

SYNTHETIC LOVE:
TECHNOSEXUALS IN A POSTMODERN ERA OF BIO-POWER

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Abstract

Speculate: project your flesh into the future. What does your *meat* look like? Dermis and pulse, limb and breath, “[t]he body is our general medium for having a world” (O’Neil 4). Through the flesh, we make history; we mark the world and the world marks us (Giblett 8-9). Bodies are our ontology: what makes us “human”. Postmodernity recognizes our fetish with the flesh. The future promises, tantalizes with projections of corporal transcendence. Embracing this postmodern cyborg vision, the curious body socializes on the fringe of “nature”, exploring the ambit of corporeality as shape and substance slips and slides. As meat morphs into metal, the body a silicone shell of selfhood, what it means to be “human” is rapidly changing. Humanity pulses, thick in the moral mire of this self-engineered, “participatory evolution” (Gray 3). We cannot share the flesh—so we seek to control it. Through biopolitical techniques we exploit and oppress, consume and commoditize the technosexual body. Nevertheless, bounded to a fated trajectory of progression and adaptation, we have but one choice: “Evolve or die” (Bacigalupi 243). Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow. Still, we “have the same sickness. Life is, after all, inevitably fatal” (Bacigalupi 247).

Speculate: project your flesh into the future. What does your *meat* look like? Dermis and pulse, limb and breath, “[t]he body is our general medium for having a world” (O’Neil 4). A nexus of impulse and sensation—taste and be tasted, touch and be touched. Life is always as close as one’s skin. The body, the squish and subtle yielding, is our “starting point” (Giblett 4). The borne form fleshes out the subject, localizing a physical and social identity; intellect and essence are grounded into stable shape. Blood and bone, mind and matter converge: the hand that wields fire, builds empires, creates poetry. We love our bodies—everything from the dimple in our left cheek to the slight curve of our back, from the freckles on our nose to the scars on our shins. We love what our bodies can do—bend and breed, soothe and wound. Even as they fail us, as we wrinkle and dry, we cling to our vessel, to the meaning in the marrow. Through the flesh, we make history; we mark the world, leave our trace, and the world marks us, brands us, imprints upon us (Giblett 8-9). Bodies are our ontology: what makes us “human”.

Postmodernity recognizes our fetish with the flesh. The future promises, tantalizes with projections of corporal transcendence: “epidermis and fantasy” (*The Year of the Flood* 307). We do not inhabit the seemingly rigid world of our forefathers, an idyllic “Natural” world accepting of the organic processes and limitations of life and death. Their reliance on stringent dichotomies—“self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made...” (Haraway 471)—has been undermined by our realization that humans are permeable sites, bodies of plastic and plasticity “always meshed with the more-than-human world” (Alaimo 2). We can no longer operate as solitary automatons of the flesh, impervious to the flux and flow of agential living. The world is “[too] boundless, [too] porous, [too] penetrable, [too] wide-open” (*Oryx and Crake* 196). At the core of this transformation is the institutionalization of scientific and technological studies and

advancement. “Humans have always been innovators and makers,” (Gray 13) but never have we been so radical with the skin, “[t]he cells...like clear plastic bins, with the lids you could lift up” (*Oryx and Crake* 29). Technoscience molts the flesh. The scalpel slices; the pill makes us fatter, thinner, happier, hornier; machines realize our capacity for metamorphosis.

Embracing the taboo pleasure of metal and meat, silicone and sticky-fingers, the curious postmodern body socializes on the fringe of our predecessors’ “Natural” world. As we explore the ambit of corporeality, shape and substance slips and slides, mutates and evolves into “a hybrid, or mixed, state of being—a more complex, ambiguous, and fluid identity” (Haraway 456). The postmodern world is a cyborged world, “ambiguously natural and crafted” (Haraway 457), and “[a]lmost all of us are cyborged in some way” (Gray 1):

Signs of our cyborg society are all around us. The few of us who are not in some way already ‘borged through immunizations, interfaces, or prosthetics are embedded nonetheless in countless machinic/organic cybernetic systems. From the moment your clock radio wakes you in the morning, your life is intimately shaped by machines. (Gray 2).

Cyborg culture penetrates our “lived body” (Gray 13), the synthesis of the individual “*physical body* [that] can be bumped into, knocked over, crushed and destroyed” and the “*moral body* to which we owe respect, help, and care” (O’Neill 3-4). It’s the pacemaker and the prosthetic limb, the artificial heart and the artificial breast; it’s the childhood vaccine that reprogrammed your immune system and the circumcision that altered your manhood. However, the “lived body” is not the only mutable body functioning in our corporeal world. As Rod Giblett suggests in *The Body of Nature and Culture*, “being a plurality of irreducible forces, the body is a multiple phenomenon...The body is not a singular, unified, homogenous entity, but the clashes of forces”

(6). Operating outside the purely biological, “the social/symbolic body” and “the body politic” (Gray 90) jointly shape and are shaped by ‘borged technologies. Cyborg issues infiltrate our language, our economy, our media and our ways of being, further complicating our narcissistic desire to answer the ultimate anthropocentric question: what does it mean to be “human”?

Humanity pulses, thick in the moral mire of this self-engineered, “participatory evolution” (Gray 3). Culture is at a crossroads: where does the body go from here? As the cyborg is “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway 457), we have the creative freedom to speculate, to free form a future for our flesh and dictate a new somatic politic. Many have composed their cyborg chronicle before us; they build *a* world—not *your* world—uncanny and curious. Some, like the post-structuralist theorist Donna Haraway, dream of a utopia, a paradise of “permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (Haraway 462). A paradigm of porosity, her cyborg conception seeks to transgress and transcend conventional borders erected “[i]n the traditions of ‘Western’ science and politics” (457): human and animal, organism and machine, physical and non-physical (458-59, 461). In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway’s hybridized posthuman of technoscience lacks the impervious opacity of contemporary bodies (somatic, civil and symbolic); *it* is “ether” (461): sexless and secular, “without gender” and “without genesis” (457). From one perspective, Haraway’s cyborg myth realizes our full human potential, a world uncoupled from hegemonic forces and corporal restraint. From another perspective, her utopic myth is sadly incomplete, impossible. A cyborg is a body, physical and political; “bodies are maps of power and identity [and] cyborgs are no exception” (474). Despite the endeavor to dream a “world without genesis”, all myths have beginnings, all bodies have makers. These makers toy and shape, mold and manipulate.

