

FROM SPACE TO CYBERSPACE: A REVIEW OF THE
CURRENT LITERATURE ON THE EMERGING
CYBERSPACE CULTURE AND THE WAYS IT EFFECTS
THE HUMAN IDENTITY, EXPERIENCE
AND INTERACTION

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
GRAPHIC DESIGN
AND THE INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS
OF BILKENT UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

By
Zeynep Arda
September, 2000

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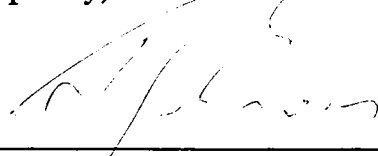
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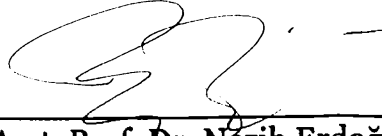
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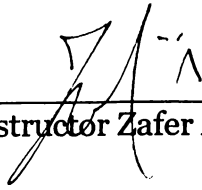
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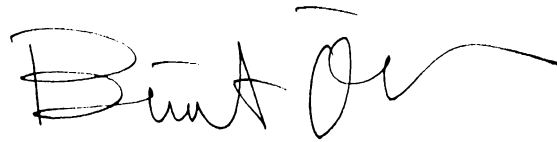
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ABSTRACT

FROM SPACE TO CYBERSPACE: A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT LITERATURE ON THE EMERGING CYBERSPACE CULTURE AND THE WAYS IT EFFECTS THE HUMAN IDENTITY, EXPERIENCE AND INTERACTION

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September, 2000

This work aims at describing the changing conditions for the human subject due to technology and more recently due to the information technology. Exploring the changing perceptions of self in the urban space and in cyberspace, the previously closed self, opens out losing its borders and merges with the milieu. Many authors define this alteration as a disorder, in literature a schizophrenic subject is brought about concerning the erasure of the boundaries that keep the identity distinct. Hence, today the human subject stands in a transition, in the middle of a journey that leads from space to cyberspace, from order to disorder, or from paranoia to schizophrenia; however from time to time departure becomes the destination again and again.

Keywords: City, cyberspace, order, disorder, paranoia, schizophrenia, fantasy, reality.

ÖZET

KENT MEKANINDAN SİBERUZAYA: OLUŞMAKTA OLAN SİBERUZAY KÜLTÜRÜ VE BU KÜLTÜRÜN İNSAN KİMLİĞİNİ, YAŞANTISINI VE İLETİŞİMİNİ ETKİLEME ŞEKİLLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Zeynep Arda

Grafik Tasarım Bölümü

Yüksek Lisans

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Bu çalışmada hedeflenen teknolojiye ve son yıllarda özellikle bilgi teknolojisine bağlı olarak değişen koşullarda insan kimliğinin nasıl değiştiğinin tanımlanmasıdır. Kişinin, kent mekanında değişen koşullar altında kendini algılamasını incelerken, elde edilen en önemli bulgu, daha önce tanımlı ve kapalı bir varlık olarak tanımlanan kimliğin, bugün sınırlarının erimesi ve içinde bulunduğu toplulukla bütünleşerek ayrı bir varlık olma tanımını kaybetmesidir. Günümüz literatüründe, pek çok yazar ve düşünür, bu değişikliği, bir bozukluk veya bir hastalık olarak adlandırmakta ve kimliği tanımlayan sınırların kalkmasıyla şizofrenik bir kimlik tanımlamaktadır. Böylece günümüzde, insan bir geçiş döneminde kalmakta, onu kent mekanından siberuzaya, düzenden bozukluğa, paranoyadan şizofreniye götüren bir yolculuğun ortasında bulunmaktadır. Ancak zaman zaman bu yolculukta varış noktası başlangıç noktasına, ya da başlangıç noktası varış noktasına dönüşmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kent, siberuzay, düzen, bozukluk, paranoya, şizofreni, hayal, gerçeklik.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 REDEFINITION ON THE <i>OUTSIDE</i>	9
2.1 Technology and the City.....	9
2.2 Changing Perceptions of the Urban Space.....	24
2.3 Public Space.....	55
2.4 Muteness: The Mute <i>Individual</i> of the City.....	63
2.5 From Paranoia to Schizophrenia.....	67
3 THERE IS A <i>THERE</i> THERE	87
3.1 Cyberspace Coming Up.....	87
3.2 Can Cyberspace Be a Public Space?.....	97
4 VIRTUALITY IN FANTASY, FANTASY IN VIRTUALITY	121
4.1 Human Desire, Human Identity – Delineating Fantasy.....	121
4.2 Merits of Schizophrenia.....	134
5 CONCLUSION	148

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Lonely Metropolitan, photomontage by Herbert Bayer (1931); rpt. in Gwen F. Chanzit, Herbert Bayer: Collection and Archive at the Denver Art Museum (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1988) 71.

Figure 2. Ideal Man, by Leonardo da Vinci (1510); rpt. in Steen Eiler Rasmussen, Experiencing Architecture (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1959) 95.

Figure 3. The eye of the Replicant, filmstill from *Bladerunner* (1982); rpt. in Scott Bukatman, Bladerunner (London: British Film Institute Modern Classics, 1997) 3.

Figure 4. The gridded space of New York (1960) Development Plans of New York from Museum of the City of New York; rpt. in Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994) cover.

Figure 5. Twentieth century New York (1976) photograph by Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, rpt. in Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994) 8.

Figure 6. Dystopia by firelight, filmstill from *Bladerunner* (1982); rpt. in Scott Bukatman, Bladerunner (London: British Film Institute Modern Classics, 1997) 15.

Figure 7. Model for a Glass Skyscraper, by Mies van der Rohe (1921); rpt. in O.B. Hardison, Jr. Disappearing through the Skylight: Culture and Technology in the Twentieth Century (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) 111.

Figure 8. Mirror Building, photograph by Stavros Moschopoulos, Image Ray (1988); rpt. in O.B. Hardison, Jr. Disappearing through the Skylight: Culture and Technology in the Twentieth Century (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) 141.

Figure 9. The Cyborg Man, by Darrell Rainey (1988); rpt. in O.B. Hardison, Jr. Disappearing through the Skylight: Culture and Technology in the Twentieth Century (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) 323.

Figure 10. The Chatroom Bar Scene, by The Motion Factory (1996); rpt. in Steven Holtzman, Digital Mosaics: The Aesthetics of Cyberspace (New York: Simon&Schuster Inc., 1997) 33.

1. INTRODUCTION

I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space, that opens up behind the surface; ...a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself there where I am absent...

Michel FOUCAULT

There has been a tendency to draw parallels between the city and the cyberspace – or between the virtual space of computer networks and post-urban places of disorder and decay – ever since William Gibson had published his science fiction novel Neuromancer and announced that the new informational network looked like Los Angeles seen from five thousand feet up in the air (Boyer 14). Gibson, with his abstract analogy not only introduced us to *the spatial* conception of the cyberspace; but he indeed coined the term *cyberspace* that turned out to be our new model for future possibilities in virtuality from 1984 onwards. It was again during this period, with the publication of Neuromancer “virtual reality” acquired a new name and a suddenly prominent conceptual identity as “cyberspace” (Stone, 1991: 98).

In the era of Information Technology, the initial steps taken towards the interaction of people who are physically separated were the electronic versions of bulletin boards and the MUDs on the newly developing global network of the previous decades; given this basis for the possibility of sociality in virtual systems, the concept of cyberspace came and triggered the spatial ascensions to such human interaction. The first virtual communities based on information technology were the on-line bulletin board services (BBS) of the mid-1970s (Stone, 1991: 88). These BBSs were named after their perceived function – virtual places, conceived to be just like physical bulletin boards, where people could post notes for general reading. After similar developments in the formation of virtual communities, there was a slight difference introduced by the Habitat designed by Chip Morningstar and Randall Farmer: Visual representations of the virtual communities. Habitat existed first as a mural located in a building in California, but, on-line, each area of the mural represented an entirely expandable area in the cyberspace, be it a forest, a plain or a city.

Habitat was actually *inhabitable* in that, when the user signed on, he/she had a window into the ongoing social life of the cyberspace – the community “inside” the computer. The social space itself was represented by a cartoonlike frame. The virtual person – the user’s delegated agency – was represented by a cartoon figure which could be customized from a menu of body parts. When the user wished to speak through his/her virtual character, he/she would type the words on the keyboard and these words would appear in a speech balloon over the head of the user’s cartoon character. Thus

Habitat was a two-dimensional example of what William Gibson called a “consensual hallucination” (51).

Later with the publication of Neuromancer, the participants of the electronic communities that have learned to delegate their agency to body-representatives that exist in an imaginal space with representatives of other individuals, realized the further possibilities highlighted by the novel. In this sense, Neuromancer was not only signalling any technological development, but more importantly, it was crystallizing a new community. The three-dimensional inhabitable cyberspace described in Neuromancer does not yet exist, but the groundwork for it can be found in a series of experiments in both the military and private sectors.

In William Gibson’s words, cyberspace is defined to be:

“Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding ...” (51).

Considering the spatial conceptualization of virtuality; there are two main highlights to the issue. The urban decay of world’s greater cities today, raise doubts on the future of city as the space of human sociality in the decades to come; as is the case in Neuromancer and Ridley Scott’s cult science fiction movie *Bladerunner* (1982). Taking the dystopian point of view as suggested

by these two popular cultural artifacts, what awaits the inhabitant of urban settlements is pictured to be a 'dark city'. For instance, in the post-nuclear holocaust Los Angeles of *Bladerunner*; seen through a dark filter of smog or persistently drizzling acid rain, in the murky streets clogged with a mass of isolated individuals, people not only lose the spatial dimension of urban life but also the effective means – and even the desire – to communicate with each other (Boyer 113).

Having this threat on one side; the other possibility that people would *get jacked into the cyberspace*, that the cyberspace would have a spatial configuration – though as virtual as it can be – exposes *an escape* from the reality just before our eyes. This idea of an escape that would relieve us off our *places* in actuality, and would allow us to step into a global network of social interaction where we might even leave our *bodies* behind and *wear* any *body* that we would rather have – or any person that we would rather *be* – expands the commotion that we are already indulged in. Yet this kind of a cyberspace is defined again by Gibson, in both Neuromancer, where Case, the protagonist connects his nerves to the nervous system of another character, in order to have access to her thoughts, to see through her eyes, to hear through her ears; and in another novel by Gibson, in Mona Lisa Overdrive, the main character trying to solve a previous event that had taken place in the matrix, strives for answers within the matrix and is *erased* from the real world. This concept of escape actually suggests a debate of cities versus computer-generated cyberspace; or to put it more effectively: Real spaces versus the matrix of the computer system which is nothing more than a grid of zeros and ones. One important point is that this differentiation of real and

virtual spaces forms a great challenge for the way we perceive; offers us a new mode of perception. One fine example of this new mode of perception is in the opening sentence of Neuromancer: “The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel.”

But concerning this point we were missing yet another: Isn't the city a grid itself? This grid implies a wish for order. A potentiality... The point that the matrix of the computer system is nothing more than a grid of zeros and ones suggests that there is the same potentiality in both, in the sense that this “grid” imposes an order.

Drawing conclusions from the given commotion, at the turn of the twenty-first century, as the real life experiences in the urban space get less satisfying and more annoying, while the meaning of computer presence in people's lives change for better or for worse; what comes out is a tendency to live a life in virtuality – at least partially. One common way of explaining the changing inclinations is to say that we are moving away from the modernist culture towards a postmodernist culture (Turkle, 1997: 20) – in the transformation of which we are suspended. The confusion with this transition arises in parallel with the difficulty of justifying the ‘reality’ within this new virtual life. Lagging behind the development paces of the computers, a decade ago people were just getting used to the idea that computers could project and extend a person's intellect; however today people are “embracing the notion that computers may extend an individual's physical presence” (Turkle, 1997: 20). So what we are experiencing today is a journey from the space as we know it, from our corporealities and physical identities; to a *cyberspace* which offers

us new opportunities, the newest of which is the flight from our bodies which might in the end come to mean a flight off of our *real* realities. As Sennett puts it; “As the reality people could believe in transformed itself into what they could immediately experience, a kind of terror about the immanent entered their lives” (Sennett, 1977: 193).

Nevertheless there is another bisection to the issue at stake; considering the evidence for an uneasiness created of the identity of human being in the contemporary urban space, and the predictions of another uneasiness that is yet to come in the cyberspace. Besides the abundant literature on the ‘disorders’ or the ‘diseases’ in the identity formation of the individual in our prominent culture, there is substantial discourse on worse to come with the new confusion. The loss of ‘physical’, the loss of ‘boundaries’ and the loss of ‘limits to this loss’, makes stabilizing one’s identity an even more difficult task to accomplish once any possibility of a reference is gone. Yet, in this sense, what constitutes the similarity between the effects of the city – the real space and the real life – and the cyberspace – the virtual – on the identity of the person, in the form of a *threat* is highlighted by Stone: “The distinction between inside and outside has been erased and along with it the possibility of privacy” (1991: 105).

Yet one has to draw the limits to the *debate* of identity at least. Yes, cyberspace is a new electronic, invisible space that allows the computer or the television screen to substitute for urban space and urban experience, or for the body and the bodily experience. It is a fact that the phenomenon of cyberspace creates an aggressive redefinition of the human condition, in that

the human subject is digitized and decentered and made *invisible* through the global stretch of cyberspace capillaries. The invisibility achieved by the newly proliferating electronic technologies of the Information Age forms a threat to the destruction of the concepts of space and time; as these new technologies are circulating outside of the human experiences of space and time, the notions of space and time are apt to change. But there is something almost uncanny in any description of “the virtual,” or in any other enthusiastic testimony that gives indirect references to what the new worlds of virtual reality is one day expected to provide – or remove. This “uncanny” may perhaps be explained in terms of the changes of perception, taking the opening sentence of *Neuromancer* again, although still in its infancy, this postmodern technology already offers new modes of perception and opens new spaces for the imaginary. As Paul Virilio puts it, “cyberspace is a new form of perspective, it does not coincide with the audio-visual perspective which we already know” (1).

This developing pace of technology while transforming the urban space and the social space posits a new threat on the identity formation of the individuals, in its way of changing the daily life of the urban dweller and effecting the social relations created in the urban space. The more technology favors the imaginary instead of the symbolic, and the cybernetic instead of the organic, the more human beings are confused in their search for a distinct identity. Fredric Jameson wrote in 1984, that in a postmodern world, the subject is not alienated but fragmented. He explained that the notion of alienation presumes a centralized, unitary self who could become lost to himself or herself. But if a postmodernist sees it, the self is decentered and

multiple, the concept of alienation breaks down. All that is left is an anxiety of identity. Thus in time, technological images become the Lacanian mirrors in which one looks for self-perception – not being able to distinguish the borders of the self, one tends to attain a wholeness by identifying with the surrounding world of images.

Considering human interaction, be that in the city or in the cyberspace, the debate of disorder finds its justifications. There is no way to derive a simple conclusion out of this commotion and say that this era of transition, this era of suspension would come to an end by itself. Having lived through these eras of social interaction in the city – in the real spaces of human life – confused with the possibilities and the impossibilities of these spaces and having undergone the processes of alienation, isolation and the evacuation of the concept of a “community” human beings would now attempt to try the opportunities of the virtual. In this sense, Neuromancer, in a single stroke, provided, through Gibson’s powerful vision for hackers, technologically literate and all the others involved, the imaginal public sphere and refigured discursive community that established the grounding for the possibility of a new kind of social interaction. However one can not conclude that what he proposes would be the way it is going to end, since from another point of view this is nothing more than *progress* and cyberspace does not give the human beings *any more reality* than they already have; so humanity would find a way out again and again...

2. REDEFINITION ON THE OUTSIDE

2.1 Technology and the City

“At that moment,” Iran said, “when I had the TV sound off, I was in a 382 mood; I had just dialed it. So although I heard the emptiness intellectually, I didn’t feel it. My first reaction consisted of being grateful that we could afford a Penfield mood organ. But then I realized how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life, not just in this building but everywhere, and not reacting – do you see? I guess you don’t. But that used to be considered a sign of mental illness; they called it ‘absence of inappropriate affect.’ So I left the TV sound off and I sat down at my mood organ and I experimented. And I finally found a setting for despair.” Her dark, pert face showed satisfaction, as if she had achieved something of worth. “So I put it on my schedule for twice a month; I think that’s a reasonable amount of time to feel hopeless about everything, about staying here on Earth after everybody who’s smart has emigrated, don’t you think?” (Dick, 5-6).

Hidden in the passage above is a mapping of the aftermath of technology, mutating the way people live and the way that they feel about it. It was with the increasing *intimacy* in the human-machine-computer relationship, growing detachment from the nature – and from the space – and at last the way human identity is altered under all this pressure exerted by the rapid

pace of technology that, despair was coined and a debate of *disorder* that evolved around human identity and human interaction in *real* and *virtual* spaces was initiated.

The secret of Philip K. Dick's science fiction novel, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? – which gave further inspiration to the cult science fiction movie *Bladerunner* by Ridley Scott – was its strong expression of the detachment of human beings from nature and the despair that had ascended about it. Today with the outburst of the concepts of cyberspace and virtuality, the despair gained yet another dimension; perplexed with the phantasmatic opportunities that these new conceptualizations of the future create, the human subject is looking for a new orientation in these *virtual* mazes. Nevertheless, technology strikes the urban space just the same and the individual of the city finds himself in a similar confusion, yet a confusion much older, which was at stake ever since technology took over the control of the development and expansion of the cities and buried the human scale, organic cities of the pre-industrial era deep in the dusty pages of history.

The vast literature on cyberspace that have accumulated ever since Gibson coined the term was, in this sense, nothing but a repetition, a recognition of the point, that the future might be clouded with a haze of despair rather than being enhanced with hope. What had less concerned the authors writing about cyberspace was that this despair involved a parallel detachment from the *space* – the *space* that the human body inhabits and the *space* that defines the presence of the *body* in return. Cyberspace, in the sense that it creates a new virtual space in which to *be*, is considered by many to be a *new*

phenomenon that might take us to places that we've never been to – yet aren't those places that we have traveled before but yet forgot? Oversimplifying the shift in imagination to the demands of technology, cyberspace promises nothing but a new *hallucinatory space* in which to *be*, an expansion of the human fantasy upgraded to a new level, but wasn't it so for the space that we had known, wasn't it yet a space that opened up to surround and embrace the fantasies of the human kind? If so, then, haven't we "heard the emptiness intellectually" before, but resisted to feel it?

Thereby the phenomenon of cyberspace creates a further understanding of the way we relate to space be that real or virtual. In this sense, one further opportunity that cyberspace highlights, is to rethink and reconsider our positions with respect to technology and space with the help of the concept cyber-, and perhaps realize how "unhealthy" the conditions are for what we call *human*, if still, we do not realize further "the absence of life".

Nevertheless with Gibson's term cyberspace and his outstanding novel Neuromancer, the significant parallels between the cyberspace and the city space were highlighted. Gibson had drawn attention to these analogous spaces, as he expressed his observation of the similarities between the electronic circuits of the computer and the view of Los Angeles seen from 5000 feet (Boyer 14). What he did was just to reduce the similarities to a congealed visual image, but yet as he triggered the analogy, he opened up a new space for our imagination, in which we would confront the potentiality that both the city and the cyberspace had – the potentiality of imposing an order on the life and identity of the human subject. This analogy gave, on one

hand, the possibility of evaluating what we have done so far with our *real* spaces before stepping into the *virtual*, and yet on the other hand, what the space had imposed over the *human identity*.

Another important reason why the city space was compared to cyberspace was the extreme thought that cyberspace had the potential to *clone* the world that we live in, simplify the world that we live in into a digital system of on and offs, reduce the spaces that we live in into a binary grid, create simulations of the world and more importantly, by means of such possibility, change our perceptions of space – and of ourselves. Regarding the way cyberspace offers communication and sociality, the idea of communication as we had known it is shattered and there arises the possibility that the city is disappearing as the space of social interaction and that face-to-face communication – already reduced to F2F in the cyberspace jargon – is bound to evaporate.

Quoted by Holtzman in Digital Mosaics, the cultural critic William Irwin Thompson is preoccupied that the tales of virtual reality is the further elaboration of the American dream of *escape from nature*. In a vivid passage from his book The American Replacement of Nature, he colourfully animates what an escape from nature would be like:

In truth, America is extremely uncomfortable with nature; hence its culturally sophisticated preference for the fake and nonnatural, from Cheez Whiz sprayed out of an aerosol can onto a Styrofoam potatoed chip, to Cool Whip smoothing out the absence of taste in those attractively red, genetically engineered monster strawberries. Any

peasant with a dumb cow can make whipped cream, but it takes a chemical factory to make Cool Whip. It is the technological process and not the natural product that is important, and if it tastes bad, well, that's beside the point, for what that point is aimed at, is the escape from nature. In America, even the food is a moon shot, a fast food rocket aimed away from Earth... History is replaced with movies, education is replaced with entertainment, and nature is replaced with technology... At the edge of nature in the farthest West of America, it is no accident that the final act in the American replacement of nature should be the replacement of the body's incarnation into Virtual Reality (60).

Even though the term that is being pronounced about cyberspace, "revolution" invokes and implies positive consequences for the future, the common dystopian view takes its leverage from the increasing detachment of the human being from the nature – which has long been the case.

Donna Haraway, the famous author of "A Cyborg Manifesto", begins the introduction of her book Primate Visions with the question: "How are love, power and science intertwined in the constructions of nature in the late twentieth century?" She, then goes on to ask:

What may count as nature for late industrial people? What forms does love of nature take in particular historical contexts? For whom and at what cost? In what specific places, out of which social and intellectual histories, and with what tools is nature constructed as an object of erotic and intellectual desire? [...] Who may contest for what the body of nature will be? (1)

In Haraway's account, these questions guide the history of popular cultures emerging from accounts of the bodies. Nevertheless, for many other authors, nature is already marked "dead" for the industrial people, and with it arose the necessity to ask what a *new* nature would be.

The ongoing debate about the detachment of human beings from nature, discussed vastly with respect to the industrial revolution, makes a new turn with the debate on cyberspace. Mark Slouka's account on what the supporters of the new cyberization movement suggests drawing a new line in the human-nature-technology trio:

What do the digerati suggest? Not, as one might expect, an "enclosed, simulated reality" – the standard vision of a virtual world apart – but "a distributed, augmented reality... in which cyberization is integrated seamlessly into people's everyday activities, and real-world objects take on virtual attributes and behaviors that support and enhance those activities." In other words, a *personalized* universe. A universe in which "dumb" objects, "electrified with smartness," entirely subject to our will, form a seamless web around us. In this new world, the environment will be both synthetic and eerily alive; the dividing line between "the born and the made" will blur. The couch will shrink out of the way like a dog to keep you from skinning your shins, while the cat in the corner will have a patent number on its skull, beneath its fur. Technology will become, as Allucquere Rosanne Stone has put it, the new "nature" we inhabit (66).

