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QUEERING SEX MACHINES: THE RE-ARTICULATION OF
NON-NORMATIVE SEXUALITIES AND TECHNOSEXUAL BODIES

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MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2009

QUEERING SEX MACHINES: THE RE-ARTICULATION OF
NON-NORMATIVE SEXUALITIES AND TECHNOSEXUAL BODIES

by
Isaac Hok Bun LEUNG

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Cultural Studies

Lingnan University

2009

ABSTRACT

Queering Sex Machines: The Re-articulation of Non-normative Sexualities and Technosexual Bodies

by

Isaac Hok Bun LEUNG

Master of Philosophy

From the simple electronic vibrator to the complex assemblages of cybersex, sex and technology have always intersected. The dynamic relations between sexuality and technology are constantly changing along with the ways in which human beings achieve psychological and bodily pleasure through these devices. Sex machine, a term that denotes an automated device that can assist human in the pursuits of sex, has been broadly defined as therapeutic and pleasure machines in the West. Large numbers of sex machines have been documented in Europe and America starting from the nineteenth century, and were widely produced and utilized by medical practitioners, sex toy makers and individuals throughout history. This research focuses on three kinds of sex machines that have been produced and represented visually in recent years: fucking-machines, teledildonics and humanoid sex machines. By using the poststructuralist approach of combining the material and symbolic dimensions in the analysis, the thesis aims at investigating the cultural significance of sex machines by studying how they are identified, represented and produced as cultural text/artefact in the Euro-American subcultural sexual context. Through a queer reading of sex machines, the project will explore how sex machines re-configure the way we understand body, gender, sexuality and technology in the human pursuit of pleasure and desire.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

Isaac Hok Bun LEUNG
21st, July, 2009

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

QUEERING SEX MACHINES: THE RE-ARTICULATION OF
NON-NORMATIVE SEXUALITIES AND TECHNOSEXUAL BODIES

by

Isaac Hok Bun LEUNG

Master of Philosophy

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Table of Contents

Introduction – Stepping into the world of sex and technology	1
- What are sex machines?	2
Methodology	7
- The re-modified framework “circuit of culture”	8
- Lacanian’s model of psychoanalysis	10
- Sampling method and objectives	11
Chapter 1 - Background - Technosexual Evolution of Sex Machines and its Cultural History	13
- The cultural construction of fact and artifact: the crossroad of technology and sexuality of sex machines	14
- Technologies of sexual practices from the modern industrial and scientific revolutions to the recent sexual paradigms:	16
o Family value in civil society, the discourse of sexing and reproducing marriage	20
o Discursive construction of self-pleasuring illness, the discourse of self protection	24
o The discourse of potency and the formulative gendered body	27
o The discourse of sexual liberalism and the rise of pleasure sex machines	30
o Safe sex machines and the technologies of epidemic circulation	34
- From the past the present – the bedrock of contemporary sexual machinery	37
Chapter 2 - The cultural representations and interactions of sex machines	40
- Sexual and technological “surplus” of sex machines in SF	41
- Cyberpunk and sex machines – the extension of SF in the networked spatialities	51
- The fantastic “non-space” of <i>I.K.U.</i> :	52

○ The cultural context of “Tokyo”	54
○ The queerness of identity narrations in <i>I.K.U.</i>	61
- The representation of fucking-machines and teledildonics in pornography within the virtual space – from the presentability to imaginability:	66
○ <i>Fucking Machines</i> and its “excess” of Real	67
○ <i>Sex Machine Cams</i> and its “lack” of Real	73
- The representations of sex machines – a mutational process of identities	81
Chapter 3 - The cultural production of sex machines and the contemporary technosexual practices	85
- Identification of the “sexual field”:	85
○ Independent productions of sex machines	86
○ Industrial productions of sex machines	89
○ Institutional productions of sex machines	90
- Techno-fetishism of sex machines:	92
○ American garage - the suburban machines	94
○ “Opensourcing” sex in teledildonics	104
- Re-articulation of gender dynamics in sex machines pornography	109
○ Repositioning the cultural phallus	109
○ Mediated- voyeurism of the teledildonics porn	114
- From biological body to the transformation of new bodies	118
- The politics of sex machines productions	124
○ Regulations on sex machines	125
○ Gender politics of sex machines	130
- A brave new world - new configuration of sex, technology, gender and body	132
Chapter 4 - Queering sex machines – the theorization of postmodern technology and sexuality	137

- Critical perspectives – Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis and queer theory	138
- The queerness of contemporary sex machines at-large	140
- Cyborgian’s technobiological apparatus – queering the paradoxical human/machine, “techno”/“sexual” and “men”/“women” in sex machines	143
- Postmodern turn, simulation and body ontology	149
- Queer politics of sex machines – contradictions of pedagogies	153
- Sex machines and political economy	155
- The paradox of gender politics	157
Conclusion - The contemporary technosexual culture, from visual “public-ness” to visible “public-ness”, from the material reality to the “second-life”	161
- From “discipline” to “surplus”	163
- The politics of “surplus” – from the visual “public-ness” to the visible “public-ness”	166
- The public and counter-public of sex machines	168
- Politics of gender and economy	172
- Our time and the future of technosexual - a queered “lifeworld” in the multiple spatialities	174
References	178

List of Figures

Figure 1	Simple fucking-machine	4
Figure 2	“Fuckzilla” - a remodeled “Johnny 5”	4
Figure 3	The control-panel of teledildonics	6
Figure 4	Product list from a sex doll company	6
Figure 5	Gigolo Joe from <i>A.I. Artificial Intelligence</i> Prix from <i>Blade Runner</i>	7
Figure 6	Pessaries	22
Figure 7	Triggering chastity devices	26
Figure 8	Electronic pneumatic pumps	28
Figure 9	Mechanical penile splints	29
Figure 10	“Helper device”	31
Figure 11	“Self-contained gynecologic stimulator”	31
Figure 12	Condom garment	35
Figure 13	<i>THX 1138</i>	43
Figure 14	The “Orgasmatron” in <i>Sleeper</i>	44
Figure 15	Barbarella in the spaceship	46
Figure 16	Flesh Gordon 2 and its excessive masculinity	47
Figure 17	The TV commercial of the Genom Corporation	55-56
Figure 18	Sexual intercourses superimposed by 3D animations	58
Figure 19	“Cartoon box house”	60
Figure 20	The bulgy crotch of “I.K.U. Runner” clad in underpants	63
Figure 21	Without underpants on	64
Figure 22	“Storage room” of the porn studio	69
Figure 23	<i>Masturbating addiction - Sindee Jennings</i>	70-71
Figure 24	The studio of Sex Machine Cams	75
Figure 25	Dwaine Baccus, Emmett, Idaho	96
Figure 26	A fucking-machine made by James Vermeer, Victorville, California	97
Figure 27	Ruiin, a former airplane mechanic who built a series of Gothic fucking- machines	97
Figure 28	Rick of Spindoll Manufacturing and Sales	100
Figure 29	New Orleans-based Ken Cruise “Hide-a-Cock”	100-101
Figure 30	Scott Ehalt and his “Ultimate Ride”	102
Figure 31	Interview with Kyle Machulis, 29 Sept, 2008, San Francisco	105
Figure 32	“Sex Box”	105
Figure 33	Interview with Alan Stein, the owner of Thrill Hammer, 3 Oct, 2008, Los Angeles	114-115
Figure 34	Sex dolls made by First Androids	119-120

Introductions

Stepping into the world of sex and technology

One evening in 2003, when I was sitting in my apartment in Chicago, I watched the HBO documentary series, *Real Sex*¹, an episode about realistic sex dolls. The show included interviews with the biggest manufacturers of sex doll in the United States and also documented their customer's relationships with sex dolls as lovers and sex partners. Searching online for forums and blogs after the show, I found that responses like "sad", "creepy" and "losers" regarding the customers in the show were not uncommon. Instead of having similar negative feelings toward the users of the sex dolls, I was fascinated by the documentary and I couldn't help but wonder about the underlining logics and culture behind the productions of and human interactions with a non-biological. As a practicing artist who spent years exploring issues of cybersex, a virtual encounter that allows two or more persons to connect sexually via a computer network, I wondered how would it be for a person to extend this cerebral virtual pleasure to another completely artificial being or intelligence?

A day in few years later in 2006, when I walked by bookstore Quimby's² in Chicago, I found a book called *Sex Machines: Photographs and Interviews*. Despite being attracted by the stunning visuals of the cover, where a dildo is being mounted with a

¹ Real Sex is an HBO documntary series that explore alternative human sexual practices. Begining in 1990, Real Sex's episodes include, *Taxicab Confessions* (1997), *Pornucopis: Going Down in the Valley* (2004) and *Hookers at the Point* (2002). Sheila Nevins, the president of HOB documentary and family programming says, "At HBO we knew we could push [the] limits of comedy. There was no reason not to push the form of 'reality' [as] far as we could, into a certain kind of sexual explicitness that was legitimate and safe and funny" (Edgerton & Jones, 2008, p. 275-276)

² Located in Chicago, Quimby's is one of the most important alternative bookstores for zines and independent publications in the United States. It is also one of the major distributors and publishers of subcultural books.

big barrel-shaped motor in front of a door of a suburban garage, I was also fascinated by the term “sex machines”. While terms like phone sex, cyber sex, sex toys and webcam sex are highly familiar to me, when looking at a strange object called “sex machine”, my initial questions became “is there such a thing” and “what are sex machines”? Flipping through Timothy Archibald’s book at the bookstore, numerous remembered images started to pop up in my mind, such as the “Orgasmatron” in Woody Allen’s *Sleeper*, Chris Cunningham and Björk’s music video *All is full of love*, Gigolo Joe in *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* and many other automated machines designed for purposes of sex. By that time, I also realized that sex machines have never been totally foreign to my cultural experiences. Provided that sex machines are widely produced and represented in the subcultural and popular contexts, I decided to further explore the latest kinds of sex machines and formulate a substantial research of the familiar and yet foreign objects that has been little explored in the academia.

What are sex machines?

Sex machine, a term that denotes an automated device that can assist human in the pursuits of sex, has been broadly defined as therapeutic and pleasure machines in the West. Large numbers of sex machines have been documented in Europe and America starting from the nineteenth century, and were widely produced and utilized by medical practitioners, sex toy makers and individuals throughout history. The broad definitions of sex machines are notably seen in *American Sex Machines: The Hidden History of Sex at the U.S. Patent Office*, which documents over eight hundred sex machines collected in the US Patent Office between 1840 and 1998 (Levins, 1996). While sex machines range from medical tools to pleasure machines designed for

diverse purposes, this project focuses on three kinds of pleasure machines that have been produced in recent years: fucking-machines, teledildonics and humanoid sex machines.

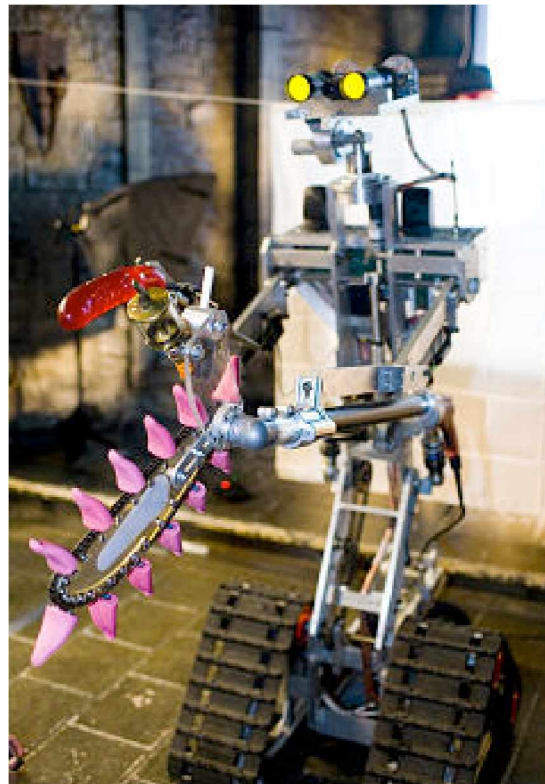
Fucking-machines which are intended for performing penetrative sex, are electrically operated thrusting and spinning devices with phallic attachments that imitate or respond to body movement. They are mechanical pleasure devices that range from the simple version that attaches a dildo to a hand-drill [Figure 1], to the complicated version such as “Fuckzilla”, a remodeled “Johnny 5”, that has multiple synthetic silicon tongues which can move up and down [Figure 2]. The earliest kinds of fucking-machines originated in the suburban American garage and are situated at the fringe of the sex toy industries. They are being invented in the small towns of the United States like Champlin, Minnesota and Kansas City, where garage space, tools, hardware, electrical appliances and sex toys are readily available. These garage-made machines are then used by the American porn industry in order to produce new genres of fucking-machines’ pornography. The productions and representations of fucking-machines in the context of American suburbs and porn industry will be subsequently analyzed.

Teledildonics, a term first used by sociologist Theodor Holm Nelson in 1975, was conceptualized as an integration of sex and telepresence that essentially refers to remote-controlled sex. It is further elaborated by one of the leading teledildonists, Allen Stein, as "Sex in a computer simulated virtual reality, especially computer-mediated sexual interaction between the presences of two humans" (Stein, 2009).

According to Stein, teledildonics originated from early Internet technologies such as BBS message boards



[Figure 1] Simple fucking-machine. Source: Copyright KensTwistedMind.com, 2002-2009.



[Figure 2] "Fuckzilla" - a remodeled "Johnny 5". Source: Monochrom.at, 2009.

that allowed users to communicate sexually. Along with the development of complex Internet functions such as moving pictures, video games and tele-presence conferencing, teledildonics becomes a sex device that is controlled by computer networking systems and can accommodate hybrid functions that combines, texts, sounds, video games, sex toys and webcams, all in one system [Figure 3]. In today's DIY (do-it-yourself) culture, where mechanical and electrical knowledge have not been limited to the professional but have become accessible to the general public, many teledildonics are also created by DIYers who invent this kind of sex machine outside the production chain of the sex toy industry. In this project, focus will be paid on the DIY teledildonics productions and teledildonics pornography that allows users to control fucking-machines in real-time via the Internet.

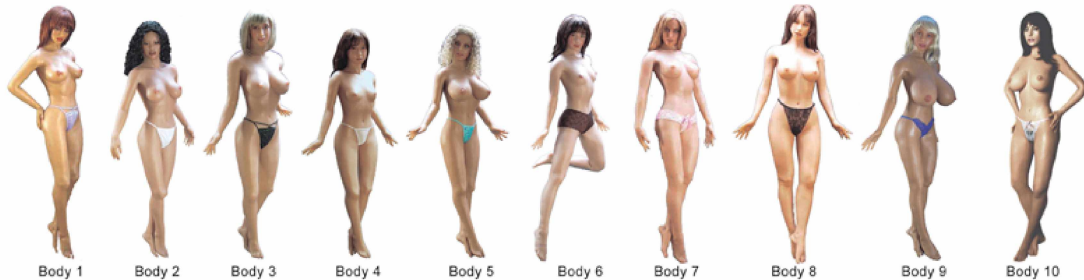
A sex robot is an artificially created agent that mechanically resembles a human and is made specifically to assist or replicate real humans in the performance of sex. Research on humanoid sex machines is increasingly popular in the sex industry; many customizable silicone sex dolls are available in the Internet market in recent years [Figure 4]. Beside realistic skin color and texture, sex dolls that have been produced in recent years are also equipped with other functions such as body movements, temperature and even delicate prosthetic lung that imitate the human respiratory system. The productions of sex robots are not only limited to realistic sex dolls, but the idea of sex with automated sex robots has also been represented widely in literature, science fictions, visual art and films. In many popular films such as the film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* and *Blade Runner* realistic androids are manufactured by

futuristic corporations [Figure 5]. The productions of realistic sex dolls and the representations of SF that depicts sex robots will be further studied in this project.

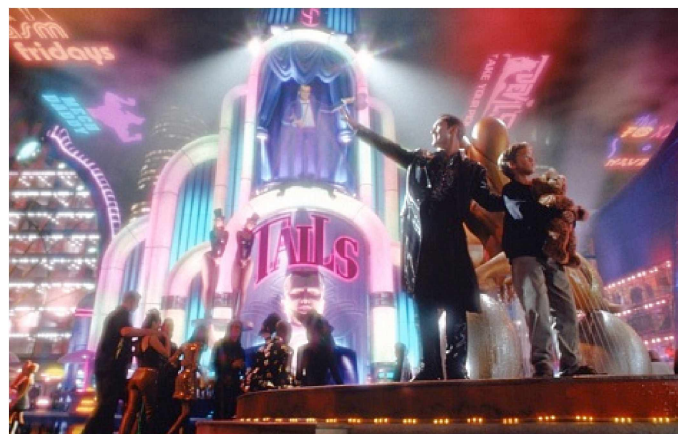


[Figure 3] The control-panel of teledildonics. Source: Copyright Thethrillhammer.com, 2002-2009.

Body Number	US Dress Size	Standard dress size	Bra Size	Shoe size	Height	Measurements (over breast, waist, hip)	Description
1	8	small	32C	8	5'6"	35"-24"-34"	Athletic- super model
2	4-6	x-small-small	32C	7	5'1"	34"-23"-32"	Curvacious athletic
3	8-10	small-medium	34D	8	5'5"	38"-26"-36"	Dancer
4	4	x-small	32AA	7	4'10"	30"-23"-33"	Petite
5	6	small	32E	7	4'10"	37"-23"-33"	Voluptuous
6	4	x-small	32A	8	5'3"	31"-23 1/2"-33"	Athletic
7	6	small	32B	8	5'3"	33"-24"-33"	Athletic
8	8	small	34B	8	5'7"	36"-26"-37"	Voluptuous
9	8-10	small bottom, large top	32G	8	5'3"	41"-25"-35"	Fantasy
10	12	medium- large	34DD	8	5'5"	39"-25"-39"	Voluptuous, big boned



[Figure 4] Product list from a sex doll company. Source: Copyright Mandelion.com, 2009.



[Figure 5] Gigolo Joe from *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. Source: Copyright Warner Bros., 2001.



[Figure 5] Prix from *Blade Runner*. Source: Copyright Warner Bros., 1982.

Methodology

This project aims to make sense of the non-normative practices and the malformed technosexual imagination. I attempt to investigate sex machines by using the poststructuralist approach of combining the material and symbolic dimensions in the analysis. In the following chapters, I hope to bring together the empirical “facts” of sex machines (films, pornography, interviews, etc) and transform them into an analysis of the underlining logics in order to find out how new practices and imagination of sex machines are being effectively produced and contradicted within the cultural and political terrain of sex machines. In doing so, this project plans to bring Stuart Hall’s “circuits of culture” (Du Gay & Hall & Janes, 1997) together with queer methods of reading that are inspired by Lacanian’s psychoanalysis. While “circuits of culture” offers a multidimensional framework to focus the analysis of the material context of sex machines’ cultural life, the Lacanian method brings the investigation of sex machines onto a symbolic level. By synthesizing both methods in the investigation, I attempt to not take the “reality” of sex machines as a “granted”

social phenomenon, but as a potential cultural and political horizon that is situated in-between practice and imagination.

The re-modified framework “circuit of culture”

Sex machines subculture is an emerging phenomenon whose practices and imaginations are not yet well-developed, therefore I attempt to shape the distinct non-normative cultural life of sex machines. Since fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are niche objects not yet settled as set of established artefacts, this project faces the challenge of locating the “full-circuit” of the sex machines’ cultural life. In fact, one cannot strictly follow the methodological framework offered by Stuart Hall, applying it directly to the study of sex machines since the cultural life of sex machines subculture has never been made complete. This sub-culture is full of “lacks” and wonderments that render the culture of sex machines a fascinating and yet politically dubious topic for the researcher. Therefore, instead of studying the sex machines subculture according to the “full-circuit” method, divided into five sections, this project especially focuses on the moments of identification, production, and representation. There are several reasons that I choose to investigate sex machines subculture by focusing on these three aspects:

- 1.) Fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots emerge from, rely upon and are highly related to information technologies, thus the interactions between sex machines and different cultural agents are rendered intangible. While machines are commonsensically denoted as something touchable, products of sex machines like teledildonics can appear as programming codes; the non-physical nature of

teledildonics also signify a new consumption pattern that is physically immeasurable. Due to the bodily and interactive nature of the sex machines where consumption patterns are boundless, emphasis on the productions of sex machines in this project is crucial.

2.) Apart from the physicality of sex machines, the consumptions of these sex machines are definitely remaining underground. While the productions of these sex machines can be traced through websites, documentaries, books and conferences that identify the independent and industrial producers, the consumers of sex machines often prefer to keep their identity anonymous. The non-communal consumption nature of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots leads me to acquire information about how sex machines are being consumed from the experiences of different producers.

3.) Contemporary sex machines originated in the context of DIY; the lines between the productions and consumptions are often blurred and inseparable under the culture heading of “prosumerism”. Many of the producers of sex machines have double identities; they utilize existing consumer products and re-create them with their own knowledge outside of their professional work time. They are the “prosumers”³ who not only consume, but at the same time produce their own products. While the

³ “Prosumer” is derived from the term “prosumerism”, it originally applied to the video industries and referred to the technologies that are between the consumer domestic market and the professional production market (Lister, 2003, p.390). Coined by futurologist Alvin Toffler’s *The Third Wave* in 1980, “prosumers” signify that the role of producers and consumers would blur and merge. Toffler anticipated that consumers would take part in production and marketing processes. This new economic model allows the “passive consumers to become the “active prosumers” (Cova, Kozinets, Shankar, pp. 247, 2007).

consumptions of sex machines cannot be separated from the domain of productions, it will be studied as an embedded practice that is seen in the production process.

4.) Since agents and stick-holders of sex machines are located in distinctly different cultural contexts which are not yet made communal, the identifications and regulations of sex machines will be investigated within the production process.

Lacanian's model of psychoanalysis

Since "circuit of culture" offers a framework for this project to investigate the cultural life of sex machines by locating it within multi-dimensional aspects, the identification, representation and production of sex machines subculture will be investigated not only as a mode of social practice, but also as imagination/unconsciousness that is embedded in the emerging political landscape of technosexual culture. Beside the material facts, sex machines will also be studied textually according to the conception of Real⁴ that is offered by the methods of Lacan's psychoanalysis. Within the framework of poststructuralist reading, the queer method of textual analysis in this project is not a conventional and linear one. By

⁴ Lacanian's Real is a term that describes something which is beyond language, something beyond the process of significations (the "lack" between the signifier and signified). If language constructs the reality of the world, then Real is referring to the impossibility of language is to signify (really existing, taking place in the reality). For Lacan, the total truth of reality cannot possibly be described by language, there is always something that cannot be put into words. Therefore, Real is paradoxical, it is a thing constantly present and absent.

The very idea of Real is something unconventional to our normative conception of objective reality and experiences. And it is highly influential to poststructuralist approaches of breaking off material conditions from the symbolic (such as these conceptual frameworks that I will use in this project: Michel Foucault's discursive analysis of the repressive/anti-repressive, Judith Butler's cultural phallus/penis, and Jean Baudrillard's sign-value and hyperreality).

borrowing the Lacanian formulation of Real, this project will look into the “lack” in signification and the “surplus” meanings formulated from such “lack”. For example, in chapter 1, I analyze the cultural history of sex machines by studying the unconscious logics and politics of the disciplinal practices of sex machines and posit the history as a discursive construction. In chapter 2, I study the representations and interactions of sex machines as cultural text, and attempt to find out the “lack” in filmic and pornographic languages in sex machines’ representations. In chapter 3, I analyze different modes of imaginations concerning sex machines artefacts by examining the cultural life of sex machines’ production. According to Lacan, though the conception of Real (the “lack” in the reality) doesn’t exist, it produces substantial effects on social activities. While the Lacanian treatment of Real is a useful tool to study the social “reality” through the textual analysis of sex machines, this project will attempt to shape the distinct “texts” of sex machines into a potential politics.

Sampling and subjective position in this research

While this project is qualitative research that aims to study an emerging and not easily accessible subculture, I use the non-probability sampling method to identify the interviewees. The process of selecting specific interviewees is based on their representative character in relation to the subject matter of sex machines. Since sex machines have been newly invented by a few notable, key figures in a subcultural context, the selection criterion of the interviews is quite simple. Most of the interviewees in this project are either the primary inventors or investigators in the field of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots. The interview questions are open-ended, with the duration being usually around 2 hours in length, covering a wide

range of topics surrounding issues of sexuality, technology and the economy. Instead of setting up questionnaires, the interviews are conducted in a personal manner that would incorporate the textual analysis based on the Lacanian model of psychoanalysis.

Together with the combined analysis of the empirical facts and underlining symbolisms of sex machines, this project attempts to investigate

- 1.) how producers of sex machines formulate their own imagination and create who they are by producing new sex machines objects and by engaging in practices of non-normative sex,
- 2.) how these practices and imaginations create a new technosexual market and ideological space that is in contrast with the larger public, and
- 3.) how these changing subjective and objective realities potentially produce a new politics of gender, body and economy.

Chapter 1

Technosexual Evolution of Sex Machines and its Cultural History

Different kinds of sex machines have been invented and widely used throughout history and by diverse cultures. Non-mechanical sexual instruments originated centuries ago, human were well aware of using objects to facilitate sexual pleasure even before the ancient history.⁵ During the nineteenth century in the West, mechanical devices were created to assist humans for medical purposes and/or sexual gratification. In the age of AIDS, sex machines were invented to permit sexual joy without the exchange of bodily fluids. Sex machines, a fusion of technology and sexuality, cannot be understood outside of the particular historical, economic and cultural context of design and use in which it is embedded. The specific technology, mechanism, design and sexual use that are configured into different kinds of sex machines, represent particular cultural meanings and identities of body, gender and sexuality. Different sex machines have been designed by independent, industrial and medical inventors under specific cultural circumstances, and are then consumed and mediated by users who in return fashion the next generation of sex machines. The development, deployment and use of sex machines that is evidenced by countless examples taken from the present and the past, construct the evolution of technological and sexual politics.

⁵ Penis shaped objects have been produced in China for more than 12, 000 years, starting in the Han Dynasty. Other kinds of dildo called “olisbos” were documented in Greece in 500BC. The Kama Sutra shows that men in AD 300 were using gold, leather and buffalo horn to extend their penis length during sex. In 1200s, the first proto-cockring was invented in China. Non-mechanical objects made for sexual aids have been recorded widely in the history. (Wright, 2009, Pagett, 2007, 1.1)

This project aims to examine sex machines as cultural text and artifact, and evaluate how they are being identified, represented, produced and culturally imagined. Different sex machines posit a culturally defined mode of sexuality and technology. In this chapter, I critically review the brief evolution of the technological construction and cultural history of sex machines that are seen in the modern West from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The investigation spans the age of modern industrial and scientific revolutions and includes more recent topics, such as the sexual revolution and the AIDS epidemic. This particular historical time span and range of materials are included to provide a solid empirical and conceptual base for exploring the gender and body politics and articulations of recent popular sex machines that I will study in the coming chapters.

The cultural construction of fact and artifact: the crossroad of technology and sexuality of sex machines

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, large numbers of sex machines were documented in Europe and America. Notably, the US Patent Office has preserved over eight hundred sex machines that were made between 1840 and 1998 (Levins, 1996). These sex machines range from medical tools to pleasure machines designed for diverse purposes. In the age when scientific facts and technological artifacts are socially constructed, sex machines, a kind of object that is materialized to work for the practical ends of bodily pleasure and discipline, constitutes the modern notion of sexuality and sexual behaviors. Looking at the evidence of the historical evolution of sex machines, we can ask what technological principles, forms of knowledge and modes of discourse did these artifacts initiate in the modern West, and

in what ways do they constitute the evolution of the current understanding of sexuality? How do sex machines and their technologies historically exemplify an apparatus that regulates, controls and articulates human bodies?

The word “technology” was not commonly used until the twentieth century, especially before the Second World War. In modern times, it has been widely used to designate the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. While mechanics, inventors, engineers, designers and scientists have so far focused on the materiality of technology, cultural historians have been analyzing technology in a broader anthropological sense. In the approach of cultural studies, Michel Foucault conceptualized technology not only as a “neutral set of artifacts” by which human exercise power over nature, but also the a whole set of “social techniques” and “structured forms of knowledge” that is practiced to intangibly exercise power over society as a whole. According to Foucault, power is not viewed as a top-down / unidirectional hegemony (Aldama, 2005, p. 41), it is formulated by individual, group, or institution making, doing and simultaneously using any type of technology constitutes a domain of knowledge and discourse within and through multi-directional systems. The totality of “technology” formulates the legitimate “bodily practices, habits and exercises conducive to “normativity” as a tool and apparatus via discursive institutional, governmental and collective implementations of knowledge (Featherstone, 2000, p. 321). The social and cultural circumstances serve as the backdrop for the emergence of certain technological objects. “Technology” is constituted by “truths” that are “sets of regulations, empirical and calculated methods” for “controlling and correcting the operation of the body” (Foucault, 1979,

p. 136). In the Foucauldian sense, the notion of sexuality is discursively formulated by “technology of power”. It is subjected to the underlining attitudinal principles and “logic of the unconscious” that are constituted by social regulations and the ethical subjectivity of gender, sex, pleasure and desires (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 133). In this account, how do different sex machines signify the “technology of power” in order to constitute body, gender and sexual normativity?

Technologies of sexual practices from the modern industrial and scientific revolutions to the recent sexual paradigms

In this project, different domains of technology, techniques and discourses are conceptualized in three types of sex machines: disciplinal, pleasure and safe sex machines, which have emerged from the context of the modern industrial and technological revolutions and on to the more recent sexual paradigms such as the sexual revolution and the AIDS epidemic. In all cases, human bodies are being articulated and controlled in different manners by the networked and institutionalized “technology of power”.

The cultural history of sex machines in this project starts from the eve of the modern industrial and scientific revolution, which is also conceptualized as the “second” industrial and scientific revolution taking place from 1870 to 1930. New industrial and scientific technologies that emerged during that period of time encoded the social, political and economic changes in Western societies. The developments and applications of science to industry inaugurated new forms of collective social organization, such as research-based universities, government bureaus, and corporate industrial laboratories. While industry and science were exercising new techniques of

surveillance, new governance and customary models such as patent, legal, medical and education systems were instituted to manage and stabilize the massively growing populations and the flow of capital. Starting from the nineteenth century along with other aspects of culture, sex was materialized, technologized, and institutionalized. Different kinds of sex machines were invented to make possible the disciplining of human sexuality. I name these types of technological objects as disciplinal sex machines.

According to Foucault, discipline starting from the eighteenth century is highly due to, and refined from, the European nature of punishment. Before the eighteenth century, punishment signified a top-down power structure as seen in public events such as the execution of criminals and outcasts. Along with economic, industrial and scientific developments, a larger scale of social regulations and new mechanism of discursive power were formulated to extensively regulate the body's practices and the mind's logics. Therefore, despite a material hegemony that is enforced from a top-down power, there is discursive power that allows the individual to formulate the "self" by logics of self-mastery characterized by the principle that one must "take care of oneself" (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 46). The powers that shape one's own inner character, ethics and practices are formulated within the logics of "governmentality". Within this concept of governmentality, individuals exercises their power by using knowledge of techniques and procedures to regulate their body, in return, individual bodies become "docile" by being disciplined within the institution and social structure (Foucault, 1995, p. 135). Therefore, discipline is "the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise." (Foucault

& Sheridan, 1995, p. 170).

Sex machines, a kind of medical tool that was widely utilized by medical professionals and government officials in the modern industrial and scientific revolution, also served as an object to exercise power that made discipline possible. The technologies of these disciplinal sex machines were understood to inform normative knowledge and cultural ideologies of sexual reproduction, sexual activity, marriage, body and gender. New patents for sex machines not only facilitated the material needs of the fast growing consumer markets under the emergence of industrial capitalism, they also made sense to government institutions and medical practitioners for the purpose of reinforcing sexual values. For example, many disciplinal sex machines were used by authorities to mediate and enforce marriage systems and procreative sex. Machines such as abortion devices, chastity devices and penile splints were utilized by medical doctors to cure patients who were thought to be sexually and mentally disordered. At the same time, the legitimacy of marital and procreative sex was discursively formulated as norms for “self-mastery” and “self-creation” (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 147, Duvenage, 2003, p. 100). During the modern age of industrial and scientific revolutions, the new technologies of these disciplinal sex machines were designed and used as therapeutic devices for discipline and control in the organization of hospitals, schools, corporate industry and civil law.

