as a form of cultural critique against the socio-cultural milieu surrounding the surface of the body. ORLAN always brought a camera crew to her operations enabling her to transmit the procedure to the galleries representing her, performing for the audience of art-goers and critiques to be shocked.



Figure 1: ORLAN, *Opération Réussie* (Successful Operation), 1991

Stuart Jeffries describes, in an interview in *The Guardian*, how ORLAN realised she had an important role to play in the possible representations, caused by a socio-cultural context of the surface of the human body, although particularly in the representation of the female. During her first operation in 1990, she understood she had a double role in what was going on: ‘She was both observer and observed’.<sup>29</sup> ORLAN then began a project with a bigger scope: she decided to undergo cosmetic surgery, not in the conventional form of enhancing the outside of her body, aligned with the fantasies of beauty. Instead she would be both the seer and the seen in a series of operations, which would result in her appearance imitating famous personas in art history.<sup>30</sup> ORLAN’s choices of artworks to emulate are paintings of women whom all have been influential on the socio-cultural image of women from a historical perspective.

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<sup>28</sup> ORLAN, *Orlan.eu*, (website), <http://www.orlan.eu/bibliography/>, [accessed 20 May 2016].

<sup>29</sup> S. Jeffries, ‘Orlan’s art of sex and surgery’, *The Guardian*, 1 July 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jul/01/orlan-performance-artist-carnal-art> [accessed 5 April 2016].

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

The first example of a particular feature ORLAN chose to imitate was the mouth of Europa, from Francois Boucher's *The Rape of Europa*. Boucher (1703-1770) was a French Rococo painter known for idyllic and voluptuous so called Fete Galantes paintings, on classical themes. He dominated French painting for most of the eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup> The woman who modelled for Europa and the owner of the mouth ORLAN has ultimately imitated is that of Madam De Pompadour. In the article '*Madame de Pompadour, Francois Boucher (1759)*', Jonathan Jones writes Madame de Pompadour, born Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, was a figure of huge cultural influence in 18<sup>th</sup> century France. She was initially married to Charles Guillaume le Normant d'Etoiles, yet later became the mistress of King Louis XV, an official position and was awarded the title 'Marquise de Pompadour'. She commissioned several paintings with her as the leading character, and she used these to communicate with the King. She continued to have a relationship to the king after their escapades ended and advised him in political matters.<sup>32</sup>

ORLAN's choice of matching the mouth of Europa could lie deeper than the association to a painting widely known and recognised for its magnificent example of the art at that time. Madame de Pompadour, the model for Europa was an example of an incredibly strong woman, who seized the game of power and politics reserved for males, and made it her own, and arguably had great influence on the decisions made at the court of France.

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<sup>32</sup> J. Jones, 'Madame de Pompadour, Francois Boucher (1759)', *The Guardian*, 8 September, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2001/sep/08/art> [accessed 15 May 2016].



**Figure 2.** Francois Boucher, *The Rape of Europa*, 1747

The portrait of *Mona Lisa*, which inspired the surgery undertaken on ORLAN's forehead, was started around 1503 and is confirmed to be of Lisa Gherardini, the wife of a Florentine cloth merchant named Francesco del Giocondo. The painter is Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci, or better known as Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) an Italian engineer, scientist, painter, sculpture and architect. Da Vinci is often described as a 'Uomo Universalis' or 'Renaissance genius' and a source of great inspiration for many generations to come.<sup>33</sup> The choosing of the painting *Mona Lisa* is engaging because there is evidence it was produced out of pure love and affection.

The German art historian and professor Frank Zöllner describes in an article written by Professor Jean-Pierre Isbouts, that Francesco did not accomplish any significant political or economic gains from this marriage.<sup>34</sup> Zöllner continues:

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<sup>33</sup> 'Leonardo da Vinci', Martin Kemp, *Oxford Art Online*, 2010, [http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/subscriber/article/grove/art/T050401?q=leonardo+da+Vinci&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/subscriber/article/grove/art/T050401?q=leonardo+da+Vinci&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) [accessed 20 May 2016].

<sup>34</sup> J. P. Isbouts, *monalisa.org*, (website), <http://monalisa.org/2012/09/05/francesco-del-giocondo-his-wife-lisa-gherardini/> [accessed 20 May 2016].

A fitting epitaph for their relationship is an extract from Francesco's own will: ...Given the love and affection of the testator towards Mona Lisa, his beloved wife, in consideration of the fact that Lisa has always acted with a noble spirit and as a faithful wife...<sup>35</sup>

The talent of Leonardo was sufficient to portray Francesco's affection towards his wife. The outcome is a portrait noble in spirit and faithfulness, as Berger writes:

Man survey woman before treating them. Consequently how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. To acquire some control over this process, woman must contain it and interiorize it.<sup>36</sup>

A plausible synthesis is that ORLAN chose the painting of Mona Lisa because it stands as a proclamation of the male gaze on woman, defined as the surveying of woman from the position of the male. Then, upon his perception of the woman, he decides how he will treat her. The painting is therefore a demonstration of objectification and anesthetisation of the woman as object. As a consequence, Mona Lisa has to express the set of values her man, Giocondo desired to look upon via his wife and not her own. In view of this, I can find an explanation and reasoning for ORLAN's use of the painting. Mona Lisa embodies the objectification by the man upon surveying woman. ORLAN wishes to abolish man's behaviour of treating woman according to their appearance, and personal reference. The Mona Lisa is the world's most famous painting and also the most mysterious, as we are fascinated by her ambiguous and elusive smile and her enigmatic look. Maybe this is the projection of the male gaze or rather, the ability of Da Vinci to find the essence of womanhood.

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<sup>35</sup> Zöllner, 1999, cited in J. P. Isbouts, *monalisa.org*, (website), <http://monalisa.org/2012/09/05/francesco-del-giocondo-his-wife-lisa-gherardini/> [accessed 20 May 2016].

<sup>36</sup> J. Berger, *Ways of seeing*, London, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 2008, p. 46



**Figure 3.** Léonardo de Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, 1503

The next feature ORLAN takes from is the chin of Sandro Botticelli's *The birth of Venus*' (1445-1510). The painter Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, also known as Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), was a painter of the early Italian Renaissance. His life-size mythological paintings and altarpieces gained him huge popularity.<sup>37</sup> The story behind the birth of Venus, or Aphrodite, as she is sometimes referred to, tells her arising directly from the foam of the seashore. This was a result of Saturn's castration of his tyrant father, the sky God Uranus. Saturn then threw the genitals in the sea. As the genitals drifted, the blood and semen mixed with the seawater. From it grew Venus.<sup>38</sup>

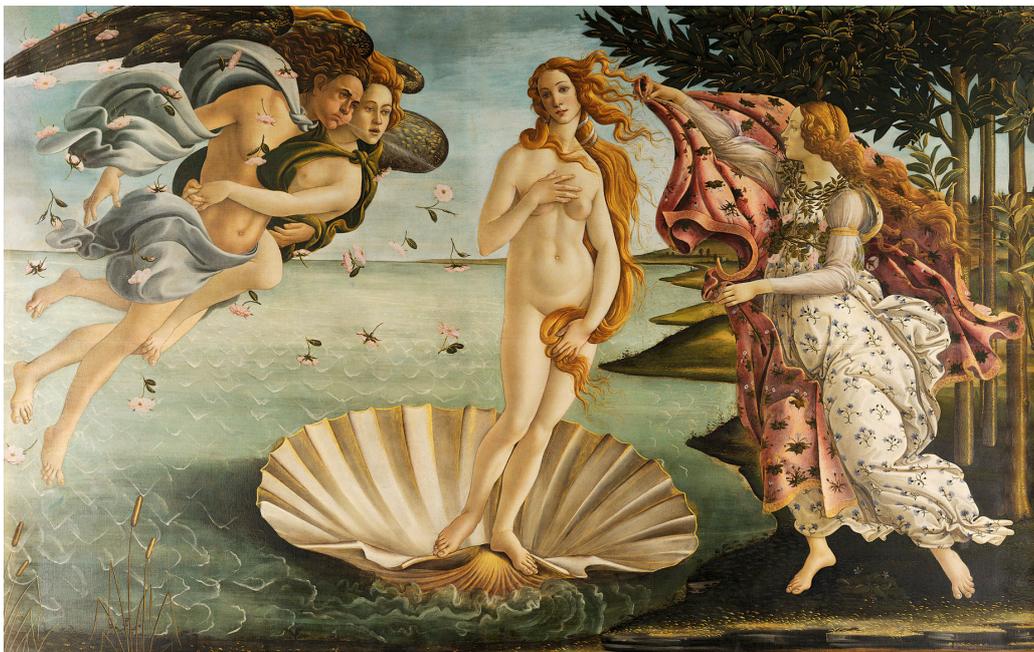
At first glance, the Roman Goddess Venus is painted aligned with the mythology, a body symbolising love, beauty, sex, prosperity, victory and desire. Ross Brooke Etle narrates in *The Venus Dilemma: Notes on Botticelli and Simonetta Cattaneo* that the woman who modelled for Venus is Simonetta Cattaneo Vespucci, and that she was chosen as model for the

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<sup>37</sup> 'Sandro Botticelli', C. Dempsey, *Oxford Art Online*, 2010, [http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/subscriber/article/grove/art/T010385?q=Sandro+botticelli&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/subscriber/article/grove/art/T010385?q=Sandro+botticelli&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) [accessed 20 May 2016].

<sup>38</sup> 'Aphrodite', 6 *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 2015, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/ehost/detail/detail?sid=7b5ac719-518f-454c-ba85-cb10f96f6ed2%40sessionmgr120&vid=0&hid=123&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVpZCZzaXRIPWVob3N0LWxpdmU%3d&preview=false#AN=39044169&db=a9h> [accessed 5 April 2016].

Venus, since the commissioner of the painting, Giuliano di Piero de Medici, was in love with her.<sup>39</sup> The woman to the right is Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and the season of spring and a symbol of nature and youth. Venus is born naked and divine, although as she lays her feet on the ground, the understanding of a need is arriving, and Flora seemingly feels an urge to cover up Venus's nakedness.



**Figure 4.** Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, 1484-1486

Of course we need clothes to keep warm, but why should Venus be covered up if not because of the 'surface imagination' of socio-cultural understanding on the appearance of the body. There is a conflicting when the world of mythology meet the world of the man. The Venus is a body that clashes with the system. It is a freed body. Freed from the European 'norms' of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Flora covers Venus because of the traditional western views of the body, which at the time were of the sinful. The result is a pictorial clash between the natural prehistoric tradition of the naked body and the near biblical interpretation of the body as nothing more than flesh and bones. A body that should be kept silent.

The French philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman explains that this division dates way back to Clemens of Alexandria, who forbid the manufacturing of the naked Aphrodite, the early form of Venus.<sup>40</sup> Concurrently, it is also the body of Venus looking forward, ahead of its time. It is a female embodying power, gazing back at us, asking us

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<sup>39</sup> R. Eittle, 'The venus dilemma: Notes on Botticelli and Simonetta Cattaneo Vespucci', *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, vol. 27, 2008, 3-10.