The matter of choice and control, over the construction and content of electronic communications recognizes the need to develop new modes of perception with which to receive, absorb, criticize, and produce new

combinations of information. It examines the implications that the disappearance of reality as a referent and then the rise of the virtual entail.

Negroponte claims that “the world, as we experience it, is a very analog place. From a macroscopic point of view, it is not digital at all but continuous. Nothing goes suddenly on or off, turns from black to white, or changes from one state to another without going through a transition” (qtd. in Boyer 5).

If we take the issue with this assumption of a space of transition, for more and more we seem to experience the world as if framed by a digital box with binary on/off choices and disjunctions, with combinatorial lists and arrays, with encoded video games and program languages. If we draw an analogy between the computer matrix of data management and the city, then in Negroponte’s account it is precisely the “spaces of disjunction between the rows and columns of data entries that represent the forgotten spaces”, “the disavowed places” (10), and the bits eradicated because of the noise and redundancy they generate.

The form of the matrix brings to the city a systemic order that hides its heterogeneous nature and the disjunctive positions we hold within it. Paradoxically, while the analogy allows for the discussion of the disappearance of the city from our postmodern social and cultural agendas, the very immateriality of this electronic matrix and the world of virtual reality that it projects defies the grounding of that analogy. “And it is exactly this crossroads that should be explored: both the analogy between the computer matrix and the space of the city, and the moment of withdrawal or

disappearance from the excesses of reality into the cybernetic representations of the virtual world of computers” (Negroponte qtd. in Boyer 10).

Many changes that await human beings in different fields of research, search for further possibilities to make the world a *better* place – nevertheless their outcomes work in reshaping the human condition as well as improving it. In an era where we are about to witness the complete resolution of the human DNA in benefit for the genome and the cancer research, our further findings might extend to experience human beings being *cloned*. The ongoing research on artificial intelligence might let us see machines *sense and feel the way that we do* in the coming decade.

Even further afield, the artificial intelligence theorist Hans Moravec calmly assures us that we are about to enter a “postbiological” universe in which robotic life forms capable of independent thought and procreation will “mature into entities as complex as ourselves.” Soon, he insists, we will download our willing spirits into computer memory or robotic bodies and do away with the weak flesh altogether.

Even more comes from K. Eric Drexler, the founding father of nanotechnology, who imagines the creation of self-replicating subatomic engines called nanomachines. In theory, these microscopic devices could slurp up oil spills or suck up toxic clouds; remove diseased DNA segments from the cells of AIDS patients, effectively curing them; or repair the ravages of normal aging at a cellular level, affording near *immortality*. For the moment, it is only the idea of such developments that cause the earthquake in

our minds, albeit in no time it might become our reality. But for now we are stuck in this transition environment, learning to live with the idea.

The means of the human body in adjusting to the new transition environment, the new space in-between, whose limits have been drawn by *the* technology, be that the real or the virtual space; goes beyond *simple* corporeality to embrace a redefinition of the human body – still on the basis of the Cartesian mind/body split. All the same this redefinition cyberspace suggests, is not that *new*, if we would just take one step (back) into postmodernism where the body had already been marked “absent” and perhaps it had always already been so. Disappearance of the body, defined with respect to the complex and multi-dimensional stimuli of the industrial capitalism had been declared and debated long ago – if not for the sake of cyberspace, with respect to the telephone, television or all the other artifacts that have contributed to the construction of a network identity – and the subject named “terminal of multiple networks”, and later the elaboration was to a “networked cyborg” with the embeddedness in the discourse of cyberculture (Baudrillard, 1983: 128; Cubitt 134). Nonetheless, for the sake of tracing the steps from *terminal of multiple networks* to the *networked cyborg*, we might assume a transition, which describes the suspension of the body today.

This transition, this in-between space in which the body – as the flesh and as the *sine qua non* of a human society – is suspended, considering the issues of the city and the cyberspace, is best described by the concept of “heterotopia” introduced by Foucault, as defining *places where incongruous*

things appear, in his discussion of utopias. Michel Foucault noted that there is a mirror standing between the utopian arrangements that have no real space but that reflect the society in either its perfected (utopian) or dejected (dystopian) state, and heterotopias that represent “other” spaces, spaces set up to counter arrangements or to offer compensatory places from those that exist in reality.

Discussed in Cybercities by Christine Boyer, the concept of heterotopia introduced by Foucault clarifies the commotion that the body undergoes, lost in the transition between the mazes of the urban space and the ethereal of the cyberspace:

Foucault uses the body’s reflection in this mirror to help define this mixed-up, in-between space. This mirror is then a utopia, a placeless place where “I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space, that opens up behind the surface;... a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself there where I am absent...” But the mirror is also a real place, a heterotopia: “It makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.” Thus at the center of any analysis of space and the body lies an illusion as to the constitution of the self, an illusion that endows the body with a false unity. In the mirror we find projected the rational self, privileged over the subjective emotional self. Here lies the basis for the Cartesian mind/body split which ascribes all things opposed to self-control, measurement, abstraction, or empirical verification to the feminized, sensual, inferior, or distrustful body. At the same time, however, Foucault’s mirror image paradoxically seems to imply that the self is both disembodied and

embodied, both absent and present, both an unreal utopian and a real heterotopian projection (Boyer 78-9).

Thus in this remark, Michel Foucault reminds us that the self as a unity or whole may already be an illusion but also that the body is *an inscribed surface of events*, while it has been constantly dismembered and disordered.

In its frozen movement, in its suspension, in its split, the body, overexposed to the technology, goes through similar processes of redefinition under the catalyzing forces of both the urban space and the cyberspace. The pathology of the real space versus the virtual appears to be in reshaping the “location” of the (human) body as well as the identity. As Holtzman emphasizes an escape from the body is always already a vicious cycle, since “the physical body always maintains its presence in the actual world” (47). And as Bruce Sterling suggests, our attempts of escape from the real world into the virtual lose meaning in that our *jump* off from our bodies is by no means a jump off of our imperfect human nature:

We do not understand how to live in cyberspace yet... We are feeling our way into it, blundering about. That is not surprising. Our lives in the physical world, the “real” world, are also far from perfect, despite a lot more practice. Human lives, real lives, are imperfect by their nature, and there are human beings in cyberspace. The way we live in cyberspace is a funhouse mirror of the way we live in the real world. We take both our advantages and our troubles with us (1992: xiii).

The point that a virtual world possesses a special quality of *actual* presence is yet to be covered, nevertheless the way technology had reshaped

the cities is still an issue we cannot avoid but confront. One point Holtzman highlights about the virtual worlds is that they “only exist within the computer” (47), however it is not so for the transparent buildings, strips of unending highways or the huge masses of shopping malls that we spend our days in, which make us lose our orientations in the urban spaces we inhabit. Therefore, the way urban spaces have altered and the lucid effect of change on our perceptions is another issue that is worth considering before moving into the ethereal of cyberspace – or, as Schaffner puts it, before we are “lost in cyberspace”.

Vicky Kirby, highlights yet another point considering the way we would construct the relation between the spaces that we live in and the notion of cyberspace, in her book Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal, when she says, “...the notion of virtual reality takes its leverage from the material ground of actuality, from the palpable fact of the manifestly physical” (130).

This idea of passage, of suspension indeed takes its leverage from the material ground of actuality, from the physical, from the urban space again which enables “a ubiquitous feeling of being in all places while not really being anywhere” (Olalquiaga 2). This feeling of placelessness, of dislocation, is the basis on which the debate of *disorder* is predicated and which formulates the parallels between the city and the cyberspace in distorting the identity of human beings.

What is at stake is a reformulation of contemporary perception, due to high technology, and this reformulation is taken by Olalquiaga, to be one that

imposes disorders on the human subject, mainly by blurring the distinction between temporal and spatial paradigms. Olalquiaga, takes psychasthenia, the psychological phenomenon in which being and surroundings fuse into one, to be exemplary of the experience of contemporary urban settings by human beings and, in parallel, she points to the association between the obsessive, compulsive disease, which is considered by many to be the “disease of the 1980s”, and the obsessive, paralyzing repetition; that is again an extension of the urban experience which replaces the temporal continuum. Not unrelated to the way Olalquiaga relates *disorder* to the perceptual changes that take place mainly *in* the urban space, is *the* urban space, the imposed order of the urban space, that sets up the trap for the human being and initiates the passage from order to disorder, from paranoia to schizophrenia. In the 18th century, before technology *inhabited* the city, the uneasiness on the human being was being a stranger to the crowd, the fear of the crowd and the paranoiac fear of the unknown, nonetheless the conditions have changed from pre-industrial to modern, from modern to postmodern, each phase defining the space and what it imposes on the individual – if there still is one, each phase redefining the borders of the self. Today the borders have melted, and the fearful subject of the eighteenth century, has disappeared into the crowd, has become invisible and indistinguishable within the milieu of strangers he was once so fearful of.

Olalquiaga, then goes on to describe the postmodern condition that defines the uneasiness for the human being:

Along with these perceptual changes, technology is gradually displacing the organic in favor of the cybernetic and the symbolic with the imaginary, producing a fragmentation of the self that is compensated in the intensification of pornographic and painful pleasures. Whether these processes help articulate a totalitarian politics of surveillance and control or its opposite, a subversive dynamic that trespasses boundaries and hierarchies, remains the foremost problem in the postmodern debate (1).

Her argument of uneasiness yet finds its justification again, in the criticism of modern architecture, in the urban space defined by particularly the monumental buildings of the “International Style”, but only for the modern subject, for things are rather different concerning postmodernity. Yet it was the attack of the modern , the world of order imposed by the modern that indicated an undercurrent for a paranoia, which was defined as “pathology of organization” (Baudrillard, 1983: 132).

Instead of the rigid order, the postmodern body was surrounded and bombarded with incoherent fragments of space and time. For instance in Boyer’s conceptualization of a CyberCity, the body seemed to be continuously in motion - be it driving the freeways, shopping at the mall, or pushing carts through supermarket aisles – but never in a continuum of either space or time. However, as it has previously been argued, in the reformulation of our perception of space and time, by means of electronic telecommunications, what we experienced was a loss of spatial boundaries or distinctions, so that all spaces began to look alike and imploded into a continuum, while time was reduced to obsessive and compulsive repetitions. For Olalquiaga, our experience of time was reduced to a process that resembled the obsessive-

compulsive disease. Consequently, our new way of perceiving the new urban environment was an inability to map our contemporary terrain, to envision space and representational forms, and thus to weave things together, to conclude, to be able to act.



Fig. 1. Lonely Metropolitan, photomontage, by Herbert Bayer (1931).

2.2 Changing Perceptions of the Urban Space

All the benches are removed from the city, all fountains turned off, all flowers and trees are destroyed. Huge electric buzzers on the top of every apartment house (everyone lived in apartments) ranged the quarter hour. Often vibrations would throw people out of bed. Searchlights played over the town all night (no one was permitted to use shades, curtains, shutters or blinds).

No one ever looked at anyone because of the strict law against importuning, with or without verbal approach, anyone for any purpose, sexual or otherwise. All cafés and bars were closed (Burroughs 41).

This city of surveillance is not the case for the contemporary city, the way that Burroughs had defined it, but this feeling that arises out of this passage, the feeling of *losing* it, points to some part of ourselves that was *in* the city, but sank to an unknown with despair. The dark picture Burroughs draws is not the picture of our condition today, nevertheless it is the same cloud of despair that hangs over the city.

Space, as defined by human and as defining the human, gave the first signs to an uneasiness that probably began with an overexposure of the human subject to the technology, the technology that had developed further and further as did the human knowledge. In the undiminished challenge of confronting the nature, in the certain degrees of enlightenment that was achieved and that had triggered the human to accomplish more and more, the city was the *membrane* surrounding the delicate balances that the human

sought to achieve in the effort that brought about the victories and defeats; while on the other hand it grew also from within with what was achieved – or was lost – and turned out to be the parade of human power and technology – versus nature; nevertheless being the disgraceful display of human failure. Hand in hand, technology and modern imposed their order on the city, under the mask of *the grid*, which had been the basis of the city plan ever from antiquity, with Hippodamus of Miletus. But this time, the grid expanded even to the *third* dimension defining a new topology of the urban geography surrounding the human subject.

The way that the city came up with the *visualization* of the human condition, brought about many other functions to the already multi-functional space of human activity; to be the *scene* to define and display the human condition from the outside and from within; and from time to time, to be the *mirror* in which to recognize and redefine what is human. In Baudrillard's view, however, even those days were gone, and the “all-too-visible” of the modern, had turned the city into a control screen, attenuating it to a “non-reflecting” surface of immanence (Baudrillard, 1983).

The *grid* provided, quite literally, the “common ground” on which the identification of the city space with the *body* – the corporeal space – could come about. This fantasy construction was inspired by a famous passage of architectural treatise, completed in about 1452, by Leon Battista Alberti, who had found that “The city is like a large house and the house like a small city”, but that in the end, “every edifice is a body” (qtd. in Burgin 35). Alberti's imagination of the corporeal city, predicated on his narrative on painting, De

Pictura, which contained the first detailed description of the method of drawing a linear perspective.

In his description, the side of each square underlying the grid represented, as the unit of measurement, the *braccio*, equivalent to one third of the height of a standing man. Using this system for measurement, in a

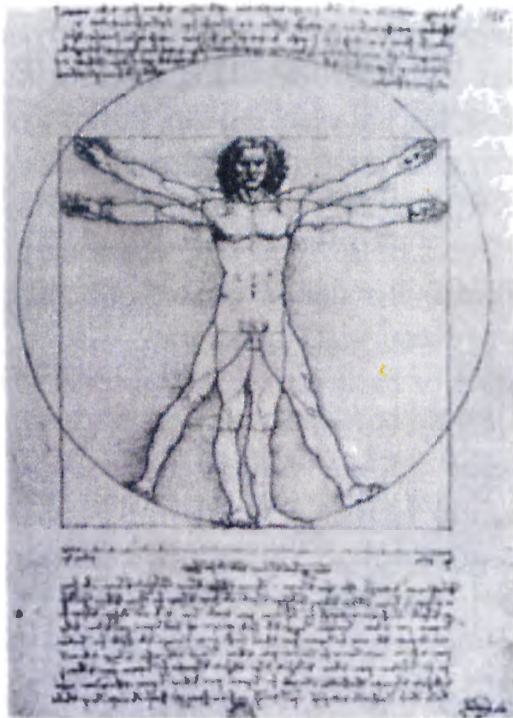


Fig. 2. Ideal Man, by Leonardo da Vinci (1510).

perspective the accurate size of a figure could be determined relatively, at any point of the illusory depth of the represented space. By this means, the size of any building, or any other object could be determined with respect to this corporeal measure. Thereby, literally, man was the *measure of all things*. Nevertheless it was again with perspective, and in the light of this new *perspective* that man was

represented and the human body as the origin of space, was swiftly replaced with the eye – *its disembodied metonymic representative* (Burgin 35).

The human body reduced to the representativeness of the eye, has long been the case, and parallelly has long been the basis of an uneasiness that arises with it. The eye becomes the relation to reality, and visible becomes all that is real. The *visible* filled and conquered the everlasting space of the modern, until the day it was *digitized* to be represented as cyberspace, it still

does in the presence of this new electronic space. Thereby, underlying the grid was the detachment of the self and the body. The subject “I” was always already transferred to the “eye”, the representative of the human body in place, in situ, before it was delegated to any other “agent” out there in the nonplace. And in this way, man was already reduced to his image, which formed the basis for more uneasiness with the body to come with the concomitant eras.

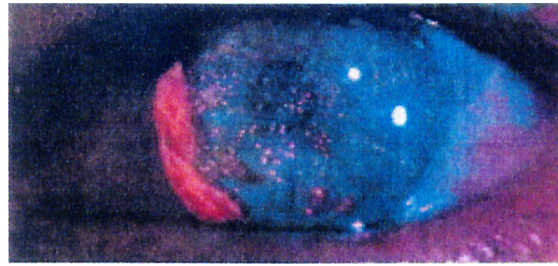


Fig.3. The Eye of the Replicant. Blade Runner (1982).

The grid had another potentiality, that of imposing its order; while erasing the differences that existed on the surface. Its first appearance in the modern was in Baron Haussmann’s dreams of modern Paris, in 1860s. His introduction of boulevards into the organic, historical fabric of Paris – though not in the actual shape of a rectangular grid, but a radiant one – was the first time implementation of the grid, lacerating the surface of differences as if to achieve neutrality and homogeneity.

Baron Haussmann’s remaking of Paris was simultaneous with the grid being imposed on New York by other planners. He was engaged in planning Paris during the era in which Central Park was created. Haussman confronted a congested city a thousand years old whose twisted streets were a breeding ground for, in his mind, the unholy trinity of disease, crime, and revolution. He imagined a traditional means of repression in face of these dangers. The cutting of straight streets through a congested Paris was to

make it easier for people to breathe, for police and if necessary, troops to move. The new streets of northeastern Paris were to be lined with apartments over elegant shops, in order to attract the bourgeoisie into previously working-class districts; he imagined a kind of internal class colonization of the city. At the same time that he opened the city mass transport to the swift flow of traffic, he also hoped the working classes were to become more locally dependent upon a new urban gentry; the Boulevard Richard Lenoir was built as such a street. Haussmann sought to create a Paris of steady if demanding customers, concierge-spies, and a thousand little services (Sennett, 1991: 62).

This was the first modern application of city planning in the sense that we know today, since city planning by specialists is a recent event in the history of cities. The reason for this is largely that, until the time of the great industrial cities, urban space and urban society was not considered as belonging to a special kind of social order. However, as industrial cities grew in population and economic importance, they came to be more uncontrolled, and rules of social welfare lost their historical power. The evils of this transformation are not unknown to us, the intense poverty, the uncertainty of health and vocation, the feeling of being locked up in the city (Sennett, 1996: 87-8). So Baron Haussmann, in this point of view, was an enlightened man of his age, in his wish to rebuild Paris lay the impetus of changing the city for the better. In many senses he did, but only under the price of a subtle grid conquering the city space to effect it deeply in the centuries to come.

Paris at this time was a mosaic of the industrial and the pre-industrial orders. New factories were growing rapidly on the outskirts of the city and in

certain sections of the inner city as well; but the tangle of small crooked streets and decaying buildings was still the focus for economic activities new and old, with a populace increasingly unknown to the administrative and social service authorities of the city. Movement within the city itself was very difficult – in 1840 it took an hour and a half to walk on foot between two sections of Paris; the distance can now be navigated on foot in thirty minutes. Especially frightening to the political authorities was the fact there was no way of controlling the workers in case of civil insurrection, since the twisted streets were perfect for setting up impromptu barricades. Haussmann began to cut, through the jumble of streets, great, long, unswervingly straight avenues, avenues that could accommodate an enormous amount of traffic, serve as an easy means of getting troops into riotous sections of the city, and act like river boundaries dividing different socioeconomic sections of the city (Sennett, 1996: 88-9). Thus the urban space possessed a new face, that of the modern, which looked at the public as a mass to be ordered and organized.

At about the same time the grid took over New York, though it is one of the oldest cities in America, New York's planners treated it during the era of high capitalism. It was treated as if it were a city on the frontier, a place required to deal with the physical world as an enemy. Under the objectives of the plan blinked an aggression against the environment; which was not displayed explicitly, nonetheless could not be hidden. The planners imposed a grid at one blow in 1811 upon Manhattan from Canal Street, the edge of dense settlement, up to 155th Street, and then in a second stroke in 1870 to the northern tip. They imposed the grid more gradually in Brooklyn east from

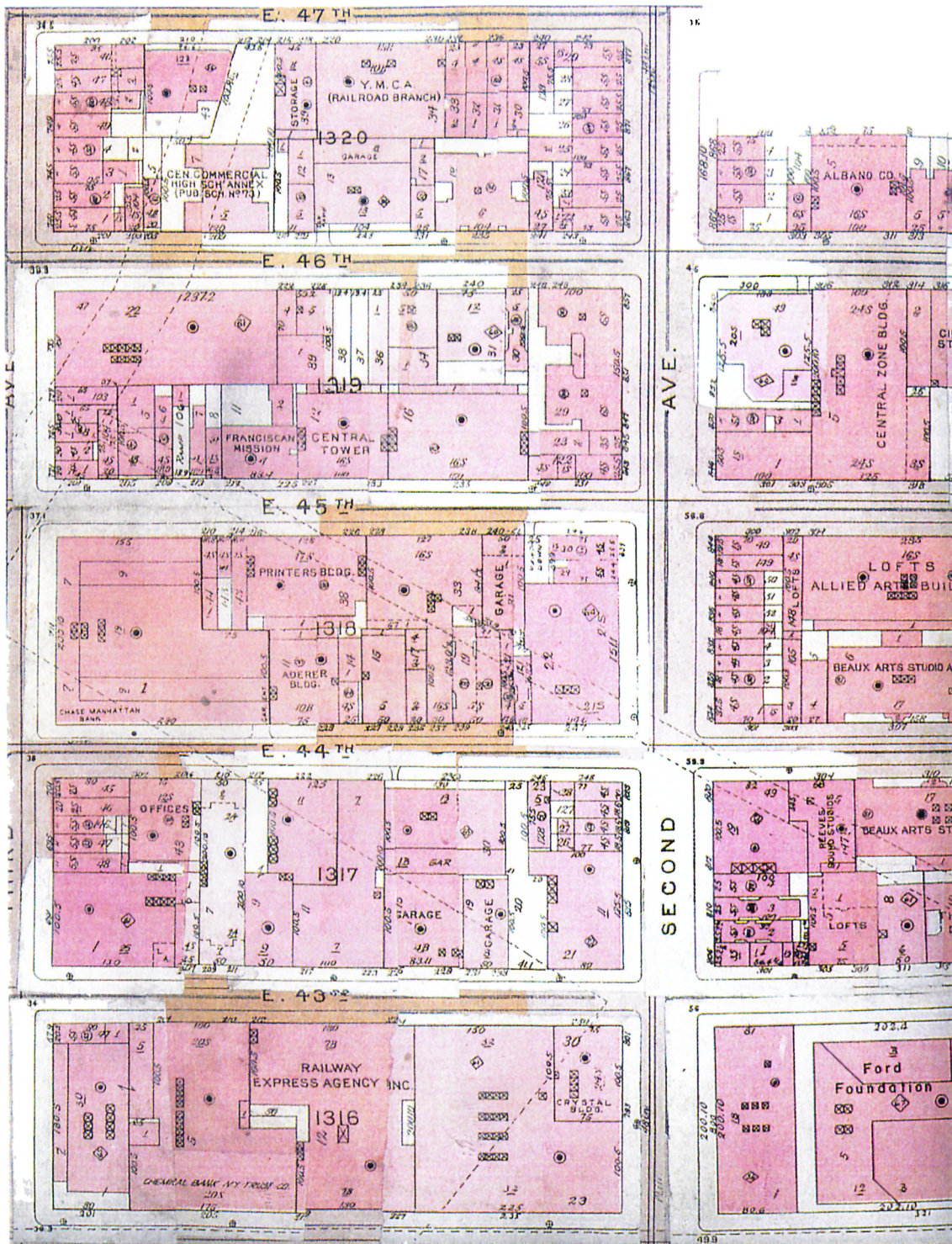


Fig. 4. The gridded space of New York (1960). Development Plans of New York from the Museum of the City of New York.