Haraway's technobody is ideal, but she is a benevolent creator. She forgets how much we love our bodies, but most importantly, she forgets how much we fear them.

Fixated on the future, we neglect our body's past. "The body is historical" (Giblett 9), a space-time construct of blood and bone that cannot operate unmarked or unaffected by active historical processes. Our somatic history is long, complicated, and always controlled; we fear the corporeal chaos of unbridled embodiment. The body is a terrific force, a force that propagates labors, creates and destroys—a force that must be harnessed, "taken control of lest it escape" (Foucault 269). According to Michel Foucault, "power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (260). The government of bodies is the ultimate sovereignty: the *privilege* to "incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize" *life* (259). Before the classical age, the "power of life and death", the power over bodies, constituted an ascendant right "to *take* life or *let* live" (259); death and "deduction" (259) were the major mechanisms of a sovereign power "dedicated to impeding [forces], making them submit, or destroying them" (259). However, post-antiquity presents a dramatic shift in Western power structuring and deployment. Rather than through sword or seizure, sovereign powers turned to modes of governance "bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them" (259). Death ceased to be a power tool; now, it is a "limit" (267). In the modern world, this power over life developed in two crucial ways: "the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (262). Through techniques of power, such as the "development of capitalism" and the "deployment of sexuality" (263), Foucauldian bio-power penetrates the individual and species body—the lived body—regulating and optimizing its forces, as well as the social/symbolic body and the body politic. No body is impervious to the marks of man, the tides of time.

Despite idyllic endeavors, the technosexual, or ‘borged reproductive body, is not exempt from postmodern sovereignty’s grid of control. Clones and Crakers, dolls and drones: subjugated synthetic love machines. In the speculative works of Margaret Atwood (*MaddAddam* trilogy), Paolo Bacigalupi (*The Windup Girl*), Gary Shteyngart (*Super Sad True Love Story*), and Kazuo Ishiguro (*Never Let Me Go*), the postmodernist technobody struggles against a cyborged dystopia rife with environmental devastation, excessive consumption, biotechnological experimentation, and administrative corruption. Within these texts, the contemporary bio-political paradigm of “achieving and/or enhancing *control over* bodies and processes” evolves into a postmodern manifestation “centered on re/de/sign and *transformation* of reproductive bodies” (Gray 90). In these built worlds, “being ‘borged is [not] empowering” (Gray 10); being ‘borged is a burden. Antithetical to Haraway’s transcendent paradise of porosity, the dystopian technosexual is objectified and othered, devalued and demonized: “creature[s] forbidden” (Bacigalupi 37), “pawns in a game” (Ishiguro 266), “hormone robots” (*Oryx and Crake* 166). Systematically suppressed, the subversive potential of the ‘borged body is wasted on mankind and their rigid conceptions of corporeality. Slow culture, confounded by the ethics of a self-engineered evolution, employs numerous and diverse techniques to exploit and oppress, consume and commoditize the three bodies of cyborg culture: the body politic (economy, technology, and law), the lived body (flesh and sex), and the social/symbolic body (ethos and art, language and the soul). Though “[t]hey are real. As much as you or I” (Bacigalupi 173), we won’t let them be human—we cannot share the flesh.

As meat morphs into metal, the body a silicone shell of selfhood, what it means to be “human” is radically evolving. Today’s body is not tomorrow’s body. Still, we “cling to some idea of humanity that evolved in concert with [our] environment over millennia, and which [we]

now, perversely refuse to remain lockstep with” (Bacigalupi 243). We intentionally draw boundaries on the body, set moral limits, sanctify the limbs. We cannot tolerate a world “stripped of its flesh by the slavering masses of nature’s new successes” (Bacigalupi 250); it isn’t right, it isn’t “natural”. Nature—“[s]uch a bloodless word” (Alaimo 1), a hollow word with an insular mentality. Do not hold too tightly to what is “natural”; it’s a cold concept of the past. “We are nature. Our every tinkering is nature, our every biological striving” (Bacigalupi 243). Radical evolution terrifies; never before could we take full *responsibility* for our own evolution. Nevertheless, bounded to a fated trajectory of progression and adaptation, we have but one choice: “Evolve or die” (Bacigalupi 243). Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow. Still, we “have the same sickness. Life is, after all, inevitably fatal” (Bacigalupi 247). There is no in-between, no utopic monotony of man. Our ‘borged future beckons to us; we are not the end-all-be-all. Speculate: project your flesh into the future. What does your *meat* look like?

“Auxiliary Organs”: The Postmodern Body Politic

Break down the body, beyond blood and brain; deconstruct the dimpled meat, find other meaning in the marrow. We are more than concrete corporeality. We are more than four limbs, two eyes, one heart. Do not forget our “auxiliary organs” (O’Neill 2)—our commoditizing economies, our transforming technologies, and our levying laws. The body is a political artifact, the flesh and facet of the state. Conditioned by scraps of a national flag, “shards of data” (Shteyngart 246), cash and “cosmetic creams” (*Oryx and Crake* 248), the body politic constructs a stitched landscape ripe for cyborgization. The base of bio-power, the body politic operates as a penetrative and persuasive force that establishes a context for the lived body and “determine[s] what values we build into posthumanity” (Gray 11), or our ‘borged social/symbolic body. In the speculative works of Atwood, Bacigalupi, Ishiguro, and Shyteyngart, these technobodies and cyborg values are forged in a politic of industrialization, innovation, and isolation. Bred vulnerable to capital constraints, machines that modify and mutilate, and administrative policing, the body struggles against Foucauldian techniques of “intervention and *regulatory control*” (262)—a dystopia of denied subjectivity and sovereignty. I repeat: We won’t let them be human; our politics won’t allow it.

First and foremost, the postmodern body politic is an economic body—“Money at any cost. Wealth at any price” (Bacigalupi 127). We are the children of capitalism, our bodies slave to the mechanism. We work our limbs to dust; we grind and strive until we die. For paper. For plastic. For temporal pleasure. It only makes sense to drag “our legacy” (Shyteyngart 4), our creations—technocratic and awfully “*optimal*” (Bacigalupi 35)—down with us, chain them to the gears of capital and industry: “the ways of the old world” (Bacigalupi 36). Postmodern or not, speculative or not, “money is money, and nothing is new under the sun” (Bacigalupi 34).

