

Consumer Cannibalism

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For always being there, even across the huge and interminable gulf that
separates us
(Cook Strait)
Sometimes so wide, and at others, far too narrow.
I love you all,
Ruth.

Abstract

What I am proposing to do here is to take the use of cannibalism as critique of corporeal exploitation made infamous in Thomas Prest's *A String Of Pearls* (better known as *Sweeney Todd*) and Charles Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend* and extend it to explore how I can use cannibalism to configure the consumption and exchange of the human body in contemporary (post) consumer culture. To suggest cannibalism as the 'zeitgeist' or religaré of society in that we are all corporeally, as well as socially, inter-dependent. My interest is not only the success but also the failure of the cannibal metaphor in how it describes the post-Industrial, post (as Baudrillard suggests) consumer culture of the west as beyond or dislocated from the reality that all value ultimately derives from flesh.

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Introduction: Consumer Cannibalism

‘Eating implies the consumption (dissolving, using up) of the food but it is also simultaneously a process of production, or better, construction, (re)producing or constructing life on all levels from the physical to the social. Thus we end up with the concept of reproduction which is nothing short of the variety of life-processes or different roles of metabolism within the body, between man and nature and man to man.’ P. Falk, *Consuming Body*, (London, 1994), p.95

What do I mean by ‘consumer cannibalism’? Essentially this work deals with two concepts, the first is that marked out in the 19th century cannibal critique that ‘the real of exchange’ as Catherine Gallagher puts it, ‘is life for life’; that consumer goods and currency relate back to the body which is ‘consumed’ in the process of (exploitative) production.¹ And the second relates to the generation, exchange and ‘consumption’ of images of the human body as *religaré* in contemporary culture.² Both relate to the body as the basis of the process of social construction or reproduction.

Cannibalism has been used as a literary device to describe and critique various exploitative economies from Industrial England to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The most infamous, and

¹ C. Gallagher, ‘The Bio-Economics of ‘Our Mutual Friend’’, in M. Feher, R. Nuddaff and N. Tazi ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part III, (New York, 1989), p.352

² *Religaré*: ‘to bind’, the root of ‘religion’.

popular, example of this is Thomas Prest's tale of the 'demon barber', *Sweeney Todd*, first incarnated as the 'penny blood' novel *A String of Pearls* and subsequently transformed into successively gory stage-plays, musicals, and finally the recent movie by Tim Burton. Cannibalism also figures strongly as a critique in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, and Swift's *A Modest Solution*, and as inversions of the usual cannibal other stereotype in Olaudah Equiano's *Narrative* and Montaigne's 'On Cannibals'; the latter notable (and somewhat typical of western 'inversions') in its attempt to reclaim the cannibal as 'noble savage' in opposition to European degeneracy and cruelty.³ The threat of cannibalism has been a longstanding technique of establishing the boundaries between self and other/ human and subhuman or inhuman in western culture. The cannibal in this sense is always projected outside or onto the margins of society; the very term 'cannibal' originally derives from 'Carib' and thus is synonymous in some sense with 'other'. In part, I want to explore the cannibal metaphor in this context as part of the articulation of humanity, but rather than read 'cannibalism' purely in terms of abjection, I want to explore how the consumption and exchange of the human body/image 'fabricates humanness', in C. Richard King's terms, from within.⁴ In essence I want to explore the communicative element of 'economic' cannibalism.

³ See Michel de Montaigne, "On Cannibals", (c1578-1580), in A.J. Andrea and J.H. Overfield, *The Human Record: Sources of Global History*, (Boston, 2001), pp.38-41

⁴ R.C. King, 'The (Mis)uses of Cannibalism in Contemporary Cultural Critique', *Diacritics*, Vol. 30, No. 1, (Spring 2000), p.109

In order to do so, I trace a somewhat tenuous progression from the 'cannibalistic' interdependence of the subsistence-level community, through to what we might call the 'symbolic cannibalism' often operating in sacrifice and particularly the totem or communion meal (although this isn't to say cannibalism in sacrifice is exclusively symbolic), and extending it through to the generation, exchange and 'consumption' of images of the human body in consumer culture. I do this because I want to demonstrate how the cannibal critique, the 'technology of sacrifice' (to coin Christine Durverger's term),⁵ and the circulation of images in contemporary culture all ultimately relate to the body as the basis of the system of exchange, while at the same time the latter two also express a desire to escape, or to sublimate, this corporeal relation. Mark C. Taylor's description of the sacrificial origin of economics in *About Religion* is invaluable here, drawing a progression between the consecrated flesh of the sacrifice, which is consumed by the community in a ritual act of identification, to the *image* stamped on the coin which 'becomes incarnate' in the social body through its binding circulation.⁶

As I said, I want to explore the communicative element of 'economic cannibalism', I'll stretch this from the 'cannibalizing' of the worker mapped out in the critique to the circulation of the human image within the social body through the mediums or 'technologies' of sacrifice to mass communication.

⁵ C. Durverger, 'The Meaning of Sacrifice', in M. Feher, R. Nuddaff and N. Tazi ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part III, (New York, Zone, 1989), p.366

⁶ M.C. Taylor, *About Religion: Economies of Faith in Virtual Culture*, (Chicago, 1999), p.151

‘Humanity’, I argue, constitutes a dialogue, in that what it is to be human is continually being re-articulated within society. A large part of this is the very basic distinctions between inside/outside, self and other which, as previously mentioned, the cannibal stereotype has traditionally been used as a means of fabricating in western culture. The circulation of images in contemporary culture serves a similar role in constructing boundaries and also constructing humanness from inside society, most obviously in the ongoing debates on abortion and euthanasia, in the plethora of articles and documentaries on disease and deformity, and the less salacious awareness campaigns. All these center around the question of what are the limits of humanity, the limits of being a human body (in the sense that to be human is to be an embodied entity), which in some sense is synonymous with the limits of articulation or representation. As Armand Marie Leroi’s study on the forms and variety of the human body *Mutants* demonstrates, the massive potential for variation in the human body pushes the limits not only of what we are *comfortable* but also *capable* of articulating and thus including in the dialogue which constitutes ‘humanity’ (for example the severe deformities of some stillborn infants).⁷ On the less sensational side, even the most mundane use of the human image in advertising has a role in binding and constructing society through building shared identification, thus representation has been and continues to be an urgent issue in mass communications in relation to sex, ethnicity, size etc.

⁷ See A.M. Leroi, *Mutants: On the form, Varieties, and Errors of the Human Body*, (London, 2005)

'Cannibalism' negotiates the boundaries of articulation, in that it threatens to transgress the boundaries between self and other, (and a certain level of distance is always required for communication). This is an inherent part of the anguish and ecstasy of the communion or totem meal, where the consumption of the victim who is the 'imago Dei' has the syncretic function of uniting society 'in the image' of (the) god,⁸ while at the same time a certain level of individuality or separation (sin) is essential in constructing this process as an ongoing need. The symbolic function of cannibalism in this sense unites Pasi Falk's eating as social and physical reproduction (see subtext) with Rossi-Landi's communication as social reproduction.⁹ Cannibalism not only establishes distinctions (self/other, human/inhuman) through threatened transgression, but also in a symbolic sense through the consumption of image (of which Taylor's *imago Dei* (the sacrifice who is the image of god) is a very literal demonstration), acts to bind (*religaré*) or to construct society. The cannibalized body or body-image is in this sense both the product and the basis of language.

While the circulation of images in consumer culture *can* act in a dialectical form there is always the danger of reducing the process of social construction from dialogue to monologue. As we'll see this is an inherent tendency in the reduction of the body into an image or symbol; while it allows for shared

⁸ Taylor, *About*, p.151

⁹ P. Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, trans. L. Adams, (Oxford and New York, 2004), p.10

communication and understanding (for language), it also limits interpretation. The circulation of images, particularly in relation to advertising imagery, also serves to further eclipse the 'real of exchange' marked out in the cannibal critique, while it also channels consumer desire away from connecting with people to the false or hyperreal social relation with images. I'm interested in whether the metaphor of cannibalism could be used to reclaim the sense of connection, of the economy as a structure of relations between real people, but I'm also interested in what the failure of the cannibal critique (in its classic sense relating to corporeal exploitation in the process of production) to feature in contemporary debate implies for our post-Industrial culture. Perhaps the most blunt example of this would be an advertisement for 'Ella Baché' skincare I stumbled across in a magazine a couple of years ago, featuring a naked woman dangling from a pair of chopsticks with the caption 'Skin good enough to eat'.¹⁰ What caught my attention about this image was the way in which it spelt out, with slightly transgressive literalism, the way in which bodies are constantly served up to us in order to stimulate consumer desire. What really intrigues me is the fact that we can have such unabashed plays on the 'cannibal' desire of contemporary consumers, while the cannibal *critique*, which underlines the fact that all goods ultimately relate back to the body of the producer/s, who are 'cannibalized' in the process of production, fails to

¹⁰ I was unable to find a print copy of this advertisement, although I did find a smaller version featuring a woman dangling off a spoon with the caption 'Skin good enough eat' for Ella Baché franchisees squeezed in next to an article on the murder of a Israeli teenager; *Marie Claire* 124, December 2005. The chopstick version is also on the website: www.ellabache.com

feature in contemporary imagery. A large part of this is due to the shift of much of mass-production to the 'third world', so we (in the west) no longer have to directly confront the realities of industrial production and how they impact on people's lives in anything other than a virtual setting. But distance isn't the only factor, as I suggested, the further image is abstracted from the body, the further desire is abstracted toward the 'nowhereland of the image' rather than toward people or towards products which are extensions of bodies (of people's labor), the easier it is to bypass the people in the process of consumption. As such are we so thoroughly dislocated that the cannibal critique can no longer be made relevant?

Part One: History and Myth

Cannibalism as a Metaphor in Consumer Culture.

‘...beyond the obvious appeal of such outrageous subject matter, the popularity of the tale of Sweeney Todd testifies to the existence of a mid-century working-class perception that in a newly industrialized economy there existed not only a literal but a metaphorical relationship between the consumption of goods and a cannibalistic feeding on ones’ fellow urbanites.’ – Sally Powell, ‘Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade, and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood’, in A. Maunder and G. Moore ed., *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, (Hampshire, 2004) p.50

‘...the trope of economics –the mediation of money –seem to be a euphemism directing our attention from that which the explicit metaphors reveal: The real of exchange is life for life.’ – Gallagher, ‘The Bio-economics of ‘Our Mutual Friend’’, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, (New York, 1989), p.352

‘Life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one’s own forms, incorporation, and at least and mildest, exploitation...’ F. Nietzsche, quoted in Paul Patton, ‘Nietzsche and the body of the philosopher,’ in R. Disprose and R. Ferrell ed., *Cartographies: Postructuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces*, (NSW, 1991), p.47

Industrialization and Exploitation

In the 19th Century cannibalism was employed as a metaphor for exploitation from Swift’s satire *A Modest Proposal* and

Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend*, to more popular 'mythologies' such as the legend of the demon barber 'Sweeney Todd', first making it's literary debut in *A String of Pearls* before eventually metamorphosing into the play, musical, and lately the movie. In these texts cannibalism features as a sophisticated, or (in the latter case) rather blunt, device for illustrating social inequalities exacerbated by urbanization and industrialization. 'Sweeney Todd' is, arguably, the foundation text for the cannibal metaphor. In *A String of Pearls* the theme of cannibalism extends from the infamous pies made from the flesh of Todd's victims (who have their throats slit on his barber's chair) to the 'consumption' of the worker, Mark Ingestrie, who is held captive by Todd and Mrs. Lovett and forced to produce (and consume) the pies with the aid of the latest technological gadgetry.¹¹ (This element is unfortunately absent from Tim Burton's recent movie, although it does have redeeming recourse to the 'dog eat dog world' in order to describe the interrelations of upper and working classes in Industrial England). Ingestrie's life drains into the machine of capitalist production in a way that parallels the experience of much of the working class,¹² and also strikes a chord with the moral of Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend*, that exchange is essentially 'life for life'.¹³

¹¹ See S. Powell, 'Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood', in A. Maunder and G. Moore (eds), *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, (Hampshire, 2004), pp. 51-2

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Gallagher, p.352

In 'Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade, and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood', Sally Powell explores the popular use of cannibalism during Industrialization as a metaphor for the corporeal exploitation of factory workers whose lives and bodies were 'consumed' in the process of creating cheap goods. A vivid example of this is George Cruikshank's cartoon 'Tremendous Sacrifice', (*Our Own Times*, 1846), depicting working-class women obliged by poverty to mount the steps into a gigantic grinding machine, turned by a 'satanic, Todd-like character',¹⁴ in which their bodies are ground up and transformed into cheap goods for unwitting and delighted consumers.¹⁵ Gallagher explores similar themes in Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend*, the first chapter of which plays on the logic that 'any commodity qua commodity is expended life',¹⁶ as the Gaffer responds to the objections of his daughter to the putrefying corpse they are hauling out of the Thames by pointing out it is 'meat and drink' to her; such trade has sustained her entire living. As Gallagher notes 'We are, then, given two ways in which the corpse can be a "living" in this passage, but the distinction between them is collapsible. The more acceptable account (in which the human body is an item of exchange in a monetary network that fails to distinguish it from other items) is disturbing. But the source of the disturbance, when sought, seems to be the deep secret that

¹⁴ Powell, p.51

¹⁵ Ibid, p.55, fig.3.4

¹⁶ Gallagher, p.353

money is always ultimately taken out of flesh.... Money is just a metaphor for human flesh.¹⁷

The dehumanizing nature of mass production produced an anti-social structure of relations between producers and consumers, which can be held in opposition to the romantic notion of face to face relations within the 'village' community; an example of such an idealized structure of relations being established through exchange is Bataille's conception of medieval Europe, where the producer had to surrender goods once the 'just price' necessary to cover the cost of production and the needs of the producer had been reached.¹⁸ In the Cruishank cartoon however the women whose lives are being expended in the production of cheap textiles are separated from the oblivious consumers by a curtain, and the consumer's enthusiasm for the product is enough to quell any curiosity to dig any deeper beyond the exclamation 'I cannot imagine how they can possibly be made for the price!' Much the same as Mrs. Lovett's customers in *Sweeney Todd* are reluctant to pry too closely into the origin of her pies in order not to dispel the enchantment generated by their quality and affordability: "Sufficient for the day is the pie thereof".¹⁹

At the same time Cruishank explored the familiar urban themes of dislocation and indifference, there was also a pervading fear of contamination, partly because the rise of microbial science

¹⁷ Ibid, pp.352-3

¹⁸ G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share: an Essay on General Economy*, Vol.I, Trans. R. Hurley, (New York, 1991), p.117

¹⁹ Thomas Prest, *Sweeny Todd, or The Barber of Fleet Street*, (Edward Lloyd, 1850), p.331 quoted in Powell, p.51

combined with overpopulation created a growing sense that the cities were thick with human matter; an anonymous comic in the *Punch*, 'A Drop of London Water: Revealed, infinitesimal semblances of humanity',²⁰ itself a parody of Arthur Hill Hassan's microscopic analysis of East London water,²¹ depicts 'microbes' with human and animalistic features (including jackets and bow ties), suggesting that not only were such things viewed as human in origin but somehow human in nature as well.²² Londoners existed in a veritable soup, where the emanations of graveyards permeated the air and corrupted the water supply along with the products and byproducts of slaughterhouses and sewers (not to mention the ever-present threat of what Powell refers to as 'the displaced urban corpse').²³ From here this corruption could seep up the ranks of society in seemingly innocent and innocuous products such as the daily loaf (as opposed to the always-suspect pie or sausage); Powell provides a vivid example in a report to the Sanitary Commission in 1847 which 'in a decent-looking shop, in a respectable neighborhood' found sewerage leaking into the baker's trough.²⁴ In 19th Century London, cannibal as a

²⁰ See Powell, p.55, fig. 3.3: "A Drop of London Water: Revealed, Infinitesimal Semblances of Humanity", *Punch* 8, 1850, 189

²¹ See Powell, p.55, fig. 3.2: "East London Water: A Microscopic Analysis of Thames Water as Revealed by Arthur Hill Hassan in *A Microscopic Examination of the Water Supplied to the Inhabitants of London and the Suburban Districts*, (1850).

²² Powell, pp.49-50

²³ Ibid, pp.45 & 47-50

²⁴ Dr William Guy, *Parliamentary papers* 1847-1848, Vol. LI, "Copy of the Evidence given by Dr Guy before the Sanitary Commission in reference to the Persons Employed in the Baking Trade". 367. Cited in Freedman, 77, cited in Powell, p.49

metaphor existed alongside a literal threat of 'cannibalism' (or at least the ingestion of human material) which lent it all the more urgency.

Pamela Gilbert explores similar anxieties, not in only relation to contaminated foodstuffs but also circulating library books, referring Cyrius Ederson's essay on the 'Socialism of the microbe', which 'binds all people of the community together'.²⁵ Every act of consumption, from food to knowledge, was one of unwanted but necessary cannibalism that left the consumer open to a sinister syncretism. Mass produced goods, which undermine established relationships not only in their process of production but also by being widely available, transgressing a number of boundaries between classes and locations and binding more people together as consumers than previously possible, also opened up channels of contamination, much like any bodily exchange. 'Given that by the 1840s industrialization had reached mass production, the success enjoyed by the tale of Lovett's pies suggests a growing awareness of the probability that food, like other products, would be further subject to mass manufacture and that in consuming such a product, the consumer would be required to make an increasingly significant leap of faith in relation to its integrity.'²⁶ Branding and other forms of familiarizing and humanizing mass manufactured products helped to facilitate this 'leap of faith' by providing a

²⁵ C. Edson, 'The Microbe as a Social Leveller', *The North American Review* 161, (1895), p.421, in P.K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels*, (Cambridge, 1997), p.39

²⁶ Powell, p.51

‘face’ and surrogate or illusory social relation that acts as much of a reassurance as the accompanying guarantee.

In light of this, Powell suggests that E.S. Turner’s claim “a psychologist could be found to assert that the macabre relish with which successive generations have devoured Sweeny Todd, the Demon Barber, springs from a desire deep down in everyman’s heart to know what his neighbor taste like” should be reversed.²⁷ That the thrill in the cannibal genre derives from the all-too-acute awareness that urbanites are already immersed in a cannibalistic syncretism, in which the living and the dead merge at their most urgent in the ambiguous, mass-produced foodstuff, where literal and metaphorical cannibalism also merge. (Peiro Camporesi’s work, *Incorruptible Flesh*, suggests this has been a longstanding and universal perception, extending through the middle ages and throughout Europe, although this still must have been exacerbated by the rapid influx of people to the cities in the industrial period. Camporesi also reconciles Turner’s cannibal desire with Powell’s cannibal knowing, presenting the pulverized, powdered or distilled human body, possibly that of an executed criminal, as an item for medicinal consumption alongside the flesh of slaughtered animals).²⁸ Which begs the question, as I will explore

²⁷ E.S. Turner, *Boys will be Boys: the Story of Sweeny Todd, Deadwood Dick, Sexton Blake Billy Bunter, et al*, (London, Michael Joseph, 1948, rev. 1975). 34 quoted in Powell, p.50

²⁸ See P. Camporesi *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutilation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, Originally published as *La Carne Impossibile* by il Saggiatore, Milton, 1983, Trans. T. Croft-Murray, (Cambridge, 1988), of course it’s important to note that Camporesi’s medicinal bodies existed alongside the institution of the Catholic Eucharist which provided something of a model for the miraculous properties of the ingested human body (although they no doubt drew on other traditions as well), while this element is largely absent from the 19th Century Critique.

throughout this, to what extent can cannibalism be used as a model for the interrelations (economic or otherwise) of communities in general? And how does this figure, or to what extent can an underlying awareness of this be read, into institutions such as money?

The Cannibal(ized) Other

The other notable use of cannibalism as a metaphor for exploitation in capitalist society relates to slavery and colonization. Alan Rice's historical exploration of the 'discourse of cannibalism' in Black Atlantic literature, 'Who's eating whom' explores the reversal of the cannibal stereotype as a literary device for turning white justifications for racism and exploitation in on itself, particularly in relation to the slave trade, from the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano to Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*.²⁹ Urban mythologies of body and organ snatching in South Africa, Brazil and Russia (among others) can be read in similar terms as expressing a real fear and a metaphorical truth. As both subversive and sensationalist such subject matter also has a role in threatened and disempowered communities of striking out at authority; organ or body theft generally mirrors the pattern of (unequal) exchange from rich to poor, east to west etc; although Luise White refers to rumor circulating among Central and Eastern African sex workers where it is the male clients, rather than the disempowered prostitutes, who are 'cannibalized' in a scene

²⁹ A. Rice, 'Who's Eating Whom? The Discourse of Cannibalism in the Literature of the Black Atlantic from Equiano's "Travels" to Toni Morrison's "Beloved"', *Research into African Literatures*, 29:4, (1998), pp.106-121

with remarkable similarity to *Sweeney Todd*, although set in a brothel rather than a barber's shop; the drugged client falls down a trapdoor into a basement where his blood, organs and skin are harvested for transplants.³⁰ Since victims are typically children the organ-stealing stories also have a role in expressing parent's anxieties and educating children in the subject of 'stranger danger', particularly in communities where children (and adults) frequently do disappear.³¹ More generally body theft rumors, (like cannibalism in general), serve to articulate the boundaries of the (threatened) community against the cannibal 'Other', and (largely for this reason) they entertain.

