

The Excessive Machine-Body / Body-Machine

Lecture Notes - Eric Kluitenberg

The concept of the cyborg (*Cybernetic Organism*), the fusion of organism and machine, is intimately linked to the idea that the body itself is some kind of (biochemical) machine. This idea has a long history in science and philosophy, which dates back at least to the mid seventeenth century. It is also a controversial idea since it has fundamental repercussions for moral thought, theology and the self conception of man. It became a popular idea in modern literature, art, and film and it still remains so for contemporary popular culture. In this text I want to explore some of the pertinent moral questions this conception has raised.

Origins of the Machine Body

The modern idea to consider the human body as a machine originates from the 17th century Cartesian philosophy and corresponds exactly with the picture of the universe as a clockwork. Nature in the Cartesian philosophy was thought of as a gigantic machinery. The immaterial soul floated above the rest of nature as a non-physical principle. Animals were considered to be mere machines, or more precisely automata, that is machines that moved by themselves.



That animals can indeed move by themselves and exhibit certain reactions to their environment is in no way contrary to the notion that they do not possess a soul or will of their own. For, as Descartes explains: *"This will not appear in any way strange to those who, knowing how many different automata or moving machines the industry of man can devise, using only a very few pieces, by comparison with the great multitude of bones, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins and all other parts which are in the body of every animal, will consider this body as a machine..."*¹

For Descartes the advances in human and animal physiology of his time posed a problem. Extraordinary similarities were found between the human body and that of many animals. It appeared that physiology alone could not explain the real distinction between beasts and men, nor the special human faculties of language and reason that he cherished so much. Descartes therefore concluded *"that our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body"*.

Lamettrie

Precisely this conclusion would be rejected altogether some hundred years later by another radical and influential mechanistic thinker, the French philosopher Julien Offray de Lamettrie. Lamettrie was a trained physician and army-doctor. Philosophically he was the first and most extreme representative of French Materialism. During his lifetime he also became a deeply despised polemic, as well as a brilliant rhetorician, a famous conversationalist and exuberant bon-vivant. His portrait for the Royal Society of Sciences in Berlin depicts him loosely dressed with a big mocking grin on his face. It filled his contemporaries with disdain, for anyone who had himself portrayed in such a fashion could not be else then a thoroughly vile person.



¹Descartes, Discourse on Method, p. 73.

One momentous event seems to have been crucial in shaping Lamettrie's convictions. During a campaign in the fall of 1744 he suffered from a severe attack of fever. The fever not only unsettled his entire body, but equally his mind. Lamettrie concluded from this experience that body and soul had to be one. Later he would write in his notorious *L'homme machine* of 1748 that **"...since all the faculties of the soul depend to such a degree on the proper organization of the brain and of the whole body, that apparently they are but this organization itself, the soul is clearly an enlightened machine."**²

Lamettrie denied the existence of an autonomous immaterial soul. The human body, alike the bodies of animals, was a composition of mechanical systems in which movement was the central propelling force. The soul was not to be considered the cause of these movements but rather its product. Lamettrie derived this conclusion amongst others from the fact that physiological experiments had shown that parts cut loose from the body could be brought to move separately, for instance through electrical stimulation.