A privatized system of “sales” (Ishiguro 41) and “exchanges” (Ishiguro 16), our Western economy demands an industrialization process latched to profit and profiteering. The world, no longer a nostalgic blue and green, reads as a vast market, red with capital and the blood of its assets. Capitalism is a ruthless sovereign power, cold and calculating. Every resource can be regulated, mass-produced; every actant requires a competitor or “patron” (Bacigalupi 211); *everything* holds a value, “everything has a price” (*Oryx and Crake* 139):

For capitalism is the stage in which all the excitations, all the pleasures and pains produced on the surface of life are inscribed, recorded, fixed, coded in the transcendent body of capital. Every pain costs something, every girl at the bar, every day off, every hangover, every pregnancy; and every pleasure is worth something. (O’Neill 1-2).

In this industrialized economic state, capitalism functions as a conduit for the commodification and objectification of life—animate or inanimate. We’re all goods, Subjects of the assembly-line and “the machinery of production” (Foucault 263). Call us cogs, call us “temporaries” (*The Year of the Flood* 399), call us anything but autonomous: “*This is the shape of our world...Tit for tat until we’re all dead*” (Bacigalupi 211).

Postmodernity likewise bows to currency and competition: a hypercapitalism of hybridized “hawk[ing]” (*Oryx and Crake* 288) and “hungers” (Bacigalupi 243). “Right now you’ve got to *sell to live*” (Shteyngart 67) or risk being sold, buy or be bought. Cash connotes continued existence; “money equals life” (Shteyngart 77). In the speculative works of Atwood and Shteyngart, this stark pecuniary mentality segregates the populace into strict classes as wealth accumulates in certain sectors and vanishes from others. Consequently, industry is localized with clichéd effects: a “technocrat elite” (*MaddAddam* xiii) and a “seedy” (*The Year of*

the Flood 7) second-class. “The man exists only for competition” (Bacigalupi 248), but we can’t all be winners.

Margaret Atwood’s postmodern economic body depresses, depreciates, divides. Dichotomous, her pre-apocalyptic future operates without a middle-class, a two-toned world: the compounds and the pleeblands. Manicured and managed, the compounds are ultra-secure, gated communities reserved for the “kings and dukes” (*Oryx and Crake* 28) of hypermodernity. “All artificial...a theme park” of the past (*Oryx and Crake* 27), the constructed compounds nostalgically emulate the pseudo-safeties of our modern world:

Remember when everyone lived in the pleeblands? Remember when you could fly anywhere in the world, without fear? Remember hamburger chains, always real beef, remember hot-dog stand? Remember before New York was New New York? Remember when voting mattered? (Oryx and Crake 63).

Their economy is generated and maintained by the privatized, mass-manufacturing of ‘borged technological goods, ranging from the nightmarish “ChickieNob” (*Oryx and Crake* 203)—a vat-grown meat, a monstrous orifice without “brain functions that ha[ve] nothing to do with digestion, assimilation, and growth” (203)—to bizarre beauty treatments that “prey on the phobias and void the bank accounts of the anxious and the gullible” (*Oryx and Crake* 247). Industrial profit-seeking perverts the dominant market and exploits the masses. No business is sacred, no purveyor purely charitable in this “economics of scarcity” (*Oryx and Crake* 211); the capitalist elite will supply it, even if you don’t demand it.

The pleeblands: “where [compound] stuff turns to gold” (*Oryx and Crake* 288). A visceral conurbation, the pleeblands seethe with unruly “[I]ife, life, life, life, life. Full to bursting, this minute. Second. Millisecond. Millennium. Eon” (*MaddAddam* 223). Hustle and bustle,

“sho[p] and sca[m]” (*MaddAddam xiv*): “so many people so close to one another, walking, talking, hurrying somewhere” (*Oryx and Crake* 288). Thriving outside the compound barricades and searchlights, the plebs teem with the impoverished, the diseased, the criminal, the consumer and the consumed—“[a]ll skin colours [*sic*], all sizes. Not all prices though” (*Oryx and Crake* 288). The lower moiety blazes like a neon sign, a living advertisement bursting with product, begging you to purchase it. Conditioned by an economy contingent on “buying and selling” (*Oryx and Crake* 288) and illicit industries, such as black market egg donations and mob-run “corpse disposals” (*The Year of the Flood* 32-33), the pleeblands choke on Capital’s unchecked deluge of foul expenditure. In this economic body, subjects are indistinguishable from objects: “[b]lood is thinner than money” (*MaddAddam* 125).

Similar to the Atwoodian economic body, Gary Shteyngart’s postmodern vision of a near-future dystopian New York, hinges on hyper-capitalist modes of production, consumption, and cla\$\$ division. Imagine: “the *new* United States of America” (8), a nation of “High Net Worth Individuals” (HNWIs) and “Low Net Worth Individuals” (LNWIs) (5) —“NOW IS THE TIME FOR SPENDING, SAVING, AND UNITY. ONE PARTY. ONE NATION. ONE GOD” (161). An “idiotic consumer culture” (38) reliant on Retail and contemptuous of Credit consciousness—smart advertising and dumb people—Shteyngart’s US teeters on the brink of economic collapse. As the international Chinese “cash spigot” (66) slows, the yuan-pegged dollar struggles for market value; Credit Poles line causeways, probing for creditworthiness and “reducing everyone to a simple three-digit numeral” (55); the “American Restoration Authority” (8) directs and divides:

Atop the Poles, American Restoration signs billowed in several languages. In the Chinatown parts of East Broadway, the signs read in English and Chinese—

“America Celebrates Its Spenders!”—with a cartoon of a miserly and happily running toward a mountain of wrapped Christmas presents. In the Latino sections on Madison street, they read in English and Spanish—“Save It for a Rainy Day, *Huevón*”—with a frowning grasshopper in a zoot suit showing us his empty pockets. Alternate signs read in all three languages:

The Boat is Full

Avoid Deportation

Latinos Save

Chinese Spend

ALWAYS Keep Your Credit Ranking Within Limits (54)

In *Super Sad True Love Story*, capitalism markets stereotypes, summarily sorting citizens into two basic sects: HNWI and LNWI, those who can afford to live and those we’ll just let die. As our protagonist, Lenny Abramov, “verbal[s]” (46), “I wish things were better for you, but we’re not all in this together” (146). Evocative of Foucauldian dogmas, this harsh reality reifies the biopolitical power of economic bodies. Not only do individual bodies operate as economic “machine[s]” (Foucault 261)—“efficient” and “docil[e]” (Foucault 261) engines of production and consumption—but, through “factors of segregation and social hierarchization” (Foucault 263), entire populations are harnessed as controllable productive forces. While economic collapse, or “[f]ear of the Dark Ages” (66), threatens the omnipotent clout of capitalism, as long as one almighty dollar lives, we’ll remain yoked: “people hawking, buying, demanding, streaming” (109).