Cannibalism has also been employed by contemporary critics to describe capitalism as a process of ingesting and incorporating people into the 'desiring machine'. A somewhat dubious feature of this is the appropriation of Native American and in particular Aztec cannibalistic practice and myth, such as Dean MacCannel's claiming of the Aztec empire as 'totemic ancestor' of modern capitalism. As C. Richard King points out in his essay 'The (Mis)uses of Cannibalism in Contemporary Critique', this appropriation has the effect of further undermining the very people the critics propose to save from being consumed by the economic cannibalism of capitalism.³²

While he explores strong evidence of a very real fear of being cannibalized by white 'consumers', Rice also suggests that given

³⁰ N. Scheper-Hughes, 'Theft of Life', *Anthropology Today*, 12:3 (1996), p.4

³¹ Ibid, p.6

³² King, pp.106-123

the European trope of the cannibal other and savagery as justification for slavery and colonialism, backed up by quasi-scientific methods of reading cannibalism into the body such as phrenology, 'eighteenth-century African writers' constant harping on their cannibalistic fears could surely be seen as a sophisticated device to illustrate the realities of the Atlantic slave trade.'³³ In his autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, Equiano, a former slave and member of the English Abolitionist Movement, frequently claims to have interpreted his captors' desires as cannibalistic; not a surprising conclusion from a child or early teen confronted with the sight of 'a large furnace or copper boiling and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection or sorrow' on his first boarding a slave ship; although in light of Rice's 'sophisticated device' it is important to point out how Equiano's copper presents an inversion of the typical cannibal scene of colonial mythology, where the dark skinned 'savages' are participants at the cannibal feast, possibly of the flesh of white captives.³⁴

'Being an owned man Equiano fears entering the bodily economy of the white man just as easily as he had been consumed by the economy of his state.'³⁵ Similarly for the Brazilian poor in Nancy Scheper-Hughes study of organ stealing

³³ Rice, p.113

³⁴ O. Equiano, 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Written by Himself', (1789), A.J. Andrea and J.H. Overfield, *The Human Record*, (Boston, 2001), p.209

³⁵ Rice, p.114

mythologies, 'Theft of Life', organ and/or body theft, far from being fantastical or far-fetched, is simply an extension of the corporeal exploitation around them.³⁶ Hughes notes that tales of organ theft exist alongside other 'bodily economies' such as international adoption,³⁷ and like Rice's cannibal analogy may be considered a device for graphically illustrating that 'unequal exchange', like all forms of exploitation, equivalent cannibalism. This also suggests Nietzsche's most basic example of power as an 'ingestion and incorporation of a weaker entity' and is carried through by MacCannell's condemnation of economic imperialism; *'Cannibalism in the political-economic register is the production of social totalities by the literal incorporation of otherness. It deals with human difference in the most direct way, not merely doing away with it, but by taking it in completely, metabolizing it, transforming it into shit.'*³⁸

Rice explores cases of shipwreck survival where slaves as crewmembers or cargo were selected before Europeans or, 'drew the short straw', to be killed and eaten, illustrating that there occasionally existed no gap between 'economic' and literal cannibalism; 'Having eaten the unfortunate slave, they used his body "“with the utmost economy,”" making it last for ten days. 'This slave had truly entered the bodily economy of the white man and his unfree status made him easy victim.'³⁹

³⁶ Scheper-Hughes, p.6

³⁷ Ibid, p.7

³⁸ D. MacCannell, "Cannibalism Today", Empty Meeting Grounds: the Tourist Papers, (New York, 1992), p.66, quoted in King, p.113

³⁹ Rice, p.114

By linking the economic values of capitalism with the 'utmost economy' to which the slave's body is put Rice underlines the dehumanizing nature of slavery as well as the inhuman nature of a slave economy, painting a picture of chilling indifference perhaps best expressed in Gallagher's terms: 'worse than cannibalistic bio-economy'.⁴⁰ The 'economic' utilization of the slave's body dramatically undermines Bataille's claim that 'the corpse is the most complete affirmation of the spirit'.⁴¹ By contrast in accounts of survival cannibalism such as the 1972 plane crash recounted in P.P. Read's *Alive*, the bodies of the deceased are cast in religious terms as sacrament in relation to their saving power for the living: this also suggests two options open to the would-be cannibal to counter the abjection of consuming human flesh, either dehumanizing or divinizing the deceased.⁴² In a sense what Rice depicts in this account of survival cannibalism is the true nightmare form of cannibalism, existing outside and undermining any social relation between the deceased and those who ingest his flesh and blood. This economic use, more than the act of consumption itself, emphasizes the slave's status as a subhuman thing whose only value lies in its ability to sustain the white 'bodily economy'.

Rice explores themes not only of consumption but also of starvation as self-preservation against the devouring machine, claiming Africans often interpreted the force-feeding on board

⁴⁰ Gallagher, p.353

⁴¹ G. Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, (New York, 1989), p.40

⁴² P.P. Read, excerpt from *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors*, (1974), in J.S. Cummings ed., *Cannibalism: Shocking true Tales of the Last Taboo on Land and at Sea*, (Guilford, 2001), pp.131-156

slave ships in terms of fattening for a cannibal market; which again had a metaphorical truth to it.⁴³ Starvation may be the only technique available to avoid being consumed. Rice also reverses Rigney's reading of the girl Pecola's consumption of Mary-Jane candy in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* from a "primitive right of passage, a cannibal feast as she gorges herself on the body of the enemy in order to assume its power",⁴⁴ to 'a sign of her entrapment in a globalized system in which intensively plantation-farmed sugar and its teeth-rotting products are signs of Third World people's exploitation both as workers and consumers'; the 'bodily economy of the white man' displays a dangerous syncretism, figured in the sweets which as a symbol of the white body are a microism of the world including the doubly exploitative, syncretic process of free trade. Pecola's consumption of the sweets brings the dyad full circle.⁴⁵

Consumption as exploitation is also a feature of Native American interpretations of colonization; King refers to a version of the Treaty of Ruby Valley where the treaty is 'consecrated' by forcing the Shoshoni Indians to consume the flesh of a slain kinsman at gunpoint, and the treaty is subsequently signed in his blood.⁴⁶ Other stories where Indians are tricked by white settlers into consuming human flesh, or

⁴³ Rice, p.109

⁴⁴ B.H. Rigney, *The Voices of Toni Morrison*, (Columbus, 1991), p.85 quoted in Rice, p.105

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.105

⁴⁶ Frank Temoke, (1965), quoted in R.O. Clemmer, 'Ideology and Identity: Western Shoshoni 'Cannibal' Myth as Ethnonational Narrative', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 52 (1996), p.214, quoted in King, p.111

narrowly escape doing so, reinforce this technique of using cannibalism both to demonize European colonizers and express the doubly exploitative system of colonization, which, after it has undermined both their culture and resources entraps native people into the economic cannibalism of capitalism.⁴⁷

Baudrillard's rather abstract understanding of the nature of exploitation in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* reads slavery as the denial of death; 'Labour therefore everywhere draws its inspiration from deferred death. It comes from deferred death. Slow or violent, immediate or deferred, the scansion of death is decisive: it is what radically distinguishes two types of organization, the economic and the sacrificial.'⁴⁸ If we take Taylor's claim that 'all economies are sacrificial', and that the origins of currency are in sacrifice, as will be discussed in the next chapter, then we can understand the denial of death in slavery as the denial of transcendence, the condemnation to what Baudrillard describes as 'the indefinite abjection of a life of labour' or a 'life without return' because being unable to risk his life the slave is unable to partake of the redemptive cycle of sacrifice figured in currency.⁴⁹ And therefore remains a commodity, a 'thing' separated from immanence and allowed possessing a limited (or limiting) value as Bataille's description

⁴⁷ R.O. Clemmer, 'Ideology and Identity: Western Shoshoni 'Cannibal' Myth as Ethnonational Narrative', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 52 (1996), p.215 quoted in King, p.111: The threat of being tricked into eating human flesh (particularly that of a friend or relative) is also a reoccurring feature of western mythologies from Homer's *Odysseus* and *The String of Pearls*, to fairy tales such as the Grimm brothers' *The Juniper Tree*, pointing possibly to a universal or near-universal anxiety.

⁴⁸ J. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, (London, 1993), p.39

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.40

of sacrifice in *Theory of Religions* suggests: 'The thing -only the thing -is what sacrifice means to destroy in the victim. Sacrifice destroys an object's real ties of subordination; it draws the victim out of the world of utility and restores it to that of unintelligible caprice.'⁵⁰ 'Between the animal that is eaten and the one that eats, there is no relation of subordination like that connecting an object, a thing, to man, who refuses to be viewed as a thing.'⁵¹

By contrasting the technologically improved bodies of the wealthy and the surgically marred bodies of the poor Nancy Scheper-Hughes neatly illustrates the division between sacrificial and economic, between the commodified bodies of the poor and the rich who are trying to sublimate themselves into currency through the ongoing process of marking their bodies in the image of society: 'While the poor and poorly insured in Brazil must make do with Third World medicine, the middle classes and the wealthy of rural Brazil indulge themselves in the latest and most sophisticated forms of clinical medicine, body sculpting, and plastic surgery.'⁵² The real trade in 'spare' organs from marginalized donors, as well as the rumored black market in stolen bodies, further removes them from the sacrificial domain by relegating them to the economic realm, while as 'gifts' the blood and organs of first world donors are seen in terms of sacrifice and therefore sacred. Interesting

⁵⁰ Bataille, *Theory*, p.43

⁵¹ Ibid, p.18

⁵² Scheper-Hughes, p.6

too that we have two ongoing 'dialogues', the contrasting articulation of poor and rich, the marks of both plastic surgery and organ theft (real or imagined) are signs of the relationships between bodies.

All these critiques are inversions of what Rice refers to as the 'white-held stereotype of the bestial other', a technique which is successful precisely because they challenge the well-established technique of using cannibalism to distinguish between outside and inside, savage and civilized, and even more basically human and sub-human/ inhuman.⁵³ As King's research shows, this technique is not specific to the west but potentially a universal means of fabricating the boundaries between self and other. King refers to the warning that the Arapesh delivered to Margaret Mead before she journeyed up the Sepik River with some of their own people that the inhabitants of the upper reaches ate human flesh: 'Do not be misled by your experience among us. We are another kind. They are another kind. So you will find it.'⁵⁴ Columbus reported legends of distant cannibals among the peoples he encountered in the Americas, although, given the tradition of the cannibal-other in western culture (as will be discussed later), it has to be wondered whether the legend was colored by the westerners' own preconceptions of who they were likely

⁵³ Rice, p.105

⁵⁴ M. Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. 1935. (New York, 1963), p.167 quoted in King, p.108

to find.⁵⁵ A similar strategy can be read into the Cree Indian legend of the *Wetiko*; the tribe-member turned cannibal living outside the margins of society/in the wilderness. European beliefs in witches and faeries can also be read in this light, if we take as definitive Carlo Ginzburg's theory that all such beliefs relate to a universal fear of the blood/life-sucking unappeased dead with whom margins and marginals are associated.⁵⁶ As King puts it cannibalism 'constitutes the cultural; it makes difference; it fabricates humanness.'⁵⁷

Cannibalism can also operate within the community to 'fabricate humanness'; King refers to Bronislaw Malinowski to propose the theory that cannibalism can also be used within the community as a means of 'to mark off their uniqueness and condemn others.' Malinowski recalled a conversation with an 'old cannibal' who wondered how the Europeans managed to consume the spoils of the Great War; 'when I told him indignantly that Europeans do not eat their slain foes, he looked at me in horror and asked what kind of barbarians were we to kill without any real object'.⁵⁸ Malinowski constructs a very economic sense of ethics in relation to human life, similar to that Gallagher notes in Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend*. The

⁵⁵ See Rice, p.111 and King, p.108

⁵⁶ In some sense the witch in Hansel and Gretel, parallels the *Wetiko*, in that she is a prime example of the cannibal other living outside the margins of society (in the forest). She also embodies the classic stereotype of the anti-mother, consuming rather than feeding/ corrupting through feeding, prevalent in the vampire genre. See J. Gordon, 'Sharper than a Serpent's Tooth: the Vampire in Search of Its Mother', in J. Gordon and V. Hollinger ed. *Blood Read*, (Philadelphia, 1997), p.45-58

⁵⁷ King, p.109

⁵⁸ B. Malinowski, Introduction, *The Savage Hits Back*, J.E. Lips, (New Haven, 1937), p.vii quoted in King, p.109

problem with such readings is they come to us already filtered through a western perspective, and offer a rather simplistic understanding of cannibalism dislocated from the complexities of the culture in which it was practiced. As we have seen cannibalism-as-binder was the nightmare of English industrial society, it did not 'fabricate humanness', it worked in terms of abjection, linking everyone (including the wealthy and the middle classes) into a subhuman 'dog-eat-dog' syncretism that was associated more with the lower orders; who, after the enlightenment, were not associated with the head or the 'closed' body of the rational individual, but with the internal and lower aspects of the body; consumption and excretion; the porous margins of the body and society.⁵⁹

The cannibal has always been an object of salacious attraction, King's reference to Herodius' *Anthrophagi*, who live clearly outside the boundaries of (Roman) civilization, somewhere near Scythia: '*Beyond this region the country is desert for a great distance; and beyond the desert Androphagi dwell... The Androphagi have the most savage customs of all men, they pay no regard to justice, nor make use of any established law... they speak a peculiar language; and of all these nations, are the only people that eat human flesh.*'⁶⁰ King traces the Androphagi myth through to Shakespeare's *Othello*, several centuries later, 'Of the cannibals who do each other eat/ The Andophagi, and men whose heads/ Do grow beneath their shoulders',

⁵⁹ See R. Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, (New York, , 2004), pp.60&247

⁶⁰ Herodotus quoted in W. Arens, *The Man Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy*, (Oxford, 1979), quoted in King, p.108

demonstrating the cannibal to have been a staple of armchair tourism for centuries, long before Dennis O'Rourke's documentary *Cannibal Tours*.⁶¹ The cannibal is never so much encountered as projected, as Columbus' interpretation of cannibal rumors picked up during his exploration of America suggest; '...at a distance there were men with one eye only, and others with faces like dogs, who were man-eaters, accustomed upon taking a prisoner to cut his throat, drink his blood and dismember him.'⁶² These accounts bear a striking similarity, suggesting both the universal technique of cannibal-as-other to define the limits of humanity and bind the community within boundaries which are both permeable and threatened, and the more likely influence of this romantic or sensational tradition of the cannibal other in western culture; the tradition with which O' Rourke's tourists attempt to connect with in their encounter with the 'reformed cannibals' of Melanesia.⁶³

The danger, in employing 'inversions' of the cannibal stereotype to demonstrate or demonize economic relations in a postcolonial world, as Richard King notes in 'The misuses of cannibalism in contemporary cultural critique', is that it can also reinforce the normative stereotype of the cannibal other.

⁶¹ King, p.108

⁶² C. Columbus, *Journal of the First Voyage to America 1492-1493*. Heath Anthropology and Journal of American Literature Vol.1, ed. P. Lauter et al. Lexington, 1994, pp.122-3, quoted in Rice, p.111: Interestingly these descriptions of ritual slaying and consumption also draw strong parallels to European folk myths involving the ritual slaughter, consumption, and often resurrection (by reassembling the bones or placing the remains in a cauldron) of cattle or people; which can also be traced back to classical myth (and at a stretch beyond since superficially 'ritualized' dismemberment and cannibalism has also been recorded among chimpanzees (who have in at least one instance enacted it against a human being)), suggesting a universal aspect to the legend.

⁶³ King, p.106

King explores the use of cannibalism in a number of critiques, the result is often a problematic contrast of reformed cannibals with reforming cannibals, as western cultural imperialism is cast as an ingesting, incorporating and even excretion of an eroticized other (as demonstrated in the previous quote from MacCannell). The argument is further undermined by the appropriation of decontextualized elements of disenfranchised 'cannibal' cultures to provide the language as well as a mirror for contemporary western society, as in Deborah Root's reference to the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca: "'Does Tezcatlipoca walk in the west? Does Tezcatlipoca still demand blood in exchange for power? Is it possible that despite the European claim to rationality and the ideal of the democratic polis, violence and cannibalism have a ceremonial function here similar to that of the Aztec state.'"'⁶⁴ To claim that 'we are the cannibals *now*' not only leaves intact but reinforces the stereotype used to justify colonialism in the first place.⁶⁵ McCannell's 'partially sublimated cannibalism', read so close to *The Cannibal Tours* in King's essay suggests an evolutionary dynamic that sees capitalism as a regression to the savage state of the Melanesians of the Sepik River Valley, or their close ancestors.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ D. Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference*, (Boulder, 1996), p.6 quoted in King, p.121

⁶⁵ King, p.121

⁶⁶ D. MacCannell, "Cannibalism Today." *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*, (New York, 1992), p.20 quoted in King, p.113

‘The zeitgeist of the west, according to Root, cultivates and even celebrates the insatiable appetites of the cultural cannibal; the ceaseless desire in turn feeds power to lives, bodies, and experiences of others.’⁶⁷ Cannibalism as zeitgeist, as the spirit or as the *religagé* of a society, in essence this is the idea I am going to explore throughout this text, and the point I want to get across particularly in my discussion of sacrifice in the next chapter, that currency, (whatever is cultural currency (which is something of an oxymoron)), is the spiritualization or the expression of a kind of society’s ‘cannibalizing’ of its members. Like Root and MacCannel, my argument rests in no small part on the appropriation of Aztec culture by western academics such as Bataille, who in turn is drawn on by Taylor. In part, I avoid directly dealing with the connotations of this by exploring sacrificial cannibalism as an abstract ‘technology’ (how appropriate for an ex-Catholic), even so (or perhaps particularly so) this deserves to be challenged.

