

LACANIAN UNCONSCIOUS AND NEW MEDIA AESTHETICS

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ABSTRACT

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Psychoanalysis,
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Contemporary biotechnologies provide an entryway into thinking about bodies and organisms not as natural and biological entities but as informational media, technological apparatuses, instrumental mediums, symbolic systems and coded means of communication, replacing the theories and practices concerning mimetic imitation of life and mechanical reproduction of nature with the semiotic, linguistic, and bioinformatic reproduction of bodies and organisms. This article examines postbiological articulation of bodies, desires, and sexualities at the site of the convergence between Lacanian psychoanalysis and new media aesthetics. It is at the interstices of the connections between information and communication technologies, modern biology, and structural linguistics that Jacques Lacan locates his psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious and desire. The notion of the unconscious as it is mapped by Lacan over structural linguistics' intrinsic kinship with information and communication technologies enables him to examine desire and sexuality at the site of the convergence between linguistic-informational, biological, and psychoanalytic discourses. This bioinformatic revolution transforms the aesthetic stakes of everyday life by suggesting new ways of thinking about bodies, desires, and sexualities. By drawing on acoustic and visual remappings of the body, fragmented and hybrid bodies, digital desires and sexualities in new media artworks, I analyze the body in contemporary art as a biotechnological apparatus, symbolic system, and discursive and non-discursive mode of communication flowing among various media networks and systems.

LACANYEN BİLİNÇDİŞİ VE YENİ MEDYA ESTETİĞİ

ÖZ

Anahtar Kelimeler

Lacanyen Psikanaliz,
Yeni Medya Estetiği,
Biyoteknolojiler,
Biyoenformatik,
Teknolojik Bedenler

Çağdaş biyoteknolojiler bedenleri ve organizmaları doğal ve biyolojik varlıklar olarak değil, teknolojik aygıtlar, araçsal ortamlar, sembolik sistemler, kodlanmış iletişim araçları ve mecraları olarak düşünmemizi sağlayarak yaşamın ve doğanın mimetik takliti ve mekanik yeniden üretimi ile ilgili kuramların aksine, bedenleri ve organizmaları semiyotik, dilsel ve biyoinformatik yeniden üretim üzerinden farklı bir biçimde algılamamızı sağlar. Bu makale, Lacancı psikanaliz ışığında yeni medya estetiğini tartışarak bedenlerin, arzuların ve cinselliklerin biyoloji sonrası ve insan sonrası dönemde algılanışını inceleyecektir. Jacques Lacan, psikanalitik bilinçdışı ve arzu anlayışını, bilgi ve iletişim teknolojileri, modern biyoloji ve yapısalcı dilbilim arasındaki bağlantıların keşiştiği noktaya yerleştirir. Lacan tarafından yapısalcı dilbilimin, bilgi ve iletişim teknolojileriyle olan akrabalığı üzerinden haritalandırıldığı şekliyle bilinçdışı kavramı, onun dilbilimsel, biyolojik ve psikanalitik söylemler arasındaki keşişme alanında arzu ve cinselliği incelemesine olanak tanır. Bu biyoinformatik devrim, bedenler, arzular ve cinsellikler hakkında yeni düşünme biçimleri önererek günlük yaşamın estetik algılamalarını ve deneyimlerini dönüştürür. Bu makale, yeni medya sanatı eserlerinde bedenün parçalanmışlığına bakarak ve dijital arzuların ve cinselliklerin akustik ve görsel olarak yeniden haritalanması inceleyerek, bedenün çağdaş sanattaki tasvirini doğal ve biyolojik bir varlık olarak değil, biyoteknolojik bir aygıt, sembolik bir sistem ve çeşitli medya ağları ve sistemleri arasında akan söylemsel olan ve-de ayrıca söylemsel olmayan bir iletişim modu olarak konumlandıracaktır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We no longer exist in the realm of mechanical reproducibility²; we now inhabit one wherein biology and information theories combine to produce a new, simulacral form of technological reproduction in which bodies and organisms become affective codes, scripted texts, and discursive and non-discursive modes of communication flowing between various media networks and systems. New media technologies provide an entryway into thinking about bodies and organisms not as natural and biological entities but as informational media, technological apparatuses, instrumental and discursive mediums, symbolic systems, and coded means of communication. This replaces the theories and practices concerning the mimetic imitation of life and the mechanical reproduction of nature with the semiotic, linguistic, and bioinformatic reproduction of bodies, organs, and organisms, as exemplified by cyborgs, clones, replicas, avatars, artificial organisms, and virtual life forms. This bioinformatic revolution transforms the aesthetic stakes of everyday life by suggesting new ways of thinking about bodies, desires, and sexualities. Whether it is the insertion of digital artifacts or sensory devices into the body, the acoustic and visual remapping of the bodily interiorities, downloadable and zipped bodies, artificial organs, digital and hybrid bodies and sexualities, or new media technologies bring forth a new understanding of the body as a biodigital communication device that regulates the processing and transmission of bodily information.