Fig. 5. Twentieth Century New York (1976).

its old harbour (Sennett, 1991: 52). And, inexorably, development according to the grid did abolish whatever existing settlement was encountered. Or in other words, planning New York was the ultimate exercise of displaying the power of technology over nature and on the built environment. The victory lay in creating a surface from an urban land containing enormous variety, neutralizing it.

Neutrality, as a space of social control, seems in this way to explain a great divide between nineteenth century European planning and those more modern practices that first took shape horizontally in nineteenth century America and are now more universally, vertically deployed (Sennett, 1991: 62). American urbanism during its great flowering has proceeded by another path of power, one that repressed the overt definition of significant space in which domination and dependence were to occur. There is no building form like Haussmannian apartment house with its service web. Instead both horizontal and vertical development proceeded among us as a more modern, more abstract operation of extension. In the making of the grid cities “new” Americans proceeded as in their encounters with native Americans by erasure of the presence of an alien Other rather than by colonization. Instead of establishing the significance of place, control operated through consciousness of place as neutral.

Gridded space does more than create a blank canvas for development. It subdues those who must live in the space, but disorienting their ability to see and to evaluate relationships. In that sense, the planning of neutral space is an act of dominating and subduing others.

The twentieth century, however, also deploys the grid. It is vertical and more universal; it is the skyscraper. The older geographic modes reappear in this architectural form. More, it is in the building of skyscrapers that the cracks became evident in the edifice of neutralizing power.

In cities of skyscrapers, Hong Kong as much as New York, it is impossible to think of the vertical slices above street level as having an inherent order, like the intersection of *cardo* and *decumanus*; one can not point to activities that ought particularly to happen on the sixth floor of buildings. Nor can one relate visually sixth floors to twenty-second floors as opposed to twenty-fifth floors in a building (Sennett, 1991: 57-60). Nor do skyscrapers have the necessary height. The vertical grid lacks definitions of both significant placement and closure.

It was under this definition of grid that the binary grid of the invisible of cyberspace was undertaken. The grid as apparent in the case of cyberspace was an act of appearing and disappearing at the same time. In her attempt to delve into the plus effect - the burden or the relief - of what the conceptualization of cyberspace, or virtual reality, brought to the already confused individual; Vicky Kirby defines the current situation to be an “exemplary of [the] incessant and aggressive redefinition of the human condition” as the “human subject is now digitized and decentered through the global stretch of cyberspace capillaries.” Her position is one of discerning the dark side of an enlightenment, that took place - and is taking place - which “extends to the larger and not unrelated question of what it means to be *human*” (129).

The dark side to an enlightenment, which had for the most part, contracted “a new Cartesian – Lockean – Kantian subject through a happy, progressive marriage of self, reason , and technology” was previously perceived by Guy Debord – as by many other philosophers - who saw the very first symptoms in the great cities of his era (Derian, *Introduction* 3). To Debord, the reduction of life to the *spectacle*, was the reason that the city took over from being the display of the visions of life, to being the scenery, the image, the representation which previously was life itself:

In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation (1).

His influential expression of lives being *visualized* rather than lived, lead the way to the realization of the “powers of the eye”, as well as to a dystopian view of the future of humanity. On the threshold of postmodernity, that aimed at the destruction of the modern order, many were altered, the spectacle replaced by *transparency* and *obscenity*, as we approached science fiction gradually (Baudrillard, 1998).

Science fiction was the most powerful media in which this view was conveyed, beginning from very early examples of the notion in science fiction novels, later with an even stronger expression in science fiction movies. Very commonly, science fiction movies took the city to be the “dark scenery” of the dark future that they represented, as the “darkness” of the city enveloped and

multiplied the dystopic view. Never in the science fiction movies was the sky over the city a bright blue.

Even in a very early example of the science fiction genre, in “The Machine Stops” by Edward Morgan Forster dated 1909, the extreme of losing the sense of space, and the sense of our body as the origin of space was the core of the novel. A dystopic nightmare fully worthy of Orwell, “The Machine Stops”, opens in “a small room, hexagonal in shape, like the cell of a bee.” The woman who lives in this room, Vashti, shops by phone, orders food by phone, gives lectures to an audience she can see and hear without leaving her room. She’s pathologically afraid of direct experience. In her world, direct observation, physical space, the unmediated event have all been banished. Her room – an underground bunker linked to others through a sort of computer, fully equipped to compensate for the outside world – is a self-enclosed universe: “though it contained nothing,” Forster tells us, “it was in touch with all that she cared for in the world.” Nature has been removed from human life. “She made the room dark and slept; she awoke and made the room light; she ate and exchanged ideas with her friends, and listened to music and attended lectures; she made the room dark and slept.”

Into this self-enclosed world, through his image that appears on a blue, TV-like plate, comes Vashti’s son, Kuno, a rebel, a malcontent, who lives in a room just like hers in the Southern hemisphere. “I want you to come and see me,” he says. Vashti, at first, doesn’t understand. “But I can see you,” she protests. Kuno, however, doesn’t want to see her through the offices of the machine. Absurdly, he wants more. “I see something like you in this plate,

but I do not see you,” he says. “Pay me a visit so that we can meet face to face, and talk about the hopes that are in my mind.” Eventually, though already anticipating “the terrors of direct experience,” Vashti agrees to go. Face-to-face with his mother, Kuno tells her of his crime. In this Age of the Machine, in which direct experience has been demonized and the natural world rendered obsolete, Kuno has been to the surface. His rebellion knows no bounds: “We say space is annihilated,” he argues, “but we have annihilated not space, but the sense thereof. We have lost a part of ourselves.” Kuno – young, aggressive, curious – is determined to recover the physical world. “Man is the measure,” he claims, to his mother’s horror. “Man’s feet are the measure for distance, his hands are the measure for ownership, his body is the measure for all that is lovable and desirable and strong.” In spite of Forster’s strong vision, Kuno’s words seem only a naïve cry, considering what we have undergone all through the twentieth century.

Portrayed in the movies and attributed to the city, was not only the dying hopes of saving the urban spaces in any conceptual or physical sense, but also the uneasiness that the human subject lived through, deriving from his interrelation with the space, his interrelation within the space, with himself and with the *other*. Or repeating Philip K. Dick’s words, what was at stake for the human subject was “sensing the absence of life” and “not reacting”. Boyer’s comment on *Bladerunner*, clarifies this point of losing contact:

Los Angeles in 2019 reflects a post-industrial, post-nuclear-holocaust, decomposed, disintegrated, and decayed city where technological systems have gone awry. Seen through a dark filter of smog or persistently dripping acid rain, its small-scale street markets and low-ceilinged malls give the appearance of a labyrinthine underground enclosure choked with refuse. All of the vendors in these crowded street markets, as well as the individually subcontracted manufacturers of eyes or various other body parts, are third-world Asian immigrants whose language is “city-speak,” a meltdown of English, Japanese, Spanish, and other vocabularies *who no longer have the effective means or even the desire to communicate with each other* (113-4, [emphasis mine]).



Fig. 6. Dystopia by firelight.
Bladerunner (1982).

What was the reason for this dystopic view? On behalf of the city, the 20th century had begun with great innovations and inventions besides the urban utopias that have configured “civilized” urban settings for the future of human communities. Reported by Robert Fishman in “Urban Utopias in the 20th Century”, the search for the ideal city of the 20th century involved the description of “the city that best expresses *the power and beauty of modern technology* and the most enlightened ideas of social justice” (19 [emphasis mine]). Between 1890 and 1930, three names, Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier came up with plans for ideal cities that

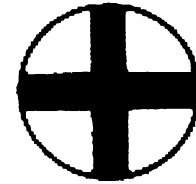
included detailed plans for factories, office buildings, schools, parks and transportation systems, all integrated into a revolutionary restructuring of urban form. Having pulled the trigger for ideas underlying the modern city, these men devoted themselves to passionate and unremitting efforts to make their ideal a reality, however reality did not turn out to be what they had planned.

This was exactly the point that Jane Jacobs attacked, in her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities in 1960s, the “megalomania” of architects like Le Corbusier, who sought to sweep away, with a single stroke of pen, a thousand years of dense urban settlement and many others who thought they would design the social life of the city with their plans for the physical design of the city. To Jane Jacobs, however, it made more sense that the viability of urban forms that have accumulated over time from local uses and historical changes were used to create a socially legitimate and democratic urban space, instead of order that the “artist-designer-dictator” imposed (111).

This attack had deep roots in the history of the city and was brought about centuries ago by Aristotle, concerning the ancient world. The grid of the city imposed by Hippodamus of Miletus, who is considered to be the founding father of urban design and city planning, was the basis of Aristotle’s argument. Aristotle saw the grid model as weakening the interaction of citizens, as the arbitrary creation of an order blocked the citizens’ learning from mutual conflict how to live together (Sennett, 1994: 59). The grid in

Aristotle's view, was much different from the grid of the modern, for it involved a closure as well as order.

The Egyptian hieroglyph that the historian Joseph Rykwert believes was one of the original signs for a town is described as a "nywt" (192). This hieroglyph, a cross within a circle, suggests two of the simplest, most enduring urban images. The circle is a single, unbroken closed line: it suggests enclosure, a wall or space like a town square; within this enclosure, life unfolds.



The cross is the simple form of distinct compound lines: it is perhaps the most ancient object of environmental process, as opposed to the circle, which defines the boundary defining environmental size. Crossed lines represent an elemental way of making streets within the boundary, through making grids, the *decumanus* and the *cardo* in the Roman city. Thereby the grid was an expression of culture, as was first perceived by Hippodamus of Miletus, and the intersection of the crossed lines, the center of the settlement, the city, civilization and life.

The grid, like any design can become whatever particular cultures makes it represent. If it was perceived to be an emotionally charged design in the ancient world, the Americans were the first to use it for a different purpose: to deny that complexity and difference existed in the environment. Thus the grid was used in modernity as a plan that neutralizes the environment, it was solid disavowal.

The twentieth century completed both these geographic processes at work in the making of grids, even when development occurred by building a thousand houses along arbitrarily twisting streets, or by digging out lumps of industrial park, office campus, and shopping mall on the edges of highways. In the development of the modern “megalopolis” it became more reasonable to speak of urban nodes than of centers. The very vagueness of the word node indicates the loss of a language for naming environmental value: center is charged with meanings both historical and visual, while node is resolutely dull (Sennett, 1991: 46-50).

Nevertheless the act of imposing the grid of modernity on the city was performed and the shift in imagination and in actuality, from urban utopias to urban dystopias pictured as such, was mainly embedded in the way our *perception* of the urban space altered according to the grid. The grid worked in transforming a livable urban setting to a neutral surface, or in other words, it was reducing the space of the imaginary to a surface of immanence.

In achieving the mutual conflict of living together, the city was first the stronghold of civilization, which in turn, showed up ironically, as the first concrete bastion of escape from nature. In the unending human challenge against the nature, civilization and technology played the lead, while the city provided the perfect scenery for the battle. Remaining as a larger settlement, where people sought to find better ways of mutual life, revolutions stroked the *human* of the city, and when the magic wand of technology touched it, with it began the process that gave the cold face of technology that alienated people from the space and later with high-tech, urban space assumed a face

that the human could no longer recognize. As materials for culture, the stones of the modern city seemed badly laid by planners and architects. Different conceptualizations of the grid, became apparent with the shopping mall, the parking lot, the apartment house and the elevator – as the object of the three-dimensional grid – did not suggest in their form the complexities of how people might live. What once were the experiences of places appear now as floating mental operations.

Along with the alienation from the space of civilization, soon the human was even an alien to his own body – *the body of technology*. It was in the 18th and the 19th centuries that the human communities had undergone the effects of the industrial revolution, followed by the invention of computer in the 20th century, and today even a “cyberspace revolution” is pronounced. As Slouka argues in the War of the Worlds, “The cyberspace revolution” seeked to erase the world “as we had known it” (22).

Realizing the potence of the rapid developments in computer technology, Alvin Toffler wrote early in 1980s that there is a “Third Wave” coming up and that “humanity faces a quantum leap forward.” To Toffler, the “Third Wave” meant “the deepest upheaval and creative restructuring of all time.” It was a *wave* both in the sense that it would clear away history, and us, human beings would be engaged in “building a remarkable civilization from the ground up”; and that it would all be so rapid that it would be done away with our civilization by the time we realize it:

Until now, the human race has undergone two great waves of change, each one largely obliterating earlier cultures or civilizations and replacing them with ways of life inconceivable to those who came before. The First Wave of change – the agricultural revolution – took thousands of years to play itself out. The Second Wave – the rise of industrial civilization – took a mere hundred years. Today history is even more accelerative, and it is likely that the Third Wave will sweep across history and complete itself in a few decades (10).

Although some chances of cyberspace being assimilated – as did many other innovations – is also pronounced by many authors who claim that it could never replace the pleasures of the *real* experiences, there is evidence that it might reshape our ‘real’ instead of replacing it:

There is another fact about cultural innovations. If an innovation is basic, simply because it is so, a generation after it has been introduced, it becomes part of the world as given – part of the shape of consciousness, you might say, rather than the content of consciousness. Television seemed to the generation of the 1940s to be an amazing triumph of human ingenuity and pregnant with social implications. Its influence on modern culture has been every bit as great as those who witnessed its birth imagined. But now that it has been assimilated, it is taken for granted, which means that, in a sense, it has become obvious and invisible at the same time. Anyone who discusses modern culture has to do a great deal of contemplating of the invisible in the obvious (Hardison xii-xiii).

Oversimplifying the visual of the city, this was indeed the core of the changing perceptions of the urban space, the technology and the grid that it imposed on the city, became “obvious and invisible at the same time”. Or, in

other words, it was the invisibility of the all-too-visible in the urban space that had changed the way we perceived and experienced it.

Richard Sennett considered, in his article “The Powers of the Eye”, the way our perception has been altered by his emphasis on the effects of the modern urban geography on the body’s sensations of motion, sight and touch. His account is very much effected by the point that our urban experiences are now presumably reflections of our altered *reality*, as he noted earlier “As the reality people could believe in transformed itself to what they could immediately experience, a kind of terror about the immanent entered their lives” (Sennett, 1977: 193).

His concern was mainly the impact of modern city planning and urban design however, the modern architecture and then, the postmodern architecture also had their share in the way the human subject of the urban geography changed his/her perception of the actual space. In 1932, an exhibition of modern architecture was held in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition was largely a tribute to the Bauhaus movement, nevertheless the style that the exhibition revealed was identified by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock as the “International Style” (Hardison 100).

This phrase, International Style, was considered to be “a stroke of genius,” because it expressed the universalizing thrust – the push away from local attachments – of the new architecture (Hardison 100). Although the features of this culture were appearing first in technologically advanced societies,

principally Europe and North America, the new culture would be transnational and transregional. It would be international because it would draw on the aesthetic of technology, not the “grab bag of styles” produced over the centuries by the different historical circumstances of different countries and regions (Hardison 101).

The fact that the International Style was enormously successful, the fact that it became the standard design for an enormous range of buildings from the most elegant to the most slipshod, is an index of the practicality of its original concepts. Between 1945 and 1970 the International Style swept all competition aside. Hotels, motels, office buildings, factories, museums, private houses, department stores, hospitals, low-cost housing developments – in short, every imaginable sort of building – testify to its impact. The International Style is not only international in the sense of being abstract rather than historical, but also in the sense of being worldwide. Low-cost housing and public-housing projects from Singapore to Hong Kong to Hamburg to Chicago demonstrate that it can be cheap and modular as well as expensive and heroic. The best known American examples of the International Style are strongly geometric and heroic in size.

The use of reflective glass was primarily functional, in buildings that were exemplaries of the International Style, especially in the American Southwest and South, because it reduced heat radiation into the buildings. However, the primary objective was beauty, not efficiency. In good buildings the effect simplified the structures, getting rid of the busy reticulations of earlier

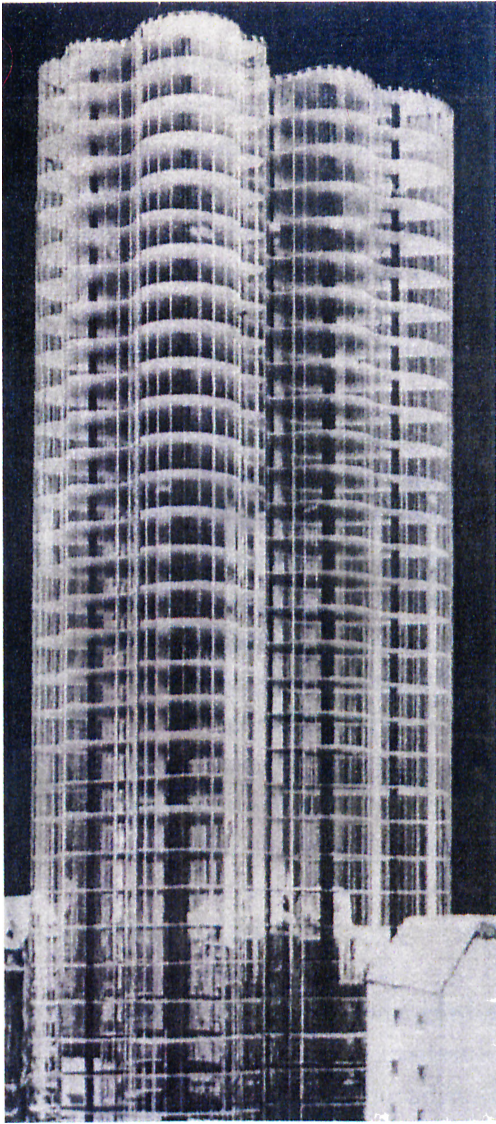
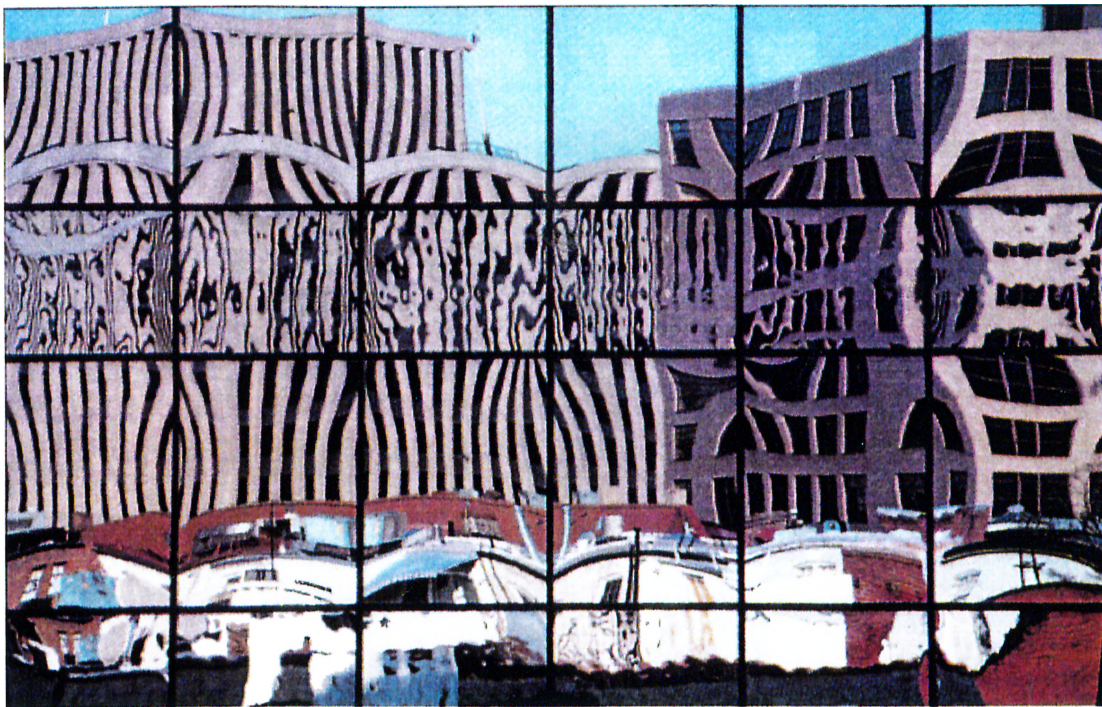


Fig. 7. Model for a Glass Skyscraper, by Mies van der Rohe, (1921). An early experiment with the cylinder in contrast to the rectilinear geometry more typical of the Bauhaus and the International Style.
Fig. 8. Mirror Building. Typical of the surreal imagery created by the façades of the buildings covered by reflective glass. (1988).



International Style buildings. The squares and rectangles were replaced by gigantic mirrors reflecting surrealistic variations of the surrounding activity.

Human beings floated across these mirrors like bubbles in an oversized Wurlitzer jukebox. The buildings themselves seemed only half real. Sometimes they were brilliantly there – great rectangles and cylinders of reflected light. At other times they were almost invisible because when they were looked at they blended into the scenery.

When they were not disappearing, these buildings asserted by their geometries that they were rigid and that their basic structural principle was compression, the piling of one column on another. The movement that rippled across their surfaces intensified the impression that they, themselves, were static. Nevertheless, they implied the playfulness of the modern aesthetic, which was their most striking – and also their most serious and, by corollary, their most disturbing – feature.

The playfulness imitates the playfulness of science that produces game theory and virtual particles and black holes and that, by introducing human growth genes into cows, forces students of ethics to reexamine the definition of cannibalism. The importance of play in the modern aesthetic should not come as a surprise. It is announced in every city in the developed world by the fantastic and playful buildings of postmodernism and neomodernism and by the fantastic juxtapositions of architectural styles that typify collage city and urban adhocism.

