

# The days of the human may be numbered: Theorizing cyberfeminist metaphors - rereading Kleist's 'Gliedermann' as cyborg, as 'ghost in the shell'

Anna Babka (Universität Wien)

A lot has already been written on Heinrich von Kleist's "Über das Marionettentheater" ("On the Marionette Theater"). I will engage in a reading that is based on deconstructivist approaches as well as on queer- and cyberfeminist-thought both of which reform concepts of the subject by taking into question bodily and gender coherence and gender identity. Queer Studies provoke a thinking of the multiplication of difference as well as a thinking of difference *within* ('entities') rather than of difference *between* ('entities'). Cyberfeminism explores the possibilities of manipulating and changing the physical body and provides metaphors for thinking 'posthuman' identities. Donna Haraway in allusion to the hybridization of gender relations and gender conceptions posits the cyborg as a leading figure/figuration of feminist politics.

The focal point of my reading will be the so-called 'Gliedermann', the godlike puppet on the strings of the protagonist figures in Kleist's text. I will conceptualize the 'Gliedermann', the puppet, as cyborg and, in relation to the protagonist figure of a Japanese Manga and its cinematic adaptation, as a 'Ghost in the Shell'. Via the metaphor of the cyborg, the theorizing of a new episteme, which is implicated in the technological revolution, can be carried out, since the "cyborg identity, embodying both nature and 'other', belongs neither wholly to nature nor to culture and subverts all certainties" (Smith and Watson, 1998, 40) and this might add new aspects to a reading of Kleist's text.

Kleist's "On the Marionette Theater," written in 1810, is an imagined account of a dialogue with a Herr C. -, a dancer, concerning the nature of the art of puppetry. Kleist's narrator and Herr C. engage in a discourse on the mystery of movement, on the impossibility of duplicating the beauty of a single motion, on the importance of the center of gravity, on the nature of grace and on the 'antigravitational' freedom of the puppet, hence on a series of questions that outline the content of Kleist's story, that indeed is said to be a "text that means too much" (Ray, 1979, 521). The text has provoked numerous variations of critical encounters, since it "touches on aesthetics, theology, the mechanics of marionettes, history, consciousness, affectation, the self and the Fall" (521). Hence the text 'touches' ideas of deracination, displacement, confusion, dislocation - all of which are central aspects in Kleist's works. Kleist's text can be described as enigmatic in content and ruptured in its narration. Perhaps one could even regard it as decentered and 'wounded' qua figurations of fragmentation and mutilation. Those figurations are, among others, the sparepartlike or machinelike figures of the cripples with mechanical legs which allow their owners to perform graceful movements not despite, but because of, their prostheses, or, the 'Thornpuller', 'decentered' by trying to repeat a graceful movement; or, figurations that break up the frontiers between human and animal, like the fencing bear, and last but not least, the fragmented but gracious puppet on the strings, the 'godlike Gliedermann', the marionette, the figure, that gives the name to this strange piece of text. Kleist's text could be described or circumscribed as a 'Körpertext', a textual body, or, as Bettine Menke puts it, regarding another figure in Kleist's work (Penthesilea): "Bodies function as emblems for questions of the text about the frontiers of the understandable and nameable" (1997, 127, my translation). All those fragmentations and deviations of a norm, exposed through the described bodies, provoke a reading which

questions what is assumed to be human or *what* or *who* qualifies as human and how this human quality is constructed.

My starting-point and basic understanding of the condition of human identities - that are always already gendered identities - is bound to the hypothesis that those identities, to follow Judith Butler's notion of performativity, are effects of a performative process of identity-construction. This performative process is closely connected to what Butler calls "the tropological inauguration of the subject" - as a result of the performative power of tropes (1997, 121). Those are reflections that obviously relate to Paul de Man's concept of a 'performative rhetoric' and that are crucial for her rhetorical-performative account of identity-construction. I will not discuss this in depth here but want to point out the importance of Butler's as well as de Man's drawing upon rhetorical figures or on the tropological system respectively, while theorizing the subject and the human condition.