There has been an epistemological shift from the mechanistic philosophy of nature and the mechanical conception of bodies' and organisms' physiological and physical processes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into modern biology's organic and vital conception of life. Subsequently, contemporary post-biological approaches to life, nature, and the body changed, a shift which can be traced back to molecular biology's intertwinement with cybernetics, information theory, and linguistic research in the post-World War II era in the United States (Johnston, 2010, p. 105-163; Geoghegan, 2011, p. 96-126). The advancement of information and communication technologies and the emerging field of cybernetics in the US had a strong influence in the formation of the

² In his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin argues that photography and film, the modern means of image production, generate new modes of human existence and perception. (Benjamin, 1935)

discourse and methods of structural linguistics.³ Recent studies concerning the historical, social, and political underpinnings of the linkages between American techno-scientific innovations and postwar French theory clearly demonstrate the foundational role of the postmodern America's cyber culture in the formation of post-war French theory (Lafontaine, 2007, p. 27- 46; Liu, 2010, p. 288- 320).

The convergences between information and communication technologies, cybernetics, modern biology, and structural linguistics form the basis of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theories concerning the workings of the unconscious. Lacan's psychoanalytic theory brings forth a new discussion concerning the biotechnological reproduction of bodily organs as signifying images in the symbolic apparatus of desire. Discussing Lacanian psychoanalysis through new media technologies and aesthetics enables the analysis of bodies as discursive networks and mediums. It is at the interstices of the connections between information and communication technologies, modern biology, and structural linguistics that Lacan locates his psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious and desire.⁴ The notion of the unconscious as it is mapped by Lacan over structural linguistics' intrinsic kinship with information and communication technologies enables him to examine desire and sexuality at the site of the convergence between linguistic-informational, biological, and psychoanalytic discourses:

I can do no more than point out here, what, in the biological register, is associated with sexual differentiation, in the form of secondary sexual characteristics and functions ... It is modern structuralism that has brought this out best, by showing that it is at the level of matrimonial alliance, as opposed to natural generation,

³ The migration of Roman Jakobson, a Russian-American linguist, and Claude Levi-Strauss, a French structural anthropologist and linguist, to the U.S during the war played a pivotal role in structuralism's revision within the framework of cybernetics and information theories and technologies. The reformulation of structural linguistics heavily relies upon Jakobson's and Levi-Strauss' incorporation of information and communication theories and technologies into their semiotic and linguistic research. Their collaboration in both The New School for Social Research, a new home for European intellectuals escaping to US from the Nazi threat in Germany and elsewhere, and in the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded research on digital media, information and communication technologies during the post-war era, radically transformed the nature of structural linguistics and had a major impact on its reception as a significant post-war intellectual movement. Jakobson's and Strauss' introduction to digital media technologies and theories via the Rockefeller Foundation and their collaborative teaching in The École Libre des Hautes Études, an institute of The New School for Social Research that promotes French theory, laid the foundations for the emergence of new structuralism (Geoghegan, 2011, p. 96-126).

⁴ There is a profound influence of Levi-Strauss' revision of the discourse and methods of structural linguistics on Lacan's subversion of the biologically oriented Freudian theory of the unconscious. Upon his return to Paris from the US in 1948, Levi-Strauss shares the significant role of cybernetics and information theory in the formation of structuralism with his close friend Lacan, to whom, in 1950, he also introduces Jakobson. Lacan's exposure to the conceptual relationship between structural linguistics and information and communication technologies lays the foundations of Lacan's theory of the unconscious as a symbolic apparatus, which simultaneously registers the biological and the technological, maintaining one through the other and integrating both in sexuality and desire (Johnston, 2010, p. 105-163; Geoghegan, 2011, p. 96-126).

to biological lineal descent – *at the level therefore of the signifier* – that the fundamental exchange takes place and it is there that we find once again the most elementary structures of social functioning are inscribed in terms of a combinatory. (Lacan, 1981, p. 150)

Through examining Lacanian psychoanalysis in conjunction with new media technologies and artworks, this article assesses the unconscious inscription of bodies, organs, skins, and flesh into the symbolic apparatus of desire. Mutant, monstrous, and hybrid post-biological bodies appear across a myriad of contemporary new media artworks, articulating the aesthetic, social, cultural, and ideological stakes of new body politics and new modes of subjectification, sexuality, and desire. In these new media artworks, bodily processes and functions are textually, visually, and acoustically coded and displayed as a combination of meat, sound, image, and code. They lay out a digital, hallucinatory cartography of the fragmented body, complex hybridizations of uncanny whisperings, blinking images, flickering sounds, and words bursting out uncontrollably. It is an artistic display of the body as a multimedia object that fuses the visual, auditory, and linguistic systems of communication. Bodily interiority is portrayed by new media artists as an imaginary landscape, an unknown territory full of strange, dream-like sounds conflated with spasmodic images and twitching words. Hallucinating and delusional organs embedded within the electronic and digital circuitry of computers bring the organic functions of the body together with the informational-linguistic codifications. This bioinformatic codification of the bodily processes reconfigures the body's biological geography in terms of linguistic codes that process and display information at sensorial and affective levels.