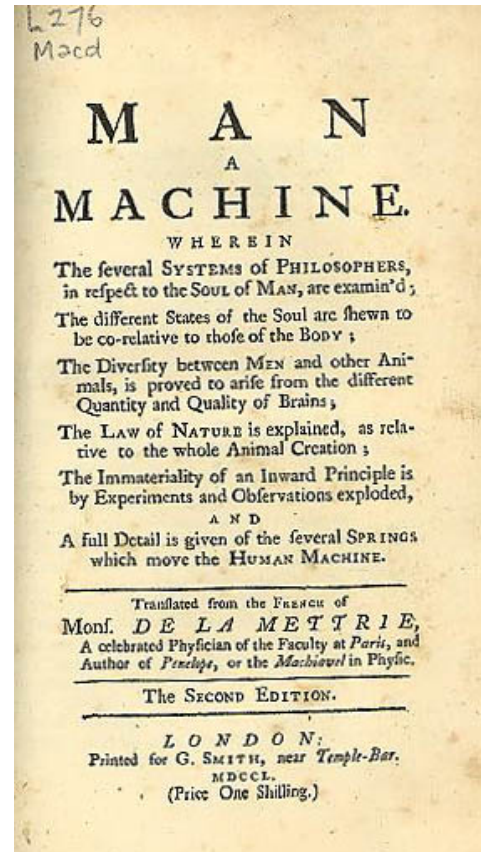
*"The soul is therefore but an empty word, of which no one has any idea, and which an enlightened man should use only to signify the part in us that thinks. Given the least principle of motion, animated bodies will have all that is necessary for moving, feeling, thinking, repenting, or in a word for conducting themselves in the physical realm, and in the moral realm which depends upon it."*³

Extending the Cartesian tradition where animals were thought of as machines, man, for all its physical similarities to other animals and the dependence of the soul on the functioning of the well-ordered body, should also be considered a machine. The specific faculties of man were but the mere result of the specific organization of the human machine.

And the metaphor again is the clock: *"Is more needed (..) to prove that man is but an animal, or a collection of springs which wind each other up, without being able to tell at what point in this human circle nature has begun? If these springs differ among themselves, these differences consist only in their position and strength, and never in their nature; wherefore the soul is but a principle of motion or a material and sensible part of the brain, which can be regarded, without fear of error, as the main-spring of the whole machine, having a visible influence on all the parts."*⁴

*"Let us then conclude boldly that man is a machine, and that in the whole universe there is but a single substance differently modified."*⁵

Thus the mechanist image of man is tied in by Lamettrie with a materialist view of nature, in which the physical material is considered to be the exclusive substance of reality.



²J.O. de Lamettrie, *Man a Machine*, Open Court Publishers, La Salle, 1912, p. 128

³Lamettrie, p. 128

⁴Lamettrie, p. 135

⁵Lamettrie, p.148

Lamettrie's book, published in exile in Leiden, provoked an outrage, necessitating him to flee even the relatively liberal Netherlands. He soon found refuge, however, at the court of Frederic the Great in Berlin. The outrage was understandable. To legitimate their claims to power, the clerical orders, Christian dogmatism and morality, and the feudal power-structures all relied on the principal separation of body and soul, as the ultimate proof for the existence of god. But it was precisely this principal separation of body and soul that was fatally undermined by the ideas of Lamettrie. The Cartesian formula of the immaterial soul that resided inside the machine of the human body was a fairly arbitrary and unsustainable construction. Lamettrie's flamboyant and polemic character lead him to tear it to shreds mercilessly.

Lamettrie's Moral Philosophy

Lamettrie's contemplations didn't stop at demonstrating the dependence of the mind on the physical organisation of the body. In another polemic text entitled *Anti-Sénèque* (1750-1751), later published under the title *Discours sur le bonheur*, he developed a deliberately provocative and shocking set of ideas on moral questions. The text is first of all an anti-stoical tract and a complete rejection of Christian dogmatism. In the text he advocates, in opposition to the Stoics' moral teachings, "the enjoyment of pleasures and the rejection of all attempts to suppress man's physical instincts".⁶

Man, according to Lamettrie, cannot do else than to seek her/his fulfilment in happiness. The sources of happiness are primarily physical and in large part determined by the 'organisation' of the body.

Ann Tomson: "*La Mettrie vehemently rejects the teaching of Seneca and the Christian Moralists, that only the virtuous man is happy and free from remorse, while the wicked and those who indulge in the pleasures of the flesh suffer pangs of conscience and ultimate misery; he points to the simple evidence that one can be a happy sinner. Similarly he shows, also in contradiction with the Stoics' teachings, that one can perfectly well be ignorant, or stupid, and happy. He gives a large number of examples gained from his medical experience, to show that happiness is organic and 'mechanical'.*"

Happiness is thought of by Lamettrie as a condition of emotional well-being independent of any doctrine or religion, achieved simply by exploiting freely what is given by human nature. **Nature's purpose is to make man happy, whereas an all too willing subjection to culture can make man deeply anguished.** Morality attempts to regulate the instincts, but at the same time brings about all sorts of 'tensions in the machine' that obstruct man in attaining an automatic state of happiness (as with animals).