The reading strategies, I suggest, are: reading rhetorically by 'using' certain tropes as instruments of analysis. The figures to approach these problems under question are: body metaphors as metaphors of hybridity hereinafter formulated as posthuman-body, hybrid body, monster, hermaphrodite and, above all, cyborg metaphors that can be regarded as attempts to rethink and refigure the body via tropes of hybridity and to express the aporetic constitution of what is called an 'identity' or the 'human condition'. The 'object' of these attempts could be grasped as Kleist's 'Gliederman', but we could even consider the figure of the Gliedermann as the 'embodiment of rhetoric' thus, at the same time as *instrument*. This means, then, that we cannot talk of an object in a classic sense, since the object and the method refer to each other in an inseparable way. The representations of identities are being examined from the point of view of their rhetorical and figurative structures, and the mode of representation is always already part of the methodological knowledge of rhetoric. Meta-language and object-language intertwine. However, my usage of the concept of metaphor (in cyberspace) with either its set of names for rhetorical figures, i.e., prosopopeia, metalepsis, prosthesis, et cetera, and, moreover, with the cyborg as metaphor for a hybrid identity, seems far-fetched regarding classical definitions. Indeed, the concept of metaphor itself, as we have to acknowledge, has undergone innumerable modifications, classifications and adaptations.

A rhetorical reading and understanding of identity-construction deals with the constitutive functions of language. Referring to a rhetorical figure, namely, to 'prosthesis', gives a first access to our theme. This figure, traditionally circumscribed as 'supplement' to heighten effects, can in a modified way be understood as a fundamental aspect of language itself, since language only represents qua abstractions, amplifications and substitutions which could otherwise not be conceived or understood. 'Prosthesis', then, can be regarded as fundamentally inherent in the possibility of representation and understanding in the first place. Hence, I'm going to talk about *prosthetic identities*, not very 'human' or 'natural' in a classic understanding of this term, since, if one considers something as prosthetically 'given' qua language, qua rhetoric, it is not 'natural' in the proper sense. What is considered as 'nature' and as 'human' must be *naturalized*, performatively, as we will see later, according to a theoretical account of Judith Butler. The 'inhuman', however, following Paul de Man's reflections, "is not some kind of mystery or some kind of secret; the inhuman is: linguistic structures, the play of linguistic tensions, linguistic events that occur, possibilities which are inherent in language independently of any intent or any drive or any wish or any desire we might have" (1986, 96).

What de Man calls the 'inhuman', indeed, seems to be the only way to conceive something *as human*. However, it could be worthwhile to break up this opposition, thus, dealing with a

figuration of Kleist, I would like to take Kleist's 'Gliedermann' as the embodiment of this *in/human touch of language*. Within the figure of the godlike 'Gliedermann' in Kleist, the contradiction and aporia of the definition of humanity should become conceivable. Reading embodiment as prosthesis could be a strategy to avoid remaining stuck within binary oppositions and to think of concepts of humanity or of 'being human' otherwise. Keeping these considerations in mind, one could ask: How can one link together Kleist's figure, its rhetorical and prosthetic constitution and the figures of post-modern cyberworlds? Let me first outline this approach theoretically with Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, both referring to Donna Haraway and the so-called 'embodiment' of 'posthuman bodies' (or 'posthumanist' bodies - terms that would suggest that the days of the human may be numbered):

Posthuman bodies are not slaves to masterdiscourses but emerge at nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourse of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context. Posthuman embodiment, like Haraway's 'feminist embodiment', then, is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations[...]. *Embodiment is significant prosthesis*. (1995, 2, my emphasis)

Thus, the emergence of the body, the embodiment, is only conceivable as a so-called 'posthuman body', as a body, which is not representable or objective anymore. Embodiment as significant prosthesis intimates the reappearance of the body and the paradox evocation of reference via the prosthetic function of language. The question here, will be, whether the lost identity, the naturalness, the completeness can or cannot be regained by means of language as *prosthesis*. What other rhetorical ways are available to approach prosthetic, post-human refigurations of identity-concepts?