2.UNCONSCIOUS AND NEW MEDIA AESTHETICS

New media technologies, according to Murray, subvert the modern mimetic technologies of inscription and technological regimes of imaginary and projective identification by leading “*to more complicated distinctions between copy and copy*” than the Benjaminian “*distinction between original and copy*” (2008, p. 164) According to Benjamin, the cinematic inscription upon the world recaptures the primitive mind's mimetic mode of thinking and its cosmic experience by means of the cinematic technologies' restoration of the law of similarity and resemblance between a copy and an original: “*Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range, by way of its likeness, its reproduction*” (Benjamin, 1935, p. 223). For Benjamin, the camera as

the modern mimetic technology of inscription has the spiritual and divine power of the ancient script. By containing the “structure of cosmic being” within the law of “*magical correspondences and analogies*” (p. 334), the mimetic mode of thinking brings microcosm and macrocosm together, connecting “*what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never one without the other*” (p. 338). The cinematic inscription of the world recaptures the primitive mind’s mimetic mode of thinking by restoring the mimetic correspondences between the signifier and the referent via the camera’s sensuous embodiment of the world. Benjamin’s conception of the cinematic reproduction of the mimetic mode of thinking is grounded in becoming “*mimetically at one with what it attempts to represent*” (p. 16). Benjamin links primitivism to the cinematic technologies of inscription as well as to the sensuous and mimetic similarities between the signifier and referent through the modern mimetic machinery’s opening up of the unconscious as the space of the Other. And, as anthropologist Taussig succinctly claims, it is through “*the magic of the signifier*” that cinematic technologies restore the mimetic faculty:

And if I am correct in invoking a certain magic of the signifier and what Walter Benjamin took the mimetic faculty to be--namely, the compulsion to become the Other--and if, thanks to new social conditions and new techniques of reproduction (such as cinema and the mass production of imagery), modernity has ushered in a veritable rebirth, a recharging and retooling the mimetic faculty. (Taussig, 1992, p. xviii - xix)

By bringing cybernetics and information and communication technologies together with the workings of the unconscious, Lacan, on the other hand, follows anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss⁵, who argues that the savage mind’s “*principles of interpretation ...*

⁵ By bringing together the theories of molecular biology and modern genetics with information and communication technologies, Levi-Strauss and Jakobson significantly revised the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s pioneering work on structural linguistics. In *The Savage Mind*, a work that employs cybernetics and media technologies in explaining the structural dynamics of the primitive thought, beliefs, and practices, Levi-Strauss refers to modern biology’s reliance upon information and communication technologies and analyzes species’ physiological and genetic diversity in terms of chromosomes, maintaining that the technological generation and the production of signifying chains corresponds to the biological signification of the molecular chain of species (Geoghegan 96-126). Levi-Strauss’ structural integration of information theory and biological discourse in his explanation of the logic of myths, rituals, kinship, marriage, and other modes of cultural expressions and social practices via linguistic codes, syntax, grammar, and messages, leading him to find structural affinities, contiguities, associations, and patterns between socio-cultural and bio-genetic diversities; the existing social and cultural relations correspond to the technological inscription and transcription of the biological regime of signs. The idea of bio-semiotic storage and transmission of signs enabled the denaturalizing and historicizing of the bio-genetic diversities through their informational-linguistic significations. This structural correspondence between modern genetics and linguistics not only points towards the compatibility between the species’ biological and genetic diversities and the linguistic-cultural codification of these diversities in terms of the socio-cultural codes, but also towards Levi-Strauss’ cybernetic and linguistic conception of modern biology. This, in turn, enabled him to reformulate the Freudian unconscious as a social and cultural operator, describing

have been revealed to us [Westerners] only recently through very recent inventions: telecommunications, computers, and electron microscopes” (Levi-Strauss, as cited in Geoghegan, 2011, p. 97). The digital reproducibility of biological images here subverts Benjamin’s biomimetic understanding of modern technologies of inscription. As Murray argues, the paradigm shift in the technologies of writing establishes “*new registrations of code and interactivity [that] is paradigmatic of the digital spectacle*” (2008, p. 225). According to Murray, new technologies of inscription replace the Freudian mystic writing pad with that of a digital scanner. The radicality of digital media lies in “effac[ing] the prestige of images by opening the subject to linguistic abstraction” (p. 220).

In order to ascertain the working mechanisms of the unconscious as psychic digital scanner, Lacan utilizes the cybernetic conception of a game.⁶ The concept of a game with its wider scope of reference to digital media and cybernetics exemplify how Lacan utilizes the a game of even and odd, electrical circuits, and cybernetic machines to demonstrate the symbolic apparatus functions as a psychic digital machine. According to Lacan, the symbolic apparatus concerns the digital alterity of the regime of signification. Lacan relates the radical alterity of “the discourse of the Other” to the machinic game of signifiers. The symbolic apparatus embodying “*the discourse of the Other*” points toward the radically alien nature of signification. He examines the symbolic apparatus as an autonomously operating meta-machine, whose self-reflexivity is grounded in “*the play [game] of signifiers*” (Lacan, 1981, p. 150). The symbolic order is thus a machinic apparatus that “*takes itself into account*” [*se compter elle-meme*]” (Johnston, 2010, p. 55). The symbolic operators follow “the play [game] of signifiers” because the Lacanian unconscious operates by “*the function of the signifier*” (Lacan, 1981, p. 152). The symbolic apparatus is a psychic apparatus that speaks the discourse of the radically alien digital Other.

unconscious symbolic structures in terms of the semiotic and informational-linguistic functions and processes (Seriot, 2014, p. 141-174).