There is a cyclical nature to such explorations, where the ‘other’ is exhumed and examined in order to understand the self; Bataille bases his argument of Aztec society as consumer society on the writings of a Sixteenth Century Spanish Franciscan, Bernardino de Sahagún; Nanauatzin (the Aztec god who immolated himself to become the sun) as the one who will ‘bring light to the world’, the sacrificial slaying of a young man ‘around Easter time’,⁶⁸ and the sacrificer ‘who regarded his

⁶⁷ King, p.120

⁶⁸ Bataille, *Accursed*, pp.46-7&49

victim as a son, as a second self',⁶⁹ have such a strong resonance with Christianity it makes it inevitable that the economic relationship between god and society, between individual bodies and the social body, mapped out in Aztec sacrifice corresponds to that of the Catholic Eucharist. Perhaps this is due to the universal structure of society in accordance with the microcosm of the human body. Or this is another example of the colonization or cannibalization of the 'Other' by western Imperialism, in which case my argument is cyclical, or self-validating, at this point it is appropriate to outline a universal truth: all universal arguments are cyclical in nature. This signals their kinship with the mythic; as Durkheim pointed out "nothing is more crude than those myths made of a single theme which is endlessly reiterated".⁷⁰ As I pointed out in the beginning my project in this next chapter is largely concerned with outlining a 'myth of origins' for consumer culture, and all myths of origins are constructed and deconstructed in the present.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.53

⁷⁰ E. Durkheim, 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life: The Totemic System in Austrailia' first published in French as *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*, Aclan, Paris, 1912a, pp.1-15, in W.S.E. Pickering ed., *Durkheim on Religion*, (Atlanta, 1994), p.107

Sacrifice

‘Though origins remain obscure, primitive economies are almost always seem to be surrounded by a magico-religious aura. Every economy is, in some sense, sacrificial. As people created networks of exchange, so they established economic bonds with their gods.’ Mark C. Taylor, *About Religion: Economies of Faith in Virtual Culture*, (Chicago, 1999), p.149

‘...the only alternative to labour is not free time or non-labour, it is sacrifice.’ J. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, (London, 1993), p.39

Before I go on, I will take a step back. In the previous chapter I explored the tradition of cannibalism as a critique of corporeal exploitation in industrial England, as well as the history of cannibalism in the western tradition of articulating the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the long established trope of the cannibal other. In the next half of my essay I want to explore how the consumption and exchange of *images* of the human body in contemporary, ‘post’ consumer culture ‘fabricates humanness’ in relation to the ‘real of exchange’ mapped out in the cannibal critique. In order to suggest that the trade in images has its origins in a desire or tendency to sublimate the social relation mapped out in the critique, that we are all inevitably locked into a ‘cannibalistic’ inter-dependency. As Gallagher suggests in relation to *Our Mutual Friend*, ‘the trope of economics -the mediation of money – seem to be a euphemism directing our attention from that which the explicit metaphors reveal: the real of exchange is life for life.’⁷¹ In order to trace the genealogy of image to

⁷¹ Gallagher, p.352

cannibalism as a *social* relation I will explore sacrifice, particularly as a technology of sublimating transmutating the body from *commodity* to *cultural currency*. As I pointed out at the end of the previous argument the function here is essentially mythic: a cyclical and self-validating exploration. Still, I'm curious to know how far I can push the metaphor before it collapses, Like Foucault's individual body and identity which would vanish 'like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea',⁷² like the over-extended body of Christ in the (reputed) Cathari critique of the eucharist: 'though it had been as great as the Alps, would long ago have been consumed long ago by those who have eaten of it'.⁷³

The Genesis of Currency

'The species of the syllogism is money, and coined money is "specie." "Specie", in turn, can also designate "either of the consecrated elements of the Eucharist." Within the machinations of the mediatrix, the process of transubstantiation extends from bread and body, as well as wine and blood, to paper, gold and even electricity.', M.C. Taylor and E. Sarineen, *Imagologies: Media Philosophy*, (New York, 1994), *Electronomics* 9

Taylor's description of the genesis of currency in *Imagologies*, read in conjunction with his later work in *About Religion: Economies of Faith in virtual culture*, draws a progression from flesh to light, from sacrifice to token to electronic currency in a process of sublimating base bodies into ethereal essence, 'pure'

⁷² M. Foucault, quoted in T. J. Armstrong, 'Bodies of Knowledge/ Knowledge of Bodies' in C. Jones and R. Porter ed., *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body*, (London, 1994), p.26

⁷³ Pierre des Vax de Cernay in E. Peters ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation*, (Philadelphia, 1980), quoted in D.S. Lopez, 'Belief', in M.C. Taylor ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, (Chicago, 1998), p.25

gold or energy which circulates within the social body, binding people and gods, living and dead through networks of exchange. According to Taylor, the forge and the womb are intrinsically linked in the human mind; miners, smelters, and alchemists act as midwives helping the earth to deliver her 'legitimate son', gold; pure gold is the purpose of all being, all other metals are the deformed result of a failing in the womb which needs correcting.⁷⁴ There are parallels here to Nancy Jay's writing on sacrifice and paternity in *Throughout Your Generations Forever*, where sacrifice figures as a (male) usurpation of the womb: '...Aztec sacrifice calls to mind the many vivid metaphors in which sacrifice is opposed to childbirth as birth done better, under deliberate purposeful control, and on a more exalted level than ordinary mothers do it.'⁷⁵ I'm not interested here in the connotations of sacrifice as 'man's childbearing' for gender studies so much as the links between the bodily process of reproduction and the technology of sacrifice and sublimation. J.L. Nancy theorizes spirit is the sublimation of the body;⁷⁶ it is easy therefore to read sacrifice as a process of sublimating the body into spirit, which mirrors, (if it is truly divisible from it), the process of the economy.

'In ancient Rome, it was not uncommon for shares of the sacrificial bull's flesh to serve as a legal means of payment. At this point the practice of substitution once again tended to intervene. Tokens, which often took the form of coins made of

⁷⁴ Taylor, *About*, pp.121-4

⁷⁵ N. Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever*, (Chicago, 1992), p.xxiv

⁷⁶ J.L. Nancy, 'Corpus', in J. F. MacCannell and L. Zakarin ed., *Thinking Bodies*, (Stanford, 1994), p.22

*precious metal with the imprint of the sacred animal, replaced animal flesh. Insofar as community is constituted by an act of "originary" violence, the god who dies on the altar is reborn, or quite literally, becomes incarnate in the social body. The token of this divine presence in the community is the coin of the realm, which bears the imago Dei.'*⁷⁷

Sublimated from commodity to currency, the flesh of Taylor's sacrificed animal is syncretic; consuming, marking from within with the *imago Dei* in a progression which reflects Mary Douglas' marking of the body as the symbol of society, although where Douglas' body can stand as a mode for any structure with permeable or threatened boundaries, the process of social construction, of marking 'in the image' mapped out by Taylor suggests a circulatory system rather than a threatened boundary, constructing the social body from within rather than without.⁷⁸ This circularity is apparent where the process of marking extends through sacrifice to the divine, since the sacrifice is 'not only an offering to the god but also an embodiment of the deity'.⁷⁹ Within this totem meal/totem economy consumption and marking are indivisible; they are the ongoing process of communicating the body which is both the basis and the product of language. We can find parallels here to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*: 'all the stupidity and arbitrariness of the laws, all the pain of the initiations, the

⁷⁷ Taylor, *About*, p.151

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.151 & M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, 1996), p.117

⁷⁹ Taylor, *About*, p.151

whole perverse apparatus of repression and education have only this meaning: to breed man, to mark him in his flesh, to render him capable of alliance, to form him within the debtor-creditor relation, which on both sides turns out to be a matter of memory, of memory straining toward the future.’⁸⁰

Representation, achieved through the sublimation of bodies into image, is essential for communication which Rossi-Landi described as social reproduction,⁸¹ as Deleuze and Guattari put it: ‘society is not exchangeist, the socius is inscriptive’.⁸² The currency which holds society together is not gold or energy but *image* for which God (in Taylor’s analogy) acts as secure referent (*imago Dei*).⁸³

‘For debt is the unit of alliance, and alliance is representation itself.’⁸⁴

This link between debt, alliance and representation deserves exploring, especially if ‘there is no alliance without representation.’⁸⁵ Representation (image/abstraction) and debt both act as *religare*, binding, and simultaneously constructing/reinforcing, society. The role of the consumption and/or circulation of the body (image) in this structure of debt is made explicit for Taylor in the communal meal; ‘As Freud

⁸⁰ G. Deleuze, and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (Minneapolis, 1983), p.190

⁸¹ Calefato, p.10

⁸² Deleuze and Guattari, p.185

⁸³ Taylor, *About*, p.165

⁸⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, p.185

⁸⁵ Ibid.

maintains in his myth of origins in *Totem and Taboo*, participants in ritual sacrifice attempt to share guilt and identify with the god by consuming its body.⁸⁶ Extending this through to Christianity through the Eucharist as the 'Christian version of the ancient totem meal',⁸⁷ Taylor collapses Freud's 'originary' murder of (god) the father and Christ's sacrifice together, (although as Deleuze and Guattari recognize, Freud's Oedipus is an imperialist construct that has its roots in Christianity, therefore the claim that 'the Eucharist... is the Christian version of the ancient totem meal' deserves to be reversed). In any case, like the coins that were substituted for the flesh of the sacrificed animal (or perhaps *like* the sacrificed animal were substituted for the (flesh of) god) in ancient Rome, Taylor points out there is a deliberate similarity in the production of Communion wafers and the manufacture of coins that both draws on and supports economic metaphors for the function, (the binding and redeeming circulation), of Christ within the social body.⁸⁸ As Taylor points out, theologians have long relied on the 'economic trinity' to describe the relation between God and human beings as opposed to the 'immanent trinity' to describe relations within the Godhead of Father, Son and Spirit.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Taylor, *About*, p.151

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.154

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.154

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.152

This distinction between immanent and economic is interesting in relation to Bataille's *Theory of Religion* and *Accursed share*; the return of the victim to immanence is staged through economic relations, (somewhat literally since sacrifice /(and) economics are performance; a reenactment of the 'originary' murder). By destroying the 'thing' in the victim, sacrifice removes the victim from the drudgery of everyday economic relations, or, in read in relation to Taylor, sublimates it from commodity to currency. 'The individual identifies with the victim in the sudden movement that restores it to immanence, (to intimacy), but the assimilation that is linked to the return of immanence is nonetheless based on the fact that the victim is the thing, just as the sacrificer is the individual.'⁹⁰ A certain amount of separation (sin) is essential in producing the anguish and identification between victim and sacrificer(s),⁹¹ in contrast to the *immanent* relation of the animal to its surroundings; 'Between the animal that is eaten and the one that eats, there is no relationship of subordination like that connecting an object, a thing, to man, who refuses to be viewed as a thing';⁹² If debt is sin as Taylor claims and sin is separation (from god), then debt is essential not only for constructing relationships, but also maintaining individuality.⁹³

⁹⁰ Bataille, *Theory*, p.51

⁹¹ In Bataille's example of sin/separation is the estrangement between master and slave; the reduction of the human being to a thing that allows the master to profit from it also inevitable estranges the master from humanity: 'No one can make a *thing* of the second self that the slave is without at the same time estranging himself from his own intimate being, without giving himself the limits of a thing.' See Bataille, *Accursed Share*, Vol. I, p.56

⁹² Bataille, *Theory*, p.18

⁹³ Taylor, *About*, pp.152-3

In Taylor's analysis damnation is a state of irredeemable debt; since humans can never give anything to God which they haven't already received they can never equivalent the original gift of being or the further debt of sin, it takes the sacrifice of Christ as intercession or investment to redeem them.⁹⁴ As 'token of exchange', however, far from dissolving debt, Christ's sacrifice serves to cement, to mark out, the structure of debt in the relationship between God and humanity; 'When the gift is doubled, debt becomes more profound'.⁹⁵ The structure of debt is impossible to escape, which makes it the perfect *religari* and the perfect system of power, since the need for intercession is ongoing. Christ, like money (or money like Christ) 'is the means for rendering debt infinite'.⁹⁶

Deleuze and Guattari make a similar claim concerning the relationship between individual and the State: '...the regime of debt resulted precisely from this savage inscription. For debt is the unit of alliance, and alliance is representation itself.'⁹⁷ The State mirrors a monotheism where 'infinite creditor and infinite debt' replaced the 'mobile and finite blocks of debt' of a pattern of exchange between people and a pantheon of gods/supernatural beings where the reality of co-dependence (that the gods are dependent on human beings for sustenance through sacrifice) wasn't completely obscured by a boundless

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.153

⁹⁵ See Ibid, pp.24&153

⁹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, p.197

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.185

generosity that rendered existence into credit. In this model monotheism becomes monologue, ('there is always a monotheism lurking on the horizon of despotism').⁹⁸ This becomes particularly interesting in light of the claim that communication makes us human; the ability to creative communication is what makes human beings *imago Dei*.⁹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari suggests something very similar by quoting Michel Carty 'The inscription of a mark on the body does not merely posses a message value here, but is an instrument of action that acts on the body itself... The signs accomplish the things they signify, and far from being a mere imitator, the artisan of the signs accomplishes a work that calls to mind the divine creation.'¹⁰⁰ Sacrifice can, ideally, like any form of economic relationship can be figured in terms of a dialogue, making spirit/humanity a communicative and thus a reciprocal relationship. The reduction of this relationship to a monologue affects not only humans as 'speech agents' but also God as a 'being-in-communicative-act'.¹⁰¹ If 'when speech is denied, so too is spirit', as Kevin Vanhoozer suggests,¹⁰² then this reduction acts to suppress our humanity.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.197

⁹⁹ K. Vanhoozer, 'Human Being, Individual and Social', in C. Gunton ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, (Cambridge, 1997), pp.177-80

¹⁰⁰ Michel Carty, "La calebasse de l'excision en pays gourmantché," *Journal de la Société des africanistes*, no.2 (1968), pp.223-25 quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, p.189

¹⁰¹ Vanhoozer, pp.177-80

¹⁰² Ibid, p.179

What debt constructs, or more properly what is constructed, marked out, through debt is a body: Bataille extends this structure of debt into ordinary economic relations through his description of Tawney's analysis of medieval Christian economic thought. The social relation or power structure marked out through debt corresponds to the medieval concept of the body as a 'hierarchy of functions': 'the clergy, military aristocracy and labor formed a unified body in which the component parts of the third term were subservient to the other two.'¹⁰³ In the bodily economy or embodied economy of medieval society the producer had yielded the product for the 'just price'; defined as that which was necessary for his subsistence. The exchange is, evidently, of 'life for life',¹⁰⁴ a circulation within the social body which, through the syncretism of the communion meal, has become the body of Christ. All exchange can never equivalent, but is always in reference to, Christ's sacrifice.¹⁰⁵

Sin, Taylor suggests, is the result of debt. It's interesting, in this light, that the fruit of the tree of knowledge is often represented as a golden fruit or, in light of the link between debt, alliance and social reproduction, as sexual knowledge. In *Consuming Bodies* Pasi Falk, drawing on John Sekora's 1977 history of luxury, describes the fruit of the tree of knowledge as the original definition of luxury. The fruit becomes the focus of

¹⁰³ Bataille, *Accursed*, p.117

¹⁰⁴ Gallagher, p.352

¹⁰⁵ Bataille, *Accursed*, p.117

a '*transgressive desire*', desire for that which is not necessary for survival and to which there is no 'right'.¹⁰⁶ The very existence of the fruit however articulates a *need*, the need for knowledge, in Falk's terms the 'fundamental lack in terms of desire' is a sign of 'human imperfection in relation to the all perfect God'.¹⁰⁷ Forbidden knowledge becomes knowledge of desire which again ties in to (social) reproduction if '...alliance codes the flows of desire and that, by means of debt, creates for man a memory of words (*paroles*).'¹⁰⁸

In a scenario that uncannily parallels Belk's claim in 'The Complex Territory of Wellbeing' that 'increases in income, once past a threshold where basic needs are satisfied, produce diminishing returns in well-being'.¹⁰⁹ Knowledge leads to the cycle of production and reproduction, and death. To man's first 'cannibalizing' of his body in order to survive 'you will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again.' Just as knowledge/sin leads to the 'economic' relationship between God and humanity which finds its ultimate expression in Christ's sacrifice, and directly after the fall Cain and Abel's sacrifices show a new relationship between God and Man, as well as reinforcing the legacy of original sin (Abel's murder).

¹⁰⁶ Pasi Falk, pp.97-8

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.98

¹⁰⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, p.185

¹⁰⁹ S. Carlisle and P. Hanlon, 'The complex territory of well-being: contestable evidence, contentious theories and speculative conclusions', *Journal of Public Mental Health*, (June 2007); 6, 2; *Health and Medical Complete*, p.8

The fall also provides a model for the 'economic' relation within the social body of humanity, which includes the soil, and from which, interestingly enough, Cain is expelled.

Further developing on the importance of representation and performance in social reproduction Deleuze and Guattari describe debt as 'this extra ordinary composite of the speaking voice, the marked body, and the enjoying eye'.¹¹⁰ Debt is both spectacle and spectator, or perhaps debt posits both spectacle and spectator; what is the god who is posited in sacrifice but an enjoying eye, and simultaneously a marked body? The 'economics' of torture, and perhaps by extension sacrifice, according to Deleuze and Guattari; drawing on Nietzsche, depends on a viewer who takes satisfaction from the event; 'The equation injury = pain has nothing exchangeist about it, and it shows in this extreme case that the debt itself had nothing to with exchange. Simply stated, the eye extracts from the pain it is contemplating a surplus value of code that compensates the broken relation between the voice of alliance that the criminal has wronged, and the mark that has not sufficiently penetrated his body.'¹¹¹ Here we might encounter the darker side of Durkheim's point that society is the reality of the gods;¹¹² since the gaze of audience and god in sacrifice are indistinguishable.

¹¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, p.190

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.191

¹¹² I. Strenski, 'Durkheim's Bourgeois Theory of Sacrifice', in N.J. Allen et al ed., *On Durkheim's Elementary forms of Religious Life*, (London, 1998), pp.120-1

On the ambiguity in the inter-relation between god and gold Taylor writes, 'In their long and tangled histories, it is often impossible to know whether money represents God or God represents money. It is also difficult to know whether God and money represent something or "notin".'¹¹³ I would argue that the reality of the god constructed through sacrifice is the social body, in that the sacrificial body is simultaneously the embodiment of the deity and the locus for identification. In this sense the marking of the body in sacrifice doesn't simply recall the divine creation, it constructs the divine creation. The individual body is, as I have suggested, the grounding point of both god and gold. Suggesting that debt relates not only to the debt of the individual to god/society, but ultimately to the debt of society to the individual (as I will explore shortly). The question of whether money and god represent something or nothing is testament to the extent to which the abstraction or sublimation of the body in the process of communication obscures the social reality of exchange.

'Primitive' as Parallel: Evolutionary Economics

We cannot discuss the links between sacrifice and economics without addressing Bataille's Accursed Share. In his essay on the general economy *The Accursed Share* Bataille reads Aztec sacrifice purely in terms of consumption and expenditure,

¹¹³ M.C. Taylor, *Confidence Games: Money and Markets in a World without Redemption*, (Chicago, 2004), p.122

opposing it to production and profit. Aztec and (20th century) European values therefore were at opposite ends of the spectrum: 'They were just as concerned about *sacrificing* as we are about *working*.'¹¹⁴ The 'accursed share' refers to the sacrificial victim and any portion of surplus destined for profitless consumption; the transcendence in sacrifice results from the removal of the victim from the dehumanizing system of economics, the destruction of the exchange-value which reduced the victim (typically a slave) to a commodity or 'thing'.¹¹⁵ Empathy is key, not just to the success of sacrifice in the production of anguish and ecstasy, but also the need for sacrifice in the first place, since the identification of the master with the slave; the immersion of the sacrificer in a system where humans are commodities constantly threatens his own individuality.¹¹⁶ Thus the need to restore lost intimacy through sacrifice/ profitless consumption, which, since the sacrificer/society at large remain part of the system, (enjoying only a temporary restoration/transcendence relative to the victim), is ongoing.¹¹⁷

Similarly Baudrillard draws death, guilt and exchange together through his reading of labour as a state of suspended death.¹¹⁸ For 'savages' who have never 'naturalized' (or rather

¹¹⁴ Bataille, *Accursed*, p.46

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.55

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.56

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.60

¹¹⁸ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, pp.39-40

‘scientized’) death, death is a social relation rather than a biological event.¹¹⁹ If the sovereign power is to suspend death, the community, as the embodiment of social power, is guilty of the ‘slow death’ of the members which temporarily constitute it: the economy functions to suspend the death which, if not natural, is the aim and the purpose of life. If the ‘death drive’ is an individual instinct, then the ‘social relation’ of death is the harnessing of this individual energy expenditure or ‘luxury’.

Among the Aztecs (our appropriated ‘ancestors’ or alternates) death, the splitting of the human organism from its *tonalli*, was never a natural occurrence but either an accident or the product of a technology such as sacrifice.¹²⁰ Until recently similar beliefs persisted in Europe, (sickness and sudden death were attributed to having ones vital energy lost or stolen/consumed through *maleficium*) even today there are very few of us who can really claim to have ‘naturalized’ death as Baudrillard puts it. Likewise the funerary ritual of a certain tribe in Papua New Guinea, described by Knaft, revolving around murder accusations and the eventual distribution of the corpse among family members, and consumption of whatever remains by non-related tribe-members ‘whom the deceased “shared meat with” in life’,¹²¹ reflects the unnaturalness of death, guilt of the living, and the culmination of the social cycle of exchange with the deceased becoming currency, vitality, in the social body.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p.131

¹²⁰ Durverger, pp.367-8

¹²¹ Knaft, p.238

Christian Duverger puts a different spin on Aztec sacrifice comparing it to nuclear physics in 'The Meaning of Sacrifice'. The principles behind splitting the atom and the 'secret spirit of sacrifice' are essentially the same according to Duverger; harnessing the energy/spirit released in destruction of the individual for the good of the community.¹²² Sacrifice is a technology aiming at splitting the human body from its *tonalli*; the individual's energy source which originates from the sun at the moment of conception. Since this energy source temporarily exceeded death, sacrifice aimed at harnessing and recycling what would otherwise be wasted by being consumed individually and pointlessly for the communal good.¹²³ Ordinary afterlife was conceptualized as an individualistic journey, during which the *tonalli* would be completely exhausted and the soul would consequently perish over four years. The afterlife of the sacrificed by contrast, like sacrifice itself, was highly social. Sacrificed warriors (which included those who died on the battlefield) and women who died in childbirth helped to support and sustain the sun, and were thus a 'source of vital energy on which the entire community could draw'.¹²⁴ The sun, himself a sacrificial victim who offered himself for immolation to 'bring light to the world', (Bataille describes him as a 'god in the image of man'),¹²⁵ is 'touchingly' dependent on human

¹²² Duverger, p.369

¹²³ Ibid, pp.367-8

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.371

¹²⁵ Bataille, *Accursed*, pp.46-7

beings 'for its astral course was a battle it could not wage alone'.¹²⁶

The first subtitle in *The Accursed Share* addresses 'the dependence of the economy on the circulation of the earth'.¹²⁷ The basic premise of Bataille's 'accursed share' is that energy is surfeit to the requirements of life and growth. Sacrifice is not concerned with ensuring the circulation of energy; instead it acts as a pressure valve to release the excess that cannot be absorbed by society. For Bataille the sun is a model of limitless giving 'the sun gives without ever receiving',¹²⁸ while Durverger's reading suggests that the sun images man as much in its reciprocal relations with human beings as much as its boundless generosity. The bodily economy of the sun can be read as a reflection or a model for the economy on earth, the microism for a 'bounded system'.¹²⁹ This points to another element in Aztec sacrifice (as portrayed by Duverger), both the 'slow death' of labor and the violent death of sacrifice both help sustain the social body. But to be sacrificed is to be sublimated into socially binding currency, into immanence with God and the social body, while to labor is to be a thing, a commodity (individual labor is consumed without a sense of syncretism).