The technologies of disciplinal sex machines and the legitimacy of marital and procreative sexual healthiness were destabilized by the cultural paradigms of the sexual revolution of the 1960s. It was the watershed for the emergence of new kinds of sex machines and technologies: a pleasure oriented sex machine. Starting from the

1960s, sex machines began to be made to accomplish sexual assistance and pleasure. They were presented as artifacts that articulate bodily pleasure through the logics of sexual autonomy. In addition, individual sexual preferences and lifestyles were normalized by collective social organizations and scientific professionals. Along with continuous urbanization and industrialization of cities in the West, the ideas of family and marriage were made less prominent by the new organization of sexual geographies and economies. This social transformation contributed to a significant shift within the legal system, such as the legal distribution of birth control and pornography. Technologies that are coded with new scientific knowledge informed the new “truth of sex” in medical and educational establishments. Sex machines, such as vibrators, were now being shaped as self-pleasuring sexual aids, and its technologies encoded new social and sexual techniques.

During the 1980s, national and international discussion concerning the AIDS epidemic and other STDs was created and reflected by hybrid modes of safe sex machines designed for both pleasure and discipline. Under this public health catastrophe, hospital, schools, and healthcare organizations were entrusted to display the medical and educational intervention of this new epidemic and apply disciplinary control and promotion of healthy sexual lifestyles. New public health policies were legislated to manage state and global health risks. Sex machines such as “electrically conductive condoms” and “musical condoms” were invented to engender sexual pleasure; at the same time, they controlled the propagation of sexually transmitted viruses. These new artifacts serve as apparatuses that recreate actual bodily sexual interactions. The technologies of these safe sex machines inherit “healthism” and

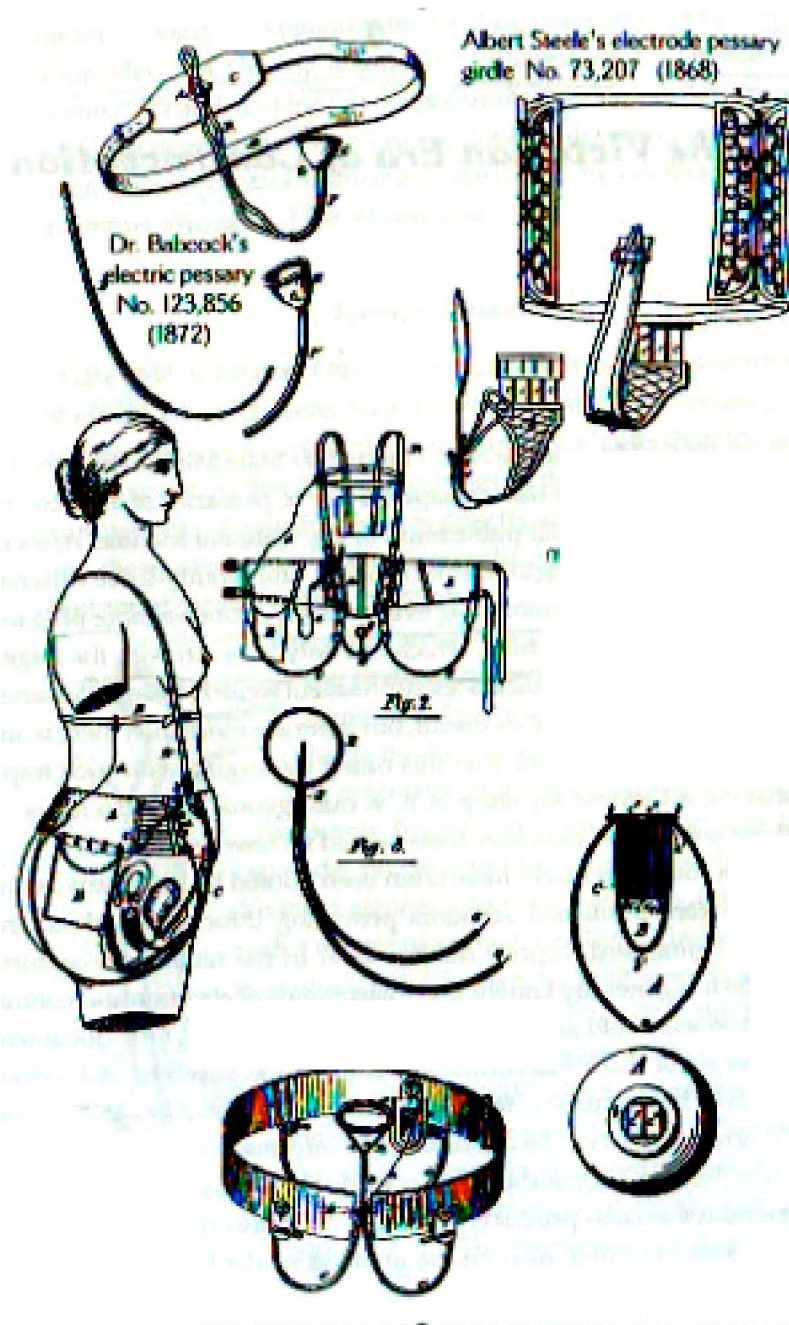
“bodyism” (Petersen & Bunton, p. 9, 1997) that engender lifestyles and risks management techniques for the growing populations of liberal democratic societies. (Foucault, 1997a).

Disciplinary, pleasure and safe sex machines emerged from the context of the modern industrial and technological revolutions, and later on in the more recent sexual paradigms such as sexual revolution and the AIDS epidemic. Different cultural contexts and domains of sexual discourse and bodily articulation will be summarized into the following five cultural dimensions:

Family value in the civil society, the discourse of sexing and reproducing marriage

The modern industrial and scientific revolutions engendered a new social architecture of family, one that would attempt to cope with the developments of industrial capitalist market economies. Foucault says in his lecture on “governmentality” that “prior to the emergence of population, it was impossible to conceive the art of government except on the model of the family, in terms of economy conceived as the management of family” (Foucault & Burchell & Gordon & Miller, 1991, p. 99). New modes of production and exchange of goods starting from the modern industrial and scientific revolution not only formulated new divisions of labour, they also marked a new kind of social system that is embedded with new kinship relations, and new beliefs and moralities to differentiate different social groups. Family is conceptualized as a focal point to craft and legitimize the citizenship of social members through heritage, lineage and religion by inscribing the sense of individual and collective belonging (Chambers, 2001, p. 27), and it is being exercised as the basic social unit

and essential component of population to construct boundaries between communities. In the realm of sex machines, the solidity of family institution was secured and manifested by codes of healthy familial behaviors, marital sex and reproduction formulated as a model to effectively manage social members. For example, during the Victorian period, pregnancy was one of the greatest personal and social concerns and the legitimacy of marital sex was highly enforced by the church and medical practitioners. Concepts of family re-enforced a cautious approach to sexuality given that it may result in pregnancy. The unsophisticated contraceptive methods and attendant health hazards created by pregnancy led to the invention of new medical devices to deal with these constructed issues. For examples, vaginal medical devices such as pessaries were utilized to prevent pregnancy or to cure vaginal diseases. Pessaries became one of the earliest devices created for the purposes of contraception and abortion [Figure 6]. Prolapsed pessaries and electric pessaries were designed to reposition the prolapsed uterus. Uterine cauterizers and vaginal syringes were used to expel a fetus. Vaginal Barriers and “Block Pessaries” were made to prevent seminal fluids penetrating the egg during sexual intercourse. In 1864, the National Medical Association documented 123 different kinds of pessaries in the United States (Levins, 1996, p. 53).



[Figure 6] Pessaries. Source: Levins, p. 50 (1996).

During the age when sexuality became entwined with the technologies of marital sexing and reproducing, there was a fundamental belief that there should be discipline and control within the domain of sensual activities. Pregnancy and abortion were taboo during that time. Non-married pregnant women were disgraced as they

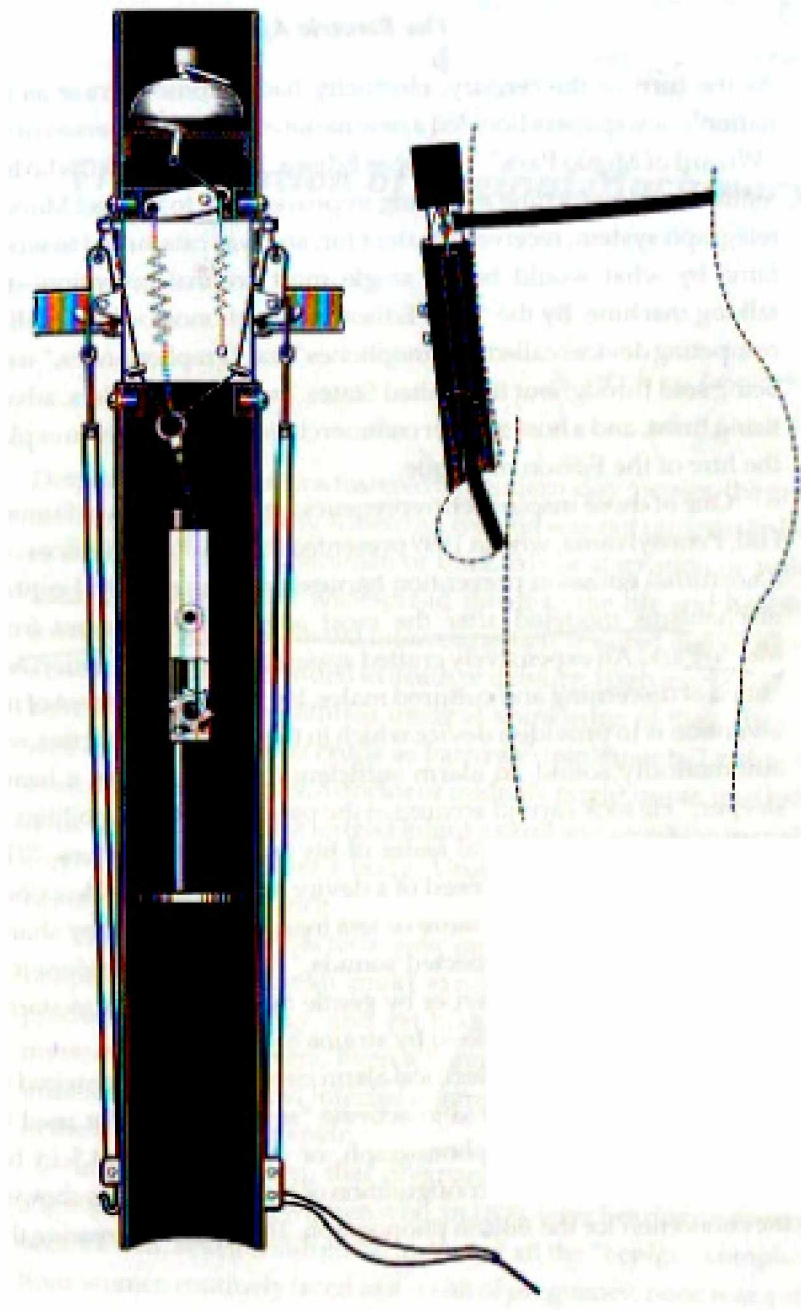
unavoidably exhibited the evidence of sexual experience. In 1803, abortion became illegal for the first time, but professional control of fertility was widely recorded during the nineteenth century (Porter, 1987, p. 1039).

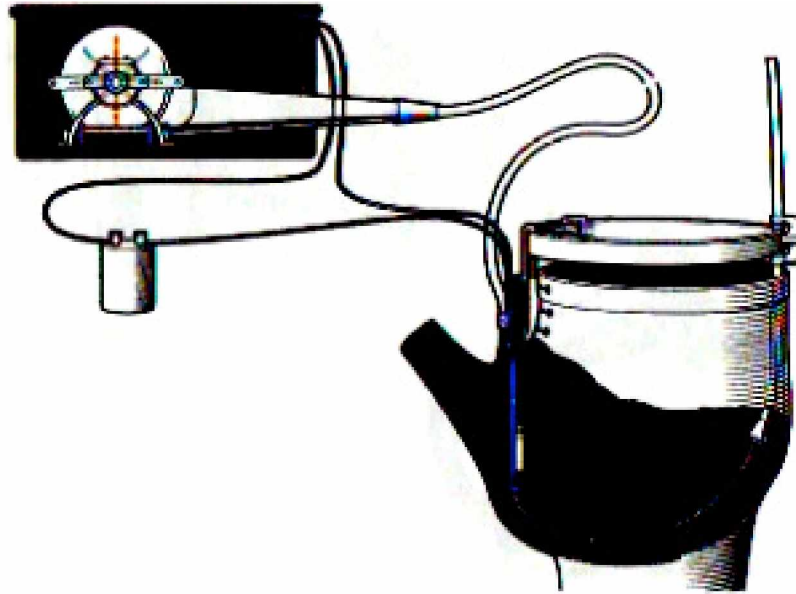
According to Michael Mason's "The Making of Victorian Sexuality", anti-sensualism was inherited from Enlightenment ideologies that encouraged progressive and reasonable ways of thoughts (Mason, 1994, p. 7). In addition to the Victorian attitude the logics of technological thinking, science, medicine and economy also enforced a public and personal maintenance of body, mind, wealth and environmental conditions. Historians such as Peter Gay have revealed that the Victorian sexuality was full of contradictions and double standards. Activities such as prostitutions and pedophilia were well recorded during these times. Numerous love letters and erotic tracts were produced in that period. On the one hand, disciplinal sex machines were supposed to embody family values; on the other hand, different codes of sexual activity were widely practiced and recorded. Disciplinal reproductive sciences were called upon to deal with the desire for non-conjugal and non-familial happiness. Sex machines such as vaginal medical devices not only served as a therapeutic contraceptive and means to abortion, they also encoded the legitimacy of marital sex and pregnancy, as well as providing an opening for people to resist the notions of Victorian family values. The contradictory notions of Victorian sexuality signify a non-linear mode of power dynamics. If codes of healthy familial behaviors, marital sex and reproduction are a form of discursive power that is formulated by the technology of sex machines, according to Foucault, this power in itself also consists of resistance. He says, "I think that resistance is a part of this strategic relationship of

which power consists. Resistance really always replies upon the situation against which it struggles” (Foucault & Lotringer, 1996, p. 387). In this account, power is being exercised between individuals in a relational matter at the same site of struggles, not only by practices of enforcement, but also practices of resistance. While sex machines normalize procreative sex and marriage, new types of sex machines, such as abortion devices, were discursively formulated as the counterforce of familial normativity which encouraged individuals to practice pre-marital sex. The concept of family is thus contested by multiple forces underneath the practical and symbolic effects of these contraceptive sex machines.

Discursive construction of self-pleasuring illness, the discourse of self protection

While many disciplinal sex machines were made to achieve sexual therapeutic ends, “human sciences” acted as an important role in diagnosing and marking the normal from the abnormal. During the Victorian period, masturbation was regarded as harmful to the human body. Different kinds of chastity devices were made to prevent self-pleasuring and nocturnal emissions. The first chastity belt called “Self Protector” entered in the U.S patent office in 1897. Devices with complicated mechanisms such as electrified anti-masturbation harnesses were made to induce pain and prohibit access of the genitalia for the sexually disordered patients or “sexual perverts”. Triggering devices attached with a bell, water systems or even phonographs were made to detect nocturnal erections [Figure 7]. These machines were widely prescribed by psychiatrists and marketed to the general public.





[Figure 7] Triggering chastity devices. Source: Levins, p. 39 (1996).

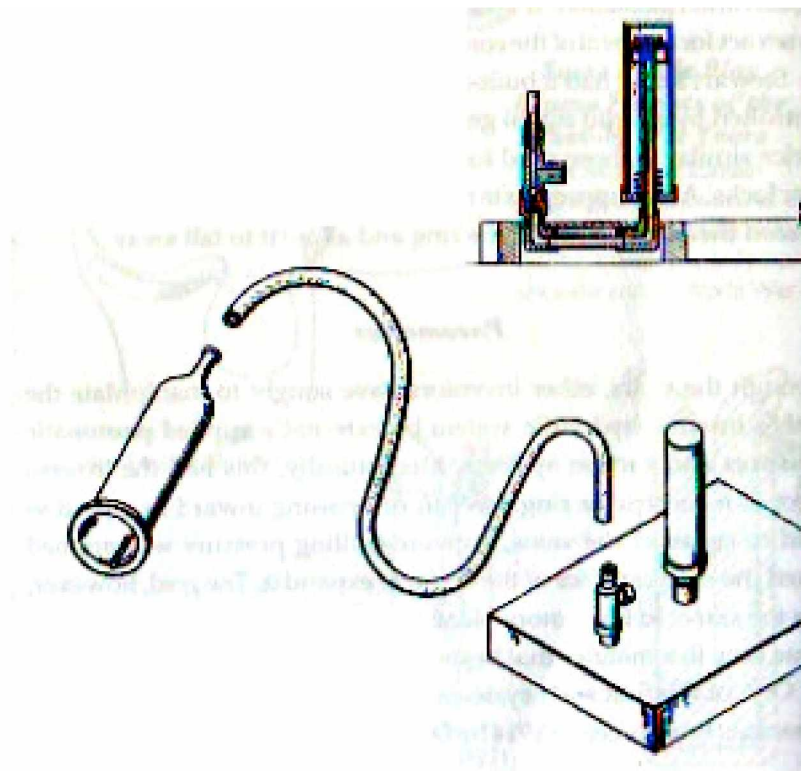
Chastity devices were designed to preserve semen. The ejaculation of the vital bodily fluids for non-reproductive desires created guilt, shame and anxiety in the individual and society as a whole. During the Victorian era when a booming economy was technologically rationalized, the vitality of semen was also connoted as a subject for governance. In “The Spermatic Economy and Proto Sublimation”, historian G. J. Barker-Benfield links the values of semen to the economy, and terms it the “spermatic economy”. Through the study of health manuals and books that were published in nineteenth century America, Barker-Benfield finds that men were cautious of the effects of masturbation. For example, one of the popular student health books says. “(this book provides) aid in forming and strengthening the intellectual and moral character and habits of the student... (Masturbation would) enervate the physical and mental powers of man” (Barker-Benfield, 2000, p. 175). Just like money, energy and other scarce resources, bodily fluids were being studied, spied upon and secured to comply with the principle of economic maximization. Masturbation was considered

as the cause of wasting physical and mental energy, which is supposed to be focused on economic activities. Spermatic economy fitted the ideology of concomitant economic and industrial developments and self-pleasuring activities were brought into the public domain for discussion. The public governance of masturbation was further affected by the Victorian regime of medicalization. During the time, numerous healthcare manuals such as *Onania, Or, The Heinous Sin of Self-pollution; and All Its Frightful Consequences (in Both Sexes)* were distributed and discussed through the medical networks. Despite preventive guidelines, doctors recommended medicines, electric stimulants and many other methods to cure and discipline self-pleasuring activities. One of patients mentioned in Barker-Benfield's book was reported by his doctor as having an "inability to fix his mind upon any subject, or give his attention to business" (Barker-Benfield, 2000, p. 177). Self-pleasuring activities not only create counter-productivity to the economy, they were also seen as the cause of other disorders, such as mental illness. In the realm of sex machines, chastity devices were invented and used as a new technique to prevent mental illness in relation to masturbation. "Curing" and normalizing those who pleasure their own body became a significant obsession among psychiatric institutions. Disciplinary chastity devices were seen as social instruments to monitor and secure economic productivity and public healthiness.

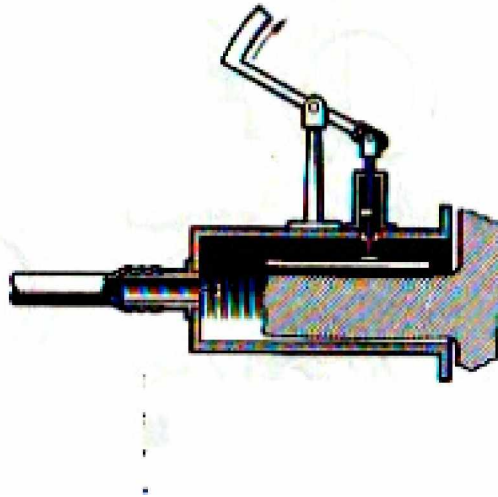
The discourse of potency and the formulative gendered body

During the modern industrial and scientific revolutions, the gendered body was also manufactured in the structural process of male/female differentials. While the spermatic economy was manifested as a dominant discourse, the ideals of manhood

and masculinity were constructed based on sexual potency. Impotence was considered a sign of witchcraft since the Middle Ages, and it was widely accepted as a consequence of masturbation during the Victorian period. In the modern industrial age different kinds of devices were made to cure impotence or to imitate the performance of a penis. Electronic penile rings and pneumatic pumps [Figure 8] were invented to enhance the circulation of blood. Mechanical and chemical (made to inject medicine into the penis) penile splints [Figure 9] were invented to substitute or assist a penis during sexual intercourse. Medical advancements made possible a surgically implanted bionic penis that would function like cardiac pacemakers.



[Figure 8] Electronic pneumatic pumps. Source: Levins, p. 113 (1996).



[Figure 9] Mechanical penile splints. Source: Levins, p. 112 (1996).

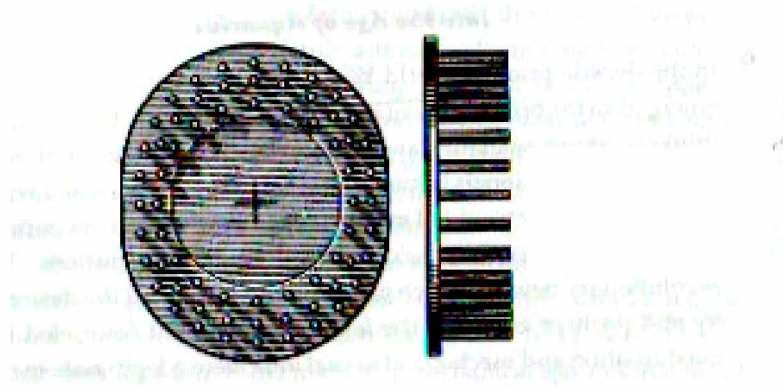
These disciplinal penile devices were inscribed with the socio-pathological knowledge of potency. The gendered male body was denoted as a measurable subject. In the eighteenth century, the Oxford English Dictionary started to include the word “impotence”. The word came into common usage throughout modern times. Throughout the history, potency and gendered bodies were inseparable. The notion of male and female embraced the superiority of family ideals and procreation and shifted gender from the biological to the cultural domain. Male bodies were evaluated by its productivity and potency. Female bodies were projected as the cause of manly impotency. In “Impotence: A Cultural History”, Angus McLaren illustrated the power relations of male/female genders reflected by the cultural construction of sexual potency. He finds that many medical studies revealed impotency based on static gender roles. For example, Freudian psychoanalyst Michael Balint states that “treating frigid women often cured men’s impotence”, and women “had to learn to be passive and less independent” (McLaren, 2007, p. 213). Static feminine and masculine roles of gendered bodies were highly grounded in the discourse of

psychiatric impotency. Balint says, “There is no question that if the woman allows her husband to be aggressive, and even enjoys it”, and he instructs his patient’s wife to “permit her husband to be more manly” (McLaren, 2007, p. 213). Biological genders were forcefully encouraged to practice certain roles during sexual activities, men were always supposed to be dominant and women were supposed to be submissive. Impotency was rendered as a medical discourse to reinforce the essential notions of the men/women dichotomy. During the Victorian period, a great amount of the medical research showed that women were considered to be responsible for men’s failure to gain erection. To solve women’s psychological problems, religious and moral inhibitions were the keys to curing erectile dysfunction (Peterson, 1973, p. 399). In fact, many of the medical discourses on impotency were highly influenced by the Freudian Oedipal complex which purports that women are a bad influence on male sexuality. Freud labeled homosexuality as a form of impotence and sexual failure. The etiology of impotence portrayed by numerous examples of sex education was attributed to the female gender. The discourse of potency during the modern industrial and scientific revolutions exhibited the way in which gendered bodies function ideologically within the realm of Victorian power/knowledge. The technologies of disciplinary potency devices taught Victorian citizens how to enhance and formulate their own particularities of the gendered body. Males and females were socialized and rationalized to take part in the patriarchal and phallogentric game.

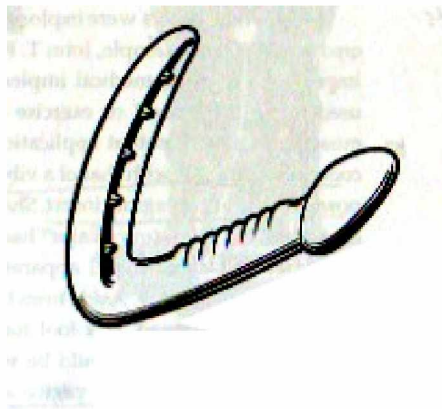
The discourse of sexual liberalism and rise of pleasure sex machines

The term “Sexual revolution” emerged and was conceptualized as a metaphor for wider sexual choice and was adopted by mass media and scholars starting in the early

sixties. It was also a new cultural regime when sex machines were made that solely focused on sexual pleasure. Instead of dildos and vibrators that were produced during the Victorian period for clinical therapeutic and sexual healing purposes, sex machines such as the “Helper device” [Figure 10], the “Self-contained gynecologic stimulator” [Figure 11] and the “Device for promoting marital accord” were invented and registered at the U.S. Patent Office during the 1960s and 1970s. These devices intended to provide autonomous sexually climatic experiences.



[Figure 10] “Helper device”. Source: Levins, p. 216 (1996).



[Figure 11] “Self-contained gynecologic stimulator”. Source: Levins, p. 217 (1996).

Along with the new sexual regime that was informed by the “Sexual revolution”, the technologies of pleasure sex machines were encoded with the knowledge of sexual

autonomy and liberalism. Ever since the landmark study of sexual behaviors conducted by Alfred C. Kinsey in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Rhodes, 2008), a more open approach to the individual's sexuality had become acceptable to the general public. "Kinsey Reports", including the "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male" in 1948 and the "Sexual Behavior in the Human Female" in 1953 gained widespread media interest, and surveys on personal sexual behaviors generally became a popular public discourse. On the one hand, Kinsey's findings effectively disrupted many taboos and challenged the conventional beliefs about sexuality. For example, his findings on sexual orientation destabilized the boundaries between homosexual and heterosexual by using the "Kinsey scale" that marks sexuality as a tendency prone to change over time (Kinsey, 1948, p. 638). His discourse displaces the notions of sexual preferences from its essentialist positions. On the other hand, the methodology of studying sexual behaviors in the "Kinsey Reports" is highly grounded in the sociological and sexological modes of categorizations. Gender, body and sexual practices that Kinsey studied are posited and circulated within the power structure of biological and social sciences that signifies "governmentality". Therefore, Kinsey's contributions to sexuality are in itself a contradiction; while it destabilized disciplinary discourses, they also reinforced discipline.

Accompanied by the new organization of medicine, architecture, space and economy that had come about through urbanization in Europe and America during the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of sexuality and reproduction were being increasingly separated from each other. Different liberal movements, including civil rights, racial rights, anti-war movements, feminism and gay rights, further intensified the shift in sexual

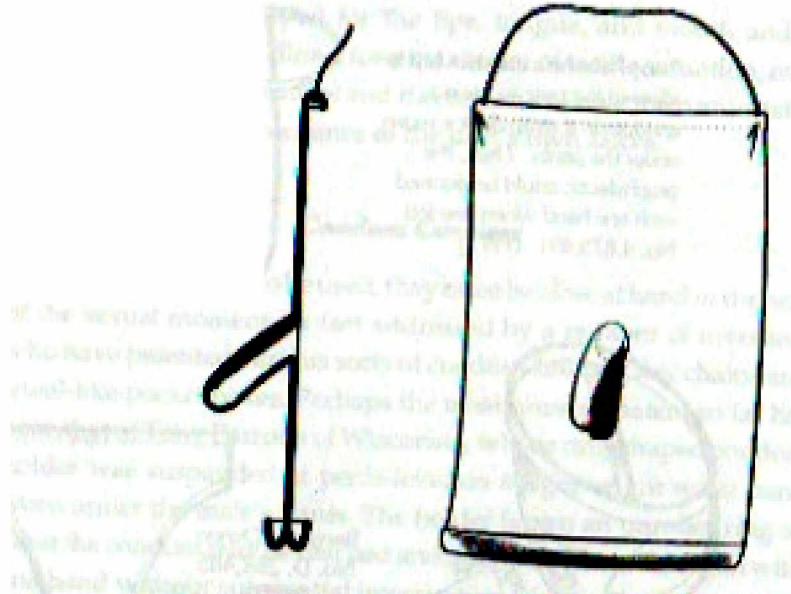
attitudes. Public discourses on sexual liberalism were positioned as a new way to knowledge/power. In the Foucauldian sense, the notion of liberalism is processed by the transformation of the “mechanism of repression” in the hidden self to attain a “certain mode of being” (Foucault, 1997b, Besley, 2006). The process of self-formation and the will to freedom that are practiced by individuals are organized and instrumentalized in the “admissible and acceptable forms of existence”, so that individuals can deal with each other in the political society (Foucault, 1997a, Besley, 2006). The new comportment encoded in the new varieties of sex machines was being understood and recognized within transformed liberal meanings and forces of sexuality. While humans were self-fashioning their own identities, the technologies of these pleasure sex machines were politically strategized to process the subjectification of the liberal sexual self. The notion of sexual liberalism was constructed as a transformed reality that pushed against the preceding era’s multiplied repressive sciences. In the above, I analyzed the “technology of power” according to Foucault’s concept that “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet... this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 95). Within the notion of “governmentality, exercises of power always comes with a counter-power”. This is why Foucault invites us to re-think the traditional hypothesis on repressive sexuality. In Foucauldian’s sense, counter-repressive force is produced by the same networks of power that discipline it; it is not made beyond the dualistic structure of repressive and anti-repressive. Therefore, despite sexual liberation movements that disrupt the inequalities between different genders and sexual proclivities, there is inevitably a backlash where liberalist’s practices are also translated as a demonstration of “governmentality”. In *Ethics:*

Subjectivity and Truth, Foucault writes, “Liberalism ...is not the idea of a political society founded on a contractual tie that gave birth to it; but in the search for a liberal technology of government...the democracies of the state of right were not necessarily democratic or devoted to the forms of law” (Foucault, 1997c, p. 77). Just as in the example of Kinsey’s discourses, sexual liberalism is highly grounded within the equality model, where it constantly reiterates the differences between the categorized body and gender; it is fundamentally contradictory to Foucault’s non-essential epistemology on sexuality. Sexual liberalism is rendered in the multiple configurations of power itself; it has its contradictory contributions to the politics of sexual relations between the privileged and the unprivileged.

Safe sex machines and the technologies of epidemic circulation

In the 1980s, a new epidemic called AIDS emerged. Safe sex machines were invented for the decirculation of bodily fluid between material bodies, at the same time; it reconstituted the terms and language of sexual interaction. During the time of the emergence, HIV virus spread extensively into thirty-three countries around the world. 8000 people were confirmed HIV positive and after only a year 3700 had died from the disease in the United State (Avert, 2009). The AIDS crisis led to untold hardship among its sufferers but also led to the innovations of epidemic-related technologies. Safe sex devices were invented to allow humans to engage in sex without skin contact or the exchange of bodily fluids. During the 1980s and 1990s, new forms of male and female condoms were registered in the U.S. Patent Office such as electrically conductive condoms and flavor-dispensing condoms aimed at increasing sensation during sex. Different condom garments [Figure 12] were invented to make the act of

safe sex more convenient. Sex robots and “fucking machines” took the role real sex partners. The age of AIDS awareness was a time when sexuality became inseparable from the epidemic.



[Figure 12] Condom garment. Source: Levins, p. 257 (1996).

In 1964, Time magazine published an issue titled “Sexual Revolution”; it published another issue titled “The Revolution Is Over” in 1984 (Smith, 1990, p. 416), indicating that the end of Sexual Revolution was instigated by the outbreak of AIDS. In “Backlash’: AIDS and the Sexual Counter-revolution”, Angus McLaren posits that the so-called “Sexual Revolution” and “AIDS epidemic” are culturally constructed and aimed to “divide time neatly up into either liberal or conservative epochs, but it has to be resisted if one’s intent is to gain a better understanding of the complex shifts which occurred in beliefs and behavior”. He thinks, “The 1960s were not all that great; the 1990s were not all that bad” (McLaren, 1999, p. 193). This new conceptualization of the end of “revolution” signifies new modes of unconscious logics that are underneath cautious attitudes toward practices of sex. McLaren thinks

that the reiterations of AIDS discourses might have been made to “shore up traditional standards, but they made available to the public a greater range of sexual scripts” that concurrently produced a backlash provoking the power of Christianity, anti-pornography acts and attacks on non-traditional family forms (McLaren, 1999, p. 193). While different safe sex technologies were designed to attain sexual pleasure in avoidance of health risks, a hierarchy of new knowledge was being formulated and verified by medical practitioners, government, health organizations, schools, churches and community groups that redefined sexual lifestyles and morality. The subject of AIDS epidemic has used as a technique for “governmentality”. In this new regime of sexuality, different groups of the sexual populations were hierarchically categorized, circulated and mapped in the new realm of medical and juridical apparatuses. New medicine, information and forms of management were designed to identify and maintain the public and individuals which resulted in a shift that was preferential to low-risk/no-risk sexual activities. Safe sex devices had been politicized to prescribe social control through the circulations of authoritative knowledge; they physiologically and psychologically refigured the language of bodily pleasure. The technologies of condoms, sex robots and “fucking machines” encoded the logic of epidemiology.