⁶ it is crucial to briefly refer here to a particular problem concerning the English translation and appropriation of the concepts play/game and stochastic/aleatory. This issue is raised by Liu as follows: “it is startling to ponder how two different concepts “game” and “play” in game theory have morphed into a single idea of ‘play’ in literary theory ... what gets lost in translation is the concept of ‘game’, ‘game theory’, and, more importantly, the associated history of cybernetic developments in the cold war ... The stochastic process ... involves the play of chance and probability... But this concept is caught in a similar blind play of signifiers, as in the instance of ‘game’, when ‘aleatory’ returns to English through literary philosophical translations that seldom render the French word back to ‘stochastic.’” (Liu, 2010, p. 153-154)

It is within this context of the biomachinic game of signifiers that Lacan distinguishes between the imaginary and the symbolic orders: "*The one thing which cybernetics clearly highlights is the difference between the symbolic and the imaginary orders*" (Johnston, 2010, p. 306). Within its broader reference to digitality, the term game is linked to the term aleatory in the sense that alea "is the Latin name for the game of dice," including connotations such as "*based on a decision independent of the player, an outcome over which he has no control,*" "*entirely passive,*" "*blind verdict of chance,*" "*negation of the will, a surrender to destiny,*" and "*pure equality*" (Liu, 2010, p. 153-154). To explain the symbolic signification on the basis of the machinic game of signifiers, Lacan discusses Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter," of which, Lacan notes, "*the cyberneticists, I noticed, make something of.*" (Lacan, 1988, p. 179). The part Lacan refers to in Poe's text concerns the policeman Dupin telling a story about a schoolboy whose success in playing the game of even and odd depends on him always rightly guessing whether the number of marbles that the opponent holds in his hands is an odd or even number. Dupin, with another policeman, concludes that the schoolboy's success was dependent on the strategy of "*identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent*" (p. 180). This identification "*depends ... upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured*" (p. 180). This kind of reasoning, according to Lacan, is based on the assumption that winning or losing in the game of even and odd concerns "*the subject adopt[ing] a mirror position*" (p. 181). By identifying with the opponent's point of view, the other person tries to correctly guess the opponent's decision. Lacan challenges the role of this imaginary identification in understanding the game of even and odd: "*the heart of the matter lies in a completely different register from that of imaginary intersubjectivity*" (p. 181). While the imaginary intersubjectivity consists in the regime of identification, the symbolic order primarily consists in the inhuman machinic game of signifiers.

By incorporating the notion of cybernetic biofeedback loops into his theory of the symbolic order, Lacan demonstrates that the symbolic apparatus operates as the digital interface linking the organism to its environment. Digital alterity reveals here a more radical alterity than the Benjaminian biomimetic technologies of identification. It transgresses the imaginary order's identificatory regime between the one and the other:

Whenever we are dealing with imitation, we should be very careful not to think too quickly of the other who is being imitated. To imitate is no doubt to reproduce an image. But at the bottom, it is,

for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it. (Lacan, 1981, p. 100)

Therefore, Lacan's notion of mimetic desire significantly diverges from Benjamin's conceptual linkage of mimesis to the technological reproducibility of images via photographic and cinematic devices. While Benjamin's notion of the optical unconscious serves to historically reconcile the spiritual power of the ancient scriptural logic with the cinematic technologies of writing, Lacan links information and communication technologies to the primitivism of the unconscious via the biotechnological reproducibility of images (their biogrammar).

The biotechnological reproducibility of images refers here to the informational-linguistic register of psychic processes construing the bio-grammar of digitally scanned body images. Murray relates this process of digital scanning to symbolic encoding. Psychic scansion, Murray argues, concerns the apparatus of digital scanner, through which "*the procedures of scansion could be thought as functioning to rewrite subjectivity as a mere component of the deterritorialized residue of code and its repetition*" (2008, p. 221). The symbolic apparatus is here conceived of as a digital psychic scanner that operates at the level of the regime of signification. This inscription of the subject within the symbolic order suggests a psychic digital scansion, an unconscious digital encoding process that concerns the signifying reduction of the subject's image to a series of 0s and 1s. The psychic scansion's bioinformatic codification of the subject's image reveals that digital media's "deterritorialized code" consists of the denaturalization of the indexical relation between an image and its referent.