¹²⁶ Durverger, p.371

¹²⁷ Bataille, *Accursed*, p.19

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.19

¹²⁹ Douglas, p.116

In their introduction to Derrida's *The Work of Mourning*, Brault and Naas tie the psychoanalytic image of mourning as an 'idealizing incorporation, introjection, consumption of the other' with communication through Derrida's suggestion that 'it is only "in us" that the dead may speak'.¹³⁰ This resonates strongly with the Christian Eucharist through Jesus' instruction 'do this in memory of me'. Funerary cannibalism, like the totem meal, represents the literal version of this 'idealizing incorporation'. Knauft stresses the role of funerary cannibalism in Melanesia in recycling individual energy into the group: 'in some of these groups, members of the community who died were eaten by their female kin and coresidents to prevent, inter alia, the escape and dispersal of their spiritual force.'¹³¹ A similar desire might inform the Aztec preference for sacrificial death, to be recycled into the social world of divine-human relations rather than obliteration in a subterranean realm. We must here acknowledge the link between the subterranean 'Hell' and the womb, as Duverger points out the soul's journey through the underworld was symbolic of a return to the 'source', Mictlan, being located beneath the mythic birthplace of the tribe (suggesting that ultimately sacrificial and 'natural' death achieve the same end).¹³² Again this points back to the link between not only sacrifice but death in general and social reproduction; social reproduction is not only about

¹³⁰ P.A. Brault and M. Naas, (introduction) in J.Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, (Chicago, 2001), p.9

¹³¹ B.M. Knauft, 'Bodily Images in Melanesia', in M. Feher, R. Nuddaff and N. Tazi ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part III, (New York, 1989), p.234

¹³² Durverger, p.371

reincorporating what is lost through the death of the individual back into society but also figures on some guilty level as the *cause* of death.

We begin existence as parasites, 'humanity' is a parasitic relation in that we are all cannibals/ cannibalized within the social body. As such the technology of sacrifice, of sublimating the body into cultural currency, originates from the desire to sublimate the 'cannibalistic' relationship of the subsistence community (and all communities are, at their heart, subsistence communities), to both *appease* and *repress* the bodies (ultimately the dead) who are consumed in the process of sustaining their peers through labour. This suggests Marx's religion and commodity fetishism as 'reflex action[s] of the real world',¹³³ the trade in image or spirit (as cultural currency) constructs a social world which always attempts to elevate itself above the physical, the basic motivation for this is the escape from death, or rather from corruption or decay which is closer to Baudrillard's slow death than the violent, sublime death of sacrifice. As such the tendency to dislocate the self from the 'real of exchange' mapped out in the cannibal critique through abstracting products into image, particularly images of bodies, is an innate human tendency which bears witness to the attraction and negation of the body as the basis of society in both the communicative (social) and physical sense.

¹³³ K. Marx, *Capital: Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling, ed. F. Engels, (London, 1957), p.51

Part Two: Revisioning the Cannibal Metaphor

The following six chapters build on the role of the marking and exchange of bodies or images in structuring and binding society developed in the previous chapter in order to trace an often tenuous link back to the 'real of exchange' acknowledged in the cannibal critique, that all exchange ultimately relates to the human body. In post-industrial culture, with the shift of much of mass-manufacture to the 'third world', this reality is further eclipsed as consumers become further dislocated from producers and the reality of labor, at the same time the further abstraction of the body-image which becomes cultural currency (the digitally enhanced or perfected body replicated over billboards, screens and magazines with the aim of inspiring consumer desire) from the body which is the grounding point for the system of economics, has implications for humanity as dialogue. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the process of sublimating the body into image or symbol in sacrifice constructed a syncretic relation between the individual and the social body, however with the realization of our desire to sublimate the body from the 'technology' of sacrifice to those of film and photography, where the body (image) becomes ever more rarefied and extended independent of the actual body, (simulacra rather than symbol), do we lose this dialogue between bodies, and what therefore are we left with? As I mentioned in my introduction, as much as the 'cannibalistic' and 'sacrificial' elements of contemporary consumer culture, particularly in advertising imagery and rhetoric, my interest is also in the failure of the cannibal metaphor or critique as a way

of mapping out the relations between producing and consuming bodies in contemporary popular culture. And what does this say about us as being dislocated both physically and perhaps socially, what are we if consumption can no longer configured as a process of communing or communicating, as a relationship between real people. Have we lost, or altered, a part of what it is to be human?

‘Technologies of Seeing’

‘Technologies of seeing make everyone a voyeur, though, in all sorts of ways, and most of us don’t worry about this anymore.’ R. Poynor, *Obey the Giant: Life in the Image World*, (London, 2001), p.106

Humans are profoundly visual animals; our babies will meet the gaze of people looking at them, and often respond by smiling or mimicking the facial expression of the person gazing. Nancy Etcoff (*Survival of the Prettiest*) suggests the evolution of the unique human sclera; the whites of the eyes which, unlike other animals, do not darken with age; bear witness to this dependence on visual communication. The whites around the iris allow us to gauge the direction of another’s gaze, to register and express interest or disinterest as the case may be.¹³⁴ The instinctual attraction of the gaze goes some way to explaining the popularity of magazines, commercials, and other media from which the faces of models or celebrities squarely meet the viewer’s eye, particularly in a society where relationships are, in Rojek’s description, ‘glancing’.¹³⁵ What interests me is how the rapid progression of ‘technologies of seeing’ affect us as communicative beings.

As the technology progresses, ‘seeing’ progressively overtakes other forms of communication, of being-in-society. It’s not so much an era of ‘mass-communication’ as mass viewing; the self is reduced in a sense to a gaze (although we needn’t take too apocalyptic a view on this). According to a recent study the

¹³⁴ N. Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest: the Science of Beauty*, (New York, 1999), p.33

¹³⁵ C. Rojek *Celebrity*, (London, 2001), p.74

average New Zealander spends 53 hours per week actively consuming media, which leaves very little space for any activities to occur free from its taint.¹³⁶ Bauman notes the increasing *mediation* of the social experience: 'the market now mediates in the tiresome activities of tying up and tearing up interpersonal relations, of bringing people together and pulling them apart'.¹³⁷ The development and pervasion of 'technologies of seeing' both reflects and exacerbates modernity's legacy of alienation.

For Baudrillard, modern alienation contained a 'symbolic benefit', since alienation posits an 'other', the element of alienation was what allowed image a communicative dimension, ('that otherness can be played out for better or for worse'), even if this communication took part largely on an imagined level. Alienation also allowed *space* for image to be contemplated by the spectator, for it to be spectacle, while in post-consumer culture all distance has been collapsed.¹³⁸ The distinctions between interior and exterior, private and public, crucial in the construction of the modern individual as a 'discrete body and identity' are undermined by technologies of viewing (and of implied surveillance) which penetrate boundaries: 'the entire universe unfolds unnecessarily on your home screen',¹³⁹ while at the same time advances in cinematography, synonymous with the 'speeding up' of

¹³⁶ P. More, 'Special Report: Mass Media: Tried and True', *Marketing Magazine*, June 2007, p.32

¹³⁷ Z. Bauman, *Liquid Life*, (Cornwall, 2005), p.88

¹³⁸ J. Baudrillard, *Ecstasies of Communication*, trans. B. and C. Schutze, ed. S. Lotringer, (New York, 1988), pp.21-2

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, pp.20-1

imagery, mean that 'reaction time is minimally reduced', reducing the viewer's engagement from contemplation (which at least allowed some form of 'dialogue' to take place) to a 'referendum', a demand to internalize or reject the image almost instantaneously.¹⁴⁰ Which begs the question; can we humans keep up with our technology (particularly if humanity is defined in Vanhoozer's terms as being in creative communication)?

In 'the ecstasy of communication', 'communication' is closer to 'communion', or possibly consummation; syncretism taken to the extreme, to the point of overcoming all distance between self and other/ self and thing, a point *beyond* communication: it affectively undoes all communication/ the need for communication, (it is an expression of the precession of simulacra undoing the real), an obscene or ecstatic,¹⁴¹ or as Taylor very succinctly sums it up 'unspeakable' moment.¹⁴² In a sense what we have playing out here is the conflict between E. Becker's conscious as a social experience and the (anti-social/false?) conscious of the 'mystical experience'. For Becker, and for the modernists, consciousness itself was an alienating experience since self was always understood in relation to the other/ by internalizing the other.¹⁴³ In (post) consumer culture we get a sense of this through what Goldman describes as the

¹⁴⁰ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, pp.62-3

¹⁴¹ Baudrillard, *Ecstasy*, pp.21-2

¹⁴² Taylor, *About*, p.139

¹⁴³ E. Becker, *The Birth and Death of Meaning: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man*, (New York, 1971), pp.24-5

‘mirrored gaze’, the moment in the contemplation of the image where the model’s gaze is internalized against the self.¹⁴⁴ The ‘mirrored gaze’ however is something of a novelty, and does not always work in this dialectical form (the ‘mirrored gaze’ also suggests the steady gaze of the ikon, with its challenging absence; the absence which comes from pointing to an absent presence or, as Baudrillard suggests, to the emptiness of the ikon itself as an autogenetic simulation).

Urry, in *The Tourist Gaze*, links the development of the tourist gaze to the medical gaze in Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic*, the gaze provides an interpretive framework which constructs what is seen according to preemptive patterns which limit the image’s ability to ‘speak’ outside the narrow grid of structure. ‘The gaze is constructed through signs’, signs allow for communal understanding while at the same time the reduction of sights into signs reduces the individual’s ability to creative interpretation ‘the tourist gaze is interested in everything as a sign of itself’.¹⁴⁵ Ritzer’s ‘technologies of seeing’ which ‘make everyone a voyeur’ are extensions of this socially coded gaze.¹⁴⁶ ‘Technologies of seeing’/visual technologies are both enabling and constraining, while technology allows us to perceive things the naked eye never can, the medium through which we perceive them is not neutral. As our ability to see increases through channels of technology, so do the constraints on our interpretation. That at least is the threat Australian media

¹⁴⁴ R. Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, (New York, 1992), p.11, quoted in Merskin, p.203

¹⁴⁵ J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society*, (London, 1990), pp.1-3

¹⁴⁶ R. Poynor, *Obey the Giant: Life in the Image World*, (London, 2001)p.106

studies expert Professor Catharine Lumby perceives in the social anxiety over the representation of children 'we are starting to see the child through the eyes of a pedophile';¹⁴⁷ the pedophilic gaze which has been the object of such anxiety and media attention has been internalized by society, meaning that any representation of children only has one possible interpretation.

Similarly Debra Merskin's discussion of the 'pornographic gaze' in fashion advertising, and Schroeder and McDough's 'logic of pornography' in digital camera promotions, reflect the pervasion of pornography as a code of reference.¹⁴⁸

Pornography comes from the Greek *pornographoi* meaning 'whore painting', thus pornography has always been inseparable from technologies of representation, in light of which the pervasion of pornographic 'codes' in advertising and the association of cameras with pornography is somewhat inevitable. As Poynor notes the pornographic gaze has gone from being the esoteric gaze of an elite community (the so-called 'Other Victorians') to the mainstream; part of the codes of reference accessed by everyone, everyday, as part of interpreting media.¹⁴⁹ A good example of this is the advertisement for Chanel 'Le Rouge' lipstick in *New Zealand*

¹⁴⁷ Prof. Catharine Lumby interviewed by Peter Overton, 'Little Women', *60 Minutes*, Monday 7 July, 2008: transcript available at <http://sixtyminutes.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=583007>

¹⁴⁸ See D. Merskin, 'Where are the Clothes? The Pornographic Gaze in Mainstream American Fashion Advertising', pp.199-218 and J.E. Schroeder and D. McDouagh, 'The logic of Pornography in Digital Camera Promotion, pp.219-44, in T. Reichert and J. Lambiase ed., *Sex in Consumer Culture: The Erotic Content of Media and Marketing*, (London, 2006).

¹⁴⁹ Poynor, *Obey*, p.93

House and Garden, featuring a head and shoulders close up of a platinum blonde model reclining in bed in the act of covering/uncovering her breast with a sheet.¹⁵⁰ You could say that the ad is simply appealing to the natural aesthetic of beauty, and the model is certainly a beautiful, and healthy, specimen, but there's too much that's culturally coded, most notably the commodity the advertisement is promoting: dark red lipstick. The model herself is a construct: makeup, hair and (the suggestion of) nudity are signals, not necessarily of sex, but of porn. They reduce the woman into a simulacrum, like one of Hugh Hefner's similarly technologically altered (or created) playmates who are also celebrated for their identical peroxide-locks, linking them with Ritzer's uniformed 'non-people' offering uniform experience (and the Playboy mansion has certainly become a stable element in popular culture, even a 'festival of reoccurrence'). It wouldn't take much more altering to turn this woman's image into a robot, or a similarly ironic doll. But as I said, there's no irony here, which is all the more odd considering its inclusion in a magazine largely produced, edited, featuring, and supposedly aimed towards, middle aged and older women with doubtful resemblance to the technologically perfected model. The suggestion is that they will consume Le Rogue lipstick because it is a sign of the woman in the advertisement, who in total is herself a sign of consumer culture (including porn): of design's construction and projection

¹⁵⁰ See *New Zealand House and Garden*, (May 2007), p.37

of the female body.¹⁵¹ As Calefato suggests the women reading the magazine have to understand their own bodies in relation to this perfected body, because no other form of reference exists in consumer culture; all other bodies are eclipsed by the predominance of simulacrum which no-body; even that of the pre-posed, photographed, and airbrushed model can ever embody.¹⁵²

Kalle Lasn, editor of anti-corporate magazine *Adbusters* claims there is nothing wrong with the medium over which advertising is projected, the problem, Lasn suggests, is the corporate stranglehold over what should be public space for debate; technologies of mass communication, as Poynor points out, are human technologies, like language itself.¹⁵³ The technology is not culturally neutral, however, it constructs the body in certain ways in the process of communicating it, in ways that cement and universalize pre-existing cultural concepts of beauty, power etc. Peter Brunette notes that the body, as it is projected over electronic media, is 'by definition' always partial, in the case of televised news, the reduction reporters or anchors to head and shoulders has the affect of implying power; 'the requisite effect of mastery'.¹⁵⁴ The upper body has always been associated with power, especially, as Roy Porter notes, after the rise of medical

¹⁵¹ Of course there is the factor I have been overlooking here is that the lipstick, and the image of female sexuality projected by the ad, can be transformed into irony by the consumer's knowing application of this signifier onto her anti-ideal, and therefore in some sense anti-pornographic self.

¹⁵² Calefato, p.77

¹⁵³ Poynor, *Obey*, pp.137&142

¹⁵⁴ P. Brunette, 'Electronic Bodies/ Real Bodies: Reading the Evening News', in J.F. MacCannell and L. Zakarin ed., *Corpus*, (Stanford, 1994), p.188

science which transferred emphasis from the embodied self of the 'humoural' system to the brain; having a parallel affect on empathy, the ability to feel with the heart or bowels was suppressed in favor of reason,¹⁵⁵ just as the medical gaze took emphasis from the patient's ability to communicate in favor of the medic's ability to read the symptoms on the patients body. The fracturing of the body also supports the construction of fetishes which in turn affect how viewers conceptualize their own bodies; and bodies in general. Calefato's 'prevailing idea of *the body* in our time' is not a complete body but a fragmented series of 'iconic devices'.¹⁵⁶ To Merskin's 'breast, buttock and lip fetishes',¹⁵⁷ we could add Baudrillard's DNA;¹⁵⁸ even the perfect digital simulations of the male and female body constructed by scanning minute cross-sections from two frozen corpses and resurrecting them online as a resource for medical students (relevant to me for their frequent use in educational programs and the CSI genre), while they are in some sense more whole, more visible than any 'real' body, are instrumental in breaking the body up into all its minute working parts.¹⁵⁹

Merskin in her discussion of the pornographic gaze in the fashion industry refers to Turner to claim 'in pornography, it is the gaze that "threatens and undermines society at the same

¹⁵⁵ Porter, p.50

¹⁵⁶ See Calefato, p.77 and Merskin, p.204

¹⁵⁷ Merskin, p.204

¹⁵⁸ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.57

¹⁵⁹ C. Waldby, 'IATROGENESIS: The Visible Human Project and the Reproduction of Life', Miriam Fraser and Monica Greco ed., *The Body: A Reader*, (London, 2005), pp. 256-261

time it is the fullest expression of society's unspoken desires".¹⁶⁰ While this might have been the case in the past clearly it isn't now. In *Transgressions: the Offences of Art*, Anthony Julius reads Manet's *Olympia* as the ultimate challenge to kitsch, subverting the genre of the nude by replacing simulacrum of a submissive female figure in a mythological setting with a real woman, rubbing the reality of the pornographic gaze in the face of the viewer who is no longer able to hide their voyeurism behind the veneer of aesthetic appreciation.¹⁶¹ Taken out of context today *Olympia* means nothing, the challenge of her gaze is subverted by the plethora of images which draw on her totally uncritically; such as the open gaze of model on her (female?) audience in the 'Le Rogue' commercial. Voyeurism, as Poynor suggests, has become the 'technology of seeing' which is so predominant there is no longer anywhere to criticize from. Far from the gaze that 'threatens and undermines society' it is the gaze that is the symbol of society, even less than a context because a context implies a space in which to speak; as such the gaze itself may indeed be 'the fullest expression of society's unspoken desires.'

To be denied speech, suggests Vanhoozer, is to be denied humanity, to be incapable of participating in the dialogue of humanity in that 'when speech is denied, so too is spirit',¹⁶² in our culture the same can be argued for representation. Thus

¹⁶⁰ B. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, (Oxford, 1984), p.83, quoted in Merskin, p.203

¹⁶¹ A. Julius, *Transgressions: The Offences of Art*, (London, 2002), p.59

¹⁶² Vanhoozer, p.179

representation becomes an urgent issue at the same time the culturally loaded gaze limits the ability to creative communication. Sexuality and ethnicity are both (visual) point where the body-as-dialogue breaks down, or so Erica Rand discovered while toying with (re)positioning Barbie and her ethnically marked counterpart, Chicana. No matter how she positioned the dolls the interpretation was already historically and socially dictated, leading her to conclude that 'In terms of race, there was no way out of dominant discourse'.¹⁶³ The reduction of ethnicity in consumer culture into a purely visual (skin color in Chicana's case) or other stereotyped 'mark' connects interestingly with the question of personae: the self as what 'sounds through' a mask, rather than wrestling with the ambiguity of whether there is a self prior to the mask (which can be read in this case as the combination of individual and social perception, in some sense of a prescribed 'role'), Advertising and the media frequently collapse self and mask by continually blurring the boundaries between the articulation of the self and the consumption of a role. Stereotyping will always be a part of the social construction of ethnicity, indeed, ethnicity in some sense results from the referendum imposed by the incursion of an Other (the somewhat hackneyed 'there are no isolated ethnicities' mantra of anthropology). Advertising both reflects and reinforces this ongoing articulation, but as Rand's experiment and Chin's research into

¹⁶³ E. Rand, *Barbie's Queer Accessories*, (Durham, 1995): 172-173, quoted in E. Chin, 'Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying with the Race Industry', *American Anthropologist, New Series*, 101:2, (June, 1999), p.307

representation suggests the danger in the desire to capitalize on ethnicity is to reduce it to a top-down monologue.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴See Chin, pp.305-321

Logos

‘Kids can recognize logos by eighteen months, and before reaching their second birthday, they’re asking for products by brand name. By three or three and a half, experts say, children start to believe that brands communicate their personal qualities, for example, that they’re cool, or strong, or smart.’ -J.B. Schor, *The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*, (New York, 2004), p.19

Is there any parallel between the play of signs in contemporary culture and the philosophic *logos* as discourse, or is it part of the reduction of communication (and by extension humanity) to a ‘referendum’ as Baudrillard suggests?¹⁶⁵ I have already suggested that humanity, or any community, is constituted by a dialogue; going back to Vanhoozer’s *imago Dei* as (the ability to) communication, suggesting that humanity is a communal experience which, in the wake of the communicative distortions caused by sin, can now only truly be experienced through Christ, since Christ as *logos* can be understood the undistorted ‘word of God’.¹⁶⁶ The communion ritual is redemption through re-articulation; binding the community through the internalization of ‘the word’. As communicative beings humans cannot exist in isolation from other human beings and or God: Hell, Vanhoozer suggests, is ‘the inability to relate to others’.¹⁶⁷ *Logos* is part of the Hellenistic legacy of Judaism and Christianity; Socrates claims to exist within his *logos* in the *Phaedo*, which suggests both his being-in-

¹⁶⁵ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.62

¹⁶⁶ Vanhoozer, pp.176-7

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.177

communication, as well as the links between *personare*¹⁶⁸ and *logos* as the underlying intention behind the communication.¹⁶⁹

Charles Winquist posits a similar understanding of the theological, (as opposed to Plato's philosophical), *logos*: 'what *sounds through* the Trinitarian personae is the Logos of being'.¹⁷⁰

The play of signs, the play of 'logos' constructs a reference system and are thus the building blocks of language and culture; of shared communication and identification. Within Schor's schoolyard, where kids can already recite 200 brands on arrival, and believe brands 'communicate' something about themselves and also, in all likelihood, communicate these qualities ('that they're cool, or strong, or smart') to themselves, it's easy to see the role of logos in fabricating identity.¹⁷¹ We can go back again to Mary Douglas' marked body as the symbol of society, which draws our attention to the syncretism between society, body and mark. It is not the mark or sign which is the symbol of society, but as M. Douglas put it 'the body which is marked': as a sign or a symbol, the logo is inseparable from the body it communicates and is communicated on (the word become incarnate).¹⁷² This also

¹⁶⁸ 'To sound through': the possible root of 'person' and 'persona'.

