

STELARC - ON THE FUTURE OF THE NET PHANTOM BODIES, FRACTAL FLESH AND COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES

1. ALTERNATE POSSIBILITIES

Just as the Internet provides extensive and interactive ways of displaying, linking and retrieving information and images, it may now allow new ways of uploading, interfacing and accessing the body itself. Browsing the Net, generating Phantoms and constructing Virtual communities in Cyberspace is one contestable future. And instead of seeing the Net/Web as a means of fulfilling outmoded metaphysical desires of disembodiment, it offers on the contrary, powerful and unexpected individual and collective strategies for amplifying body functions and extruding body awareness. The Internet does not hasten the disappearance of the body and the dissolution of the self- rather it generates new collective couplings and a telematic scaling of subjectivity.

2. ZONE OF ERASURE

Consider a body remapped and reconfigured- not in genetic memory, but rather in electronic circuitry. A body needing to function not with the affirmation of its historical and cultural recall, but in a zone of erasure- a body no longer merely an individual but a body that needs to act beyond its human metabolism, circadian rhythms and the local space it occupies. A body that generates its awareness not through its mobility, but through its connectivity. Human awareness is altered by AI and AL and feedback loops filtering intense and extra-sensory experiences of teleoperated robots that navigate unimaginable micro realms and alien landscapes.

3. NEITHER MEMORY NOR DESIRE

Bodies must now perform in techno-terrains and data-fields where intention and action collapse into accelerated responses. Bodies acting without expectation, producing movements without memory. Can a body act without emotion? Imagine a body that is directly wired into the Net- a body that stirs and is startled by the whispers and the promptings of other bodies in other places. A body that is informed by Internet interface agents- Web crawlers, software spiders, knowbots and phantoms. A body whose awareness is augmented by surrogate robots in situations and spaces where no body could go. These machines, with arrays of manipulators and hybrid locomotion would exponentially multiply the operational possibilities, scaling up the subtlety, speed and complexity of human action.

4. INTIMATE INTERFACES

As nano-tech and neuronal chips provide more internalized interfaces, connections to the Internet, software agents and surrogate robots become increasingly intimate and invisible. This would result in seamless connections and a symbiosis of spatially and electronically distributed systems- fashioning powerful performance and search engines. The body needs more adequate inputs and outputs for subtle and seamless connections. What becomes important is not the body's identity, but its connectivity- not its mobility and location, but

its interface. Intimacy through interface, intimacy without proximity. The shedding of skin.

5. SPLIT PHYSIOLOGY (VOLTAGE-IN / VOLTAGE-OUT)

What of a body whose pathology is not having a split personality, but whose advantage is possessing a split physiology (from psycho-social to cyber-system). A body that can collaborate and perform tasks remotely initiated and locally completed- at the same time in the one physiology. Or a body whose left side is involuntary and whose right side intuitively improvises. Consider voltage-in to induce the automatic actions (from its Net- connected computer muscle-stimulation system) and voltage-out to respond to remote promptings and to actuate peripheral devices. The body becomes a site for more inputs and outputs. The body needs to be rewired to cope with its split physiology.

6. FRACTAL FLESH- AUTHENTICITY IN MULTIPLICITY

Imagine a body that can extrude awareness and action into other bodies distributed over the Internet- displacing intentions into someone elsewhere. Clusters of remote agents could collaborate in the performance of a single body in a particular place or a lone agent could initiate motions in a multiplicity of bodies in many places. These Net-connected bodies would experience collectivity in their own individual way. A possessed and possessing body- neither all-yours nor all-theirs. With neither an awareness all-here nor all-there. Bodies hosting remote agents, calculating with collective minds and speaking with many tongues. Consider a body then whose authenticity is grounded not essentially in its individuality but rather in the multiplicity of remote agents that it hosts and performs and prompts. Constructing a more complex and operational entity.

7. PING BODY / TELEMATIC DREAMING

Consider a body directly wired to the Web. A body that moves not because of the promptings of other bodies in other places, but that quivers and oscillates to the ebb and flow of the Internet activity. A body that manifests the statistical and collective data flow. A body whose musculature is actuated not merely by its internal nervous system but by the external stimulation of globally connected computer networks. Its subjectivity would be telematically enhanced to perceive and perform beyond its biology and the human-scale within which it now functions. Its Virtual Web vision augmenting its optical flicker- switching, superimposing and splitting your perception.

8. OPERATIONAL INTERNET- INTELLIGENT SYSTEM

Imagine the Internet structured so that it would continuously scan, select and switch- automatically interfacing clusters of on-line bodies (the size and expertise of the clusters selected for the operational or cerebral task to be attempted). Can a body function and cope with the multiplicity of agents- a fluid and flowing awareness that dims and intensifies as agents are connected and disconnected. Awareness and agency would be shifted and shared in an electronic space of distributed intelligence. The Internet becomes not merely a means of information transmission but a mode of transduction, affecting physical action between bodies. Electronic space becomes a realm of action rather than information. Are humans in the business of browsing and chatting to affirm their social, emotional and biological status quo? Or should we be plotting other trajectories with varying velocities in alternate spaces and structures? Perhaps being human is not about retaining our humanity...