This bioinformatic and linguistic processing of bodies shifts the emphasis away from the idea of biological reproduction to the technological reproducibility of bodily images as signs, which refers to informational-linguistic register of psychic processes of construing the bio-grammar of scanned bodily organs. According to Lacan, the bioinformatic circuitry of the signifying networks corresponds to the geographical distribution of bodily zones only because organs are mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus as the regulators of drives. Organs are mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus as "organ-instruments" of the bodily drives. Lacan's notion of "organ-instrument" pinpoints this overlap of the biological and the linguistic-informational functions of the bodily organs. The psychic system's digital montage of drives opens the possibility of analyzing drives as complex montages of

digitally copy-pasted body parts and organs. Such psychic scansion concerns a digital montage of drives: *"It is because of the reality of the homeostatic system that sexuality comes into play in the form of partial drives. The drive is precisely that montage"* (Lacan, 1988, p. 176). This conception necessitates addressing the bodily stimulation within the context of the biotechnological reproduction of the visual, auditory, and tactile organs as sense-apparatuses. Bodies become corporeal media of information transference. The process of cutting, copy-pasting, and superimposing different body parts chosen from a large variety of scanned bodily organs disintegrates the body and establishes it as a complex montage and collage of technologically coded images mapped onto the unconscious signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus of desire.

The psychic systems' bioinformatic codification of the bodily network of signifiers opens a radically new perspective in terms of the structural correspondence between the biological signification of the body and its linguistic/informational codification in the symbolic apparatus. This correspondence reconfigures the inscription of the bodily organs and drives in the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus in relation to the digital montages of the bodily drives and organs. These organ-instruments are embedded in the networks of signifiers, redefining desire in terms of the technological inscription of the erotic zones in the symbolic apparatus. The bioinformatic circuitry of the signifying network corresponds to the bodily geographic distribution of the erogenous zones.

Echoing Lacan's idea of *"delusional endoscopies that the subject has of what is happening inside his stomach or lungs... of what goes on inside the system of nerve fibers"* (1988, p. 35), the CTHEORY Multimedia online art exhibition *Tech Flesh: The Promise and Perils of the Human Genome Project*, curated by Timothy Murray and Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, display bodily interiority in the form of a digital psychophysical landscape, manifesting a coordination between the geographical distribution of body parts (the body's psychic geography) and their linguistic and symbolic codification. This new media art exhibition consists of digital and interactive artworks from fourteen artists whose projects articulate the aesthetic stakes of bioinformatic and biotechnological apparatuses. These new media art forms and technologies lay out bodies' sensorial cartographies in terms of linguistic-informational digital circuits. They address the bodily stimulation within the context of the biotechnological reproduction of the visual, auditory, and tactile organs as sense-apparatuses.

The symbolic apparatus operates as a digital archive, a databank of pre-scanned images and models. It contains the complex digital montages, layering, collages, superimpositions, and integrations of various bodily organs and drives. In Brad Todd's net art *Hearing Loss*, Murray argues, "vision and voyeurism are layered in montage over the architectonics of the ear" (2008, p. 172). The integration of the visceral intensities of the electronic sound with the digital image of an ear reconstitutes the visual field as the digital and supplementary artifact of the auditory organ. It disintegrates the whole sensorium of the body, "reconfiguring the senses, creating hybridities and mutations of the previously separated ratio of the senses" (p. 173). The auditory organ displayed as a mute sense-apparatus, or a digital sensory device that does not hear but speaks, creates semiotic confusions and sensory disorientations in the observer. The hybridization of the organs generates monstrous montages of distinct sensibilities, rewiring the digital circuits of sensations by disrupting the normative physiological choreography of the body:

An eye that hears. Skin that speaks. ... A recombinant body with tactile smell, touch that arcs across the color spectrum, chromatic sounds, muffled sweat, talking retinas and noise that bleeds, Lasix eyes, eyes that see but have no vision. (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu)

Norie Neumark and Maria Miranda's *Machine Organs* exhibition also encompasses a series of bodily functions uploaded into the wired membranes of the net: a digestion machine, a heart pump machine, a breath machine, and an x-ray vision machine, providing the users with links to each machine. *Digestion Machine* consists of incessantly repeating gulping sound, the image of two bouncing spheres, and a blinking group of words that diagonally move across the screen. Digestion is symbolized with a mechanical sound, a short and compressed version of the processes of putting the food in the mouth, salivation, pushing the food around, chewing, and swallowing. This amplified sound of the act of digesting becomes the material fabric of the phrases cutting the screen diagonally in the forms of an "organ of hunger" "hungry for information" and "computers as stomach and intestines" (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu). *Digestion Machine* then lays out the psychic geography of what the artists call the "frightening, messy, noisy unconscious" (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu). It manifests the psychic system's digital scansion and symbolic codification of the bodily drives in terms of the monstrous hybridizations, collages, and montages of the joyfully filthy digestions, cannibalistic oral sounds, disgusting wastes, bleeding excretions, constipated words, dirty vibrations, decaying images, speaking organs, engulfing noises, and erogenous bodily fluids and zones.