¹⁶⁹ N. Loraux, 'Therefore Socrates is Immortal', in M. Feyer ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part II*, (New York, 1990), p.19

¹⁷⁰ Lopez, p.226

¹⁷¹ J.B. Schor, *Born to Buy: the Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*, (New York, 2004), p.19

¹⁷² Douglas, p.117

draws parallel's with Deleuze and Guattari's link between the mark of alliance and social reproduction.¹⁷³

The marked body in this instance shouldn't be understood as the body of the consumer, but what Roland Barthes described as the 'absolute body' of the advertisement as the motivation for consumer desire: '...the covergirl's body is no one's body, it is a pure form, which possesses no attribute... and by a sort of tautology, refers to the garment itself.'¹⁷⁴ Marking the body, a process which is synonymous with replication (bringing to mind again Deleuze and Guattari's link between the process of marking and reproduction) is a conjurors trick which also causes it to disappear. Image is dislocated from the 'secure referent' of the body, and this action posits a 'form', a hyperreal, 'absolute' body. Essentially what we have here is Baudrillard's 'precession of simulacra', which undoes not only the model's body but *everybody*. The omnipresence of image renders all bodies incapable of being represented; the 'perfect'/digitally perfected bodies reproduced en mass over channels of mass communication exist in relation to the hyperreal rather than the real of actual bodies, producing what Baudrillard describes as a 'total relativity' where 'signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real',¹⁷⁵ demonstrating just how dislocated 'post' consumer culture is from the cannibal critique's 'real of exchange'(life for life).

¹⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari, p.190

¹⁷⁴ R. Barthes, (1967), *Système de la mode*, English Translation, *The Fashion System*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990 quoted in Calefato, p.55

¹⁷⁵ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.7

Patrizia Calefato notes as much in *The Clothed Body*, the saturation of all mediums of representation with images of perfected bodies means there is 'no room for anyone who falls outside the limits of age, size, or shape' (which in an age of airbrushing suggests that there is increasingly 'no room for anyone' at all)¹⁷⁶ '...neither the nakedness of the Benetton-Toscani baby nor, at the other extreme, that of the old or the sick can be used as conventional symbols to promote the prevailing idea of *the body* in our culture of mass communication.'¹⁷⁷

'Conventional symbols' signals a language structure: to fall outside the realm of representation is to be incapable of being articulated, highly significant if the limits of what it is to be human are constantly being redrawn within language. What, if anything, then is being communicated, what are consumers communing with? The dislocation of symbols from the process of representation suggests if anything the Death of Language: like Baudrillard's 'ecstasy of communication' which really signals the end of communication; or an ecstasy *beyond* communication (or at least beyond dialogue). The form or absolute body posited by the precession of images suggests Taylor's death of God as 'the climax of divine self-realization': 'the death of the transcendent signified effectively divinizes the web of images and simulacra that constitute modern

¹⁷⁶ The best example of how airbrushing has become standard practice in representation would be the very memorable billboards from the last New Zealand election, where Helen Clarke's 'face' fairly glowed. Airbrushing is particularly significant since unlike makeup it doesn't *mask*, (and is not applied to any real body), and cannot be seen as self-expression, airbrushing *erases* that which cannot, (presumably, or perhaps *evidently*), be represented.

¹⁷⁷ Calefato, p.77

culture.’¹⁷⁸ The sign’s being in and for itself also suggests Vanhoozer’s ‘sinful autonomy’,¹⁷⁹ (it also suggests a Platonic *being* rather than *becoming*; the sign therefore is the (false) realization and conclusion of the philosopher’s dialectic), the exchange of signs without referent can also be read as false communication. The role of the image in binding the ‘imagined community’ of consumer culture both masks the real isolation of individuals and actively serves to ensure it; as Guy Debord describes it in ‘The Society of the Spectacle’:

*The Spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges. Being isolated –and precisely for that reason- this sector is the locus of illusion and false consciousness; the unity it imposes is merely the official language of a generalized separation.*¹⁸⁰

As Taylor suggests, the emptiness of image’s self-communication parallels god as an ‘absent presence’; Taylor describes the dislocation of image from referent as *kenosis* (emptying or evacuation),¹⁸¹ the term which was employed by the church fathers to describe the incarnation of Christ (‘when the word became flesh, divinity did not fill up with matter, nor

¹⁷⁸ Taylor, *About*, p.26

¹⁷⁹ Vanhoozer, p.177

¹⁸⁰ G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, originally published as *La société du spectacle* by Buchet-Chastel, 1967, (New York, 1994), p.144

¹⁸¹ Taylor, *About*, p.26

did matter fill up with divinity').¹⁸² The ability of Schor's toddlers to recognize logos roughly coincides with the development of a preference for beautiful (healthy) faces (according to the BBC documentary *The Human Face*).¹⁸³ The ability to recognize health, the preference for health, suggests the reaching a stage at which one can both comprehend, and is beginning to contribute to (particularly when employed in documentaries), the articulation of humanity, since the boundaries of being a human (body) are drawn up in terms of health.¹⁸⁴ Grasping the dialogue of logos at roughly the same time seems significant. The articulation of beauty, and health, are also inescapably bound up with logos in consumer culture. What's interesting is the notion that what children recognize in healthy faces is an absence: the presence of beauty is the absence of deformity, signaling the perfect replication of the human organism from its DNA template, as Baudrillard puts it: 'it is in the genetic code that the 'genesis of simulacra' today finds its completed form'.¹⁸⁵ The absent presence of god and the absent presence of the beautiful body/image draw together in the twentieth century hunt for Eden by rating the physical perfection of the inhabitants, tracking the 'imago Dei' back to its original form. Absence either reveals the presence of god (the absence in beauty is the absence of deviation from the

¹⁸² Baudinet, Marie-José, 'the Face of Christ, the Form of the Church', in M. Feher, R. Nuddaff and N. Tazi ed, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part I, (New York, 1989), p.150

¹⁸³ J. Cleese, *The Human Face*, (Burbank, c2004)

¹⁸⁴ The abundance of documentaries focusing on the body are all part of this articulation; modification, disease, and deformity all push the limits of what can be represented.

¹⁸⁵ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.57

imago Dei), which suggests imago as *ikon* rather than Vanhoozer's *echo*; the emptiness of the ikon directs the gaze to the absent god, therefore images resemble god in their *lack* of communication. Or absence *is* god, linking back to Taylor's question of whether god and money represent something or 'nothing'.

If 'the medium is the message' then the message is always rendered mute. On a disturbingly similar level to the use of Marcus Schenkenberg's bare or draped body to advertise jeans is the dislocation evident in campaigns such as Bennetton's 'United Colours'; featuring photographs of convicted murderers from the US and the words 'sentenced to death'.¹⁸⁶ On the one hand, getting issues such as execution out into the public sphere on the same level as product promotion is probably an improvement on the level of attention they usually get, but the *branding* of issues, of Harvey Lee Green's subsequently euthanized body, is extremely problematic. Why brand at all? What does the Bennetton logo add to the debate? According to Rick Poynor, Bennetton creative director Oliviero Toscani argues that the 'inappropriate' context will shock viewers into paying attention, and he is obviously correct.¹⁸⁷ On a more sinister level is the notion that the logo lends a kind of legitimacy, (apart from the obvious copyright), like the 'imago Dei' stamped on Taylor's currency.

¹⁸⁶ Poynor, *Obey*, pp.61-3

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.62

On the co-option of cultural space Poynor also refers to a series of ads run by Italian designer *Diesel* supposedly set in North Korea and juxtaposing a bleak street scene where an man and child shelter under a piece of cardboard with a poster depicting a western couple in *Diesel* designer wear advertising a fictitious travel company with the caption “escape now”.¹⁸⁸ Asked to explain, *Diesel* founder Renzo Rosso responds with a vague need to ‘mock’ globalization.¹⁸⁹ Faced with the muteness of the image and the irresolvable conundrum of being wise (or more to the point being *seen* to be wise) to the effects of globalization while promoting their brand designers take refuge in shock and irony. When relying on shock there is always an inherent danger in sensationalizing, I should know, I’m writing on cannibalism, the salacious attraction of which as a topic should have been made clear in my first chapter. The result, as Poynor notes, is self serving and circular, which will always be the case where advertising becomes the medium through which issues are encountered, since circular self-communication is the aim of advertising. (‘For the spectacle, as the perfect image of the ruling economic order, ends are nothing and development is all, although the only thing the spectacle intends to develop into is itself’).¹⁹⁰ The reliance on shock and irony in the end bears witness to Baudrillard’s claim that ‘communication becomes all the more urgent when there is nothing to communicate’.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Print ad for Diesel, no.86 in a series, 1991-1998, Creative director: Joakin Jonason. Photography: Peter Gerke’ in Poynor, *Obey*, p.85

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, pp.83-7

¹⁹⁰ Dubord, p.144

Sovereignty to Celebrity: The New (Post-)Body Politic

‘Celebrities replaced monarchy as the new symbols for recognition and belonging, and as the belief in God waned, celebrities became immortal.’ –Chris Rojek, *Celebrity*, (London, 2001), p.14

In Rojek’s description of the passage from sovereignty and divinity to celebrity, celebrities become the ‘visible sign’ of the death of God and the new embodiment of society (something already suggested, in a sense, in the ‘absolute body’ of the covergirl).¹⁹¹ The process through which celebrities are sublimated into image, which becomes cultural currency, resonates with Taylor’s sacrificial economy. Taylor fails to mention the other ‘imago Dei’ bourn on the coin of the realm was (and still is); the monarch. Of course as Rojek recognizes there has always been a syncretism between sovereignty and divinity; ‘anointed’ monarchs derive their legitimacy from God/s.¹⁹² This also, possibly, points to the sacrificial origins of sovereignty (although again these are more mythic, and in the least composite, than ‘real’); Bataille for example claims the Aztec king was originally ‘the culmination of the cycle of sacrifices’, who was eventually obliged to save himself by giving of himself; the gifts which can be read as extensions of the king’s body, ‘he was obliged to *give* and to *play*’.¹⁹³ We can read a similar ‘sacrificial’ character into European feudalism, where all land belonged to the king, which, combined with the image

¹⁹¹ See R. Barthes, (1967) *System de la Mode*, Eng. tr. *The Fashion System*, (Berkeley, 1990), pp.258-9 quoted in Calefato, p.55

¹⁹² Rojek, p.30

¹⁹³ Bataille, *Accursed*, p.63

stamped on the coin of the realm, meant that all exchange in some sense was within and of the sovereign, which makes sense within the syncretism between the social body and the sovereign's body ('the body politic').

Likewise Luc de Hensch in 'The Sacrificial Body of the King' describes the king's body in Africa as a 'reproductive machine', not just a model but an embodiment of society as a whole: 'this mysterious body is the site where natural forces mesh with the social order to assure complete fertility, complete fecundity'.¹⁹⁴ Similarly in consumer culture, celebrities ensure 'complete fertility, complete fecundity' by continually stimulating desire, and ensuring continual consumption, production (and excretion) of commodities without which the system will die, (or alternatively they conceal the fact that the system is already dead). My interest is how the connection between the 'king's' body and the cultural landscape/social body plays out in consumer culture, and what are the implications of celebrity replacing sovereignty and divinity in the 'economy of salvation'?

In his study of the postmodern condition *Liquid Life* Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes the consumable, and therefore necessarily discard-able, nature of celebrities. Celebrity worship, Bauman suggests, reflects the liquidity of the postmodern condition in that worshippers can pick and choose from an ever-renewing pantheon of celebrities without ever 'mortgaging' their future.

¹⁹⁴ L. de Heusch, 'The Sacrificial Body of the King', in M. Feher, R. Nuddaff and N. Tazi ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part III, (New York, 1989), p387

Celebrities are the incarnation of dematerialized desire, which carries through to the 'liquidation' of social ties. While in the 'solid' modern era, according to Bauman, the 'imagined communities' of nation-states solidified around their martyrs and heroes, today celebrities function as an ideal binder or *reliaré* in a 'society' wary of lasting ties and commitments, where the option to disassociate the self from the fallen idol and cult of worshippers is always open.¹⁹⁵ This may be at least partly due to disillusionment in the wake of the wars of the last century, which irredeemably eroded confidence in the righteousness of the nation-state and its proponents. It also explains the subterfuge of irony and kitsch in celebrity consumption and collection, since kitsch is that which can easily be put aside or distanced from the self.

While Bauman's concerns about the 'liquidity' of celebrity and its implications are justified, he overlooks the dual nature of celebrity as both commodity and currency. While minor celebrities may indeed 'hardly ever outstay their public welcome,' the big names and faces are continually resurrected in a continual process of incarnation and circulation in the social body. Even the fleeting faces of the minor celebrities, perhaps more than anything else, bear witness in their similarity to the permanence or the never ending simulation of the 'absolute body'.

There is, as already mentioned, a strong sacrificial character to celebrity, the most obvious manifestation today being Princess

¹⁹⁵ Bauman, p.50

Diana,¹⁹⁶ (interesting too since her death cast paparazzi in the 'guilty' role of priests/sacrificers in the cult of celebrity worship,¹⁹⁷ even while they are supported by the largesse of a society eager to commune through the consumption of photographs). In any case, this sacrificial element is by no means recent, many of the early stars of silent film and rock n' roll such as Rudolph Valentino died young, echoing in some sense the old cliché that those the gods love most they take back to themselves while still young and beautiful, and many (although certainly not all) celebrities have something of the unblemished sacrificial victim about them, and a (post) Christian aesthetic idolizes victims above all. Similarly, in the sacrificial economy of celebrity the death of the body is the realization of immortality, sublimated into 'pure' image, following her death Marilyn Munroe is 'everywhere but nowhere, an absent presence', like the absent presence of God.¹⁹⁸ If we apply the same 'death of the author' to the image as Barthes does to the word then the performance of celebrity involves a continual process of sacrifice and 'resurrection'. Although, as Rojek notes, there is an anxiety over what is lost in the process, which links to Baudrillard's 'precession of simulacra', as the projected image becomes superimposed

¹⁹⁶ The multiple collectibles of the 'People's Princess' or 'Diana, Princess of Hearts' churned out shortly after Diana's death, such as porcelain dolls (although with a donation to one of Diana's charities, kitsch with a conscience), bear witness to the indomitable nature of kitsch. All too shortly after her death Diana, annihilated by the precession of simulacra, (supposedly driven to her death by paparazzi) became kitsch.

¹⁹⁷ H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W.D. Halls, (London, 1964), pp.67-8

¹⁹⁸ Rojek, p.78

upon or eclipses the self, although this is part of the romance of celebrity.¹⁹⁹

There is a cannibalistic or in the least totemic character to celebrity worship (and consumer culture in general). The death of a star in particular can create a feeding frenzy among a public eager to commune, or perhaps this reflects Derrida's process of mourning as an 'idealizing incorporation' of the other,²⁰⁰ (in any case, marketers and media are both eager to stir up and cash in on this phenomenon). Rojek claims celebrities often 'feel hunted by the devouring public.'²⁰¹ The consumption of image is perhaps the most voracious example of consumer desire, but the public also seek to both to incorporate and to incorporate themselves, either to the specific body of the celebrity or the more general 'absolute body', through the consumption of products bearing the aura of celebrity. Cannibalism takes a more literal character with the collection of objects, 'reliquaries', as Rojek terms them, with a tangible relation to the celebrity; soap, chewing gum etc.²⁰² The often deviant character of these collectors perhaps lies not in the level of fanaticism as much as the transgression against *image* (and distance) in the pursuit of the real.

The ideal celebrity is absolutely consumed by the process of worship and (related) degradation, like the victim who is

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, pp.77-80

²⁰⁰ Brault and Naas, p.9

²⁰¹ Rojek, p.77

²⁰² Ibid, p.58

purified of 'dark, dirty and impure traces' by fire and rises as god/gold, as light or in this case *image*, (I'll discuss the connection between consumption and sublimation in the following chapter). While as consumer items celebrities may indeed feel threatened/ fear being utterly consumed by the desiring machine, to fear the 'devouring public' is to betray weakness or a lack of confidence: the ideal celebrity need not fear incorporation, but revels in 'sharing' with or colonizing their fans. Bodily metaphors for this are most obviously sexual, and also viral. This syncretism is a source of endless fascination and hysteria, (and as Taylor suggests, desire);²⁰³ celebrities are frequently cast as the incarnation of social dis-ease, most obviously 'Twiggy', whether her infamous thinness was natural or not, was frequently held responsible for the spread of anorexia and bulimia in the sixties. Daniel Craig, the 'blond Bond', is held responsible for the spread of these 'female' diseases into males today (along with more masculine-gendered excessive weight training), in an article from the *Christchurch Press* featuring a picture of Craig emerging from the beach in the last *Bond* movie, *Casino Royale*. A reversal of the classic scene where the (blond) 'Bond girl' emerges from the waves; suggesting that masculine bodies as bodies for both voyeuristic and jealous desire is a recent reversal of the norm.²⁰⁴

Electronic bodies are extended bodies, as such, like the extended eye discussed in the previous chapter, they have

²⁰³ M.C. Taylor, *Nots*, (Chicago, 1993), p.220

²⁰⁴ R. Morrisson, 'Buck the Trend Guys', *The Christchurch Press*, Tues Feb 6, 2007, p.D1

extra-ordinary ability to penetrate boundaries. 'When you tape yourself,' Dean Kuiper's said on taping himself for *playboy*, 'then you become one of those people who has somehow gathered all that magnetic, erotic power that comes from having their image replicated by electronic means. You've replicated your image electronically, and that's powerful stuff.'²⁰⁵ This erotic power links up with the reproductive power of Heusch's sacrificial body of the king. As eminently fecund bodies, continually reproducing themselves on screen and on consumer items, as bodies of light or energy transmitted through frequencies and currents, as absent presence, celebrity bodies are godlike bodies, or bodies of power. This is also suggested in Peter Brunettes 'requisite effect of mastery',²⁰⁶ and we should note of course the association of the upper body or head with sovereignty (and by extension divinity) in the body politic.

²⁰⁵ D. Kuipers, quoted in Poynor, *Obey*, pp.93-4

²⁰⁶ P. Brunette, 'Electronic Bodies/ Real Bodies: Reading the Evening News, in J.F. MacCannell and L. Zakarin ed., *Thinking Bodies*, (Stanford, 1994), p.188

Sublimation and nihilism – ‘nothing’ and the desire to reproduce (with) it.