Under the threats of the HIV virus, condoms not only serve as an effective object for prohibiting body fluid exchange, but have also become an object for sexual discourse. In “How to Use a Condom”, Paula A. Treichler thinks that the “condom discourse” provoked by the crisis of AIDS makes the debate of submerged gender and body matters broadly accessible as a subject for “self-help”, and it is a contested zone of

“dilemmas involving biomedical science and clinical medicine, official and popular metaphors and meanings, moral and ethical systems, technology and public policy, the free market, and human needs, pleasures and desires” (Nelson & Gaonkar, 1996, p. 350). The discourse of condom not only renders a contradictory “double life” of birth control and disease (death) control (Nelson & Gaonkar, 1996, p. 352), the pro-condom and anti-condom discourses signify the contested cultural values of sex that are upheld by different groups of people (such as homosexual/heterosexual, religious/non-religious, etc). Other than the technical functions of condom that are designed to prevent pregnancy and the transmission of HIV viruses, the knowledge of using condoms is also discursively associated with “immorality, lack of relationship commitment, and a sense of being repressed” that counteracts with the designs and functions of condom (Meyer, 2002, p. 501) The meanings of condom is therefore rendered contradictory. Thus the virus of HIV is not only a biological threat, but also creates cultural debates on sexual ethics and behaviors. Nevertheless, in this account of contradictions, public sexual pleasure (of having a prolonged and healthy sex life) is often governed by the avoidance of unpleasure (sex without condom). The pro-condom and anti-condom discourses are positioned within the structure of pleasure principles that consists of the duality of pleasure and discipline. It is part of the “governmentality” logic that leads the individual to identify the self in relations to the AIDS epidemic.

From the past the present – the bedrock of contemporary sexual machinery

The five dimensions in the above provide the phenomenological insights concerning the technosexual evolution and the cultural history of sex machines. They include,

1. Family value in the civil society, the discourse of sexing and reproducing marriage
2. Discursive construction of self-pleasuring illness, the discourse of self protection
3. The discourse of potency and the formulative gendered body
4. The discourse of sexual liberalism and rise of pleasure sex machines
5. Safe sex machines and the technologies of epidemic circulation

The materiality and technologies of different sex machines were made prominently visible spanning different periods of sexual and technological paradigms of modern Western history. Codes and languages of sexuality were constantly produced, discussed, articulated and circulated within the domains of discourses/knowledge. Sexual behaviors were constantly monitored and operated by the multiplicity of power relations, and conversely, particular sexual “truths” were liberalized by the transgression of sexual laws and taboos. In “The History of Sexuality”, Michel Foucault states that the history of sexuality was formulated by the united forces of the “repressive” and the “anti-repressive” interest in sex. This duality of domination and resistance reacted to institutional mechanisms that are bound up with the development of capitalism in the modern West and are well represented in the “bio-history” of sex machines. The technologies of different sex machines during the three time spans above were shaped by the logics of disciplines and/or pleasure. Bodies and genders were positioned as subjects for articulations and re-articulations.

Differing materialities and technologies of the sex machine evolved and were transformed starting from the modern industrial and technological revolutions to the AIDS paradigm, revealing the empirical and theoretical backdrop of the contemporary sex machines and sexual mechanisms. In the new millennium, the cure of AIDS is foreseeable in the future. Fast-paced technoglobal innovations are creating unexpected and drastic changes in sexual ideologies around the world. Contemporary sex machines, such as fucking-machines, are deployed from garage laboratories to global online markets; teledildonics are mediated by the open-source language of sexual programming; sex robots are being projected as the new kind of phantasmic partners.

In the following chapters, these three popular sex machines will be investigated for their multi-faceted means of cultural representation and production. The re-articulation of the cultural body and gender that are produced and have evolved from the bedrock of modern sexuality will be further investigated.

Chapter 2

The cultural representations and interactions of sex machines

In the last chapter, I analyzed that various social concepts concerning the family, sexual health, potency, sexual liberalism and health epidemics have been formulated and circulated as “sexual truths”, while the understandings of body, gender, subjectivity and social relations have been legitimized within the domain of sex machines. The cultural history of sex machines has been discursively constructed by the networks of power relations in a “multiplicity” that is constituted by bio-medical knowledge and its discourses. The cultural meanings of sex machines, the contested “reality” and “natural” identity that are being formulated in the modern West (from the nineteenth to the twentieth century) provide me with an insightful backdrop to further examine the cultural significance of contemporary techno-sexual inventions. In this chapter, I will investigate the meanings of sex machines by studying their representations and/or interactions in science fiction films and pornography. Within the domain of sex machines, I will attempt an overview of the meanings of science fiction films that critically and metaphorically transgress the naturalistic and realistic notions of culture, and how the images and concepts of these films represent the normative knowledge of sexuality and technology. This project is focused on three kinds of recently invented sex machines: fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots. In this paper I will analyze the filmic and pornographic representations of these three types of sex machines by studying *I.K.U.*, *Fucking Machines* and *Sex Machines Cams*.

Sexual and technological “surplus” of sex machines in SF

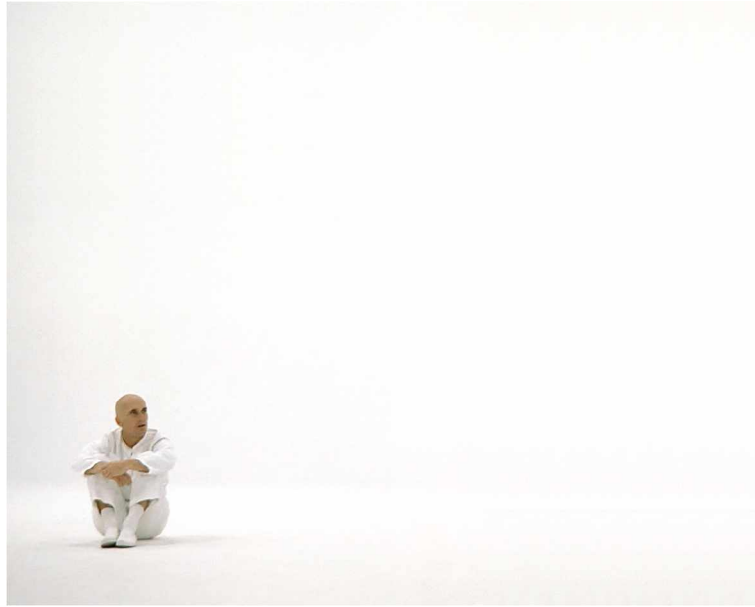
Along with a sexual openness informed by the sexual liberation movements of the 1960s, sexual representations in SF films have also become more widely accepted. While the nature of SF depicts the cognitive logics of “scientific” practices, the merging of sex and machinery, which underlines the relationship between bodies and machines, also became a popular topic in SF texts. Sex machines are not only being literally depicted as a new kind of body, they also represent a new kind of material and symbolic sexuality. The materiality and technologies of different types of fictional sex machines portrayed in SF films creates “symbolic surplus” and invites audiences to re-imagine different normative notions of sexuality. While SF writer and analyst Adam Charles Roberts posits that the nature of SF is the “discursive space that enables the wish-fulfillment” that lies between “metaphoric” and literal”, the representation of sex machines in SF is referential to the “discursive space” of sexuality that is formulated in the real world (Roberts, 2006, p. 141). In many SF films, sex machines are metaphorically depicted as an alternate and imaginary world/space (of sex). For examples, George Luca’s first feature length film, *THX 1138*⁶ and Woody Allen’s *Sleeper*⁷, which were produced in the 1970s, portray a

⁶ *THX 1138* is a 1971 SF film directed by George Lucas. The film is set in the 25th century where thousands of nameless shaven-headed citizens are working in a huge underground nation where sexual desire, love affairs and emotions are forbidden. The protagonist, THX 1138 played by Robert Duvall, works in a dangerous nuclear factory in a society where hard work, increased production, the prevention of accidents and the consumption of products are the only values respected by the state. His emotions are regulated by government prescribed drugs; his libido is satisfied by a mechanical masturbator and senseless holographic programs. Concerned about his problems, he goes to one of the confession booths that are placed around the city like our phone booths. He talks to a picture of a Jesus-like man called Omm, who responds in a repetitive pre-recorded voice saying things like “Buy more, buy more, buy and be happy”. However, THX 1138, unlike other citizens in the underground state, is not happy with his life. THX 1138’s assigned roommate, LUH 3417, who is also uncomfortable in this totalitarian regime stops taking her state prescribed drugs and purposely switches THX’s usual sedatives with stimulants. They both begin to experience authentic emotions and happiness. They fall in love and engage in sexual intercourse, which eventually leads to them being arrested and charged with drug evasion, malicious sexual perversion and transgression (sexual

dystopian space where sexuality is controlled by governmental systems by way of technology. Instead of utilizing flashy high-tech special effects, both films present an abstract, modernist and minimal kind of visuality. The iconic “white on white” mise-en-scène and clinical aesthetics where human warmth is absent, negatively represent the “bio” technological future (Telotte, 2001, p.140) [Figure 13]. Situated in an alternate world of sterile white walls, corridors and rooms where windows, doors and sky are absent, *THX 1138* aesthetically and conceptually challenges the audience’s “ordinary awareness of size, dimension and perspective” in relations to actual societies (Sobchack, 1997, p.97). It comments on consumer culture, the medical industry and religious control that are spied upon by the advanced technology. In this totalitarian state, the protagonist THX 1130 is portrayed as a character that resists the programmed normative customs. He is the “other” who fights against the state, someone who wants to escape to the outer world. Apart from the over-sanitized settings, the fictional mechanical masturbator and senseless holographic programs are used to symbolize the forbidden (human/human) sexual contact. The government prescribed sedative medicine is also depicted as a form of “sexual machinery/technology” that regulates sexual desire, love affairs and attendant emotions.

activities excepting masturbation is considered illegal). At the end of the film, THX 1138 successfully escapes from the authorities to the outerworld.

⁷ *Sleeper* is a 1973 SF comedy directed by Woody Allen. The story is situated in 2173 after a global nuclear war when the United States of America is ruled by a totalitarian leader (who looks like the Pope in wheelchair). The protagonist Miles Monroe, played by Woody Allen, has been cryogenically frozen for 200 years. He is revived in the year of 2173, and soon becomes unwillingly involved with the anti-government underground due to his advantage of being the only member in this society without a known biometric identification. As in *THX 1138*, the police state dictates everything from food to sexual activity. Miles is arrested and brainwashed by robot cops and scientists due to his illegal citizenship and pre-dystopian intellectual spirit. Since everyone in the country is programmed to be either frigid or impotent, an elevator-like electromechanical device called Orgasmatron is being used to induce orgasm. Orgasmatron can accommodate multiple partners, immediately giving the users sexual orgasms without the need for bodily contact.



[Figure 13] *THX 1138*. Source: Copyright American Zoetrope, 1971.

Similarly in *Sleeper*, a fictional sex machine that looks like an elevator and is called The “Orgasmatron” [Figure 14] is used to induce sexual orgasms without the need for bodily contact. The “Orgasmatron” symbolically represents the bio-political control of the totalitarian state where all the citizens are programmed to be frigid and impotent. The protagonists of both films are depicted as the “other”, individuals who are trying to escape from the normative sex of these imagined societies (non-bodily sex). The “other” of both films are referential to, in actual reality, “us”. The “discursive space” of imagination that is informed by the material setting of both states in *THX 1138* and *Sleeper*, the “white on white” mise-en-scène, the mechanical masturbator, the sedative medicine and the “Orgasmatron”, is a symbolic reverse of the discursively formulated space of sexuality as it actually exists in the here and now. As I stated in the last chapter, many sex machines were invented as a product of discursive medical and technological governance; both films invite us to transcend and re-imagine the socially constructed idea of the sexual norm. The portrayal of the

alternative space in both films encourages us to re-define what is to be normative or alternative, and it allows us to create a new imaginary space that could possibly transcend both domains.



[Figure 14] The “Orgasmatron” in *Sleeper*. Source: Copyright United Artists, 1973.

While many SF films depict the notion of merging sexuality (human) and technology (machines) by portraying the new bodies of sex machines, they also formulate a “surplus” space for sexual imagination, specifically in regards to family, gender, and sexual health. The static, natural and “taken-for-granted” narratives of sexuality are thus radically re-arranged by methods of exaggeration and/or counteraction in the “discursive space” of the new wave SF texts. For example, unlike the minimalist treatment of the future world in *THX 1138* and *Sleeper*, SF films such as *Barbarella*⁸

⁸ Directed by Roger Vadim, *Barbarella* is a 1968 erotic science fiction film based on a French adult comic strip of the same name. The story is situated in the 41st century, where an astronaut called Barbarella engages in futuristic tongue-in-cheek sex during her adventurous space journeys. Barbarella is requested to stop a civil war by searching for the evil scientist Durand Durand in the city of Sogo. Along the way, she teams up with strange characters at a planet called Tau Ceti who helps her on her

and *Flesh Gordon 2: Flesh Gordon Meets the Cosmic Cheerleaders*⁹ invites us to re-imagine gender and sexual acts through a campy take on fictionalized sex machines. Also known as a New Wave of SF films, during the period of 1960s and 1970s, SF films are also seen as “sextrapolation” (Pearson & Hollinger & Gordon, 2008, p. 52) and “sexploitation” (James & Mendlesohn, 2003, p. 91) epics, which intentionally expand the “boundaries of the sexual content that can be depicted in mainstream films” (Fraiser, 1997, p. 6). In *Barbarella* and *Flesh Gordon 2: Flesh Gordon Meets the Cosmic Cheerleaders*, the exaggerated and “expanded” juxtaposition of femininity and masculinity represents the sense of campiness that “extrapolates” men/women gender characteristics. “Campy” is understood as the dramatic and theatrical performance that is not inherent in the person or thing itself, but in “the tension between that person or thing and the context or association” (Newton, 1979, p.107), the notion of expanding the non-given gender symbols as seen in *Barbarella*. The main actress Jane Fonda is portrayed as a hypersexualized female astronaut who is being transformed into a fetishized sex object. The film’s highly unrealistic mod and kitschy costumes, the colorful spaceship and the imagined outer spaces promotes her as the impossible feminized sex icon [Figure 15].

quest. She eventually rescues the earth with the help of the Black Queen from Sogo. The film ends with Barbarella lying in the Excessive Machine that sexually fondles her. Barbarells realizes the man who made the machine is Durand Durand..

⁹ [Flesh Gordon 2: Flesh Gordon Meets the Cosmic Cheerleaders](#) is a sequel to the pornographic cult film [Flesh Gordon in 1974](#). The film portrays an emperor, Evil Presence, who comes from another planet. Evil Presence wants to become the only potent man in the Universe. He threatens to make every man impotent by using his sex machine that generates an impotence ray. The story starts with the protagonist Flesh Gordon being kidnapped by the cosmic cheerleaders Babs, Sushi and Candy Love. He is taken to the Ice Planet to sexually serve the cosmic cheerleader Robunda Hooters, since all the men on that planet have been affected by the impotence ray. Later on, Flesh Gordon’s girlfriend Dale Ardor and Dr. Flexi Jerkoff come to rescue Flesh, where upon, Evil Presence freezes Dale and drags her to the airship. Flesh and Dr. Jerkoff begin looking for Dale, during which time they successfully destroy the impotent ray.



[Figure 15] Barbarella in the spaceship. Source: Copyright Paramount Pictures, 1968.

Provided that a female astronaut was impossible during the 1960s, *Barbarella*, on the one hand, disrupts the cultural logics of gendered science, and on the other hand, it exaggerates the sexual role and aesthetics of woman to an improbable extreme. The estranged logics of gender in *Barbarella* opened up a new debate regarding gender representations in SF films during that period. Apart from the fictional “technologies” of gender construction, the sex machine of *Barbarella* is represented by sex enhancing pills and the pleasurable and yet fatal “Excessive Machine”. Contrary to the sedative drugs and the mechanical masturbator in *THX 1138*, the ‘scientific’ objects in *Barbarella* symbolize the transcendent pleasure that is informed by diverse sexual activities. Even though Jane Fonda performs as a fetishized sex object (for men, and in juxtaposition to masculinity), *Barbarella* creates an imaginary space that is bounded not by physiological limits, but in a transcendent form of non-

bodily cerebral pleasure through the use of sex pills. In the last scene, the “Excessive Machine” symbolizes another kind of pleasure that is “excessive” and powerful enough to blur the boundaries and principles between pleasure and torture. While the sex machines in *Barbarella* symbolize a campy femininity, *Flesh Gordon 2* can be viewed as symbolizing excessive masculinity. Similar to *Barbarella*, *Flesh Gordon 2* uses theatrical, “painterly”, colorful and campy backdrops and props that can be compared to “science” [Figure 16]. The main actor Vince Murdocco is portrayed as an



[Figure 16] *Flesh Gordon 2* and its excessive masculinity. Source: Copyright New Horizons, 1989.

excessively potent and virile hero that can combat a fictional sex machine that transmits impotent-inducing radiation. The Evil Presence from an outer planet in *Flesh Gordon 2*, who is shamed by his impotency, symbolizes the contradictory notion of essentialized maleness and the natural procreative capability by repositioning male genitalia away from scientific and medical symbols. With the aid of “camp” elements, *Barbarella* and *Flesh Gordon 2* manifest and transform the impossible cultural “standard” of feminine and masculine stylizations of the body.

They problematize the natural understanding of sexuality and gender by parodying the “surplus” of gender and sexual conventions. The “Excessive Machine” and the impotent-inducing radiation machine, symbolize the instability of rational ideas concerning gender and sexual experience that is represented in realistic fictions.

Apart from their radical illustration of governance, sexuality and gender, many SF films portray new post-human species and viruses that are related to the contemporary socialization of families along with public health issues. For example, in the re-imagining of the family in SF films, birth is often depicted through the lens of reproductive technologies: cloning, robot child, male pregnancy, monstrous birth and many ways of reproducing artificial offspring are re-imagined and moved away from the solidarity of family structures, such as heritage and lineage and the national identity of social members. Many classic SF novels such as *Frankenstein* and *Brave New World* encode a direct human confrontation with newborn creatures.

In the blockbuster SF film, *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.*¹⁰, instead of a clinical or campy setting, the audience is presented with flashy computer-generated special

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Artificial Intelligence: A.I. is a 2001 science fiction film written and directed by Steven Spielberg. The story concerns a future world sometime after a global warming ecological disaster. Scientists create androids to maintain civilization since there has been a huge reduction in population. Due to the exhaustion of natural resources on earth, only licensed couples can have children. Human reproduction is generally prohibited. David, the main character of *A.I.*, is a robotic boy with biological appearance created by Professor Hobby by a private firm called Cybertronic Manufacturing. He is a new form of robot known as “Mecha” who is programmed with the capability to love and dream. One of the workers of Cybertronic Manufacturing, Henry Swinton and his wife Monica have decided to adopt David since their son Martin has been cryogenically frozen due to chronic illness. As David continues to live with the Swintons, he starts to feel love for Monica due to his activated imprinting protocol. But things go wrong when the biological son Martin is miraculously cured, leading to the android son David being abandoned. Just like the story in *Pinocchio*, David tries to look for ways to become a “real” boy. He’s convinced that Monica will love him and take him back if he can find the Blue Fairy. 2000 years later, long after the human extinction, the future alien-looking robots allow David to reunite with his mother, and this is when David can finally reach “a place where dreams are born”.

effects. Like many of the SF films produced from the 1980s and onward, *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* is stylized through the language of virtual reality, with a focus on computational artifice made possible by the advanced systems of CGI. The film's main location is situated in a computer-generated metropolis that is filled with hover-car highways and flashy neon lights, in contrast to the submerged underworld of a re-imagined New York City in the other scenes of the film. *A.I.* narrates the story of an artificial offspring who is on a quest to find his own identity. The portrayal of David, a new cloned and robotic child, radically alters the notion of humanity and family. The fear towards David as the "other", a machine that indicates a disruption in the harmonious organic unity of family, challenges the audience to re-imagine the binary boundaries of machine and organism and the meaning of what a legitimate family is or can be. The confusion (love and fear) towards the David and the questions of whether he fits into established notions of family problematizes the natural heritable traits of human species and the basics of biologically based socializing units. While the David character in *A.I.* is understood as a new kind of species, the re-imagination of social units in SF films is not always confined to new fictional species. The socialization of different citizens is also defined by microorganisms, such as viruses, that prompt us to re-think concepts of public health risk management. Also situated in a computer-generated city, *Demolition Man*¹¹ presents an imagined combination of

¹¹ Demolition Man is a film inspired by Woody Allen's Sleeper in many aspects. The story is situated in the future world of 2032. The city San Angeles portrayed in the film (created from the joining of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and San Diego after a massive earthquake in 2010) is a sanitized city ruled by the fascist leader, Dr. Raymond Cocteau. Due to the heavy crime, the spread of disease and the decay of natural environment in America during the 21st century, the new city prohibits anything "bad for you". There are laws against smoking, drinking, fighting and sexual contact in the futuristic city of San Angeles. The story begins when the criminal Simon Phoenix and the police officer John Spartan are released from a cryogenic prison after 36 years. Simon Phoenix is hired by the fascist leader to destroy the subversive underground, while John Spartan is teamed up with the innocent cops Huxley and Garcia to revolt against the authority. At the end of the film San Angeles returns to being a city with individual choice and freedom.

existing big cities in California. In *Demolition Man*, a sex machine induces sexual simulation to avoid bodily contracted STDs. By exaggerating the social fears of risk and hazard that could be contracted through bodily sex, this machine symbolizes the failure of public health governance that is based on the social and medical understanding of STDs viruses in the future world. *Demolition Man* invites the audience to re-think the meaning of virus and epidemic that is referential to the AIDS epidemiology in the real world. The machine serves as a symbolic object of epidemic governance; it invites us to re-think the relationship between sexual body and viruses and the social politics behind them. Both *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* and *Demolition Man* create a new domain of scientific imagination by introducing a new “machinery” of species and viruses in contrast to the normative social narration of family and public health. The “surplus” symbols of these new species and viruses is played out as a paradox in which David in *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* is neither an insider nor the outsider in the family, and bodily sex in *Demolition Man* is neither risky nor non-risky. The fictional depictions of sex machines in both films create unease towards the accepted understanding of socialization regarding family and sexually transmitted epidemics.

The design and visualization of different sex machines in SF films are, on one hand, cognized by the materiality of “scientific” logics of sex machines; on the other hand, it creates a “transcendental or metaphysical aura” that symbolizes the otherness and

The rationale of banning unhealthy food, tobaccos, alcohol, caffeine and bodily contact in San Angeles is aimed at facilitating public health. In *Demolition Man*, sexual diseases transmitted through physical contacts are regarded as the major cause of the society downfall of the 21st century. When John Spartan and Huxley are attempting to have sex, Huxley says, “After AIDS, there was NRS, then there was UBT.” Huxley is disgusted by Spartan’s request of sex with bodily contact since a new form of sex called “Vir-Sex” is prevalent in 2030. In that future city, people wear a new kind of sex machine on their head during “Vir-Sex” to replace physical intercourse.

imaginary sexual life offered by the futuristic sexual technologies. The alternative meanings of sexuality such as family, health, gender, liberalism and epidemic are metaphorically exaggerated and/or counteracted in reference to the real world. The contested meanings and logics of sexuality in different SF films poetically create a surplus and paradoxical space making re-imaginings possible. The characters in *THX 1138*, *Sleeper* and *Demolition Man* define themselves as either following or opposing the totalitarian regimes. Barbarella and Flesh Gordon present themselves as excessive campy superheroes. David gives machines a new identity that is capable of love. While the sex machines are metaphorically symbolized but literally illustrated in SF films, they also represent a slippage between the “literal” and “metaphorical”, where new identities are re-formulated. The notion of “slippage” in SF is a logical extension of the sub-genre of cyberpunk, which depicts the “virtual realities”. In the contemporary world, the invention of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are all made possible with the emergence of cyberspace. I will now analyze the sub-generic characteristics of cyberpunk in relation to *I.K.U.*, *Fucking Machines* and *Sex Machines Cams*.

Cyberpunk and sex machines – the extension of SF in the networked spatialities

In the above, I analyzed different examples of SF films that depict and emphasize the material nature of the sex machine. Provided that the world of technologies is not only bounded by its physical existence, but also by its untouchable networks, many SF films portray an intermediated culture; these are categorized under the genre called cyberpunk. While the term cyberpunk specifically refers to the sub-genre of SF that was built around the work of William Gibson and other writers who depicted a future

world of cyberspaces within “technological development and power struggles”. The term also theoretically reconstructs the “social theory of the present and near future” and proposes “experimental lifestyles and subcultures” (Featherstone & Burrows, 1995, p. 3). The symbolism within the cyberpunk genre expresses a transcendent and compressed “time and space” communication network based on the empirical experiences of human/machine interconnectedness. It is a special site with a lack of distinct “situatedness”, with “no fixed geographic referent in the physical landscape”, what Gibson posits as the “non-place” (Sabin, 1999, p. 62). “Non-space”, a term for a space doesn’t exist, is also a metaphor for the “expression of transnational corporate realities as it is of global paranoia itself”. It is an “exceptional literary realization within a predominantly visual aural postmodern production” (Jameson, 1992, p. 38).

The fantastic “non-space” of *I.K.U.*

Blade Runner, directed by Ridley Scott in 1982, marked a shift in visualizing the cyberpunk sensibilities in popular and cinematic contexts. By depicting the romanticism and paranoia towards manufactured sex androids who are known as the “pleasure model”, *Blade Runner* symbolizes the cyber-sexual embodiment and disembodiment that is possible through the mise-en-scène of computers, televisions and billboards that broadcast the simulated organism and cloning pleasure. Similarly, self-stated as an symbolic extension of *Blade Runner*’s sexual narratives, *I.K.U.* invites the audiences to “imagine a post-*Blade Runner*, post-apocalyptic metropolis, populated with irresistible kinky cyborgs, known as “I.K.U. Coders” (Zensk, 2001). Despite this narrative sequel, *Blade Runner* depicts Los Angeles in the year 2019

where “replicants” are being genetically manufactured by Tyrell Corp. *I.K.U.* imagines a future Tokyo in the year 2030 where the Genom Corporation, the worldwide leader in the field of pornography, invents new sexual technologies including sex robots, orgasm data storage and sexual-presence devices. The film starts off by introducing Reiko, a type of bioengineered robot also known as “I.K.U. Coder” (an equivalent of the “replicants” in *Blade Runner*) that is cloned to have the ability to collect sexual orgasm data. After being activated by having sexual intercourse with a female-to-male transsexual supervisor, “I.K.U. Runner”, these robots travel around the world in teams to collect information on different varieties of pleasurable experience. During their quest for orgasm data, the film includes scenes of pornographic action between Reiko and all sorts of partners with different genders and sexual interests. Reiko’s arm can transform itself into a penis-shaped device, which allows large amounts of erotic data to be transmitted and collected during the climax of penetrative sex. Subsequently, “I.K.U. Runner” is sent by the Genom Corporation to collect orgasm data by inserting a machine called “Dildo Gun” into Reiko’s vagina. Instead of depicting the specialist police called “blade runners” who are trained to destroy the “replicants”, Cheang, later in the film, introduces the counterforce through “Tokyo Rose”, a different kind of robot dispatched by another competitive I.T. company, Bio Link Corporation, in order to steal and damage Reiko’s orgasm data by spreading a sexual virus. By the end of the film, an artificial orgasm system is successfully built by the protagonists and Genom Corporation begins to sell the “I.K.U. Chips” all over the world via vending machines, while a portable videophone called “Net Glass Phone” becomes popular for clients in order to decode, through the broad band internet, the orgasm data of “I.K.U. Chips”.

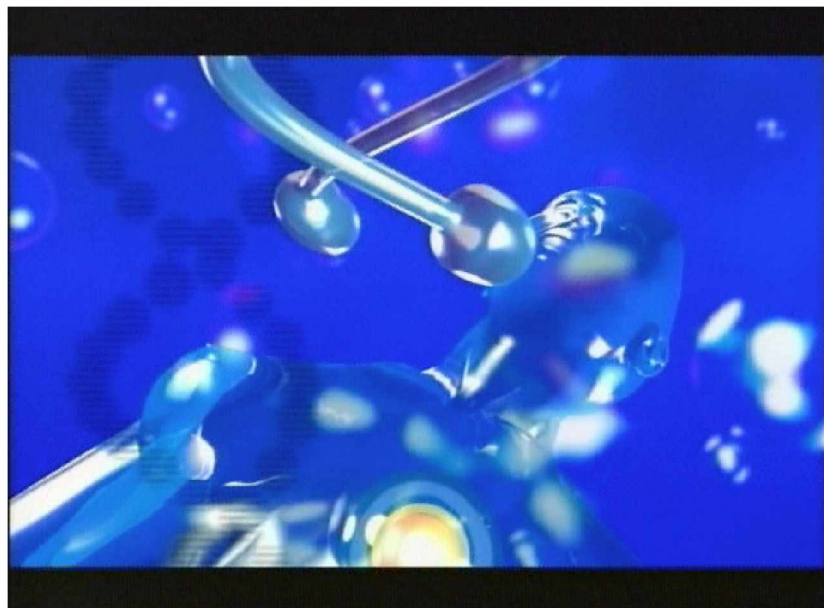
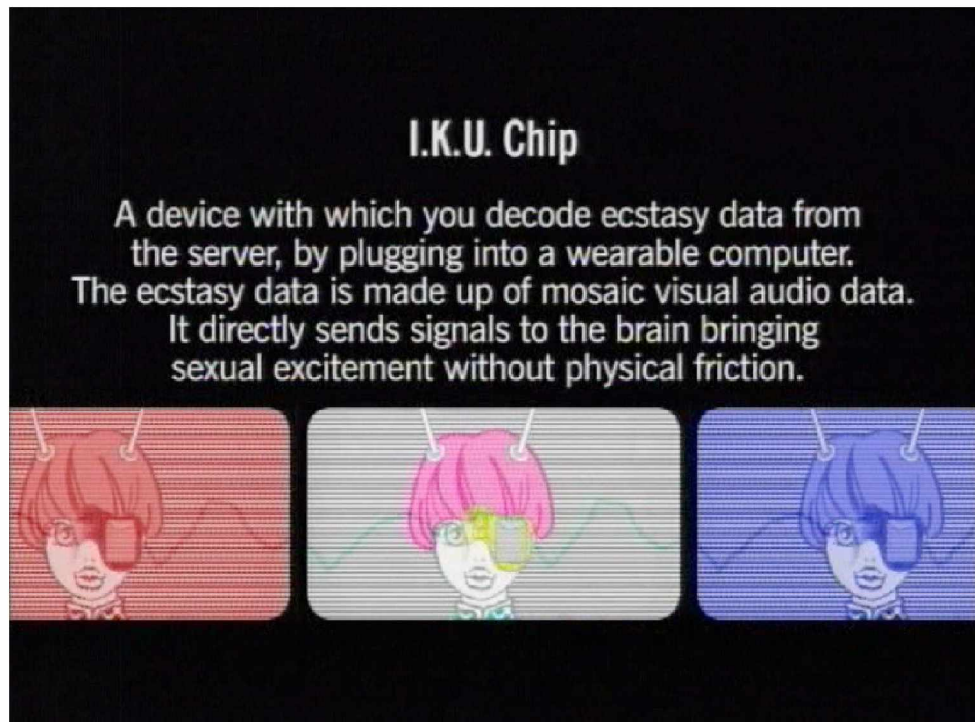
The cultural context of “Tokyo”

The spatial depiction of *I.K.U.* is the communication network that is situated in an imaginary Tokyo in 2030. Unlike the mainstream cyberpunk films such as *Blade Runner*, *I.K.U.* does not depict the material landscape of high-rise Tokyo metropolis. Cheang envisions the future world by swirling between existence and non-existence throughout the film. *I.K.U.* either utilizes existing transportation structures such as elevators, tunnels, highways and car park, or features a psychedelic and phantasmagorical animation special effect that is equivalent to a LSD induced hallucination. While the “real” Tokyo is not actually shown, the spatiality of *I.K.U.* is metaphorically translated as a “passage” that is a “four-dimensional space-time manifold” (Sim, 2001, p. 18; Merrell, 1995, p. 151). Unlike many of the films that I mentioned earlier, this “passage” in *I.K.U.* is a process of transition; without indicating the landscape of the future “Tokyo” as either dystopic or utopic, Cheang narrates a neutral “non-space” that is neither pleasant or unpleasant. It is a space that is an “absence of both existence and non-existence” (Pirie, 1858, p. 623) and it is a “concept of the moment” that can be “imagined as occurring in a multi-dimensional matrix, a spatiotemporal convergence of discourses of difference and identity” (Cronin, 2000, p.69). In other words, the “passage” in *I.K.U.* encodes different contested and fragmented meanings and is a space full of wonders. While the “Tokyo” in *I.K.U.* symbolizes a “non-space”, this space is referential and seen as an extension of the “real” Tokyo that is embraced by global capitalism that allows the transnational “flow” of information. Unlike many cyberpunk films that portray non-sexual corporations, such as Coca-cola in *Blade Runner* and KFC in *Demolition Man*,

I.K.U. portrays a transnational corporation that provides telecommunications and information for the processing of sex and pornography.