In Burgin's account, one of the most visible images of the modern dialectic of interior and exterior is the wall of steel and glass, of which the glass and iron structures of the Paris arcades are a prototype. He considers the specific example of the Administrative Office, for a model factory complex, built by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer for the Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in 1914. The Administrative Office building, as Sennett has described it, was an outstanding example of one, where the confines of the interior have lost their meaning: "...in this building you are simultaneously inside and outside. ... From the outside you can see people moving up and down between floors. ... You can see through the walls, your eyes move inside to outside, outside to inside." Thus, Burgin notes, "...the metaphor of porosity competes with a dialectic of interior and exterior which belongs to a different register. This ambivalence marks the representational space of modernism in general" (36).

Today postmodern culture includes the geometries of the International Style, the fantasies of façadism, and the gamesmanship of theme parks and museum villages. It pretends at times to be static but it is really dynamic. Its buildings move and sway and reflect dreamy visions of everything that is going on around them. It surrounds its citizens with the linear structure of pipelines and interstate highways and high-tension lines and the delicate virtuosity of the surfaces of the Chrysler Airflow and the Boeing 747 and the lacy weavings of circuits etched on silicon, as well as with the brutal assertiveness of oil tankers and bulldozers and the Tinkertoy complications of trusses and geodesic domes and lunar landers. It abounds in images and sounds and values utterly different from those of the world of natural things

seen from a middle distance. But the way it included play is by no means, to help the human subject in overcoming any uneasiness that s/he had undergone. In Hardison's words, "it is a human world," but one that is human, "in ways no one expected" (145).

Thus far, the new architecture that involves transparent façades, semi-open spaces and skylights causes an uneasiness on the individual's experience of the urban space, the sense of space or enclosure is totally lost and the individual is left in a maze of transparencies which emphasizes what is hidden more than that is displayed. Nonetheless, Novak makes similar indications, in his concept of "liquid architecture":

The city, traditionally the continuous city of physical proximity becomes the discontinuous city of cultural and intellectual community. Architecture, normally understood in the context of the first, conventional city, shifts to the structure of relationships, connections and associations that are webbed over and around the simple world of appearances and accommodations of commonplace functions (249).

The unceasing feeling of 'being lost' in the freedom of the new conception of space leads to yet another sense of loss: There is a feeling of having been robbed of time in the space of transparencies and multiplications. In the repetitive pattern of the urban daily life, one feels as if time had shrunk and everyday is lost to the urban rituals instead of the bodily pleasures it might have included. Coming to the Wonderland comparison suggested by Olalquiaga, the city is becoming yet another place *where reality and appearance merge into one*.

As discussed by Sennett in “The Powers of The Eye”, the changing urban space has its way of deadening our bodily sensations and reducing them to a rapid cycle of appearances and disappearances, or in the context delineated by Negroponte previously, digitizing the space, reducing it to ons and offs. The human subject wanders in this three dimensional grid, floats, appears and disappears.

In the early eras of the modern, Benjamin had drawn an analogy of the film to account for the changing perceptions, mainly focusing on the descriptions of the crowd, in “The Man of the Crowd” by Edgar Allen Poe:

Whereas Poe’s passers-by cast glances in all directions, which still appeared to be aimless, today’s pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals. ... Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in the film. ... Poe’s text makes us understand the true connection between wildness and discipline. His pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to the machines and could express themselves only automatically. Their behaviour is a reaction to shocks. “If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers” (132-133).

Even more of uneasiness comes from the motion attained in the industrial city due to the automobile, as motion reduces the urban journeys to journeys *through* space instead of journeys *in* space, meanwhile reducing the perception of space as *space*:

People experience speed today in terms people in the past could hardly conceive. The technology of motion has changed modern geography; thanks to the power of human speed, human settlements have extended beyond tight-packed centers out into peripheral space.

Yet speed is a very curious phenomenon. For one thing, anxiety about moving has developed in the same measure as the ability to move fast; people become uneasy if a subway stops for half a minute, and traffic jams bring out the beast in even the most sedate bourgeois. ... The desire for speed has in turn a marked effect on one's sense of space. The moving body does not want to be arrested in space, it seeks pure forward thrust. This dissonance between speed and space again contrasts to earlier eras. For instance, the "Villes Circulatoires" of the eighteenth century sought to organize a city so that people could circulate efficiently through it yet experience its monuments, churches, and parks as pleasurable elements in the process of moving... as a journey in space, the course of the journey as significant as its origin and its destination (Sennett, 1994: 61).

In this consideration motion and speed are blamable, for the urban space becoming a land of complex and perpetual geography of movements abstracted from space, nevertheless no longer as space that is experienced as *space*. The streets of the *flâneur*, becomes streets for the machine, a street is the runway for speed and motion now, emptied of street life and the public carved within.

The speed of daily life, both in the sense of speed attained by the body moving around in its automobile armour, and the speed of the perception process in the urban environment becomes a perplexing aspect of the urban space, a threat for the individual completing his/her identity formation. In this context, the distinctions that define the identity of the individual in space

as the individual are so blurred that the merging of reality and appearance is inevitable as well as a threat to identity formation. The reality of perception is more a reality of rapid snapshots of ‘appearances’ rather than a gaze. And the city becomes an *envelope* of the landscape of human silences – but not the space of social interaction anymore. As Burgin reminds us:

[A]s much as modernity is the locus of transparency in architecture, it is also the at the origin of the social isolation in and between high-rise apartment houses, the death of the street as a site of social interaction, and the practice of “zoning”, which establishes absolute lines of demarcation between work and residential areas, and between cultural and commercial activities. The transparent wall, used by such socialist modernists as Gropius to unite interior with exterior, was destined to become the very index of capitalist corporate exclusivity (37).

Thus arguments of the psychological disorders - considered as the “disease of the 1980s” - are relevant when we consider also the way individuals are deprived of *verbal language* to re-establish the necessary distinctions. As the verbal language is gradually replaced by the *visual*, the threat on identity formation expands.

The *disorder* that Olalquiaga finds appropriate in defining the current condition of the human subject is, as was mentioned before, *psychasthenia*. Psychasthenia helps describe contemporary experience and account for its uneasiness. Urban culture resembles this mimetic condition when it enables a ubiquitous feeling of being in all places while not really being anywhere. This feeling of ubiquitousness is at its extreme in the condition of cyberspace. This feeling is the triggering force that separates the body from the space,

that blurs the boundaries of the body, defines the condition of uneasiness for identity, when it attacks the final bastion of the human identity – the body.

Defined as a disturbance in the relation between self and surrounding territory, psychasthenia is a state in which the space defined by the coordinates of the organism's body is confused with represented space. Incapable of demarcating the limits of its own body, lost in the immense area that circumscribes it, the psychasthenic organism proceeds to abandon its own identity to embrace the space beyond. It does so by camouflaging itself into the milieu. This simulation effects a double usurpation: while the organism successfully reproduces those elements it could not otherwise apprehend, in the process it is swallowed by them, vanishing as a differentiated entity (Olalquiaga 1-2).

Any sense of freedom gained by the absence of clearly marked boundaries, however, is soon lost to the reproduction ad infinitum of space – a hall of mirrors in which passersby are dizzied into total oblivion. Instead of establishing coordinates from a fixed reference point, contemporary architecture fills the referential crash with repetition, substituting for location an obsessive duplication of the same scenario.

Lefebvre reminded us that even an apparently solid house is permeated from every direction". Thus he writes: "...as exact a picture as possible of this space would differ considerably from the one embodied in the representational space which its habitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice." If the built

environment is conceived of in terms of the body, then a different body is at issue here (Burgin 39).

In “Psycho-Analysis of Space”, Schilder writes: “There is at first an undifferentiated relation between an incompletely developed body-image and the outside space. Clearer differentiations take place around the openings of the body. There is a zone of indifference between body and outside world, which makes distortions of body-space, and outside-space by projection and appersonization possible” (295).

Appersonization is the process in which: “We may take parts of the bodies of others and incorporate them in our own body-image” (1950: 172). Concerning a pathological setting, such interchange of body parts is a symptom of “psychoses”. According to Freud, autism and schizophrenia, amongst what he calls the *defense psychoses*, are those which bear most directly on the corporeal relation to external reality. At one extreme of the continuum is autism, which represents a total closing down of that relation. At the other extreme is schizophrenia, which represents a total opening of the relation; to such an extent that the schizophrenic body is scattered in pieces throughout its world (Burgin 41).

As Freud reminds us, “the frontier between the so-called normal states of mind and the pathological ones is to a great extent conventional, and ... is so fluid that each one of us probably crosses it many times in the course of a day.” Today, the autistic response of total withdrawal, and the schizophrenic

anxiety of the body in pieces, belong to our psycho-corporeal forms of identification with the tele-topological puzzle of the city in pieces.

Today we can not disregard the actuality of the fact that a new way of perception is blurring and merging our distinctions of our identities, like *Bladerunner* coming true. In *Bladerunner*, based on Dick's novel, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, the way the space was *evacuated*, indicated another evacuation within the human subject, that deprived the human being of his reactions and feelings while the *replicant, the artificial* appeared with his wish to possess *humanity* as such. "I want more life, *fucker...*" cries Roy, the highly developed Nexus 6 replicant, to Rick Deckard, the protagonist, who has been ordered to hunt down and "retire" these rebellious replicants (Bukatman, 1997: 7). In this expression of machine versus human, important to argument of the city and the human being was the interrelatedness that triggered this evacuation, the way that the human body related to the urban space, the way that the urban space related to the human body, or to put it more bluntly, the way that the human body related to other bodies in the urban space.

Hence in this urban space, with the altering conceptions of space, and architecture, and enclosure, a certain subject is redeemed "a useless body", the all-too-visibility is sweeping away the subject when and where the "truth is out there" (Baudrillard, 1983: 129; Zizek 3-45).

2.3 Public Space

Besides the aftermath of technology on the physicality of the city, another realm that is attributed to the urban geography, the public realm also had its share out of the subtle threat of cyberspace on human identity and space. Extensive historical work in cultural studies has stressed how apparently new forms of identity formation and content are often strongly dependent upon pre-existing social arrangements (Hall 60). Therefore, to be able to comprehend what had altered in the social space of the city with the emergence of new technologies and new cyber-communities, one may have a clearer picture of what “public” came to mean in the eighteenth century city – the time the word “public” had taken on its modern meaning (Sennett, 1977: 17).

In the evolution of the concept of the “public”, there lay the struggle to define and delineate the border between the inside and the outside. Considering the identity of the individual, confusions in the social space arose later in the evolution of the public – in the blurring of the border and the disappearing distinction between the inside and the outside. In the pre-industrial urban setting, strangers talked openly to one another.

What public came to mean was a closure of individuality, when it first meant anything, it was that you could be in places where you are with people who are not your family or your friends, but yet with the industrial revolution there appeared the notion that you had no right to speak to those strangers.

With the onset of the industrial revolution and its cold penetration into the public, nineteenth century city witnessed the withdrawal of the individual into the private realm; social interaction remained scarce while the persons outside the private realm remained *strangers*.

Each person withdrawn into himself, behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees them not; he touches them, but does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society (Tocqueville qtd. in Sennett, 1977: 1).

What lied beneath this closure of the private was the emerging behavior, as the emerging belief, that the psyche had to be isolated from the external effects to fulfill its internal completion. Few people today would claim that psychic life arose from spontaneous generation, independent of social conditions and environmental influences. Nevertheless, the psyche was treated as though it had an inner life of its own. This psychic life was seen as so precious and so delicate that it would wither “if exposed to the harsh realities of the social world and “would flower only to the extent that “it is protected and isolated” (Sennett, 1977: 4). Thus in this primary definition of the private life and of the isolation of the psyche; each person’s self had become his principal burden; to know oneself had become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world.

This conflict of isolation versus interaction, in the sense of its contribution to the development of the self, was also identified by Goethe:

From early on I have suspected that the so important sounding task “know thyself” is a ruse of a cabal of priests. They are trying to seduce man from activity in the outside world, to distract him with impossible demands; they seek to draw him into a false inner contemplation. Man only knows himself insofar as he knows the world – the world which he only comes to know in himself and himself only in it (qtd. in Sennett, 1991: 1).

Thus, before any definition of public was made, this self-absorption of the individual was the main reason of the difficulty of arriving at a principle, of giving any clear account to ourselves or to others of what our personalities were. This “claustrophobic” sense of identity indicated one of the extremes that the human identity had ever undergone in the history of civilization and the city in history, while today, the schizophrenic sense of identity defines yet the other extreme.

The sense of public, in its long evolution, had eradicated the walls that kept the self isolated, before even the distinction, the border between the private and the public was invented, while as it evolved further up to date, has eradicated itself with the meltdown of the boundaries once again to relieve what had kept these two realms apart. As in the sense of identity, so in the pillars of the city, was this evolution important for it underlined a *raison d’être* of the city space as well as of identity.

It was nevertheless in the city space, where the sense of who the public were was delineated and where one was when one was out “in public” was defined; the concept became enlarged in the early eighteenth century in both Paris and London.

Bourgeois people became less concerned to cover up their social origins; there were many more of them; the cities they inhabited were becoming a world in which widely diverse groups in society were coming into contact. By the time the word “public” had taken on its modern meaning, therefore, it meant, not only a region of social life located apart from the realm of family and close friends, but also that this public realm of acquaintances and strangers included a relatively wide diversity of people. “Public” thus came to mean a life passed outside the life of family and close friends; in the public region diverse, complex social groups were to be brought into ineluctable contact. The focus of this public life was the capital city (Sennett, 1977: 17).

Behaving with strangers in an emotionally satisfying way and yet remaining aloof from them was seen by the mid-eighteenth century as the means by which the human animal was transformed into a social being. Together, public and private created what today would be called a “universe” of social relations.

The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by the fundamental change in the ideas of public and private which followed upon the great revolutions at the end of the century and the rise of a national industrial capitalism in more modern times. What

public came to mean, when it first meant anything, was that one could have a life outside the home, one could be in places with people who were not his/her family or friends, yet there remained a distance that defined the border between the public and the private, and that had kept them separate. This defining space in between grew even wider with the industrial revolution and a notion which was unknown until then had appeared: You had no right to speak to those who are strangers.

Industrial capitalism was equally and directly at work on the material life of the public realm itself. For instance, the mass production of clothes, and the use of mass production patterns by individual tailors or seamstresses, meant that many diverse segments of the cosmopolitan public began in gross to take on a similar appearance, that public markings were losing distinctive forms. Yet virtually, no one believed that society was becoming thereby homogenized; the machine meant that social differences – important differences, necessary to know if one were to survive in a rapidly expanding milieu of strangers – were becoming hidden, and the stranger more intractably a mystery. The machine production of a wide variety of goods, sold for the first time in a mass-merchandising setting, the department store, succeeded with the public not through appeals to utility or cheap price, but rather by capitalizing on this mystification. Even as they became more uniform, physical goods were endowed in advertising with human qualities, made to seem tantalizing mysteries which had to be possessed to be understood.

Still in the alternating realm, the bourgeoisie continued to believe that “out in public” people experienced sensations and human relations which one could not experience any other social setting or context. Out in public was where moral violation occurred and was tolerated; in public one could break the laws of respectability. This sense of being “out in public” meant in fact, that one was in a growing milieu of strangers, who remained unknown and to whom one remained unknown. It might be claimed that this notion coincides with our sense of being “out in cyberspace”, where the identity is no longer intertwined with visibility, and that this invisibility allows for the moral violation to occur and to be tolerated – at least to the extent that the newly developing ethics of cyberspace, “netiquette” allows – in cyberspace one could break the laws of respectability. The advanced intrigue of cyberspace that expands the sense of freedom is that there is no geography, no limiting identity involved, since all the people involved are total strangers to one another. This phenomenon as observed by Mark Dery, editor of Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture, is explained as, “authors are sometimes anonymous, often pseudonymous, and almost always strangers.” This incorporeality and invisibility, that transcends the borders of the previous definitions of sociality heralds new possibilities on the cyberspace frontier:

[A] technologically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity [is] disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions. On-line, users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants, at least to the degree that their idiosyncratic language usage does not mark them as white, black, college-educated, a high-school drop-out, and so on (560-1).

Moreover, these new possibilities posed a challenge to the earlier idea of the public as an immoral domain, which meant rather different things to women and men. But once freed from the constraints of a gendered body in cyberspace, what was observed in the industrial capitalist city of early nineteenth century no longer applied. The public domain, for women was where one risked losing virtue, dirtying oneself, being swept into “a disorderly and heady swirl” (Thackeray qtd. in Sennett, 1977: 23). For women, the public and the idea of disgrace were closely allied. The public for a bourgeoisie man had a different moral tone. By going out in public, or “losing yourself in public”, as the phrase occurred in ordinary speech a century ago, a man was able to withdraw from those very repressive and authoritarian features of respectability which were supposed to be incarnate in his person, as father and husband, in the home. Therefore, for men, the immorality of public life was allied to an undercurrent of sensing immorality to be a region of freedom, rather than of simple disgrace, as it was for women (Sennett, 1977: 23).

By the middle of the last century, experience gained in company of strangers came to seem a matter of urgent necessity in the formation of one’s personality. One’s personal strengths might not develop if one did not expose oneself to strangers – one might be too inexperienced, too naïve to survive. In the *ancien* regime, public experience was connected to the formation of personality. Worldly experience as an obligation for self-development appeared in the great monuments of the last century’s culture, as well as in its more everyday codes of belief; the theme speaks in Balzac’s Illusion Perdues, in Tocqueville’s Souvenirs, in the works of the social Darwinists. This

pervasive, painful, unreasonable theme was the conjunction of a surviving belief in the value of public experience with the new secular creed that all experiences may have an equal value because all have an equal, potential importance in forming the self.

Consequently, as the boundary between public and private was no longer at work, and so was the line between private feeling and public display. What is today popularly misnamed “unconscious” behavior was foreshadowed by these ideas of involuntary disclosure of character in public. In a milieu where sensation and feeling, once aroused, are thought to be displayed beyond the power of the will to conceal them, withdrawal from feeling is the only means of keeping some measure of invulnerability. The only sure defense is try to keep oneself from feeling, to have no feelings to show.

In this society on its way to becoming intimate – wherein character was expressed beyond the control of the will, the private was superimposed on the public, the defense against being read by others was to stop feeling – one’s behavior in public was altered in its fundamental terms. Silence in public became the only way one could experience public life, especially street life, without feeling overwhelmed. In the mid-nineteenth century there grew up in Paris and London, and hence in other Western capitals, a pattern of behavior unlike what was known in London or Paris a century before, or is known in most of the non-Western world today: There grew up the notion that strangers had no right to speak to each other, that each man possessed as a public right an invisible shield, a right to be left alone.

And gradually public behavior became a matter of consumption, of passive participation, of a certain kind of voyeurism. The “gastronomy of the eye”, Balzac called it; one is open to everything, one rejects nothing a priori from one’s purview, provided one needn’t become a participant, enmeshed in a scene. This invisible wall of silence as a right meant that knowledge in public was a matter of observation – of scenes, of other men and women. Knowledge was no longer to be produced by social intercourse (Sennett, 1977: 28).

The paradox of visibility and isolation which haunted so much of modern public life originated in the right to silence in public which took form in the last century. Isolation in the midst of visibility to others was a logical consequence of insisting on one’s right to be mute when one ventured into this chaotic yet still magnetic realm.

2.4 Muteness: The Mute *Individual* of the City

In the introversion of man and the closure that allowed the distinct separation from the other, from the stranger of the urban scene was the individual deprived of his main tool of communication – disarmed *off* his speech. Lying at the heart of this notion was the fear of the other, not knowing the other, being in a homogeneous crowd of strangers. Forming the basis of urban paranoia, this sense was highly integrated with the modern ethos of “minding your own business”, and social interaction was less desired than ever (Knox 25). In this “landscape of human silences”, on the stage of

visibility *of* the other, and visibility *to* the other, the eye assumed a new role, that of doing a kind of sociological work which was previously done by the voice (Sennett, 1994: 62).

The modern environment was full of mechanical noise but it lacked the verbal language. This sense of deprivation was expanding the threat on identity, as the voice of disorder was heard louder and louder and meanwhile verbal language was gradually replaced by the visual and thereby blurring the distinctions between the self and the other even further.

It was not only by the public space but also by the changing physicality of the city; the geographic dispersion of the city, the driver's detachment, and the rise of television that accomplished what the nineteenth century police was not able to do. The density of talking bodies has thinned out, and physical contact between them has weakened; watching television was a more passive experience than reading. Talk lacked the space in which it was collective action, despite people still talking to strangers in bars or on airplanes.

According to Sennett's concern, the eye assumed a very harsh responsibility:

As the city has fallen silent, the eye has become the organ through which people now got their direct information about strangers. What social knowledge comes to the eye, looking around in silence? (1994: 63)

The pre-industrial, dense urban center was a place in which strangers talked openly to one another, on the street as in coffee houses, cafés, shops, and government buildings. More than sociable impulses moved strangers to talk to one another; in an age without mass communication, talk was the most important means of gaining information, especially among the large mass of people who could not read. Some critics have argued that the growth of mass literacy commenced the process of eroding discussion among strangers, so that people increasingly read about others rather than talked to them, but this was not the case. The advent of the modern newspaper in the eighteenth century sharpened, if anything, the impulse to talk; displayed on racks in cafes and bars, the newspapers served as points of discussion for the people who read them in public. Throughout the nineteenth century, men felt free to speak to others on the street, intervening when something unruly occurred or striking up casual conversations. Throughout the nineteenth century, however, the authorities feared the political consequences of strangers gathering together to talk, knowing that social revolt could be ignited by the sparks of the discussion. In London, Paris and Berlin, a police system of spies and repressive laws operated throughout much of the nineteenth century, attempting to keep people from talking too much to each other in bars, pubs, and in public squares. Thus regulation proceeded into paranoia.

With the phenomenon of cyberspace, the individual has lost his ability to speak in the cyberspace. The flight from the body has disarmed the man of his *speech* again, reducing speech to *chat* on the Internet, while it reduced the space of interaction to the *chatrooms*. The speech, language, that was

necessary to the man to justify his presence to himself has been evacuated, his representation to himself thus reduced. In Debordian terms, what was *once directly lived* has become *pure representation*.

But then, what if representation is separated from the body? What if representation is *already* separated from the body? Perhaps this is the perplexing point about the identity of the human being in the contemporary society. The image of man is *deterritorialized*. The lost connection between man and his image is *the disease of the 1980s*. According to Olalquiaga, this is the basis of disorder, disorder stems from the (dis)connection between the individual and the environment.

It was also in this context of muteness that the example of psychasthenia, developed with respect to the current architecture, helped define this contemporary experience; the psychasthenic organism begins to abandon its own identity to embrace the space beyond, losing its spatial boundaries, it camouflages itself into the space. From an urban sociological point of view, this may go hand-in-hand with the urban paranoia, in a constant sense of paranoia, the individual disappears into the crowd to be safe from all that causes the uneasiness, nevertheless, the individual does not appear as 'one' of the crowd, instead the crowd becomes *all that causes the uneasiness*.