While the economic body facilitates the stage for biopolitical domination, emergent postmodern technologies play upon capital and corpses, modifying and mutilating. Aimed at the

common consumer, the following “äppäräti” (Shteyngart 250) establish a context for radical evolution, or the full-cyborgization of the reproductive lived body, which we will discuss thoroughly in the next chapter. As John O’Neil candidly notes in “Five Bodies”, “Nothing praises our divinity like our machines”:

We look good to ourselves in machines; they are the natural extensions of our narcissistic selves. They magnify us, and at the same time amplify the world we have chosen to create for ourselves—the ‘man made’ world. There is no escaping our romance with the machine we have created in order to recreate ourselves. (1).

We are hooked, compelled, “codependent” (Gray 88) on technology—“it ma[kes] you feel like God” (*Oryx and Crake* 51). In the works of Shteyngart and Bacigalupi, these “prosthetic gods” (O’Neil 1) innovate and intervene, redesign and damage, with the intention to “incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize” (Foucault 259) the economic and physical potential of bodies, human or not. Fueled by crooked objectives, these technocultures of addictive “äppäräti” (Shteyngart 250) and “genehacked” crops (Bacigalupi 8) have “thought up yet another way to rip off a bunch of desperate people” (*Oryx and Crake* 56).

“We love to wear machines” (O’Neil 1): In Gary Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story*, we never take them off. The brain and heart of “America 2.0” (Shteyngart 322), the “äppärät” (8)—a wireless electronic communication and data-collecting device worn like a pendant around the neck (like a noose)—negotiates daily life for the postmodern citizen. Talking or *verballing* (29) is near-obsolete, the majority of communication relegated to a screen and endless streams of Images and data: “*Less words = more fun!!!*” (27). Public interactions are likewise technologized; via their äppäräti, bar companions can “FAC” or “Form a Community” (88)—“It’s, like, a way to judge people. And let them judge you” (88). As previously connoted

by the Credit Poles, Shteyngart's America is a highly quantitative society, obsessed with one's rank and numerical value. Equipped with "RateMe Technology" (70), the *äppärät* satisfies the curiosity of an insecure society, rating and ranking one's cash standing, "Fuckability", and "Personality", even one's "ANAL/ORAL/VAGINAL PREFERENCE" (89). These rankings rule: who cares about your qualitative value if you're poor and ugly! Wholly dependent on these technologies, non-digital life comes crashing down when political, economic, and social chaos cuts the power-line to "this rude data stream" (92):

My *äppärät* isn't connecting. I can't connect....I can't connect in any meaningful way to anyone...Four young people committed suicide in our building complexes, and two of them wrote suicide notes about how they couldn't see a future without their *äppäräti*. One wrote, quite eloquently, about how he "reached out to life," but found there only "walls and thoughts and faces," which weren't enough. He needed to be ranked, to know his place in this world. And that may sound ridiculous, but I can understand him. We are all bored out of our fucking minds. My hands are itching for connection," (270).

In *Super Sad Love Story*, invasive technology hovers above the skin; it does not pierce the flesh in a literal sense, but marks nonetheless. "[A]live with at least seven degrees of information" (86), the *äppärät* and credit pole autonomously monitor and manage, enhance and augment the lived experience of postmodern citizens with both helpful and harmful effects, the most noted being an addictive dependence. Although these technologies do not "re/de/sign [or] *transfor[m]*" (Gray 90) the lived body, they certainly exhibit a biopolitical power. "We love to wear machines" but, "[w]e hate to switch off our engines. Lest we switch off ourselves" (O'Neil 1).

A more invasive technological politic, Paolo Bacigalupi's prophecies of technocapitalist ventures penetrate the lived body with the intent to "achiev[e] and/or enhance *control over* bodies and processes" (Gray 90). Set in twenty-third century Thailand, the Windup world is dominated by capitalism and calories. Nature is a "thing" (Bacigalupi 7), "genehacked" (8) and feared. Mass crop mutations and invasive species "manufactured by flawed gods" (346) ravage the planet, a "culture[d] death" (248) causing global famine and disease. Contagion is a visceral fear. Yet, as "prosthetic gods" (O'Neill 1), we fail to see the terror of our technologies:

The more they kill us, the more we turn to them for safety; the more they sicken us, the more we turn to them for health; the more they cripple us, the more we turn to them for repairs. (O'Neill 1).

Obstinate and unapologetic, "farang" (7) calorie companies, like "Agrigen and Purcal and Total Nutrient Holdings" (3), bank on this postmodern technological dependence. In a post-Contraction world, these vast agri-corporations attempt to synthetically reproduce the natural genetic seed stock razed by "cibiscosis and Nippon genehack weevil and blister rust and scabis mold" (2). "[M]anufactured in the bowels of the Midwest Compact's research labs" (3), these genetically-modified crops, whose engineered sterility (92) insures "intellectual property rights" (120) and high profits, facilitate the construction of a monopoly on food production. Yoked to their patented grains and seeds, the world "starv[es] and beg[s] for the scientific advances of the calorie monopolies" (3); the needs of the lived body are thus capitalized on, extorted for intimate influence. As with the epidemics and famine of the eighteenth century, "a relative control over life averted some of the imminent risks of death" (Foucault 264). However, there is nothing *relative* about the hegemonic domination driving Bacigalupi's Windup world. Invasive biotechnologies act as "managers of life and survival" (Foucault 260), subjecting the individual

body and the species body to “precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (Foucault 259). “These men with profits in their beating hearts [and technologies in their greedy hands] have no choice” (51), they must innovate; they must infiltrate.