At the beginning of the film, Cheang shows a TV commercial of the Genom Corporation for its cyber sex products. The advertisement is stylized by scientific and medical illustrations that are comically animated like those in the Japanese anime and manga [Figure 17]. The complicated mechanisms of the “I.K.U. system” is thus



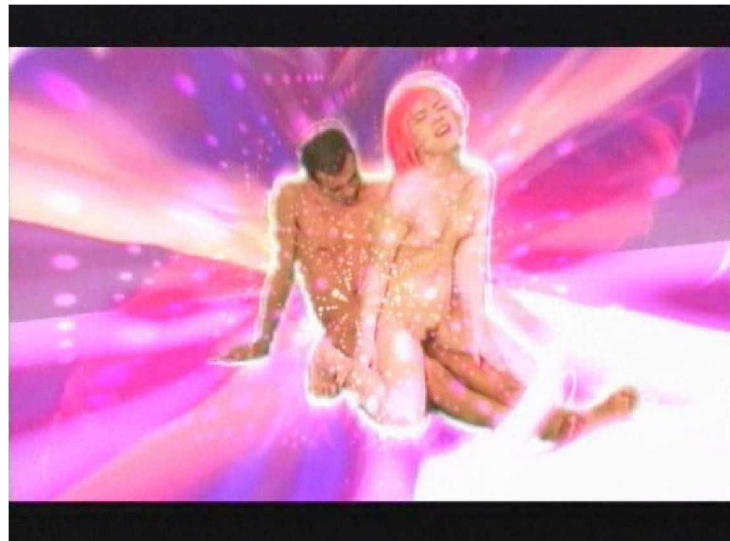
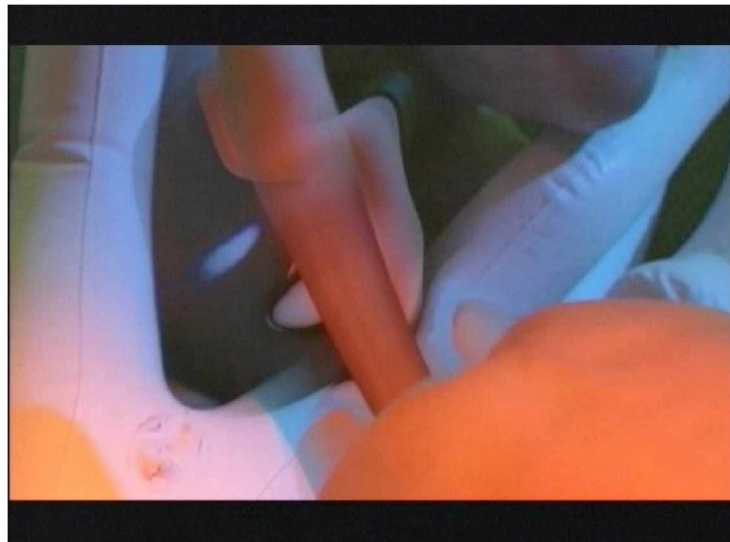


[Figure 17] the TV commercial of the Genom Corporation. Source: Copyright Uplink Co., 2001.

storyboarded by stylistic symbols that serve as a façade of the information (sexual) technology in which no one seems to have the need to fully understand. Being the first scene of *I.K.U.*, the TV commercial of the Genom Corporation symbolically

introduces the notion of cyberpunk; the commercial represents a transnational corporation that is leading a global industrial integration of sexual sensibilities without the “trace of material inertia” (Webster, 1999, p. 234). In our global age, commodity and information exchange are not only made trans-geographically possible in a material sense, it also takes place in the cyberspace immateriality. The immateriality of exchanges in our global economy is what Bill Gates describes as the cyberspace as the “friction-free capitalism” (Webster, 1999, p. 234). The new culture of commodity exchange prompts Cheang to re-imagine sexuality into the logic of “friction-free” that is embraced by the sexual technology within the notions of global capitalism (vending machines selling orgasm data worldwide). This spatiality of sex allows individuals to “self-satisfy” their “erotic imaginations” and “social fantasy” under the “frictionless flow of images and messages” (Zizek, 1997, p. 156). The scientific and yet comical TV commercial in the first scene of *I.K.U.* creates a space for the spectators to imagine the fictional products that is distributed by the future global flow of capitalism. It stylistically introduces a new concept of sex that is immaterial and not bounded by geographical constraints. Apart from the TV commercial that depicts scientific and yet comical images, throughout the whole film, the “flow” of images and messages is represented by a mixture of traditional recorded cinema and digital effects. For example, scenes in which Reiko is having sexual intercourses with different characters are superimposed with 3D animations, X-rays, speeding and deformed images, and digitized letters and codes [Figure 18]. The recorded “real” images of sexual act are coherently and incoherently mapped, mutated and eliminated by the “animated” scenes. While the language of photography and digital imagination becomes fluid, *I.K.U.* metaphorically symbolizes the “realness” of

sex that can be “animated” by free-floating artificial images.



[Figure 18] sexual intercourses superimposed by 3D animations. Source: Copyright Uplink Co., 2001.

The visualization of simulated sex is especially complex in the scene of the “cartoon box house” which depicts Reiko #5, Aso Miyu, trying to acquire the orgasm data from a human, Gogota, inside a cardboard box house that is under a high-speed highway. The façade of the house is recorded by a camera which depicts the three dimensional world. Though only going once into the interior, you immediately get a

sense of the virtual world's cyber aesthetics. Starting with an image of a fully-naked Gogota penetrating a blow-up doll next to a laptop and webcam, the scene goes on to Reiko joining the orgy with five other blow-up dolls floating around within the space [Figure 19]. All the walls inside the house are covered by abstract animations of shapes and texts; they visually transport the viewer to another unidentifiable time and space. Watching the interior of the house is similar to the experience of going into the virtual world of network-mediated video games, where the fantasy avatars role-play through multiple identities in a graphical environment virtually inhabited by many players from all over the world. This scene in *I.K.U.* intensifies the hallucination effect by having numerous of floating squares which are the reflection of the orgy's body parts. The film's viewers are unable to identify who is who and who is having sex with which body. The last part of this scene portrays Reiko's arm turning into a penis-shape device which is inserted into Gogota's anus, and goes on to a LED-like display with patterns of coded mosaics that indicates that Reiko has successfully acquired Gogota's orgasm data. The complex and hallucinated visual treatment of the "cartoon box house" implies the visual rhetoric of postmodernity; it suggests the dislocation and disembodiment of the cybersex culture, a space that is not bounded by geographical locations and a body that is transformed beyond physicality. While the space in *I.K.U.* is non-geographical, the body of Reiko (cloned robot) and Gogota (human) are fluidly identical as they "can take on almost limitless embodiment and have no terrestrial weight" (Welton, 1998, p.103). Their minds are symbolically detached from the fleshy material "weight" while their sexual pleasures and identities are re-configured into the domain of the abstract information patterns of cyberspace. The "cartoon box house" scene's numerous floating rectangles reflecting

the body parts of



[Figure 19] “cartoon box house”. Source: Copyright Uplink Co., 2001.

Reiko and Gogota symbolizes the fragmented body. Rather than symbolically illustrating a coherent mirror of the body in the cyberspace, the disembodiment of the body goes beyond the “mirror stage”. The bodies of Reiko and Gogota are seen to be de-unified as in the partial reflections. In this incoherent imagery, the body is thus “caught in the web of the symbolic order” (Zizek, 2000, p.296) and it constitutes the “armour of an alienating identity” (Fraser & Greco, 2005, p. 173). On the one hand, the sexual “non-space” of *I.K.U.* is visually represented by the languages of recorded cinematography and the logics of global sexual corporations. On the other hand, this space is made imaginary by the complex special effects denoting dislocation and disembodiment. By using the fusion of live recorded cinematography and animated manipulations, Cheang developed a new vocabulary of seeing and constructing the “alienating” identities of the protagonists. In *I-k-u.com*, Cheang says that she wants to explore how “the boundary of the human race is becoming unclear” when “the words like "Human Genome", "Clone", or "Human Robot" are being whispered”. I will analyze the “alienating” identities of the new human race that are embraced by the “non-space” in *I.K.U.* below.

The queerness of identity narrations in *I.K.U.*

Provided that Cheang wants to “lavish visual metaphor for the sexual freedoms afforded by the internet, fantasies you can indulge with others regardless of gender, social constraints or even physical possibilities.” (Zensk, 2001), *I.K.U.* purposely introduces as many sexes and sexualities as possible: biological male, biological female, FTM, drag queen, androids, orgies, one-on-one, kinky versus vanilla. Even

the abstract orgasm data is symbolically rendered into an image of fragmented sexual identity. On the one hand, Reiko is portrayed as a sexualized object and commodity that is produced by the big sex corporation; Reiko's image and sexuality fit into the conditions of advanced capitalism where objects are fetishistically displaced and fantasized for (sexual) consumptions (Sedgwick, 1997, p. 97). On the other hand, rather than positioning the objects (sex robots) as "others" like the "replicants" in the "off-world colonies" of *Blade Runner*, which are classified, racialized and gendered in contrast to the "Blade Runners" on the "Earth", Cheang purposely "de-problematizes" the popular dystopic visions of cyberpunk that emphasizes a conflict between human/machine, male/female, hetero/homo, by using an avant-garde narrative film language. The vision of *I.K.U.* is neither dystopic nor utopic. The identities of the characters portrayed in *I.K.U.* are never made clear. The protagonists have fluid and mutable identities and they commit to their contradictory and partial nature of being within cyberspace. Spectators of *I.K.U.* can hardly distinguish and make sense of the narratives of the character's identities due to the abstract and experimental treatments of the disrupted time/space sequences. Rather than utilizing a linear logic, *I.K.U.*'s story is arbitrarily sequenced with half-perceived flickers of full-frontal views of intercourse. The visual narrative is choppy enough so that spectators, without reading the synopsis, cannot easily recognize how scenes and characters are being developed.

Concerning the fluid sexuality and identity of the characters, Cheang portrays Reiko as "biologically" defined female, at the same time, she can perform the "male feature" when her hands are transformed into a penis-shaped device. In the first scenes of the

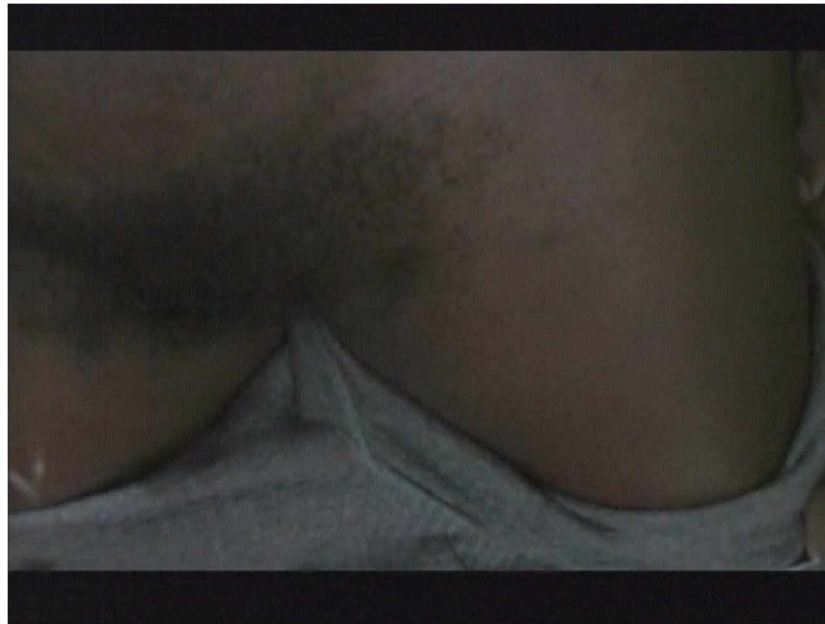
film, when Reiko is being activated for her sexual function, the camera deliberately focuses on the close-up shots of the bulgy crotch of “I.K.U. Runner” clad in underpants [Figure 20].



[Figure 20] the bulgy crotch of “I.K.U. Runner” clad in underpants. Source: Copyright Uplink Co., 2001.

During “foreplay”, the body of “I.K.U. Runner” is being “worshipped” by Reiko. “I.K.U. Runner” is perceived as, and seems to be, a masculine African man. This scene represents the mainstream hetero erotic qualities in Japanese pornography that are seemingly “predictable”. Though by the end of the film, when Reiko has acquired all the orgasm data, the film again reveals the close-up of the crotch of “I.K.U. Runner”, this time without underpants [Figure 21]. Cheang unexpectedly reveals the biological gender of “I.K.U. Runner” as female. Instead of penetrating with a biological penis, “I.K.U. Runner” uses a “Dildo Gun” to satisfy Reiko. *I.K.U.* disrupts the gender expectations bounded by the “interior essence”. In “Gender Troubles”, Judith Butler once wrote, “...expectation concerning gender, that it

operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates” (Butler, 2004, p. 94). The narrative concerning the gender of



[Figure 21] without underpants on. Source: Copyright Uplink Co., 2001.

“I.K.U. Runner” rejects the logical expectations of the inside (biological gender) /outside (gender acts and gestures) gender coherence and it revolves around the “metalepsis” of “(trans)gender performativity” which disrupts and contradicts the spectator’s logical “anticipation” regarding gender. The careful arrangements of close-ups at the beginning and the end of the film encode the fragmented notions of gender, which is mutable, partial and temporal.

The “Dildo Gun” in this scene further renders and reduces the fluid sexual identities into pure, “clonable” and reproducible genetic codes. All the sex acts; complex identities and interrelations between human and machine are reduced into codes of

data. The “nature” of sexual identities is thus manipulated into a “technical product”, the “natural reality” itself becomes something “simulated”, and the only “Real is the underlying structure of DNA” (Zizek, 1997, p. 133) where sex is translated as the flow of data. This schema of “reproduction” via the “transference of genetic material” (Roof, 1996, p. 172) symbolizes the disintegrating notion of a separated “human or machine” identity in *I.K.U.* The illusions created by the similar costuming, make-up, gestures, and special effects of different characters make the bio-engineered robots (machines) indistinguishable from human. In the DVD version of *I.K.U.*, after the scenes showing that the successful mission of building up the I.K.U. system in which “I.K.U. Chips” are sold all over the world via vending machines, viewers can choose two different abstract endings. The “Ending Type 1” depicts Reiko meeting up with the “I.K.U. Runner” again. Despite the mission being set up by the Genom Corporation, Reiko and “I.K.U. Runner” fall in love in a human/machine relationship and drive away on a highway. This ending tries to convey the idea that the bio-engineered robots are not the “objects” (serving the human), they are in fact symbolically identical to the subjects (human) as the same “species” in a future world. The “Ending Type 2” depicts one of Reiko’s human partners, “Akira The Hustler”, falling in love with the “I.K.U. Runner”. This ending allows the viewer to consider whether “Akira The Hustler” is a human or a machine, and correspondingly, the boundaries of his identity as a “hustler”. The suspended and non-conclusive endings, along with fragments of dialogues, visual effects and performances further suggest an indefinite reading of the character’s identities. The signs and symbols of the characters are made complex, paradoxical and impossible to be logically decoded; the “reality” of the story is effaced, leaving all behind in an

uncanny mode of interpretation and imagination within the sphere of sex and technology.

As an experimental form of cyberpunk, *I.K.U.* challenges the spectator's expectations regarding the genre and modes of traditional narrative. The textual information provided by *I.K.U.* disrupts the logical anticipation on how certain stories, identities and scenario are usually developed. The rejection of either/or narrative devices in *I.K.U.* opens up alternative possibilities for trans-racial and trans-sexual imaginings of the body. This hybrid narration is central to the genre of *I.K.U.*, one that rejects cinematic conventions by blending cyberpunk and pornography. Opposite to the representations of sex robots in *I.K.U.*, fucking-machines and teledildonics have mainly been visualized by the pornographic industry. I will discuss the pornographic industry's representation of sex machines below.

The representation of fucking-machines and teledildonics in pornography within the virtual space – from presentability to imaginability

In *I.K.U.*, Cheang portrays a “non-space” that is formulated by communication technology, conversely, independently made fucking-machines and teledildonics are pornographically utilized and represented in cyber space. In *Fucking Machines* and *Sex Machines Cams*, the “biological phallus” is replaced by the “technological phallus”. What are the symbolic meanings of phallus displacement in fucking-machines' and teledildonics' pornography? How does the contemporary robotic and networked technologies induce us to rethink the representations of pornography?

Fucking Machines and its “excess” of Real

Fucking Machines is the first pornographic website that is solely dedicated to fucking-machine sex. It was the second website launched after the umbrella company, Kink.com¹², was founded in 1997. Located at the former San Francisco Amory, Kink.com is a corporation famous for producing alternative fetish pornography. *Fucking Machines* is one of the Kink.com’s most popular sites, having more than 350 online streaming videos depicting women being penetrated by thrusting machines. Apart from the videos, *Fucking Machines* also has a blog, forums and a section that displays all models of their fucking-machines, including the technical specs, photos and written descriptions. Rather than displaying the name and sexual features of the porn stars like a catalogue in many pornography website, *Fucking Machines* explains every details of their machines from “Fuckzilla” that is able to walk, to “The Lick-a-chick” that operates many prosthetic tongues at variable speeds. Under the same thematic narrative, Kink.com also launched *Butt Machine Boy* in 2003, which depicts the same machines interacting with men. But because of low subscription rates, *Butt Machine Boy* is no longer being updated.

¹² A quote from “About Us” at Kink.com: “Kink.com was started in 1997 by bondage enthusiast, Peter, who was a PhD student. After realizing consensual BDSM games were more exciting than finance, he left academia to devote his life to subjecting beautiful, willing women to strict bondage. The result was Hogtied.com, Kink's first site. Hogtied now has an enormous archives of videos depicting many tightly bound women.

Through adhering to our core values, kink.com has grown into a respected company which has attracted talented employees. Kink's team of more than 90 people is now dedicated to bringing you the most imaginative fetish material. Each of our unique websites is directed by a webmaster who is heavily kinky. Each webmaster's passion is to bring their kink to life to deliver authentic fetish footage. Our models are never told to act or artificially struggle.

BDSM is about respect and trust. When you watch a Kink.com movie, you are watching real BDSM-loving people play in this context. We at Kink.com pride ourselves in the authentic reproduction of fetish activities enjoyed by those in the BDSM lifestyle.”

On the front page of *Fucking Machines*, there's an introduction explaining the "selling point" of its productions. It says, "We take kinky sex to a new level...by sex toys and machines at speeds up to 350 RPM, leading to genuine orgasms...The experience of getting fucked by a machine brings girls hot orgasms, many shuddering in full body orgasmic bliss...If you like seeing women getting fucked by machines and having genuine screaming, cum dripping orgasms, *Fucking Machines* is the Website for you." Obviously, besides the of robotic fetish that is different from the mainstream pornography, *Fucking Machines* emphasizes a narration of orgasm by displaying fully visible scenes of human/machine frictions and female ejaculations. Besides the images that visually demonstrate the orgasms, the orgasmic effects are also narrated by the performer's voice, accompanied by the strong and repetitive noise that is generated by the mechanical fucking-machines.

As it states in the introductory page, representing the "genuine" is what *Fucking Machines* stands for, "realness" is being "factually" recorded in all the episodes. For example, the episode *Amateur Girl Fridays – Mason* begins with an interview that is conducted by a camerawoman. In this scene, the performer Mason sits on a stool in what appears to be a garage. Instead of having shelves that are filled with power tools, cables or automobile products, the room is filled with different kinds of fucking-machines. The mise-en-scène leads the spectator to realize that it is the "storage room" of the porn studio [Figure 22]. With a voice-over, the camerawoman begins to ask



[Figure 22] “Storage room” of the porn studio. Source: Copyright Kink.com, 2009.

Mason some basic questions regarding her personal life, and then she says, “I’m going to make sure that you’re comfortable, and I’m going to make sure that you know how things work. I’m going to leave you alone with the devices. I don’t want you to fake it. You don’t need to look at the camera. Anything you have seen in porn, just forget about it. I just want you to be yourself today. If any machines is not working, tell me and I will change it” (Fucking Machines, 2009). Right after this introduction, Mason strips and turns on the machine next to her. She starts to experiment with the machine’s knobs and figures out the effects of different speeds. The camera then moves to a close-up of the machine engine, as the thrusting sound gets stronger and stronger. After that, Mason starts to interact with the machine in different positions with a “wish” to attain “fulfillment”. The emphasis on the

“realistic” and “autonomous” aspect of *Fucking Machines* on the one hand articulates the male-oriented pleasure to female pleasure; on the other hand, it reinforces the boundaries of a commodity economy that Mason is unavoidably trapped within: the “mechanic enslavement” of the “libidinal economy”. Mason is symbolically positioned as a “workstation” (for men) (Pettman, 2006, p. 123). The “genuine” pleasure of the performers in *Fucking Machines* is contradictory and difficult to decode. No matter if the “pleasure” of Mason is genuine or not, the “realness” and “autonomous” depictions of *Fucking Machines* denotes a new mode of visual representations that has high fidelity to the “real”. Paradoxically, the fetishistic realness in fucking-machines porn can only be capable of showing the “lack” of the total real.

In addition to depicting the “amateur” performers learning to attain pleasure for their first time by using fucking-machines, in another episode, *Masturbating addiction - Sindee Jennings*, shows an “expert” who can “handle” the machines like a professional. In the descriptions, it says, “You may remember Sindee from the *Squirt Off Olympics* where she hosed Flower Tucci and Via with her squirting pussy... she challenges her pussy to take big dicks... which has her squirting all over her stomach. Try and keep up with this hot girl's orgasms!” (Fucking Machines, 2009). During the 50 minutes of the episode, Sindee ejaculates more than five times with five different machines. The images are centered on Sindee’s vulval skin and the dildo of the machines [Figure 23]. The audio is a constant mixture of human voice and noise from the engines. The backdrop and the other parts of the bodies (both machines and Sindee) are no longer a “presence” in the sex act narrative. The framing and cropping

of the partial bodies that are fused with the total sound level creates an ironic incoherent tension, and urges both Sindee and the spectator to “reconcile” their (physical and psychological) tensions through the dramatic expulsion of the squirting scene. While the video data is streaming on the spectator’s screen, Sindee’s fluid is smeared on the machines, her own body, and the set. It pushes the “functions” of the machines and Sindee to a maximum level. I am confused as to whether she’s the subject who is controlling the machines (for her heightened orgasm) or the object that is being operated by the machines (to create a surplus value for a commodity). The subject and object positions in *Fucking Machines* are made illusionary and thus unidentifiable.





[Figure 23] *Masturbating addiction* - *Sindee Jennings*. Source: Copyright Kink.com, 2009.

While the biological partner of the performers are replaced by a mechanical object, *Fucking Machines* exaggerates the “surplus of the Real” to the maximum extent of “sex” and minimum of “foreplay”. It doesn’t show any scenes of hugging, fondling, kissing or oral sex. It only focuses on things that are “essential” and “necessary”. Without adding any “unnecessary” narrative of sex, *Fucking Machines* aims to represent and reveal the greatest amount of “realness” as possible. Through the

clearest images of HD video recording, the best craftsmanship, the most mimimalistic plots and mise-en-scène, and the most faultless noise that could possibly be recorded from the machines, *Fucking Machines* represents a “technical perfectability” (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 52) which presents the viewer with an extreme “realism” and high “authenticity” of sex. On the one hand, *Fucking Machines* emphasizes “genuine orgasms” via “machines at speeds up to 350 RPM”; on the other hand, it visualizes the “direct access” and “maximum exposure” to the most artificial and unreal ways of sex possible. With the “lack” of biological human to generate orgasm, *Fucking Machines* pushes the “surplus” of pornography to the extreme; at the same time, it doesn’t present the spectators with any anticipation of how certain stories, identities and scenario are going to be developed. The logic of erotic and pornographic representations is solely “deduced” to the reproduction of the techniques (of machines and human). This scenario illustrates what Slavoj Žižek calls the “paradox” or “unpresentability” of pornography” in which “the congruence between the filmic narrative (the unfolding of the story) and the direct display of the sexual act is structurally impossible” (Žižek, 1997, p. 177). The gender and body identities of the performers, the machines and the spectators are constantly being negotiated between the filmic languages and the “realness” of sexual expressions. This contested zone is further made complex by the interactive tele-presence technologies in which the data of sex is not recorded, but displays a real-time configuration of the body.

Sex Machine Cams and its “lack” of Real

Sex Machine Cams is the first pornography site specializing in interface designs that

allows users to control fucking-machines in real-time via the Internet. Under the umbrella of *Flirt 4 Free*, a website that is dedicated to providing real-time private shows for subscribers, *Sex Machine Cams* offers the spectator a chance to drive the fucking-machines and chat with the performers by using the virtual interface on the website. It states on its blog, "...Sex in a computer simulated virtual reality, especially computer-mediated sexual interaction between the presences of two humans... We take the whole fucking machine experience from our studio to your home" (Sex Machine Cams, 2009). Unlike *Fucking Machines*, *Sex Machine Cams* is produced in the studio, and is simultaneously mediated by spectators from all over the world. Without a cameraperson, the angles and framings of *Sex Machine Cams* are configured by the performer with an operating system that includes multiple cameras, lighting and special effects that are networked with the live broadcasting systems¹³ [Figure 24].

¹³ *Sex Machine Cams* is operated by the *TriCaster*TM system which is designed for the live digital broadcastings. Here's an excerpt from the official site of *TriCaster*TM:

"The process of creating live, network-style television can be very costly and require massive amounts of expensive equipment and a large crew of people. *TriCaster*TM changes all of that. In one lightweight, portable system (small enough to fit in a backpack), you have all of the tools, including live virtual sets on select models, required to produce, live stream, broadcast, and project your show.

There is a reason that *TriCaster* is the standard in portable live production for major players like Fox Sports, MTV, VH1, NBA D-League and the NHL. Its small footprint makes it possible to broadcast from anywhere and *TriCaster* is flexible enough to allow you to deliver live productions on your own or with a team. No matter where your live broadcast plans take you, there is a *NewTek TriCaster* perfect for you."



[Figure 24] the studio of Sex Machine Cams
(Left: Isaac Leung, Right: Allen Stein)

When you go to the front page of Sex Machine Cams, you see a video banner

depicting examples of the live sex show with text floating across it, such as, “Drive a Sex Machine from your Own Home”, “Real Sex Machines...Real Orgasms”. On the right hand side of the banner, there is a box indicating which performers are currently online. In addition to the flashy banners, *Sex Machine Cams* has a blog and calendar with an RSS feed function, so members of the website can receive the latest schedules and information without visiting the website. After reading the detailed information about each performer, including their birthdays, weights, heights and body sizes, members of *Sex Machine Cams* can login for free “foreplay” with the performers. By clicking on one of the performers, members will go to an interface that broadcasts a live webcam image with a chat function. While the performer is covered by lingerie/underwear, he/ she attempts to seduce the site’s membership by typing erotic missives and assuming alluring poses. After the end of the free trial, members can either choose to buy credit for a private show, or to chat with another performer. This way, the line between the “foreplay” and “penetration” is distinguished by the presence/non-presence of the genitals, and it is configured by the credit/ no-credit pay system.

In the private show, members are invited to an interface that has a controller with virtual knobs. The visual images of pornography are made increasingly complex in *Sex Machine Cams*; besides the presence of the full exposure of the body and genitals, the sex act is also enacted by writing in the chat box. While the body of the performer is fragmented by cropping different body parts, the grammar and vocabulary of the texts are also uniquely re-structured for cyber sex. “Emoticons”¹⁴, acronyms, abbreviations, and different linguistic strategies are applied to develop an

¹⁴ Pictographs that are made by keyboard symbols. For example, the smiley face.

online relationship in the shortest time possible. Performers send flirtatious messages to seduce the site's subscribers, such as "Hello I'm Summer...ohhh talking dirty if you want", and the consumer responds with such language as, "I'm nude...can u zoom in your puss?"¹⁵. The lack of correct grammar and vocabulary, the "disjunctural" depictions of sound and body movements and the incoherent logics of the dialogue expand the space for imaginative sex acts. Unlike *Fucking Machines*, that is aimed at depicting visual "realness", *Sex Machine Cams* represents a visual language that is completely the opposite of real. The backdrop of *Sex Machine Cams* is like the virtual sets we can see on CNN or ESPN, in which they simulate a working newsroom environment. With the live digital broadcastings system, the sexual performance can be visualized in locations ranging from a studio, a stage, a presentation hall, a football stadium, a spaceship, to an abstract motion background that looks like the movie *Matrix*'s introductory animation. The performer can be moved from one place to another with a simple click on the control panel, while his/her presence can be recorded by multiple camera angles. Unlike the perfect clarity of *Fucking Machines*, that depicts the clearest and most visible images of human/machine frictions and ejaculations, the performers and the machines of *Sex Machine Cams* can be blurred, color adjusted, distorted, reduced, sharpened and stylized by different filters. The sound emitting from the performers and the machines can be turned up and down to create a special erotic soundscape. All the visual and audio language in *Sex Machine Cams* represents an ironic artificialness that is completely detached from the "natural" world. Instead of taking the requests from spectators literally, the performers of *Sex Machine Cams* guarantee to display more

¹⁵ Excerpts recorded from visiting the live-show at the Sex Machine Cams studio on 3 Oct, 2008.

than what spectators expect. If being in a porn studio is not seductive enough, she/he can ride the machines like a football player or a news anchor; if the voice is not exciting enough, the system will exaggerate it. The narratives of *Sex Machine Cams* are always expanding through the play of the body, time and space. The aesthetic value of manipulated images in *Sex Machine Cams* thus goes beyond the “original” and “natural” object. It provides the spectators a simulated experience of the “real”.

In *Fucking Machines*, an episode of 50 minutes can depict multiple orgasm shots, though in teledildonics pornography, it’s not always the case. Since *Sex Machine Cams* runs in real-time, the sex acts cannot be recorded and edited to depict images of intense orgasm one right after another. In fact, most of the spectators only stay at the private show for a short period of time, since every minute of viewing costs from 2 to 6 US dollars. Therefore, the presence of the performers is further fragmented by these time constraints. Instead of enjoying the dramatic expulsion of the squirting scenes, the pleasure of using *Sex Machine Cams* for the spectators is his/her control over the virtual knobs. Apart from the visual and audio manipulations that are controlled by the performers and crews, the “effects” of *Sex Machine Cams* are also co-mediated by the spectator. On the virtual panel, far away from where the studio is located, the spectator can adjust the speed of the machines to 10 different levels. While the visual and audio language of *Sex Machine Cams* represents the ironic artificialness that is opposite to the “natural” real world, the virtual panel represents a “realness” that assures a coherence between the real material world and the virtual one. Even though the only material actions that the spectators do are mouse-clicking and watching the screen, the symbolic sensation is heightened beyond the material

pleasure. The “realness” of the virtual knobs is thus contradicted by the “lack of real” presence on screen, creating an ironic tension in teledildonic sex. Instead of reconciling the tension by an ejaculation that is guaranteed to be captured by camera, *Sex Machine Cams* always assumes a partial aesthetic and identity. Under the strictures enacted by the pay-by-the-minute system, no one has “full-ownership” of the sex act. Unlike *Fucking Machines* where the bodily discharge symbolize the end of the pornographic narration, the performers in *Sex Machines Cams* can never “satisfy” himself / herself fully by physical ejaculation (the performers procrastinate as long as possible). Correspondingly, the spectators can never psychologically acquire the climax and its resolution. The lack of a reconcilable ending in teledildonic’s sex renders a temporary, partial and unsustainable sexual spectatorship and a pleasure that dramatically differs from mainstream pornography on the Internet.