Consuming Light

‘Give us a heavy body and we will restore its lightness, a feeble body and we shall restore its impassivity, a malformed body and we will restore its beauty, a gross body and we will restore its subtlety so that it will be like the spirit.’ Padre F. Zuccarone, S.J., *Prediche quaresimali*, Venezia, 1671, p.325. ‘Le doti de corpi glorificati. Predica... della Resurrezione nel giorno di Pasqua’, quoted in P. Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh* (Cambridge, 1988), p.25

The desire to sublimate the body into light carries through not only in sacrifice but in the language of medicine, cosmetics, cooking, and until recently embalming.²⁰⁷ The above excerpt from a seventeenth century text resonates with contemporary magazines, with their promises to ‘detoxify’, (and what is detoxification but the removal of ‘dark, dirty and impure traces’?), to free the body of the drag of excess weight and restore the natural ‘glow’ to skin. To be light, to be pure, ‘as good as gold’ in Taylor’s terminology,²⁰⁸ ‘celestial honey’ in Camporesi’s,²⁰⁹ the aim, like that in the extended body discussed in relation to celebrity, appears to be to push the body to the limit, as far as possible from corpo-reality. From the body of light projected over the screen to the airbrushed

²⁰⁷ What these have in common, as well as relatively similar methods, is the preparation of bodies, often with the aim of preservation or transformation.

²⁰⁸ Taylor, *About*, p.124

²⁰⁹ Camporesi, p.34

translucency of the model on the magazine page, consumer culture reflects a sort of superficial Gnosticism, where the desire to restore the shining, spiritual, 'body' possessed before the Fall into the material realm is incarnated on the technologically altered surface of the skin, or better yet the screen or page. The alchemist's belief that all matter will eventually become gold, that gold is the aim of all being, carries through with this desire to sublimate the 'base' body, to 'restore its subtlety so that it will be like the spirit'. Light, lightness, and the spirit are almost inseparable. As the most essential, incorrupt, 'prima materia', far more than gold, light is the culmination of life.²¹⁰

The ad for Ella Baché mentioned earlier proclaims 'Skin good enough [to] eat',²¹¹ and yet in reality there is no skin; the model has been flayed with an airbrush, and yet there must be skin, or an appeal to skin, because no one is going to buy nothing. And yet we are buying (into) nothing, whether we go as far as to purchase a skincare product or simply gaze wistfully at the image in the magazine. This negation in a sense reflects Vernant's contradictory body of the Greek Gods who 'have a body that is not a body',²¹² Richard Morrisson describes them as bodies for 'aspiration' rather than emulation,²¹³ but Vernant suggests this contradictory nature bears testimony to the body

²¹⁰ Taylor, *About*, p.122

²¹¹ See: 'Skin good enough eat', advert for Ella Baché franchisees, *Marie Claire* 124, December 2005

²¹² J.P. Vernant, 'Dim Body, Dazzling Body', in M. Feher, R. Nuddaff and N. Tazi ed, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part I, (New York, 1989), p.39

²¹³ Morrisson, p.D1

as the unavoidable basis of communication, the 'body' of the gods is nothing or rather the unrepresentable.²¹⁴ This also points to Nancy's spiritual body as the sublation or sublimation of the body. Dissolving into the page the digitally replicated body is eminently light, and eminently superficial, in that it consists of a (flayed,) paper-thin surface.

Again, what this might reflect is the body as a microcosm of the world, in Camporesi's foray into the medieval body *Incorruptible Flesh*, the body is a battleground between benign and malignant forces that not only mirrors, but interacts with the spiritual struggle between good and evil. Designer Natalia Ilyn, in *Chasing the Perfect*, links the purging of the interior of the home to the desire for control in an imperfect world, a reaction in part to the anxiety caused by the imperfection and unpredictability of people.²¹⁵ Similarly the purifying of the exterior or the interior of the self (although the latter seems to be largely in the aim of improving the former), taking refuge in a plethora of creams, cleansers and diets, the preoccupation with the body which often verges on the fanatical, reflects the desire for control as much as the 'natural' desire for health or social attractiveness.

Zygmunt Bauman suggests as much in *Liquid Life* by linking fat with terrorism; 'At the height of the terrorist alert in the U.S. the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thomson, told a senate committee that 'obesity is a critical public health

²¹⁴ Vernant, p.39

²¹⁵ N. Ilyn, *Chasing the Perfect*, (New York, 2006), p.67

problem in our country that causes millions of Americans to suffer unnecessary health problems and die prematurely', (although this could also be read as a healthy dose of relativity).

²¹⁶ Bauman focuses on the similar language used to describe fat as the terror lurking within the body, (physical and social), and innocuous terrorist 'cells'.²¹⁷ In a society of consumers, thinness, according to Nancy Etcoff, signals 'control over everything you eat',²¹⁸ fat therefore, becomes a symbol of social disorder and poor governance. (In reference to terrorist cells, the loss of 'control over everything you eat', could also be used as a metaphor to describe the failure to incorporate and control the ingested 'other', the immigrants who fail to integrate, and also the cultures who failed to respond to globalization in desired ways, i.e. to take on the values of the west).

The body-as-a-refuge is undermined by the constant stream of information eroding confidence in its well-being, demanding it consume an ever expanding range of 'essential' vitamins and 'wonderfoods' from omega three fatty acids to arecola berries to Salbatm 'supergrain', to insulate the skin against the world and the passage of time, all marketed with the same salvific language. As Bauman points out the surface, the point where the body makes contact with the world is a site of profound ambiguity,²¹⁹ a battleground between 'good' and 'bad' in which

²¹⁶ Bauman, p.97

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp.96-7

²¹⁸ Etcoff, p.224

²¹⁹ Bauman, p.95

there is always the danger that today's 'superfood' will be rediscovered as tomorrow's poison. In this sense the body is truly a 'microcosm of the world at large'.²²⁰ However, this is not to lose sight of the fact that anxiety itself is desirable, not only from a marketing perspective, but from a consumer point as well. Consumers 'construct the facade of embodiment' in response to advertising not only out of a desire to be desired like the model hawking the product, but also out of a desire to consume. The discrepancy between the technologically perfected and the real body is a source of 'enjoyable frustration and longing'.²²¹

Embodiment is the basis of empathy, or at least the 'operational similarities' between bodies enable us to sympathize with pain, sickness etc.²²² We may be evolutionarily 'wired for competition not happiness',²²³ but we are also wired to *connect*. 'Nothing human is alien to me';²²⁴ the trade in image refers not only to the technologically perfected but also to the imperfect, even grotesque bodies, the carnivalesque celebration of surgical mishaps, obesity and deformity, projected over channels of mass communication often reminiscent in their intensely voyeuristic character of a medieval 'freakshow', although in the guise of "human

²²⁰ Vanhoozer, p.160

²²¹ Belk, pp.298-202

²²² K. Hills, *Digital Sensations*, (Minneapolis, 1999), p.166

²²³ Carlise and Hanlon, p.9

²²⁴ Terence, quoted in D.J. McCracken, 'Ethical Positivism', *Proceedings from the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, 49, (1948-1949), p.83

interest”, bear witness to the fact that these bodies are also sublime in the same sense as the perfect body, particularly if we read the sublime in Walter Burke’s terms as originally relating to a call to empathy which frequently threatens to be subsumed into voyeurism.²²⁵ This helps to explain the kind of socialized hypochondria described in the above paragraph, the desire to discuss illnesses and flaws, to swap stories and scars and to watch medical disasters as much as gaze at sublimated images.

If, as Taylor claimed, sublimation is intrinsically linked to the process of gestation in the human mind, and the forge of the womb,²²⁶ then why not the process of digestion, after all is the forge really that dissimilar to the oven? As well as a similar interiority digestion and cooking involve a process of chemical reaction and transformation, and as (usually) domestic activities are inevitably linked with reproduction and nurture, as Falk puts it eating ‘implies the consumption (dissolving, using up) of the food but it is also simultaneously a process of production, or better, construction, (re)producing or constructing life on all levels from the physical to the social.’²²⁷ Digestion is a process of sublimation and subsumation, where food like gold is sublimated in order to remove the undesirable

²²⁵ E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the sublime and Beautiful*, (London, 1958), p.44-6

²²⁶ Taylor, *About*, p.121

²²⁷ Falk, pp.94-5

traces before being incorporated into the body. Alternatively medicine and health foods aid the body's continual process of self-sublimation or purification. Cooking is an extension or a preemption of this. In the medieval mind, digestion was figured in terms of heating, the stomach functions as a purifying forge or a sacrificial flame, thus Tommaso Campanella associates inefficient digestion with impurity; 'Moses, a divine and natural magician, in his exceeding wisdom forbids all meat taken from carcasses, from any animal which does not ruminate, because they swallow gross foods, in haste, and without digesting them, and in consequence they are full of vicious, gross and malignant vapors and of raw meat, which has not been cooked in natural heat.'²²⁸ Which also implies that the human stomach is not efficient enough to deal with these 'gross, vicious and malignant vapors', but requires the intermediation of ruminating animals, with their complex digestive systems, as well as the oven.

Bauman reads fitness counselor Christ St George's response to the problem of overeating as 'come to the gym more often and speed up your metabolism', as typical of consumer culture,²²⁹ to infinitely increase the metabolism, to increase the body's capacity to the point where it can compete with the desiring capacity of the mind, in a sense this is the ideal body in a society of consumers; 'ingesting, incorporating and expelling an

²²⁸ T. Campanella, *Del senso delle cose de magica*. Unedited Italian text with variants from the codices of two Latin editions, ed. A. Bruers, Bari, 1925 pp.245-7, quoted in Camporesi, p.84

²²⁹ Bauman, p.92

expanding range of objects',²³⁰ like the Nietzschean body of power discussed earlier in relation to colonialism.²³¹ Unlike the threatened body which bears the mark of fat or disease the high metabolism (which we can link back to sublimation through digestion) can consume without the danger of syncretism. Like the Christian saint for whom the ingestion of the wash-water of lepers or pus from an infected wound was the greatest expression of faith in the divine and contempt for the material realm, the inversion of social norms in a society obsessed with physical purity, the consumption of fat in a society of consumers is the greatest expression of faith in the body itself. The ability to consume anything (as opposed to accumulate) without being marked becomes an expression of the body's power.

Accumulation refers not only to fat in the body itself but goods that are considered extensions of the consumer body; old clothing (inevitably linked with fat thanks to Trinny and Susannah of *What Not to Wear*, and their numerous clones), debts, old furniture, any and all outdated or unused consumer items drag the consuming body down, are figured in terms of illness; socially and spiritually crippling. Thus the recent reality show *The Big Stuff* in which 'life designer' Sian Jaquet proposes to solve all of couples' problems by clearing away their excess material baggage (including items associated with past

²³⁰ E. Lupton and A. Miller, 'Hygiene, Cuisine, and the Product World of Early Twentieth Century America', in J. Crary and S. Kwinter ed., *Incorporations*, (New York, 1992)p.507

²³¹ Patton, p.47

relationships and families).²³² This conforms to Lupton and Millers 'ethos of disposal', where the production of waste in the twentieth century product world was cast in terms of a social good,²³³ although in the wake of environmental awareness waste becomes even more 'creative' under the title of recycling. Where wealth and desire are increasingly dematerialized, the materiality of consumer goods cannot be figured in terms of an investment in the body, (it's not an ethos of accumulation: accumulation is grotesque, even degenerate), but as a block to desire. The ideal body is the dematerializing body with its hyperactive metabolism constantly converting matter into nothing.

From Reproduction to Replication

There is an echo of the alchemist's 'belief in the finality of nature' in the 'golden ratio' of 1:1.618,²³⁴ the scientific claim that failing, 'machine errors that arise from the vicissitudes of the womb',²³⁵ the perfect human organism, and all living organisms, will conform ratio of 1:1.618, perfect symmetry which signals the perfect replication of the human body from

²³² www.tv3.co.nz/TVShows/Reality/TheBigStuff/tabid/766/Default.aspx?showid=16049

²³³ Lupton and Miller, p.504

²³⁴ M. Eliade, *The Forge and The Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy*, (Chicago, 1978), p.50 quoted in Taylor, *About*, p.121

²³⁵ Leroi, p.356

its DNA template (in this sense 1:1.618 becomes something close to the God behind *imago Dei*, just as Taylor's gold is 'from this [the alchemist's] point of view... God').²³⁶ It is widely accepted that the attraction in beauty stems from reproductive desire, Armand Marie Leroi, in his study of human genetic variation, *Mutants*, makes the particularly interesting leap from genetics to philosophy to back this up, citing philosopher Elaine Scarry: 'when the eye sees something beautiful, the whole body wants to reproduce it'.²³⁷ In consumer culture the reproduction of beauty is dislocated from the body and becomes *replication*. Beautiful faces are (coincidentally?) the most photogenic; the faces mapped in accordance with their symmetry by Dr Stephen Marquart in *the Human Face* are those of celebrities, and in particular models such as Liz Hurley and Kate Moss.

The link between reproduction or replication and philosophy (not to mention beauty and celebrity) is interesting. Scarry's philosophy of beauty and reproduction has an obvious debt to Plato, as Leroi notes.²³⁸ In the *Symposium*, Diotima prefers the reproduction of the mind to reproduction of or through the body, 'People look enviously at Homer and Hesiod and other good poets, because of the kind of children they have left behind them, which provide them with immortal fame and remembrance by being immortal themselves.'²³⁹ Literature is, like image, and children, an extension of the self. Even in this

²³⁶ Taylor, *About*, p.124

²³⁷ E. Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, (London, 2000), quoted in Leroi, p.348

²³⁸ Leroi, pp.348-9

²³⁹ Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill, (London, 1999), 209d

though reproduction is not a singular activity but the product of a meeting of minds, reproduction or 'birth in beauty' is through, or considering the patronage which is the focus of the *Symposium* into another, such as the boys Socrates takes into his tutelage, and are used by Plato to narrate his story in a kind of double emphasis (considering Plato's claim to have been Socrates' pupil). Likewise in the *Phaedo* Socrates achieves immortality and immortal fame through his *logos*, the word which interacts with society to form a dialectic in pursuit of the beautiful (wisdom/the real) after his physical death.²⁴⁰

Paul Patton in 'Nietzsche and the Body of the Philosopher' betrays this obsession with lightness, this tendency to blur the boundaries between sublimation and reproduction in his description of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, whose 'transformation into one capable of expecting children is inscribed on his body, which has become light, like that of a dancer.' Signifying, Patton claims, that 'giving birth to new values is essentially a corporeal event.'²⁴¹ Birth as a 'corporeal event' marked by lightness, where the clichéd 'glow' of pregnancy becomes an ethereal or transcendent light(ness), suggests reproduction as another attempt to escape, or in the least sublimate, the corporeality of the body. Bataille suggests as much in *Literature and Evil*: 'the mainspring of human activity is generally the desire to reach the point farthest from the funereal domain, which is rotten, dirty and impure. We make every effort to efface the traces,

²⁴⁰ Loraux, p.32

²⁴¹ Patton, p.51

signs and symbols of death. Then, if we can, we efface the traces and signs of these efforts.'²⁴² The body itself is inevitably tied to death, or more to the point *corruption*, since death in a sanitized, abstracted or spiritualized sense; a 'martyr's death', or the sacrificial death discussed in chapter two, doesn't invoke the same abjection (and of course we should note again Baudrillard's opposition of violent death with slow or suspended death, the latter synonymous with the slow decay or degeneration of the body).²⁴³ In essence this is death sublimated as far as possible from the corporeal realities of corruption, which Plato's preference for (re)birth into philosophy or literature suggests again the desire to sublimate the self into cultural currency I read into the technology of sacrifice.

*'In our era we must philosophize with images rather than concepts.'*²⁴⁴ In contemporary culture the philosopher's desire to achieve immortality through the sublimation of the body into cultural currency (into the 'body' of thought or text) is realized through digital reproduction, which grants the image a limitless, although, as we will see, curiously sterile fecundity. In this 'precession of simulacra' the system bypasses (the death of) the body, in this sense digital replication becomes a technology of what Taylor describes as 'sacrifice without sacrifice',²⁴⁵ or in Baudrillard's terms 'anticipated

²⁴² G. Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, trans. Alistair Hamilton, (New York, 1985), p.66

²⁴³ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.39

²⁴⁴ M.C. Taylor. and Esa Saarinen, *Imagologies: Media Philosophy*, (New York, 1994), Media 15

²⁴⁵ Taylor, *About*, p.26

resurrection'.²⁴⁶ As such replication does away with the need for reproduction, and reproductive desire, as Baudrillard writes on the dilemma of the voyeur faced with an erotic photograph of twin sisters: 'How do you invest when the beauty of one is immediately duplicated in the other? The gaze can only go from one to the other, and these poles enclose all vision.'²⁴⁷

Replication, particularly once it becomes simulacra, is autogenetic, introverted, suggesting Vanhoozer's 'sinful autonomy'.²⁴⁸ Replication leaves no room for a dialectical model of interaction in the process of 'creative communication', only the 'singular seduction' of gazing. As the realization of the philosopher's quest, and indeed of all desire, replication again signals the end (death), the 'closure of the system' (although like Nietzschean 'death of God' this is not death in the biological sense, (or even the social sense), but rather the rendering of the body null and void); according to Baudrillard: 'perhaps this is the seduction of death, in the sense that, for we sexually differentiated beings, death is perhaps not nothingness, but quite simply the form of reproduction prior to sexual differentiation.'²⁴⁹

Images of the body betray an endless fecundity, but it is of an asexual character since the masculine vision is incapable of 'investing' in the image/ is rendered impotent in the face of this

²⁴⁶ J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York, 1983), p.4

²⁴⁷ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.73

²⁴⁸ Vanhoozer, p.177

²⁴⁹ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.73

vast fertility (what need can there be for reproduction when replication achieves so much?). No wonder the typical model's body is somewhat androgynous; according to *The Human Face* the ideal female model's facial features are a composite of 'adult' (male) and child,²⁵⁰ which combined with the almost invariable neutered thinness does not suggest much reproductive capacity. Similarly Gary Soldow suggests that as the male body enters the visual marketplace and becomes subject to the (always) masculine gaze it becomes increasingly feminized or androgynous.²⁵¹ This androgynous, asexual, and frequently ecstatic, body also suggests the body-for-consumption as opiate, (after all, the dilation of the pupils Belk notes in consumers of the image could be read another way apart from sexual desire).²⁵²

In *Generation Ecstasy* Simon Reynolds claims the ecstatic, intoxicated body as akin Deleuze and Guattari's 'body-without-organs', an androgynous or 'de-phallicized' body echoing the 'age-old mystical goals' of alchemists and Gnostics to restore the 'subtle' or 'translucent' body.²⁵³ Bodies for consumption (the bodies of advertising) are often depicted as opiates, which, taken into the body, produce hallucinations or new levels of consciousness, (and there is of course a longstanding link between celebrity and drugs). Brian Greenspan's fantasy of

²⁵⁰ Etcoff suggests much the same thing in *Survival of the Prettiest*, pp.149-55

²⁵¹ G. Soldow, 'Homoeroticism in Advertising: something for Everyone with Androgyny', in T. Reichert and J. Lambaise ed., *Sex in Consumer Culture: The Erotic Content of Media and Marketing*, (London, 2006), p.333

²⁵² Belk, pp.197-202

²⁵³ S. Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy*, (Boston, 1998), p.246

ingesting speaking entities and thus gaining knowledge through consumption manifested in advertising campaigns echo the western tradition of counter-sacrament in the witches' Sabbath; the ingestion or anointing with the rendered fat of unbaptized infants through which the initiate gains hidden knowledge and/or is transported to a fantastic realm, a tradition which, Carlo Ginzburg suggests, probably relates back to pre-Christian mushroom cults but also reflects Camporesi's suggestion that 'ultimately, the widespread practice of anointing was perhaps not so removed from the many paths that mass escapism took (even if only in fantasy) into forbidden or impossible areas.'²⁵⁴

Again we come back to humanity as communication; knowledge is not only transmitted through the medium of the consumed/consumer body but is frequently knowledge *of* the consumed/consumer body as the locus of desire. 'The medium is the message', at which point bodies cease to function as symbols or signs since they can only signify, or communicate, themselves *ad infinitum*. The reality of consumer culture is not the social body but a simulation, thus it might signal the end of all bodies, the end of the real of a (social and individual) body. The predominance of advertising today, which at the same time it is no less an intrinsic, and sought after, aspect of social life, there is a sense is becoming less and less effective, less relevant, means less and less, might then reflect Baudrillard's claim that 'communication becomes all the more urgent when there is nothing to communicate'.

²⁵⁴ See C. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies; Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, (New York, 1991), p.307 and Camporesi, pp.22

The *Dislocation* of Desire

The main point of *dislocation* is the dislocation of consumption from production and its links to the dislocation from the body. The human body is the grounding point of the whole system of economics, although as we have seen, this is progressively abstracted from flesh, to gold, to digital media, to the point where it is apparently 'notin' or simulacra. The cannibal critique attempts to overcome the dislocation by (as illustrated in Cruishank's cartoon) pulling back the veil that concealed the conditions of production from consumers, to make explicit that consumption implicates in the corporeal exploitation of fellow human beings or, as Gallagher put it, 'the real of exchange is life for life'; production, exchange and consumption are physical relations. With the shift of much of mass production to the third world, this 'reality' is increasingly difficult to reveal as the relationship becomes more abstract. Even the moment of exchange is progressively depersonalized, as will be discussed shortly.