Tethered to the economies and technologies of our postmodern worlds are the governing bodies that allow or disallow their presence and power. “[S]ending their tentacles everywhere” (*The Year of the Flood* 25), ascendant administrative authorities contrive laws and a national politic contingent on surveillance, regulation, and subjugation: “a hammerlock on power” (*MaddAddam* 69). Within the Western world, the lived body cannot subsist unmarked by the grip of government agency—“The body shapes the nation, the nation shapes the body” (Giblett 10). In the works of Ishiguro and Bacigalupi, the individual body is optimized and the species body controlled through administrative techniques of isolation and “embargo” (Bacigalupi 120). Ostensibly protected from “the onslaughts of the outside world” (Bacigalupi 120), its insatiable greed and blatant perniciousness, the postmodern body “hide[s] behind...walls and hopes to survive” (Bacigalupi 348). However, as “[h]istory tells us, we must engage with the outside world” (Bacigalupi 349) before it engages with us, controls us, destroys us.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro’s postmodern governmental body takes the shape of an old-fashioned, English boarding school: Hailsham, a “privileged estate” (4). Secluded and secretive, Hailsham is far from orthodox; a vagueness clouds its purpose, its story “told and not told” (82). The teachers, or “guardians” (36), implement procedures and curriculums aimed at fostering students’ healthy lifestyles and artistic aptitudes. Their intent: optimize and supervise. Constantly told how special they are, the students of Hailsham subconsciously come to understand they’re not “normals” (96); in fact, they’re clones. While we will discuss the postmodern biopolitical implications of clones in the following chapter, the infiltration of flesh

and sex, it's important to note the politic of isolation at play beforehand. Destined to donate their vital organs so others may live long while they die young, the Hailsham clones are given one gift: "[their] childhoods" (268). Only enforced isolation makes this possible. While the outside world might see them merely as "shadowy objects in test tubes" (261), within the cloistered comforts of Hailsham they're "[nothing] less than fully human" (262). Nevertheless, the outside world waits at the gates; the students have a job to do—"Your lives are set out for you" (81), there's no escape, no "deferrals" (154).

Unlike *Never Let Me Go*, the administrative bodies in *The Windup Girl* trumpet techniques of isolation. In a post-Expansion, post-Contraction world, the Thai kingdom is one of the few nation-states still intact, largely due to stringent policies of global embargo and a heavily guarded seed-bank project; "[a]gainst all odds, they were alive" (120). Champions of isolation, the Environment Ministry—manned by the brutally patriotic "white shirts" (50)—maintains the kingdom's borders and biological security at all costs, including the burning of entire villages and the mass-slaughtering of diseased organisms (125). In this constructed landscape of quarantine, the Ministry can easily monitor the population, manage its forces and control its potential:

All life produces waste. The act of living produces costs, hazards and disposal questions, and so the Ministry has found itself in the center of all life, mitigating, guiding and policing the detritus of the average person along with investigating the infractions of the greedy and short-sighted, the ones who wish to make quick profits and trade on others' lives for it. (121).

A pervasive fear of the *farang*, or foreigners, likewise restricts borders, shutting the "City of Divine Beings" (7) off from global supply lines. Nevertheless, "*gaijin* traders and agricultural

executives squat amid stockpiles of calories, all of them waiting patiently for a crop failure or plague to beat aside the Kingdom's trade barriers" (104). Hope as the Ministry might, the outside world never simply vanishes; it can only be kept at bay and only for so long. In opposition to a politic of isolation and embargo, the Trade Ministry urges for the reinstatement of a free market economy. Enough of this "absurd defensive crouch" (99)—"[t]he *farang* are the key to our future" (124). As with *Never Let Me Go*, isolation can never last in this chaotic world: someone or something always wants a piece of you, a piece of your *meat*.

In the speculative works of Atwood, Bacigalupi, Ishiguro, and Shtyengart, the postmodern body politic erects a biopolitical framework suitable for the "re/de/sign and *transformation* of reproductive bodies" (Gray 90). Through commoditizing capitalist economies, the body is set up as an object, a labor force to be harnessed. Technological innovations create a dependency, further melding us to our machines that modify and mutilate. Finally, administrative entities police and monitor, locking the body down in a grid of controls. Emerging from this body politic, the cyborg materializes: a civil, somatic, and symbolic organism. With our auxiliary organs now in place, let's move on to the cyborg flesh.

Synthetic Love Machines: The Postmodern Lived Body

We love to eroticize our technology, the uncanny sensuality of perfected prosthetics and the pleasure of the interface. Try as some might, humanity cannot shy away from this machinic love affair. We're in too deep; our bodies crave the imminent integration. Postmodernity, with its "promise[s] of transgression" (Bacigalupi 43) and "transcorporeality", entwines the human with the more-than-human world (Alaimo 2)—technosexuals, synthetic love machines. Ideally uninhibited by the repressive binary controls of normative culture and hegemonic Western constructs of sex and gender, the 'borged reproductive body seems to proclaim, "Tomorrow sex will be good again" (*A History of Sexuality* 7). In a world of Crakers and clones, Windup girls and girls with *äppäräti*, postmodernity provides a site for reconsidering our own humanity, from conception to reproduction. "Anatomy [is] up for grabs" (Gray 157), the body open to the "bionic construction of many sexualities and sexes" (Gray 158): a carnal freedom at last. Remember, "all sex is real" (*Oryx and Crake* 144).

Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* trumpets the transgressive power of technosexuality embodied in the cyborg—"a hybrid of machine and organism" (456). "Ambigiously natural and crafted" (457), Haraway's chimeric posthuman of technoscience revels in the borders between traditional Western binaries:

Self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man. (471).

A paradigm of porosity, the utopic cyborg revolts against the rigid sexual expectations of modern society, including sex role specialization, the heterosexual marriage and nuclear family, and the "seduction of organic wholeness" (a body *given*, not *built*) (458). Instead, Haraway's myth of

“potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities” (461) explores a “monstrous world” (475) of “techno-digested” (465) “polymorphous desires” (Gray 12)—“Endless high-grade sex, no consequences” (*Oryx and Crake* 295). In this “utopian dream” (475), the ‘borged lived body ostensibly operates unfettered from the hegemonic body politic discussed in the previous chapter; according to Haraway, “the cyborg is not subject to Foucault’s biopolitics” (465). While a progressive speculation, this assertion is only tangible in a world devoid of its own corporeality. Permeable or not, gendered or not, the cyborg remains a body—a piece of sexed flesh vulnerable to sovereign powers. This utopic dream is just the standard nightmare.

In addition to the economic, technological, and civic mechanisms of capitalism, Foucauldian biopower exercises “sex [as] a means of access both to life of the body and the life of the species”:

On the one hand, it was tied to the disciplines of the body: the harnessing, intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies. On the other hand, it was applied to the regulation of populations, through all the far-reaching effects of its activity. (267).