Let us turn to Paul de Man's recasting of the term human. Even if he does not address the *body* as 'post-human'-body at all, he nevertheless questions what is said to be human by and through the trope of prosopopeia: "Man can address and face other men, within life or beyond the grave, because he has a face, but he has a face only because he partakes of a mode of discourse that is *neither entirely natural nor entirely human*" (de Man, "Wordsworth and the Victorians," 1984, 90). Let us look more in depth at what prosopopeia means: "Prosopopeia is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name [...] is made as intelligible and memorable as a face" (de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," 1984, 76). This would suggest, as Cynthia Chase emphasizes, that "face is given by prosopopeia" (Chase, "Giving a Face to a Name," 1986, 84), and this figure constitutes the subject of speech in the first place - as figure, as face, as voice. The subject of speech seems to be always already given, but at the same time it is obstructed by the dynamic of figuration and its effects: "The rhetorical figure of prosopopeia communicates the conferring of figure/face/ voice that were originally missing and hence refers to its own meta-figurative double-structure of figuration and disfiguration." (Menke, 1992, 437, my translation). Prosopopeia posits or figures and disfigures at the same time, because it communicates its own positing within a self-referential gesture. Faces, names and gender-identities are *given*, or, as Cynthia Chase puts it: "Face is not the natural given of the human person. It is given in a mode of discourse, given by an act of language. What is given by this act is figure. Figure is not less than our very face" (Chase, "Giving a Face to a Name," 1986, 84). What is identified as being posited or given cannot be proper or essential or, more precisely, what is defined as the product of a rhetorical operation cannot be regarded as a 'natural' category but as a rhetorical one (cf. Menke, 1992, 441, my translation).

The face or the voice that is 'given' belongs to an 'I' that can no longer be regarded as a stable human 'I' but rather has to be located at the horizon beyond such definitions and above all does not speak as one. The 'I' in the text is always another 'I', is a substitute or supplementary 'I', a textual 'I' through figural transformation and hence effect of writing and reading. The 'textual being' relates to the 'sexual being' of the body. The borders of understanding run alongside the 'textual body', the 'Körpertext', which is a 'posthuman' or 'posthumanist' text, according to the style and diction of postmodern metaphors of technology. Being human and thinking of oneself as a 'self' means first of all being embodied, and, being named. Moreover, as outlined by de Man,

the attributes of centrality and of selfhood are being exchanged in the medium of the language. [...] The self can only persist as self if it is displaced into the text that denies it. The self which was at first the center of the language as its empirical referent now becomes the language of the center as fiction, as metaphor of the self. What was originally a simple referential text now becomes the text of a text, the figure of a figure. The deconstruction of the self as a metaphor does not end in the rigorous separation of the two categories (self and figure) from each other but ends instead in an exchange of properties that allows for their mutual persistence at the expense of literal truth. By calling the subject a text, the text calls itself, to some extent, a subject. (de Man, "Rhetoric of Tropes (Nietzsche)," 1979, 111f.)

De Man's metaphorization and textualization of the self can be regarded as an argument along a similar line to Halberstam/Livingston, who tell us that we cannot make any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context and so on. This argument would suggest that the semiotic closure of codes such as 'sex/gender', human/non-human, etc., self/text is not possible in general. Furthermore, such a conclusion proposes a shift towards a thinking that focuses on *differences* rather than *binary oppositions*. But, how can we think difference as non-identity, as irreducible difference, as post-human hybrid identity? Framing difference as *différance* might be one possibility. *Différance*, a term coined by Jacques Derrida, can be translated as both 'difference' and 'deferral'. *Différance* resists the either/or logic of binary oppositions and the privileging of one over the other, it refuses unity and closure and asserts the ultimate provisionality of meaning. Gayatri Spivak outlines the connection between difference and *différance* as well as between sexual identity and sexual difference: "Différance is [...] only one name for the irreducible double bind that allows the very possibility of difference(s). Sexual identity is sexual *différance*, not sexual difference; it produces sexual difference. [...] There is no harm in admitting that it is not just the production of sexual difference that is being framed here but the possibility of difference itself (1993, 132). Difference as *différance* asks for figurations of this term, since *différance* as abstract term is not easy to grasp. In my account, this figuration of an irreducible and always deferred in-betweenness is the godlike Gliedermann - recast as a cyborg existence, as a non-human, post-human identity. Bodies of cyborgs are said to be contaminated bodies, deadly bodies, techno-bodies, queer bodies and bodies of unfixed contours. In her essay "Reading Like an Alien" Kelly Hurley describes the "posthuman identity" by "body horror", that means, that the human 'subject' is being disintegrated, dismantled and "demolished": "a human body whose integrity is violated, a human identity whose boundaries are breached from all sides" (1995, 205). Here she is less concerned with the so-called 'postmodern' fragmentation of the body and its identity, but rather its (her/his) "reconfiguration through the pluralization and confusion of bodily forms" (205). What this means, then, is that what could be thought of as the specific 'human', providing a specific identity, erodes. The standard figures of the human/non-human are the monster, the alien, the mutant or the cyborg, all of them figuring as tropes for bodily ambiguation.