<sup>40</sup> G. Didi-Huberman and J. Jakobsson, *Öppna Venus*, Stockholm, Ersatz, 2009, p. 46

questions. It is a painting crafted on a symbolic look of the woman as being above the man. Venus is said to be the mother of all Romans, ever since her love affair with the Trojan prince Anchises. Together they had a son, Aeneas, the founder of Rome. As a result, Venus is the Mythological founder.<sup>41</sup>

Hanna Westley, assistant professor at The American University of Paris, values John Berger in her book '*The Body as Medium and Metaphor*', to analyse the issues surrounding the artist in the field of self-representation. According to Westley, 'the problematic posed for artists in self-representation is that of being at once subject and object, seer and seen'.<sup>42</sup> Westley assigns John Berger's formulation of the subject/object contradiction in his publication '*Ways of Seeing*'. Berger's quote is still regarded as central to understanding the role of the female artist when she appears in her own art:

From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the surveyed and the surveyor within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman.<sup>43</sup>

The presence of a female artist in her own work is therefore of a different social character than that of the man. A woman has been brought up to survey herself before going anywhere, since the socio-cultural expectation is that the state of her appearance reflects how she looks upon herself. It is a part of mainstream culture of being a western woman, to have the ability to dress and look appealing. It is embodied in her actuality to always reflect on herself from a visual perspective. Constantly imagining how she looks when she is gazed upon.

The paradigm lies, one has to remember, in the knowledge that these three paintings are all made by a man, and are to be gazed at by men. It is such paintings of woman, embodying the same position that ORLAN ideally wants to be in. Whether it is to be the Venus mother of men, as the centre of attention in a cult of adoration. The example of an obsessive gaze by a husband, proclaiming what is wrong about the male gaze. Or a woman of power, plying the game of politics and sex to form society in the direction she wishes. ORLAN is playing the game of the male gaze in the habitat of man, applying her rules of structuring society. However it is a gaze flipped on itself, keeping her in the driver's seat of imaginations and desires upon the body. ORLAN is comparable to a kaleidoscope, however one of the art history used as a statement of critique. So one can see through the idealised image of womanhood, made for a male audience to enjoy.

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<sup>41</sup> Didi-Huberman and Jakobsson, 2009, p. 47

<sup>42</sup> H. Westley, *The Body as Medium and Metaphor*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2008, p. 162

<sup>43</sup> J. Berger, 2008, p. 46

### 1.3 An “other” Solution

Stuart Jeffries explains that it is not only the image of the body ORLAN is working with, but also taboo surrounding and altering the body. Not in an understanding of enhancing the outer shell, but as the search for a new criterion of the surface. A role of the image as a medium of representation playing a crucial part in the development of the inner identity formed from the surface of the body. ORLAN wishes to instigate a conversation about what is binding the self to the body and if it even is bound.<sup>44</sup> She does this in her series of surgeries, by combining the known identities, in the form of art history, forming a picture atlas in an attempt to find an “other” body solution. ORLAN uses her body as a picture atlas, taking us on a journey of art history. Similar to the atlas of the world in a kid’s room, with pictures of important cultural sites instead of names of countries. The ‘atlas of ORLAN functions quite as a traditional picture atlas, displaying sites of cultural significance, in order for the beholder to gain an understanding of culture in relation to location, however with an extra dimension. A dimension exemplifying an idea of the identity of the Being as bound to visual connotations, which is represented by the surface of her body. ORLAN presents the concept of the body as a canvas, on which it is possible to create identities across historical time. It is an understanding of the body’s inability to be a stable container, and therefore demonstrates the possibility to create identities by cutting the skin and assembling it again. The skin is a medium for the creation of identity.

ORLAN titles her series of procedures ‘*Omnipresence Surgery*’. Omnipresence meaning all present, at all time. Constantly present everywhere. Omnipresence is also a biblical description of the presence of God. When ORLAN is altering her body she is taking the right to create in her own hands, out of the hand of God. It is a discourse taking on the view of the ownership of the body. ORLAN elaborates in a self-proclaimed *Manifesto of Carnal Art* and expresses the subject of taking the ownership back from society, a society bound in old philosophical ideas and rituals with forgotten meanings.<sup>45</sup> I suspect ORLAN is adopting biblical rhetoric to beat religion and society on their own ground, to intercept the language about the surface of the body, highjacking it and then setting the new course. ORLAN has created a new concept of the body, by removing it from its immediate function in western classical art. She takes the body away from objectification and scrutinises it. ORLAN

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<sup>44</sup> S. Jeffries, ‘Orlan’s art of sex and surgery’, *The Guardian*, 1 July 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jul/01/orlan-performance-artist-carnal-art> [accessed 5 April 2016].

<sup>45</sup> ORLAN, *Orlan.eu*, (website), <http://www.orlan.eu/texts/> [accessed 8 April 2016].

describes her own art as a hunt for something else, 'an "other" body'. An absolute other ideal.<sup>46</sup> ORLAN is against the DNA-based and ready to use natural body. ORLAN is frustrated with the stagnation of the evolution of the body. Therefore to surpass her own frustration, she has initiated the debate of whether it is time to drop the inherited taboo on altering the body. ORLAN takes pleasure in to smothering us with the use of her body to make a point of the current situation of the human vessel.

From this chapter I can conclude on the finding of a prism creating a system of power-relations when the body is spectated through it. Relations between the sexes forming a paradigm and creating the relationship between man and woman as seer and the seen. The artist ORLAN created an artwork on her own body in the form of a picture atlas. The atlas exemplified the identity and Being as bound by visual connotations, and the skin as creator of identity. It could be said that ORLAN's work establishes a need for a new body; we will never be able to evolve as a species. We will always find ourselves circulating around the representation of the body if we are not able to pass the barrier of focus on controlling the surface of the body. The next chapter will be about re-conceiving the human surpass the paradigm and the 'Surface Imaginations'.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2: TRANSFORMING THE BODY

This chapter investigates and attempts to re-conceive the human, surpassing the paradigm between the sexes and the complications of the ‘surface imagination’, suggested by the work of the artist ORLAN. The present body is embedded with visual complications in its cultural exploit. What would the consequences be if one decided to transform the body into a form different from the present? This question has lead me to regard and study the work of British sociologist Nicholas Rose writings on the human body as a cultural construct, and therefore not a stable vessel of flesh:

We are increasingly coming to relate to ourselves as “somatic” individuals, that is to say, as beings whose individuality is, in part at least, grounded within our fleshly, corporeal existence, and who’s experience, articulate, judge, and act upon ourselves in part in the language of biomedicine. From official discourses of health promotion through narratives of the experience of disease and suffering in the mass media, to popular discourses on dieting and exercise, we see an increasing stress on personal reconstruction through acting on the body in the name of fitness that is simultaneously corporeal and psychological.<sup>47</sup>

Rose comments on the snowballing pressure from society regarding the treatment of our bodies as one’s property. One has to show a responsibility of the state of their vessel, just as one would take care of maintaining a belonging of value, such as a car or property. It is a consciousness of the body from the perspective of commodity. It is not enough to merely have a body. We must make sure this body is fulfilling its full potential, otherwise it is a body wasted.

Heike Steinhoff, assistant professor of American Studies at Ruhr-University, Bochum, comments on Rose’s writings by applying her own description of the craft of identity she calls ‘authentic identity’. This refers to a state of authentication of identity after it has been photographed and shared as evidence of a life being lived in a good and correct manner, according to what is culturally and socially accepted. It is not a wasted “boring” life, and doing what is customary, but a life one should admire for its pureness, in comparison to the ordinary. The body often becomes a narrative or language, in order to create the ‘authentic identity’ through a visual transformation. These transforming bodies and narratives of self-actualisation are often seen via social media applications designed for smart devices, such as ‘Instagram’. The images create notions of self-improvement, self-realisation and self-

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<sup>47</sup> Rose, 2007, pp. 25-26

experience. It is a body capable of moulding and modelling itself into the desired shape. At its heart, it is a quest for the transformation that is inherently never-ending.<sup>48</sup>

The transforming bodies become central to the transaction of power, the control of others and control of the self, leading to different cultural concerns. Body modification is a reflection of late modern capitalism, new technologies and globalisation, according to Steinhoff.<sup>49</sup> It is a constant quest for optimisation and broadcasting. And this broadcasting, or sharing, on social media creates a new understanding of what is ‘normal’. What is deemed ‘normal’ breeds a new course for which the individual recognises and relates to himself or herself as a subject through somatic transformation, negotiating ideas of beauty, gender, relation to self and the body, and the somatic self to somatic others in the West. British sociologist Mike Featherstone argues:

In contemporary consumer culture, body maintenance is central to the achievement of a marketable self and ‘body work’ is represented as a “precondition for the achievement of an acceptable appearance and the release of the body’s expressive capacity.”<sup>50</sup>

Maintaining a healthy and athletic appearance is an important component towards obtaining the dream job or social status one hopes for. And it is also a matter of investment from the workplace. In addition to the process of maintaining the body, it is becoming increasingly popular for one to ‘show off’, via social media, what kind of hard work one chooses to put themselves through. It is pornography of the will, to push one’s self in shaping the body, and also demonstrates a power over the body, exemplifying self-control. This self-control is an important part of cashing in on the investment in the body.

Heike Steinhoff considers the body as capital. A viable capital. The body can be invested in with fitness training, special diets and cosmetic surgery. The revenue is returned in the form of a longer life, a better job or a more desirable partner. The body is both consumer and commodity, therefore creating consumption itself, by responding to other bodies of desire, which in turn respond to other bodies, and so forth, creating a parallel vision of the ideal body. This body is attached to the natural body but moves in the direction of an extreme body, transformed by cosmetic surgery or extreme fitness training, producing hegemonic relations of power, as bodies are considered ‘individual’ and ‘improved’.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 6

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 8

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## 2.1 The Mind/Body Split

In western culture, the mind/body split is often held accountable for the almost perverse interest in the appearance of the body. René Descartes is consistently credited for coining a term for this, as Steinhoff specifies: ‘distinguishing between an extended substance, the *res extensa*, and a thinking substance, the *res cogitans*, often referred to as Cartesian dualism’.<sup>52</sup> It has been tradition in the West, to culturally critique the human as divided between mind and body.

However, typical in the study of humanities, it is possible that there is an overlapping taking place between the two things. In this case it is the mind and body, without it being a characteristic or quality, it occupies the ability to twist one into the other. The relationship between body and mind seem integral, considering their philosophical difference. The self, so to speak, is always embodied. The self is often spectated as a cultural and historical construct. Steinhoff quotes Rose’s idea of the self to be:

Revealed not as our inner truth but as our last illusion, not as our ultimate comfort but as an element in circuits of power that make some of us selves while denying full selfhood to others.<sup>53</sup>

Rose suggests that it is an understanding of the body, not as a creator of the boundaries and the relationships to others, but the understanding of the self, expressed through the body. It leaves us seeing the world from inside out. As humans, it is difficult to believe other people to be anything else than reacting to our presence. One could say I understand I exist and I am conscious of my body and its disadvantages, therefore I reduce others and deny them selfhood in my view of the world.