Dystopian postmodernity likewise adopts “sex as a political issue” (267), a technique of power developed beyond the basic functions of pleasure and procreation. However, in the works of Atwood, Bacigalupi, Ishiguro, and Shteyngart, the modern paradigm of “achieving an/or enhancing *control over* bodies and processes” has been supplemented by postmodern approaches “centered on the re/de/sign and *transformation* of reproductive bodies” (Gray 90). Our synthetic love machines, which seemed so transgressive before, are subject to the same “infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, [and] extremely meticulous orderings of space” (Foucault 267); like master, like slave.

Emerging from a technocapitalist dystopia of ecological ruin, excessive consumption, and biotechnological experimentation, the Atwoodian ‘borged bodies present a compelling manifestation of postmodern biopolitical control. Beginning with *Oryx and Crake*, the *MaddAddam* trilogy witnesses the collapse of civilization, an event without an immediately clear cause. The “only” survivors are our protagonist, the post-apocalyptic hermit Snowman—“He’s humanoid, he’s hominid, he’s an aberration, he’s abominable” (*Oryx and Crake* 307)—and a community of “people...Or I think they’re people” (*MaddAddam* 34) called Crakers, our postmodern technosexual cyborgs. Biotechnological creatures designed down to their DNA, the Crakers are genetically spliced to perfection, “rendition[s] of how bodies ought to be” (*MaddAddam* 11). A race of “every known colour” and “admirably proportional”—“No ripples of fat around their waists, no bulges, no dimpled orange-skin cellulite on their thighs. No body hair, no bushiness” (*Oryx and Crake* 100)—the Crakers function as “floor models” (302) for genetically-engineered evolutionary enterprises. Focused on the lived body, “its disciplining [and] the optimization of its capabilities” (Foucault 261), these eugenic ventures “re/de/sign and transform” (Gray 90) the individual reproductive body: “Gender, sexual orientation, height, colour of skin and eyes—it’s all an order, it can all be redone and done” (*Oryx and Crake* 289). Similarly, “the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” (Foucault 262) of the species body can be restructured and enhanced:

Whole populations could be created that would have pre-selected characteristics. Beauty of course; that would be in high demand. And docility: several world leaders had expressed interest in that. Paradise had already developed a UV-resistant skin, a built-in insect repellent, and an unprecedented ability to digest

unrefined plant material. As for immunity from microbes, what had until now been done with drugs would soon be innate. (304).

Beyond merely capitalist motives, these technosexual “floor models” serve a higher purpose; they are the Adams and Eves of a new “Paradise”, the perfect post-human race. However, their “God” is not as trusting as ours. Meticulously programmed inside and out, the Crakers pay for the pains and the idiosyncrasies of the father, a mad-scientist named Crake.

Obsessed with the limitations and failures of human sexuality, Crake “re/de/sign[s] and transform[s]” (Gray 90) the reproductive body through techniques of power designed for “achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 262). Tantamount to a god, he attempts to rectify the “imperfectly monogamous” (*Oryx and Crake* 166) sexual body “thwarted [by] lust” (165) and a “needless despair...caused by a series of biological mismatches, a biological misalignment of hormones and pheromones” (166). Crake constructs a seemingly liberated sexual future for his creations, a transgressive technosexual speculation:

No more *No means yes*...No more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, no haggling over the price, no pimps, no sex slave, no more rape....Sex is no longer a mysterious rite, viewed with ambivalence or downright loathing, conducted in the dark and inspiring suicides and murders. Now it's more like an athletic demonstration, a free-spirited romp. (165).

However, let's not be too deluded. Crake's manifesto is not a benevolent attempt at bettering our sexual lives; it's a power play against the agential body, a well-ordered deployment of sexuality “that had always to be taken control of lest it escape” (Foucault 269). Unloved and unloving, Crake regards love and unchecked sexuality as “constant torment[s]” (*Oryx and Crake* 305), “hormonally induced delusional state[s]” where “the love object [has] too much power” (193).

Therefore, he attempts to eradicate the “blinding” (313) repercussions of love, designing a “direct and simple” (324) postmodern reproductive body and mating ritual more similar to mammals than men. Speaking of men, what happened to their sexually deviant bodies? Simply put, they died of *blyss*.

Inextricably linked to the Paradise Project, Atwood’s novum—the BlyssPluss Pill—likewise functions as a covert technique of bio-power. Advertised as the future of sexuality and “prophylactic in nature”, the BlyssPluss Pill endeavors to redirect or “eliminate” “misplaced sexual energy, which [Crake] considers to be a large factor [in the “external causes of death”]” (*Oryx and Crake* 293). “Designed to take a set of givens, namely the nature of human nature, and steer these givens in a more beneficial direction” (293), the pill’s “power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (Foucault 260). With three marked capabilities, the pill:

- a) would protect the user against all known sexually transmitted diseases, fatal, inconvenient, or merely unsightly;
- b) would provide an unlimited supply of libido and sexual prowess, coupled with a generalized sense of energy and well-being, thus reducing the frustration and blocked testosterone that led to jealousy and violence, and eliminating feelings of low self-worth;
- c) would prolong youth. (294).

Sounds like a sweet deal, but what’s the catch. “Under the guise of giving them the ultra in orgies”, the BlyssPluss Pill would “also act as a sure-fire, one-time-does-it-all birth control pill, for male and female alike, thus automatically lowering the population level” (247). The pill furtively infiltrates the reproductive body, exerting its sovereign power at the level of the

individual as well as the species. Despite the altruistic pretext for the prevention of “haphazard reproduction” (304), the pill has a greater economic value: “the thing would become a huge-money spinner. It would be the must have pill, in every country, in every society of the world” (295). Who knew the mass sterilization of bodies would be such a lucrative business. In *Oryx and Crake*, technosexual bodies and synthetic love objects are falsely promoted as mediums of human liberation. Once again, the objectives of transgressive technosexuality are warped by sovereign powers—Capital and Crake—and the lived body subjected to biopolitical domination...or worse.