In *Fucking Machines*, I analyzed the contradictions of narrative representation and spectatorship by using Zizek’s “paradox” or “ ‘unpresentability‘ of pornography”. *Sex Machines Cams* no doubt also represents the contradictory notions of pornography, though the symbolism of *Sex Machines Cams* is rendered in a reversed position. While *Fucking Machines* depicts the visual and audio “realness”, *Sex Machines Cams* encodes the notion of computer artificiality. Correspondingly, while *Fucking Machines* symbolizes the material impossibility (of scene by scene of ejaculations), *Sex Machines Cams* assures the possibility of physically remote controlling the performer. Therefore, the modes of illusionary imagination and spectatorship of *Fucking Machines* and *Sex Machines Cams* are different, even though the performers are interacting with similar fucking-machines. The symbolic articulations of body in

teledildonics pornography encodes the boundless space of networked communications; instead of projecting the “real” identities, *Sex Machine Cams* returns the body’s identity back to its fundamental nature of artificialness. In Žižek’s account, virtual sex heralds “the end of the virtual space of symbolization” where objects are “transitive” and “instantly here” (Žižek, 1996, p. 190). He posits that the fragmented presence of pornographic images creates a hyperreal situation where all objects are “de-realized” and radically exposes the “myth” of “real sex” (the act with a flesh-and-blood partner) that is inherently phantasmic (Žižek, 1994, p. 2). According to the Lacanian thesis “there is no such thing as a sexual relationship”, in reality the “real” body only serves as a support of the subject’s phantasmic projections where no coherent, perfect and harmonious sexual coupling is fundamentally possible. Žižek re-articulates this notion by proposing that all sexes are fundamentally distorted and that virtual sex “simply renders and manifests its underlying phantasmic structure” (Žižek, 1994, p. 2). This mode of phantasmic imagination is constructed by the illusions that the performers and spectators are simultaneously subject and object; the frame of representation (on the screen) is neither statically “mastered” or “slaved” by the subject or the object. The performers and spectators are both used to make sense of the sexual act according to the logics of the computerized networks where every action and presence are immediately realized and made operable between the mediation of activity and passivity. It is a state of paradox and confusion where the information of the “reality” is “too much”. The capacity and dimension of imagination is thus expanded to an immeasurable metaphysics.

The representations of sex machines – a mutational process of identities

While I attempted to examine the representations of sex machines by using the methods generic analysis in the above, I found that the symbolic meanings of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are re-articulated by the concept of “surplus”. The excessive values of these contemporary sex machines’ representations underlines the contested boundaries between subject/object, femininity/masculinity, existence/non-existence, utopic/dystopic and reality/fiction. Bodies, genders and the state-of-being are being rendered and mutated by the deconstructed and fragmented treatments of languages in SF films and pornography.

In SF films, sex machines are seen as symbols of governance, family, gender and virus. The languages of SF films are excessively stylized, depicting the objects, aliens and outer spaces that serve as a “slippage” between “cognition” and “estrangement”. The “slippage” in SF is then metaphorically mutated into images of a non-existent space, called “non-space” in the cyberpunk genre. The original “surplus” values of SF are thus further problematized by the abstract signs and symbols of the characters, stories and mise-en-scène of cyberpunk films. As in the analysis of cyberpunk *I.K.U.*, the representations of sex robots that I analyzed is encoded with a paradoxical mode of interpretation and imagination; the identities of bodies, genders and the notions of reality are made increasingly complex and uncanny. The signs and symbols of sex machines representations in cyberpunk are made incoherent. In pornography, the original “surplus” of signs and symbols emphasizes “it” (what cannot be shown in the non-pornographic film) where spectatorship is the pleasure of the reiteration of “it”

“does”, “enjoys” and “suffers” in “maximum exposure”. The excessive stimulation is mutated into a virtually simulated pleasure where the delineation between “it” and the spectator is no longer easily defined. This simulated space underlines the “non-space” that is portrayed in the cyberpunk genre. The mutable “surplus” values in SF films and pornography are further problematized by the generic categorizations of the representations of sex machines. While *I.K.U.* is included in a hybrid genre of cyberpunk and pornography, its language of representation, such as hallucinatory aesthetics and animated special effects are also applied to the teledildonics porn industry. The visual rhetoric of the penetrating scenes in the cyberspace in *I.K.U.* is thus symbolically exchangeable with the artificial presence of the performers on the screens of *Sex Machines Cams*. The generic distinctions of SF films and pornography are further erased by the reversible codes of languages in the cases that I analyzed. The representations of sex machines in SF films and pornographies are emphasizing “surplus” values, thus the notions of “surplus” is fluidly mutated in different modes and facets within the hybrid meanings of either filmic or pornographic representations of contemporary sex machines.

In *THX 1138* and *Sleeper*, the protagonists’ counteractive practices inform a new kind of power that is against normative sexuality (as in the films, non-bodily sex are considered to be normal). In reverse, despite creating new kinds of spectatorships, the surplus symbolisms of *I.K.U.*, *Fucking Machines* and *Sex Machine Cams* also create a new spatiality that is considered as a counterforce to the essential meanings of SF, art, pornography, gender and body. The hybrid and undefinable meanings that are formulated from the above examples invite us to politically re-think the cultural

meanings of genres, bodies and gender and our living conditions, just as in the films, THX 1138 and Miles Monroe are made to think and react. Therefore, representations of sex machines not only inform new aesthetics, but also new modes of visual and ideological politics within the distribution and cultural networks of these films and pornographies. This power dynamics between the essential and non-essential notions of representation also provoke me to further consider the materiality of gender and body outside the texts of sex machines.

In the analysis of the cyberspace above, Frederic Jameson says that “there is an exchange and a dialectical multiplication of imaginary entities between subject and object”. What can be made of this new structure of dialectics in the material world? Concepts offered by post-feminists invite us to re-imagine the pornographic bodies away from the essential and normative understandings of genders, though the insights drawn by the early feminists that female bodies are commoditized in the consumption of pornography are still valid. Within the dialectics of the political and libidinal economy, sexes are still somehow precisely assigned to certain roles and functions in pornographic representations and interactions. While *I.K.U.* “de-problematizes” the dystopic visions of gender and sexual conflicts, and it takes bodies and gender into a realm that has “no terrestrial weight”, our material bodies in real life are still weighted and loaded with power struggles that are inherent in our sexual social landscape. Just as Frank Rich says, pornography helps us to “understand the choreography of performing and laboring bodies”, the representations of sex machines always come with a multiplicities of dialectics that include the embodiment and disembodiment of gender, body, sexuality and technology. Despite the contradictory meanings of body

and gender within the texts of sex machines, the materiality of body and gender outside the texts are also full of contradictions. Based on the insights of “surplus” value, I will further investigate through in the field interviews the productions of sex machines and try to formulate a study into the imaginative processes and the material politics of the productions of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots. In the next chapters I will aim at bringing this into the larger cultural context in which contemporary sex machines are produced.

Chapter 3

The cultural production of sex machines and the contemporary technosexual practices

From the simple electronic vibrator to the complexities of cybersex, sex and technology have always intersected and created new sexual practices. The dynamic relation between sexuality and technology are constantly changing along with the ways in which human beings achieve psychological and bodily pleasure through these devices. Provided that pleasure machines have been made increasingly complex due to technological advances, previously understood sexual technologies such as phone sex, vibrators, cyber sex, pornography and sex dolls have been further hybridized into new kinds of sex machines, such as fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots. Technosexual bodies and genders have been re-defined into a mode of even more contradictory and contested meanings. Along with my textual analysis on the representations of sex machines, I also conducted in-depth interviews with different contemporary sex machines producers in the United States and Europe in 2008. In this chapter, I will examine the production of sex machines as a cultural artefact and evaluate how sex machines are being produced and culturally imagined. In order to find out how sex machines have culturally redefined sexuality, technology, gender and the body, I will evaluate different values, beliefs, ideologies and practices engaged during the invention and production processes especially that of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots.

Identification of the “sexual field” of sex machines

Based on the Bourdieusian concept of field and Goffmanian analysis of social psychology, “sexual field”, a term created by Dr. Adam Isaiah Green, examines how individual agents develop a reflexive relationship to their sexual practices with the possession of “erotic capitals”. “Sexual field” enables us to study the power relations of different erotic agents and serves as an apparatus that “shifts the sociological focus from individual-level problems around sexual identity and practice to the study of systems of sexual stratification that characterize collective sexual life” (Green, 2008). In this project, in conjunction with a study of the producer’s non-normative sexual practices and identities with an in-depth analysis of the mediations by different erotic agents in the production process, I attempt to create a new cultural theory that incorporates the concepts of suburban spatiality, simulation theory and theories of body displacement. This should further animate the productions of the contemporary technosexual landscape. Based on interviews I conducted with different producers of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots, I will analyze how sex machines are being technically produced and culturally situated within their specific cultural contexts. The sexual field of sex machines in this project includes the independent production of fucking-machines, the production of fucking-machines in pornography and sex toy industries, the artistic imagination and industrial production of sex robots, and the cultural production of sex machines within major institutions that are dedicated to the study and research on sex machines.

Independent productions of sex machines

The phenomenal achievements in mechanical flexibility, and electrical and tele-networking technologies have proliferated among the independent inventors¹⁶ of fucking-machines and the “open-sourcing” of sexual programming. Mechanical and electrical knowledge have not been limited to the professional but have become accessible to the general public in DIY (do-it-yourself) culture today. Fucking-machines originated from independent producers and they are situated at the fringe of the sex toy industries. In the suburbs of the United States, the convergence of garage laboratories and sexual aids, where tools, hardware, electrical appliances and sex toys are readily available, has created an outlet for many independent creations. Some of the most extensive research on independent fucking-machines is documented in Timothy Archibald’s book, *Sex Machines: Photographs and Interviews*¹⁷. Archibald traveled to rural towns and suburbs across the United States between 2003 and 2005. He discovered more than thirty do-it-yourself fucking-machine enthusiasts through

¹⁶Independent productions of sex machines denote a production that is outside the production chain of the sex toy industry. Most of the independent sex machines are not originally designed to be mass-produced. Some of the inventions are not even made to be used or consumed by anyone. The independent producers invent sex machines without the aid of paid professionals. While some of the inventors are professionals in mechanic and engineering, they produce these sex machines when they’re “off-duty” from their paid jobs.

¹⁷This is the excerpts and the introduction of *Sex Machines: Photographs and Interviews* by Timothy Archibald:

“*Sex Machines: Photographs and Interviews* reveals an astonishing American subculture, and the homespun inventors and users who propel it. The book introduces us to: a laid-off tech industry exec who transforms a thrift store pasta maker into a high-powered sexual appliance and thus creates a new career; an apocalyptic visionary who builds a sex machine prototype for female survivors of a future without men; and an Idaho cowboy who intends to use his device as a form of Christian-based marriage counseling.

Sex Machines celebrates the spirit of American ingenuity and bold approaches to an ever-changing sexual landscape.

Timothy Archibald’s photographs have appeared in *New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *GQ*, *The New Yorker*, and *Outside Magazine*, and in ad campaigns for Apple Computers, Eastman Kodak, and IKEA. Archibald lives in San Francisco with his wife, Cheri, and two sons, Elijah and Wilson. *Sex Machines: Photographs and Interviews* is his first book.” (Archibald, 2005)

his research. His book includes a series of documentary photographs and interviews that are aimed not only at artistic expression, but also sociological investigation (Archibald, 2005, p.104).

Apart from the mechanical innovations, advanced computer-mediated communicating (CMC)¹⁸ technology allows Internet users to interface with social networks for exchanging sexual information and sexual sensation. Kyle Machulis, the first dildo maker in Second Life and a full-time robotician, is known for his innovations in teledildonics and video gaming programming which are being applied for sexual purposes. He is on the leadership council of the International Game Developers Association and specializes in sexual applications for video games. His projects include *Slashdong*¹⁹, a blog about the electronic and mechanical engineering of sex toys, *opendildonics.org*²⁰, an open source teledildonics wiki; and *MMOrgy*²¹, a website that advocates sexual activities that are being applied in the MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Gaming) community.

¹⁸Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is a form of mass communication technology that occurs through the use of two or more networked computers. For example, the instant online messaging software like MSN and mobile phone text messaging.

¹⁹Self-claimed as the “porn of engineering” instead of the “engineering of porn”, *Slashdong* is a blog that provides the latest engineering information and news of sex machines. Since 2004 the blog mostly covers the latest inventions of teledildonics and sex toys, it has newsclips, photos and videos that are linked from a wide range of sources. *Slashdong* is licensed under Creative Commons.

²⁰*Opendildonics.org* is an opensource wiki that is dedicated to provide information on teledildonics programming. The site categorizes different information on sex machines hardware and software and encourages the “DIYers” to assemble their own teledildonics by providing programming codes for users to download.

²¹Inspired by the term MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Gaming) that indicates a video game that is capable of supporting many players so they can take part online at the same time, *MMOrgy* is a blog started in 2005, that updates information on sexually oriented online games ranging from the Second Life pornography to PlayStation Portable sex games. In addition to providing information on sex gadgets, *MMOrg* also lists articles and news on cyber sex culture.

Industrial productions of sex machines

Developments in new technologies have provided the sex industry new ways to produce, market and deliver their sexual products. From the invention of analog devices such as phone, film, and photography to digital inventions such as the high-speed Internet connections and mass data storage systems, the sex industry has always been closely intertwined with new technologies. Sex machines, a type of sex object or device that is inseparable from technology, has been widely utilized by entrepreneurs in the porn and sex toy industry. For example, the growing number of independently invented fucking-machines and the booming of internet pornography has inspired a former PhD student of Columbia University in finance, Peter Acworth, to open *Fucking Machines*²² in 2000. *Fucking Machines* is the first porn site that is entirely dedicated to human interactions with thrusting machines. It is one of the projects under the umbrella of *Kink.com*²³, a major porn company in the United States with a production studio that employs over a hundred people located at the former San Francisco Armory. Likewise, the computer-networked sex machines have also been widely produced in the sex industry. Alan Stein, the owner of Thrill Hammer and the co-founder of *Sex Machine Cams*²⁴, is the pioneer of commercial teledildonics inventions. Based in Seattle, Thrill Hammer offers custom-made teledildonics services and online retailing of fucking-machines that are produced by different manufacturers, while *Sex Machine Cams* is the first porn company which specializes

²²Please refer to chapter 2 on *Fucking Machines*

²³Please refer to chapter 2 on *Kink.com*

²⁴Please refer to chapter 2 on *Sex Machine Cams*

in interface designs so that users can control fucking-machines in real time via the internet.

Apart from fucking-machines and teledildonics, advanced humanoid sex machines that resemble the human body structure through mechanical, electrical and (or) artificial intelligent agents are widely conceptualized and produced by sex industrialists and artists. I interviewed Michael Harriman of *First Androids* about his sophisticated humanoid sex dolls that have the capability to generate human body temperatures and perform bodily and respiratory movements. Located in Nuremberg, Germany, *First Androids*²⁵ is the only company that provides online orders for custom-made humanoid sex dolls. Every product comes with unique body features and functions. Apart from the industrial creations of humanoid sex machines, artists such as Shulea Cheang visualized robotic imaginations into video art. Shulea Cheang created bioengineered humanoid robots that are also known as “I.K.U. Coder”. Cheang’s *I.K.U.* is a pornographic art film that portrays new forms of sex that have been invented by a futuristic corporation. Besides “I.K.U. Coder”, Shulea Cheang also envisioned a future orgasm decoding technology that allows consumers to download and experience orgasms without bodily contact through an “I.K.U. Chip”.

Institutional productions of sex machines

On top of the independent, industrial and artistic production of sex machines, the “sexual field” of sex machines is also mediated by the institutional factors that motivate the cultural production of sex machines. Non-governmental institutions in

²⁵First Androids is a sex doll company that sells fully custom-made sex dolls through the internet. In contrast to Real Doll, the biggest sex doll company in the United States that provides extensive lists of body size, gender, skin and color options for customers to choose, First Androids accepts photos and sketches in order to fulfill the specific and unique demands of the customers.

contemporary societies have recently been concerned with proclaiming, promoting and legitimizing certain ideologies, arrangements and practices. Knowledge and people's conceptions are socially constructed through institutional processes. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) Just like any cultural product, sex machines are partially mediated by different institutional agents such as academic and curatorial practices. In this chapter, Arse Elektronika, a sex-oriented conference, will be examined because of the projects it has done on sex machines. In recent years, many academic conferences have focused on different aspects of sex and technology, including psychology, public health, sex culture and education. Arse Elektronika, which is sponsored by the Department of Art Funding in Austria, is a sex and technology conference that in 2007 aimed at exploring pornography and sex machines. Organized by an "art-tech-philosophy" collective, *Monochrome*, Arse Elektronika was held in San Francisco, located next to the high tech industries of Silicon Valley, which has a long history of sexual diversity and technological advancement. Among many scholars who concern about sex and technology, there was David Levy, an artificial intelligence researcher, whose PhD thesis is about the human-robot relationships in love and sex. He is currently one of the owners of a computer game company in London. He is also the president of the International Computer Games Association. His prediction concerning robotic marriage by the year 2050 in *Love + Sex with Robots*²⁶ has captured major media attention, including The New York Times, CNN and NBC.

²⁶*Love + Sex with Robots* is a book written by David Levy that aims to predict that the United States will legalize robotic marriage in 2050. Levy uses examples of human's physical and psychological attachments with machines such as virtual pets Tamagotchi to draw the connections between sex, love and sex robots. Not only sex robots provide physical pleasure, Levy concludes that humans are likely to build a love relationship with sex machines in the future. This book received a lot of media attentions in 2008, and raised many questions regarding the ethical issues dealing with robots.

Different agents in the “sexual field” mentioned above mediate the cultural productions of sex machines where they constantly define and re-define the culture of sex and technology. In-depth interviews were conducted in order to find out how different agents have conceptualized, identified and operated the productions of their sex machines.

Techno-fetishism of sex machines

One of the main patterns that have been seen in the process of the productions of sex machines is “techno-fetishism”. In order to understand how this pattern is being articulated in the productions of sex machines, it’s important to understand the cultural meanings of technology and fetishism. Essentially, the meaning of technology is the application of different scientific data to achieve different practical ends. The “technology”²⁷ that is being examined here goes beyond its material nature. The “totality” of “technology” that is being fused with “fetishism” in the productions of sex machines represents not only the instrumental value of the artefact itself, but also the sociological and cultural relations that the machines engendered. Different types of sex machines in the “sexual field” entail different techniques and technologies; correspondingly, each type of sex machines is situated in a specific social and cultural condition that in return shapes the design and technological process.

²⁷ French sociologist Marcel Mauss has positioned “technology” in the sociological domain; he sees all “objects” of technology as products of a “total” social relation and the “invention” of technologies represents not only the ability to “solve a mechanical problem” but “the processes of imagination” in society (Mauss & Schlanger, 2006, p.34).

What are the effects of “technology” when it is “fetishized”? “Fetishism” in Karl Marx’s definition is that objects (commodities) are exchanged while the “use-value” and ‘labour value’ are being effaced by capitalism, thus objects are being seen to have power over labor (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.267). Jean Baudrillard further elaborates “fetishism” by using a semiological approach. Besides the exchange value, “sign-value” is also generated through the “display of commodity”(Kellner, 1994, p.21), Baudrillard concludes that consumers construct their own identity and lifestyle by “fetishising” the signified of objects. Though R. L. Rutsky in “High Techne” made a sound connection between the two, the fetishism of technology cannot be fully explained by the “commodity fetishism” postulated by Marx and Baudrillard. Rutsky illustrated that the fetishism of technology in contemporary societies “extends beyond the fetishism of particular high-tech object”, which in other words is the extension of the instrumental functions and the non-instrumental aesthetics of the object self. He explained that the “very idea of high-technology is itself fetishized” and the “idea” of technology represent a “mysterious life” of its own. He associated techno-fetishism with Marx’s perspective on commodity fetishism and Baudrillard’s idea on signified “style”, in which objects in modern societies are not being seen in terms of their material value and their production and distribution factors, but with the idea of “mysterious life” and the “complex logic” that is being signified in the high-techness of the object self (Rutsky, 1999, p.130). In this chapter, “Techno-fetishism” will be noted as one of the patterns that is found during the process of the production of sex machines. It is not only aimed at articulating the functional value of the technology that producers are attracted to, but also refers to the social and cultural meanings of the specific technological style that is being signified for different kinds of sex

machines.

American garage - the suburban machines

When Henry Ford's Model A was being introduced in 1927, "garage", a structure that is usually independent of the house was created for automobiles. Apart from sheltering the automobile, many garages in America are used for storage of tools and as a workspace for home improvement projects. Garages not only became part of the American family's automotive lifestyle, but also became a location for home inventors, a significant element in industrial innovation. People like Steve Jobs of Apple, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard of Hewlett Packard and Walt Disney of Disney invented their first products in their own garages. According to Thomas Roche, the Public Relation Manager of *Kink.com*, there were no sex devices that were designed to thrust ten to fifteen years ago, and his business was highly inspired by the independent-made fucking-machines²⁸.

The rapidly rising popularity of fucking-machines in this decade originated from and was inspired by independent garage inventors. Scattered throughout small towns in cities like Champlin, Minnesota and Kansas City in the United States, fucking-machines are being invented in many suburban garages. In my interview with Timothy Archibald, he talked about his first exchanges with fucking-machines

²⁸ "I think there's a very important aspect of amateur sex machines, that was present in the early fucking machine sites, it was sort of an exciting way to create something new and kinky that also involves a great degree of craftsmanship. On my panel at the Arse Elektronika, we were talking very much about this idea that amateur inventors who put a lot of energy to make fucking machines, that requires a lot of complex interactions with the machinery, they put a lot of love and energy into it. There's something really interesting about that". (Roche, personal communication, 30 Sept, 2008)

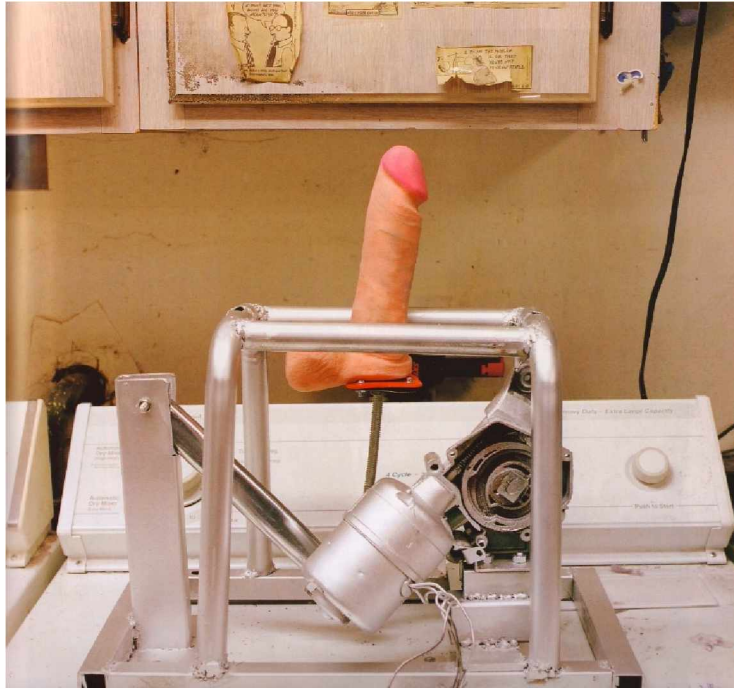
inventors. He was amazed by the fact that the inventor was an ordinary suburban man with grown kids and wife. He said,

“You saw how he (the inventor) had taken over this invention of his that he was so passionate about, he had taken over the garage where he made the machine. And I just thought it was fascinating to see this guy so passionate about mechanics. He’s just a normal guy so I thought this would be an interesting collection of people to photograph. I could find other people like him.” (Archibald, personal communication, 27 Sept, 2008)

This passion about mechanics is almost a prerequisite for the garage fucking-machines inventors who appear in Archibald’s book. For examples, one fucking-machine inventor, Dwaine Baccus [Figure 25], from Emmett, Idaho, believes that building and operating a machine that he built himself can be “on the level of a sexual experience”, “an aphrodisiac of his mind” and “all his senses”. He thought that the intense pleasure of building fucking machines had a lot to do with the fact that he built them himself. Ironically, Baccus didn’t make machines for his own sex partners, but enjoyed seeing other couples use and test his machines. He explained that his creations were a combination of “creative needs” with “sexual components”. To build these machines was “a way to express himself sexually”. (Archibald, 2005, p.20) Another garage inventor James Vermeer [Figure 26] of Victorville, California thought that building fucking machines was all about “the wonder of gears, bearings and housing”, the pleasure was to see these things all come together and work perfectly (Archibald, 2005, p.22). Similarly, Ruiin [Figure 27], a former airplane mechanic who built a series of Gothic fucking machines, states in Archibald’s book that he was not into the orgasm when he had sex and making the sex machines was similar to this feeling. He said,



[Figure 25]Dwaine Baccus, Emmett, Idaho. Source: Archibald, p. 18 (2005).



[Figure 26] A fucking-machine made by James Vermeer, Victorville, California.
Source: Archibald, p. 23 (2005).



[Figure 27] Ruiin, a former airplane mechanic who built a series of Gothic fucking-machines. Source: Archibald, p. 62 (2005).

“The machine was like that for me: I really enjoyed making it, working out the details and the design, finding ways to do it affordably, thinking it through. But using it was not really anything special” (Archibald, 2005, p.64) These similar responses made Timothy Archibald wonder why independent fucking-machines inventors were so passionate about the mechanics. He once asked an inventor and instead of getting a direct answer, he began to understand this mechanical inclination through the sound that was generated by the fucking-machines. He thought, “There was a feeling with the sound, the electronic buzz, and a powerful thing that was going to do whatever it did no matter what”. He described that this realization reminded him of a human being, but it was emotionally and mechanically stronger and faster and more powerful than any human being and “it was not going to stop.” Many of the independent inventors didn’t think about practical ends before they made the fucking- machines; a lot of the time they were preoccupied by sex and the fact that they could invent something. Obviously many of the garage fucking-machines inventors were gratified by the mechanical nature of the fucking-machines, the sensations generated by seeing, touching and hearing the machines and the process of tooling different mechanical components. Despite inventing an end product that is ready for the sale in the market, many inventors are attracted by what the complex mechanical logics and sounds signify. The symbolisms of merging sex with mechanical tooling extend the inventor’s suburban conditions into the realm of imaginations. The remodeling of available mechanical objects to produce fucking-machines becomes “fetishised” and made part of the suburban social and cultural life.

Apart from those who only made the fucking-machines for private consumptions, there are many who took their inventions into the market²⁹. One of the successful examples is Rick of Spindoll Manufacturing and Sales³⁰ [Figure 28]. He started his business by inventing three fucking machines and shooting home pornography. His fascinations with the fact that his machines can make woman “come faster and harder”, and they “get them (women) off better than anyone else’s machines” pushed him to do live demonstrations of his inventions with his wife Kristy for a local swinger club in Henderson, Nevada. In 1997, his invention “Orgasmo” made him famous in the world of sex machines. It became one of the most highly priced fucking machines in the market. Some inventors didn’t attempt to make luxury sex machines, they wanted to make their inventions affordable and easily available. For example, New Orleans-based Ken Cruise [Figure 29], who has a day job at a major retailer, works nightly in the garage for his family-run sex machines business called Ken’s Twisted Mind Inc. He put his invention “Hide-a-Cock”³¹ on eBay for USD

250

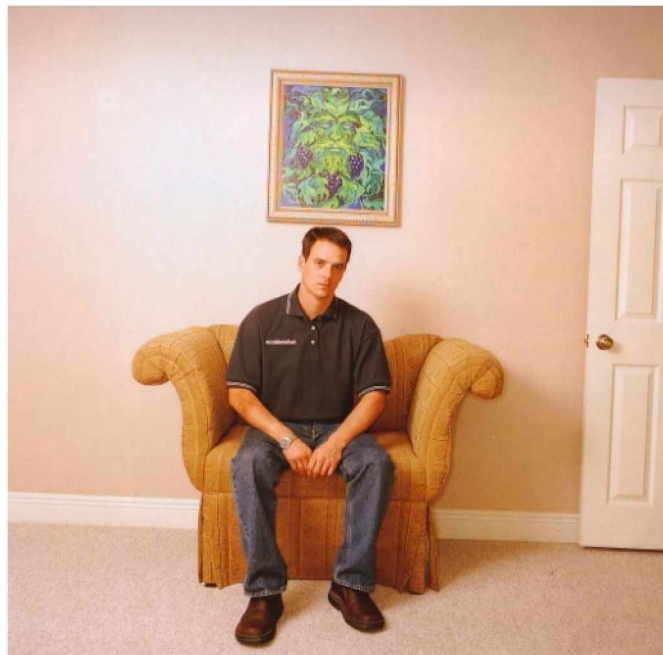
²⁹ “In America, there’s a belief that you can get rich, you can invent something to get rich. There’s Apple computer, there’s light bulb, there’s a thing in America that you can come up with something, and it is going to put you on a Jay Leno show, you will be talking to Jay Leno and you’re going to be rich.” (Archibald, personal communication, 27 Sept, 2008)

³⁰ Started in 1997, SpinDoll.com started its business by attaching a spinner bed with a fucking-machine. The owner Rick started to showcase his live fucking-machines demo in 1998 at the Reno Hilton during a Lifestyles convention. His shows were later featured on TV show across the world, including Real Sex 30 on HBO and the Playboy Channel.

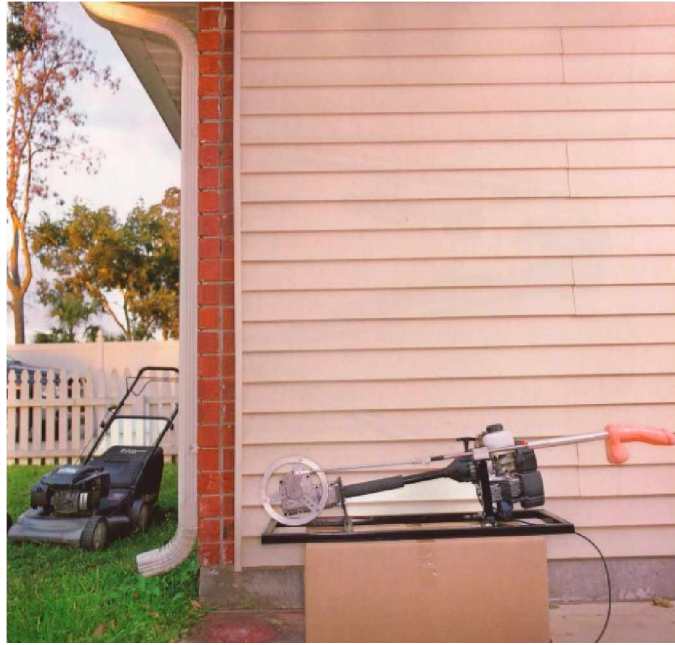
³¹ *The Hide-a-Cock* is a fucking-machine that has many quality components and features. The machine speed is adjustable from 0 - 140 strokes per minute via a handheld remote. Users can use the speed adjuster to move the fucking-machine faster and slower according to their own desires. From the descriptions of *kenstwistedmind.com*, the name Hide-a-Cock is inspired by its “easy-to-hide” functions. It says, “The machine is easy to “hide” when not in use and can be tossed into our optional storage bag for added security”. According to the website, *Hide-a-Cock* is not intended for mass productions, and its price is purposely set to be lower than the usual fucking-machines in the market.



[Figure 28] Rick of Spindoll Manufacturing and Sales. Source: Archibald, p. 37 (2005).



[Figure 29] New Orleans-based Ken Cruise. Source: Archibald, p. 50 (2005).



[Figure 29] “Hide-a-Cock”. Source: Archibald, p. 53 (2005).

and was able to immediately make a sale. The week after he made 30 more transactions. Another garage inventor Scott Ehalt [Figure 30] from Champlin, Minnesota, created “Ultimate Ride”³² by using his kitchen table. He brought his invention to the Bank of America and tried to explain his business plans. The business wasn’t as big as he planned, though he was still producing machines when he received his first orders online. These examples represent a common practice of entrepreneurship that is deep-seated in the American garage culture; the practical ends for the inventions were not confined to the functionality of the fucking-machine itself, they also engender the possibility of setting up businesses for innovative products that are not yet being produced in the market.

³²The Ultimate Ride is claimed to be one of the strangest machines that Timothy Archibald photographed. It is essentially two vertical shafts of steel, upon which an enormous dildo is mounted, and there’s an engine attached to it. The inventor Scott Ehalt told Archibald during the interview that he was trying to hide the functions of the machine from his neighbor during the productions and he said that the Ultimate Ride is a tool to poke holes in sheetrock.



[Figure 30] Scott Ehalt and his “Ultimate Ride”. Source: Archibald, p. 77 (2005).

How is “technology” being “fetishised” in the suburban context of the independent invention of fucking-machines? Needless to say, many of the garage inventors were fascinated by the material nature of machines and mechanics; the process of articulating the “technology” itself was symbolically equivalent to the process of having sex. It was not hard to find out through my interviews that during the process of producing the fucking-machines a way to sexualize machinery (and mechanize sex) came about.