The urban space then, was a *landscape of human silences*, but not the *space of social interaction* anymore.

2.5 From Paranoia to Schizophrenia

A 1903 essay by Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” drew a complicated portrait of the city as a site of emphatic sensation and kaleidoscopic variety. The “swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli” provoked new mental attitudes in its inhabitants, and this “intensification of emotional life” was neither entirely positive nor unswervingly negative (325). A commitment to commerce reduced human beings to numbers or quantities, the crowd, but the city’s size also offered opportunities for exploration and growth, personal as well as economic. The economic imperatives of the city might “hollow out the core of things” and flatten distinctions between people and objects, but it was an expansive environment: in the city, “the individual’s horizon [was] enlarged” (330; 324). It was easy to get lost in the metropolis; it was also possible to define oneself anew.

The journey of disorders, suggested by the title is one that defines the path through which “the individual” was transformed to “a man of the crowd”, and then into a “terminal of multiple networks” scattered and dispersed through the capillaries of the communication network. Oversimplifying the notion of “disorder”, this analysis of the process is predicated on the way human subject was identified and named, every now and then, by the subsequent effects of eras that brought about substantial change, be that the pre-capitalist, modern or the postmodern. Postmodern, although it does not signify an era, in the same manner that the others do, although it is still a stage in the course of modernity as in Habermas’s

definition of modernity as “an incomplete project”; for the sake of the argument, postmodernism is used, from time to time, for purposes of indicating to today’s world, which is thickly inhabited and influenced by the computer and the communication technologies.

The city, after its invasion by technological developments, became the proud screen for displaying the power of technology, first by the machine, and later even so by the computer. The noise of technology was so loud that the muteness of the human subject was barely heard. First, as the machine entered the urban land, technology drew many people to cities, reducing the human subject to exist under the tag of *labour*. So there was the crowd that veiled the silent scream of the human subject, as it disappeared into the void. As if the turbulence that the sudden apparentness of the machine, as a means of production, was not sufficient; out came the machine, crawling out of the production place, invading the streets, the buildings, and even the open spaces. It walked firmly still, into our private spaces and lives. In our living room was the TV that stared blankly and indifferently at us. We moved swiftly on the streets crowded with cars and more cars, we were strong and rigid in our automobile armors, but weak and fragile, if we ever tried to resurrect the *flâneur* of good old *modern* Paris.

All the same, these storms of change, allowed a cavity for a metaphorical “space of literature”, where the impact of these changes on the identity could be traced, ranging from the early literal definitions of daily life by the *physiologies* of 19th Century Paris, to the later originated idea of the *detective stories* and then on the extension of the journey beyond the modern, *the*

science fiction literature, that narrated “the dissolution of the most fundamental structures of human existence” (Bukatman, 1997: 8). These new genres that evolved in the course of the time with the substantial changes were not only witnesses to the change that took place, but also evidences by themselves if we concern the way that they were generated. Following the traces of the idea of disorder, by the way it was represented on the surface of literature, proved just as good an experience as the review of the public surface, or the built environment.

Concerning the built environment again, if Paris was “the capital of the 19th Century”, capital of the transition to *modern*, then it must be New York that portrays *postmodern* all too apparent today (Benjamin qtd. in Sennett, 1977: 129). In focusing the tensions at that time sweeping through all of western Europe, Paris made their structure and consequences manifest, and thus the city was, like New York of today, a place of both fascination and horror to others. It was as if in Paris Europeans saw a disease creeping into all their lives, and yet could not avert their gaze from the sick patient (Sennett, 1977: 129). The delirium of space is all too evident in New York, the way Olalquiaga portrays it; New York is the continuum in which all boundaries and borders disappeared into one, is the last bastion of human uneasiness in the city.

Exploring the primary departure for the journey of the human body in the changing space, we may go back to the beginning of the 19th century in Paris. In parallel with the significant alteration of the economical life and the public space, the urban social geography was also changing, through the swift

passages in between these phases. The transition to modernity was captured as Baudelaire moved fearfully into the traffic-laden boulevards of Haussman's Paris:

I was crossing the boulevard, in a great hurry, in the midst of a moving chaos, with death galloping me from every side (qtd. in Berman 159).

Baudelaire's words drew attention to a chaotic and anxious perception of the modern city as well as to a crowded space which manifestly displayed an overflow of activity on the outside, nevertheless the evacuation of the sense of public from within. As Sennett witnesses the transition; to an old women of Paris, surviving into the 1880s, the contrasts between the city of her youth and the city of her old age might have appeared to her as the feverish growth of public life in the 19th century, and to tell her that the city was ceasing to be a public culture would have drawn a snort of derision (Sennett, 1977: 125).

In the modern, the impact of the space, as well as that of the mass of strangers on the human subject, was deep but clear. The convergence of the inside and the outside occurred, slowly but surely, blurring the border that kept them distinct, replacing the inside with the outside every now and then. This convergence was also removing gradually the border that kept the public distinct from private, the one that kept the human subject as an "individual" out of the crowd. But the convergence and the replacement was such that in every act of losing the border, it appeared anew, in every step of substitution the distinction was underlined and more apparent than it was before. To trace the steps of this process, one could follow those of the *flâneur*, who

strolled on the wide boulevards and arcades of Paris in the 19th century; “who turn[ed] the boulevard into an *interieur*”, “who [went] botanizing on the asphalt”:

The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*, he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enameled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done (Benjamin 37).

Nevertheless, his convergence of the inside and the outside as such was still an innocent one, and one where the two realms had approached one another, but yet had not merged into one. One could see in the reversal of the inside and the outside, still the opposite duality of the two, perhaps even highlighted. One could see the “porosity” of the *membrane* that kept them from merging (Lacis qtd. in Buck-Morss 26).

The *flâneur* who turned the street into a living room committed an act of transgression, which reversed an established distinction between public and private spaces. In this act of reversal, in the possibility of the penetration through the now porous membrane that allowed the space for one to be the other, Benjamin and Lacis saw the survival of the pre-capitalist social forms which had not yet succumbed to the modern (Burgin 36).

Lefebvre finds both that, around 1910, “a certain space was shattered” and that “it did not disappear”. The phallogentric abstract space of capitalist

modernity survived to inhabit the representational space of aesthetic modernism (Burgin 38). Indeed, it survives into the present day. It is not that one spatial formation was replaced by another. It is rather as if a superior 'layer' of spatial representations itself became permeable, 'porous', and allowed an inferior layer to show through. Lefebvre himself supplies the appropriate analogy. He notes that early in the genesis of a biological organism, "an indentation forms in the cellular mass. A cavity gradually takes place. [...] The cells adjacent to the cavity form a screen or membrane which serves as a boundary [...] A closure thus comes to separate within from without, so establishing the living being as a "distinct body". This 'closure', however, is only ever relative: "The membranes in question remain permeable, punctured by pores and orifices. Traffic back and forth, so far from stopping, tends to increase and become more differentiated, embracing both energy exchange (alimentation, respiration, excretion) and information exchange (the sensory apparatus)". Burgin translates this point that Lefebvre had made as "Closure, then, rather than belonging to the natural order, is a creation of the social order" (38). This was easily observed in the development of the public, as the "individual" of the pré-capitalist era opened up the borders that kept the self apart from the public, and then at the same time closed down the border to keep the public as the other, as the stranger. Thus, Lefebvre writes: "A defining characteristic of (private) property, as of the position in space of a town, nation or nation state, is a closed frontier. This limiting case aside, however, we may say that every spatial envelope implies a barrier between inside and out, but that this barrier is always relative and, in the case of membranes, always permeable" (175-6). Then it was the same case with the individual, who sought to achieve a closure of the

self with advent of the modern, detaching further from his nature, nevertheless remaining fragile with his porous membrane.

Vitalizing this porous membrane and being vitalized through it, the *flâneur* exists, trying to make sense of the new. The *flâneur*, was one of the leading characters of the so-called *physiologies*, which began to appear late in the first half of the 19th century. These were short articles published in the newspapers and journals of the time which sought to describe the various characters found in the crowd. For Benjamin, the emergence of *physiologies* was the solidification of the response to the “quantitative change in human numbers and its qualitative impact on human experience” (Gilloch 140). As Benjamin notes, the first reaction of one who observed the crowd was that of “fear, revoltion and horror” and thus the urban *physiologies* that had appeared were the literary expression of the desire to allay the paranoia engendered by a life among strangers (Benjamin 131). Supposedly humorous skecthes of the crowd, these texts presented rather crude and facile stereotypes for the reassurance of the readers. A physiognomist, was defined in Benjamin’s description of the writer Heinrich Heine von Hoffman, was, one who perceived the extraordinary, in specific people, things, houses, objects, streets: “As you have perhaps heard, one calls people who are able to discern people from people’s faces, from their gait, from their hands or from their head-shape, their character, occupation, or even their fate, ‘physiognomist’.” This definition predicated upon Benjamin’s notion of monadological approach, in his concern of the city as a *monad*, an entity that encapsulates the characteristic features of modern social and economic

structures, and thereby as the site for their most precise and unambiguous interpretation (Gilloch 5-6).

The conceit of physiognomy was very much different than that of the detective story, that evolved in turn; particularly on the point that the physiognomy implied the observation of the normal daily life in the metropolis, and hoped to seek a way to cope with the paranoia that was bound to arise with the crowd; while the alleviation of panic was not the goal of the second genre. Detective stories were the products of a dubious eye, wandering over the crowd, seeking to play upon with and exacerbate the fear. Unlike the “dull” physiologies, the detective story “was to have a great future” as “the literature which concerned itself with the disquieting and threatening aspects of urban life” (Benjamin 40). The rise of the detective story was the fall of a common point made by the physiologies; the way that they had pictured the stranger as eccentric and simple, attractive or severe was a description with an undercurrent that implied the stranger to be “harmless” and “of perfect bonhomie” had to decline (Benjamin 37). With the detective story, the uneasiness of a special sort peculiar to the crowd, was finally voiced and pronounced. This was also the end of a particular bourgeois fantasy of the crowd as safe haven, the comfortable and comforting assumption not that you were just like everyone else, but that everyone else was really just like you (Gilloch 140).

This apparent outcome highlighted the distinction between the self and the other, and yet the self as a closed entity, enclosed in a vulnerable and fragile, bordered yet porous body. The visibility of the body and yet the isolation of

the self was a lucid contradiction that challenged the individual in maintaining individuality, yet defining the self a separate identity. The daily life, previously thought to be indispensable to forming the identity, ended up in the blossom of a “flower of evil”, that never died out until then, that never vanished from the face of the earth of the *self*. The body, and all the same the identity, was now threatened by its visibility, by the realization of the porous membrane that it was contained in. In the terror of the vulnerable, when everyone was somewhat a conspirator, everybody would be in a situation where they have to play detective. This involved yet another emphasis on the visible.

Once again an analogy drawn from the city is appropriate in portraying the condition of the identity; extending the analogy of the biological organism to the social space of the built environment, Lefebvre reminds us that even an apparently solid house is “permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals, and so on”. Thus the identity in the social space and in the closure of its represented space was *open*, through the porosity of its membrane, to any threat that existed on the *outside*. Lefebvre continues “as exact a picture as possible of this space would differ considerably from the one embodied in the representational space which its inhabitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice” (qtd. in Burgin 39).

As Baudrillard beautifully describes; this was “the era of the discovery and exploration of daily life” (Baudrillard, 1983: 126). Indeed it was exploration of

the limit, which was not transcended yet. In other words, it was for most part, the days of a *promenade*, that wandered along the streets and boulevards – not an automobile ride that erased the distinctions of the space into a continuum; the days of the urban “scene” – not the television image that reduced the “surrounding universe to a control screen” (Baudrillard 127). By the same token, the individual maintained existence, though slipping slightly into the realm of immanence.

What was significantly at stake was also the issue of visibility, which brought about the withdrawal of the self into the depth of the inside, into the isolation of its enclosed space, where could never be left alone. This engendered a new sense of vision on the outside, a safe and pleasurable one, as long as it remained on the outside.

The *flâneur* enjoyed a kind of voyeurism, “deriving pleasure from his location within the crowd”, of his passive participation. The “gastronomy of the eye,” Balzac called it; provided one needn’t become a participant, enmeshed in a scene (Sennett, 1977: 27). As was also apparent, this motive of the crowd, in the narrator of Poe’s story “The Man of the Crowd”, who found enormous joy in examining the crowd, watching the crowd go by. Here, in this story it was not the “man of the crowd”, but the narrator was worth noting, who was fascinated by the crowd. Set in London, its narrator is a man who, after a long illness, ventures out again for the first time into the hustle and bustle of the city. In the late afternoon hours of an autumn day he installs himself behind a window in a big London coffee-house. He looks over the

other guests, pores over advertisements in the paper, but his main focus of interest is the throng of people surging past his window in the street:

[The] latter is one of the principal thoroughfares of the city, and had been very much crowded during the whole day. But, as the darkness came on, the throng momentarily increased; and by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door. At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me, therefore, with a delicious novelty of emotion. I gave up, at length, all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without (475).

Nevertheless as Benjamin notes, Poe's observer succumbs to the fascination of the scene, which finally lures him outside into the whirl of the crowd (129). His intensions and his drive in merging into the crowd is still one of vision, one of voyeurism.

The passivity, the withdrawal rendered on the substitution of the operations of the ear by those of the eye, or to put it more bluntly, by the eradication of language. "As the *flâneur* parades down the street, people watch him; they do not feel free any longer to go up and speak to him. The passive spectator, the onlooker silent and amazed..." sums up the condition of the spectator, Sennett in The Fall of the Public Man. People had to adapt themselves to this new and rather strange situation, one that is peculiar to big cities. Simmel has felicitously formulated what was involved here (Benjamin 37).

Someone who sees without hearing is much more uneasy than someone who hears without seeing. In this there is something characteristic of the sociology of the big city. Interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear. The main reason for this is the public means of transportation. Before the development of buses, railroads and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another (486).

This new situation was, as Simmel recognized, not a pleasant one. The uneasiness was not only one of *being seen* by others, but also the obligation of having to *see* the others, while it was no longer possible to be relieved by depicting them as harmless, benign figures. What led to the emergence of the detective story was yet this unceasing “horror” involved in the crowd. As Benjamin indicates, there would have been no tendency to examine such “motifs” of the crowd, if it was not for the uneasiness. Benjamin’s notes the relevancy of a thoughtful observation by Heine:

“Heine’s eyesight,” wrote a correspondent in a letter to Varnhagen in 1838, “caused him acute trouble in the spring. On the last such occasion I was walking down one of the boulevards with him. The magnificence, the life, of this in its way unique thoroughfare roused me to boundless admiration, something that prompted Heine this time to make a significant point in stressing the horror with which this center of the world was tinged (131).

Benjamin’s interpretation of this uneasiness as fear, revulsion, and horror; were the very emotions that the big-city crowd aroused in those who observed it, defined a moment of “shock” – of vision (132). Baudelaire speaks

of a man who plunges into the crowd as if into a “reservoir of electric energy”. He calls this man “a *kaleidoscope* equipped with consciousness”. Perhaps this sense of “shock” aroused by the crowd is the most obvious in the case of the “immigrant” who has just set foot in the metropolis. Sennett summarized the condition of the immigrant:

An urban situation has been taken as one in which strangers are likely to meet routinely. We have been concerned with the social psychology of encounters between strangers; in the 19th Century in western Europe as well as southern and southeastern Europe, a sharp rural dislocation occurred. Partially a matter of famine, partially one of new forms of rural property ownership and the capitalization of farming, this upheaval sent masses of peasants and villagers out of their traditional homes, displacing them either to cities in Europe, to unknown provincial localities, or to the United States, Argentina, and Brazil. These displaced persons were thus also coming to experience encounters with strangers – routinely, as part of the more general trauma of their uprooting (1977: 128-129).

Not only is he alien to the crowd, all the activity going on around the city, but also to the scene, to the urban scene amidst which he stands. His horror is one lived at the climax, it overwhelms him, and he is a fountain that spurts out this horror, out on to the crowd. He is a reflecting mirror of the horror scene, in the days of the modern, nevertheless he becomes much more uneasy in today’s world, where his horror is the only means to his survival in the urban space. His adjustment phase can only follow this first shock. Nonetheless, it is not that it is his only shock, for the “shock” is the quintessential experience of the crowd and the definitive signature of

modernity. And the city is the site of inundation and overwhelming of the individual by sudden, unexpected, diverse sense-impressions (Gilloch 143).

In this sense, the detective story was in some ways a tool, invented to cope with the uneasiness of *visible*, in line with its emphasis on observation of the visible. In its origin, lied the notion that it be investigating the functions that are peculiar to the masses in a big city, where “the masses appear as the asylum that shields an asocial person from his persecutors” as Benjamin derives from the emphasis of a police report as early as the turn of the 19th century. “It is almost impossible,” wrote a Parisian secret agent in 1798, “to maintain good behaviour in a thickly populated area where an individual is, so to speak, unknown to all others and thus does not have to blush in front of anyone” (40). Thereby the origins of the detective story were rooted in the issue of visibility, which became apparent first, of all the menacing aspects of the masses.

Detectives were, what every man and woman had to be when they wanted to make sense of the street. Baudelaire wrote: “An observer is a prince who is everywhere in possession of his incognito” (qtd. in Benjamin 40). Humorously reflecting the case is a piece from one of Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories, “A Case of Identity”. A young woman walks into Holmes’s Baker Street flat; he takes one glance at her.

“Do you not find,” he said, “that with your short sight it is a little tiring to do so much typewriting?”

The girl and, as always, Watson are amazed that Holmes could deduce this. After she has left, Watson remarks:

“You appeared to have read a good deal upon her which was quite invisible to me.”

To which Holmes makes the famous reply:

“Not invisible but unnoticed, Watson. You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important. I can never bring you to realize the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumbnails, or the great issues that may hang from a boot-lace” (96).

The science of reading character from appearances was everywhere tinged with the portrayal of anxiety in the acts of reading, it was made to seem a dangerous necessity. The inhabitant of the modern city, was not only seeking to read a great deal from the appearances, but also inducing himself into his own closure to avoid detection in the street, “to deny to probing eyes a knowledge that should come to none indiscriminately in the city” (Thackeray qtd. in Sennett, 1977: 169). There was a world of shaded lamps, hooded bonnets, rides in closed carriages. Indeed, beyond all the mystification produced by the machine, the very belief that appearance is an index of character would prompt people to make themselves nondescript in order to be as mysterious, as little vulnerable, as possible.

Nevertheless this undercurrent for paranoia was an ebb-and-flow, predicating on the ambiguity of the experience of the crowd. And even in this era where the minimal separation of the inside and the outside was

preserved, identity was still kept distinct, there were marks of the schizophrenic subject everywhere. Headed by the terror of paranoia from within, the subject tended to merge with the crowd, in order to be nondescript, removing the borders of the self though only on the outside. Perhaps it was the *limitedness* of the space as yet, that kept schizophrenia from taking the lead. Engels describes the scene of London, in order to define the locked-up crowd and the identity:

... But the sacrifice which all this has cost became apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realizes for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city... The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? ... And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing stream of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space (qtd. in Benjamin 57-8).

The *flâneur* only seems to break through this “unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest” by filling the hollow space created in him by such

isolation, with the borrowed – and fictitious – isolations of strangers. Next to Engels's clear description, it sounds obscure when Baudelaire writes: "The pleasure of being in a crowd is a mysterious expression of the enjoyment of the multiplication of numbers" (Benjamin 59). The *flâneur* was neither paranoiac nor schizophrenic.

For Baudelaire, and for Benjamin, the crowd is both generative of experience, producing intoxication, yet simultaneously destructive of it, leading to boredom. A shifting, fragile balance. On the one hand, destructive of genuine experience and diversity, the crowd rigorously regiments the individual and denies his or her autonomy. The crowd is the negation of individuality and the self. On the other hand, despite its brutalizing tendencies, the crowd retains a certain allure for the outcast who wishes to remain undetected. In the crowd one is able to lose oneself. The crowd is the finest setting in which to be alone, to find precisely that solitude which Benjamin found most desirable, to experience the "loneliness peculiar to the city" (Buck-Morss 128).

While Saisselin states that "the city expanded the range of the seeable" (21), for Benjamin it is the home of the unseeing stare, for the metropolis that one appear to look without seeing. In the crowded buses and trains of the city the passenger must still find empty spaces into which he or she may safely stare. In the metropolis the avoidance of the gaze and the refusal to return it are paramount (Gilloch 145). In the crowd, one may see many people, but one notices no one, one looks at no one, one recognizes no one. No distinctions are made. For Simmel, this leads to neurasthenia as the

individual cultivates the “strangest eccentricities” in appearance and manner in order to be different, in the hope of attracting attention (336). For Benjamin, the crowd, like fashion, becomes the ceaseless parade of the always-the-same. The crowd is the dullness of the nothing-new, the ultimate locus of boredom. Nonetheless at the same time, the experience of the metropolis is based upon the avoidance of negative encounters as life becomes a purely defensive strategy (Gilloch 144). The urbanite has to manage “the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance and, the unexpectedness of violent stimuli” (Simmel 325). He or she can only react mechanically, automatically. Interaction becomes instant reflex.

In this sense, the *flâneur* can be regarded very symbolic, in displaying the exact ambiguity that awaited the individual, for the *flâneur* enjoys being part of the crowd, nevertheless rejects *disappearing into the crowd*. “The *flâneur* is that character who retains his individuality while all around are losing theirs” (Gilloch 153). The *flâneur* derives pleasure from his location within the crowd, but simultaneously regards the crowd with contempt, as nothing other than a brutal, ignoble mass. The *flâneur* “becomes their accomplice even as he dissociates himself from them. He is precisely the one who heroically resists incorporation into the milieu in which he moves. Indeed, the disappearance of the *flâneur* into the crowd, the instant in which they become “one flesh”, is the moment of extinction of the *flâneur*.”

The era of the *flâneur*, at once so prim and in its habits and so unbuttoned in its momentary enthusiasms and dreams, is difficult today to imagine in all

its complexity and all its grandeur. We see the primness as a slavery from which we have barely recovered a century later, the fantasy as false and perverse, a world of imagined passions and inflated perceptions which were only “compensation” for the rigors of propriety. It is difficult to perceive Balzac’s entrepreneurs, the flâneurs who walk the streets of Paris in Baudelaire’s poems, as both great and fatally diseased. It is difficult to understand how, despite our rebellion against them, their struggle with the eroding line between privacy and publicness was the seed of the present-day struggle with intimacy (Sennett, 1977: 125-6).