In the view of Rose, bodies are always ‘thought bodies’ or ‘bodies thought’.<sup>54</sup> They are not fixed or passive, but moving or reshaping together with culture and time, always transforming, and should be given status to what is a historically specific body. Specifically, these bodies or their surfaces are sites of the creation of power relations.<sup>55</sup>

In 2005, Sellars and Stelarc exhibited the installation *Blender*. Writer Julia Clarke visited the exhibition for an article titled *Corporeal Mélange* for the journal *Leonardo*. She describes the installation as Stelarc’s following interest in the portrayal of the body as a landscape, but also observing it as waste and ‘use value’. The artists underwent liposuction, to

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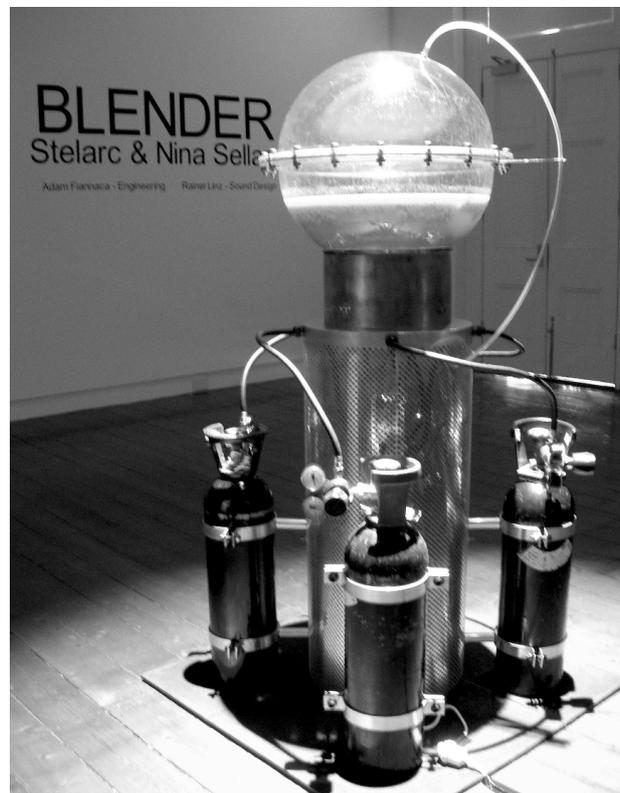
<sup>52</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 15

<sup>53</sup> N. Rose, *Inventing our selves*, Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 5

<sup>54</sup> Rose, 1996, p. 183

<sup>55</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 17

gather biomaterial for the installation. Instead of visualising the body in the light of cosmetic surgery, as ORLAN does, they were interested more in the modification that is instigated in the laboratory. In the laboratory, human biomaterial can be blended and used in many forms of biomedical techniques. The *Blender* is a metaphor for the human body. The structure of the installation itself has a circular Plexiglas vessel on top of a vertical steel column, surrounded by four large oxygen tanks.<sup>56</sup> Inside the carefully sealed bowl, is a mixed mass of subcutaneous fat, nerves, connective tissue and blood, taken from Stelarc's torso and Sellars's limbs. The artists also introduced oxygen and methylated spirits (ethanol), to aerate and prevent the biomaterials from degrading. All this was blended together to create a soup of biomass.<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 5.** Nina Sellars & Stelarc, *Blender*, 2005

Clarke describes, ‘digital sensors triggered the blades and prompted a continuously looped clicking sound that suggested the rhythmic sounds of heartbeat or blood flow’.<sup>58</sup> This is something that has previously featured in Stelarc's robotic performances.

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<sup>56</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Corporeal Mélange: Aesthetics and Ethics of Biomaterials in Stelarc and Nina Sellars's Blender’, *Leonardo*, vol. 39, 2006, 411.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Corporeal Mélange: Aesthetics and Ethics of Biomaterials in Stelarc and Nina Sellars's Blender’, *Leonardo*, vol. 39, 2006, 412.

The blending of materials break down the body to its essential elements, its DNA. Clarke outlines the artwork ‘disturbed the boundary between the bodies of the artists and the machine in which their excess biomaterials were housed’.<sup>59</sup> The relationship between the body as raw material and the technology that can reanimate and reconfigure it into a new body or form becomes something tangible and physical for the audience. ‘The caustic element formed a bridge between the visual exterior and the silent zone of the bodily interior’.<sup>60</sup>

*Blender*, is a machine installation containing a liquid body. The soft and liquid internal parts of the body are here on full display, as if it were a landscape. The body in its recognisable form is erased. In its place are traces of Stelarc’s and Sellars’s bodies, kept inside the machine, as a stand in for a body. The biomass acts as the material that contains the biology to create life. It is a human/non-human alliance. The agenda of the installation was to address the blending of bodies and the technology that makes it possible to blend bodies.<sup>61</sup> The artists suggest, with the overlap of their bodies, ‘that they could transcend their fixed boundaries’.<sup>62</sup>

It is against our understanding as being humans, to see our bodies as raw material, but also attempting to recognise the soup of mass as human challenges our deeply self rooted defence mechanism of understanding the human life form as more than human.<sup>63</sup>

However, if we are moving towards a reality of designed human beings, dictated by eugenics, then one must consider the body as raw material and the implications it might have in the understanding of our relationship to one another. The use of fat from liposuction, in itself is a reminder of the unwanted and tabooed bodies, considered worthless under oppressive regimes. Ambivalent in this context it may be, the body, in art creating awareness surrounding the issues scientist employ in biotechnology, and degrade the body removing personal desires and social needs, to gain access to tissue without slipping on the aesthetical norms.<sup>64</sup>

Another artist who works and comments within the field of bio-art and the future of evolution or creation of the body is Natasha Vita-More. She integrates a vision for the future in her conceptual art. She is a firm believer in human enhancement and morphological freedom. To Vita-More, human nature means our desire and willingness to solve a problem by

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Corporeal Mélange: Aesthetics and Ethics of Biomaterials in Stelarc and Nina Sellars’s Blender’, *Leonardo*, vol. 39, 2006, 413.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

innovation. *Primo Posthuman* is a project attempting to predict the future human. What is different is that it is a human produced by conscious intervention, and not natural selection. *The Primo Post-human* is an upgrade of the human form. One that has to overcome disease and aging. Different to the cyborg, the Primo has the nature of unfolding its outer, as well as inner form, depending on the given circumstances. It is a body building on the rational.

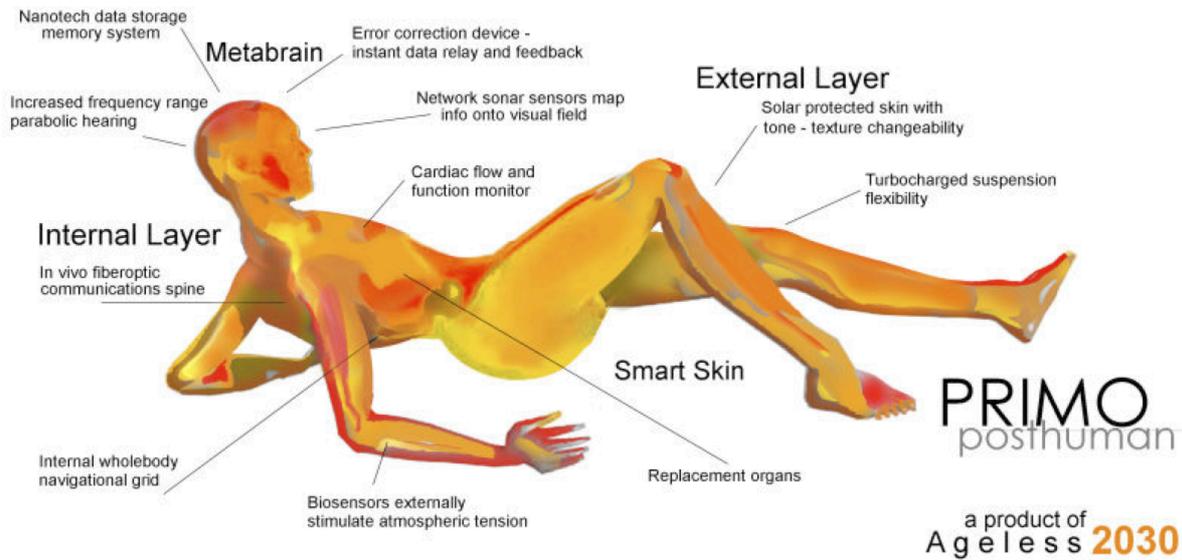


Figure 6. Natasha Vita-More, *Primo Posthuman*, 1997

It is an idea of the body so different than one we have today. One has to think of it as a finely tuned machine, but camouflaged like a biological body, imitating human shape. Vita-More writes:

For cognitive association, visual recognition, and aesthetic appeal. Yet, the Primo body does not age, is easily upgraded, has meta-sensory components, 24-hour remote Net relay system, and multiple gender options.<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting, in spite of all the features and improvements made to the inside of the body, Vita-More still finds it important to retain the outside similar to the original form, or at least imitate it in order to not be marked an outsider. The future body by Vita-More, does not surpass the course of surface imagination, because if the creator does not notice the problems concerning the *Primo body* to be mentally aware that it does not resemble others, then I can imagine other shapes and surfaces of the human body that would be more effective in terms of

<sup>65</sup> G. Dvorsky, '7 bio artists who are transforming the fabric of life', *io9.gizmodo.com*, (web blog), 24 Juni 2013, <http://io9.gizmodo.com/7-bio-artists-who-are-transforming-the-fabric-of-life-i-558156053> [accessed 2 April 2016].

surviving a life within an ever changing environment, for example, global warming, but also for future space travel and exploration of the universe.

The outer part is covered with something Vita-More coins ‘smart skin’. This is made up of large molecular cells connecting together. This smart skin has the ability to repair itself, but also change its skin colour, via Nano-bots, communicating with the brain to determine the desired colour. The idea behind this, as Vita-More explains, for the body to learn from its experiences, what is the optimal appearance is in a given situation, in order to attain the desired result of a conversation or discussion.

I can see a number of problems occurring if this apocalyptic version of the body 2.0 were to exist. It is a body hindering diversity, by making statistical choices based by chance. However it is also a body playing the game of the surface-imagination, taking into account the many factors of the lens in its forming of the body, conforming automatically, making the complicated calculations of the expectations from society, and inevitably evolving into a suspicious society.