These new media artworks' inscriptions of the complex hybridizations of the bodily organs and drives into the circuits of signifying networks brings up the question of how the symbolic apparatus of desire scans and remotely activates the intensive multimedia network of bodily drives. *Digestion Machine*, for example, articulates the geographical alignment of the mouth as it is coded in the signifying networks of desire as the "organ of hunger," which becomes the speaking organ that is "hungry for information." The notion of "food as information" points out the structural affinities between the informational-linguistic register and the biological register of the oral drive. Concerning the mouth as the regulator and transmitter of the oral-drive circuit, Lacan writes:

Why are the so-called erogenous zones recognized only in those points that are differentiated by us for their rim-like structure? Why does one speak of the mouth and not of the oesophagus, or the stomach? They participate just as much in the oral function. But at the erogenous level we speak of the mouth, of the lips and the teeth, of what Homer calls the enclosure of the teeth. (1981, p. 168-169)

The generation of the oral drive relies upon the inscription of the mouth in the symbolic apparatus as the instrument of its drive. It is the body apparatus or the medium through which the oral drive comes into existence. However, the mouth becomes the organ-instrument of the oral drive only if the oral drive recognizes itself as the mouth in the symbolic apparatus of desire. By recognizing the mouth as the operator of the oral drive, it simultaneously recognizes itself in the symbolic apparatus and becomes recognized by the symbolic apparatus as the mouth. The mouth as the organ-instrument of the oral drive is the oral drive's medium. However, the question still remains: why among all these organs (oesophagus, stomach, etc.) that participate in the satisfaction of the oral drive, is that the mouth is caught in the signifying networks of desire as the erogenous zone and medium of the oral drive?

As the erogenous zone of the oral drive, the mouth is a boundary, limit, or point of contact that distinguishes the inside from the outside. The oral drive is channeled through the mouth because it is the erotic zone of contact (erogenous zone) on the limit of the inside and the outside, a topological symbolic operator through which the self opens itself to the other. It is through the mouth that the linguistic register of the oral drive becomes coordinated with its bodily geographical distribution. In other words, the mouth is the bio-informatic and linguistic regulator of the oral drive because it links the inside and the outside at the limit of both. In other words, the mouth is the medium of the oral drive only because the materiality of the mouth is the same with its signification.

The Krokors' spoken word and Steve Gibson's musical artwork *The BioTech Eye* in the *Tech Flesh* exhibition also demonstrates the overlap between the biological and the linguistic-informational circuits. The artwork makes it untenable to view signifying functions and biological functions as distinct categories. *The BioTech Eye* is the future eye, "a data catcher," a digitized acoustics of the visual field, a bio-semiotic inscription, a non-signifying intensive network of sounds and words, a site for auditory emission of images and involuntary visual contractions of sounds, or an eye that has lost its ability to speak (ctheorymultimedia.cornell.edu).

Concerning the scopic drive, Lacan argues that "the root of the scopic drive is to be found entirely in the subject, in the fact that the subject sees himself ... he looks at himself, I would say, in his sexual member" (1981, p. 194). At the level of the scopic drive, the symbolic apparatus marks the eye as a signifying bodily image. The eye is then codified as an organ whose symbolic function is to see. The eye as a bodily organ becomes inscribed into the networks of signifiers in the form of an image whose symbolic function is transcribed as the organ-instrument of the scopic drive. In that sense, the biological function of the eye is the same as its symbolic function. The eye as a biological organ functions like the sensory organ of sight because it corresponds to "the function of the signifier" (p. 152). Lacan's notion of an organ-instrument pinpoints the overlap of the biological with the linguistic-informational functions of the bodily organs. Now, turning back to Lacan's argument that imitation, undoubtedly, refers to the reproduction of an image in that "it is, for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it," one recognizes that the subject's insertion in the symbolic order necessitates its inscription in the symbolic apparatus of desire, which is regulated by "the function of the signifier" (p. 150). The function of the eye is integral to its symbolic function because the eye is marked as a signifying bodily image. In other words, the eye is mapped onto the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus as a bodily image that transcends this image's indexical relation to its referent. The eye is symbolically marked here as the medium of the scopic drive. The symbolic apparatus scans and remotely activates the intensive multimedia network of bodily drives:

we must now pose the question as to the exact status of the eye as organ. The function, it is said, creates the organ. This is quite absurd – function does not even explain the organ. Whatever appears in the organism as an organ is always presented with a large multiplicity of functions. In the eye, it is clear that various functions come together. (Lacan, 1981, p. 102)

The eye is then the medium/media which brings all these heterogeneous functions together and organizes them according to the function of the signifier. There are many parts and elements that contribute to the sense of sight. However, the organ which is symbolically codified as the sense organ of sight is the eye. As a part of the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus, the eye differentiates itself from the networks of other signifying organs via its symbolic instrumentality and is thus inherent in the signifier eye's function. As the regulator of the scopic drive, the eye "has separated itself off as organ" (Lacan, 1981, p. 103). The biological network of the body parallels the complex signifying network of drives only because the organ-instruments such as the eye are themselves bioinformatic codifications. One of the critical implications of this lies in reformulating organs as exterior bio-technological sense-apparatuses. The eye is the prosthetic supplemental excess of the sense of sight. It is absent from itself, because it is extracted from itself by the symbolic apparatus of desire.