Kleist's 'Gliedermann' is, according to de Man's rhetorical account of the characteristics of the figure, "the anamorphosis of a form detached from meaning and capable of taking on any structure whatever" (de Man, "Excuses (Confessions)," 1979, 294). We can read this in Kleist, concerning the manifestation of gracefulness. "Gracefulness reappears when knowledge has passed through an infinity-in such a way that it simultaneously is manifested most purely in that anthropomorphic structure, which has either no consciousness at all or which is infinite-which is to say, either in the puppet or in God" (Kleist, 1985, my translation). Nikolaus Hellmayr calls Kleist's Gliedermann an "anthropomorphic machine" that becomes 'anamorphic', that becomes the mechanical puppet out of which any materiality seems to be dissolved and which is being constituted only within its (interrupting) movements (cf. 1989, 131). The mechanism of "anamorphosis" is, according to Cynthia Chase, an "effect in which representing an object from a special angle distorts and conceals its shape" ("Mechanical Doll," 1986, 144). Hence the object is being transformed, transmuted, contorted. The angle from which we view the object can never be the same, and any gaze is imperatively transforming. Anthropomorphism as anamorphism transforms but fails. Anthropomorphism as anamorphism enlivens a figure illusory, gives it an appearance and at the same time distorts it. The transformation simultaneously is a fixation, is a transformation, etc. However, what we are able to grasp is only a 'humanlike' figure, is a figure of interruption, a monstrous figure, a 'reconfiguration through pluralization'. This leads to a 'confusion of bodily forms' that provokes or enforces a turn towards new figures of thought, towards new drafts of *embodied id/entities, gendered id/entities*. The figure of thought of a world characterized by 'postisms' is the cyborg, as Donna Haraway would formulate it:

The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense a "final" irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the "West's" escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. (1991, 150)

Considering Haraway's ideas, one cannot talk of an organic wholeness any more, not even of a higher unity through the appropriation of the power of all parts. What figures as a cyborg is contradictory and paradox per se, because he/she is presented mutilated and not identically human but at the same time 'overprovided' (cf. Gray, 1996, 400, my translation). Together with this figure of art in all its madness, we have to think of his/her 'mad gender' as well, since the question of gender is constitutive for being human, as emphasized by Judith Butler. Butler stresses the 'performative power' of language and discourse, and she describes the subject as an effect of the latter. One example she gives is compelling: It is *the naming of the child*, starting from a status of *neuter*, of *it* to a *she* or a *he*, and this naming, or "girling", as Butler puts it, "does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect" (1993, 8). What seems to be natural must be stabilized, and the interpellation into the natural gender must be repeated permanently, *nature must be naturalized*. Moreover, following Butler's train of thought:

Such attributions or interpellations contribute to that field of discourse and power that orchestrates, delimits, and sustains that which qualifies as the human'. We see this most clearly in the examples of those abjected beings who do not appear properly gendered; it is their very humanness that comes into question. Indeed, the construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures [...]. Hence, it is not enough to

claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less 'human', the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable. (1993, 8)

The above-mentioned 'overprovided' cyborg comes close to what Butler calls 'abjected beings', that thus means, not being properly gendered. Yet Butler applies the construction of the human as something which occurs to all gendered beings through a set of foreclosures that fails, since it produces the more and the less human, the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable. The cyborg is one figure (among others) for the unthinkable in/human. Cyborgs often figure as hermaphrodites, and it is no coincidence that exactly within the figure of the cyborg the order of sex/gender is highly at stake, due to his/her paradoxical and lawless figuration: "Like the hermaphrodite, the cyborg is about 'transgressed boundaries', not only those between male and female, but also between human and animal, and between animal and machine." (Weil, 1992, 160)