## ***2.2 Surfaces of Power***

It is a body with contours, created by matter rather than biology, changing the context of the body and its surface to be one of materialism. The philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler discusses this discourse in opposition to Steinhoff. The concept of matter, in the debate of bodies that matter, is also the opposite of construction. In the context of construction, Judith Butler argues matter is not meant as surface, as I have previously discussed, but a ‘process of materialisation that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter’<sup>66</sup>. In this context, what creates the contours and movements of a body will come from the world of materialism.<sup>67</sup>

However, the materialism will be an effect of power. According to this perspective, bodies produce the self as an inner process and the framework of own identity, without the influence of culture and norms. This is the theoretical starting point of transforming bodies in modern cultural representations of somatic transformation. These theories often challenge and re-inscribe the mind/body split and its respective cultural connotations, says Steinhoff.<sup>68</sup> It is a different discourse to what Rose is proposing. He visualises his ‘thought bodies’ as moving

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<sup>66</sup> Butler, 1993, p. 9

<sup>67</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 20

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

forward, according to place and time as a historically specific object, always conforming to the outer. To look at how the somatic self is transformed and working within the concept of power, Michel Foucault offers a new perspective. Foucault states it as power replicating a ‘multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization’.<sup>69</sup>

It is the gaps of space between people, the pause in a conversation or glimpses of eye contact, which create and constitute the power relation between two individuals and settle their relation relative to each other. Foucault continues to clarify his vision of power as a process, not something constant one keeps, once having. Power is always relative. He continues, it ‘exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action’.<sup>70</sup> So there is never a stable relationship between two oppositions, the oppressor and the oppressed because power is always ‘local and unstable’.<sup>71</sup> According to Foucault:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.[---]There is a plurality of resistance,[---]They are the odd term in relation to power; They are inscribed in the latter as a irreducible opposite.<sup>72</sup>

Foucault recommends that we should focus on the ‘mobile and transitory points of resistance’.<sup>73</sup> Power is not only restraining, but also a creator of social relations, knowledge and subjectivity. An existence of knowledge or truth cannot be present in perception without a factor of power. Knowledge and truth are at the same time an outcome and a creator of relations of power. Relations of “power-knowledge” are contained and represented by processes of what Foucault calls subjectification. In the process of subjectification, the human body is the place these activities take place in the construction of the self. Foucault views the body as an aggregator of focusing and designing of networks of social control. He explains how the body is:

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.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> M. Foucault, *The will to knowledge-The history of sexuality Vol. 1*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 92

<sup>70</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 21

<sup>71</sup> Foucault, 1990, p. 93

<sup>72</sup> Foucault, 1990, pp. 95-96

<sup>73</sup> Foucault, 1990. p. 96

<sup>74</sup> Foucault and Sheridan, 1977, p. 25

Foucault deems the political sphere as the self upheld social control. We are policing ourselves to conform to society, in order to be part of it, and not excluded. It is a dangerous existence, without the protection of the majority, both in terms of the mental, when seeking recognition about ones own appearance, but also on more severe levels, such as securing a job and starting a family. We see this type of speculation coming into focus when reflecting upon Vita-More's Primo-Posthuman's smart skin, enabling the human to upgrade its inner and censorial parts, while still looking like a traditional human being.

Networks of social control are also evident in politics. We see world leaders or a dictator, depending on which side of the chalk line one is, implementing these ideas of networks. In this instance, the body is used as a sign, to show the power of the people, through the use of propaganda, excessive ceremonies and parades, and national duties such as military drafting. All constructed to create the illusion of a strong, united commonwealth. However, this is nothing more than a manipulation by the state.

In the book *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault focuses primarily on disciplinary power and the production of docile bodies. In Foucault's words, docile bodies are a kind of body that can be: 'subjected, used, transformed and improved'.<sup>75</sup> The docile bodies are produced by a course of disciplinary acts. These disciplines being, 'methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility'.<sup>76</sup> The idea of docile bodies explores why some may have power over other bodies, without making physical contact with them whatsoever. The docile body is trained to perform tasks and behave according to what a leader of society deems best. The difference from a bound or enslaved body is that the docile body operates on its own. It is an invasion of the mental state of the citizen, having trained him or her to make correct choices in life according to the greater good of society. It is the creation of body culture that is retained by self-control and constant affirmation. It is a power that teaches the human body to inspect and designate, a maker of division and classes between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'. This is, as the Australian professor of philosophy and gender studies Elizabeth Grosz discusses, "There are no 'natural' norms; there are only cultural forms of body, which do or do not conform to social norms".<sup>77</sup>

Bodily standards are often relating to an ideal standard or model, or are based on what is considered to be normal. In society nowadays, one may have the feeling we are navigating

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<sup>75</sup> Foucault and Sheridan, 1977, p.136

<sup>76</sup> Foucault and Sheridan, 1977, p.137

<sup>77</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 22

our individuality and regulating ourselves, through self-repression, clearly visible to everyone and therefore setting a standard and values associated with normality, pushed into play by what is believed to be true production of selfhood.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, the French social theorist and cultural critique Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), reflects upon the relationship between the real, symbols and society. Baudrillard introduces 'Simulacra' as something that replaces reality with its representation. It is copies of something that actually never existed, or something, which has lost its original. It is a materialisation of a person or thing, with the function to appear exactly as the original, but without its abilities or powers, it is only a representation with no actions. 'Simulations', on the other hand, is an imitation of the real, a deliberate imposter of behaviour or surface by pure action, where as 'Simulacra' is a new material in itself, but without the abilities of the original.<sup>78</sup>

Jean Baudrillard claimed our current society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs. To this, he adds that human experience is a 'simulation' of reality. The 'simulacrum' is a signifier and symbolism of culture and media, which Baudrillard accuses to be responsible for creating a constructed and perceived hyper-reality, in which we mirror our own existence in order to measure our success in life, and if we are perfect enough to be happy with our existence. Baudrillard viewed society as being too interested with simulacra, and our lives too dependent on the constructed society. All was now meaningless, because nothing mattered anymore when everything was just a construct leading to more constructs. Baudrillard called this never-ending meaninglessness the 'precession of simulacra'. Everything meaningful has been reduced or replaced by signs and symbols. We are all designed by society.<sup>79</sup> According to Baudrillard:

Power itself has for a long time produced nothing but the signs of its resemblance. And at the same time, another figure of power comes into play: that of a collective demand for "signs" of power – a holy union that is reconstructed around its disappearance.<sup>80</sup>

We are afraid of the disappearance of power, because it creates order and therefore a fata morgana of a predictable and stable future. A stable set of norms that can only be strived for, and a possibility to measure ones success according to the outlook of others. When we feel the signs of power are fading, we look for them even more, and that enforces them, much like a machine of power, producing a collective demand, and we are in terror of its collapse.

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<sup>78</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, pp. 3-22

<sup>79</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 23

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Baudrillard foresees everything ending as a critical obsession with power, an obsession of its death and survival. And when the self-enforcing power of society has totally disappeared, we will all be under the hallucination of power.<sup>81</sup>

There one sees what the real never was (but “as if you were there”), without the distance that gives us perspectival space and depth vision (but “more real than nature”). Pleasure in the microscopic simulation that allows the real to pass into the hyperreal. (This is also somewhat the case in porno, which is fascinating more on a metaphysical than on a sexual level).<sup>82</sup>

In contrast to this, cinema is still the divine and real image, in a sense closer to the ‘actual’ world. Cinema simulates seemingly ‘perfect’ feelings, and guileless narrative, which have not been polluted by signs and symbols. Cinema can create a feeling of aspiration and confidence, because it insists that everything happens for a reason. Much in the same way cinema creates bodies, we can be convinced of and are confident. They help us to imagine what our own body might one day become in the future, or help us construct identities, mimicking the characters of a film.<sup>83</sup> Cinema is an image of “myth” that still retains something of what Baudrillard calls the double. The phantasm, mirroring our dreams and decries of the future, instigating a drive to actively do something. It is a feeling one takes with them long after they leave the cinema. The mediatised world of television does not suggest anything like cinema does.<sup>84</sup> Television is merely a machine creating meaning inside your head. It is the television that watches you, not the other way around. It transistorises all the neurons, allowing the brain to hallucinate into manifesting these images, when in fact we are only staring into thousands upon thousands of LED lights.

Jean Baudrillard describes the process or structure of social relations, based on one-dimensional discussions, for example, animation, self-management, information and media, as creating a field of management of viewpoints and ideas. From this perspective, a model of security is created. However it is actually a model leading to deterrence. Baudrillard calls it ‘The Beaubourg Effect’, named after the Beaubourg area of the 4<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement in Paris, where lies the complex Centre Georges Pompidou building. Baudrillard criticises the Pompidou Centre for intending to animate a new culture, but is in fact only a reanimation of the old.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 23

<sup>82</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 28

<sup>83</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 43

<sup>84</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 51

<sup>85</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 61

The Pompidou was built to be futuristic, inspiring, that one would be immersed, propelled or even galvanised in some way. And if one is not, there must be something wrong with that individual. Perhaps one is not cultured enough. It is a description of the expectation of society which mirrors itself, anticipating everyone else to be moved, and afraid to be caught out if not experiencing anything else than a building looking pompous and lacking purpose.

A concept of bodily consensus sanctioned by blackmail to gain security is the story of social relations running as flux from the treatment of culture in modernity. As Baudrillard states, 'everything wants to be animation and is only reanimation'.<sup>86</sup> It is an example of the given form of the body in this present time, and the utopian idea of the body already possesses counter-meaning, and is destroyed. The body has not evolved too far in thousands of years, and an all-new thinking will be disappointing and only an imitation of nature, due to a difference between the interior and the exterior life of the 'surface-imagination'.

However Jean Baudrillard and Michel Foucault do not agree on the nature of power, even though they are describing the same phenomenon they see it as a result of power, but in a different light. In his book, *Seduction*, Baudrillard criticises Foucault for being too positivistic regarding the nature of power and not considering power in simulation, because power will not do it by itself. Baudrillard goes as far as to say that Foucault is 'reviving the illusion of power'.<sup>87</sup> However Baudrillard is not more dismissive of Foucault than able to accept his central hypothesis in *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. Foucault sees the production of sex as a discourse, and is fascinated with the field of speech and its existence because of power. He questions where power comes from, and what is staging it. Baudrillard proposes power might not exist without knowledge or theory. In that case it should be placed in simulation, as something produced to simulate what is no longer there, but kept alive as an illusion.

Foucault views sex and power as something existing between people, constantly in flux, but always there, producing real relations and existing as a variation of language. Baudrillard on the other hand, shares Foucault's understanding that power is production, but is of a different understanding in terms of its nature. He views it as being a simulation kept alive by rulers and dictators, and should not be put on a pedestal, but instead be kept at arms length, as a harbinger of everything wrong in society or between bodies. As a sign of instability, leading to nothing else than a simulated society, built on previous mistakes, with no hope for a brighter future.

Furthermore, both agree on a sense of the crafting of sex, referring to power, resulting in self-control, in the attempt to obtain the power bound in sex, in the hope of creating

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<sup>86</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 62

<sup>87</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Seduction*, Montréal, New World Perspectives, 1990, p. 49

networks and dictating the shifting agenda. It is a description of surface imaginations as they happen. Imaginations that are simulating power as the cement to keep the purpose of the body alive. The old surface of the body will never be given up, because it would be the collapse of the system of power as we know it. It stems from the inability to leave the old view of the body. Berger describes that men treat the female based on a reflection of her appearance, and the female plays the game and understands she must embody ideals for him to reflect, as she would prefer.<sup>88</sup>

Western society and its simulations of sex and power has made its mark on the body, with less than physical work in the sectors of service, but with a focus more than ever on the body, as if we are always most interested in what we can not have. Obesity is a concern in society, resulting in attempts to fix the body by surgery, as a way of inventing us out of the problem. Just as Prometheus did, in securing man the skill of crafting.

Crafting in Greek translates to art, and cosmetic surgery and art have always had a connection. The surgeon crafts the folds of the patient, much how the artist creates a painting or a sculpture. It also requires a certain amount of creativity from the surgeon, as every patient is different. It is after all biological material, and no one ever resembled the average anatomical illustration one would find in a textbook. These illustrations are mere suggestions. This connection, combined with the fantasy of the West for the perfect body, pushed by somatic power relations, has inspired a generation of artists working within portraiture.

I am interested in Greek mythology from a philosophical perspective, explaining where we, the Being, originate from in a western perspective. The myth of Epimetheus's forgetfulness of the human, we experience Prometheus solving the problem by theft of *Techné*, a divine power. This myth explains the reason for which the nature of the Being is always to invent our self, out of a given problem. In the case of this thesis, the problem is the body, or more precisely, the surface of the body, leading to our attempts to invent or foresee a new feasible carrier of the Being.