The satisfaction of the scopic drive, or the act of seeing taking place, relies upon the enclosure of the signifying drive-circuit, or the arrival of the drive to its point of departure. According to Lacan, it is through the enclosure of the scopic drive-circuit, or the reflexive closure of seeing oneself seeing, that the symbolic apparatus regulates the "outwards-and-back movement" of the scopic drive (1981, p. 178). The reflexive "outward and return movement of the drive" (p. 178) situates the subject at "the correlative of the picture" by weaving threads that link one to the other at each point in space, "a point-by-point sweeping of space, a scanning" (p. 316). In other words, the auto-erotic closure of the scopic drive, the reflexive closure of seeing oneself seeing, is the same as the enclosure of the signifying circuit.

While examining the Freudian homeostatic drives in terms of the enclosure of the erogenous signifying circuits, Lacan incorporates the biofeedback mechanisms into understanding the symbolic apparatus of desire. The homeostatic reference addresses here the nervous system's equilibrium, its discharge of energy, in relation to the biofeedback mechanisms, which concern the returning of the drive to its point of departure. It is through these bio-cybernetic reflexive feedback loops with the outside that a system turns back on itself:

... this thing turning back on itself. It's called feedback, and it is related to the homeostat ... We call that a message ... What is a message inside a machine? Something which proceeds by opening and not opening, the way an electronic lamp does, by yes or no. It's

something articulated of the same order as the fundamental oppositions of the symbolic register this something which turns has to, or doesn't, come back into play. It is always ready to give a reply, and be completed by this selfsame act of replying ... this comes very close to what we can conceive of as Zwang, the compulsion to repeat. (Lacan, 1988, p. 88-89)

The message becomes transmitted when systems feed back into themselves. The biocybernetic reflexivity implies that any system, by closing in on itself, makes this enclosure simultaneously possible and impossible. Only by recursively turning back or closing into itself may it differentiate itself from its outside and become the same with itself inside. A system's biocybernetic reflexivity thus refers to the medium's act of mediation with itself. Through the reflexive feedback loops with the outside, systems fold back into themselves by folding from the outside in to the inside. Reflexivity might then be defined as this act that constitutes the outside as the inside of the inside, or vice versa. In other words, the transmission of the message--the enclosure of the signifying circuit--has nothing to do with meaning. It does not signify anything but only concerns the erotic enclosure of the signifying circuits. Desire is dehumanized here because the satisfaction of the drives relies upon the opening and closing of the drive circuits.

The symbolic codification of the turning back of the scopic drive to its point of departure results in the bioinformatic codification of the eye as the "organ-instrument" of the sense of sight. The reflexive closure of seeing oneself seeing depends on the constitution of the subject as the reversed reflection of the other, the process through which the other is reversed or inverted into what the subject articulates as "I." The signifier "I" is the inverted form of the "you," the other through which "I see myself seeing myself." By moving back and forth from one pole to the other, the subject becomes constituted as the one, or ego/I, that sees herself from outside of herself as the Other. This relation is that of a subject with herself as the Other links self-replication to self-mutilation via the technological reproducibility of an image of oneself in the other as the stain or spot: "*I situate myself in the picture as stain--these are the facts of mimicry*" (Lacan, 1981, p. 98).

In pronouncing the reflexive visual trope of "I see myself seeing myself," the subject replicates itself, revealing a further insight into the symbolic apparatus regulating this process of signifying reversion. "To see" is the reversed form of "to be seen." "To be seen" is turned inside out to see that which is "to be seen." It is because of the signifying reversion of the outside into the inside that one sees oneself seeing. This reflexive relation

of the subject with herself corresponds to the scopic drive's act of closing in on itself. The inside is determined as the reversion of the outside, or similarly the inside is determined as the outside of the outside.

This enclosure of the signifying circuit reduces the subject to zero and the subject becomes captured by the non-signifying networks of desire: "*the subject always remains unperceived, for it is reduced to zero. In so far as the gaze, qua objet a, may come to symbolize this central lack expressed in the phenomenon of castration*" (Lacan, 1988, p. 76-77). The subject symbolizes her own vanishing in the form of I/ego: "*That is why ... misunderstood (meconnu) ... the subject manages, fortunately, to symbolize his own vanishing and punctiform bar (trait) in the illusion of the consciousness of seeing oneself see oneself*" (p. 83). The subject becomes caught in the signifying networks of the symbolic apparatus of desire: "*And there is only one method of knowing that one is there, namely, to map the network. And how is the network mapped? One goes back and forth ... one cross-checks*" (p. 45).

The symbolic apparatus demonstrates the bodies' sensorial cartography in terms of the overlap of the biological and linguistic-informational circuits. With the signifying reversal of the "being seen" from everywhere outside into the inside or the reversal of "being seen" into seeing that which is "being seen," the eye becomes extracted from the body as a signifying bodily image that is mapped onto the signifying networks of desire. The eye is then inscribed into the networks of the symbolic apparatus as the organ-instrument of the scopic drive. In other words, the eye is a biotechnological instrument.