Turning to Kleist again and to his usage of the term *grace* in his "Marionettentheater", the majority of the interpreters conclude that instead of a harmonization of body and soul, of sensuality and reason, grace is transformed into a kind of 'materialistic' way, that means reduced to a bodily substance without 'spirit' (Greiner, 1990, 98) or, even more radically, the lack of spirit turns out to be the *condition of grace*. To read it differently and *with* Kleist: his gracious Gliedermann is being moved by simple lines, by the holding of the strings, and those lines are 'mostly straight lines (that link the puppet and puppeteer) and nevertheless full of mystery and nothing other than the path of the dancer's soul" (cf. 1985, 340, my translation). Kleist's Gliedermann can be read as 'non-human', as 'animal'. It is animated mechanically, it is an animated machine, animated and spiritualized cyborg. In Kleist's text we have to deal with a non-conceptual, non-appropriate body, figured via the metaphor of the 'Gliedermann', the puppet, figured within the bodily construction that either has no or an endless consciousness - as Gliedermann or God (cf. 345, my translation).

In allusion to Kleist's text Paul de Man's ideas lead to a radical deconstruction of language articulated through the metaphor of the body and its complete fragmentation and dissolution, which he, then, the other way round, applies to language itself:

We must, in short, consider our limbs, hands, toes, breasts [...] in themselves, severed from the organic unity of the body [...] . We must, in other words, disarticulate, mutilate the body [...] . To the dismemberment of the body corresponds a dismemberment of language, as meaning-producing tropes are replaced by fragmentation of sentences and propositions into discrete words, or the fragmentation of words into syllables or finally letters. (1986, 88f.)

De Man evokes the 'self-mutilation' inherent in language and takes the body as the perfect model for it. Kleist's text supplies an impressive picture for this: "This mutilated textual model exposes the wound of a fracture that lies hidden in all texts" ("Shelley Disfigured," 1984, 120) That means: "If one speaks of the inhuman, the fundamental non-human character of language, one also speaks of the fundamental non-definition of the human as such [for] it is not at all certain that language is in any sense human" (1986, 87). According to Cynthia Chase, and as an allusion to the superiority of the artificial limbs of the dancing cripple, this idea of mutilation in Kleist's text can be read as a function of language that favors the figurative prosthetic gesture of it, a gesture that asserts gracefulness: "Kleist's text brings together, de Man shows, the deeply disquieting effect, the idea of a fall from grace, the loss of a state of nature or paradise which ultimately can be recovered, and the conception of art as prosthesis, for art, skill, or 'aesthetic education' as the means of such recovery" (1989, 46).

Kleist's text has often been interpreted as his own 'spiritual autobiography', following the assumption that there existed a relation between the conception of the text and some occurrences in his own life or some very personal characteristics of himself. I would like to suggest not to try to construct such interconnections but, rather, to regard the figure of the Gliedermann (as cyborg) generally as 'figure of autobiography', yet in a very different way, namely, as a disfigured, de-faced figure, according to the gesture of the trope prosopopeia, which gives a face and at the same time withdraws it. This means, then, that this figure can rather be read as a figure of the interruption of any autobiographical reference and at the same time as interruption of the order of the sexes. Why should Kleist's figure be a man at all? How does the figure present itself? As a godlike principle that nevertheless is committed to Kleist's ironic, fragmented body. The gender of God has no sexually differentiated meaning, and within the role of the Savior sexual differences are neutralized, as Jan Dirk Müller emphasizes (cf. 1997, 88, my translation). Müller stages a picture of androgyny which promises wholeness and salvation, in which sexuality and destructibility vanish within the godlike principle. But, as one could put it, within the figure of the 'Gliedermann' this approach is just a slip of the tongue, the promise slips, which in German would be easier to express, the promise 'verspricht sich' into a hermaphroditic diversity or variety. The transcendental ideal of the androgyne, hence the 'complete' god/dess that unites the male and female parts within one body, cannot be successfully figured within the metaphor of the Gliedermann. The hermaphroditic figure emerges and takes over the scene, the scene of differences, and blasts the boundaries of the sexes.