British contemporary photo-artist Juno Calypso travelled to American 'love hotels', to explore why we feel a need for enhancement. Her pictures keep to a strict regime of pastel pink coloured walls, creating the setting for Calypso's staged self-portraiture, loaded with sexual frustration and dreadfulness toward the ambition for the body driven by the surrounding society.

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<sup>88</sup> Berger, 2008, p. 46

In an interview for *The Guardian* from 2015 by Nell Frizzel, Calypso explains how putting on a mask or creating a different persona from her real self, she is able to express a different view on the body, by removing the usual signs and applying an unusual skin colour. Calypso's work has a sense of airless claustrophobia, but also frustration, loneliness and exhaustion with unrealistic ideals of femininity and beauty. The green skin, she explains, is made with body paint. The paint removes most of the signs we use to identify a body with, and it made her feel alien, like a gargoyle.<sup>89</sup> In her name, Juno also carries a legacy. Juno was, in Roman religion and mythology, the wife and sister of Jupiter. Hera and Juno is the same goddess and functioned as the protector of woman, but mostly of their sexual life.<sup>90</sup>

The attention and choice of pastel colours, together with the use of a large format camera, have a near ritual feel to it. Calypso explores the manufacturing of femininity and seduction, while transcending her body towards her fantasised "better self". The human presence being overshadowed by the process of beautification it encounters with the male gaze. As Calypso describes, 'as a mirror to the exhaustion felt whilst bearing the dead weight of constructed femininity'.<sup>91</sup> Joyce is not only a reaction to the male gaze, she is also satirically appealing to the self adoringly narcissism Instagram culture of bedroom images made by young women on social media.

In the photograph, *A Dream in Green*, a figure stands centre in a heart shaped pink bathtub, surrounded by mirrors. She hides her face from us in her long red hair. Apart from the green body paint, she is naked. She has her back to us and there is no water in the bath. No eye contact is made with the viewer, in contrast to the renaissance paintings ORLAN uses as references for her *Omnipresence Surgery*. She is standing in the classical contra-poste court in the moment of shifting the weight from one leg to the other. The mirrors and the hiding of her face, together with the naked body, create a startlingly erotic panorama. I am reminded of Botticelli's *Venus on the seashell*, yet all the signs of the 'Surface Imaginations' socio-cultural inherited understanding of the appearance of the body, are opposite. She is an anti Venus, fighting the gaze of society, sanctioned by blackmail to gain security. It is the story of social relations Baudrillard refers to by the Pompidou Centre, as an example of the expectation of society's mirror on itself.

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<sup>89</sup> N. Frizzell, 'I sounded like I was having the best sex': Juno Calypso's one-woman world tour of honeymoon hotels', *The Guardian*, 2 July 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/02/juno-calypso-tour-honeymoon-hotels> [accessed 3 April 2016].

<sup>90</sup> 'Juno', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2016, <http://academic.eb.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/EBchecked/topic/308353/Juno>, [accessed 23 May 2016].

<sup>91</sup> G. Barker, *Junocalypso.com*, (website), <http://junocalypso.com/text-2/> [accessed 3 April 2016].



**Figure 7.** Juno Calypso, *A dream in green*, 2015

By removing the human signs, Calypso sets herself free from the somatic power-relations pulling and pushing her body into, hoping to identify who she is as a woman. When she transforms into Joyce, she becomes powerful, because she is outside the system of sex and signs. Foucault and Baudrillard's theories of power no longer apply. We do not recognise her as a human, but rather an animal or a non-human figure, such as the mythological Gods. She has transformed the vessel of the human.

What Calypso hides from the viewer is the truth about the body. It cannot do anything, because it does not have any natural given abilities, and will ultimately betray and fail us in the end. The body is 'Simulacra', nothing more than a representation of material as an individual object, and without abilities. All the signals and signs are empty. By removing all the empty signs with the use of green paint and references to art history, she displays the body as an empty vessel; ready to imitate the identity the beholder wishes to see. She is a mirror of our own desire.

This chapter discussed how a reconceived human could surpass the paradigm between the sexes and the complications of the ‘surface imaginations’ prism of a traditional western view of the body. I can conclude the body to be a cultural construct. And identity is only true if the body has been visually transformed with the use of social media, leading to notions of self-improvement, self-realisation, self-experience and a determination of the transformed body as a key site for the negotiation of power via the constant quest for optimisation.<sup>92</sup> I have discussed the tradition in the west to culturally critique the human as divided between mind and body. However the relationship between body and mind seem inseparable, because of their philosophical differences.

Through Rose, I described humans as having a difficulty in believing other people to be anything else than reacting to our own presence, and continued by defining bodies as only being ‘thought bodies’, determined by the present culture and time and therefore, never passive and solid.<sup>93</sup> Nina Sellars and Stelarc’s work *Blender*, exemplified the ethical issues involved in the relationship between the body as raw material and technology, testing the boundaries of what is a conceived human, and provided evidence there is a tension in the question, and strong reactions bound to experimenting, with the concept of what we can deem something human.<sup>94</sup> I can also conclude a body has to appear as a body, in order to remain free of being excluded from society. Judith Butler discussed in opposition to the idea of bodies shaped by the present culture. She implies bodies produce the self as an inner process and the framework of own identity, without the influence of culture and norms.<sup>95</sup> This pointed to a view of the body as being a product of materialism and therefore an effect of power. A vision of power as a process, not something constant one keeps. Power is always relative, and not only repressed, but also productive of social relations, knowledge and subjectivity.<sup>96</sup>

However we are policing ourselves to conform to society in order to be included and not cast out.<sup>97</sup> We are afraid of losing the system of power, since we would not know how to navigate socially. Therefore, we all play along, follow by fulfilling our role, trying to maintain our position. Thinking we are free to do what we want. In reality we are trapped in a system of expectation. No one dares to say it is an illusion, in fear of seeming uneducated, when in reality one is better educated for realising the illusion. The body is just a hollow shell, only possessing what we reflect onto it or inhabit within. In the next chapter, I will

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<sup>92</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 6

<sup>93</sup> Rose, 1996, p. 183

<sup>94</sup> J. Clarke, ‘Corporeal Mélange: Aesthetics and Ethics of Biomaterials in Stelarc and Nina Sellars’s *Blender*’, *Leonardo*, vol. 39, 2006, 413.

<sup>95</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 20

<sup>96</sup> Steinhoff, 2015, p. 21

<sup>97</sup> Foucault, 1990, p. 93

discuss the future human. I will be considering somatic power-relations, focusing on the technological progress in the context of the future role of the body.

## CHAPTER 3 – LEAVING THE BODY

This final chapter turns its eye to the future human. Once again, this thesis will examine the human condition in regards to its surface and the somatic power relations. However, focusing closely on technological progression and how it contributes to the reshaping of human life and Being. The way, in which we perceive ourselves, and relate to each other as humans, in a century marked by technological advancements, will play a deciding role on the future of the body. This question is, how will we live, interact, organise and control one another? This question is the fundamental curiosity driving this investigation. This will be conducted by observing the visual-cultural and philosophical remains of human life, investigating the fine line between man and machine, existing within a possible future, in which individuals can reform into something ‘Trans-Human’.

A hybrid between man and machine, known as the cyborg, in theory, might not be too far away to consider thanks to modern technological advancements, with the capacity to infiltrate our bodies. It will soon be a topic humanism must consider ethically, in order to navigate through and define the issues created, keeping in mind human’s partiality towards dividing the world into opposites, for example, the living and the non-living or the natural and artificial. Technology has forever changed the world, transforming how we communicate and relate to each other. The lines between authentic life and virtual reality have become blurred.

### *3.1 Science fiction and Bio-art*

It could be said, there is a connection between science fiction and bio-art, seen in projects such as Sellar’s and Stelarc’s *Blender*, and Natasha Vita-More’s *Primo Posthuman*. They both act as media scratching the surface to give an answer to what we might materialise in the future, and how it might come about. In the light of this near scientific approach, it is important to remember that artists and film directors are not researchers in a scientific understanding.

Vita-More warns us, as she writes in *Brave BioArt 2*, their proof is founded by their creativity and objectiveness, in order to understand what it means to change the means of biology, and therefore the course of life itself.<sup>98</sup> Vita-More discusses biotechnology, the original science, and science fiction or bio-art as Janus-faced. It has been criticised for

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<sup>98</sup> N. Vita-More, ‘Brave BioArt 2: shedding the bio, amassing the nano, and cultivating posthuman life’, *Technoetic Arts*, vol. 5, 2007, 172

exclusively representing the positive prospects of manipulating DNA, in dealing with the relief of biological decay. However biotechnology has been reported to be associated with testing with potentially dangerous methods and outcomes.<sup>99</sup>

The purpose of the artist is to understand what impact the research in biotechnology will have on us, and to reflect on the consequences in order to grasp and discuss the topic within society. It is a simulation of possible futures. Simulating the effects it might have on our culture and life form. Vita-More also mentions artificial general intelligence (AGI) as a creation to solve our difficult engineering problems with, but also shows an interest in the developing field of friendly AI (FAI), and ‘as a possibility to counter potential runaway super intelligences whose cognitive capabilities well outperform humans’.<sup>100</sup> It is a move toward the direction of partially biological, living media.

An example of such a technological scenario is Ridley Scott’s film *Blade Runner*.<sup>101</sup> An agent named Deckard is on assignment to seek out and terminate four ‘replicants’. Replicants are uncanny to Vita-More’s *Primo Posthuman*, in their ability to learn from past mistakes and create their own identity to such an extent they become indistinguishable to humans, therefore making it impossible to tell man from machine. The only exposing feature of their true synthetic identity is an obscure contradiction, seen only in the iris of the eye. The mechanics of the human eye is something beyond replication in regards to emotional responses. The replicants are not mortal and therefore do not qualify as humans. They have not inherited a past, culturally or emotionally, they can learn from.

Philosopher Bernard Stiegler explains in the film *The Ister*, which the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s idea of mortality follows that no one else could die in your place. ‘My death is always mine and mortality is what one cannot foresee’. I exist because I say I am. ‘However as soon as I am living, I am dying.’<sup>102</sup> I know I am dying. While we are living, we live fully in this knowledge. It is the path toward death that is inevitable. But it is a ‘Knowledge Non-Knowledge’, because it disguises itself as forgetting. The nature of death is one of forgetting, blocking out.<sup>103</sup> By existing without an inherited past, the replicants are dangerous because they are not held back by the mistakes of humanity, and the inherited understanding of the Being. This theory makes them almost ‘God-like’ amongst men, but

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<sup>99</sup> N. Vita-More, ‘Brave BioArt 2: shedding the bio, amassing the nano, and cultivating posthuman life’, *Technoetic Arts*, vol. 5, 2007, 172

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> *Blade Runner*, dir. Ridley Scott, USA, Warner Bros., 1982. (DVD)

<sup>102</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:21:50

<sup>103</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), Running time: 00:23:35

without a conscious, and this is the precariousness of creating partially robotic/biological beings with the capacity to cognitively outperform humans. If they have the ability to calculate their own future, it would be a culture of simulation and fascination without the production of meaning. It is a cultural practice of the masses. It is a manipulative and random practice of signs, and without meaning.