This reflexive movement of the drives, their arrival to the point of departure, constitutes the subject by linguistically reducing her to the binary code of presence and absence of the I/ego. The symbolic function of this enclosure of the drive-circuits finds its expression in the digital codes of being (1) or non-being (0). By being integrated to the symbolic apparatus, the subject constantly questions the presence and absence of the ego: am I or am I not, is it yes (1) or no (0)? "*Everything comes back to 'to be' or not to be,*" Lacan writes, "*absence or presence*" (Lacan, 1988, p. 192). The symbolic order operates by yes or no: "*As soon as the subject himself comes to be, he owes it to a certain non-being on which he raises his being*" (p. 192). The code of life insistently returns back in the form of yes or no, the constant opening or closing of the drive-circuits. The psychic oscillation generated

by the turning back of the drive-circuits manifests itself at the level of the incessant closing and opening of the signifying circuits:

Once the door is open, it closes. When it is closed, it opens. A door isn't either open or shut, it must be either open or shut, it must be either open and then shut, and then opened and then shut. Thanks to.... what is called feedback, it is sufficient for the door to close for it to be returned ... to an open state and that is its closure again, and its opening again. In this way what is called oscillation is produced. This oscillation is the scansion. And the scansion is the basis upon which one can inscribe ... a series of montages. (Lacan, 1988, p. 302)

Turning back to the way Lacan relates the Freudian homeostasis to the reflexive enclosure of the drives via the compulsion to repeat (Zwang), one recognizes that repetition manifests itself by way of the symbolic function of 1 (am I?) or 0 (am I not?): *"repetition ... emerges beyond the pleasure principle. It vacillates beyond all the biological mechanisms of equilibration ... It is only introduced by the register of language, by the function of the symbol"* (p. 90).

The enclosure of the signifying circuit corresponds to the death drive, that is, "the biological finality of sexuality": *"when the loop is closed ... there has been a reversal, when the other has come into play, when the subject has taken himself as the end, the terminus of the drive"* (Lacan, 1981, p. 183). Sexuality is examined here in terms of the death drive, as the death drive addresses the relationship between sexuality and signification: *"all the sexual drives as articulated at the level of significations in the unconscious, in as much as what they bring out is death – death as signifier and nothing but signifier"* (p. 257). The idea of biological reproduction replaced with the techno-sexual reproducibility of differential signs foregrounds sexuality and desire in technical and technological genealogy and generation of signs. The interlocking themes of bioinformatic modulations of sexuality entail the reformulation of sexual reproduction within the technological regime of signs, shifting the emphasis away from the reproductive capacities of the biological body to the technological transmission of affective information and generation of recombinant or mutant bodies, desires, and sexualities.

This perspective reconsiders sexuality in light of the bodies' bioinformatic circuitry. The bioinformatic processing of the bodies emphasizes the technological reproducibility of the bodily regimes of signification: *"with regard to the biological finality of sexuality, namely, reproduction, the drives ... are partial drives"* (Lacan, 1981, p. 175). Sexual

reproduction understood in terms of the technological reproducibility and differentiation of signs points towards a post-biological articulation of sexuality and desire, reformulating sexual signification in relation to the structural interbreeding, monstrosity, montage, and hybridization of bodily drives and organs.

The symbolic apparatus is thus a digital archive, a database of pre-scanned images and models. It is the digital archive of desire because it possesses the complex digital montages, layering, collages, and superimpositions of various bodily organs and drives. The biological network of the body parallels the signifying networks of desire only because of this digital montage, this collage and montage of bodily drives and organs:

They deal only with that part of sexuality that passes into the networks of the constitution of the subject, into the networks of the signifier – sexuality is realized only through the operation of the drives in so far as they are partial drives, partial with regard to the biological finality of sexuality. (Lacan, 1981, p. 177)

Therefore, the technological inscription of the bodies in the signifying networks of desire replaces the idea of natural sexual reproduction with the technological reproduction of digital images as sexually differentiated signifiers. Sexual reproduction understood in terms of the technological reproducibility of signifiers foregrounds sexuality in the technological reproducibility of bodily images; these images are structurally differentiated signifiers that are inscribed into the bodily networks of informational-linguistic systems.

3.CONCLUSION

The symbolic apparatus is the site where the biological and linguistic-informational processes are coordinated. It pinpoints the inability to coordinate between materiality and signification. I think Lacan makes it untenable to view signifying functions and biological functions as distinct categories. Everything becomes a sign; everything speaks, but only to each other: *“the signifier is a sign that doesn’t refer to any object, but insofar as it forms part of language, the signifier is a sign which refers to another sign”* (1988, p. 167). The symbolic apparatus is a meta-machine that operates by randomly blinking signifiers signifying each other: *“The symbolic world is the world of the machine”* (p. 47). By incorporating the notion of cybernetic biofeedback loops into his theory of the symbolic order, Lacan demonstrates that the symbolic apparatus operates as the digital regulator of the bodily drives. The symbolic apparatus scans and remotely activates the intensive

multimedia networks of the body. Lacan's exposure to the conceptual relationship between structural linguistics and information and communication technologies lays the foundations of his theory of the unconscious and desire.

ARHİVUS

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