The ways of the 'soul' of the godlike 'Gliedermann', as mentioned above, build crossroads with Masamune Shirow's animated film "Ghost in the Shell", which is based on the Manga of the same title (cf. Ito, 1995; Shirow, 1995). The 'hero' and protagonist of the film is Major Kusanagi, member of a special security unit of an unnamed country in the near future. Major Kusanagi is a cyborg. The linkage, again, between the 'Gliedermann' and the cyborg Major Kusanagi is the question of what qualifies as human and of how this humanity is being figured, disfigured and refigured. Monsters, goddesses and cyborgs, are, as Nina Lykke puts it, all three signifiers of chaos, heterogeneity and unstable identities, yet, despite their differences, one finds connections between them:

Monsters have for thousands of years undermined the normal and the stable by their deviant appearances. The early worldmother-goddesses of ancient mythologies are often situated close to chaotic and undifferentiated primordial states. Cyborgs are grotesque post-industrial boundary figures, questioning the boundaries between human, organism and machine [...]. In spite of their differences, the three metaphorical figures are therefore related through their metonymical closeness to the non-orderly, non-stable, non-identical and so on. (1996, 5)

Goddesses or ghosts or cyborgs are figurations of the 'in-between', of the non-identical, of the 'other'. They question boundaries profoundly and are grotesque and familiar at the same time. They are somehow 'necessary' figurations of what has to be figured beyond intelligible identities, yet has to be figured nonetheless to become graspable. That means that the 'other' has to be figured to stand in difference to the supposed 'own', the 'real', the 'identical'. Ghosts figure "[a] certain *virtuality*, a *relation* to the other" and they *are* literature, as Derrick Attridge suggests: "the ghost *is* literature [...]. Literature appears to us, calls on us [...]. The ghost is prosopopeia and apostrophe in their most violent form" (1995, 224f.). Attridge refers to the trope of prosopopeia in correlation to his conception of the ghostly notion of literature itself. Hereinafter I will focus on some aspects of the concept of *ghost* within cyberworlds to arrive then, finally, at Kleist's Marionettentheater again.

In Oshii's film, that is, in his adaptation of a Japanese Manga playing in the near future, cyborgs live together with 'real' people, mostly without knowing that they are artificially created. In this world of the future the substitution of fragile, sick or destroyed bodyparts by mechanical ones has become daily praxis. Major Kusanagi, our hero, is, as we already know, cyborg as well. She is the perfect function unit and she can change her shell or become invisible. Furthermore, she is capable of connecting her intercept set directly with her nervous system, which allows her to dive into computersystems directly, since hackers are all around and do not have any scruples about implanting false memories and synthetic experiences, hence utilizing the population of their country like marionettes (cf. Chute, 1997).

Kusanagi consists mainly of spare parts since most of her 'natural' limbs and other body parts, injured or destroyed in the course of her professional duties, have been substituted through prostheses. Only a very little of her original grey brain mass has remained intact, yet, Kusanagi believes that her spirit (in German 'Geist', i.e. 'ghost') is still uninjured and whole. Kusanagi's *ghost* - in the sense of soul or consciousness - is able to live in the *shell*, either artificial or organic. Ghost means, for the time being, individual identity and is not bound to a real, organic body, a body out of flesh and blood: "Ghosts can move from organic to inorganic bodies, but an inorganic body cannot generate its own ghost", since: "identity is a uniquely human trait" (Ebert, 1996, 1). *Ghost* differentiates human beings from machines and this romanticizing principle seems to remain important even in the world of Cyberpunk. However, what happens if such a ghost starts to create itself out of itself and forces Major Kusanagi to rethink her concept fundamentally? This happens in the film at the moment when a highly developed computer program attains self-consciousness and independence and moves freely through the Internet. Soon it becomes known as the "Puppet Master", as the greatest hacker of all time (cf. 1).

The hacker, the Puppet Master, is an agent that has been generated by the secret service itself. It is a being without a physical body, and it only becomes aware of its own existence in the course of its activities and its travelling through the Internet. This fact turns out to become a problem for its inventors. At the moment when the hacker appears for the first time in the shell of a female cyborg, it becomes apparent that he/she/it is something or someone that has not existed until this very moment, namely, an intelligent life form that has never been human in the first place. The so-called Puppet Master, fragment of a computer virus that has copied itself and in the course of this process has obtained wisdom, has seized a body in order to be able to ask for political asylum - a personal right that can be claimed by every other life form (cf. Chute, 1997)

Oshii, the filmmaker, stages a vision that one could call a Second Creation. For Oshii the internet seems to be like the earth before the appearance of the first human being. He speculates about how a higher life form could emerge out of this endless sea of data, using metaphors related to Christianity as well as to Japanese mythology (cf. Möller, 1997).