*Gattaca*,<sup>104</sup> directed by Andrew Niccol, is a film in which the perfect being is created through, one could say, a cultivated natural selection. In *Gattaca*, a society is built upon the use of eugenics. This process determines one's prospects of a particular job, or the right partner. In the film, the viewer watches Irene Cassini, the love interest of the film's protagonist arrive at a facility, seemingly designed for the purpose of screening genes from the debris of others. Cassini hands over a sample of hair from the protagonist in order to verify whether he inherits the ideal, worthy genes.

It is a society in which one's whole life is mapped out before one's conception through the use of eugenics. It is a life with no unknowns. People within this society are still technically human, however not in the perspective of Heidegger. Heidegger understood the Being as 'Non-Knowledge', the ignorance of what is to come. If we know what is going to happen, what we will become, and when it is most possible we will die, then it is not a life. It is a human without Being. Being is key. The more one tries to forget, the more it controls. Forgetting is Being, and Being and death are therefore intertwined within a special relationship. One cannot exist without the other, but only if we are also asked the question of Being. It is a question of mortality of inconclusiveness.<sup>105</sup>

The subheading of *Gattaca*: 'There is no gene for the human spirit',<sup>106</sup> hints towards the theories of Stiegler. It is very possible to create a society by controlling genes in a race for the survival of the fittest. A so called 'gene apartheid', as individuals with less valued genes continue to exist within society, but as second-class citizens. Moreover, this genetic modification of our DNA would be a mistake, keeping in mind the work of Stiegler, and inevitably leading to a loss of *Elpis*, translating to hope in life, ultimately culminating in depression and mental illness.<sup>107</sup>

Bio-artist David Kremers predicts the body of the future:

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<sup>104</sup> *Gattaca*, Andrew Niccol, USA, Columbia Pictures, 1997. (DVD)

<sup>105</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:22:57

<sup>106</sup> *Gattaca*, Andrew Niccol, USA, Columbia Pictures, 1997. (DVD)

<sup>107</sup> B. Stiegler, *Technics and time vol. 1*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998. p. 197

As biotechnology and digital technology hybridize, reality is going to get, not merely better or worse, but very weird and fluid. Technology development is going to be more like gardening, the harvest will be out of our direct control.<sup>108</sup>

Kremers denies the black and white perspective of the future, but more a symbiosis with technology, a second nature, or even nano-surface imagination. Technology will be self-sustaining. Our role will be to garden it, keep it in order and harvest from the fruits of technology when the time is right. It will be a new kind of relationship. One that equals, and in order to work, must become symbiotic. A very possible direction for this symbiosis could be to enhance the human life form with the ability to expand our intelligence artificially, and to extend our lifespan. But what are the consequences and what should we do with it, when our lifespan is longer, or maybe even immortal?

### ***3.2 The Dasein***

Stiegler critiques and comments on Heidegger's concept of the 'Dasein', in *Technics and time Vol. 1*. The 'Dasein' or Being is one who seeks to be mortal. Seeks to postpone death, and therefore a differentiating from the Being or humanness. It is a separation from the life in-between. A life with no desire to have, with no fantasy. A saturated life without taste and colour. The Being will try and calculate or invent itself out of destiny, trying to flee time. The time of society, but also the technical time of the clock or media.<sup>109</sup>

Time is real, but the method in which we measure and keep track of it, is constructed by society which strives to meet at an allocated time, or to gain an understanding of how old something or someone is. In that respect, time is very abstract, difficult to understand or grasp, and can only accept things or individuals falling under its rule.

To extend the human lifespan is a fantasy, if possible, would significantly change the mentality of the beholder. It would align us with the immortal Gods of Olympus, and therefore change our way of viewing a representation of ourselves in photographs, because every image is a moment of a fraction of a second. It would be quite a different relationship to photography if our relationship to time was infinite. The existence of time in photography would be of no meaning, and the purpose of imagery would be with no mission.

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<sup>108</sup> Kremers, 2007, cited in N. Vita-More, 'Brave BioArt 2: shedding the bio, amassing the nano, and cultivating posthuman life', *Technoetic Arts*, vol. 5, 2007, 180

<sup>109</sup> Stiegler, 1998, p. 6

The one who tries to invent himself out of death against the order of nature, is a concept Martin Heidegger further describes as Dasein; as ‘that being which is concerned about its very being’.<sup>110</sup> It is the relationship between death and time, which the ‘Dasein’ is trying to flee, trying to create a non-time. An elimination of time. A metaphysical time. However Stiegler discusses a different discourse on the same question. In the film *The Ister*, he comments:

Yes, Heidegger is right in saying that technology gives one the tools and methods to calculate the unknown. But at the same time technology also makes it possible to undergo the experience of mortality. So technology is the condition of the experience of mortality.<sup>111</sup>

Stiegler grants his vision of the surface of the human body falls short of grasping another aspect to the container of the being. As long as we cannot surpass current technology, we lack the ability to progress, and remain stuck within the domain of the mortals.<sup>112</sup> Stiegler explains Heidegger’s idea, in the introduction to his book *Time and Being*, as the past of the ‘Dasein’ not following him, but as having always preceded him. And this past he calls the past ‘historicality’ of Being, the *Geschichtlichkeit* of the ‘Dasein’. This is not the past lived by the ‘Dasein’, but the historical past. Therefore, the ‘Dasein’ can be said to be mortal, if he has inherited the experience of his ancestors in a cultural understanding.<sup>113</sup>

There is a link between Epimetheus and the ‘Dasein’, decides Stiegler. Epimetheus is the one who makes mistakes. And he reflects on these mistakes. In his reflecting, he develops wisdom. And this wisdom is what he has learned by reflecting on past mistakes. It is wisdom we as ‘Dasein’ also inherit from the past, and if we learn to utilise the wisdom of generations before we will have reach mortality in a philosophical sense.<sup>114</sup>

We must reflect on the experience of the body’s deterrence and behaviour, rather than continue in the dark, towards the edge of a cliff without headlights. We have to reflect because we can only observe another’s death, and not our own. Our society’s philosophy regarding the bodies’ failure will only know how to reflect by the reflection of the death of others.

However, Stiegler continues to comment in the film *The Ister*, the history of the Being is one of misinterpreting the question of Being, and therefore Epimetheus is a figure of

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<sup>110</sup> M. Heidegger and J. Stambaugh, *Being and time*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 10

<sup>111</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:57:29

<sup>112</sup> Stiegler, 1998, p, 16

<sup>113</sup> Stiegler, 1998. p. 5

<sup>114</sup> Stiegler, 1998. p. 248

accumulation. But also, he carries the prostheses, and this once more permits the inscription of the past. Therefore Heidegger discusses time must be thought from the perspective of the future.<sup>115</sup> It is the result of Epimetheus's neglect, forgetting man in the process of the distribution of powers. Prometheus reflects upon his brother's error and takes action, by stealing powers from another source. It is this ability to reflect upon our actions, which humans have inherited in a philosophical understanding, and Heidegger views this in perspective of the future, 'as both unconcerned distraction and after-thoughts'.<sup>116</sup> The result is *Elpis*, meaning both hope and fear, protecting the Being against the knowledge of death.<sup>117</sup>

Death is inevitable and a paradox. Death is the sole event one will never live. When death comes, I will not be there to live it. It will therefore never happen to me. It is the only thing that will for certain happen, and will not happen. Happen in the sense of experiencing. It has never been and it will never arrive. This also means that one can experience the death of others but not of one's self. The 'Dasein' can never experience death, only of others'. However, Stiegler does not agree with Heidegger regarding death in this light, when he writes of the 'Dasein'.<sup>118</sup> We inherit the possibilities from the past and create our future. That is the relation between the two. There is no future without a past. But the past might also once more be inherited from another group of possibilities. It is a historical past of a people, but not one that I have lived personally, writes Stiegler in his interpretation of Heidegger.<sup>119</sup>

Stiegler writes of Heidegger's interpretation of the present as not living, but mortified and hunted by the phantoms of the non-lived past.<sup>120</sup> However, for Stiegler the hunted or the legacy from the dead who lived before, remain in our consciousness, and are therefore still present in the world, through the monuments and artefacts they have left behind. They are relics.<sup>121</sup>

The critique of Heidegger by Stiegler is important if one endeavours to understand the complications of expanding the life of the human being, by harvesting from future technologies. It is not as straightforward as one would think. It implies a significant change to the understanding of the Being. A change of the Being would distort the human identity into something different, something other, because the Being is interconnected with the understanding of time in relation to own representation.

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<sup>115</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:48:13

<sup>116</sup> Stiegler, 1998, p. 16

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Stiegler, 1998. p. 5

<sup>120</sup> Stiegler, 1998. p. 245

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

A different scenario for a future human is one we have already embarked on, however with hesitation. That being the question of prosthetics. We already wear glasses and use mobile phones. These have become socially accepted extensions of our selves. However, in this context, a significantly different kind of prosthetic. A kind that can extend the body's natural performance.

### ***3.3 The fear of prosthetics***

The writing of the art critic Hal Foster is helpful in investigating this matter, by explaining the less than even relationship between the original human, and that of technology, which could one day create a future human. Foster focuses, in his book *Prosthetics of Gods*, on the alien relationship between the industrial machine and the natural body in the first decades of the twentieth century. Foster describes the relationship as both one of extension and constriction, and he decides to call this paradox 'the double logic of the prosthesis'.<sup>122</sup>

It is interesting to take a step back, quite like Hal Foster, and examine the relationship between man and machine in a historical perspective. Observing the relationship throughout the past century will help to create an understanding of why we react to the idea of a mechanical human body as we do, as if it were a non-human robot.

Foster draws on the past, one could say, to answer for our hesitation in the employment of technology and prosthetics directly onto our body. The western world became fearful after the First World War, from the damage the industrialized war inflicted upon it. Never before had the losses been so high on both sides.

The war invented prosthetics, such as the machine gun, the tank and bombshells bigger than had been conceivably possible. As a result, technology and man were kept apart as two separate entities, never to be joined. It is an inheritance from the dead we carry today into our relationship with biotechnology.

A similar theory of inheritance Stiegler and Heidegger discuss, in regards to the 'Dasein', can be found in films such as *Blade Runner* and *Gattaca*. It is an inheritance we have not lived, but follows the consequences of what was learned. It is an inherited respect for technology, which much like Foster's 'double logic of the prosthetic',<sup>123</sup> can end in constrain, holding technology back unnecessarily, against the interest of humanity.