From Crakers to calories, we move on with our examination of the subjugated ‘borged body. In *The Windup Girl*, Paolo Bacigalupi constructs a technosexual identity amidst a landscape of unchecked “tinker[ings] with the building blocks of nature” (248): “beasts and plagues” (246), Windups and other “horror[s] of [the] imagination” (240). Materializing out of this biotechnological terrain, our cyborg, Emiko, is “New People” (35), a genetically-modified humanoid race like the Crakers—a “collection of cells and manipulated DNA” (34), born “from test tubes and gr[own] in crèches” (35). She is a “novelty” (34): “perfect eyesight and perfect skin and disease- and cancer-resistant genes”, a body that “would never age” (34). “A genetic dead end” (114), the New People were “manufactured by flawed gods” (346) to solely exist as a labor force, a servile race “trained from birth to duck [their] head and bow” (36). Not only are their bodies treated “as a machine” (Foucault 262)—“herky-jerky” (43) and “so optimal” (35)—and thus inserted into the economic “machinery of production” (Foucault 263), but the permanent sterilization of their reproductive bodies connotes the ultimate biopolitical “control of populations” (Foucault 262).

Abandoned by her Japanese master in the Thai Kingdom, a population of superstitious and isolated figures, Emiko's status alters from a "wonder" (37) or "an exquisite object" (106) to "[a] joke. An alien toy" (36), a "creature forbidden" (37)—"affront to niche and nature" (37). Merely a *thing*, the Thai regard her as a "piece of genetic trash" (36), a "biological oddity" (45), an "animal" (38)—anything but human. Designed down to her DNA, she struggles with agency, obedient to a fault. Her body is not her own, "perform[ing] just as it was designed" (38); "she cannot control it no matter how much she despises it" (38). An illegal resident, "an invasive" (272) subject to "mulching" (106), Emiko finds pseudo-safety working in a Thai sex club; in exchange for protection, she becomes "property...owned" (46). Despite being an "anthropomorphized of a thing that is not and never will be human" (302), Emiko is used as a sexual "object" (106)—"Sex and hypocrisy. They go together like coffee and cream" (41). In Japan, her economic role varied from "pillow companion, secretary, translator and observer" (101); in Thailand, "she is nothing" (38) but a body to watch, to punish, to play with. As a technosexual, she offers "herky-jerky sex and the promise of transgression" (43). However, this is not the progressive transgression of Haraway's ideal cyborg world; this is a hyper-sexualized transgression bolstered by hate, the taboo, and the dollar sign.

Under the pretext of aging bodies and failing organs, Kazuo Ishiguro erects a national regime of uncanny organ procurement and transplantation in his novel *Never Let Me Go*. Purposefully "kept in the shadows" (263), the origins of these organs expose the cruel biopolitical powers at work in this narrative. While "normals" (96) "preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum" (262), the truth is not so innocent—your cure means the death of another, the death of a "student", the death of a clone. In *Never Let Me Go*, the 'borged body is a clone body. Fostered in crèche-like institutions

isolated from “the outside world” (84) and bred sterile, Ishiguro’s technobodies vie for corporal agency and autonomy in a reality that denies their existence as anything but a “technical necessity” (140), a fleshed object in the “machinery of production” (Foucault 263). As our protagonist Kathy H. notes, the veil of ambiguity enclosing clone life even extends to the early years of the clones themselves:

Thinking back now, I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves—about who we were, how we were different from our guardians, from the people outside—but hadn’t yet understood what any of it meant. (36).

“Told and not told” (82), the students of Hailsham are permitted an innocence, a “cozy state of suspension in which [they] could ponder [their] lives without the usual boundaries” (143). Still, in their innocence they remain artisanal-grown clones complete with cage-free organs. Ultimately, the “dream future” (142) dissolves and the untold are told:

Your lives are set out for you. You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do. You’re not like the actors you watch on your videos, you’re not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. So you’re not to talk like that anymore....If you’re to have decent lives, you have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you,” (81).

A synthetic caste powerless to propagate and cultured to be docile and compliant with their niche, the clone body inherently yields to the disciplines of the “*anatomo-politics* of the human body” and the “*bio-politics of the population*” (Foucault 262). Through procedures and curriculums centered on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including lectures on safe sex, students

are prematurely commoditized: not a body with a mind and a soul, but a vessel of vital organs—made, not begotten.

From the uncanny, we move closer to home: a reality right around the corner. In Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*, we—the madscientists and gods of this technocultural world—practice upon our own bodies, no force to optimize or redesign but ourselves; finally, we take some responsibility in our own evolution! And guess what...we totally die. In a “creative economy” (12) of “nanotechnology and stuff” (12), “the *new* United States of America” (8) stands on the threshold of “Indefinite Life Extension” (9). “Life Lovers” (12), such as Joshie, the proprietor of “Post-Human Services” (5), pump their bodies full of “smart blood” (5) and “little machines...rewiring, rededicating, resetting the odometer on every cell” (218) in a desperate attempt to survive the mortal “fallacy of merely existing” (67). While all citizens, including our protagonist, Lenny Abramov, “may think of themselves as the future” (60), only a “deserving” few succeed “the Old World and its dying nonelectronic corporeality” (21):

I scanned the files of our prospective Life Lovers. Their white, beatific, mostly male faces (our research shows that women are more concerned with taking care of their progeny than with living forever) flashed before me, telling me about their charitable activities, their plans for humanity, their concern for our chronically ill planet, their dreams of eternal transcendence with like-minded yuan billionaires. I guessed that the last time they had been so painfully dishonest was when they penned their applications to Swarthmore forty years earlier. (123).

“Bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them” (Foucault 259), our lust for immortality disciplines the body at the level of the individual, as well as the species. “Centered on the body as a machine” (Foucault 262), the requirements for “cheat[ing] death” (153) are

contingent on physical, financial, and intellectual aptness. Those that cannot afford the price of immortality or already have the “stench of death” (21) about them stand as “poster children for Harm Reduction. The city [has] no use for [them]” (95). This exclusivity controls the population at “the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” (Foucault 262); we are building a superior race and you—yes, *you*: “a so-so body in a world where only an incredible one will do” (5)—do not make the cut. But remember, we are a dumb people in a world of smart advertising. At the end of the novel, we see what immortality looks like: tremors, failing organs, and drooling bodies that scream, “We were wrong” (329).

Speculative fiction projects interesting possibilities for the future of the body and its sexual components. For some like Haraway, the future is bright: emancipation from gender roles and sex expectations, freedom to embrace our transgressive technosexuality, and an end to the era of bio-power and repressive capitalism. However, others chronicle a cyborg future quite like the present: the oppression of bodies and their commoditization, the regulation of populations, and the suppression of counter-normative desires. When presented with the opportunity to transcend the inadequacies of our meat, why do we intentionally draw boundaries on the body, set moral limits, restrict the path to progress? Why is slow culture, our social/symbolic body, so bent on killing us?