What disturbs this natural state of happiness is remorse. Tomson: "...remorse is purely the result of prejudices inculcated in childhood, and arbitrary, religious standards of good and evil which force the individual to suppress his natural instincts and to condemn physical pleasure as inferior and even wicked. It is education in particular which conditions the individual to develop certain habitual forms of behaviour, as a kind of second nature, which are most often in conflict with man's natural tendencies. Man's original nature usually reasserts itself over education, but this second nature is often strong enough to result in remorse and much psychological suffering.

(...) Remorse is therefore the main object of La Mettrie's attack. For him it is both the chief means used by religious and political authorities to repress the individual, and a cause of much unnecessary psychological suffering. Repression by means of the inculcation of arbitrary standards and rules, combined with the fear of punishment if these rules are

⁶For an elaborate discussion see: Ann Tomson, *Materialism and Society in the Mid Eighteenth Century - La Mettrie's discours préliminaire*, Librairie Droz, Genève / Paris, 1981 - Chapter III & VIII.

contravened, is the best way to keep in check man's natural instincts to seek his own happiness, generally in anti-social ways. Without these restraints there would be no authority, and society would crumble. For man is by nature anti-social and amoral. Indeed, in the state of nature there is no such thing as morality; for man is naturally determined to commit all sorts of 'crimes' and 'sins' which he sees as necessary for his own well-being. There are therefore no abstract ideal standards of good or evil, of just or unjust: such concepts are instituted by societies to ensure their survival, but have no meaning outside society".

Interestingly, La Mettrie's attempt to construct a radical liberalisation of the individual, is combined with a highly conservative political ideology. He sees only a certain elite as fit to be elevated to his own standards of conduct. The mass of society would only be inclined to 'crime' and self-indulgence which would cause society to collapse. He therefore considers education and the church, purely functionalised as political instruments, to be highly effective means to control the mass of citizens, and thus integrate society.

Lamettrie's moral theory was equally shocking to the enlightened thinkers of his time as it was to the Christian institutions. Their moral maxim; "**Do not do upon others, what you would not have them do upon you**", displayed their belief in the natural inclination of man and animal to do good, which was solely disturbed by society. They conceived of this principle as an inborn natural law in every animal and human being.

Although his ideas and the man were scorned at the time, La Mettrie's ideas created an extremely important conceptual foundation for modern medicine and (medical) psychiatry. Simultaneously, as evident from a contemporary point of view, they revealed the inherent paradoxes and inconsistencies of the desire to liberate modern man from repression and social inequality, conjured up by the fundamentally anti-social constitution of man's nature.

A Sadean Twist....

Lamettrie soon found an ambiguously famous admirer (ironically of noble blood) in no one less than the late 18th century novelist and philosopher Donatien Alphonse François de Sade (1740 - 1814). His infamous novels *Justine* and *Juliette* were no less than an expose of the way in which de Sade had understood Lamettrie's ideas, and in particular his book *L'homme machine*, which he greatly admired.

For de Sade, the moral disposition of man as an inborn natural law is both too simplistic and unsustainable. In nature there is no place for weary hopes of salvation, as the continuously raped and scorned innocent Justine finds out. In the end only death awaits her, as if by divine intervention (she is struck by lightning). Her sister Juliette commits herself to an alliance with crime and the 'true corruption of nature', and she triumphs victoriously over her struggling sister Justine⁷. While we can recognise in Justine the deceived ideology of the enlightened thinkers of man's natural inclination to do 'good', in Juliette an idealised self-portrait of de Sade, as a woman, as he had wished to be in real life may be recognised.