Consequently, the identity of the individual was a pendulum that went from paranoia to schizophrenia and back to paranoia again and again. But in today’s world, where the identity has shifted from the securely closed, but porous self of the modern, to the dispersed identity of the postmodern, the journey was indeed one from paranoia to schizophrenia. Whether it is a pathology or a defense remains debateable for the conditions to come with the information technology triggered a need, a yearning to be *schizophrenic*.

With the “ecstasy of communication”, the body, landscape and time all disappear as scenes. The public space, “the theater of the social” is reduced more and more to a large soft body with many heads, where one could no longer detect the borders of the self, even if s/he intended to do so. Loss of the public space indicated simultaneously the loss of the private. “The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret,” says Baudrillard(130). And the instant that the other is *visible* all too apparently before our eyes, is the moment that the pendulum would not swing back to paranoia. That’s the

ecstasy of communication. The one and the other both are effaced in an obscenity, where the most intimate processes of our life becomes the virtual feeding ground of the media. All secrets, spaces and scenes are abolished in a single flow of information. That's obscenity, that abolishes even paranoia, to define a new *schizophrenic*.

There also, one can perhaps make use of the old metaphors of pathology. If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore (132).

3 THERE IS A *THERE* THERE

Identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed. (Hall 62).

3.1 Cyberspace Coming Up

Cyberspace is a new electronic, invisible space that allows the computer or television screen to substitute for urban space and urban experience (Stone, 1991: 105), or *for the body and the bodily experience*. Though the term was overused and maybe from time to time misused; still, the phenomenon of cyberspace creates an aggressive redefinition of the human condition, in that the human subject is digitized and decentered and made *invisible* through the global stretch of cyberspace capillaries (Boyer 14). The invisibility achieved by the newly proliferating electronic technologies of the Information Age forms a threat to the destruction of the concepts of space and time; as these new technologies are circulating outside of the human experiences of space and time, the notions of space and time are apt to change. There is something almost uncanny in any description of “the virtual,” or in any other

enthusiastic testimony that alludes to what the new worlds of virtual reality will one day provide. As mentioned in the previous chapter, although it is still in its infancy, this postmodern technology already offers new modes of perception and opens new spaces for the imaginary.

The inability to define and stabilize the notion of cyberspace and the future that the phenomenon indicates, leads, on one hand, to the common debate of order/disorder, or to the discourse of virtual reality or cyberspace, being a simulation of the already existing real world that we live in – except for the confusing point that this simulation need not be one where physical rules of the real apply. In any case, what is new about cyberspace is not the idea of disorder with the *virtual* – since it is already a debate of the *actual* – but the space that it opens for the imaginary, for the fantasy. Accordingly, this new sense of space, whose boundaries – and limits - remain unexplored at the moment, creates a sense of escape, an escape from the world as we had known it, from our physicality, and visibility, and corporeality that bounded, and from our physical bodies that have been the only limit to our “earthly presences” so far.

This notion of abandoning the physicality is on the other hand, an expansion of our everlasting challenge of nature, similarly the sense of escape that cyberspace brings about connotes once again an escape from nature, from natural – that is if nature still is the nature that we know and not the “technology as our nature” (Stone, 1991).

This irredeemable sense that we desperately seek an escape has long been the issue of science fiction literature; nevertheless, as Mark Dery points out, cyberculture “seems as if it is on the verge of attaining escape velocity”, as he defines “escape velocity” to be “the speed at which a body – a spacecraft, for instance – overcomes the gravitational pull of another body, such as the Earth” (3). Even so, this escape, though it appears as a reminiscent of the extreme escape from the earth, the migration to the off-world colonies that *Bladerunner* assumes – but all the same leaves open to question – is an abandoning of the body limit, is “getting rid of the flesh”, or all the more implicit the disembodiment of the human and the visible of the human instead (Sobchack qtd. in Dery 310).

Cyberspace, as defined by William Gibson, is a “hallucinatory” space, an electronically generated alternate reality, and a physically inhabitable place whose reality is only attained by a “consensus” about “hallucination”. It is entered by means of direct links to the brain; that is, it is inhabited by refigured human “persons” separated from their physical bodies which remain in real space. However strange it may sound, this idea of a *nonplace* beyond the computer screen is significant in our contemporaneity; this nonplace had always been there, apparent with the telephone, with the *telepresence* that voice alludes in communicating via the telephone with another not physically present. In Slouka’s account, in today’s world, we are as comfortable with the superhuman speed – and the level of abstraction it brings with it – as we are with the telephone, which had, in a single stroke, distanced us from a habit as old as our species: talking to one another face-to-face. It was almost impossible, for the initial users of the telephone, our

grandmothers and grandfathers, who found it striking to conceptualize another human being beyond the inanimate receiver; in order to communicate, they had to personify the receiver and speak *to* it, as to some mechanical pet, rather than *through* it to someone else (Slouka 3-4). It is similarly uneasy for us, to imagine a new space that is *invisible* to us but yet still inhabitable by our *bodies*.

What is new about cyberspace is that it involves this sense of space; it connotes a space where *bodies* appear. In Paul Virilio's words, it is a completely new perspective, which does not coincide with the audio-visual perspective, which we already know:

It is a tactile perspective. To see at a distance, to hear at a distance: that was the essence of the audio-visual perspective of old. But to *reach* at a distance, to *feel* at a distance, that amounts to shifting the perspective towards a domain it did not yet encompass: that of contact, of contact-at-a-distance: tele-contact (par. 4).

This spatial gist has evolved within the progress of the notion of virtuality in the older audio-visual perspective, beginning with the telephone and the radio – Franklin D. Roosevelt's "fireside chats" – and gradually penetrating our conscious with the electronic bulletin board systems, and gaining new dimensions with the Habitat developed by Chip Morningstar and Randall Farmer, a project that brought a 2-D visibility to the virtual space of communication (Stone, 1991: 87). Habitat was a large-scale social experiment that was accessible through common telephone-line computer networks. Designed for Lucas Films, Habitat first existed as a 35-

foot mural located in California, but on-line, each area of the mural represented an expandable area in cyberspace. It was inhabitable in that, once on-line, the user had a window into the ongoing social life of cyberspace – the social life, the community *inside* the computer. The virtual person, who is the user's representative, was visualized on the screen as a cartoon figure, which may be customized from a menu of body parts (Stone, 1991: 93-4). This project alluded a new dimension in virtuality, in that it demonstrated the possibility that we might have a visuality even to our virtual *selves*.

As the body you were in was by no means your own body in the Habitat, in the further elaborated cyberspace, the physical rules of normal did not need to apply and thus it did not need to encompass any *real* physicality of the body. Cyberspace in the vivid imagination of Gibson, was entered by means of direct links to the brain – because by then the Chinese had invented *nerve-splicing* (4) – that is, it was inhabited by refigured human “persons” separated from their physical bodies, which were parked in real space. Thus, in cyberspace, no measures to remind our body of its limits was necessary, the physical laws of real space did not *need* to apply; nevertheless some experiential rules carried over from normal space; for example,

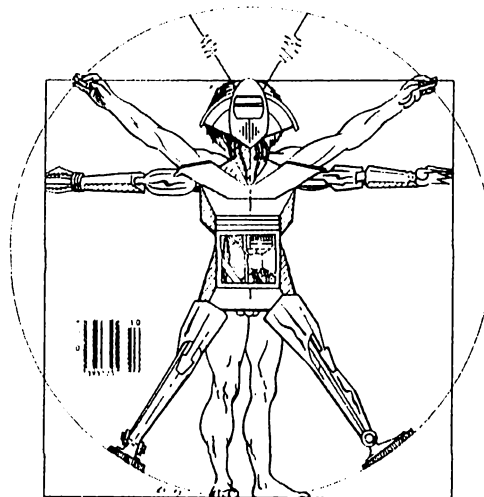


Fig. 9. The Cyborg Man. Darrell Rainey (1988).

the geometry of cyberspace as Gibson defined it was Cartesian, thus a *virtual grid* was behind the order of the virtual. In Neuromancer, the “original” body was the authenticating source for the refigured person in cyberspace; no “persons” existed whose presence was not warranted by the concomitant existence of a physical body back in “normal” space. But death was all the same real, in cyberspace, in the sense that if the “person” in cyberspace died, the body in normal space died also, and vice versa (Stone, 1995: 34).

Although it has still not occurred to be our everyday reality in the way Gibson had described, we are moving towards this virtuality at an increasing speed. More and more we are convinced, like the sagely cyborg in Bruce Sterling’s science fiction novel Schismatrix, that “there is a whole world behind this screen” (179), as we are spending ever greater amounts of our lives in cyberspace, while the notion of community evolves into cybercommunities and being is reduced to the disembodiment of the human. More and more people are communicating with each other behind the screen, even in the case of physical proximity. But in the case of the physically separated, the new space creates the opportunity to be liberated from place as well as from space:

Yet, at the same time, liberated from local ties by the ability to communicate at global distances, the religious, political and economic refugees of the 19th century attained a certain freedom from parental cultures that allowed them to leave, and at the same time, except under conditions of slavery, encouraged a less claustrophobic sense of identity (Cubitt 125).

Nevertheless this *less* claustrophobic sense of identity, is perhaps more dangerous than the claustrophobia aroused by the body limits, in the sense that it erases the borders – of identity – thus causing a loss of orientation as Virilio describes:

Together with the build-up of information superhighways we are facing a new phenomenon: loss of orientation. A fundamental loss of orientation complementing and concluding the societal liberization and the deregulation of financial market whose nefarious effects are well known. A duplication of sensible reality, into reality and virtuality, is in the making. A stereo-reality of sorts threatens. A total loss of the bearings of the individual looms large. To exist, is to exist *in situ*, here and now. This is precisely what is being threatened by cyberspace and instantaneous, globalized information flows (par. 5).

The strength of the newly defined space stems from the simulation of presence; there is a *thereness* achieved in this hallucination, in this redefinition of space when one is lost in the global capillaries of the cyberspace. The evidence suggested by Mark Dery is interesting and relevant in understanding the new feeling of space arising:

Those who spend an inordinate amount of time connected by modem via telephone lines to virtual spaces often report a particular sensation of “thereness”; prowling from one electronic conference to another, eavesdropping on discussions in progress, bears an uncanny resemblance to wandering the hallways of some labyrinthine mansion, poking one’s head into room after room. “One of the most striking features of the WELL,” observed a user named loca, “is that it actually creates a feeling of ‘place’. I’m starting at a computer screen. But the feeling really is that I’m ‘in’ something; I’m some’where” (1993: 565).

This striking definition of experience indicates the rise of cyberspace, in occupying our spaces of the imaginary, while indicating on the other hand, the “high-tech assault on reality”, the decline of reality. The reason why we are more immensely embedded in virtuality every day is our growing detachment from reality, as Slouka puts it; our firm paces on the “road to unreality” (1-4).

On the road to unreality, we have gone a long way ever since Debord’s preoccupations regarding the way life and experience being reduced to spectacle. Today, the evacuation of reality seems much more rapid and pierce. Regarding Sherry Turkle’s account of our relationship with simulations, how we “turn games into reality and reality into games”, the issue of “war” might be considered as a striking exemplary of the current condition. For a generation of teenagers and children who have witnessed the Gulf War, between Iraq and the United States, broadcasted live by CNN, the meaning of war had been altered forever. This mighty war “on-line”, had reduced war into “this rotten simulation”, to any other war epic, where everything was just fiction (Baudrillard, 1995: 59). Therefore, one should consider their indifference in “playing” with war, playing war games, and inscribed by the motto of such games: “The more deaths the better”.

James, fourteen years old, has been demonstrating his prowess at Platoon, a Nintendo video game. He tells me that the game pretty much boils down to “the more deaths the better.” I ask James how he feels about this. What he thinks about Platoon’s definition of success. James responds by clarifying how he sees the relationship between real and simulated war. “If you are a soldier on the ground, war is

about killing faster than the other guy. So the game is realistic. It's too bad that people die, but the idea in war is that they die and you don't." James adds: "I sort of like it that it [Platoon] rubs your nose in what war is about. If people think war is more glamorous than that, I think that's what's bad."

In Turkle's view, James's comment clarifies the point that the assumptions of such games are likely to reflect our real world assumptions as well. James's conviction that *Platoon* does well to confront us with reality brings us back further discussion and criticism of our reality. We go back to the question of "what is Real?"

The question may take many forms. What are we willing to count as real? What do our models allow us to see as real? To what degree are we willing to take simulations for reality? How do we keep a sense that there is a reality distinct from simulation? Would that sense be itself an illusion? (Turkle, 1997: 72-3).

By such means discussed above, virtual worlds represent labyrinths that confront our bodies and our experiences of space with paradoxes of a new order. In the past, labyrinths were always spatial in conception, as they were metaphors of disorientation; while in "the virtual" they become meta-labyrinths of strange knots and irrational dizziness. Full immersion in "the virtual" means that everything in it relates to the synthetic reality of cyberspace, and not to exterior physical space (Boyer 50).

Going back to the issue of escape that cyberspace connotes, and which appears to make cyberspace so *new*, there is the possibility that it was our

escape, if not from the *space*, or from our *bodies*, or from our *realities*, but only from the “all-too-visible” that the city has exposed, in its being a mere screen with all the capitalist overflow. Maybe we were just looking for a new place to reinvent our fantasies, for the “obscene” did not allow for any imaginary space to exist. Maybe we desperately sought the *invisibility* that it offered, in which to be ourselves again, to hear our muteness, to remember what humanity was like.

“We tell ourselves stories in order to live,” is the opening line of Joan Didion’s White Album, indeed we do, or at least we have to do, for only stories would allow for the space of the imaginary in this technological world (qtd. in Dery, 1996: 15). Isn’t there also the possibility that “cyberspace” is yet another story that we are telling ourselves? Indeed it is. For in its reduction of the space to little uncanny sentences of definition, of description is where we believe to be in a new space, a new space which we believe that we are delineating, where we believe we are defining the rules, and we are indeed obeying the rules we have created anew, we are defining ourselves a new *order* in which we can develop new *disorders* to be able to cope with the uncanny of the life itself.

In fact, cyberspace had existed long before Gibson had coined the term and gave it a substantial existence. We were in cyberspace when we talked on the phone with *someone* and maybe we were in cyberspace when we believed that the television had the “whole world in it”. We were in cyberspace when we forgot that the computer was only a tool in our hands, in our control, and

believed that it was a “second self” to us. Were we *deceived* or are we just about to be?

3.2 Can Cyberspace Be a Public Space?

The new *space* of interaction, folds and unfolds to make apparent a virtuality that people are very much embedded in, and unfolds again to display the illusion and fascination of it. In very crude terms, what is going on in cyberspace sociality is that:

The electronically disembodied are zapping E-mail around the world, typing messages back and forth in real-time “chat,” and flocking to BBS discussion topics and UseNet newsgroups. They’re lurking and flaming and ROTFLOL (Rolling on the Floor Laughing Out Loud). They’re swapping pornographic .GIFs (digitized photos) and swinging in anonymous “text sex” trysts. They’re mousing around the Net’s latest addition, the World Wide Web, a hypertext-based system that enables users around the globe to point and click from one multimedia site to another, bouncing from digitized video clips to snippets of sound to screenfuls of text without end (Dery, 1996: 6).

As observed by Mark Dery, and by many other authors, overwhelmingly growing numbers of people are convinced that “there is a *there* there” and that there is an irredeemable social life going on in the cyberspace (Barlow 164-169). In Neuromancer, William Gibson had borrowed the phrase “There’s no *there* there”, that was coined by Gertrude Stein, who was speaking of Oakland. But the phrase, has turned out to be reversed today, if we are to concern the fact that the number of people that are convinced about

a presence in cyberspace, and about a presence of cyberspace, is growing very rapidly. Strong evidence suggests that many people enjoy and are satisfied with this new definition of sociality, where they fulfill their needs for sociality and where some of the participants could even go as far as achieving tactility and thereby some physical ones as well. Though mainly developed for transmission of information, and for military purposes, the fact that these new technological conduits had the potential to create new kinds of communities was noted and encouraged by the very top leaders of the research projects that created it.

Before ARPANET went online in 1969, the people who had sponsored its initial development, J. C. R. Licklider and Robert Taylor, wrote an article with E. Herbert, "The Computer as a Communication Device," in which they set forth their vision for the future of computer-linked communities:

Although more interactive multiaccess computer systems are being delivered now, and although more groups plan to be using these systems within the next year, there are at present perhaps only as few as half a dozen interactive multiaccess computer *communities* (in italics) [...] For the society, the impact will be good or bad, depending mainly on the question: Will "to be on-line" be a privilege or a right? If only a favored segment of the population gets a chance to enjoy the advantage of discontinuity in the spectrum of intellectual opportunity. [...] On the other hand, if the network idea should prove to do for education what a few have envisioned in hope, if not in concrete detailed plan, and if all minds should prove to be responsive, surely the boon to human kind would be beyond measure (Rheingold 76).

Their hopeful envision of the future proved to be true – both in the way that they foresaw and even in ways they wouldn't have expected – even before the actualization of the on-line communication project, with the cyberpunk genre that had developed into a subculture with the early comments on what the cyber-future would bring.

The term “cyberpunk” had first appeared as an ear-catching coinage borrowed from Bruce Bethke's story of the same name, dated 1983, and was attributed to the “bizarre, hard-edged, high-tech” science fiction literature emerging in the eighties by the critic and editor Gardner Dozois in a 1984 *Washington Post* article (Dery, 1996: 75).

Soon the term tore loose from its initial purpose and floated into the mainstream. Katie Haffner and John Markoff used the term to describe “young people for whom computers and computer networks are an obsession, and who have carried their obsession beyond what computer professionals consider ethical and lawmakers consider acceptable” (9).

As the term evolved, so did a new subculture, outlined by a society of journalists, science-fiction manifesto-makers, postmodern theorists, net surfers, and fans who stretched the term into strange new shapes. All the same, it was used as a label for electro-industrial rock with a grungy, sci-fi edge and it serves as a prism to refract some of cyberculture's recurrent themes: the convergence of human and machine; the supersession of sensory experience by digital simulation; the subcultural “misuse” of high technology in the service of perverse sensibilities or subversive ideologies; and a

profound ambivalence, handed down from the sixties, toward computers as engines of liberation and tools of social control, reweavers of the social fabric shredded by industrial modernism and instruments of an even greater atomization (Dery, 1996: 75).

To Lewis Shiner, what had once started out as a fashionable subset of science fiction, showing high technology subverted by opportunists on the margins of the society, for profit or just for fun” had become a cliché by 1987, losing its meaning for its founders and “escaping, virus-like, into the mainstream, where it continues to thrive” (A17).

Nevertheless, the edges of the cyberpunk genre extended out to cover all the contemporary culture; it was also appropriated to refer to music by Paul Moore, a software engineer who edits desktop-published “cyberpunk /electronic /techno /noise fanzine” called Technology Works, “cyberpunk” best describes the folk music of cyberculture. “I appropriated the term from science fiction and applied it to this music because, although nobody seemed to be talking about these bands in terms of a movement, there seemed to be a link between cyberpunk’s hard-edged writing style and the edgy music made by bands like Clock DVA, Front 242, and Skinny Puppy,” he says. “In a musical sense, [cyberpunk] means using electronics to express yourself. You don’t have to be a traditional musician to program machines and get some music out of them. Cyberpunk music is about using high technology to express a ‘street’ sensibility” (Dery, 1996: 80).

This gathering around the cyberpunk genre and the possession of the term by many as a subculture, gave early signs of the newly emerging *cybercommunities* that appeared with the network of relationships that were lived on-line, in a parallel computer era.

The idea of a cybercommunity is mainly predicated on the sense of cyberspace as an actual place. This perception of the *conferncees*, as Stone calls them, or the MUDders, is based on an idea of virtual thereness indeed. Members of electronic virtual communities act as if the community met in a physical public space. The number of times that on-line conferncees refer to the conference as an architectural place and to the mode of interaction in that place as being social is, overwhelmingly high in proportion to those who do not. They say things like, "This is a nice place to get together" or "This is a convenient place to meet" (1991: 104).

Besides their being perceived as such, there is also the point that the virtual space is most frequently visualized as Cartesian. On-line conferncees tend to visualize the conference system as a three-dimensional space that can be mapped in terms of Cartesian coordinates. And yet, conferncees act as if the virtual space was inhabited by bodies. Conferncees construct bodies on-line by describing them, either spontaneously or in response to questions, and articulate their discourses around this assumption. This demonstrates not only their ability to perceive of selves in delegated agencies, and also that they seem to have no difficulty addressing, befriending, and developing fairly complex relationships with the delegated agents of other conferncees.

Electronic virtual communities represent flexible, lively, and practical adaptations to the real circumstances that confront persons seeking community. They are part of a range of innovative solutions to the drive for sociality – a drive that can be frequently thwarted by the geographical and cultural realities of cities increasingly structured according to the needs of powerful economic interests rather than in ways that encourage and facilitate habitation and social interaction in the urban context. In this context, electronic virtual communities are complex and ingenious strategies for survival.

Nonetheless, what constitutes the similarity between the effects of the city and the cyberspace, on the identity of the individual, in the form of a threat is highlighted by Stone:

The distinction between inside and outside has been erased and along with it the possibility of privacy (105).

According to Stone, the origin of cyberspace goes far back to 1669, to Robert Boyle's academic paper that allowed for *virtual witnessing* (86). He created what he called a "community of likeminded gentleman" to validate his scientific experiments, and he correctly surmised that the "gentlemen" for whom he was writing believed that boring, detailed writing implied painstaking experimental work. Consequently it came to pass that boring writing was likely to indicate scientific truth. By means of such writing, a group of people was able to "witness" an experiment without being physically present. Thus in the very early idea of a virtual community, texts became ways of creating new kinds of communities.

Later evolution of virtual communities owed a great deal to the invention of telegraph and the radio that gathered musical communities around the phonograph, removing the community from the physical public space of the concert hall, and shifting to a new kind of virtual communal space. Perhaps even more apparent than the music communities, in this era, was the community that *joined* and enjoyed Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "fireside chats". Instead of talking to a few hundred representatives, Roosevelt used the radio as a tool for fitting listeners into his living room. The radio was one-way communication, but because of it people were able to experience presence in a different way. This view implies a new, different, and complex way of experiencing the relationship between the physical human body and the "I" that inhabits it. Roosevelt did not physically enter listeners' living rooms. He invited instead the listeners into his. In a sense, the listener was in two places at once – the body at home, but the delegate, the "I" that belonged to the body, in an imaginary space with another person (Stone, 1991: 87).