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<sup>122</sup> Foster, 2004, p. 109

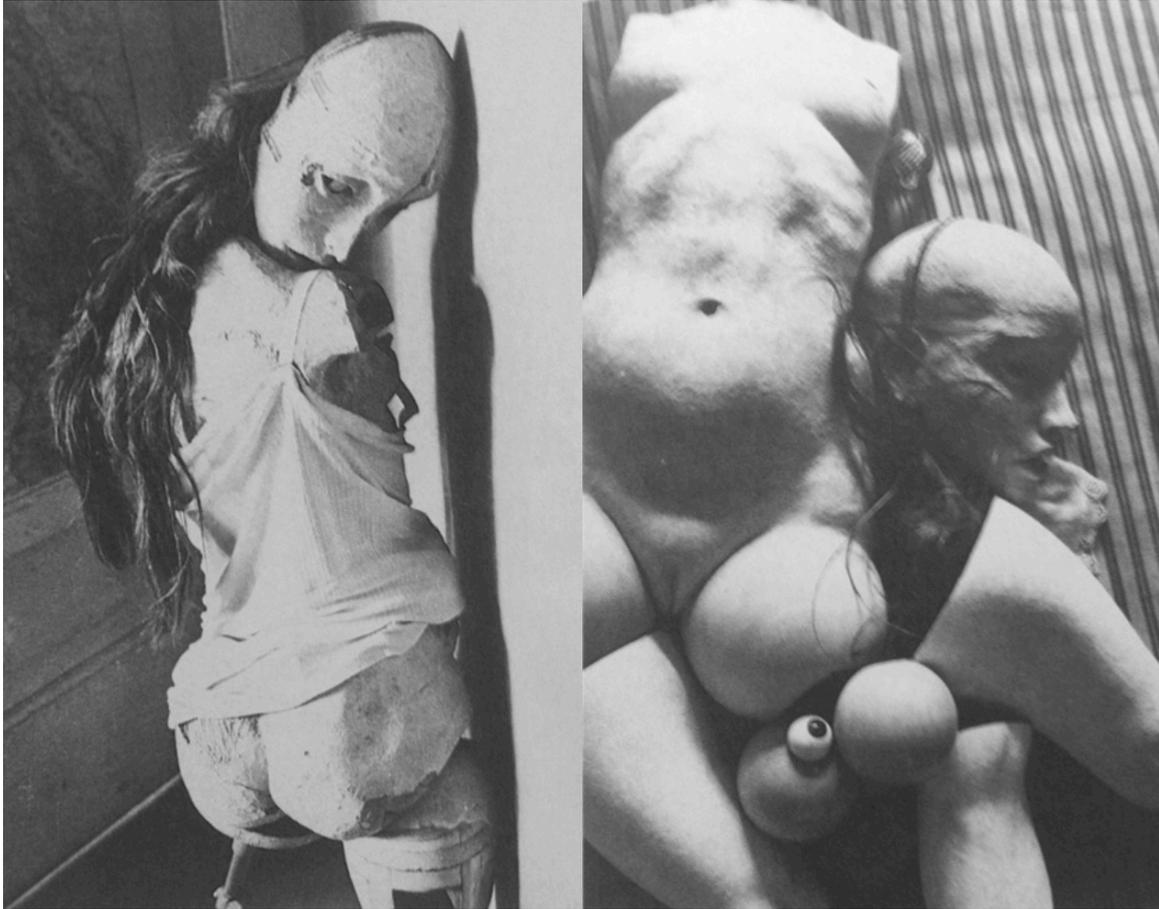
<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

The dismemberment in the realm of surrealism is an example Foster considers, as a point in art history, when artists began to make commentary on the situation in early Nazi Germany, and its relationship with the robotic and industrial view on the body. Hans Bellmer illustrated his feelings regarding the Nazi-regime through his dismembered dolls titled *Die Puppe*. By dismembering, he reawakens his traumatic feelings toward the machines, but simultaneously shielding against the traumas of the First World War.<sup>124</sup> The creation of *Die Puppe* was for Bellmer, a therapy, helping the artist to manage his experiences of traumatised bodies, dismembered by the power a machine can inflict on the human body. At the same time the doll functions as a monument, commenting on the Nazi movement, of the time, reminding society of the horrors that took place. To exceed the fear of technology as prosthetics, a new term rises, in the hopes to create a new field to discuss the future human.

It is a term spectating the body as a prosthetic device we can use and then throw away when it becomes out-dated or no longer suitable for its purpose. It is an idea of the body as a temporary vessel. As an extension of the Being. It is a field hoping to create a fresh dialogue regarding the body, the Being and technology in the area of symbiotic relationships. By creating a new term for this field, the hope is to excite the idea of the past in the realm of the old body, and in doing so, give birth to a new thinking of humans transcended from the past towards a future of new dimensions, for the circulation of the Being.

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<sup>124</sup> Foster, 2004, p. 114



**Figure 8.** Hans Bellmer, *Die Puppe*, 1934

### ***3.4 The 'Trans-Human'***

The term for this emerging field has been coined as 'Trans-Humanism'. The term is an attempt to answer questions regarding new anthropological-moral issues. Issue in need of addressing and, reconstructing a language for this new discussion.<sup>125</sup>

Peter Manley Scott, professor at the faculty of Applied Technology at Manchester University, and Celia Deane-Drummond, professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, explain 'Trans-Humanism' is best articulated in comparison with ideas of enhancement. Whereas enhancement discusses medical measures of improving an individuals functioning, surpassing what had previously been thought to be normal. 'Trans-Humanism', on the other hand, is to be understood as focusing on the cognitive function as the vehicle for human identity. The declared plan for 'Trans humanism' is to find a different host for the

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<sup>125</sup> C. Deane-Drummond and P. Scott, *Future perfect?*, London , T & T Clark, 2010, p. 2

cognitive function, instead of the present body, in which the processes can continue eternally.<sup>126</sup>

A change in human nature is currently suggested, and a new phase in human evolution is eminent. Therefore, the understanding behind human identity is to be understood as a placeholder for something else that is yet not defined and will not be possible to answer in the near future.<sup>127</sup>

Deane-Drummond and Scott continue determining ‘Trans-Humanism’ as a departure from an image of who we are, and what we would like to become. ‘Trans-Humanism’ offers transformation, leading to a new level of perfection. The problem with ‘Trans-Humanism’ is it assigns the future to science and doctors without much regard to nature, without questioning if we even need nature. Ted Peters, Lutheran theologian and Professor of Systematic Theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary writes, ‘Trans-Humanism’s’ take on the relationship between humans and technology is, that we should use it to remake human nature by the use of genetics, information technology and nanotechnology. This points towards technology as the definite next step in human evolution. This comes from a theory evolving from the brain as the carrier of identity. We are what we think. This could ultimately result to disembodiment, yet intelligent immortality.<sup>128</sup>

However Peters also offers a different perspective, asking, ‘is a downloaded version of me the same me?’<sup>129</sup> Peters asks this, for there is an understanding in philosophy and cultural science in general, that the human mind is intimately connected to physical states. We do not function simply as disembodied founded machines, but as a person in a bodily and communal context.<sup>130</sup>

Peters answers the question for himself. He believes our identity is created step by step, as we live our lives, including our scars and limbs, as they too experience life combined with our memory of the already lived life.<sup>131</sup> I can find two problems in Peters’s formulation. He does not take into consideration the not yet lived life as a creator of identity. The not yet lived is the most critical part of creating an identity. The not yet lived life is an instigator of identity, because it allows us to imagine what and how we would prefer to be. It is a sphere of imagining something that cannot be done, but possible if we move in the right direction,

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Deane-Drummond, and Scott, 2010, p. 3

<sup>128</sup> Deane-Drummond, and Scott, 2010, p. 18

<sup>129</sup> Peters, 2010, cited in C. Deane-Drummond and P. Scott, *Future perfect?*, London , T & T Clark, 2010, p. 25

<sup>130</sup> Deane-Drummond, and Scott, 2010, p. 25

<sup>131</sup> Deane-Drummond, and Scott, 2010, p. 27

because we can believe, imagine and realise it so. And belief is the strongest motivation for action. It is an outcome of reflecting on one's present life. We can reflect on our existence in relation to the future, because reflection is in our very nature, as Heidegger comments. Prometheus reflects on his brother's error of negligence. It is a reflection on the 'happened', resulting in wisdom.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, I would suggest the not yet lived life is an instigator of identity and creator of wisdom, if one reflects on their not yet lived life.

This leads me to present a photograph made in 2014, as a part of my photographic documentary practice. The project follows a particular group of people whom, within the community of transgender-people, consider themselves as both inhabiting their original identity, and having departed in a bodily understanding from that body, to inhabit another. These individuals explain throughout the documentation, how they felt, and drawing on both their former and present life, in order to form their understanding of Being. It was therefore not a total abandoning of the past, but a blending between two identities, alongside moving on in a bodily understanding, through surgically performed gender transformation and behavioural reconfiguration of the body. However, they continued to feel a strong connection to a body they no longer inhabited, in an understanding of identity. A body they will never experience grow older, retaining a mental image of its appearance. They reflected upon their body as though it was still theirs, and what kind of life it would have been. It is a parallel body, still existing as a future life in the mind's eye of the individual, now embarking on a course away from its original body, in the favour of inhabiting another.

Illustrating this through a careful image manipulation, a portrait of one of the transgender women, named Jasmine, resulted to a photograph containing two different identities. In the photograph, to the left she is Jasmine, the appearance she is most comfortable with, and happy to boast. On the right she appears as Daren, her original and less preferred appearance. Jasmine describes her former appearance as not forgotten, but not inhabited for the time being. If she will ever return, she does not know.

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<sup>132</sup> Stiegler, 1998, p. 16



**Figure 9.** Johan Peter Jønsson, From the series Melandrium, *Jasmine*, 2014

She sits relaxed, with her ankles crossed and her upper body open, with a straight back and neutral face. However traces of confidence and a discreet smile permeate her expression.

Jasmine looks straight at the viewer, such like Botticelli's Venus. She wears a pink 'princess dress', galore with charms, her platinum blonde hair voluminous. Jasmine's former self, Daren, has taken position on a chair to the right by the window. He wears a tracksuit, and leans forward, folding his hands, looking away as if to avoid eye contact, with the lens, or the audience.

This group of individuals, within the Transgender community, happen to exist, as what could be deemed as 'Trans-Human', according to the criteria discussed by Scott and Deane-Drummond. However, defying Peters in two steps. Firstly, in terms of the body as creator of identity, because our scars, and our limbs, experience life combined with our memory of the already lived life. Secondly, for his forgetfulness of the not yet lived life, since their understanding of the not yet lived, in a body no longer in their possession, still has an influence over creation of identity.

This chapter serves as an investigation into what the consequences would be if the human were to leave the present body behind, discover a new host in the form of ‘Trans-Human’. The problem of a future, immortal life would be that there is no life, since we know we cannot die. Life is the in-between living and dying. However, Stiegler comments that we will not have the ability to progress within the realm of the body, as we remain dormant living within the domain of the mortals.<sup>133</sup> We cannot create a future human until we stop thinking as the old one. A change of the Being would distort the human identity into something different, something other. The Being is interconnected with the understanding of time in relation to own representation. The goal of the ‘Trans-Human’ is to find a new host for the cognitive function, in which the processes can continue forever.<sup>134</sup>

The final part of the chapter negotiated the understanding of identity in a life as a ‘Trans-Humanist’. It is a perspective of a life with the potential to outlive multiple bodily identities. This chapter ends by critiquing Peters for not considering the not yet lived life, by referring to a case study of a group of Transgender people. Their relationship to the no longer inhabited body was still present as a parallel persona. They continued to hold on to memories of their former life. However they did not have the body in possession, which is everlastingly bound to their memories.

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<sup>133</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:58:36

<sup>134</sup> Deane-Drummond and Scott, 2010, p. 2

## CONCLUSION

This thesis was an inquiry and analysis into the obsession of the body, the plausibility of leaving it behind, and what the possible complications occurring for the Being, if so be. This investigation was initiated out of a sense of necessity. I did not feel any previous theories and artwork I had confronted regarding the transformation and potential prospect of departing the body had delved into the complexities as an entity. However, they are consistently separated into their respective fields, never correlating or discussed in conversation touching on considered artwork and the writings of leading theorists. Furthermore, I felt I was in a unique position, being both a student of visual culture, and a practitioner of documentary photography, commenting on the separation of body and Being as a subject, utilising my knowledge of art from the perspective of the practitioner. Therefore, I posed the overall question, ‘what if the obstacles concerning power-relations, bearing down upon the present surface of the human body, can be surpassed by a reconceiving of the body, and finally, departing the body from it, without a loss of Being, investigated through an analytic study of art and photography.’