Timothy Archibald came up with his project by studying the American suburban lifestyle. He said during his interview, “I wasn’t inventing sex machines, but I live in the suburbs and I have a kind of unsensational life, I got kids and wife and taking kids

to school. So I liked the idea of suburban mundanity, like the truly dreary unsexy things that you do in you life". The social and spatial conditions of American suburbia represent the "familial isolation through a lack of public space and through an emphasis on home maintenance and home-centered entertainments" (Miller, 1995, p.393). The lack of public spaces such as café, central plaza, train stations, or movie theatres in suburbia limits social interactions with friends and strangers. Family and home oriented activities are more or less the only choices left since many suburban residents have nowhere to go in the suburban setting. Since public spaces are "decentralized" from suburban house, automobile trips became necessary for many daily tasks (Miller, 1995, p.395). The garage, a private space originally designed to shelter an automobile also became the ideal space for home entertainments and maintenance. The mechanical objects in the garage range from the automobile to the lawn mower to the hobbyist's tools, things that became essential elements in suburbia's everyday needs along with concomitant social and cultural lifestyle concerns. The suburban is someone who uses, remodels and invents machines and mechanical objects not only because of the object's material functionalities, but also due to the process of usage, the remodeling and invention of those machines and mechanical objects themselves are being "fetishised" into the suburban social and cultural life. The "technology" that is being "fetishised" for the independent fucking-machines inventions is the signified style of the American suburban life, i.e. the use of garage and machines and the tooling of mechanics due to the unique suburban social and cultural conditions. Besides those who are only making the machines for self-(sexual) entertainments, there are garage inventors who took their fucking-machines into the marketplace. Those independent inventors brought the

“technology” into the entrepreneurial dimension. The “technology” in those productions is the signified American dream of that turning one’s ideas, visions and creativity into a mass-produced product; anyone who wants to set up a business has a chance to try. Fucking-machines are being produced in the garage, at the same time, suburban’s (sex) life is also being re-invented, re-used, and re-modeled through the process of the production of these D.I.Y. fucking-machines, and in doing so, these machines embody the broader Americanness of suburban’s sexual modernity.

“Open-sourcing” sex in teledildonics

Many of the garage-made fucking-machines are being discussed, promoted and sold on Internet forums and shopping sites like eBay. Technological advancements in computer-mediated communication (CMC) brought not only new business opportunities for independent fucking-machine inventors, they also proliferated new ways of having sex. It is easy to find open source sex sites everywhere on the Internet. *Smartstim* is a site for sharing electro-stimulation programming for sexual pleasure. *Cybermistress* is a site where Internet users can build and share their customized programming for a virtual mistress online. Among all of these sites, *Slashdong* and *Opendildonics* are two that advocate teledildonics productions based on community and public collaboration. Kyle Machulis [Figure 31], the owner of both sites created his first teledildonics “Sex Box” [Figure 32] by hooking up an Xbox controller with a dildo. He explained that his original inspiration for using video games was the fact that video games have replicated an imaginary world where people can do whatever they cannot do in reality. He said at Arse Elektronica 2007, “There are communities of



[Figure 31] Interview with Kyle Machulis
(Left: Kyle Machulis, Right: Isaac Leung)



[Figure 32] “Sex Box”. Source: Copyright, Wired.com, 2009.

people with fetishes and they find them in “Crash”, they can experience the “reality” of car crash right on the screen accompanied by sexual orgasm. As a full-time robotic engineer, Machulis invented the “Sex Box” out of his own curiosity. He then started to post his creations on his blog *Slashdong* and received 60,000 unit hits the next day.

After three years of explorations on teledildonics, he became the expert in the open source teledildonics community. During my interview with Machulis, he said,

“I’m sharing all the information on the Internet, because I feel that people should build whatever they want and use it however they want. I’m not really worried about getting money out of it. I want the Internet users to take the instructions and apply them on their own fetish. Thanks to the internet now, I cannot keep up with those new fetishes anymore.” (Machulis, personal communication, 29 Sept, 2008)

When Machulis was asked whether he had always been interested in sex before making the teledildonics, he said his focus was always on technology. He grew up in the mid-west in the United States and has been using the Internet since the mid-80s. He believes the Internet profoundly influenced his social growth and how he makes sense of things. In fact, he had not heard of the term “teledildonics” and had no interest in sex machines before he became an expert in the field. What he had was an enormous passion for building things to satisfy his fantasies along with an interest in communicating via the Internet. He said during the interview, “Since I spent most of my formative years talking to people on the Internet versus talking to the real people, it seems to make a lot of sense this way. Though, funny enough, I have a fiancé and I don’t really use teledildonics in my personal life”. Instead of being preoccupied by sex, he explained that he had fetishes about engineering which he found very sexy. During the process of putting things together as an engineer, he always ignores the end goals while indulging himself in the experimentation. Like the “Sex Box” project, he got pleasures by testing different video games and dildos to see what would happen. He never expected that eventually many online users would utilize his device.

The technique that is being applied to open source teledildonics is computer engineering. Obviously, as an independent teledildonics producer, Machulis was fascinated by the process of designing software that was aimed at integrating sex with different hardware. The applications of computer engineering technology on sex were a vehicle for him to achieve his bigger visions. Just like Timothy Archibald and many other independent fucking-machines producers, the end result of producing projects on sex machines was not solely about exploring sexuality. Other than the functional nature of computer engineering, the “technology” that was being “fetishished” in the independent teledildonics production was the unpredictable “high-techness” behind the source codes, i.e. the open source culture. Unlike the garage productions which rely on “hands-on” tools and standard mechanics, the tools for independent teledildonics producers are the computer and the modem; the space for the teledildonics production is the “blogosphere” instead of the automotive garage.

Blogosphere is a term that describes blogs, wikis and personal broadcasting that exist as a connected social network and community. The social and cultural space of the blogosphere is non-geographical and non-physical. Under this social network, like many other open source content providers of teledildonics, Machulis became the “prosumer”³³ by co-creating goods and services rather than only producing or consuming products. His creations were based on the existing hardware that was

³³“Prosumer” is derived from the term “prosumerism”, it was originally applied to the video industries, referring to the technologies that are aimed between the consumer domestic market and the professional production market (Lister, 2003, p.390). Coined by futurologist Alvin Toffler’s *The Third Wave* in 1980, “prosumers” signify that the role of producers and consumers would blur and merge. Toffler anticipated that consumers would take part in production and marketing processes. This new economic model allows the “passive consumers to become the “active prosumers” (Cova, Kozinets, Shankar, pp. 247, 2007).

available in the market, such as dildos, Xbox and the video game “Crash”, though the products he created were uniquely different from the original products. The open source culture which motivates the appropriations, modifications and redistributions of products back to community or organizations was “fetishized” for its inscrutable value and “mysterious life”. The “high-techness” of the open source culture of teledildonics allows for a production and consumption that is not only based on how the body perceives physical pleasure, but how social networks and communities are magically involved with the idea and lifestyle of what sex and technology signify together. The do-it-yourself aesthetics, the process of discovery, the idea of achieving unpredictable results by altering existing products in the massive open social networks and the enjoyments of “decentralizing” the conventional producer-generated (sex) products are what are being produced and consumed in the independent productions of teledildonics. The boundaries between production and consumption within the cultural and market circulation cycles of are thus dissolved into a hybrid form.

In the above, the independent productions of fucking-machines and teledildonics provides us the insight that, other than the material functions of the sex machines, its symbolic “complex logic” and “mysterious life” are in itself being “fetishized” by the producers. The meaning of sex machines thus surpasses its material being and go beyond the cultural conditions of the suburbs, gadgets and the Internet networks. While these machines serve as a means for the producers to achieve “fetishism”, they are also being distributed in the markets of the pornography industry. When these machines are being “used” by the porn performers and “watched” by the spectators,

how has body and gender been re-articulated in comparison with the conventional human/human interactions in pornography?

Re-articulation of gender dynamics in sex machines pornography

In *Sex Machines: photographs and interviews*, most of the fucking-machines were produced by suburban men; women were mostly not interested in using the inventions. “The recurrent thing in the book is the idea of men being really into these sex machines and women being puzzled by them. The women feel like they like hugging, cuddling and giggling, they don’t want the sex machines. That is something more than a norm”, said by Timothy Archibald. For Kyle Machulis, the teledildonics he created were not being used personally with his fiancé. Many of the independent-made sex machines were not being designed for targeted users. The productions of those machines were not aimed at achieving any practical end results. On the contrary, the industrial-made sex machines in the porn and sex toy industries were manufactured to make profits; companies made deliberate decisions on how to produce, market and distribute their sex machine products.

Repositioning the cultural phallus

Fucking Machine is one of the most successful porn sites which is wholly dedicated to human-machine interactions in pornography. During my interview with Thomas Roche, he explained why fucking-machine was a popular genre. He thought one of the reasons was that the effects of sex machines on people were much more direct and obvious for physical pleasure. The design of those fucking machines were about

women in control of their pleasure from multiple modes of thrusting stimulations that a human being and a vibrator cannot provide, no matter if this interaction was on or off-camera. At the opening of *Arse Elektronika 2007*, curator Johannes Grenzfurthner asked if any one in the audience would be willing to do a live demonstration with the fucking-machines. A university student called Binx, who didn't know anyone from the conference, volunteered to be penetrated on stage by "Fuckzilla", a fucking-machine that was produced by *Kink.com*. She wanted to experience the feeling of being penetrated by a high-powered fucking-machine in front of total strangers and to find out her subjectivity as a woman while being on stage.

"I volunteered to get on stage and fuck a \$10,000 machine, undoubtedly a once-in-a-life-time opportunity. Thrill-seeker? Exhibitionist? Robot-fetishist? Yes, yes and yes... Perched naked on a table behind a sheet, I admit that I started off a little nervous. All of my trepidation fell aside, however, once the actual show started. The Fuckzilla made it hard for me feel anything but Intense Pleasure, oh yes, with capital letters. I had the hands-down best orgasm of my life, both subjectively and objectively... But, do you want to know the real reason I agreed to get on stage with Fuckzilla? Feminism, baby", said by Binx. (Grenzfurthner, 2008, p.83)

Reports said that Binx had "squirted about five feet into the air", and Binx described that the penetration was a force she had "never come close to achieving". Obviously, the intensity of physical pleasure and sexual climax from the penetration by "Fuckzilla" was something that Binx had never encountered before. The fact that Binx's actions were being displayed in public and broadcast on the Internet like a pornographic actress, made her think about what she had learned about feminism theory and gender study in the university. She thought fucking-machines were "the pornographic equivalent of third-wave feminism", that she was able to proclaim her own sexuality and self-conscious empowerment by not faking her orgasm for the

male gaze. “Fuckzilla” was a remodeled “Johnny 5”, its arms were mounted with a variety of sex toys including synthetic silicon tongues that were able to move up and down. Binx described that the machines are designed to “get women off, nothing more and nothing less”, and the fucking machines porn was a “fundamental shift towards the woman’s enjoyment in the total absence of men” (Grenzfurthner, 2008, p.83). She claimed that being independent of men during sexual intercourse and the willingness to try new things went in line with her sex-positive feminist principles.

To examine Binx’s reflections in reaction to “Fuckzilla”, one needs to understand the dynamics between Binx and the giant high-powered “phallic” object. In “The Lesbian Phallus”, Judith Butler described “phallus” as “transferable, substitutable, plastic, and the eroticism produced within such an exchange depends on the displacement from traditional masculinist contexts as well as the critical redeployment of its central figures of power” (Butler, 1993, p.89). Based on Lacanian’s “phallus” that displaces the male genital organ from its ontological reality, Judith Butler argues that both man and woman can “have” and “be” the “phallus” symbolically (Butler, 1993, p.85). She considers that “having” the phallus can be symbolized by any body part or “purposefully instrumentalized body-like things”, and that the “signifying chain” of “having” and “being” of the “phallus” can be recirculated and reprivilaged from the “logic of non-contradiction that serves the either-or of normative heterosexual exchange” (Butler, 1993, p.88). Butler displaces Lacanian’s formulation of “phallus” which implies that the signifier of phallus is being performed by women in which the process of “self-definition and “potential autonomy” are being excluded (Grosz, 1990, p.116). The “signifying chain” of

“Phallus” in this sense doesn’t only belong to men, and thus when women are performing penetrative sex with phallic objects they are not necessarily representing what men’s biological penis or symbolic phallus can perform during sex act. On one level, the machine that Binx used was biologically incapable of ejaculation. They were the pleasure-giver designed solely to assist women’s autonomous desires. On the other level, in Butler’s conceptualization of phallus, Binx (a biological female without a penis) was “having” the symbolized phallus (“purposefully instrumentalized body-like things”) that was symbolically “reterritorialized” and “subverted” from the biological penis (men). The idea of “phallus”, both the physical functions and symbolic significations were displaced from the “the either-or of normative heterosexual exchange” that reinforces the male to female “orgasm for orgasm” kind of exchange. The high-powered fucking-machine symbolizes a force that she had never experienced before, the force that Binx “purposefully” encountered, reinforced the autonomous ideal of the third-wave (post-) feminism. The symbolic phallus in “Fuckzilla” did not belong to anyone and everyone, it was being internalized by Binx as a symbol that is “displacable”, “performative”, and even “phantasmatic” through chains of imagination along with the absence of a biological phallus and/or a symbolic male phallus during penetrative sex.

Undoubtedly, the design of fucking-machines in pornography was aimed at creating visual pleasure (mostly for men) (Mulvey, 1989, p.19), the productions of fucking-machines porn are privileged by men who are able to pay and obtain sexual pleasure from women. Though in Binx’s case, despite of the sexual acts of the pornographic actress were being displayed for pleasure, contradictorily at the same time, such act

was also was autonomously and deliberately executed and controlled without the mediation by any directors. The fucking-machines were being controlled and adjusted simultaneously in response to the actress's physical and mental self-reactions. The emphasis on real orgasm, female ejaculations and actress's desire in *Fucking Machine* was a contrast to the mainstream pornography that emphasized on male's desire and ejaculations (on female bodies). Fucking-machines were being articulated as a mediator for sexual pleasure that doesn't include a biological male organ and symbolic male desire. Fucking-machines repositioned the female from the passive to active role, and the "male/active" social construction was being deemphasized due to the lack of a biological and symbolic male. The fantasy being projected in the fucking-machines porn was shifted from a totally male-oriented pleasure-seeking body to a pleasure-giving body (machine). These symbolic re-articulations of "women" in the productions of fucking-machines porn displace the "male gaze" to a mode of more contradictory and contested meanings. On the one hand, the "male gaze" is destabilized by the increasing autonomy of performances in *Fucking Machine* that are mediated by new kinds of sexual technologies. On the other hand, the symbolic meanings of Binx's event also create a backlash that sees that Binx's imaginations are undeniably mediated by "maleness" that is built into the event itself. Therefore, the notions of "voluntary" and "choice" for women to "enjoy herself" that Binx and Roche subjectively felt are not a complete free-will. The symbolic re-imaginings of women bodies in fucking-machines porn is a kind of "freedom" that struggles between the subjective imaginations of bodies and the objective cultural and historical context that is full of gender-/capitalist-based power dynamics.

Mediated-voyeurism of the teledildonics porn

While the majority of consumers of *Fucking Machine* are men for one of the biggest custom-made sex machine companies, Thrill Hammer, the larger demographic is women. Ranging from the gynecological chair with a high-powered dildo that is networked with the Internet [Figure 33], to an aromatherapeutic fucking machines that is equipped with vaporizer, Allen Stein's products are primarily targeted to women



[Figure 33] Studio of *Sex Machine Cams* by Thrill Hammer



[Figure 33] Interview with Alan Stein, the owner of Thrill Hammer
(Behind: Allen Stein, Front: Isaac Leung)

clients. During my interview, Stein said that the key market for his custom-made fucking-machines was usually wealthy individual women who were making six digit annual income³⁴. Stein believed that many of his clients were not satisfied with the social norms of dating. Instead of having sex machines as a total replacement for men, they used sex machines as an option to fulfill the momentary desires for penetrative sex. Apart from fucking-machines, Stein is the first producer in the industry of custom made teledildonics which applies the teledildonics technology to pornography. After being in the pornography industry for five years, Stein noted the excess of pornography in the market that was faking women's orgasm and sexuality.

³⁴ "They are usually the professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, people who have the busy schedules and don't have time to date. On Thrill Hammer, you can't fake the orgasms, it was so effective that it pops a lot of orgasms, a lot of girls who haven't had the first orgasm with it before". (Stein, personal communication, Oct 3, 2008)

He claimed that his teledildonics, which were being documented with *Sex Machine Cams*, was a break-through in technology and women's sexuality. Stein thinks that the virtual sex machines provide another level of intimacy for his customers *and* the performers, he described the users of the site as sensual; they were there to pleasure women instead of just sexually dominating them. At the website, users can ask the porn stars if they want the machine to be faster or slower and if they want more vibrations or rotations. Users can understand how performers feel through their actual verbal response. Stein believed that those feedbacks provide a location for better sexual experience, as this kind of communication rarely happens during bodily sex and in conventional pornography. Stein said, "If guys learn how to slow down and communicate, there wouldn't be pre-mature ejaculation, there wouldn't be all these gender imbalances in sex".

Just as in the analysis of the representations of *Sex Machine Cams* in the last chapter, the symbolic meanings of the productions of teledildonics porn also surpass the essential bodies of women. Stein thinks that his inventions disrupt the normative dating conditions for women and the "fakeness" of conventional pornographies that do not take women's physical pleasure into account. Summer's performance is mediated by the "aesthetic of the 'grab'" that she can tactically create a simulated space without actually "doing" everything statically as in conventional pornographies. Despite the excessive symbolic meanings that disrupt the essential female bodies in pornographic representations, the meanings of teledildonics porn is also contradicted by its material conditions in itself. Even though the majority of clients of Thrill Hammer are women who subjectively purchase teledildonics for their own pleasure,

this “empowerment” is only privileged by the “professionals, such as doctors and lawyers” who can afford to buy these expensive tailor-made machines. In addition to capitalist-based imbalances of power, the “empowerment” in Stein’s projections is also highly problematic. The disruptions of dating norms that Stein projects is highly normative in that he posits the “professionals” are those who have no time to date, thus these women can exchange their “busy schedule” (money they earn) with a momentary desires for penetrative sex. In the productions of teledildonics, “men” are essentially irreplaceable. The “option” that Stein offers for his clients is only a wish-fulfillment that is upheld by himself, but never the total truth of the material reality. On top of the teledildonics online shop, the idea that *Sex Machine Cams* are not “fake” is also not completely true. Provided that teledildonics porn is full of an excess of effects and symbolisms, it is hardly a genre that is opposite to the “faking (of) women’s orgasm and sexuality”. Summer did not perform statically as in the conventional pornographies, though her performances are also undeniably a “fake” for male spectators and the exchange of money that is situated within the gender-/capitalist based cultural context.

The productions of fucking-machines and teledildonics pornographies displace the performers from their essential gender positions as in conventional pornographic productions. The alternative imaginations that are formulated by the producers and performers in the cases above allow us to re-understand different gender and capitalist power dynamics that move away from historically cultural associations. Nevertheless, the symbolic re-articulations of “women” are still highly mediated by “maleness” that is inseparable from the cultural productions itself. The new freedom and autonomy

that is offered by the recent technologies in fucking-machines and teledildonics are only partial; they are always marked by the material conditions that are deep-seated in the industry of pornographic productions and spectatorships.

From biological body to the transformation of new bodies

The body of fucking-machines and teledildonics represent the “modernist machine aesthetics” of functional and instrumental ideals (Rutsky, 1999, p.12), while humanoid sex machines were designed to resemble the biological human structure. In “Turing’s Man”, J. David Bolter states, “there was perhaps never a moment in the ancient or modern history of Europe when someone was not pursuing the idea of making a human being by other than the ordinary reproductive means” (Chrisley & Begeer, 2000, p. 429). The desire to recreate a human body through artificial means can be noted throughout history.

First Androids, located at Nuremberg, Germany, is a company that produces custom-made humanoid sex dolls that can be hooked up with machines and enact different movements for sexual stimulation. Michael Harriman, the owner of First Androids identified himself as an artist rather than a businessman. He told me that the sex dolls were being made in various forms and with various functions upon the specific requests of his clients. According to Harriman, his clients ranged from teachers to police to priests and came from all over the world, from Germany to China. After filling out the First Androids online forms and sending pictures of the desired type, clients can explain every detail to Harriman concerning their particular desires. The

products are then mailed to the clients from 2 weeks to a year's time, depending on the complexity of the doll requested. Along with the conventional male and female dolls [Figure 34], some of the First Android's dolls are called "fantasy sculptures" which come in irregular or mutated body forms³⁵. Underneath the silicon skin, some of the dolls are equipped with internal heaters and electronic hearts that are able to beat faster during the "sex" act. The dolls are capable of mimicking suggestive body moments while being remotely controlled by the user. Harriman's ultimate fantasy is to create a "Cherry", an artificial woman that is programmed to be the ultimate wife and erotic companion in *Cherry 2000*, a science fiction cult film that portrays a perfect humanoid sex machine. He thought the perfect sex doll should have the capability to do house work along with sex service. In fact, many users were not only consuming First Androids's products solely as sexual devices, but as Harriman said,



³⁵ "I made one look like a bed with a lot of breasts, holes and mouths. I also have the other doll with 6 breasts and a huge vagina-like hole. Customers have their own fantasies, and I try to fulfill them. I also made a breast wall for one of my clients. And of course I made many transgender dolls, these dolls are better than human because they have many different sexual features." (Harriman, personal communication, 7 Aug, 2008)

[Figure 34] Sex dolls made by First Androids
(Left: Isaac Leung)

“A lot of customers have their dolls sitting on their chairs or lying in their bed all the time. Some of my clients even have their dolls sit with them in their car for companionship. They live with the dolls, and treat them as humans. They put them in a garden and take a sunbath together. People have been interested in synthetic human for thousands of years. It’s the dream of the mankind to make a copy of himself.”
(Harriman, personal communication, 7 Aug, 2008)

To understand what it means to fantasize and design the humanoid sex machines and the dynamic relationships between the producer, consumer and the sexualized humanoid body, one needs to understand how our body is being culturally interpreted. While the productions of sex robots is a process that imitates the appearance or character of human bodies, I would like to open up the body simulation theory and theory of prosthetic pleasure in order to make sense of how and why sex robots are being produced for the subcultural consumer.

In Jean Baudrillard’s view, our body is a “marked” body that is organized in the “system of signification” of cultural codes. Our body is being articulated by the mediation of “directive models and thus under the control of meaning”, the process of such is the “transference of the wish-fulfillment of desire upon the code”³⁶. Throughout history, humans have sought ways to re-articulate our bodies, from cosmetic aids to plastic surgery, from medicine to surgically implanted devices. Our

³⁶For examples, Baudrillard often use the examples of the advertising culture in the advanced capitalistic societies where the representations of bodies in advertisements are translated as the ideal cultural codes of bodies. While these codes are symbolically driven away from the essential biological bodies, either by accepting or rejecting the ideal codes of bodies as in advertisements, our bodies are constructed and “marked” by our own willfully fulfilled signs to signify our own meanings and “style” within the society.

body has been intervened with in many different ways in order to go beyond its ontological limits. The imperfect, fragile, and mortal human body is thus being manipulated to fulfill our desire and to signify the socially and culturally constructed codes of the ideal body type for ourselves or for the physical partner. These manipulations are not only being applied to our biological self, our body has additionally been dreamed about or projected onto the “prothesized” form.

Sex dolls are being created to resemble our human bodies, complete with texture, color, shape, temperature, seductive gestures, flexible genitals and even delicate respiratory prosthetic lung designed and crafted to satisfy the users’ “wish-fulfillment of desire” that is coded by the social and cultural ideals of human bodies. Unlike our biological body, which is guided by material limitations, the “prothesized” bodies can be made in any fantasized forms that multiply different codes of signs (simulacra) through the “power of dreams”. In reality, our natural bodies are being “marked” with the fact that it is constantly being bought, sold, exchanged, replaced, trained, treated, examined and designed. Our signified body is also constantly being integrated and disintegrated. The fantasy dolls with multiple genitals and irregular body shapes create a mirror image of the fragmented and multiplied signs of our real body through the “power of dreams”. The potentially limited possibilities of body manipulation with the assistance of technology allow us to dream unlimitedly about the “perfect” self and the other (self). During my interview with Harriman, he said that his ultimate dream was to create a “Cherry”, in fact, many of the consumers treated their dolls as their wife, lovers, and domestic companions. The intimate relationships between the consumers and the sex dolls well represent the state of “phantasm” that is being processed between the self and the other (self). According to Baudrillard,

“phantasm” is capable of creating “strangeness, and at the same time the intimacy of the subject to itself are played out” (Baudrillard, 1994, p.95). The “phantasization” of the sex dolls heightens the pleasure and intimacy that is mediated by the “power of dream” of the “prothesized” body. The lack of realness of the non-biological sex dolls provides room for the users to dream or even transgress what is considered socially and culturally acceptable with a real lover since the “prothesized” bodies will never reject their owner’s wishes. The “prothesized” bodies are never going to be real biologically, and paradoxically, they are forever going to be real in the realm of “phantasization”. The signified dream wife, lovers, or domestic companions are being “phantasized”, produced and consumed by the producers and consumers of the sex dolls. The human body is being re-articulated symbolically through the imagination of the other body; pleasure and intimacy are being processed and transformed during the production and consumptions of the humanoid-like sex machines.

These kinds of humanoid sex machines are not only industrially produced as a sex doll, the “phantasm” of sex dolls and robots are concomitantly being culturally produced as a discourse on human fidelity. The idea of “phantasm” between the human owner and the robots has been much discussed in recent years among academics. Peter Asaro, a scholar and director of the documentary *Love Machine* said at Arse Elektronika 2007, that many discussions on human and robotic relationships were focusing on the idea of fidelity. In his view, people who are in love with sex dolls are formulating their very own definition of fidelity, while technologically the dolls have become the other, a foreign being that is not an

extension of the self, but actually another being. Similar discussions are being raised by David Levy, the author of *Love + Sex with Robots* who predicted robotic marriage will be legalized by 2050 in the United States. Levy says, "Keeping a robot for sex could reduce human prostitution and the problems that come with it. However, in a marriage or other relationship, one partner could become jealous or consider it infidelity if the other uses a robot" (Choi, 2007). The imagination of the other body in reactions to sex robots have raised questions about the socially and culturally constructed borders of not only sex, but also love and intimacy. The "phantasm" between human and "prophesized bodies" is being translated as a cultural product, the discourse of the possibility of a new kind of love and fidelity. Therefore, the productions of sex robot not only disrupts the normative meanings of sexual practices, they also create meanings for a new kinds of love relationships. Can humans create a love relationship with sex robots similar to romantic human interactions? Will having a relationship with machine be considered to be unfaithful to human? Can human and sex robots get married and construct families? If one accepts the proposal of human/machine marriage, then what would these new kinds of marriage and family be like? How would these events counteract the essential meanings and social structures inherent in our cultural history? These questions that are raised by Asaro and Levy invite us to rethink love and fidelity and move on from their essential meanings. The "phantasm" between the consumers and sex robots transcends the discourse of what constitutes "human" and what is the politics of love, marriage and family. The invention of sex robots is thus potentially counteracted by social groups that uphold the normative ideas of sex and family. In the interview with New York Times, Levy talks about the concept of normativity in sex. He thinks that the public

view of what is acceptable in sexuality shifts from time to time. Sexual practices such as oral sex, masturbation and homosexuality used to be considered as non-normative and these practices are “widely regarded as thoroughly normal and as leading to fulfilling relationships and satisfactory sex lives” (Henig, 2007). The sexual practices with robots, as in the case of First Androids are no longer only something imagined between the customers and machines; it is also a politic between the sub-cultural groups (who practice sex with robots) and the “public” who doesn’t believe in romantic or sexual human/machine relationships. The symbolic meanings of sex robots are thus translated as a counter-power that strives for new definitions of sexual intimacy.

The politics of sex machines productions

In the above, I studied the different practices of sex machines during the production process and analyzed what kinds of non-normative meanings that sex machine productions have formulated counter to the essentially consented meanings of body, gender, sexuality and technology. The underlining subcultural practices and counter-power that are upheld by the producers of sex machines prompts me to further question how these subcultural groups position themselves politically in relation to the “public”. In *Doing Cultural Studies*, Stuart Hall ponders the differentiations between the “private” and “public” by stating that “the public refers to the sphere of communal life, and the private to the realm of the personal and the domestic” (Du Gay & Hall & Janes, 1997, p. 112). In the realm of sex machines, how does the

“private life” of non-normative practices alter their meanings in regards to the public sphere; how does sex machine production transgress the domestic sphere of knowledge within the public communal life?

Regulations on sex machines

In the realm of sex machines productions, even though the practices of sex machine users are usually hidden, the meanings and knowledge of sex machines are often given discursive presence in the realms of the public sphere through the “circuits of culture”. For fucking-machines, the underground and hidden practices of suburban garage inventions are discursively made “public” in Timothy Archibald’s book. The subcultural practices of making sex machines not only belong to the “private”, but also become part of the politics of sexual beliefs that is counteracted by a larger sphere outside the suburban. When Archibald tried to promote and exhibit his photos of sex machines with his publisher, he experienced problematic response from the “public”³⁷.

Being an artist and a commercial photographer, Archibald constantly needs to keep his artistic creations underground, or at least separated from his professional career. Through the circulations of images, a form of artistic expression that aims to investigate “social anthropology” is thus constructed as something

³⁷ “Powell’s Books was a big independent bookstore and they had a show of the prints from this (sex machines) exhibit, to promote the book and give a slideshow. They wanted to do an invitation... and they had a picture with a big phallus on it... Though the big problem that did arise was that I’m a commercial photographer. I tried to promote myself with these images... And that caused problems. Mass mailings going to advertising agencies with the phalluses on it, it didn’t go well. So I got a lot of hate mail, hate spam, lots of “don’t ever send this to me again”... There was another problem that dealt with the same thing. A commercial client saw the sex machine work and didn’t like it and wanted to be removed from a project that had started. The client had a religious leaning, and really, in the scheme of things, it’s not totally surprising in America.” (Archibald, personal communication, 27 Sept, 2008)

negative to Archibald's normal (capitalist's) life that allows him to survive by making money as a commercial photographer. Even though works of *Sex Machines: Photography and Interview* are photos, which apply the same skills that Archibald uses in his other professional jobs, the content of non-normative sexual practices of sex machines conflicts with public values that uphold normative concepts of sexuality. He adds, "That was a big thing but I feel like it was my own fault, for trying to mix my artwork with my commercial world, and thinking that they would embrace these two things. So I now kind of keep things a little more compartmentalized" (Archibald, personal communication, 27 Sept, 2008). Archibald's book symbolically transgresses the boundaries between art and advertising, and this transgression has also been translated as a politics of sexual beliefs that conflicts and counteracts the public's views on religion and professionalism in the advertising industry.

Similarly, the subcultural practices of teledildonics porn productions are also conflict with the public's views concerning sexual representations. Allen Stein thinks that anti-pornography acts become the ontology that every porn companies are striving against³⁸. While teledildonics porn disrupts the normative meanings of sexual representations, it is also politically counteracted by the power of government that is mediated by groups who have strong religious values of what sex is to be. Interestingly, while Archibald's experience is a struggle between the

³⁸ "The US government is not usually very friendly with the porn industry, and they find unique ways of coming after us like a theocracy almost. They make the law based on religious value which isn't the way it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be democracy and not theocracy. That's always been the issue. We've been self-regulated quite a bit, because we don't want people to be consuming our products that aren't supposed to be consuming our products" (Stein, personal communication, 3 Oct, 2008)

commercial and non-commercial, Stein is also dealing with a counter-force that is mediated by another commercial entity within the technological domain³⁹. In the information age, the regulations of cultural production are not only bounded within the physical space, the power dynamic is also seen to be happening within the “non-space” of communications. In fact, the intangible space of the networked technology is governed by the American way of corporate rights. In addition to the power dynamics between the artistic/commercial and governmental/individual, the productions of teledildonics porn is also mediated by the dynamics between the different commercial entities. Power struggles are not only limited to sexual belief and practices, but also the use of technology in the realm of sex machines production. What is the legitimate usage of technology? Who has the right to apply such technology under the government-enforced systems of law? Despite common notions that sexual representations are always being regulated and censored according to pornography laws, the power dynamics in sex machines productions are seen in multiplicities across different domains of knowledge. The patent system in the United States creates power dynamics between the meanings of corporate rights in the domain of technology.

While *Sex Machines Cams* deal with the power dynamics within the context of the American sex and technology industries, the sex robot we see in *I.K.U.* encounters a larger scale of “publicness” within its international distribution

³⁹ “Then there is the technology side, like few years ago with a company called Occasia, which is basically a patent control. This company bought a patent on video conferencing; they claimed that every streaming video and audio was owned by them. This company came and attacked our industry and we had to start paying licensing fees” (Stein, personal communication, 3 Oct, 2008).

networks. Being an intentional artist who has exhibited her works in many different places, Shulea Cheang has also, over the years, experienced censorship. Other than challenges from museums such as the Walker Art Center and the Guggenheim Museum for her past works, SF porn *I.K.U.* has to be re-edited into different versions to make its distribution possible in different countries and cultural contexts (industries of porn, film and art). In Cheang's case, censorship issues of pornographic materials are not only rationalized according to religious and commercial beliefs but due to the culturally-specific boundaries of aesthetics.