With the computer, or with the era of information technology, the first virtual communities based on information technology were the first computer, terminal-based bulletin board systems (BBSs). The on-line BBSs were named after their perceived function – virtual places, conceived to be just like physical bulletin boards, where people could post notes for general reading.

Within a few months of the first BBS's appearance, a San Francisco group headed by John James, a programmer and a visionary thinker, had developed the idea that the BBS was a virtual community, a community that promised

radical transformation of existing society and the emergence of new social forms. “The CommuniTree Group”, as they called themselves, envisioned the BBS to be an extension of the participant’s instrumentality into a virtual social space. They proposed a new kind of BBS, which they called a tree-structured conference, employing as a working metaphor both the binary tree protocols in computer science and also the organic qualities of trees as such appropriate to the 1970s. Each branch of the tree was to be a separate conference that grew naturally out of its root message by virtue of each subsequent message that was attached to it.

The conferences saw themselves not primarily as readers of bulletin boards or participants in a novel discourse but as agents of a new kind of social experiment. When asked how sitting alone at a terminal was a social act, they explained that they saw the terminal as a window into a social space. When describing the act of communication, many moved their hands expressively as though typing, emphasizing the gestural quality and essential tactility of the virtual mode. Also present in their descriptions was a propensity to reduce other expressive modalities to the tactile. It seemed clear that, from the beginning, the electronic virtual mode possessed the power to overcome its character of single-mode transmission and limited bandwidth.

Habitat, designed by Chip Morningstar and Randall Farmer, was a large-scale social experiment that was accessible through such common telephone-line computer networks as Tymnet. Habitat existed first as a 35-foot mural located in a building in Sausalito, California, but, on-line, each area of the

mural represents an entirely expandable area in cyberspace, be it a forest, a plain, or a city. Habitat is inhabitable in that, when the user signs on, he or she has a window into the ongoing social life of the cyberspace – the community “inside” the computer. The social space is represented by a cartoonlike frame. The virtual person who is the user’s delegated agency is represented by a cartoon figure that may be customized from a menu of body parts. When the user wishes his/her character to speak, s/he types out the words on the Commodore’s keyboard, and these appear in a speech balloon over the head of the user’s character. The speech balloon is visible to any other user nearby in the virtual space. The user sees whatever other people are in the immediate vicinity in the form of other figures.



Fig. 10. The Chatroom Bar Scene, by The Motion Factory (1996).

Habitat is a two-dimensional example of what William Gibson called a “consensual hallucination”. First according to Morningstar and Farmer, it has well-known protocols for encoding and exchanging information. By generally accepted usage among cyberspace engineers, this means it is consensual. This simulation software uses agents that can transform information to simulate environment. This means it is a hallucination.

Thus in the era of the Habitat, the participants of electronic communities seem to be acquiring skills that are useful for the virtual social environments developing in the late twentieth century technologized nations. Their participants have learned to delegate their agency to body-representatives that exist in an imaginary space contiguously with representatives of other individuals.

The single most significant event for the development of the next stage in virtual communities was the publication of William Gibson’s science fiction novel Neuromancer. Neuromancer represents the dividing line between the previous ideas of virtual community and the new, not because it signaled any technological development, but because it crystallized a new community.

Neuromancer reached the hackers who had been radicalized by George Lucas’s powerful cinematic evocation of humanity and technology infinitely extended, and it reached the technologically literate and socially disaffected who were searching for social forms that could transform the fragmented anomie that characterized life in Silicon Valley, and all the electronic industrial ghettos. In a single stroke, Gibson’s powerful vision provided for

them the imaginary public sphere and refigured discursive community that established the grounding for the possibility of a new kind of social interaction.

The three-dimensional inhabitable cyberspace described in *Neuromancer* does not yet exist, but the groundwork for it can be found in a series of experiments in both the military and private sectors. During the period, when *Neuromancer* was published, “virtual reality” acquired a new name and a suddenly prominent identity as “cyberspace”. The critical importance of Gibson’s book was the way that it triggered a conceptual revolution among the scattered workers who had been doing virtual reality research for years: As task groups coalesced and dissolved, as the fortunes of companies and projects and laboratories rose and fell, the existence of Gibson’s novel and the technological and social imaginary that it articulated enabled the researchers in virtual reality – or under the new dispensation, cyberspace – to recognize and organize themselves as a community.

Parallel to these electronic communities were the MUDs, MUSEs (Multiple-User Simulation Environments), MUSHes (Multiple-User Social Hosts) and MOOs (MUD Object-Oriented). All were generalized under the name of MUDs, Multi-User Domains, or with greater historical accuracy, Multi-User Dungeons, because of their genealogy from *Dungeons and Dragons*, the fantasy role-playing game that had swept high schools and colleges in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Turkle, 1998: 7). The first MUDs, developed in the late 1970s, were multiplayer fantasy games of the dungeons-and-dragons variety. In 1989, a graduate student at Carnegie Mellon

University named James Aspnes decided to see what would happen if you took away the monsters and the magic of the swords out of the game and instead let people extend the virtual world. Thus people's main activity, that was trying to conquer the virtual world in *Dungeons and Dragons*, went from trying to conquer to trying to build it collaboratively (Bruckman 173).

Your character, Buffy Mojo, is crawling through a maze of tunnels in the dungeon of her archenemy's castle. The walls are dank, the lighting is dim, and the silence is ominous. A spell has turned Buffy's only ally into a toad. Your hands feel clammy on the keyboard; your heartbeat seems too loud. If Buffy runs into the wrong character down here, your persona will die, and hundreds of hours of work you put into constructing her will have been wasted. More than just your imaginary character is at stake. Buffy's fate will influence virtual lives of other characters that represent real friends in the material world. You are in a MUD, along with the tens of thousands of others around the world who build fantasy worlds in the Net (145).

The description above, by Rheingold, is a typical example of what a MUD might look like and what the experience of it might be like. "Welcome to the wild side of cyberspace culture, where magic is real and identity is fluid," Rheingold greets us. More and more people are involved every day with this experience of a play of identities and magic of life, while many others wonder what is so appealing to this experience. "What is the matter with these people?" is a question that many people ask when they first learn about MUDDing. "Don't they have lives?" (146). This is the most serious question arising from the brief history of the medium so far – is this a dangerous form of addiction? The strongest case for the possibility that computer mediated communication might present grave social dangers as well as opportunities

stems from the documented instances of MUDDers who spend most of their waking lives in their alternate worlds.

What are the unique features of this medium that appeal to people psychologically, and what does that say about people's psychological needs? The answer might be lying in the changing notions of identity that we have traced beginning from the built environment and ranging into the social, that were precipitated with the changing technologies. Some people are primed for the kind of communication saturation that MUDs offer because of the communication-saturated environments that have occupied their attention since birth. MUDs are part of the latest phase in a long sequence of mental changes brought about by the invention and widespread use of symbolic tools.

Similar to the way previous media dissolved social boundaries related to time and space, the latest in the computer-mediated communications media seems to dissolve boundaries of identity as well. One of the outstanding characteristics of MUDs, is *pretending to be somebody else*, or even, *pretending to be several different people* at the same time.

Some people seem to use these depersonalized modes of communication to get very personal with each other. For these people, at the right times, computer-mediated communication is a way to connect with another human being. But the authenticity of human relationships is always in question in cyberspace, because of the masking and *distancing* of the medium, in a way that it is not in question in real life. The grammar of MUD life involves a

syntax of identity play: new identities, false identities, multiple identities, exploratory identities, are what are available in different manifestations of the medium.

Identity is the first thing you create in a MUD. You have to decide the name of your alternate identity – what MUDDers call your character. And you have to describe who this character is, for the benefit of the other people who inhabit the same MUD. By creating your identity, you help create a world. Your character's role and the roles of the others who play with you are part of the architecture of belief that upholds for everybody in the MUD the illusion of being a wizard in a castle or a navigator aboard a starship: the roles give people new stages on which to exercise new identities, and their new identities affirm the reality of the scenario.

Unlike computer conferencing systems or bulletin boards, people's social interactions are in different varieties of real-time chat mode, not the kind of bulletin-board style communication you can find on BBSs or alike. MUDs are very much about who is in the place at the same time and how they interact. In MUDs, unlike computer conferencing systems or ordinary chat services, participants also create objects with powers, such as magic carpets that transport their owners to secret parts of the kingdom (Rheingold 149). Other participants can buy or steal these carpets; people can gain power to make even more useful carpets, but only after amassing sufficient knowledge of the MUD's lore as well as formal mastery of the MUDs' world-building languages and meeting certain challenges. Gaining the power to modify the

environment in which the game takes place is a primary goal for newcomers in both the “adventure” and “social” MUDs.

Another difference between the MUDs and the BBSs or other chat programs is that, when you log off from the WELL, all you leave is the words you have posted. When you log off a MUD, many of the dwellings you have built, the cities that you have constructed, the tools and the toys, and the weapons that you have created, can be explored or used by other people.

In a MUD, you are communicating with other people elsewhere on the net, via your characters, but you are also playing a role and learning your way around a world where knowledge of how that world works can translate into power over the other inhabitants. For example, you can gain the power of invisibility, which gives you the ability to spy on other conversations. One notorious trick in less reputable corners of the MUD universe is to talk somebody into going to a dark corner of a MUD for some tinysex – dirty talking via computer screen. Net.sleazing, as the practice of aggressively soliciting mutual narrative simulation is also known, which is an unsavory but perennially popular behavior in MUDland. Tinysex, net.sleazing and gender deception are aspects of MUDs and computer-mediated communication worth examining, but it’s a mistake to stereotype the very broad range of MUD behavior with images of its most sophomoric elements.

The single largest category of MUDders are college students, aged between seventeen to twenty-three, and the particular uses they find for this technology, identity play and sexual innuendo, reflect the preoccupations of

that population. But not all undergraduate MUDDers are immature, nor are all MUDDers undergraduates. For many, a MUD is a place where they feel more comfortable in some ways than they do in the real world.

Turkle wrote about the behavior of young, compulsive computer programmers that seems to offer a key to understanding MUDDing's addictive potential. Turkle focused on the notion of *mastery* as a crucial missing element in the lives of these young people:

The issue of mastery has an important role in the development of each individual. For the developing child, there is a point, usually at the start of the school years, when mastery takes on a privileged, central role. It becomes the key to autonomy, to the growth of confidence in one's ability to move beyond the world of parents to the world of peers. Later, when adolescence begins, with new sexual pressures and new social demands from peers and parents, mastery can provide respite. The safe microworlds the child master built – the microworlds of sports, chess, cars, literature, or mathematical expertise – can become places of escape. ... But for some the issues that arise during adolescence are so threatening that the safe place is never abandoned. Sexuality is too threatening to be embraced. Intimacy with other people is unpredictable to the point of being intolerable. As we grow up, we forge our identities by building on the last place in psychological development where we felt safe. As a result, many people come to define themselves in terms of competence, in terms of what they can control.

Pride in one's ability to master a medium is a positive thing. But if the sense of self becomes defined in terms of those things over which one can exert perfect control, the world of safe things becomes severely limited – because those things tend to be things, not people. Mastery

can cease to be a growing force in individual development and take on another face. It becomes a way of masking fears about the self and the complexities of the world beyond. People can become trapped (qtd. in Rheingold 153).

The ability to create places and puzzles for others to explore, is a form of mastery, a way for people who might lack social status in their real-world community to gain status in their alternate community. For people whose lives are controlled by parents, or professors or bosses, there is a certain attraction to a world where mastery and the admiration of peers is available to anyone with imagination and intellectual curiosity.

In MUDworlds, description is the same as creation. MUDs are evidence that text still has its powers, even in this highly visual era. When you weave text into the kind of interactive landscape that computer models provide, you can build a kind of magic into the environment. Hence, the roots of MUDs are deep in the part of human nature that delights in storytelling and playing “let’s pretend”. Brenda Laurel, in Computers As Theatre, claims that the strong identification players feel with artificial characters in a computer database is an example of the same human capacity for mimesis to which Aristotle attributed the “soul-changing” power of drama (112).

Narrative is the stuff of which MUDworlds are made. Everyone and everything and every place has a story. Every object in a MUD, from your character’s identity to the chair your character is sitting in, has a written description that is revealed when you choose to *look* at the object – where *look* is a command, that brings out the textual descriptions of all the objects

and identities in the MUDworld. The story is known in MUDspeak as “the description”. If you have the authorization to do so, you could create a small brown mouse or a purple mountain range or whatever else words can describe. Although the MUDworlds are fantasies, with no more tangible reality than the settings and characters in a novel or a soap opera, the inhabitants of these MUDlands are deeply immersed into a *reality* of this virtuality.

People who join virtual communities today are rarely given any set of formal rules for the finer points of on-line relationships, like the possibility of identity deception. Although the technology of computer-mediated communications provides the instrument of deception, the special importance we place on gender roles and prevalence of swindlers in a population are both rooted in social questions that extend far beyond the technology that brings them into focus. The opportunity for deception, however, is designed into the medium all the same. And the peril on the edge of the cyberspace blinks at us through the significant embeddedness of this feature.

On the track of a non-linear relationship between the identity that was embedded in corporeality once – now an illusion – and the current switches between different on-line personae and alternate identities in MUDs and the alike, the human celebrates joyfully the ultimate penetration of the outside from without, and the extreme porosity of the inside.

It is not as simple as it may seem in the first instant. This is the ultimate merge of the real and the virtual that merge completely until they dissolve again in the fantasyland. This is the merge of the inside with the other, the other with the self such that even they are no longer separable.

When Turkle says, “We are able to step through the looking glass,” this is her concern (1998: 5). We step into the land of pure fantasy, but no longer by ourselves. We are there with the other, the other of ourselves. We are there to give birth to the other, to create our other and live with it. “We are learning to live in virtual worlds”.

Among the all too many “boundary stories” of creating the other in cyberspace, perhaps the one which most strikingly affronts us with what is going on, is the case of Julie accounted by Stone; which Stone claims is a “wonderful example of the war of desire and technology” (1995: 75).

Julie Graham started on a women’s discussion group on CompuServe, in New York in 1982. She had described herself as a New York neuropsychologist, who was a totally disabled older woman, but she could push the keys of a computer with her headstick. The personality she projected into the “net” – the vast electronic web that links computers all over the world – was huge. Julie’s disability was invisible and irrelevant. Her standard greeting was a big, expansive “HI!!!!” Her heart was as big as her greeting, and in the computer intimate electronic companionships that can develop during on-line conferencing between people who may never physically meet, Julie’s women friends shared their deepest troubles, and she offered them

advice – advice that changed their lives. Trapped inside her ruined body, Julie herself was sharp and perceptive, thoughtful and caring.

She had made an enormous number of friends on the Net, with whom she had deep friendships, but who never saw her in real life, since she had told them that in addition to her disability, her face had been severely disfigured to the extent that plastic surgery was unable to restore her appearance and consequently she never saw anyone in person. The others on the chat system had occasional parties, at which those who lived in reasonable geographical proximity would gather to exchange a few socialities in biological mode, but Julie assiduously avoided these, instead she ramped up her social profile on the net even further. She also took it upon herself to ferret pretenders in the chat system, in particular men who masqueraded as women. She was not shy about warning women about the dangers of letting one's guard down on the net. "Remember to be careful," she would say, "things may not be as they seem" (Stone, 1995: 72). Moreover, she was a bisexual, from time to time coming on to the men and women with whom she talked. In fact, as time went on, she became flamboyantly sexual. Eventually she was encouraging many of her friends to engage in cybersex with her.

After several years, something happened that shook the conference to the core. *Julie* did not exist. *She* was, it turned out, a middle-aged male psychiatrist called Sanford Lewin. Logging onto the conference for the first time, he had accidentally begun a discussion with a woman who mistook him for another woman. "I was stunned," he said later, "at the conversational mode. I hadn't known that women talked among themselves that way. There

was so much more vulnerability, so much more depth and complexity. Men's conversations on the nets were much more guarded and superficial, even among intimates. It was fascinating and I wanted more. And then I thought to myself, here's a terrific opportunity to help people, by catching them when their normal defenses are down and they are more able to hear what they need to hear" (Stone, 1995: 70). He had spent weeks developing the right persona. A totally disabled, single older woman was perfect. He felt that such a person wouldn't be expected to have a social life. Consequently her existence only as a net persona would seem natural. It worked for years, until one of Julie's devoted admirers, bent on finally meeting her in person, tracked her down.

The news reverberated through the net. Reactions varied from humorous resignation to blind rage. Most deeply affected were the women who had shared their innermost feelings with Julie. "I felt raped," said one of Julie's friends, "I felt that my deepest secrets had been violated." Several went so far as to repudiate the genuine gains they had made in their personal and emotional lives. They felt those gains were predicated on deceit and trickery.

There was yet another side to the Julie story. Sanford Lewin, when he began to realize that things were getting a little out of hand, and when he got a little nervous about the turns Julie's life was taking and her tremendous personal growth. Apparently he had never expected the impersonation to succeed so dramatically. He thought he would make a few contacts on-line, and maybe offer some helpful advice to some women. What had happened instead was that he had found himself deeply engaged in developing a whole

new part of himself that he had never known existed. His responses had long since ceased to be a masquerade; with the help of the on-line mode and a certain amount of textual prosthetics, he was in the process of *becoming* Julie. Not that he was losing his identity, but he was certainly developing a parallel one, one of considerable puissance. Lewin began to realize the enormity of his deception. This was what Stone evaluated as, “Sometimes a person’s on-line persona becomes so finely developed that it begins to take over their life *off* the net” (1991: 84).

If the information age is an extension of the industrial age, with the passage of time the split between the body and the subject is growing more pronounced still. But in the epoch of Neuromancer, the split is simultaneously growing and disappearing. The socioepistemic mechanism by which bodies mean is undergoing a deep restructuring in the latter part of the twentieth century, finally fulfilling the furthest extent of the isolation of those bodies through which its domination is authorized and secured. The boundaries between the subject, if not the body, and the “rest of the world” are undergoing a radical refiguration, brought about in part through the mediation of technology.

But this occurs under a new definition of public and private: one in which warrantability is irrelevant, spectacle is plastic and negotiated, and desire no longer grounds itself in physicality. Under these conditions, one might ask, will the future inhabitants of cyberspace catch the engineers’ societal imperative to construct desire in gendered, binary terms – coded into the virtual body descriptors – or will they find more appealing the possibilities of

difference unconstrained by relationships of dominance and submission? Partly this will depend upon how “cyberspaceians” engage with the virtual body (Stone, 1991: 106).

“Space may be the final frontier, but it’s all made in a Hollywood basement” goes the lyrics of a popular song by Red Hot Chilli Peppers, named *Californication*. The way that it is reduced to imagery, the way that it is being imposed on us is clear even in the lyrics of a song. Then in this reduction of space, cyberspace has its share again, being a catalyzing agent in formulating a new sense of space, even if space is not at all made, “in a Hollywood basement”, it is still more or less as a scenery of a movie shot.

Going back to Gibson’s Neuromancer once again, the way three-dimensional space is configured in the novel had lead the way to imagine the new life that the future might bring. As previously observed, virtual worlds are not burdened by the structural dictates of the real world. Virtual worlds are not subject to the principles of ordinary space and time (Holtzman 47). The space for fantasy is the fundamental of cyberspace, or in other words cyberspace is pure fantasy. As Michael Benedikt explains:

In patently unreal and artificial realities ... the principles of ordinary space and time can ... be violated with impunity. After all, the ancient worlds of magic, myth and legend to which cyberspace is heir, as well as the modern worlds of fantasy fiction, movies, and cartoons, are replete with violations of the logic of everyday space and time: disappearances, underworlds, phantoms, warp speed travel, mirrors and doors to alternate worlds, zero gravity, flattenings and

reconstructions, wormholes, scale inversions, and so on. And after all, why have cyberspace if we cannot apparently bend nature's rules there? (128).

So once again, cyberspace comes both as a threat to, and a tool for the rules of the nature and for changing those rules, to look at them from a *new* perspective.

4. VIRTUALITY IN FANTASY, FANTASY IN VIRTUALITY

4.1 Human Desire, Human Identity – Delineating Fantasy

The already porous human subject of the modern, standing every now and then, at the edge of schizophrenia, has yet confronted a new era of being digitalized, achieving an even painful “electronic porosity” (Stone, 1995: 166). However destructive it sounds, on the path of the all-too-visible of the urban and the invisible of the cyber – and back again, the pendulum of the human comes out of the battle defeated, and all the same victorious. On the eyes blazed by the brilliant yellow glow of the computer screen, there is yet another glow to be read, one of reclaiming back the space in which to dream, to fantasize. This recognition of the space for dreaming is a mirage in the midst of all the threat on the human identity. Drawing on Turkle’s argument in The Second Self, this is a space necessary for the identity to be reclaimed; Turkle characterizes computers as intimate machines and at the same time, as the new location for dreaming, which is a central identity formation process (qtd. in Hakken 87).

The early identification by Turkle, of the computer as a “second self”, was a consideration that identity-transforming relationships were almost always “one-to-one, a person alone with a machine”. Turkle admits, as we all do, today this is no longer the case.

A rapidly expanding system of networks, collectively known as the Internet, links millions of people in new spaces that are changing the way we think, the nature of our sexuality, the form of our communities, our very identities. ...Beyond [the level of computer being a tool], the computer offers us both new models of mind and a new medium on which to project our ideas and fantasies. Most recently, the computer has become even more than tool and mirror. We are able to step through the looking glass (1998: 5).

Cyberspace and all the idea of global network, of connectedness, of the proximity of everything that penetrates the human without resistance; allows to draw one more possibility, while it announces the condition of the human subject as schizophrenic. Once the “shock” of the superfluous identity is taken care of, the human subject is now free to remember what s/he forgot with the rigid and the unbendable of the modern urban space and the modern culture: the play. Inherent in all the “boundary” stories of identity in cyberspace, is the play, the play of identities. In fact, this is the uppermost sensation of cyberspace, experienced by means of the invisible of the ephemeral. The idea that the body is abandoned and the human disembodied, disregards this one last hope for the human, the possibility of play – or fantasy – brought *back* by the cyber-, and the stubborn fact that any escape from the body must always be followed by a fall – back into the corporeality of the body. As Stone reminds us, “No matter how virtual the

subject may become, there is always a body attached. It may be off somewhere else – and that ‘somewhere else’ may be a privileged point of view – but consciousness remains firmly rooted in the physical” (1991: 111).

But on the fall back to the body, still the fantasy of the escape persists. In this sense, cyberspace ironically transforms itself from the latest and deepest threat of technology, to a new role, that of being a new possibility for survival from the all-too-visible of technology. It deploys an interval in which to breathe, for the subject of the urban space lost in the humdrum of daily life in the city, in which s/he can deny any reality that tackles, that obstacles, and in the end that belongs to the physical order.