Theories behind the plausibility of leaving the body, and what would be the ramifications for the Being, describe the issue as an evolution humans will have to take into their own hands, actively transforming, and in the wake of this, leaving the body. The departure would result in the loss of Being, and humans would therefore no longer be human, but something else. Another entity altogether. These theories describe the gradual disappearance of the biological ‘natural’ human, and the birth of something else. Something better suited for modern life. I wanted to expose the particular role of the field of visual culture, as a field open to discuss complex theories regarding the transformation of the body, and the idea surrounding the loss of Being. This is made possible by surpassing dialogue toward technology, since we have difficulty perceiving the post-human if we continue to address the subject within the domain of the mortal, as Stiegler foresees.<sup>135</sup>

This thesis discussed the determination of a social suffering, that suffering being the inability of being able to discuss the issue within the role of the ‘Trans human’. We are held back by our ineptness to free ourselves from the power-relations we create on the surface of the body, resulting in our short falling and inability to imagine the body without signals and signs, which we use in order to transmit, simulate and create relations across to other

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<sup>135</sup> *The Ister*, dir. D. Barison & D. Ross, Pakistan, Black Box sound and images, 2004. (DVD), running time: 00:57:29

individuals. If we do not disrupt this pattern, we continue to simulate and reflect the same behaviour. As people with conventional bodies, we will never escape the belief in a social suffering of inhabiting a transitory, failing body.

The purpose of this thesis was to expose the need to stop spectating the world as an ancient human, as we will never canyon through the promised land of what we want to be. This I discussed and reflected upon in three chapters. In the first chapter I asked the question: ‘Is the solution to the uneven relationship of power between the female and the male body, to remove the body from its present function and form to surpass ‘Surface Imaginations’, and establish if there is a need for a new body?’ To establish the need for a new body, I used the theory of ‘Surface Imaginations’ by Rachel Hurst, as a visual cultural term functioning as a prism through which we observe the body.<sup>136</sup> A prism creating a system or pattern of power-relations between the sexes in the form of a paradigm. I established that this paradigm constitutes the relationship between man and woman, as seer and the seen, utilising theories by Hanna Westley and John Berger, on the self/representation of woman in art.<sup>137</sup> The artist ORLAN created work, the canvas being her own body, in the form of a picture atlas. The atlas exemplified the identity and Being as bound by visual connotations, and the skin a creator of identity. I concluded we will always merely be recirculating the representation of the body, and that we will never be able to free ourselves from the body as long as we stay in this paradigm.

In the second chapter, I progressed my hypothesis within the theory of the transforming body, in the shape of an enquiry into how we could reconceive the human, surpassing the ‘Surface Imagination’, to investigate what the consequences would be. Upon leaving the body, I asked the question: ‘The present body is embedded with complications in its visual cultural exploit. What would the consequences be if one decided to transform the body into a form different from the present?’ To consider the possibility of reconceiving the human body, I discussed Nicholas Rose’s ‘Thought Bodies’<sup>138</sup> and Heike Steinhoff’s understanding of the body as creator of identity.<sup>139</sup> Both Rose and Steinhoff understand the modern view on the body as one of documenting and constituting its existence, by posting ones achievements on social media. Through their analysis, the view of the body evolves as one of property. Something one would work hard investing into. It is a creation of identity and Being as a result of the reaction to ones presence from the surrounding society.

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<sup>136</sup> Hurst, 2015, p. 18

<sup>137</sup> Berger, 2008, p. 46

<sup>138</sup> Rose, 2007, p. 25-26

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

Nina Sellars and Stelarc exhibited the work *Blender*. Its purpose was to ask the questions surrounding the boundaries of the human body, and whether a human can be deemed one, without a body.<sup>140</sup> It sparked strong feelings amongst the gallery's visitors, confronted with these questions. It could be said this was because they were incapable of relating to this supposed human in a tank, in a bodily manner, as it lacked all recognisable anatomy, containing only raw material. Natasha Vita-More created another vision of the future human. One optimised on the inside, but still had the uncanny appearance of a conventional human. This was so, as the *Primo* 'Posthuman', as she named it, would otherwise be in danger of being excluded from society. It seems therefore our fear of being different, is at this point the biggest issue in terms of discussing a transformed human. The ability to relate to bodies and looking upon them as your own kind, and next classifying them in terms of success or failure is the most important part in creating a Being, and without a conventional surface of the body, it would be a challenging existence.

Judith Butlers discusses a counter argument in opposition to Rose and Steinhoff. She is of the understanding that the inner, and not the outer of the body, is what shape the Being.<sup>141</sup> She elaborates her reasoning in Michel Foucault's theory of 'Power-Relations' as the producer of relations between people.<sup>142</sup> The production of relations created by power is used to navigate socially. The power works indirectly to control the choices people make in life and their understanding of themselves, in relation to society and the world, so called 'Docile Bodies'.<sup>143</sup> Therefore the Being is an effect of power working indirectly on a mental level, in the fear of being excluded and not as straight forward as reactions on the appearance or surface of the body. Jean Baudrillard on the other hand, viewed power as an expression of fear of losing the current system, of navigating socially, in his book *Simulacra and Simulation*.<sup>144</sup> It was the very fear of losing the system and not the system itself, which were the creator and promoter of the power-relations on the surface of the body. A system functioning as a mirror, producing recognition of one when one recognises the system as existing. The fear lies in being the one who exposes the system as not really existing, and is only able to exist because it simulates life. Foucault and Baudrillard have very different ideas in the light of the production of power. However, what they could agree on is the result of it. Power will create self-control, in an attempt to obtain more power for oneself. And exercise self-control in order to sustain

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<sup>140</sup> J. Clarke, 'Corporeal Mélange: Aesthetics and Ethics of Biomaterials in Stelarc and Nina Sellars's Blender', *Leonardo*, vol. 39, 2006, 411.

<sup>141</sup> Butler, 1993, p. 9

<sup>142</sup> Foucault, 1990, p. 92

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Baudrillard, 1994, p. 23

the situation one has in relation to others, in an attempt to create new networks, to climb the latter of social relations in the hope of more power, resulting in a self-destruction of the individual Being, transforming us into soldiers of the system.

The artist Juno Calypso illustrates the description of a body, caught in the system of Power-relations, in her photographic artwork, *A Dream in Green*. Calypso is trying to set herself free from the expectations of her body, expressed by the surrounding society bearing down on her.<sup>145</sup> She is mirroring the expectations of society and hiding the truth about the inability of her body, and the state of it being nothing more than empty signs. The body is just an empty vessel ready to imitate whatever the beholder wishes to see.

In the third chapter, I investigated what the consequences would be, if one left the body altogether. ‘The way we perceive ourselves and relate to each other as humans, in a century marked by technological advancements, is going to be crucial for the future role of the body. How are we going to live and interact, organise and control each other?’ I employed the film *Blade Runner*, as a window into a possible future of ‘replicants’, with no relation to or understanding of the past. This realisation of a Being, without a past, would be a problem for one’s behaviour, since there are no inherited experiences of failure and conquest of the ones before them. Because of their human appearance, it would lead to a manipulative and random practice of signs without meaning.

I applied Bernard Stiegler’s critique on Martin Heidegger’s ‘Dasein’, the concept of a Being, who constantly attempts to flee death, and therefore forgets to live.<sup>146</sup> Life is the in-between living and dying, and if we pursue a future life, without the complications of somatic power-relations, it would conflict with life itself, since power-relations are what makes us human, and what creates meaning in life. It is therefore not as easy, to interfere and leave the human body as it seems. However I concluded with the help of Stiegler, that as long as we are not discussing the body from the perspective beyond the current state of the body, we can not expect to pass further. We will not be able to halt the conflict between solving somatic power-relations, and loss of Being. Our existence relies on not knowing when we are going to die, and to know that, we would not know what life is, as Heidegger explains. It is therefore vital, for a future existence, to not understand too much about themselves and their possible future. It is however, of great importance to know the past, since we must reflect upon it and to not make the same mistakes twice. The film *Gattaca* portrays a utopian society and a population

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<sup>145</sup> N. Frizzell, ‘I sounded like I was having the best sex’: Juno Calypso’s one-woman world tour of honeymoon hotels’, *The Guardian*, 2 July 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/02/juno-calypso-tour-honeymoon-hotels> [accessed 3 April 2016].

<sup>146</sup> Stiegler, 1998, p. 197

sustained by the use of eugenics. Everyone is aware of one's health, lifespan and approximately one's expiration date. If this were to happen, life would be saturated and meaningless, since we all would know when it would end. There is no hope and therefore no drive. It would be an existence, but not a life.

However our hesitation toward the employment of technology, in the search for a new body, could leave us inadequate. Hal Foster investigates into the source of our fear of prosthetics in relation to the body, as a raised finger against stubbornness and the apathy toward new technology. He determines whether or not it would be in the favour of humans to not invent us a new body. That it is time to get over our fear.<sup>147</sup> This was illustrated by Hans Bellmer's doll, standing as a monument to the trauma suffered to the body last time the invention of technology got out of hand against the human body. It is important to remember these aberrations, because they will continue to help guide us in the direction of a future understanding of the relationship between the Being and its vessel, but also as a warning that we should be careful with using technology we do not fully understand the consequences of.

To investigate into how to stall discussion regarding the future body from the perspective of inhabiting the old conventional body, a new term has emerged called 'Trans Humanism', presented by Celia Dean/Drummond and Peter Scott. It is a vision of a life in which the Being is switched for cognitive processes, as the vehicle for human identity. In 'Trans Humanism', there is no need to stay within the same body that is now called a host for the processes of identity, in theory to continue forever.<sup>148</sup> I reflected on 'Trans Humanism' through a photographic image manipulation I made of a Transgender woman named Jasmine. Even after changing her body she still felt an attachment to her former body. For her the question of the Being is partly bound to the body and partly to the inner. In the case of Jasmine, it seems to be a complicated relationship between the understanding of the time of her former life, in relation to own identity in the present, that is creating a Being divided between two bodies existing at two different times in her life, however continuing to exist as equals in her understanding of own Being. Furthermore, it is a path to wisdom that we have learned to reflect on the past, and we should utilise that ability when imagining the future. We should reflect on the present body before using our divine ability to create from nothing and craft a new human. The danger of a new body is that it would potentially lead to a loss of Being, since the creation of Being is interconnected with the understanding of time in relation to own identity. It would be difficult not to distort the circumstances if the Being was to exist outside a conventional body or within several other forms. This thesis could serve as a starting

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<sup>147</sup> Foster, 2004, p. 109

<sup>148</sup> Deane-Drummond and Scott, 2010, p. 2

point for further research into the question of what constitutes as the creation of Being. The research could go in either two directions. One of determining how to set ourselves free from the body, because it would be unsuited for a future life in a hyper-reality of mass media and technological forms of life. The other subject I envision my thesis research could serve, would concern the creation of robots, or other artificial intelligent based life. The creation of an understanding of Being would be important, if they evolve to be intelligent enough, in which they become interested in their own existence and origin. Without an understanding of Being, there would be a limit to their transformation.

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