Juliette has been taught early in her life that there is only one basic principle of conduct: "**Do upon others what you would not have them do upon you.**"

One of de Sade's characters explains that crime and virtue are mere processes of nature, terms such as vice and virtue, crime and morality are meaningless in a mechanistic universe. In de Sade's universe, there is no place for the rational benevolence that the Enlightenment philosophers had hoped to replace Christian morality with. As he explains in his *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, in nature rape and murder are natural acts for which there is no natural penalty. The conclusion is therefore inescapable that if nature would now be the 'moral imperator'

⁷For a discussion see: Donald Thomas, *The Marquis de Sade*, Allison & Busby, London, 1992.

instead of some social or religious code of conduct, it is absurd to continue consider murder and rape as crimes, a position in fact amazingly close to Nietzsche's reversion of all moral values (especially the Christian ones).

Towards the Machine Woman

The materialist theories of Lamettrie and followers were eagerly embraced by the liberally oriented bourgeoisie, who gained tremendous power with the rise of industrialisation. The materialist philosophy served perfectly to legitimate a liberal ideology that would enhance the technologisation of human life on an unprecedented scale, via industrialisation in the 18th and 19th century. Andreas Huyssen has rightfully noticed that *"this extreme materialist view, with its denial of emotion and subjectivity served politically to attack the legitimacy claims of feudal clericalism and the absolutist state. It was hoped that once the metaphysical instances, which church and state resorted to as devices of legitimizing their power, were revealed as fraud, they would become obsolete. At the same time, however, and despite their revolutionary implications such materialist theories ultimately lead to the notion of a blindly functioning world machine, a gigantic automaton, the origins and meaning of which were beyond human understanding. Consciousness and subjectivity were degraded to mere functions of a global mechanism. The determination of social life by metaphysical legitimations of power was replaced by the determination through laws of nature. The age of modern technology and its legitimacy apparatuses had begun."*⁸

Huyssen observes a striking change in art and literature at the turn of the century in the perception of the automaton, which he thinks reflects this feeling of technological domination.

Huyssen: "It is no coincidence that in the same age literally hundreds of mechanics attempted to construct human automata who could walk and dance, draw and sing, play the flute or the piano, and whose performances became a major attraction in the courts and cities of 18th century Europe. Androids and robots such as Vaucanson's flutist or Jacquet-Droz's organ player captured the imagination of the times and seemed to embody the realization of an age-old human dream. With the subsequent systematic introduction of laboring machines, which propelled the industrial revolution, the culture of androids declined. But it is precisely at that time, at the turn of the 18th to the 19th century, that literature appropriates the subject matter, transforming it significantly. The android is no longer seen as a testimony to the genius of mechanical invention; it rather becomes a nightmare, a threat to human life. (...) It is not hard to see that this literary phenomenon reflects the increasing technologization of human nature and the human body which had reached a new stage in the early 19th century."⁹



While the constructors of the androids of the 18th century did not seem to have a specific preference for either of the two sexes, the literature of the 19th century on the contrary did display a special preference for the machine-woman.

⁸Andreas Huyssen, *The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang's Metropolis*, in: *After the Great Divide*, London, Macmillan Press, 1986, pp. 65-81.

⁹Huyssen, *The Vamp and the Machine*, p. 70

Huysen: "There are grounds to suspect that we are facing here a complex process of projection and displacement. The fears and perceptual anxieties emanating from ever more powerful machines are recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality, reflecting, in the Freudian account, the male's castration anxiety. This projection was relatively easy to make; although woman had traditionally been seen as standing in a closer relationship to nature than man, nature itself, since the 18th century had come to be interpreted as a gigantic machine. Woman, nature, machine had become a mesh of significations which all had one thing in common: otherness; by their very existence they raised fears and threatened male authority and control."

Interestingly Huysen has made these comments as part of an analysis of Fritz Lang's classic movie *Metropolis* (1926), and the specific role of the woman robot in the film.