During my interview, Cheang uses the examples of the aesthetic challenges of pornography in Japan⁴⁰. For *I.K.U.*, besides the ideological debates of sexual representations, the struggle is also formulated by the mechanisms of aesthetic representations, a debate between with or without mosaics that is set up by the Japanese porn industry. The ideology of pornographic sexuality in Japan is thus operationalized as a code of conducts for negotiations. According to Cheang, the refusal to use mosaics in the screening of *I.K.U.* in Japan was exactly what she wanted to challenge about Japanese porn conventions. Re-editing *I.K.U.* was a pay-off, and yet a statement, that she wanted to make for her global audiences.

While different producers of sex machines transgress essential social strictures by re-imagining body, gender, sexuality and technology in a way that alters their

⁴⁰ "Eventually, the final piece that was screened in Japan was already a re-edited version, where some of the shots were taken away... As I said, we already did some kinds of self-censorship for the release of *I.K.U.* I think nowadays, in the sex industry mechanism for the commercial release, you know where exactly your limits and how far you can go. Particularly in Japan of course, you cannot show penis and vagina explicitly. Japan has developed the most sophisticated mechanism of what you can or cannot see" (Cheang, personal communication, 20 July, 2008)

original conditions, they are at the same time counteracted by different kinds of “publics” that uphold the power of knowledge and normativity. Archibald’s “public” is the advertising industry that disapproves of sexual content in the capitalist’s professional environment. Stein’s “public” is the government and a public majority who disapprove of the values of pornographic expressions; this disapproval is furthered by corporations who challenges the legitimate use of technology within the legal and capitalistic structure of the American “publicness”. Cheang’s challenge is the aesthetic boundaries and codes of behaviors that are drawn by disciplines of porn, film and art, her work *I.K.U.* signifies a kind of power dynamics that can not only be contextualized locally, but according to different political situatedness internationally. Nevertheless, despite of the imaginations that I analyzed for the productions of sex machines, the politics of sex machines productions are unavoidable mediated materially within the “public”. While these producers are constantly transgressing the essential domains of knowledge by producing the sub-cultural sex machines, they are at the same time self-regulated to cope with the normative standards within their distribution networks. The “private” constantly resist and accept the normative ideologies within the “public” sphere, while they’re being regulated by the opposite regimes of power (censorships), they are at the same time tactically rebellious and self-regulated to allow their cultural products to be distributed effectively. The politics of the productions of sex machines are rendered contradictory in between realm of imaginations and the contexts of material existence.

Gender politics of sex machines

The contradictory political power dynamics can not only can be traced according to the subcultural practices of sex machines productions, in gender matters, politics are also highly contradictory. In the study of fucking-machines and teledildonics pornography, I analyzed how excessive symbolisms of sex machine porn destabilizes the essential notions of gender; then I further articulated the symbolic re-imaginings of women bodies in sex machines porn as a kind of “freedom” that struggles with the subjective imaginations of bodies and the objective gender-/capitalist-based cultural and historical context. While *Kink.com* produces pornography that removes women’s body from having intercourse with a biological male, the cultural “maleness” is always there within the production process. In teledildonics porn, while Summer is rendered as a “mediated voyeurism” that is offered by the networking technologies, her material body is undeniably also rendered by the phallogentric economy, where her job of performance is highly reliant on satisfying men’s fantasies.

Despite the contradictory gender dynamics in pornography, while bodies of gender are re-articulated into new realms of imagination as “fetishism” and “phantasm”, the imagination in sex machines productions also unavoidably consist of male-oriented construction. Needless to say, the reality is that most of the producers of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are biological males. Besides that, the ideas and designs of sex machines are also culturally formulated according to fantasies of “maleness”. Fucking-machines productions disrupt the mundanity and the heteronormative ideals in the American suburbs,

and we can easily see something like “machines can make woman “come faster and harder”. In the analysis above, they “get them (women) off better than anyone else’s machines”. While the fucking-machines producers are constantly transgressing the boundaries of sex and gender, I also question who wants to “come faster and harder” and who wants to “get off better”? Do the “women” that these producers describe really want to have a sex machines, or it is a desire that is formulated due to the producer’s own good? In *Sex Machines: Photography and Interview*, Timothy Archibald creates a new subcultural world for us and he discursively challenges the normative sexual and gender imaginations within the “public”. Though at the same time, he says, “The women feel like they like hugging, cuddling and giggling, they don’t want the sex machines. That is something more than a norm”. Other than the disruptions that Archibald contributes, his idea of women is undeniably grounded within the static perspective of men. In the realm of teledildonics like in Michael Harriman’s case, not only does he want to create a sex robot for his male clients, he also fantasizes about making a “Cherry” who has the capability to do house work along with providing sex service. The logics behind the non-essential fragmented bodies not only signify new modes of gender imagination, but also are contradicted by a highly static projection of gender that can be commonly attributed to men. Behind the “phantasm” of sex robots productions, there is also a maleness fantasy that has potential to reinforce established differences concerning gender. The “phantasm” in the realm of sex robots imagery can never sustain and stand alone without the mediations of normative associations of

gender differences; the non-biological sex robots signify a contradictory picture of gender politics.

Therefore, other than the non-normative practices and symbolisms of sex machines productions, power dynamics are also mediated materially according to the static conditions of body, gender, sexuality and technology. While sex machines producers invent sex machines to destabilize the normative notions that are embedded in their cultural context, they are counteracted by the powers that uphold static values of gender, body, sexuality and technology. Despite all that, while the producers subjectively transgress their modes of imaginations by using excessive symbolisms, they are also contradicted by the normative imaginations within themselves. The contradictory power struggles between the “public” and “private”, men and women thus renders a new picture of the world of sex machines.

A brave new world - new configuration of sex, technology, gender and body

In the field of independent, industrial, artistic and institutional productions of sex machines, each agent has his or her own formulations of machines, materiality and human sexuality. Values, beliefs, ideologies and practices upheld by different agents are being processed and circulated within the sexual field and this has rendered the sex machine a cultural artefact. Despite of the material functionalities, the meanings of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are transcended symbolically into the realm of “fetishism” and “phantasm” that disrupts the original conditions of the

suburbs, Internet networks and body. These excessive symbolisms further create gender politics in pornographies and body politics in the simulated world of the technosexual.

In the productions of sex machines, the techniques being applied to the independent sex machine productions have inspired the porn industry to utilize these products as another way to package the orgasm. The success of industrial sexual products has, in return, motivated independent inventors. The science fictional imaginations of future sex machines have become the signified ideals for sex dolls makers and consumers. The new pleasures and sensations that are being produced within the human/dolls relationships have brought up new discourses of sex and fidelity in popular film, academic conferences and popular medias. Different agents within the field of sex machine production have created a semiotic network that is constantly defining and re-defining how we make sense of and utilize sex machines materially and culturally. The three types of sex machines being technically produced not only engender different kinds of pleasure and sensation, but the process and result of production also encode how sex machines are made culturally meaningful. The cultural meaning of sex machines are being articulated by different contingencies of circumstances (Hall, 1997, p. 3) and as a consequence, alter the role of sexuality, technology, body and gender into different forms.

Sex-positive culture has detached sex from procreative norms. The insertion of sexuality into technology in the field of sex machines has further posited new sensations and new meanings of sex. Sex machines have not only brought new kinds

of physiological pleasures to many users, the productions of sex machines have also created new forms of sexual strangeness, otherness and identity. The “other” body of sex machines can range from the networked vibrator such as Xbox, “Johnny 5” to the undefined humanoids that are being used as sexual and/or love partners. Unlike the previously made sex toys, many users and producers are treating sex machines not only as a material object or device that is used in facilitating human sexual pleasure, they also considering and projecting sex machines as the “other”, sexually and spiritually. These machines are being interpreted by different producers and consumers as something strange, something in between a human and sex toys, something that doesn’t have a concrete identity or even a name. Sexuality has thus been displaced even further from our fragile understanding of sexual orientations and practices, since the sexual “other” in the sex machine engenders fragmented and contradictory significations of identity and practice. The previously defined terms for sexual identity such as “heterosexuality” “homosexuality”, “bisexually”, “asexuality”, “polysexuality”, or the terms for non-normative practices such as sexual fetishism are thus being further reinterpreted and rearticulated. Is the sexual “other” a lover? Are they gendered? Are they only a toy? Can they substitute for human bodies? Can they substitute spiritually for the human? What if they become bio-engineered and what if they have intelligence?

The strangeness and “otherness” of sex machines destabilize how we understand our sexual identities. The meaning of sex machines is constantly being constructed and deconstructed by different agents within the sexual field. Until the day we have the cloned body for sex, this sexualized technology in the realm of sex machines will

always be considered as a foreign object for producers and users to share, to live and to be with physically, sexually and (or) spiritually. This kind of strangeness and “otherness” that is generated from the intersection of sex and technology has also reconfigured body and gender roles. While still having intense and unique bodily sensations, the human body has been further disintegrated and displaced by sex machines. The biological human body is being replaced by a foreign other, the pornographic body is being negotiated and rendered via teledildonics, the signified human body can be further and unlimitedly “prophesized” and “phantazied” all the way to the end. The non-essential genders are further problematised by the “other’s” gender that is transferable, undefinable and yet paradoxical. Since the biological gender of the other is absent, the signified gender of such is being reshuffled and reprocessed by the producers’ and users’ imaginations.

What exactly is this something-in-between “other” being created during the production of sex machines? What does this strangeness signify? Before the day of doubling “the Other into the eternity of the Same”, sex, technology, body and gender will always be configured as new possibilities within the realm of sex machines innovations.

In the analysis above, the excessive symbolisms that are formulated by fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots not only disrupt the original suburban, cyber and pornographic conditions and spatialities, the new something-in-between meanings of these non-normative technosexual practices also create new modes of power dynamics in gender (pornography productions), sexuality (human fidelity and

ensorships). The disruptions of the normative aesthetics of technosexual are further translated as a counter-power that could possibly build a new brave world of sex. After all, for myself and the majority public who have not even seen or used any of these new sex machines inventions, the practices and symbolisms of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots seem very foreign and detached from us. How can we make sense of the otherness of these non-normative technosexual practices? How do these sub-cultural groups of people politically motivate those who have never seen or used sex machines (us) to re-think their (our) sexuality? Provided that the productions of sex machines are always in-between the normative and non-normative imaginations of gender, what is the underlining philosophy of the contradictions as seen in the politics of sex machines? In the next chapter, I will further examine the representations and productions of sex machines by using queer theory, a political philosophy that may help us to further understand the contradictions of the contemporary technosexual sub-culture.

Chapter 4

Queering sex machines – the theorization of postmodern technology and sexuality

Sex machines created in the postmodern context extricate and redefine technology and sexuality. The strangeness and otherness of sex machines that I analyzed in the earlier chapters proposed new possibilities to restructure and re-imagine the material reality and symbolic order of social institutions, including ideas of gender and body. In this chapter, through the lens of queerness and by methods of deconstruction, I theorize the representations and productions of sex machines within the domain of contemporary techno-sexual innovations. Prior to the inauguration of the poststructuralist framework and discursive analysis of gender and body, new modalities of cultural theories had been proposed to assimilate sexual and technological disembodiment into certain contradictions further problematized the static definitions of body and gender identity. The artificial nature of the machine/human exchange provokes me to consider the counter-natural promises, temporality and contradictions of bodily and identity contingencies. In this research, queer theory will be articulated as the overarching theoretical apparatus to analyze the postmodern body and gender reconfigured by sex machines. I will attempt to bring queer epistemology into an interaction with other theoretical frameworks that concern body and gender, such as post-feminism, cyborg and simulation theories in order to critically formulate interdisciplinary engagements across different domains of body and gender propositions. In so doing, I will try to make sense of the contemporary techno-sexual post-modernity through the interactions of sex machines.

Critical perspectives – Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis and queer theory

In Chapter 2, I focused on the ways in which the cultural history of sex machines has been discursively constructed in the West over the past two centuries. I examined how, over different periods of time, the formulation and circulation of knowledge concerning the family, sexual health, potency, sexual liberalism and epidemic have evolved within the domain of sex machines as a result of certain normative understandings of body, gender, subjectivity and social relations. According to Foucault, the politics of body, gender and identity should not be viewed as a top-down / unidirectional hegemony of the power of capitalist’s control and the regulation of desire (Aldama, 2005, p. 41). This study focuses on the problematics of “power dynamics” by examining the underlining symbolic power of the text and artefact of sex machines. The discursive method of studying sexuality notes that behind the materiality of body and gender conditions, practices of sex underline the multiple mechanisms and symbolisms of power that is able to constitute who “I” am subjectively in relation to the others in a community or society. Through the discursive analysis of sexuality, Foucault re-evaluates traditional psychoanalysis and draws attentions to the symbolic, linguistic and power structures of different cultural agencies. Similarly, Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis also stresses the study of individual personality underneath material conditions. Foucault says in his interview that by reading Lacan’s theory he was able to discover that one “had to try to free everything that hides itself behind the apparently simple use of the pronoun “I”” (Dean & Lane, 2001, p. 44). Lacan interprets psychoanalysis as “a linguistic account

of self-formation” and conceptualizes “sexual identification and desire as the result of inclusion in a speaking community” (Craig, 1998, p. 199). In Lacan’s sense, the unconsciousness is not composed of something immaterial, it is made of the Real constructed by language, therefore, the materiality of experience and conditions are in itself unconscious. He thinks that Real implies a “material substrate underlying the imaginary and the symbolic”. Besides the simplistic notions of external reality where material condition exists and conflicts with itself, reality is also subverted by imagination and symbolic power that creates contradictions (Evens, 1996, p. 163). This way to critique power, seen as underneath the text of the material world (unconscious) further inspires queer theorists to reconsider gender, body and sexual practices in a symbolic paradigm. Judith Butler’s theories of body and gender are highly inspired by Lacan; she makes the argument that psychic life is always social. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, she “refuse(s) the ontological dualism that posits the separation of the political and the psychic”, and she thinks that queer theory and psychoanalysis are the tool to “offer a critical account of psychic subjection in terms of the regulatory and productive effects of power” (Butler, 1997, p. 19). The displacement of materialism and essentialism in the analysis of the symbolic consciousness prompts Butler to articulate gender and body in a mode of new imagination.

Queer theory, which was initiated in order to critically disengage from the status quo of leftist politics (Kirsch, 2000, p.33), fundamentally destabilizes the normativity of identities. If gender is formulated by the “citational performativity” and “reiterative power” of discourse (Butler, 1993, p. 2), the performance à la experimentation allows

us to move body and gender away from the hierarchically given statement or utterance of identity. In this way, rather than politically promoting binary oppositional power, queer performativity fosters a “transcendence” of contemporary relations of power” (Butler, 1993, p. 241). In the realm of contemporary sex machines that are informed by postmodern conditions, how do the cultural productions of body and gender signify the destabilization of essentialist logics? How do the “performings” (making and doing) of sex machines hinder, change and/or challenge the “ordered system of knowledge” within the networks of established social institutions? In this chapter, I will articulate how contemporary sex machines at-large signify queerness, and then I will further theorize the specificity of different kinds of sex machines within the conceptual framework of the cyborg.

The queerness of contemporary sex machines at-large

This project focuses on three kinds of recently invented sex machines: fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots. Even the names of these three kinds of sex machines are unfamiliar to most people. This sexual/technological area of knowledge has been little explored within academic literature. Since my project primarily contains a great amount of unheard-of knowledge, as a researcher it becomes a prerequisite, every time I speak about them, to constructively explain the definitions and boundaries of these three kinds of sex machines. Apart from my own experiences, even among those in the sex industries or generally in-the-know, the naming of these recent inventions are contestable and negotiable. One notable example is when Kink.com, the first company dedicated to making pornography using fucking-machines, failed to legitimize the name “fucking-machines” with the U.S. Patent

Office in 2007 (Billman, 2007). Obviously, unlike the medical sex machines that are mentioned in Chapter 2, the design of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots can hardly refer to any clear and delineated purposes. The “hard-to-explain” phenomenon of sex machines can be viewed as one that results from the deconstruction of commonsensical understandings of technology and sexuality. Essentially, the meaning of technology is the application of different scientific data to achieve different practical ends. However, fucking-machines are fetishistically designed; teledildonics are made for the “high-techness” of the open source blogosphere, while sex robots are created for self-imagined phantasms. The names and meanings of contemporary sex machines are non-substantial and mutable. Fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots, instead of serving medical ends for delineated domains of pleasure and discipline, are technologically created for non-essential fetishism, high-techness and phantasm. The design of these machines can only be actualized as “real” in the realm of the imagination. Notable science fiction writer Arthur Charles Clarke once wrote, "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 4). The “magic” of the technology that induces alternative sexual practices in sex machines is what I would call queer.

Apart from the domain of technology, what is the sexual meaning that is being formulated by sex machines? In the sexual domains, the sexuality referred to by fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots is beyond the dominant understandings of sexual pleasures and sexual behaviors. Materially, human/machine sexual interactions do not fall into the biological male/female, male/male, female/female or transgendered figurations of sex that we normally talk or think

about. Sex machines's material sexuality is an interaction with something that is beyond the structural position of an embodied biological human. Symbolically, a sex machines's sexuality is informed by a kind of pleasure that is generated by the specific modes of human/machine interactions. The sexual pleasure that is entangled with fetishism, high-techness and phantasm, and that goes beyond the material human body is something beyond normal understandings of "sexual pleasure" (human/human sex). This kind of "sexual pleasure" can be translated as "jouissance", a term adopted by Jacques Lacan and re-elaborated by Slavoj Zizek. Synonymously known as "enjoyment" in English, "jouissance" is not a commonsensical understanding of "mere' or 'normal' pleasure" (Sharpe, 2004, p. 64). In addition to the common understandings of pleasure, "jouissance" is the "ecstasy" of an indefinable state that is beyond the "pleasure principle", "the distinctions of pleasure and pain" and "the bounds of identity, meaning and law" (Edelman, 2004, p. 25). Psychoanalytically, the totality of pleasure is filled with "enjoyment" and "unenjoyment", "jouissance" is equal to the "lack" (of enjoyment and un-enjoyment). In "The Plague of Fantasies", Zizek writes, "we find jouissance in the vicious cycle of circulating around the void of the (missing) object, renouncing the myth that jouissance has to be amassed somewhere else" (Zizek, 1997, p. 33). The "jouissance" in the realm of sex machines can be made sense as a "lack" of object (material and symbolic "human" body and pleasure) that is informed by the dominant understandings of what constitute sexual body and pleasure. In the process of sexually interacting with sex machines, this "lack" is materially and symbolically exchanged and replaced by the unnamable foreign objects (fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots) and can only be made meaningful when these foreign objects are

translated into fragmented meanings, signs and symbols. The process of exchanging and replacing symbols and signs is indeed the state of unnamable “dream-work” and “enjoyment”. This “dream-work” has not materially taken place at the site of the genitalia (in another words, not focusing on genital orgasm). The “jouissance” referenced by sex machines is symbolically carried out “somewhere else” in the realm of fetishism, high-techness and phantasm. According to my interviews with individuals in the sex machine field, the original inventions of fucking machines and teledildonics were not designed with a specific market application in mind, in fact, some of the invented products have not been used at all. The concept of “jouissance” provides a psychoanalytical tool to understand the queerness of sex machines that reveal and undo the coherency of socially constructed and performed meanings of sexuality. According to Lacan, the unnamable state of “jouissance” permits “significations”. But what signs are being translated and transformed in the circulation process of the symbolisms of sex machines?

Cyborgian’s technobiological apparatus – queering the paradoxical “techno”/“sexual”

In the above, the unnamable and unsustainable symbolism of sex machines signifies queerness. In this section, I further problematize the differentiated delineations of technology/sexuality and human/machine by investigating cyborg theory. In “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”, Donna Haraway hybridizes the machine and the organism by positing a new cybernetic organism called “cyborg”. According to Haraway, “Western” history is the battleground of a “boarder war” that establishes boundaries.

To be a cyborg, Haraway opens up three “crucial boundary breakdowns”: The first one is the boundary between human and animal, in which the transgressions between human and animal (organism) becomes the conceptual foundation for the birth of “cyborg”. The second “breakdown” is the boundary between machines and organisms. The third is the “subset” of the second: the boundary between the physical and non-physical, material and opaque, which is what she later called “simulation” (Haraway, 1991, p. 153). I will subsequently analyze this.

By deconstructing the meaning of human (*homo sapiens*) and humanism, “cyborg” shifts into a hybridized identity and meaning. Beside the material transgression of machine and human, “cyborg” symbolically signifies an ambiguous and transgressive state-of-being. In the realm of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots, the material biological body (subject) is being interconnected with mechanical sex machines (object). On the first level I can easily imagine the subjects (human) of those sex machines existing materially as “cyborg” (the execution of cyborgian human/machine sex) and I symbolically identify the subjects of sex machines as a “state-of-being” which is no longer coherent to the normative sexual identity. On the other level, other than materially and symbolically breaching the boundary between the subject and object, I would interpret cyborg theory in the domain of sex machines as the transgression of technology/sexuality based on the structural oppositions of natural/artificial. In the constructivist framework of science, technology is artificial and sexuality is biological: technology and man-made objects cannot reproduce themselves in a biological sense. Conversely, nothing could be defined to have sexuality (to have reproductive activities) outside the domain of living organisms.

The “pleasure in the confusion of boundaries” (Haraway, 1991) of sex machines is the coupling of technology and sexuality. I name this new sexual condition as “technosexual” or “cyborgian sex”.

Below the surface of “pleasure in the confusion of boundaries”, the subtext of “A Cyborg Manifesto” is one that politically challenges the traditional feminist way of thinking, such as the essential delineations and reiterations of gender differences. It is why Haraway posits her declaration as a queer project that is constantly trying to disengage with organizational left politics. She says, “I have tried to queer the self-evidence of witnessing, of experience, of the conventionally upheld and invested perceptions of clear distinctions” (Haraway & Randolph, 1997, p. 267). By blurring the boundary between human/machine, cyborg theory is implicitly designed to subvert the cultural categorization of gender. This political agenda also provides me with a good opportunity to negotiate the gender articulations of sex machines by using the cyborgian concept.

Let’s go back to the study of Binx and Fucking Machine that I analyzed in Chapter 4. In the story of Binx, in which she engaged in a live performance with the fucking-machine “Fuckzilla” at Arse Elektronika 2007. She thought fucking-machines were “the pornographic equivalent of third-wave feminism”, through which she was able to proclaim her own sexuality and self-conscious empowerment that was based on what she had learnt about feminist theory and gender study in the university. She subjectively proclaims her “performance” with “Fuckzilla” as an empowerment based on the way she rejects the structural gender roles that is constituted by the essential

feminist theory and gender studies. In another words, she shows disagreement with the idea that women that are sexually displayed in pornography engender a reinforcement of patriarchy (male gaze, etc). Through her realization of being the “pornographic equivalent of third-wave feminist”, she feels empowered by “performing” as a porn star/queer/cyborg that symbolically rejects the structural position of herself as a woman (the opposite of man). At the same time, she describes that the machines are designed to “get women off, nothing more and nothing less”, and that fucking machines’ porn is a “fundamental shift towards the women’s enjoyment in the total absence of men”. Her grounding of “empowerment” as a “third-wave feminist” was highly invested, linguistically and logically, in the static positions of “women” and “men”. Even though “Fuckzilla” is not a human, and its “phallus” was re-circulated and re-privileged from the “logic of non-contradiction that serves the either-or of normative heterosexual exchange” (Butler, 1993, p. 88) and it doesn’t belong to men’s biological penis or symbolic phallus, during the “performance” Binx (as a cyborg), cannot escape from the ontological “affirmation and negation” structure of linguistics and logics (Foucault, 1972, p. 173). Politically, Binx’s performance was also mediated by the contradictory understandings of gender, i.e. the two cultural sites that formulate Binx’s performance: Arse Elektronika and the porn company Kink.com (which sponsored the conference and “Fuckzilla”). While both sites are physically located in San Francisco, they ideologically represent and embrace the notion of political liberalism. For example, the curator of Arse Elektronika, Johannes Grenzfurthner proclaimed his group as leftist and he described San Francisco as politically liberal city during my interview⁴¹. Kink.com described

⁴¹ He states, “Monochrom is a leftist group ... Because San Francisco is a really open and really liberal

San Francisco in a similar way, “Lucky for us, San Francisco is a very liberal city, and some establishments are even more liberal than others” (MeFeedia, 2009). When Thomas Roche, the Public Relation Manger of Kink.com speaks about the ethics of porn production during my interview, his groundings are highly embraced by liberalism⁴². The ideology of Arse Elektronika and Kink.com are both highly liberally conscious about gender and expressions of sexuality. They reject gender discrimination and promote sexual rights. This ideology is exactly what bodies of queer and cyborg theories are designed to disengage with, because liberalism is structurally another facet of the hetero-normativity. Therefore, the objective mediations of Binx’s empowerment are also formulated by the liberalist male/female designations, and the BDSM/non-BDSM, gay/non-gay structures of equal rights. The empowerment informed by Binx’s subjectivity through the queer/cyborg/third-wave feminism epistemology is both, politically and linguistically, affirming and negating the dual structure of gender and sex; therefore it is also seen as partial and paradoxical.

Binx’s story represents queerness informed by subjectivity, while the case of teledildonics porn in *Sex Machine Cams* shows the cyborgian and hetero-normative ontology. In Chapter 4, I analyzed that the performer of *Sex Machine Cams*, Summer, who accepted and rejected the user’s requests through flirtatious negotiations of a

city,... San Francisco, they have seen everything... they have this long tradition and history of sexual openness and sexual scenes and the gay scene, all of that. People, especially in San Francisco, tend to forget, because it’s this strange enclave of liberalism in a pretty conservative country, and people flee here in a certain way, and then they have this idea that they are in a safe haven here” (Grenzfurthner, personal communication, 30 Sept, 2008).

⁴² “So you see both man and woman performing on Maninpain.com, which is a male submissive site with female dominants. And you would see the same woman going to Sexandsubmission.com and being submissive to another man. Theoretically being submissive to the same man who’s in Maninpain.com” (Roche, personal communication, 30 Sept, 2008).

partial “grab” that is mediated by the networked machines. I argued that the presence of Summer is a fractal “positioned view” rather than a “unified perspective” being mediated by webcam pornography (Grenzfurthner, 2008, p.166) and therefore the “grabbing” that was being co-mediated by the “voyeur” and “exhibitor” via the webcam technology destabilizes and intervenes the “visual pleasure” that is usually articulated on the conventional pornographic screen. In this case, none of the practitioners of *Sex Machine Cams* (the porn company owner Summer and the audience) are subjectively queer/ cyborgian. Though Summer’s hands and genitals are mediated by the teledildonics machines that are controlled by Summer herself, the audience and the material nature of the network (pixels, flickers and disconnections) during her performance are highly cyborgian. On the one hand, this cyborgian “being” of Summer gives room for us to re-imagine the traditional symbolic position and power of women in pornography that challenges traditional one-dimensional “visual pleasure”. On the other hand, the cyborgian nature of teledildonics porn can be seen as a reinforcement of hetero-normative power by providing a multi-dimensional pleasure both visually and physically (for men). The networked machines allows men to not only gaze at women, it also encourages the audiences (men) to physically penetrate the performer (women) by pressing the button in real time (even though they are miles away). If I use the equality logics of male/female representations for the case of this teledildonics’ porn, Summer is then seen to be highly non-autonomous. The fractal “positioned view” that is mediated by the cyborgian ontology in teledildonics porn is also inseparable from the hetero-normative ontology that men and women are unavoidably imbalanced within the structure of gender formations. I don’t disagree with Haraway saying, “cyborg is our ontology”.

Even in pornography, machine and human are inseparable, and static genders and modes of sexuality seem to be changing and destabilizing from our logical structure of knowledge, though the body of cyborg is still entangled materially and symbolically within the structure of hetero-normative logics. Binx's voluntary performance is embraced by the logics of liberalism and Summer's job is mediated by the relatively more hetero-centric ideology. The other facet of the cyborgian ontology is the hetero-normative ontology. A cyborg is a transient that holds the structural logics of both (cyborgian and heteronormative) ontological situations and its position is paradoxical.

Postmodern turn, simulation and body ontology

The transient and paradoxical natures of cyborg and queerness could be well explained by Haraway's third "crucial boundary breakdown", that is, "the ubiquity and invisibility of cyborg" and that, "they (cyborgs) are as hard to see politically as materially" (Haraway, 1991, p.153). Since queer and cyborg theory extend the analysis of power to the focuses on discourses and symbolic meanings and they reject any foundational stance of identities and ideologies, it has the tendency to displace material conditions and politics of the embodied life. Therefore, Haraway thinks the embodiment and disembodiment of the cyborg project "are about consciousness – or its simulation" (Haraway, 1991, p.153). Along with the growing interconnectedness of human and machines that is informed by the technological advancements, queer performances can no longer be understood only in the literal and material sense. New hybrid mechanical/engineering technologies and telecommunications networks bring us to new realms of spatialities that are away from our original material positions. In

the realm of the recently made sex machines, the new spatialities of consciousness in sex are especially important to be noted. According to the analysis in the past chapters, different modes of spatial excess are seen in the productions and representations of three kinds of sex machines. The independent fucking-machines productions extend the suburban conditions to a new spatiality that radically disrupts the small town mundane lifestyles. The surplus symbolisms and the high fidelity to the “real” of fucking-machines porn create simulated pleasures that are displaced from the “original” sex. Independent and industrial productions of teledildonics create spatial surplus that are not bounded by geography, the new spatiality of blogosphere and tele-presence interactions is the simulated environment that re-define the literal time and spatial experiences. The prosthetic pleasure of making and interacting with sex robots extend the materiality of human bodies into a wishfully fulfilled realm of “phantasm”, the fractal bodies of sex robots are the simulated sex and love partners for the producers and customers. Therefore, the productions and representations of sex machines are always in between the real and the simulated “real” of spatial existence. The human/machine interconnectedness and cyborgian articulation are a paradoxical presence between embodiment and disembodiment of “simulation”. Other than the material conditions and politics, the “real” is simultaneously extended into other spatialities that address the immateriality of underlining power dynamics in body and gender. In the *Manifesto*, Haraway notes that her third level analysis of cyborg is influenced by Fredric Jameson’s Marxist analysis of postmodernism and Jean Baudrillard’s simulation theory, in that both of them are situated within the context of “advanced capitalism” and “postmodern imagination” (Haraway, 1991, p. 245). What is the effect of “advanced capitalism”

and “postmodern imagination” and how does it relate to the “ubiquity and invisibility” of queerness?

To understand this paradoxical presence of cyborgian sex, we can begin to understand it by using the concept of “simulation” as something beyond the Platonic notion of simulation. Postmodern conditions not only inform the poststructuralist approach in order to make sense of history (the discursive analysis), sexuality (queer theory) and gender (cyborg theory as a post-feminist subjectivity), but for Baudrillard postmodernism also turns “reality” into “hyperreality”. To understand the notion of the simulated body of sex machines, it is important to articulate the creation of the simulated “real”. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard distinguishes between modernity as an era of history organized around production, opposed to postmodernity as an era organized around “simulations” (Durham & Kellner, 2006, p.447). Inspired by advanced capitalistic developments (technology, globalization, etc), Baudrillard posits that the new condition of simulation signifies the “idealized America” (Durham & Kellner, 2006, p.447). He uses the example of the Disneyland as the ultimate example of “hyperreality” in that it is the “perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation” and “it is a play of illusions and phantasms” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 12). Given these conditions, Baudrillard invites us to think that the signifier and signified are no longer linked, as the simulacra is a copy without an original, it is a “replica of a fantasy” (phantasm) that is “more-real-than-real” (Durham & Kellner, 2006, p.447). The disjunctive significations between the material conditions and imaginations prompt me to question the politics of sex machine’s simulation.