Distance, De-socialization and Non-Production.

Dislocation is the condition of commodity fetishism, as Marx realized in *Capital*; 'Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange.' Marx realized the explicitly religious character of consumer culture when he resorted to the 'mist shrouded regions of the religious world' to

explain commodity fetishism.²⁵⁵ Taylor picks up on this in *About Religion* where he takes the 'magico religious aura' to its ultimate realization in the speculative economy as a 'realized eschatology', in which, as previously mentioned, the death of go(l)d; the unhinging of currency and society from the 'secure referent' of God and gold, becomes the 'climax of divine self-realization'.²⁵⁶ Marx claimed that the transcendent element, both commodity fetishism and religion as 'reflex actions of the real world', would vanish when the social nature of the 'life-process of society', (which Marx, fully in keeping with modern ideology, bases on 'the process of material production' rather than consumption), as cooperation between 'freely associated men' was fully apparent.²⁵⁷ Marx's prediction is subverted, as Taylor's dynamic suggests, in part by the precession of simulacra, in which the transcendent is resurrected in the hyperreal or the virtual, and through the related process of the very literal dislocation of production from consumption, as mass manufacture increasingly takes place in the intangible space of the 'developing world'.

Baudrillard announced the death of production in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* '...nothing is produced, strictly speaking: everything is deduced, from the grace (God) or benefice (nature) of an agency which releases or withholds its riches.'²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Marx pp.43-4&51

²⁵⁶ Taylor, *About*, p.26

²⁵⁷ Marx, p.51

²⁵⁸ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.9

Produced... deduced, Baudrillard's words signal not only the dislocation of production from consumption, but the fundamental dislocation or alienation of the product itself. Since things obviously are produced, and their production is often no less labour-intensive as in the past; for a comparison see workers' testimonies before the Saddler Committee of 1831 and other enquiries into working conditions in textile industries in England of the 1830s,²⁵⁹ and compare them with Micha X Peled's documentary on the manufacture of jeans in Shenzhen, China, *China Blue*. Clothing manufacture is extremely labour-intensive; workers in the factory followed by Peled worked from 8am to 2 or 3am on a standard day.²⁶⁰ Yet Baudrillard can claim things are 'deduced' (and his claim can still ring true, or even more true, some thirty years on) because in the world of simulacra which we 'in the West' inhabit the product is eclipsed by its sign. What allows a pair of jeans to become 'nothing' as George Ritzer (*The Globalization of Nothing*) puts it is the fact that through advertising, branding etc consumer desire is actively constructed toward the consumption of 'image'. By ensuring that the aura, the connection between thing and image, surrounding consumer items decays almost immediately upon consumption, (in some sense mirroring the fact that 'once through the maw, the item is lost to introspection'); by dematerializing desire and 'rendering non-satisfaction permanent' advertisers ensure

²⁵⁹ see *Commission for Inquiry into the Employment of Children in Factories, Second Report, 1833*, and *Testimony Before the Sadler Committee, 1831*, in A.J. Andrea and J.H. Overfield, *The Human Record: Sources of Global History*, (Boston, 2001), pp.271-2

²⁶⁰ M.X. Peled, *China Blue*, Teddy Bear Films c2004

continuous consumption. Transforming the product into 'nothing' is a conjurer's trick that accomplishes, although unwittingly and as something of a side-effect, what the techniques of sublimation discussed in previous chapters aimed to do, sublimating the body/ bodily labour into *nothing*.

On the western front is the phenomenon Ritzer describes as 'nonpeople'; highly scripted, (presumably) disinterested people basically playing the part of a simulacrum: conforming to an industry template, the penultimate examples apparently being 'the counter people at Burger King, telemarketers', and Disney Land cast members.²⁶¹ Ritzer's description of nonpeople runs along generalized lines of disenchantment and anti-social relations; for example he compares the relationship (ideally) built between a bartender and clientele with that between a visitors and cast members at Disney Land, with the latter approaching 'the highest level of dehumanization'.²⁶² What's interesting is Ritzer's claim that we as customers increasingly prefer to deal with nonpeople,²⁶³ although he doesn't address the underlying reasons. The most likely perhaps being what Julius, (referring to pornography) refers to as 'the safety afforded by distance'.²⁶⁴ When dealing with nonpeople, interaction stereotypically follows predictable, impersonal, undemanding lines, and this is comforting; an integral part of the (false) enchantment built around Disney Land and

²⁶¹ See Ritzer, pp.52&82

²⁶² Ibid, p.82

²⁶³ Ibid, p.87

²⁶⁴ A. Julius, *Transgressions: The Offences of Art*, (London, 2002), p.59

McDonalds. And safety is particularly interesting in industries targeted strongly toward children or the 'family' market.

Ritzer also notes the role of costume, but only so far as 'nonhuman roles or costume' alienate cast members from customers (which, if we want to be pessimistic, could be extended to the infamous uniforms of the fast food industry), rather than the role of costume in generating the (false?) enchantment which is another part of the attraction of *nonplaces* and *nonpeople*.²⁶⁵ While we may not have a relationship with the person in the Mickey Mouse costume we have a hyperreal relation with Mickey Mouse himself, built on years of consuming media, toys, and generally engaging in popular culture (as heavily mediated as it may be). It is a relationship with simulacra, as Ritzer suggests, but simulacra of an entirely different level than the *nonpeople* themselves.²⁶⁶ And this again is *safe*, disconnected from the realities of the real world and the realities of people; perhaps the reason we encourage our children into fantasy worlds is, aside from the possible physical dangers lurking outside the tv screen, 'the safety afforded by distance', our deep unease surrounding personal relations of any kind. On the other hand, it is quite amusing that in an era of 'stranger danger' we have curiously fetishized the ambiguity surrounding masked or costumed figures; think the number of teenage girls, and older women, who have their picture taken on Santa's knee.²⁶⁷ The fact that

²⁶⁵ Ritzer, p.82

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p.94

²⁶⁷ Of course this also points to the extent to which we've fetishized childhood.

we feel secure enough, within the highly controlled perimeters of the theme park or Santa's grotto, to allow children to engage quite intimately with people we would usually be suspicious of further emphasizes the dislocation inherent in the experience; for example kids can sit on Santa's knee or hug Mickey Mouse while holding hands with a teacher rouses concern (and again, it is the media who are partly responsible for this hyper-awareness).

Nonpeople produce nothing; this is literalized in Ritzer's description of the McDonald's 'Big Mac' as the classic example of a non-thing or a simulacrum (which again has the circular effect of reducing the entire society which produced it into *nothing*).²⁶⁸ This ties in with the demise of reproduction discussed in the previous chapter, which Ilyin makes clear when she cautions against the effeminizing effects of 'becoming a society of choosers rather than creators'; 'its like the old sex dance of the penguins or of the cockatoos, and we are the quiet one, the silent one, the female one, and the producer is the showy one, the one who offers, the male'.²⁶⁹ In saying this (as well as cementing gender-role stereotypes), Ilyin echoes twentieth century fears of the decline of western virility and the (people) factory of Asia, although the stereotype can be comfortably reversed with westerners fertilizing the feminized factories of the east with their designs. Anyway, what interests me is the alienation or possibly *dehumanization* which comes from being dislocated from production. This accounts for a

²⁶⁸ Ritzer, p.78

²⁶⁹ N. Ilyin, *Chasing the Perfect: Thoughts on Modernist Design in Our Time*, (New York, 2006), p.91

large part of the economic devaluation of 'unskilled' workers, but is it part of the social devaluation as well? Ritzer's argument is telling. In making *nothing*, in being reduced at best to intermediaries, *nonpeople* are excluded from the social process 'recounted' in material artifacts.

Nonpeople are the penultimate consumer cannibals; in fact *nonpeople* are the ultimate example of the anti-social model of the cannibalism critique, existing only in the realm of consumption and exchange, irredeemably dislocated from the people whose labour they consume. As we will see shortly, the phenomenon of *nonpeople* is a self-perpetuating cycle, as consumption becomes the main form of escape from the drudgery of work. Having said this, I suspect if anyone went on a quest to discover someone who could truly be classified as a 'nonperson' they'd fail, but this is in some sense the point. *Nonpeople* are a product of alienation and (consumer) perception. They do not exist or at least no one can manage to be a *nonperson* in every facet of their existence (the very act of getting to know a *nonperson* would change them into a (some?) person). Opinions may vary here according to personal experience. In any case, for Ritzer's *nonpeople* as a stereotype to have any value for my thesis I'd like to re-appropriate it and extend it to suggest that we are all, to some extent, *nonpeople* in our dealings, or lack thereof, with others in consumer culture.

The Dematerialization of Desire

‘That which counts is here each time that *anticipation*, that which binds one in activity, the meaning of which is manifested in the reasonable *anticipation* of the result, dissolves, in a staggering, unanticipated way, into NOTHING.’ G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Vol. III, trans. R. Hurley, (New York, 1998), p.211

The de-socialization of the moment of exchange, reduction to *nonpeople* and the alienation of consumer culture is intricately connected to the dislocation or dematerialization of desire. As Lasch suggests advertising ‘plays seductively on the malaise of Industrial civilization. Is your job boring and meaningless? Does it leave you with feelings of futility and fatigue? Consumption promises to fill the aching void’.²⁷⁰ Advertising appeals to intimacy, Taylor, drawing on Freud, suggests consumption as a way of overcoming the loss of the mother, (and the oceanic is of course strongly related to Baudrillard’s ecstasy).²⁷¹ Russel Belk’s research toward *The Consumer Behaviour Odyssey* suggests consumers actively seek out advertising material in magazines in order to connect with an esoteric community; ‘Readership rituals, feelings of symbolic communion with other aficionados, and loving acts of reverence and sacrifice suggest that specialty magazines often serve as inspiring sacred texts’.²⁷² It is significant that people ‘buy into’ this virtual community over and against real relations; one of the magazine

²⁷⁰ C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in the Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (New York, c1979), p.72

²⁷¹ Taylor, *Confidence*, p.134

²⁷² R.W. Belk, ‘Speciality Magazines and Flights of Fancy: Feeding the Desire to Desire’, *European Advances in Consumer Research Vol 5*, 2001, pp.197-202

consumers interviewed for the *Odyssey* was a hiking enthusiast who preferred to 'lust drool and fantasize' over adverts for hiking equipment rather than take to the trails which were a short distance from his office;²⁷³ suggesting Merskin's fetish as that which 'replaces human relations with commodified object relations'.²⁷⁴ Similarly, Belk notes the shift from participation in a generalized consumer culture to elite subcultures catered for by specialty magazines. Specialty magazines offer esoteric knowledge which may offer to elevate above the mass of consumers (we are, Carlisle and Hanlon suggest suggests, wired for competition).²⁷⁵

The two most frequent metaphors for consumer desire turned up in the *Consumer Odyssey* are sexual desire and hunger, according to Belk magazine addicts 'heart rate and blood pressure increase and pupils dilate in looking at images and reading descriptions of the latest goodies', again suggesting the dislocation of desire from the body.²⁷⁶ Of course the other explanation could be that the reactions experienced by those surveying magazines are in response to the beautiful bodies and faces of the models used to pimp these products. In either case, it's interesting that desire has been subverted from reality to image. This goes further than consumption as a means for filling the 'aching void', since readers seldom go as far as

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Schroeder and Borgenson, 2003, p.66 quoted in Merskin, p.204

²⁷⁵ Carlisle and Hanlon, p.9

²⁷⁶ Belk, pp. 197-202

actually purchasing the products advertised. They consume the *ads*, and go to some length to do so, taking the time, travel and money to peruse the shelves of magazine stands in order to ‘find new objects’, (perhaps better put as find new images), ‘to wish for, long for, and desire.’²⁷⁷ Desire is entirely motivated to ‘the nowhere land of the image’ and this, as Belk’s research suggests, is the real secret behind advertising’s threatened ineffectiveness, consumers have internalized the dematerialization of desire to a remarkable degree.

Cannibal/ized Kids.

Dislocation affects children as much as adults. Schor notes that low income children are the most immersed in advertising media through their high exposure to tv due to the erosion of their social worlds, the increased restriction on children’s social activities outside the home due to safety issues.²⁷⁸ Such children may not have much power to consume, but they are educated from an early stage in the production of ‘desires to desire’: aside from the constant commercials there are the ‘educational’ products touted (mainly toward parents) in media aimed at younger children such as *Blues Clues* and *Sesame Street*, while older children’s cartoons are invariably based on card games such as *Yughi-o* and *Pokémon*, or in the least come with a host of collectible, ever-adapting figurines. While If they

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Schor, p.205

can afford to consume children can immerse themselves in a particular product-fetish to a fanatical level. Schor uses Pokémon as an example of brand extension; along with the tv program there are computer games, handheld electronic games, collectible cards, (she doesn't mention the clothing, duvet covers, school stationary),²⁷⁹ influence extends to the fast food outlet through McDonald's 'happy meals' with their inevitably brittle plastic toys promoting whichever movie or fad is popular.

Bell, writing on tourism in the *The Accelerated Sublime* made the link between escapism and collecting,²⁸⁰ escapism, and safety, must also lie at the heart of desires to desire. The escape into a fantasy world of vision, where one can 'lust, drool and fantasize' over images or,²⁸¹ more appropriately for children, (for whom the media frequently substitutes violence, albeit in a censored or at least bloodless form,²⁸² for sex), can 'zone out' in front of the tv screen. What's interesting too is the highly moral nature of such cartoons; the constant recycling of the Manichean battle between good and evil which is, with the exception of the recent trope of the 'axis of evil', not *generally* reflected in the immediate reality of children or their parents.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, p.26

²⁸⁰ Bell and Lyall, p.155

²⁸¹ See Belk, pp.197-202

²⁸² Children, for example, got the censored version of cartoon *Dragonball Z*, with the violence but not the carnage, on daytime viewing. Which basically meant that while the hyper-masculine bodies of the cartoon characters, some of them children, were frequently shown battered and bleeding, the pools of blood and corpses salivated over by adult viewers on the DVD were left out. Pokémon, of course, consists mainly of small, fuzzy animals pitted against each other in arranged battles by children. In some sense it is the electronic equivalent of cock or dog fighting.

What this reflects is a nostalgia for (a largely imagined) certainty which is not limited to children, (think all the references to Nazi Germany in adult's films such as *Bond* and *Indiana Jones* in the 80s and 90s, not to mention Lucas' *Star Wars* supposedly written 'so his children would have something to believe in'), in the absence of any confidence in our own culture what can we transmit to our children but escapism and obsolete black and white morality?

J. B. Schor notes that the undermining of children's 'social worlds' leaves them dependent on media, this is, presumably, not just for entertainment but for identity and as a surrogate for social relations.²⁸³ Cartoon characters are such an integral part of our childhood they also form a part our identity and sense of solidarity later in life, for example the popularity of tee shirts emblazoned with 'retro' characters from cartoons such as 'Transformers' and 'Scooby Doo' among those of us 'made in the 80s'. It is a measure of the extent to which we are a consumer culture that brand extension can continue almost exponentially, and again, the connection is with the character and how it expresses us to others 'in the know' about 80s cartoons rather than the physical history of the 'Made in China' tee shirt itself. This 'branded enchantment' leaves us vulnerable to the distress Langer noted in one of her students realizing '...my whole childhood was based on exploitation' after seeing a pamphlet defaming working conditions in

²⁸³ Schor, p. 205

factories producing Disney toys.²⁸⁴ Only where this reality is hidden can the enchantment essential to the children's consumer industry continue. As previously noted however, realities are very easily hidden where children's consumer desire is motivated within the 'nowhere land of the image' without necessitating or encouraging any connection the products themselves, which are often irredeemably disenchanted, crude, poor quality, and only very brief bearers of the aura of the character/commercial with which they are associated.

Chin notes the irony in toy corporations concern to provide representation of ethnic minorities among their toys, which often posits the importance of children's identification with consumer goods over that of their relationships with real people. It also privileges ethnicity or rather skin color over all the other aspects which separate children from their doll's character, and the fantasy worlds of idealized consumerism they inhabit in commercials.²⁸⁵ The irony of a girl receiving an expensive doll for a present only two years before she becomes a mother could perhaps be paralleled by juxtaposing Santa's elves with the actual production of toys in a third world factory.²⁸⁶ While worshipping the child's imagination they force it down narrow channels, such as the four ethnicities represented in the Barbie range. Ethnic representation is of

²⁸⁴ B. Langer, 'The Business of Branded Enchantment: Ambivalence and Disjuncture in the Global Children's Culture Industry', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, (2004); 4; 251 p.270

²⁸⁵ Chin, pp.309-10

²⁸⁶ See Ibid, p.308

course a politically correct need to address in the toy industry, early teen pregnancy, drug addiction and violence cannot help but conflict with the rather narrow sense of enchantment children are supposed to draw on to help them cope with their otherwise presumably disenchanted lives.²⁸⁷

Conversely, Berly Langer points out, corporate rhetoric of the 'sacred child'; the Manichean opposition of good and evil characters in cartoons, games, toys, and associated products through 'brand extension', as well as the emphasis on children's natural right to play, imagination, and enchantment, generates a hyper-moral space in which the 'social relation' between consumers, producers and corporations becomes a matter of social urgency.²⁸⁸ Because the (false) enchantment surrounding commodities by Mattel, Disney etc sits ill at ease with their production in developing countries by underpaid and frequently underage workers the branded experience of childhood is constantly threatened by the realities of production. If the distance between producers and consumers break down, as in the 1993 toy factory fires in Thailand and China, the connection is almost unbearable, (again, interestingly enough, the 'social relation' is mediated by the media (news coverage), over the same channels as the (false) social relation between the child and the brand, so that Sarah Cox can note her connection with the 'imagined, but very real' victim who may have made her child's cabbage patch doll).²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Although perhaps, in light of my earlier claims, I should rethink the latter.

²⁸⁸ Langer, p.264

²⁸⁹ Ibid, pp.266-8&270

The highly publicized connection between children and material goods also means that consumption becomes an assertion of a child's right and 'sacred' status within a less than ideal world, as Chin noted in her research on girls from low income black families in southern states of America; 'Whether or not the girls played with dolls much, their families still gave them dolls, as if to underscore the girls' continuing status as children', in light of which the young mother's receiving of a doll mentioned earlier is not as one-sided an example of consumer-culture's disconnection from reality as it seems.²⁹⁰ Childhood becomes a space of critical communication and consumer items are an integral part of its vocabulary.

Boundless Desire

'The possibility of transgression is based on duality. The notion of a boundary acknowledges that there is an Other: the notion of transgression acknowledges the boundary between Self and Other can be collapsed, at risk to both identities. Transgression is alienating because it re-creates the transgressor as Other than him or herself. Desire is alienating, because in desiring an other, one moves towards transgression, therefore, desire must be "contained" by law and custom, or sublimated.' P.K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels*, (Cambridge, 1997), p.43

The dematerialization of desire relates to the dematerialization or at least the abstraction of the body both as a desired and desiring object; in a sense it is this abstraction of the body that gives rise to all needs and desires beyond the basic (although,

²⁹⁰ Chin, p.308

as suggested in the previous chapter, the abstract body, particularly as a construct supported by science and projected through advertising for products as diverse as skincare to the latest safety adaptations in all-wheel drive vehicles, is instrumental in making all (advertised) needs basic and immediate). What I'm interested in exploring is how the idea that we are increasingly beyond transgression relates to the dematerialization of the body; building on the collapse of the boundary between self and other discussed in 'Technologies of Seeing'. Transgression constructs or cements boundaries in the process of transgressing them, as the above quote from Gilbert suggests. If a certain level of alienation, and the need to overcome that alienation, is essential to the ability to empathize then what does this collapse of distance mean?

As we have seen, the cannibal critique plays with the threat of transgression, and with the ambivalence surrounding all acts of consumption, physical or economic. The threat of transgression in cannibalism again established physical and cultural boundaries between self and other at the same time the critique threatened their erosion by revealing them as constructs. In post-consumer culture the idea is that there is no boundary to transgress, as everything collapses into superficiality.

Saturation undermines or drowns out any dialogue between bodies or body images. The category of porn as we have seen is instrumental in collapsing images into simulacra, the pervasion of pornographic codes into the mainstream, while it provides for instant recognition, also has the effect of rendering images

mute. As Poynor comments on Tom Hingston's *Porn?*: 'Try as it might, the book confirms just how hard it is to say anything new on the subject, especially if our starting point, both emotionally and literally, is that we have seen it all before.'²⁹¹ We have seen it all before, and if the gaze itself is pornographic, as Lumby suggests,²⁹² then all representation becomes porn; although this development has the circular effect of rendering porn a defunct category ('most of us don't worry about this anymore').²⁹³ The only thing pornographic imagery could articulate was transgression, in the absence of boundaries it becomes a monologue on consumerism.