This philosophical dimension of the film can be revoked by a question of Paul de Man, referring to John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, namely *what is the essence proper of man?* or - what is the organic world in general? Maybe Kleist gives some answers: "We see that, in the world of animate matter, as self-consciousness becomes dimmer and weaker, to the same extent gracefulness manifests itself more and more radiantly and dominantly" (II, 345, my translation). In Kleist's text the artificial limbs are the more graceful ones, and also the fencing bear, a 'nonhuman' figure, is the more powerful, more agile and skillful one. The capacities of the cyborgs strikingly exceed those of human beings, and the superiority of the mechanical compared to human capacities leads to paradox matters in



Kleist's text as well: "I said that, however skillfully he conducted the case of his paradox, he would still never make me believe that more grace could be contained in a mechanical jointed man than in the structure of the human body." (II, 342, my translation).

In Kleist's text gracefulness is located beyond expectable esthetic categories; his worldorder - figured as the 'Gliedermann' or as God - is brittle and mutilated, artificial in any case. Kleist confers the 'ghost', the spirit, into the God figured as marionette, as puppet on the strings, since grace does not require a ghost - just as little as it requires power, precision and perfection on the part of the cyborg. Within the figure of the godlike Gliedermann as well as within Oshii's Science Fiction the contradiction of the definition of mankind becomes evident. Thereto, out of the dialogues of the film: "If a cyber could create its own ghost, what would be the purpose of being human?" The Puppet Master and the Gliedermann, both become legible as divine principle, able to create themselves out of themselves. They are confronting and challenging what is said to be human, or 'half-human', searching for a human *host*, as one could interpret the figure of the Savior. God and the Holy Spirit, united within the Holy Trinity with the One and Only who is able to represent them in a humanly shell. The Gliedermann as God is provided with no or with an endless consciousness in the same way as the Puppet Master, the agent, created by the 'ministry of foreign affairs'. The Puppet Master in Oshii's film is the Super Ghost, is the one who dominates the net and the one who has access to the knowledge or who figures all knowledge itself. He is the one who gains the utmost power as bodiless entity.

In Kleist's text Mr. C. asks whether the machinist, the puppet master who controlled these dolls, had to be a dancer himself or at least had to have some idea about the esthetics of dance (cf. 340, my translation). What is at stake here is the soul or the ghost since the line the machinist, the puppet master, describes is nothing else than the ways of the dancer's soul, and Mr. C. doubts that such a line could be attained unless the puppet master placed himself in the center of gravity of the marionette, or, in other words, unless he danced (cf. II, 340, my translation). The machinist, the puppet master, transposed into the center of gravity, is dancer, is marionette, just as the Puppet Master in Oshii's film is the creator and the created one simultaneously, harboring two principles as a *ghost* in the *host*.

What do ghosts intend, how are they figured and what do they perform?: "[W]hat might this ghost have to tell us? In speaking, it would seem an exemplum of the rhetorical figure of prosopopeia [...]. What might this prosopopeia be?" (Royle, 1990, 40) The *ghost* wants to fuse with Major Kusanagi, wants to give voice and face to himself and, as compensation, endless consciousness to her. The rhetorical function of prosopopeia, the positing of voice and face by means of language, becomes anthropomorphized within the figure of the cyborg Kusanagi. One could also describe this process as the phenomenalization of a voice, as the affirmation of the existence of the ghost.

What is at work here is the performative and positional power of Kleist's discourse that produces those effects of hybridization, that it names, provisionally, opening up boundaries and resignifying terms and concepts. Perhaps it is "the pleasure in our *monstrous selves*," "the pleasure in the 'confusion of boundaries'", that leads us and Kleist towards "tak[ing] up the tools of technology and take 'responsibility in the [de]construction' of such boundaries" (Weil, 1992, 161, my emphasis). Kleist's divine Gliedermann as well as the Puppet Master stand for figures that do not want to overcome the logic of representation or do not try to substantialize the non-representable; rather they offer possibilities of twisting and distortion, of the displacement and interruption of metaphysical concepts of identity and wholeness. As

signifiers they rather incorporate a lack of signification, and this lack provokes new images, new figures that bridge this lack without overcoming it.

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