Ethos and Art, Language and the Soul: The Postmodern Social/Symbolic Body

“Our bodies are the very flesh of society” (O’Neill 7), cultural palimpsests on which we write and rewrite the intimacies of our symbolic and psychological lives. An active historical process, Postmodernity provides humanity with a new inscription, a novel code of conduct to organize and optimize our abiological bodies. Like it or not, technosexual values penetrate the heart of us: our ethics, our art, our language, and our notions of the soul. Nothing is sacred or concrete to the cyborg; their porosity transcends our opacity. Nevertheless, inherent in these ‘borged values are covert sovereign controls that condition and constrain the societal future of our synthetic love machines. Confounded by the ethics of a self-engineered evolution, slow culture employs diverse techniques to exploit and oppress, withhold language and deny the existence of a cyborg soul. We cannot share the flesh, we cannot reconsider our socially constructed definitions of what it means to be “human” or “natural”— so we’ll die from the pettiness of our own anthropocentricity.

In Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, Craker culture is wholly constructed by sovereign powers. “Walking potatoes” (*MaddAddam* 19), they lack the complex emotional and social lives of their predecessors: “no aggression, no jokes” (*MaddAddam* 19), no artistic or literate lives (*Oryx and Crake* 361), no “harmful symbolisms, such as kingdoms, icons, gods, or money” (*Oryx and Crake* 305), no leaders or slaves (*Oryx and Crake* 155). Intended to purge the world of its socially-constructed torments and the “destructive features” of the “ancient primate brain” (*Oryx and Crake* 305), these interventions suggest a controlled *devolution* of man, a nostalgic return to pre-industrialized life. Humanity is easily discarded:

Monkey brains, had been Crake’s opinion. Monkey paws, monkey curiosity, the desires to take apart, turn inside out, smell, fondle, measure, improve, trash,

discard—all hooked up to monkey brains, an advanced model of monkey brains but monkey brains all the same. Crake had no very high opinion of human ingenuity. (*Oryx and Crake* 99).

Born into a world of fabricated innocence, the Crakers are encouraged to abstain from the poisonous fruits of that pesky Tree of Knowledge. Thanks to biotechnological meddling, it's like we never left the Garden of Eden. However, there is nothing quintessentially 'borged about this programmed projection of an innocent evolution, no slipping or sliding of symbolic thought. We've imposed a stringent, societal grid of control on our synthetic love machines, if only to prevent them from becoming like us. We won't let them be human.

From Crakers to clones, our relentless subjugation of cyborg culture continues. Unlike Atwood's sovereign power, the guardians of Hailsham encourage certain symbolic behaviors—most importantly, an impassioned dedication to the arts: “A lot of the time, how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were like and respected, had to do with how good you were at ‘creating’” (16). Poetry and pictures; “they *revealed what you were like inside...they revealed your soul*” (175). Under the guise of giving its students “good lives” and a cultured education (261), Hailsham's true purpose for collecting the art of its clones remains vague until the end of the novel. Their 'borged art not only *reveals* the soul, but “*prove[s] [they] had souls at all*” (260):

We demonstrated to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being. Before that, all clones—or *students*, as we preferred to call you—existed only to supply medical science...shadowy objects in test tubes” (261).

However, confident of the soullessness of these “demonstrably *superior*” (264) bodies, sovereign society holds no qualms about its subjugation of synthetic love machines: “they tried to convince themselves you weren’t really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn’t matter” (263). Our narcissistic anthropocentric natures delude us into thinking we are the end-all-be-all, the solely souled. But what’s a soul other than a moral abstraction, a hegemonic technique to elevate our status at the expense of others.

Similarly, Bacigalupi’s Emiko struggles against sovereign powers that deny agency for the “soulless”. As a sterile race, the New People will never have the “opportunity to supplant the human species entirely with [their] own improved version” (114). Their sexual and reproductive bodies are subjugated. Why? Though “money is money, and nothing new is under the sun” (34), capitalism is only a shallow factor in this complete corporeal domination. Perhaps its “fear” (125): our fear of the “*farang*” (124), our fear of death, our fear of evolution. We call Emiko “nothing”, “almost human” (34), a “soulless” (302) vessel that “apes the motions of humanity” (301). She is deemed unnatural, but she eats, she breathes, she lives. She *is* real. So why are we so afraid? Dr. Gibbons, a renegade AgriGen bioengineer, suggests, “Don’t cling too tightly to what is natural” (242):

We are nature. Our every tinkering is nature, our every biological striving. We are what we are. We are its gods. Your only difficulty is your unwillingness to unleash your full potential fully upon it. (243).

Gibbons claims that our fear of the “unnatural”, our inability to evolve, will kill us: “Evolve or die” (243). He argues, “We should all be windups by now” (243)—an adaptive race that can be built better, more easily protected from the man-havocked environmental decay. In the *Windup Girl*, humanity stands on the brink of “inevitable change” (243) yet we “refuse to adapt” (243).

To evolve is to transgress the nature of now, to give up the “comforts” of capitalism and body domination. To evolve, to become a “New People”, is to admit that we made a mistake, that we are at fault for our own economic and environmental collapse. To evolve is to give bodies back to our slaves, lift our “infinitesimal surveillances [and] permanent controls” (267). However, like Gibbons and Crake from Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, we’re weary of self-engineered evolution and the experimentation of our own bodies; we’d rather play God.

Evolve or Die

The petty anthropocentricity of humanity astounds. We lust for immortality, but lack the stomach to do what it takes: “We should all be windups by now” (Bacigalupi 243). Still, we cannot share the flesh, mutilate it pass recognition. Bodies are our ontology: what makes us human. Consequently, radical evolution terrifies. As John O’Neil notes:

If we have anything to fear from humanity’s capacity for metamorphosis, it is from the awful potential we now have to erase all other living forms along with ourselves. The truly unthinkable side of our civilizational discontent is that we may well be the first human society to think of itself as the *last*. (2).

The *last*: as if we are the acme of evolution. If anything, it is not our machines that will kill us, but it is our own “hubris that will see our doom” (Gray 2). Whether we like it or not, “the whole world is now one vast uncontrolled experiment” (*Oryx and Crake* 228): a landscape of technosexual bodies and synthetic love machines. So give up and give in to the promises of postmodernity; let the curious body wander, explore the ambit of corporeality as shape and substances slips and slides, mutates and evolves. Do not refuse to adapt—do not die. An Eden of

transcendence beckons to us. Surrender to the speculation; project your flesh into the future.

What does your *meat* look like?

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