An issue of the magazine *Zoo* referred to by Poynor in *Designing Pornotopia*, included pictures of 'a Romanian woman with a 12-stone tumor', hands mutilated by barbed wire, along with the standard 'page after page of breasts.'²⁹⁴ Men in torture scenes and naked women have been the staples of voyeurism in western culture for centuries, as can be charted through classical Greek sculpture and depictions of Christian saints to *Bond* movies, (the latest two *The World is Not Enough* and *Casino Royale* being particularly good examples). Of course, art, and even to some extent *Bond* attempts to communicate a deeper meaning to torture, as problematic as this romanticizing pain might be. *Zoo* puts it in the context of a stupidity 'fix', thereby as Poynor points out assigning a similar context of

²⁹¹ R. Poynor, *Designing Pornotopia: Travels in Visual Culture*, (New York, 2006), p.146

²⁹² See chapter 3

²⁹³ Poynor, *Obey*, p.106

²⁹⁴ Poynor, *Designing*, p.41

adolescent voyeurism on the viewer.²⁹⁵ 'Stupidity' is telling, as in some sense what porn represents, or has come to represent, is the dumbing-down of sex, or in this case pain.

If transgression is impossible voyeurism becomes nostalgic, part of a longing for the lost 'other' and, by extension, the self (since the self is always constructed in relation to the other). Poynor, reminiscing about an anti-drugs film he saw as a teenager, recalled the 'numbing physical shock, a brutal new awareness drilled into nerve endings, lasted for days' after being shown an image of a junkie-girl on the autopsy table.²⁹⁶ Now, having 'supped full of horrors', Poynor notes he can be aesthetically 'moved' in response to an image, but never 'viscerally shocked'.²⁹⁷ Pain no longer communicates to and from a body; in some sense it is even beyond Baudrillard's 'referendum', where the self had to respond to the challenge of abjection by accepting or rejecting the demand to 'internalize' the image (even if the result of this enigma was a days long state of shock). Contrast the 'numbness' which was Poynor's response to the autopsy scene to that he ponders watching the spectacle of a man burning alive in the movie *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, granted the latter is fiction but the reaction is

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ See Poynor, *Obey*, p.103: Oddly enough what could be referred to as autopsy porn has become a standard feature of evening viewing (at least in New Zealand), with the predominance of medical or CSI dramas, all featuring voyeurism of the corpse, quite often with novel ways of revealing and concealing, for example strategic lighting that blurs out sexual organs on otherwise fully naked corpses on NCIS. Revealing yet concealing of course being one of the standard features of porn. The scene which so shocked Poynor as teen is nothing today, even the reality of the 'junkie-girl' is undermined by existence of real crime scene investigation documentaries where the corpses of real people are offered up for view in a context that reflects that of the fictional genre.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p.103

still the same as that when we are presented with images of starving refugees.²⁹⁸ What we have now is encultured, rather than embodied, empathy. Our greatest reaction to images of pain is often concern over our lack of reaction, and this of course is the guilt the media often play on using such images. Wound porn may be similar in motivation to the radical attempt to regain embodiment Zizeke reads into 'cutting', (and of course there is also a strong sexual, as well as anti-social, element in self-harm).²⁹⁹ Not necessarily a desire to reclaim either pre-modern or pre-adolescent 'innocence' so much as the 'rush' (as porn suggests) and this of course links into Belk's need to feel as the motivation for magazine consumption.³⁰⁰

'Technologies of seeing' appear to routinely transgress the boundaries of the closed, individual body which is (according to Foucault and Bakhtain) the basis of the modern individual.³⁰¹ In effect though, as everything becomes opened up to the gaze it becomes superficial, as the boundaries between internal and external are collapsed, whether we are talking about the interior of the body or the once 'private' life unfolding on 'reality t.v.'. This is suggested by the pervasion of what I've referred to as 'autopsy porn' into the mainstream public media, to the extent where commercials featuring All Blacks flayed of

²⁹⁸ Ibid, p.105

²⁹⁹ S. Zizeke, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on 11 September and Related Dates*, (London and New York, 2002), p.70

³⁰⁰ See Belk, pp.197-202

³⁰¹ See M. Bakhtin, 'The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources' (1984), in M. Fraser and M. Greco ed., *The Body: A Reader*, (London, 2005), p.94

skin to demonstrate the effects of *Powerade 'Isotonic'* in keeping the body up with the mind are a routine sight. The original meaning of 'autopsy', Roy Porter tells us, is 'to look to the self',³⁰² although Paul D. Moore puts a slightly different spin with to look *for* the self; the opening up of the body is linked to (self) revelation, to the enlightenment and the modern as self-reflexive.³⁰³ As the body becomes simulacrum in the process of being revealed the possibilities for any kind of dialectical relationship between bodies is eroded. The bodies most frequently offered up and opened up for viewing on programs such as *CSI Miami* are exemplary simulacrum also in that they are generally beautiful young women, further collapsing (in the popular sphere at least) the distinction between the medical gaze and the voyeuristic gaze, which has always been shady. In *CSI Miami* the distinction between gazes (medical, male, voyeur and consumer) is further blurred by the use of product placement; the gaze pans over the corpse and the logo of the impressively named 'Thermo Finnegan Trace DSQ Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer' alike, in the latter case with the obvious aim of inspiring desire.³⁰⁴ What's interesting to consider is the effect that this gaze has turned in on the self.

³⁰² Porter, p.44

³⁰³ 'Just how close is the connection between the post mortem and the historical examination? The word "autopsy" has its origins in *autopteó*, which Liddell and Scott render as "see with ones own eyes...esp. witness a divine manifestation..."', Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *autopteó*, in S.D. Moore, *God's Gym: Divine Male bodies of the Bible*, (New York, 1996), p.65

³⁰⁴ J. Krasner, 'Massachusetts Lab Science Companies Use 'CSI Miami' to Showcase Devices', *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, Mar 1, 2004, p.1

‘There is nothing wrong with the medium’ but what if technologies of vision reduce the body to a referendum, to a simple question of to internalize/not to internalize, a reducing engagement to a purely narcissistic relation? ‘Culture jammers’ such as the magazine *Adbusters* attempt to reclaim the media from consumerism, but their techniques mirror those of the culture they critique to the extent that they too fail to move us, to have any impact that would distinguish one from the other. Pictures of carnage juxtaposed with corporate media don’t shock, rather they only draw attention to our numbness; if they disturb it is not so much because they are repelling but boring. As Nancy puts it, wounded bodies, dead bodies, *carnage*, has ceased to function as a sign, unless it is as a sign of itself.³⁰⁵ (Writing in response to Nancy Spivak notes the discrepancy between the ‘abject’ victim who is the object of a televisual gaze and the survivor).³⁰⁶ The violated body is thus reduced to simulacra, if it is a sign of anything it must be the sign of an absence, not only of the body of the victim, but of the body of the viewer, who has been reduced to a rationalized gaze to the extent that empathy can no longer be felt through/ ‘sound through’ embodiment, and in this perhaps you have the death and disappearance (of the body) of God/ the social body. The end of imago Dei.

This is developing toward the nostalgia for transgression in what Bataille described as a ‘postsacred’ world, but this would

³⁰⁵ Nancy, p.22

³⁰⁶ G.C. Spivak, “Acting Bits/Identity Talk,” *Critical Inquiry*, 18 (1992), pp.776-79 quoted in G.C. Spivak, ‘Response to Jean-Luc Nancy’, in J.F MacCannell and L. Zakarin ed., *Corpus*, (Stanford, 1994), p.45

be somewhat naive.³⁰⁷ On the one hand, consumption of pornography such as *Zoo* can be compared to the period of boundary-affirming transgressive behavior anthropology notes in transition stages such as adolescence (Poynor's placing of *Zoo* consumers at the younger end of porn's standard 18-38 year main consumers reinforces this notion).³⁰⁸ The 'other Victorians' reinforces this stereotype in its depiction of porn as esoteric, 'hidden knowledge' revealed within an elite fellowship. Porn magazines draw on this heritage, but are thwarted by the pervasion of pornography and violence into everyday life, contemporary porn represents a nostalgia for boundaries which would give it meaning. These boundaries were only ever perception as the popularity of 'penny blood' fiction, also intensely voyeuristic, with its staples of (insinuated) sexual violence and murder which flourished contemporary to the elite culture of pornography suggests.

As Taussig suggests, the *perception* of transgression is essential in maintaining the sense of enchantment in a given culture,³⁰⁹ and this perhaps can be extended to the 'false enchantment' of pornography, which is evidently an essential part of our culture. The ongoing 'revelation' of sexual knowledge is the staple source of enchantment in film and advertising media (often with children, whether in the audience or onscreen, forming the presumed 'unknowing' or 'active unknowing' which is the

³⁰⁷ G. Bataille, "Attraction and repulsion I", Jan 22, 1938 D. Hollier Ed, *The college of sociology 1937-39*, (Mineapolis, 1988), p.104

³⁰⁸ Poynor, *Designing*, p.41

³⁰⁹ M. Taussig, 'Transgression', in M.C. Taylor ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, (Chicago, 1998), p.356

source of the sense of enchanting transgression). This also suggests the by no means novel conclusion that we are a society obsessed with adolescence, and constantly through the media re-living our adolescence, (which becomes interesting in light of Becker's assertion that adolescence was the original time of sharing, in some sense the height of social and emotional development),³¹⁰ think the pervasiveness of films, sitcoms, soaps and even ads featuring teenagers and high schools. Although it is interesting that the media also insists on dumbing-down this period from one of complex social and emotional development (as Worringer looks nostalgically back to), to one of hormone and sex (in the most dumbed-down sense), driven behavior.

³¹⁰ Becker, p.30

The 'Slow Food' Movement: A 'Post' Cannibal Critique?

It might be a little obvious, but the success of the cannibal critique, particularly in the case of Sweeney Todd, lies in the fact that cannibalism doesn't appeal just to the brain, but to the stomach, beyond the surface to the visceral body (which can never be sanitized); when Lupton and Miller talk about consumer goods as extensions of the body they do so as a 'permeable, manipulable *surface*, ingesting, incorporating and expelling an expanding range of objects' [my emphasis].³¹¹ Likewise the Nietzschean body of power, with its unchanging character, and Bauman's hyperactive metabolism, are eminently *superficial*; even the high metabolism features more as an *absence*, as Drew Leder would put it, in that its function is ineffable: it does not (apparently) affect the all-important surface (most notably by increasing surface mass).³¹² The surface of the body, Sherrington suggests, represents the boundary of consciousness; 'Once through the maw, the object is lost to introspection... The naive notion that when we have eaten and drunk we have *fed* is justified *practically*.'³¹³ This loss of control lends a particular urgency to ingestion which explains the deep ambiguity surrounding food, the ritual forms of consumption such as the communion meal, and the threat inherent in cannibalism; particularly the unwitting consumption

³¹¹ Lupton and Miller, p.356

³¹² Leder, p.3

³¹³ C. Sherrington, *Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, (New Haven, 1947), quoted in D. Leder, *The Absent Body*, (Chicago, 1990), p.332

of another 'speaking organism' (as in Prest's *A String of Pearls*). It also explains why the further we extend cannibalism from the stomach, to cover the 'corporeal exploitation' of, for example, factory workers in the clothing industry, it loses impact. It takes an explicit illustration of the 'real of exchange', such as Cruishank's 'Tremendous Sacrifice!' to make the connection in the consumer's mind, and of course Cruishank relies on the cannibal anxiety already stirred up in *A String of Pearls* by Todd's pies.³¹⁴ Clothes relate to the surface, to that part of my body I have the most power to 'change', so to speak, therefore I can always distance them, and the whole society that produced them, from myself to an extent to which I can never distance myself from what I eat.

With this in mind it makes sense to explore the so-called 'Real Food' or 'Slow Food' movement as what I have termed a 'post cannibal critique'. As a value system constructed entirely around food, or at least around eating, and extending thereby from producers and consumers to 'products', particularly animals, 'real food' is interesting. It also attempts to return or to reconstruct a basic model of society revolving around mutual sustenance, often literally in the case of back-to basic 'reality' cook shows such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's *River Cottage*. This appeal to the need to commune through consumption, through *nurture*, highly nostalgic, and as we will see, transgressive, is particularly interesting in light of the reality of the movement as a highly marketed 'endeavor', supported by a plethora of glossy magazines and programs

³¹⁴ See chapter 1, pp.12-18

showcasing celebrity chefs, endlessly churning out equally glossy cookbooks and endorsing products, (although often with the aim of supporting 'local' suppliers). Again, the desire to commune through consumption extends to reading as 'foodies' engage in 'sacred consumption' of the text (and image). The conscious attempt to construct and buy into a virtual community is demonstrated in the celebration not only of celebrity chefs but of subscribers, such as 107 year old Rene Morgan in *Cuisine Magazine*: and who wouldn't be charmed by a wholesome 107 year old who poaches fruit and has a weakness for sherry and ice-cream? 'Rene is a living testament to our mantra at *Cuisine*. Eat well. Drink well. Live well.'³¹⁵

Part of what makes food a morally loaded subject is its association with *nurture*, with the safe haven of the domestic realm and child-rearing, thus the strong nostalgic element in 'real food', and the deep anxiety surrounding preservatives and genetic engineering. When Ritzer needs a product indicative of our time he turns to the McDonald's Big Mac as penultimate example of *nothing* consuming society from the inside in its insidious infiltration not only of the stomach but of the most benign (although really the most ambivalent) areas of mainstream culture; the 'family' restaurant. Searching for an opposite Ritzer suggests the culattello ham, hand reared, butchered, and cured as 'very much a human product'.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ M. McKay, 'Rene Morgan', *Cuisine*, Issue 120, January 2007

³¹⁶ Ritzer, pp.77-8

As the 'humaness' of Ritzer's culattello ham with its 'personal relationship' to its producer suggests there is a transgressive (cannibalistic) element in this desire to commune with the real through consumption.³¹⁷ Proponents of 'real food' revel in the anxiety surrounding the consumption of meat, insisting on the necessity of going beyond anonymous polystyrene and cling-film packages to the real of raising animals, and in particular, killing. In *Cooking in the Danger Zone* celebrity chef Stefan Gates suggests that it is 'good to come face to face with our food' as he confronts the piglet which will be slaughtered in his honor in Fiji (although his expression, and need to rationalize, are a little ambiguous).³¹⁸ The same chef earlier followed the 'passion' of an Angus steer in the BBC's *Full on Food* (staying with the animal overnight before it was slaughtered), elevating an eye fillet into sacrament, although the experience brought the animal too close to the extent that Gates had to put the fillet in the freezer till he could bring himself to eat it (do we have an echo here of Bataille's anguished identification with the victim in sacrifice)?

What makes the ethical treatment of an animal such an urgent issue in our society while the ethical treatment of people hardly figures? Distance of course is a key point, not only in that farm animals tend to be on the same land mass but, as already mentioned, the overcoming of distance through consumption. And of course the attraction of 'real food' not limited to the

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ S. Gates, 'Food that Kills', *Cooking in the Danger Zone*, broadcast on 24 August, 2007, on BBC1

‘humane’ treatment of animals but the social relation with producers, although this does, in relation to magazines and cooking shows, take on a virtual character (which, since readers can easily limit their ‘communion’ to magazine consumption, and may often be obliged to do so, may never be actualized: Belk’s cultivation of ‘desires to desire’ applies). *Cooking in the Danger Zone* and a notable earlier documentary cook-show *Ready Steady Trade*, on the impact of free trade on third world farmers; undermining local markets with cheap goods such as tinned tomatoes produced by government subsidized farmers in Italy,³¹⁹ combine issues of eating and exploitation, but the cannibal critique, in its classic form in relation to corporeal exploitation, is notably absent from contemporary debate.

³¹⁹ Ian Stuttard, *Ready, Steady, Trade*, broadcast on BBC1, Sunday 9 March 2003; transcript available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/1/shared/spl/hi/programmes/panorama/transcripts/readysteadytrade.txt>

Conclusion

What I've built on throughout this text is the fact that communication, as much as it draws on the body as an unavoidable structure, also reflects the desire not so much to escape, but transmute or sublimate the body, to remove all traces of or to remove the 'body' as far as possible from the 'dark, dirty and impure' traces of corruption. The desire to sublimate the body into *prima materia*; light or spirit, reflects a similar process of skewing the 'code' of the body Vernant notes in relation to 'bodies' of the Greek gods,³²⁰ and we should note again here the link between spirit and communication (Vanhoozer's spirit as communication's guiding force),³²¹ particularly in that communication-as-social-reproduction relates both to the desire for immortality, as in Plato's preference for literary progeny, and the desire to connect or to commune with others. This tendency to abstract the (desired) body to the point of nihilism is an innate human tendency which reflects not only the negation and attraction of the body, but also of the social relation between bodies (the cannibalistic inter-dependence of the community). As we've seen within the latter the process of social reproduction is inevitably linked to death, in the sense of the 'slow death' of labour in the process of sustaining the social body. The abstraction of the social relation into *cultural currency*, which is synonymous, as I have suggested, with Mary Douglas' marked body as the image of society, allows for the articulation of humanity, while at the

³²⁰ Vernant, p.39

³²¹ Vanhoozer, p.179

same time as the object of an interpretive gaze the 'marked' body's communication is always in some sense predetermined or limited.

'Muteness' is therefore an inherent tendency in the image. In post-consumer culture this is exacerbated by the precession of simulacra and the pervasion of 'technologies of seeing' into almost every aspect of life. This said, 'technologies of seeing' are as Poynor notes *human technologies*, echoing Lasn's 'there's nothing wrong with the medium', as such there may always be the possibility for creative communication, for the articulation of humanity, possibly if we get rid of 'the people who are controlling the technology right now'.³²² Whether the corporate stranglehold is the only thing that prevents mass-media from being transformed from monologue to dialogue is debatable. There is, as Baudrillard suggests, a 'singular seduction' in witnessing image-as-simulacra's self-communication.³²³ A large part of this might be, as much as it thwarts reproductive and communicative desire and therefore threatens humanity, the fact that it is undemanding; Julius' 'safety afforded by distance'.³²⁴

This tendency toward escapism needs to be continually re-addressed if the 'dialogue' of humanity is to be maintained, rather than to have it collapse into a Baudrillardian 'ecstasy of communication' / a passive state of viewing or desiring (to

³²² Poynor, *Obey*, p.137

³²³ Baudrillard, *Symbolic*, p.73

³²⁴ Julius, p.59

become) the image rather than using it as a tool to engage with society. Reclaiming the cannibal metaphor of *A String of Pearls* and *Our Mutual Friend* could present a useful way of breaking through the dislocation of producers from consumers, and image from body, and reclaim economics as essentially a corporeal relation, but this faces certain challenges. Firstly the tradition of cannibalism as its been used as a tool for social construction in western culture should be acknowledged, and, as should have become glaringly obvious in my first two chapters, there are significant issues with re-appropriating such a culturally loaded term, particularly one that has been used to justify centuries of racism and exploitation, which renders it of somewhat dubious validity for contemporary debate. Also there is still the inherent tendency to sensationalizing which is closely related to sublimating, (and 'cannibalism' is a subject intensely prone to sensationalizing), perhaps best demonstrated in Tim Burton's musical version of *Sweeney Todd* with all its salacious gore and less of the symbolism of the 'cannibalized' worker Ingestrie.

However the greatest challenge to the use of the cannibal metaphor in 'post' consumer culture is the dematerialization of desire. As I've said, the abstraction of desire from product to image allows the consumer to further disassociate themselves from the people who made it, in favor of the 'absolute body' it is made to represent. As I noted in the previous chapter, the success of cannibalism as a metaphor relies on the *threat* of the transgression of distance between bodies, of contamination. The continued anxiety surrounding ingestion is evidenced in the

‘slow food’ movement, but the superficiality of many mass manufactured goods, most obviously clothing, works against the cannibal metaphor.

Post-consumer culture is in this sense beyond the cannibal critique, in that the process of dislocating not only product from labour, but *desire* from the product, which bears a relationship to the producer’s body, to the ‘nowhereland of the image’ renders cannibalism irrelevant. As such the failure of the cannibal critique becomes representative of our time in that, while we are still inevitably locked into relations with other people as producers and consumers, our obliviousness to the fact, the fantasy that we exist in a ‘realized eschatology’ where ‘everything is deduced’ independently of the body testifies to the extent to which we are (socially) removed from the fact that ‘the real of exchange is life for life’, that the economy is a corporeal (as well as a social) relationship between *people*. As such we are failing to be human, failing to participate in the ‘dialogue’ of humanity, in a crucial aspect of our lives.

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