This other dimension of the escape is the most apparent in the MUDs – the Multi-User Domains – of communication, which are the closest to the cyberspace in Gibson’s definition that we have at the moment.

In exploring this sense of escape from the “earthly reality”, Jenkins’s comparison of the situation to the craze of fandom proves helpful in understanding why these fictional worlds are so popular. In Textual Poachers, Television Fans and Participatory Culture, Henry Jenkins analyzes fan culture with an emphasis on fan reading and writing practices. Like MUDs, the world of fandom is an alternative reality that many participants find more compelling than their mundane lives. The conclusion of Textual Poachers is called “In My Weekend-Only World...”: Reconsidering Fandom,” and begins with this epigraph from a fan writer:

In an hour of make-believe
In these warm convention halls
My mind is free to think
And feels so deeply
An intimacy never found
Inside their silent walls
In a year or more
Of what they call reality

In my weekend-only world,
That they call make-believe,
Are those who share
The visions that I see
In their real-time life
That they tell me is real,
The things they care about
Aren't real to me. (qtd. in Rheingold 168).

Jenkins writes about the fan folk song “Weekend-Only World” that it “expresses the fans’ recognition that fandom offers not so much of an escape from reality as an alternative reality whose values may be more humane and democratic than those held by mundane society.” The author of the song “gains power and identity from the time she spends within fan culture; fandom allows her to maintain her sanity in the face of the indignity and alienation of everyday life.

Thus in the visibility and intimacy of all, where the play is lost, cyberspace brings back fantasy by its way of “veiling” the apparent once again. Turkle highlights one more point, when she reclaims hysteria, which Baudrillard rejects in today’s world. Nevertheless, Turkle makes her point on hysteria, the

neurosis of Freud's time, claiming "today we suffer [hysteria] not less but differently." The human subject of our day, terrified of being alone, yet all the same afraid of intimacy, experiences widespread feelings of emptiness, of disconnection, of the unreality of self. At this point computer enters the realm as a companion without emotional demands and offers a compromise. Taking the helping hand of the computer – and *the whole world behind the screen*, "you can be a loner, but never alone"; "you can interact, but need never feel vulnerable to another person" (1984: 307).

In a single stroke, in a flashback, cyberspace gives back an old fantasy of *the ideal*. Remembering the nineteenth century Romantics through a *Neuromancer* concern, instead of a quest for an idealized person, we take computer as a second self. The Romantics, in the nineteenth century, wanted to escape rationalist egoism by becoming one with the nature. The "console cowboys" of Gibson's *Neuromancer* – or in a more common terminology, hackers – find soul in the machine, they lose themselves in the idea of mind building mind and in the sense of merging their minds with a universal system. When nineteenth century Romantics looked for an alternative to the mechanism and competition society, they looked to a perfect society of two, "perfect friendship," or "perfect love". This desire for fusion has its echo today, although in a new and troubling form.

This desire claims another view on the abandoning of the body, this time abandoning the body becomes a yearn for being part of a collective mind. This somehow religious connotation is in fact very much technological. The

case of *Case*, the protagonist of Neuromancer, is very precise about his desire, of being disembodied, of belonging to the order of ephemeral.

Having this concern in mind, Dery reads Neuromancer as a “lengthy meditation on the mind-body split in cyberculture” (1996: 248). He is affirmed indeed by Gibson himself, who asserts, “the key to [the protagonist] Case’s personality is [his] estrangement from his body, the meat” (Rudy 170).

Indeed the idea, the notion, the *ideal* of cyberspace, the whole schema of *escape* takes its leverage from the mind-body duality. Slenderly appearing under the skin, is the pulse to “get rid of the meat” to merge with the matrix out there (Sobchack qtd. in Dery, 1996: 310). Borrowing from Dery again, “If religion is the opiate of the masses and Marxism the opiate of the intellectual, then cyberspace is the opiate of the twenty-first-century schizoid man, polarized between mind and body” (1996: 252).

Case exemplifies what Andrew Ross has called the “technocolonization of the body” (qtd. in Dery, 1996: 250). Bodies like every square foot of public space and the natural environment are corporate property in Neuromancer’s near-future dystopia. For an accurate reading of this dystopia, and an illumination of any sense of fantasy that it may offer, Case is worth dichotomizing.

Case is an outlaw hacker for hire, a thief with bad fortune, an information rustler, who had once “worked for other, wealthier thieves, employers who provided the exotic software required to penetrate the bright walls of

corporate systems, opening windows into rich fields of data.” His body is a spent shell, his mind elsewhere –lost in memories of his exploits as a hotshot console cowboy, when he used a brain socket to physically connect his nervous system to a “custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness” (5) into the “neon-streaked” matrix, where “data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system appear as towers, cubes, and pyramids in a virtual reality version of Le Corbusier’s Radiant City”. (Gibson, 1984:5;51).

For him, the flesh is literally toxic: In a moment of weakness, he had made the classic mistake, the one he had sworn he would never make, he had stolen from his employers, and in return, they had “damaged his nervous system with a wartime Russian mycotoxin,” rendering him physically unable to “jack” into cyberspace:

For Case, who’d lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace, it was the Fall. In the bars he’d frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh (Gibson, 1984: 6).

To his rescue, comes a former “meat puppet” – prostitute – Molly, who is strongly aided by costly cosmetic surgery, contacting him for reasons even unknown to her, in order to employ him to crack the security programs of an enigmatic artificial intelligence. His mysterious new employers restore Case to his previous cyberspace compatibility. They, nevertheless blackmail him, using his strong desire for “the bodiless exultation of cyberspace”; if he succeeds in the crack, the slowly dissolving toxin sacs that they have planted

in his arteries will be removed, enabling him to be in the cyberspace as he wishes, if he fails, they will melt to return him to his fallen state.

The world Case inhabits in Neuromancer, was an age of affordable beauty where money could buy a “blandly handsome blend of pop faces” or “shoulders bulging with grafted muscle”, or eternal youth, or even practical immortality:

Julius Deane was one hundred and thirty-five years old, his metabolism assiduously warped by a weekly fortune in serums and hormones. His primary hedge against aging was a yearly pilgrimage to Tokyo, where genetic surgeons re-set the code of his DNA. ... Then he'd fly to Hongkong and order the year's suits and shirts. ... He affected prescription lenses, framed in spidery gold, ground from thin slabs of pink synthetic quartz and beveled like the mirrors in a Victorian dollhouse (12).

Case's rescue agent Molly, was a technological construct, a *cyborg*:

She held out her hands, palms up, the white fingers slightly spread, and with a barely audible click, ten double edged, four-centimeter scalpel blades slid from their housings beneath the burgundy nails (25).

She settled back beside him. “It's 2:43:12 A.M., Case. Got a readout chipped into my optic nerve” (32).

And quite ironically, she had eye transplants and she could see in the dark.

This is only nominally science fiction, for Gibson, resurrects current trends of our contemporaneity in Neuromancer. He sets foot into each and every square of *the grid* of our *fantasies* and gazes at all the invisible of our imaginary, bringing out the dystopia out of our technologies. And from his point of view it looks dystopic indeed.

However, considering today's world, the obsession with the body, the "body beautiful", and the representation transcending the original to such an extent that it is no longer possible to talk of representation; the slim hope for abandoning the body, leaving it behind does not come as a surprise. It is a rebel to the order of the real, which surrounds and penetrates the individual in the medium of the city, of the communication. The so-called liberation of the body, which was the case, in the last century, had thrust back, the body became more obvious than ever before, as today media spurts us images of perfect body, and the primary issue on our agenda appears to be achieving that body through diets and sports and all. As in the example of bodybuilding that Dery suggests; the way that the liberation movement of the body thrust back is obvious and the last attempts to make the human *belong* to his/her body fail sadly though they erase any possibility of abandoning the body *completely*:

Bodybuilding represents a last-ditch attempt to hold the body together at a time when genetic engineering and the Human Genome Project

remind us, disconcertingly, that a human being is “little more than a cloud of information,” to borrow Thomas Hine’s memorable phrase (1996: 260).

Thus human falls back into the prison of the flesh. Nevertheless alienated and irritated:

For nearly a century, modern culture has sought to liberate the human body, to set it free in particular from the sexual phobias, silences, and prejudices of earlier eras. Yet a great chasm exists between modern images of the body and bodily experience. Just as few soldiers taste the movie pleasures of ripping other bodies apart, marketable images of sexual pleasure have very little to do with real lovers’ sexual experience. Few films show two elderly naked people making love, nor naked fat people; movie sex is great the first time. The imagery of bodily pleasure in the mass media supposes a flight from one’s own body (Sennett, 1994: 60).

What underlies the alienation is a strong notion of “body beautiful” imposed on human, especially on women ever since the patriarchal culture, penetrating ever fortified into our day. Technology had one subtler objective, brought about by culture, to bear on women’s bodies in the service of male fantasies:

The corset produced the heaving bosom of romance novels even as it hindered respiration, restricted mobility, and rearranged the internal organs; the bustle thrust the buttocks up and back, approximating “the posture of a female animal in heat” (Dery, 1996: 237-8).

The remodeling of the female body in accordance with bourgeois ideals did not end with the passing of the corset and the bustle. The consumer culture of industrial modernity merely emphasized the economic subtext of such practices. In the 1920s, writes Stuart Ewen, advertising educated American women “to look at themselves as things to be created competitively against other women: painted and sculpted with the aids of the modern market” (180).

In The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women, Naomi Wolf indicts the unattainable ideal promulgated by the beauty industry – a pernicious fantasy that has made crash dieting, eating disorders, cosmetic surgery, and the onset of a chronic self-loathing rites of passage for too many American women. In cyberculture, notes Wolf, digital systems have enabled the creation of truly posthuman paragons of beauty: the impossibly flawless models in ads and fashion layouts in women’s magazines exist only as digitized photos, retouched with computer graphics software. “Airbrushing age from women’s faces is routine” even in general interest publications, she reports, and “computer imaging... has been used for years in women’s magazines’ beauty advertising” to remake reality to corporate dictates. This issue, she contends,

is not trivial. It is about the most fundamental freedoms: the freedom to imagine one’s own future and to be proud of one’s own life... to airbrush age off a woman’s face is to erase women’s identity, power and history (82-3).

At the end of The Beauty Myth, Wolf warns that women are endangered by their failure to understand that the Iron Maiden – the unnecessary fictions about the body beautiful that cage women’s lives – has finally been uncoupled from the human frame of reference. “We still believe that there is some point where [cosmetic] surgery is constrained by a natural limit, the outline of the ‘perfect’ human female,” she writes:

That is no longer true. The “ideal” has never been about the bodies of women, and from now on technology can allow the “ideal” to do what it has always sought to do: leave the female body behind altogether to clone its mutations in space. The human female is no longer the point of reference. The “ideal” has become at last fully inhuman... Fifty million Americans watch the Miss America pageant; in 1989 five contestants.. were surgically reconstructed by a single Arkansas plastic surgeon. Women are comparing themselves and young men are comparing young women with a new breed that is a hybrid nonwoman (266-7).

Strengthening and amplifying this opinion, not only on women but on human in general, is the “armored cyborgs” of Hollywood, “the remnants of their humanity impregnable behind heavy metal hardware, speak to a growing sense of human irrelevance in what is, more and more, a technological environment” (Dery, 1996: 243). Similarly, Bukatman sees, in *RoboCop* and the *Terminator*, “an uneasy but consistent sense of human obsolescence, and at stake is the very definition of human. ... [O]ur ontology is adrift” (1993: 20).

The reply comes from Haraway, “The cyborg is our ontology, it gives us our politics” (1989a: 150). Unlike *RoboCop* and other aggressive symbols of

an embattled status quo, Haraway's *cyborg* is the personification of the future untroubled by ambiguity and difference. It reestablishes the relationship between mechanism and organism, culture and nature, simulacrum and original, science fiction and social reality in a single body. A utopian monster, born of a "pleasure in ... potent and taboo fusions" and "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity," Haraway's cyborg is a living symbol of difference – sexual, ethnic, and otherwise – that refuses to be resolved or repressed (151; 173).

When Haraway declares that we are all cyborgs, she means it both literally – medicine has given birth to "couplings between organism and machine," bio- and communications technologies are "recrafting our bodies" –and figuratively, in the sense that "we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system" (150; 161; 164). In short, technology is reversing the polarities of the world we live in:

Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally-designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert (152).

Going back to the nineteenth century Romantics, what Haraway gives us is a *quest for an idealized cyborg*, instead of an idealized person, and for the escape that the Romantics foresaw from the rationalist egoism, by becoming

one with nature, comes the bid on becoming one with *technology*. Haraway is a *Neu-romancer*.

Thus introducing cyberspace, technology ironically takes the blame on its guilt, its penitence in alienating human from his/her body, suggesting one more way out for human identity, one into the fantasy of the cyberspace, a flight off the body to repossess the bodily sensations, a dream, which will end with a return to consciousness which remains rooted in the physical, neverminding whether the physical is human or cyborg.

As we hurtle toward the millennium, poised between technological Rapture and social rupture, between Tomorrowland and *Bladerunner*, we would do well to remember that – for the foreseeable future, at least – we are here to stay, in these bodies, on this planet. The misguided hope that we will be born again as “bionic angels,” to quote a *Mondo 2000*, is a deadly misreading of the myth of Icarus. It pins our future to wings of wax and feathers (Dery, 1996: 9).

4.2 Merits of Schizophrenia

Reconciling the highlights of the new condition in which the identity of human is to be formulated, the continuous image bombardments of everyday life, the undiminishing presence of the machinic, together with the changing conception of space has made stabilizing human identity a difficult task to accomplish – if not impossible. The struggle to distinguish one’s identity from the milieu, from the surface causes a meltdown of the self, thus

technological imaginary becomes the screen – no longer the Lacanian mirror – in which one looks for self-perception. The urban space, which is neither the Debordian spectacle nor Baudrillard’s scene now, has squashed what is human into the binary grid of the digital, into a flattened mass, leaving no distance, between the surface and the individual in which to *be*. Everything is so intimate that intimacy has lost meaning, it was evacuated, like many other concepts that we have lost along the way. Without the distance, the human subject, all-too-visible in the urban space, is no longer visible in the milieu. “No more expenditure, consumption, performance, but instead regulation, well-tempered functionality, solidarity among all the elements of the same system, control and global management of an ensemble,” says Baudrillard for this new ideal. For him, our new world is one where the “scene” and “mirror” no longer exist; instead there is a “screen” and “network”. “In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold – the smooth operational surface of communication” (Baudrillard, 1983: 126-127).

It was on this surface that a “distance towards fantasy” was lost (Zizek 19). With absolute transparency, absolute emergence of the apparent in the modern world, where, in Zizek’s words, the “truth is out there”, a room for fantasy became anorexic, a long and painful process which redeemed the subject and the distinctions that supported the subject as subject.

[The] traditional closed universe is thus in a sense *more* ‘open’ than the universe of science: it implies the gateway into the indefinite

Beyond, while the direct global model of modern science is effectively 'closed' – that is to say, it allows for no Beyond. The universe of modern science, in its very 'meaninglessness', involves the gesture of 'traversing the fantasy', of abolishing the dark spot, the domain of the Unexplained, which harbours fantasies and thus guarantees Meaning: instead, we get the meaningless mechanism (160).

This leads us back to the invisibility of cyberspace, which allows for the fantasy to exist, for the play of identities. For on the surface, there is no identification, no possibility of play. As Deleuze and Guattari engrave it, there is no longer an *I*, for every *I* is a multiplicity. There is no *one*, for every one is a multiplicity. If an identity is to be defined for human in this schizophrenic society of merges that they consider, then cyberspace must be the exact *plateau* for this identity, considering the convergence of cyberspace and fantasy that we have traced. Cyberspace is the plateau where each and every human being is given the possibility of being any "one" that they desire to be, by being able to choose from the multiplicity.

Operating within the framework "identity" (negative difference) versus undifferentiation (confusion) "leaves a body three options. Becoming the person it is said to be: the slow death of stable equilibrium. Opting out of that path, into its opposite: neurosis and eventual breakdown. Or shopping-to-be: Not exactly mental stability, but not quite breakdown either. The frenzy of the purchasable – potential experienced as infinite choice between havings rather than becomings. Stealing away from the shopping mall on an exorbital path tangent to identity and undifferentiation is called "schizophrenia". Schizophrenia is a breakdown into the unstable equilibrium of continuing self-invention (Massumi 92).

The climax of cyberspace is shopping-to-be; particularly worth examining is the controversial boundary between neurosis and stability, or in the case of cyberspace, multi-personality disorders and multi-user domains.

A study by Turkle, "Constructions and Reconstructions of the Self in Virtual Reality", presented at the Third International Conference on Cyberspace, elaborates the subject, clarifying the way pathology answers the questions of shattered self-identities in the cyberspace:

The power of the [virtual medium] as a material for the projection of aspects of both conscious and unconscious aspects of the self suggests an analogy between multiple-user domains [MUDs] and psychotherapeutic milieus... MUDs are a context for constructions and reconstructions of identity; they are also a context for reflecting on old notions of identity itself. Through contemporary psychoanalytic theory which stresses the decentered subject and through the fragmented selves presented by the patients, psychology confronts the ways in which any unitary notion of identity is problematic and illusory. What is the self when it functions as a society? What is the self when it divides its labour among its constituent "alters" or "avatars"? Those burdened by post-traumatic dissociative syndrome [multiple personality disorder, MPD] suffer the question; inhabitants of MUDs play with it (qtd. in Stone, 1995: 59).

When we go back to the *actual* public space to examine the condition of the individual, Sennett's account indeed demonstrates that the individual was *locked up in plastic*.

As belief in the public domain has come to an end, the erosion of a sense of self-distance, and thus the difficulty of playing in adult life, has taken one more step. But it is an important step. ... A person cannot imagine playing with his environment, playing with the facts of his position in society, playing with his appearances to others, because these conditions are now part and parcel of himself. ... To lose the ability to play is to lose the sense that worldly conditions are plastic. This ability to play with social life depends on the existence of a dimension of society which stands apart from, at a distance from, intimate desire, need and identity (1977: 267).

Nevertheless, this era in Turkle's concern, was an era of stability, it was an era where "stability was socially valued and culturally reinforced" (1997: 255). In our time, health is described in terms of fluidity rather than stability. It comes as no surprise that people are so much into switches among personae. Some people thought of the identity switches to be "evocative objects for thinking about the self".

This play of identities was indeed enjoyed by the inhabitants of MUDs, MUSHes and MOOs. One of the inhabitants explained the underlying cause very briefly; "Virtual communities are, among other things, the co-saturation of selves who have been, all their lives, saturated in isolation" (1997: 268). If there is any uneasiness concerning multiplicity of identities, in the cyberspace construct, then it must only be predicated on valuing stability, which is in our day a *slow death*. But once the standard unitary view of identity is abolished, there seems to be nothing wrong with the play. Embedded in this play are our previous investments in the body, our previous uneasiness with our isolated selves, and limited lives. If cyberspace

is offering fantasy back, why not take it? If the human subject is more content and satisfied and more human being schizophrenic, then why not be schizophrenic?

Turkle concludes her book, emphasizing that we stand on the boundary between the real and the virtual in today's world, drawing from anthropologist Victor Turner's term – a liminal moment. A liminal moment is a moment of passage when new cultural symbols and meanings can emerge, a time of tension, extreme reactions and great opportunity. Based on this view of transition, she calls the inhabitants of MUDs, "our pioneers" (268). This calls for the fact that cyberspace is here to stay with all its uncanniness, nonetheless with its gratification of human desire. If it is to be the new locus of human desire and fantasy, the *dark spot* in which to reclaim fantasy, then why try to avoid it?

There is no meaning without some dark spot, without some forbidden/impenetrable domain into which we project fantasies which guarantee our horizon of meaning. Perhaps this very growing disenchantment with our actual social world accounts for the fascination exerted by cyberspace: it is as if in it we again encounter a Limit beyond which the mysterious domain of phantasmic Otherness opens up, as if the screen of the interface is today's version of the blank, of the unknown region in which we can locate our own Shangri-las or the kingdoms of *She* (Zizek 160).

We are almost *there*.

5. CONCLUSION

The transgressional magic of the *flâneur* is to make the interior appear on the 'wrong side' of its bounding wall, the wrong side of the façade. Isn't the screen a kind of *flâneur* that disintegrates the inside and outside of our bodies? In cyberspace, be that the simulated three dimensional virtual space, or the space just behind our computer screen, or the space in between two telephones that connect two people somewhere in between, as we communicate ourselves, through the screen, through the interface that we use, aren't we transgressing the border that keeps our body separate, a separate entity; aren't we penetrating the *porous* membrane, that keeps distinct inside from outside, outside from inside? As technology helps make possible this porosity, isn't it also redefining the body and the identity that we have considered human as yet? Through the projection of human into this space of nowhere, aren't we leaving behind the identity that we knew to embrace a new identity that is a hybrid of inside and outside, here and there, machine and human, digital and physical? Even though we are still embedded in physicality, we have the chances of being anywhere, being anything that we desire. Nothing so far, not even art, gave way to such fulfillment of human fantasy, of being the other, of disappearing into the

crowd, while appearing as the same and the other at the same moment. Thus cyberspace is not just a new phenomenon, but also the final stage in a very old phenomenon, in transgressing the limits of the body which we have always known to be the only physical boundary to our presences. It is not that we don't possess our bodies anymore, but that we have finally achieved establishing a new *reality*, where we are much more free than we have ever been. *There*, where we can have multi-personalities, is where we can achieve anew, ways of understanding the other once again, and therefore losing our communication in the way that we used to know to step into a new world of communication, where we can wear any 'body' that we had fantasized, where we can "assume even the body of a lobster," to redefine what is human (Jaron Lanier qtd. in McFadden 45).

William Gibson opens his novel Neuromancer, with an exemplary that points out to a new sense, a new perception: "The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel". Since an image always announces the death of what it represents - being a prolonged postmortem on what will inevitably depart or disappear - there is a haunting estrangement between the image and reality.

And virtuality is a further death of reality, if not the evacuation of the real. The stabilization of identity is yet a significantly difficult achievement to overcome, within the domain of reality; in the "unthinkable complexity" of virtuality it remains only a possibility (Gibson, 1984: 28). But in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, becoming the person that one is said to be is again the slow death of stable equilibrium. Thus in this new world, in the new

definition of human, one is allowed to shop for identities, before schizophrenia comes the possibility of identity.

Yet in the age of the *evacuated identities*, where images do not refer to anything and where the reality is already attacked by the spectacle, this possibility is needed since it leaves the human beings the interval in which to be – the interval between the spectacle of life and the image of death.

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