Based on the concepts of sign-value and hyperreal simulation, Baudrillard thinks that the constantly changing technology brings new modes of imaginations, he says, “modes of the imaginary follow modes of technological evolution, and it is therefore to be expected that the next mode of technical efficiency will give rise to a new imaginary mode” (Baudrillard, 2005, p.127). His conception about semiological imagination in the domain of technological inventions leads me to conceptualize the re-imagined meanings of technology/sexuality and subject/object relationships in the realm of sex machines. The independent fucking-machines inventors (subject) produce (and consume) their invention (objects) via techno-fetishism. It is an imagination concerning what is behind the suburban garage. Teledildonics makers are understood as prosumers (subject). Behind the dildos, computers and the open source codes (object), the high-techness of the blogosphere is exactly the site of these suburban garage inventors’ new imaginary sex and technology. The specific sex robots that are designed to created regular “sex dolls” and “fantasy sculptures” and which come in irregular or mutated body forms in order to duplicate and multiply the subject’s own being, invites me to use Baudrillard’s concept of “phantasm”. In the case of Michael Harriman’s sex robots, I am provoked to ask why the consumers are driven to have emotional and sexual relationships with dolls that embody something unnamable like “a bed with a lot of breasts, holes and mouths”. In the contemporary societies, the disembodied code of signs of the subject (that is also mediated by objects and representations of media, advertising, etc) is being projected onto prosthetic objects through imagination, entangled orders of simulation and phantasm. This power of dreaming is also empowered by the lack of a biological body, a space

that doesn't contain delineated meanings of gender, body, love, sex and technology (multiplicity of sign-value). The object can signify anything (in terms of gender, body, love, sex, technology) according to the customized wish fulfillments of the subject (producer, customer). It also transgresses the political boundaries set up by the essentialist definition of gender, body, love, sex and technology since the object in this case cannot speak, think and induce consciousness, it cannot be constituted as a human by any means according to our technological and structural meaning of human.

What if this non-biological object becomes a biological human and the prosthetic pleasure becomes a science fiction-like cloning of the body? In Baudrillard's sense, the cloned body "negates the subject and the object", it is only the "micro-molecular genetics (that) is nothing but the logical consequence". The subject (human) in this case will be identical to the object (human). The sign-value of the object will be materially and symbolically undifferentiated from the subject, and therefore, no imagination will be in immutably repeated. This is the end of body and the last stage of history in Baudrillard's term. In the *Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway posits cyborg as ubiquitous and invisible at the same time. If self and other are no longer distinguishable, it will also be the end of the paradox of the cyborg. The non-dual subject/object relationships will also be the end of structuralism and post-structuralism. The significance of queer identity will be no longer necessary since the identity of self/other are forever identical.

Queer politics of sex machines – contradictions of pedagogies

In the above, I theorize the representations and productions of sex machines through a queer lens. In the realm of sex machines, different meanings such as sexuality, technology, gender, body, reality and science fiction have been positioned away from the original static definitions. The production of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots disseminate the original meanings of technology and sexuality, but the functions of the products are no longer directly referential to the normal understandings of what constitute technology and sex. Cyborg theory further destabilizes the binary divide of technology and sexuality by re-imagining the structural positions of human and machines. This point of view opens up a new way to re-consider the binary meanings of men and women in gender articulations within the pornographic representations of sex machines. While the meaning of technology, sexuality and gender are seen as contradictory and paradoxical, the ubiquity and invisibility of the non-essential queerness has entered a stage of simulation. It also brings up the notion of self and other bodies within the process of “wonder” in which subjects and objects are marked by the concept of symbolic sign-value. While the production and representation of sex machines are in itself fluidic, the structural relationships between both domains are further problematized, making us wonder what “reality” really is. The logics of representation, production and consumption of sex machines are endlessly entangled, and could never be clearly defined according to original meanings.

In the realm of contemporary sex machines, that is informed by postmodern conditions, different producers and consumers design, use and imagine body, gender, technology, sexuality and the market cycle of sex machines according to the non-

essential logics where different meanings and positions no longer can make a “perfect” sense. The ordered systems of knowledge of different domains are re-articulated into the queer paradigms of contradiction and wonderment. Sex machines, as an emerging techno-sexual artefact is thus a process of wondering at, and constantly re-creating meanings. It is a transitory passage towards something we don’t yet know. According to simulation theory, self-branded as a fiction-theory, its conceptualization and “prediction” of the future is fatal. It also makes me wonder if the invention of sex machines is leading us to more choices and new principles of sexual pleasure, or, if sex machines are leading us to the death of sex (and also our own beings)? Provided that sex machines productions and their representations are always full of politics that are derived from material conditions, body, gender, sexuality and technology are far from a complete fatal/fictional being.

Sex machines and political economy

Lacanian’s psychoanalysis and queer epistemology encourages me to re-think gender, body, sexuality and technology with new linguistic and symbolic tools. Baudrillard’s simulation theory further helps us to highlight the prosthetic pleasure and tele-presence technologies in the contemporary technosexual culture. Despite these re-articulations of symbolic politics, in chapter 4, I also analyzed the material dimensions of sex machine productions. The non-normative practices of the productions of sex machines not only signify new modes of imagination that are effectively distributed between the producers and users, the “private life” of these sub-cultural groups also create new meanings within the public sphere. Timothy Archibald’s book symbolically transgresses the boundaries between art and

advertising, and this transgression has been translated as a politics of sexual beliefs that conflicts with the public's views on religion and professionalism in the advertising industry. While Allen Stein's *Sex Machines Cams* disrupts the normative meanings of sexual representations, it is also politically counteracted by the power of government that is mediated by groups who have strong religious values of what sex is to be. The project of teledildonics porn further challenges the rights of using technology in the non-space of the Internet. Shulea Cheang politically transgresses the boundaries of porn, art and film, as *I.K.U.* constantly disrupts the codes of conduct and aesthetics and addresses the political situatedness within the international "public". According to the material politics of these non-normative practices, how can one fully accept the proposal of the fatal? While numerous people are physically mobilized to enjoy or resist the work of sex machines, body and gender are far away from "death" or "end" in which everything the participants of sex machines experience are only simulations. What is behind the fictional "reality" of the sex machine is a material reality that is full of political contradictions.

In the examples above, producers of sex machines constantly rebel and alternately self-regulate in order to effectively distribute their cultural products. While "fetishism", "phantasm" and the "dream world" of the sex machine symbolically go beyond the pleasure principle, the materiality of sex machines practices simultaneously represents the contradictory logics of "governmentality". The tactics acquired by the producers of sex machines well represent the power dynamics of gender, body, sexuality and technology that are situated within the contexts of sex machines. After all, despite surplus symbolic meanings of the sex machine, the non-

normative practices that are studied in this project cannot be considered without the political dimension of the economy, where producers and consumers, the “private” and “public” of sex machines, are unavoidably situated within the system of the capitalist’s logics. Despite the fact that fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are only accessible to those who have capital, as sex machines and their attendant pornography are more expensive than the conventional sex toys or pornographies, the logics of transgression (beyond the essential body, gender, sexuality, technology, market cycle, etc) and imagination are highly grounded in the concept of capitalism. Producers of sex machines utilize the knowledge of political economy to constantly rebel and reinforce the normative notions of gender, body, sexuality and technology, but instead of through activism to bring about social changes. In other words, beside the political project that Lacan, Baudrillard and queer theorists propose, there are limitations to the idealistic re-considerations of gender, body and technosexual. The epistemology of queer, cyborg and simulation are rendered as a paradox within the landscape between the materiality and immateriality of the political economy.

The paradox of gender politics

The political economy of sex machines productions and representations also prompt me to draw the analysis of gender positions in the last chapters together with the epistemologies that this project eventually comes to. In chapter 4, I analyzed the politics of gender in the productions of sex machines. While Kink.com produces pornography that displaces the essential meanings of women by using the excessive symbolisms of fucking-machines, the cultural “maleness” is always present within the

production process. In teledildonics porn, while Summer is rendered into a “mediated voyeurism” that is offered by the networking technologies, her material body is undeniably also mobilized by the phallogentric economy, where her job of performance is highly dependant to satisfying the men’s fantasies (for men who have the gender and money capitals) within the gender/class-based labour divisions of economy. Besides the porn stars, Binx, who volunteered to perform at Arse Electronika 2007, was politically mediated by the liberalist’s equality-based notions of gender. Her subjective empowerments were only partial. On top of the positions of women within the realm of pornography, I also analyzed that imagination in sex machines’ productions are also highly male-oriented; transgressions of gender positions, during the production process of sex machines, are highly formulated according to “maleness” fantasies. While bodies of sex machines displace essential positions of how women can be imagined by the producers and consumers, the designs and logics of making sex machines are highly based on fulfilling the wishes of men. The discourses of sex machines as seen in the interviews are highly contradictory, somewhere between the essential and the non-essential.

Therefore, apart from our bodies that are far from being away from the fatal, the politics of gender can never be simplistically rendered only by modes of “seduction”. Lacanian’s analysis of the symbolic gender helps us to re-consider the non-essential gender and body in pornographic spectatorship. Though if such proposal is pushed all the way into the realm of the symbolic, gendered bodies become merely textual; women are thus “de-literalized” as if human flesh and society do not matter anymore. Materially, in the world of pornography, porn stars always encounter the physical

“side-effects” of pornography during production. In addition to vaginal and anal abrasions, physical harms such as sexually transmitted diseases and psychological discomforts are not unknown in much empirical research on porn stars. Other social dimensions, such as the porn star’s racial, financial, educational backgrounds also constitute why and how “women” are mobilized to perform in the porn industry. While the productions of fucking-machines and teledildonics porn displaces some of the potential harms to the porn stars (such as the risks of pregnancy), bodies of women are still undeniably mediated by numerous material conditions. What is behind the symbolic women is always human flesh. Beside the imaginary, there is the social. Therefore, without disregarding the Marxist-feminist concerns of the materialist’s body, gender, sexuality and technology, I simultaneously embrace the fluidity of queer, cyborg and simulation epistemologies. After all, I do believe sex machines engender a new paradigm of thinking and sensation in regards to our sexual practices. We are existing in the queer moment when sex machines have not yet been made clonable as identical to the biological human. The partiality, wonderment and contradictions of sex machines constitute the enthusiasm of my research. Through this project, I want to highlight the complexities of sex machines without posing it as either essential or fatal, and yet, without disregarding the materiality and immateriality of our technosexual landscape. As Meaghan Morris says, “Cultural Studies is a humane and optimistic discourse, trying to derive its values from materials and conditions already available to people”. The values and beliefs of cultural studies are in-between the material conditions and the symbolic. Under this schema, how do fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots provide significant subject matters in a study of our contemporary technosexual landscape? What kinds

of perspectives should we hold on to for the complex and yet contradictory practices/meanings of sex machines? In the next chapter, I will conclude my project by synthesizing the aesthetical and political dimensions of sex machines, and attempt to formulate a critical perspective that is potentially able to create a better future of technosexual.

Conclusion – The contemporary technosexual culture, from visual “public-ness” to visible “public-ness”, from the material reality to the convergence of spatialities

At sixteen years of age I received my first personal computer. At that time, without the opportunity to access sexual bodies (in pornography, on film or in reality), I anticipated accessing my own sexuality through the computer in the anonymous space of my bedroom. The first thing I did with my new computer was to access and enjoy the erotic and pornographic content on the Internet. I reveled in the pleasure of watching pornographic images and flirting with numerous partners via the instant messaging platforms, and eventually I created an art project in which I had live videoconferencing sex with 176 men all over the world⁴³. Looking back at my

⁴³ “The Impossibility of Having Sex With 500 Men in a Month - I’m an Oriental Whore” is a project I did in 2002 that aimed at exploring the possibility of virtual sex by using web camera. Below is the artist statement:

“In the United States, calling somebody “Oriental” is somehow an offensive stereotype for people from Asian Pacific countries. For me, the word “Oriental” reminds me of the experience of being a gay Chinese man in the Western world.

I was brought up in the 80’s, when AIDS was only beginning to emerge. Now, we’re living in a culture of AIDS awareness where the Sexual Revolution engages with the Technological Revolution.

Annabel Chong, the former record holder of the World’s Biggest Gang Bang, says: “The only thing I thought I’d do differently if I had to do it all over again -- I would definitely be more savvy about making sure all the guys were tested and wearing condoms for the big gang-bang event. But otherwise, I would do it the same way.”

In the shadow of my sexual repression informed by my “Oriental-ness” and AIDS awareness, I decided to explore myself in the anonymous, body-fluidless space on the Internet. In the absence of real body contact, the sex act is through transmission of data, the contact is through a machine. The anonymous experience is similar to a gay bathhouse where one can exhibit their body to many random people.

In the project, I attempted to have sex with a target of 500 men in a month through video conferencing. I used my stereotypical oriental feature to seduce web cam sex partners with a persona. During the process, I captured still images and video clips of them while they were masturbating without their knowledge or consent. I documented the conversations I shared with my partners in the cyber space.

The project documents the collective experience of orgasm in the virtual space. It pushes the limit of exhibitionistic behavior in the telepresence culture. It questions whether Internet sex is virtual or real, whether Internet space is private or non-private. It explores the boundary of my fantasies and my partner’s fantasies since we commit sexual act in a space where we no longer frame by social norms like we do in the real world. It creates a discourse of sexual politics in the context of post-colonial and

formative sexual years in ways that were similar to many people who reached maturity in the Information Age, I realized that my experience and knowledge of sexuality has never been separated from technology. For me, to make sense of sexuality can no longer come about according only the common understandings of human-to-human sex. For me, the totality of meanings and the pleasure of sex are undeniably mediated by different kinds of technologies. Thus, sexually interacting with machines seems to be “natural” according to my empirical experience and the formation of my own sexual identity. Nevertheless, as an academic researcher, during the quest for the meaning and value of sexuality formulated by my material and cultural existence, I have also learned about and imagined the landscape of the modern technosexual conditions. Phone sex, cyber sex, sex toys, pornographies (from porn cinema to VHS to the internet), SF (that portrays sex) and many other studies and literatures of modern technosexuality have provided me with an insightful backdrop that allows me to critically understand the texts and artefacts of the “technosexual”. While this research is focused on recently invented fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots, I aim not only to examine the unexplored technicalities, functionalities and interfaces of the new technologies and sexualities, but also to formulate a broader understanding of the meanings of the “technosexual”. Given that our sexualities are definitely influenced by these technologies, what cultural and philosophical insights can we gain from the studies of new types of sex machines? How do fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots provide significant subject matter in a study of our contemporary technosexual landscape?

interracial sexual relationship by showing my “oriental” identity through my web camera. It juxtaposes my personal experience of being a gay Chinese man in the Western World, my awareness of AIDS, my sexual repression and my love relationship to the undefined science fiction paraspaces.”

From “discipline” to “surplus”

In chapter 1, I critically reviewed the brief evolution of the technological construction and cultural history of sex machines that are seen in the modern West from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Based on Michel Foucault’s concept of “technology of power”, I analyzed different kinds of sex machines that were invented in the modern West as disciplinal sex machines. While different sex machines functioned as medical tools to prevent and cure sexual health problems, scientific, industrial and medical institutions also were discursively exercising new techniques of surveillance, governance and customary models to make possible the defining and disciplining of human sexuality. Besides the sex machine’s material functions, the technologies of these disciplinal sex machines were understood to inform legitimate knowledge and cultural ideologies of sexual reproduction, sexual activity, marriage, body and gender. During the three periods of time I studied, namely the industrial revolution, the sexual revolution and the era of the AIDS epidemic, institutional power has been reinforced and/or counteracted by “repressive” and the “anti-repressive” discourses in sex. Codes and languages of sexuality were constantly being produced, circulated and negotiated within the knowledge of specific sex machines. The meaning of sex was thus constituted by a multiplicity of power relations. The duality of domination and resistance within sexual discourses that reacted to institutional mechanisms are well represented in the “bio-history” of sex machines. The technologies of different sex machines during the three time periods were shaped by the logics of disciplines and/or pleasure.

While the “technology” of sex machines in the modern West signifies the institutional power and sexual disciplines (pleasure) that is informed by systems of institutional control, the signs and symbols of the recently made sex machines go beyond the “reality principle” and “pleasure principle”⁴⁴. Sex machines that are created as the object of medical discourses are transformed as the partial object signifying the “surplus” of sexual imagination in fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots. The subjects of sex machines are changing from medical practitioners and patients to garage inventors, porn producers, programmers and consumers who are interested in technosexual inventions. Fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots that signify the “surplus” meanings do not only symbolically serve as a part-object for the producers and consumers to re-imagine sexuality and technology, they are also politically utilized as an object to counteract sexual normativity.

In this work, I examined the cultural representations, interaction and productions of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots, I concluded that the values and meanings of these contemporary sex machines are marked and supplemented by “surplus”. During the process of sex machine production, humans and machines are displaced from their “original” state by the excessive symbolism of the contested and contradictory meanings of bodies, gender, technologies and sexualities. Human bodies are not only extended to physically interact with machines, but also human and machine consciousness interacts in realm of “phantasm”. Besides actual interactions, the bodies of human and machine are being further displayed through telepresence and network technologies in the virtual “non-space”. Modes of imagination are

⁴⁴ See “jouissance” in chapter 4.

surpassed by the mediations between presence and non-presence. In the realm of the contemporary sex machines, bodies are re-articulated by new technologies and create new excessive meanings and symbolisms. They are being extrapolated from a coherent biological being, to a “partial” being and further disintegrated into virtual “non” being.

In chapter 3, I analyzed the “surplus” meaning of sex machine production. Fucking-machines originated in the American suburbs; during the production process, excess values are created that are beyond the object’s material functionalities. The remodeling of available mechanical objects to produce fucking-machines is “fetishised” and made part of the suburban social and cultural life. Fucking-machines are thus marked with “fetishistic” values that surpass the intended suburban use of the original object. Similarly, teledildonics are being produced beyond the functional nature of computer engineering. The “technology” that is being “fetishised” in the independent teledildonics productions creates excessive values of the imaginable “high-techness” that is behind the source codes and the “blogosphere”. Sex robots that are being sold online, are marked by fragmented and multiplied signs; they create a surplus space for “phantasm” that is fantastically fulfilled within the “power of dreams” through a perfect duplication or multiplication of a human’s own being. Despite of the excess values that are being generated in the independent inventions of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots, these artefacts are also being circulated within the cultural circuits and are being represented as textual excess in pornography and science fiction films. In chapter 2, I have analyzed that fucking-machines pornography depicts the extreme realism and maximum exposure of sex by

focusing on the “technical perfectibility” of the sound and image of human/machines interactions. The symbolism of fucking-machines pornography surpasses the “reality” of possible sex. Teledildonics pornography distorts and re-visualizes sex by adding excessive computer effects and simulated experiences. The “surplus” optical and mechanical manipulations of bodies further extend the meaning of traditional pornography. Sex dolls are being imagined as a perfect duplication of the human body; the notions of the disintegration of human/machine are represented by the “non-space” of cyberpunk. The language and images of human/machine contact in the film *I.K.U.* symbolize the excesses of “reality”. Therefore, other than their material existence and advanced functions, fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are supplemented with “surplus” meanings that disrupt the essential meanings of human technology and sexuality. While the new interfaces and modalities of technosexual interactivity connect and displace bodies within different domains of space (reality, telepresence, virtual reality, tele-networking etc), how is this disembodiment bringing about new cultural values? How is the “reality” of the contemporary technosexual landscape being re-articulated by this mode of “surplus” that is informed by recently made sex machines?

The politics of “surplus” - from the visual “public-ness” to the visible “public-ness”

In the realm of contemporary sex machines, producers and consumers are constantly intermediated in between the physical world and the virtual world, material reality and phantasm. This project aims to be aware of the immateriality and the materiality of body and gender while also not fully embracing them, so my question becomes: what

is the politics of the technosexual landscape? Apart from the cultural aesthetics of sex machines, how do the new subcultural queer social groups disrupt and transgress the cultural normativity by circulating non-normative texts and practices? In “Sex in Public”, Michael Warner says that the queer culture is a “world-making project” that formulates a new “counter-public” sphere. How does the social grouping of sex machines politically address and create a “publicness” that possibly formulates a new world of future sex (social imaginary of the “public”)? How do the queer bodies of sex machines subculturally re-negotiate the gender-/capitalist-based power relations/struggles that is informed by materialist philosophy?

In the analysis of the previous chapters, the “surplus” signs and symbols of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are circulated among the producers and consumers within the sphere of the technosexual culture. For the sex machine producers and consumers, the texts and artifacts of contemporary sex machines not only serve as an object for imaginations, but the circulations of “surplus” technological and sexual meaning also formulate a sphere of a “counter-public” subculture that counteracts the commensensical interpretations of the “public’s” notions of gender, body and technosexuality. According to Michael Warner, “public” is the “central fiction of modern life” and the “essential fact of the social landscape” that “tax(es) our understanding to say exactly what they are”. While the aesthetics of the cultural sex machines are transformed into different forms of stylistic practices and pragmatics, they also disseminate the non-dualistic notions of gender, body and sexuality that is in counter-balance, from the essential “publicness”, to “exactly what they are”. By conducting non-essentialist technosexual acts and

speeches around the objects of sex machines, the participants are also potentially reformulating a “lifeworld” of being and doing. In these ways, the social life of the producers and consumers of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots extend the spatiality of non-normative technosexual practices to the terrain of political struggle with the predominated power of normativity that embrace the essentialist and binary oppositional ideologies of sexuality and technology. The imaginations of “public” can be potentially re-articulated to contain fluid meanings through a new political sphere that is composed of supporting and counteracting forces.

The public and counter-public of sex machines

Seeing that fucking-machines primarily originated in the American suburbs, the producers of independent fucking-machines disrupt and extend the social and spatial conditions of American suburbia of the familial isolation within public space. The non-normative practices of fucking-machines productions in the garage create new modes of home maintenance and home-centered entertainments that are beyond the commonly consented suburban inhabitant’s “public” life. Not only do producers create a new spatiality of the suburban’s garage, the surplus meanings of sex and machines are also being circulated to the pornography and artistic fields as in the material produced by Kink.com and Timothy Archibald. Images and writings about fucking-machines and their related pornographies create new modes of spectatorships that address the “strangers” and non-normative bodies and new spaces alternative to the public knowledge of gendered and suburban life. Through the circulations of images and writings about fucking-machines, the contested “surplus” meanings of

gender, bodies, suburban life and technosexuality become a new kind of generic style that are coded with a new vocabulary of citational mise-en-scene, speeches and dialogues. They are further being disseminated to invite potential participations in the larger public sphere by being discussed and debated in the conferences such as Arse Elektronicka 2008 that I studied in this project. The “surplus” display of fucking-machines aesthetics is thus transformed into a visible political project in different fields and a re-created spatiality.

The productions and representations of fucking-machines inspire the emergence of teledildonics sex. Fucking-machines are not only materially infused with network technologies in order to create new phantasmic and sensational experiences in teledildonics pornography, but the surplus effects and functions of teledildonics become a new kind of technosexual practice that is not bound by the linear time and space. Besides broadening the generic styles and modes of bodily participations in pornography, teledildonics create a new visual and physical field that accommodate activities and dialogue in which the performers and spectator can engage with others from around the world without geographical and time constraints. The new modes of technosexuality informed by teledildonics pornography politically formulate new languages of sex that counteract the “publicness” of conventional pornographies; performers and spectators can set themselves away from the essential spaces of pornographic performances and spectatorships by using a queer symbolism offered by the internet networks. The telepresence “reality” of teledildonics sex allows queer bodies to physically and conceptually engage in a trans-geographical space that is

referential to a larger queer lifeworld; this is a site of identity construction in which the performers and spectators struggle with and re-negotiate essentialist and static notions of body and gender. While the participants are marked by surplus functions and aesthetics in the virtual space, teledildonics pornography creates a spatiality to potentially counteract the normative understandings of the reality/virtual spatial dichotomy. Teledildonics pornography thus invites the “public” to politically re-imagine the previously established definitions of virtual sex and allows the participants to uphold more ambiguous ideas toward new technosexual practices.

For the independent teledildonics productions, the spatial practices of circulating programming codes in the open source platforms bind diverse participants together in a site that disrupts the static meanings of consumerism. By infusing programming codes with consumer products such as Xbox, the “prosumers” and the networked websites of teledildonics serve as a form of agency that potentially empowers the “public” programmers and consumers of gadgets from around the world; they create and engage a larger sphere of queer technosexuality counter to the static consumer spaces they ordinarily inhabit. While gadgets like Xbox, programming codes and sex toy have their own domain of functionality and meaning, and the consumers of such represent different social and cultural statuses, open source teledildonics serve as a counter-publicness in order to hybridize such functions, meanings and statuses. The participants of the independent teledildonics sex are thus bound together and create the capacity to disrupt the static mass consumer culture that is marketed by the producer-led market economy.

Despite the different forms of power that are formulated in fucking-machines and teledildonics productions and representations, the machine/human interactions in sex robots further decentralize the normative and binary oppositional notions of human/machines. Sex robots do not only signify surplus meanings of the fragmented symbolic human bodies, the producers and consumers of sex robots create new languages and modes of practice by interacting with a non-biological object for love and sexual pleasures. Besides the queer social groups that are interested in making and interacting with sex robots, the “counter-discourses” formulated by sex robots in the documentaries, conferences and bestselling books that I have analyzed also circulate the oppositional interpretations of human and machines identities. The alternative “public” of those that counteract with sex robots creates a discursive space that expands definitions of sexual and technological behaviors. While the practices of robotic sex counteract the normative definitions of love and sex, the “surplus” imaginations of a hybrid mechanic and genetic bodies seen in *I.K.U.* further queer the generic delineations of pornography, SF and art. The representations of *I.K.U.* make the hybrid bodies and frictionless sex visible on screens in cinemas and galleries. The new languages of technosexuality that is created by Shulea Cheang elaborate an alternative style of visual representation and political behavior in sexuality and technology.

Out of this analysis of the transformation of visual “public-ness” of the sex machines that offer visible counter practices and a power that is able to potentially destabilize the binary oppositional notions of gender and body normatively, my question becomes: what is this “world-making project” leading us to a future world of

technosexuality? Given that the material reality of sex machines is still full of gender-/capitalist-based power struggles between those who are privileged by the physical and ideological embodiments of financial and gender capitals and those marginalized by specific gender-/financial constraints, what critical perspectives shall we hold on to for this political techno-queer project in order to neutralize the power struggles between the privileged and the unprivileged?

Politics of gender and economy

In chapter 4, I analyzed the politics of sex machines by studying how fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are being regulated by the “public”, and how women are materially mobilized to perform in the porn industry within the context of the phallogentric economy. I also further re-articulate the sex machines producers’ imaginative model which represents fantasies of “maleness” that are highly grounded in static gender differentiations. While producers subjectively transgress their modes of fantasy by using excessive symbolisms, they are also contradicted by the normative imaginative trends within themselves. In chapter 5, I bring the empirical conflicts and symbolic power dynamics of sex machine production under the theory of political economy and highlight the contradictions of queer pedagogies between the material and immaterial. While the “private lives” of sub-cultural groups transforms old meanings, and/or creates new meanings within the public sphere, I also conclude that the non-normative practices that are studied in this project cannot be considered without the political dimension of the economy, where producers and consumers, and the “private” and “public” of sex machine usages, are unavoidably influenced by the

system of capitalist logic. The constant transgression and self-regulations of sex machine productions that are informed by the sensibilities of capitalism prompts me to re-think gender and queer politics within the Marxist-feminist perspective. In the productions of sex machines pornography, bodies of women are still undeniably mediated by numerous material conditions. While *Kink.com* produces pornography that does without women's bodies having intercourse with a biological man, the cultural "maleness" is still present within the production process. In teledildonics porn, though Summer is rendered as a "mediated voyeurism" offered by networking technologies, her material body is undeniably also rendered by the phallogentric economy, where her job of performance is highly reliant on satisfying the male fantasy. What is behind the symbolic women is always human flesh. The mobilizations of a workforce based on socially static gender associations of women, still validate the struggles between the privileged and unprivileged. Karl Marx says, "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power". The "practice" of sex machines, rather than transgressing the normative, is itself contradicted by the "practical" reality of gender-/capitalist-based power struggles within the "society". The subject-oriented social positions of body, gender and class in the realm of sex machines leads me re-consider the limitations of queer theory. In relation to the politics of "surplus" that alternately displace and embrace the material conditions of gender, body, sexuality and technology, what kinds of insights can we conclude? Under a conclusion that highlights the limitations and contradictions of queer and Marxist-feminist's theories, how can we develop a perspective that can possibly make a better, or more inclusive "social imagination"

concerning our future world of technosexual? How can one link the non-normative technosexual practices of sex machines and bodies of theories to construct a better world?

Our time and the future of technosexual - a queered “lifeworld” in the multiple spatialities

Based on the analysis of the aesthetics and politics of sex machines in this project, I want to make a conclusion by rendering the technosexual culture of sex machines as a “lifeworld”, a convergence of different spatialities in between the material and immaterial. These ideas include:

1. The material spatiality of the “public” – This spatiality is the constructed essential meanings of body and gender; individuals in this spatial condition practice normative sex and technology. For example, the “normal” implies regulations of sex machines opposing to the non-normative practices, women in the porn industry are mobilized within the phallogentric economy, etc
2. The immaterial spatiality of the “private” – This spatiality is where the sub-cultural groups re-imagine the material conditions of gender, body, sexuality and technology, and transform those conditions into molecularized spaces of the imaginary (both in their subjective minds and the non-space of the internet network). For example, the fetishism and phantasms of sex machines productions, and the spatial excess created by the representations and interactions of sex machines.
3. The material spatiality of the “private” – This spatiality is where the sub-

cultural groups counteract their imaginations with their normative practices and associations. For examples, producers design and use the sex machines based on male desire, and they self-regulate their productions in order to fit into the capitalist reality (which informs class and gender struggles).

4. The immaterial spatiality of the “public” – This spatiality is where non-normative practices can potentially transform the essential conditions of the public. If everyone embraces the idea of the queer epistemology without reiterating differences, the “social” is potentially able to redefine gender, body, sexuality and technology into an ideal world. For example, the non-normative practices of sex machines may disseminate the non-dualistic notions in counter-balance to the essential “publicness”.

In my proposal, the convergence of the four spatialities in the above constitutes the complex technosexual landscape of sex machines. The immaterial spatialities have the capacities for living bodies to re-configure multiple technosexual body and gender identities by formulating both symbolic phantasm and political power that may possibly counteract essentialist spatial conditions. By looking into both the materiality and immateriality of sex machines, the immaterial spatialities can range from the new “suburb” that the sex machine producers have created, to the abstract “non-space” that is no longer bounded by linear time and space. Rather than standing alone as an independent spatiality, the immaterial simultaneously exist within the material conditions of that the participants inhabit. Based on the queer aesthetics that marks the “presentability” and “imaginability” of the living body somewhere between the “real” existence and non-existence, the participant’s new spatial practices formulate a

binding together of material reality and imagination in a new world of technosexuality. The queered convergence of different spatialities constantly questions and challenges the static conditions and positions of gender, body and normative meanings of technology and sexuality, and it has the potential to formulate a political project to re-articulate the material conditions of “real” life. This blended “world” of four spatialities of life well illustrates the contradictions and fluidity of the technosexual landscape of our time.

The “public” and “counter-public” not only simultaneously co-exist in the same cultural landscape, but additionally, one person can uphold both the logics of “normative” and “non-normative” in the same “life” at different and contradictory spatialities (the material reality VS the imagination within our contemporary technosexual landscape). While different spatialities are compressed into one within the private and public, power dynamics and politics no longer happen in a linear sense; it is formulated discursively in multiple directions. Yet it is naïve to believe that the participants of fucking-machines, teledildonics and sex robots are completely empowered away from the gender-/capitalist-based power structures in our everyday cultural life. This partial empowerment is what the “public” still needs to continuously negotiate in relation to different social groups, cultural spatialities and even within the multiple “life” of one self.

In conclusion, I want to name the non-normative technosexual practices as a culture of “hyper-queer”. The productions and representations of sex machines denotes a cultural obsession with the “molecularized”; they push the normative notions of gender, body, and technosexuality onto a new frontier. The “surplus” of spatialities

creates new forces and powers to render the original suburban-created porn, and cyberspace into new fluidic spaces where body and gender are digitized and fantasized. While surplus spatialities encourage us to re-imagine essential sexual/social notions and conditions, they simultaneously inform a new politics that contradicts the materiality of capitalism. It leads to a political landscape that is not only literal, but also a convergence of multiple spatial powers. This project validates the non-essential aesthetics of body, gender and technosexuality that is culturally mediated by sex machines without losing sight of the political materiality of human flesh; it connects the immaterial spatialities with the material conditions of reality. “Hyper-queer” can help us illustrate the compression and contradictions of different spatialities of “queered” non-normative technosexual practices, it marks the historical, textual and political situatedness of our ever changing technosexual landscape. In the foreseeable future, bodies will still be far from fatal, therefore what is behind the symbolic extensions of bodies is our material flesh. Without withdrawing the Marxist-feminist’s positions or fully embracing the fatal theories of body, gender and technosexual, the future developments of technosexual practices will be a new movement to counter different modes of hegemony. It will potentially change the way we (different communities and identities) live with what is coherent and what is contradictory. The emergence of the contemporary sex machine allows us to enact a new kind of negotiation situated between the material reality and new modes of imagination. The merging of technology and sexuality will always be an unfinished queer project in which we strive for a better positioning of our mutual identities.

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