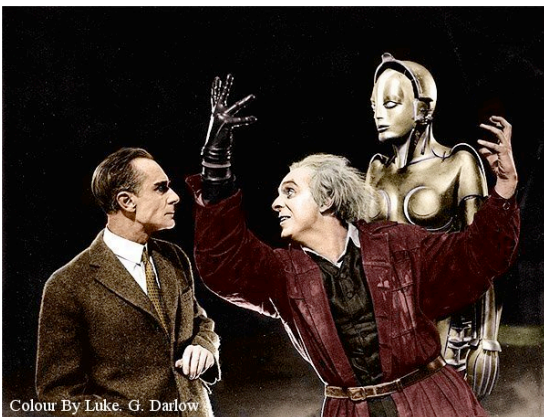
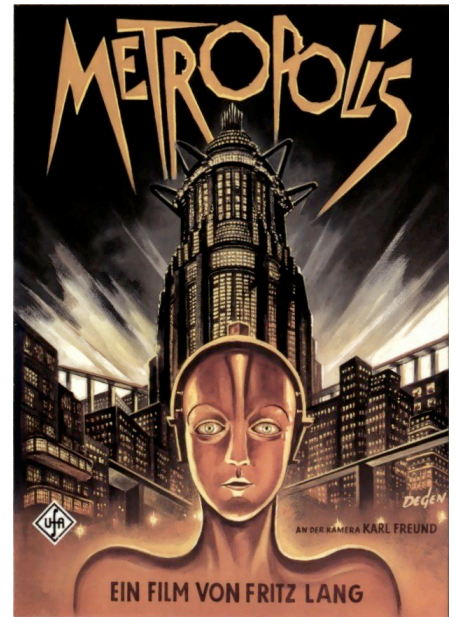
The Ultimate Male Fantasy: The Daughter Born Without Mother

The 'otherness' of woman is represented in the film by two traditional images of femininity - the virgin and the vamp. Both images are defined in sexual terms. Both are imaginary male (patriarchal) constructions. Huysen describes these constructions as the *male gaze*. They are deeply ingrained in the social and psychological conventions, which have determined the image of women in society.

Huysen: First there is the challenge that the real Maria poses to Frederson, the master of Metropolis. She prophesies the reign of the heart, i.e. of affection, emotion, and nurturing.

(...) The result of Frederson's fear of femininity, of emotion and nurturing, is the male fantasy of the machine-woman who, in the film, embodies two age old patriarchal images of women which, again, are hooked up with two homologous views of technology. In the machine-woman, technology and woman appear as creations and/or cult objects of the male imagination. The myth of the dualistic nature of woman as either asexual virgin-mother or prostitute-vamp is projected onto technology, which appears as either neutral and obedient or as inherently threatening and out-of-control. On the one hand there is the image of the docile, sexually passive woman, the woman who is subservient to man's needs and who reflects the image which the master projects of her. The perfect embodiment of this stereo-type in the film is the machine-woman from the earlier sequences when she obeys her master's wishes and follows his commands. Technology seems completely under male control and functions as intended as an extension of man's desires. But even here the control is tenuous. We understand that Rotwang (the robot's constructor) has lost a hand constructing his machine.(...)

Later Rotwang transforms the obedient asexual robot into Maria's living double, and Frederson sends her down to the workers as an *agent provocateur*. She now appears as the prostitute-vamp, the harbinger of chaos, embodying that threatening female sexuality which was absent (or under control) in the robot. Of course, the potent sexuality of the vamp is as much a male fantasy as the a-sexuality of virgin-mother. (..)



There is a significant ambiguity here. Although the vamp acts as an agent of Frederson's manipulation of the workers, she also calls forth libidinal forces which end

up threatening Frederson's rule and the whole social fabric of Metropolis and which therefore have to be purged before order and control can be reestablished. This view of the Vamp's sexuality posing a threat to male rule and control, which is inscribed in the film, corresponds precisely to the notion of technology running out-of-control and unleashing its destructive potential on humanity. After all technological specifically male female sexuality the vamp of the film is a artefact upon which a view of destructive has been projected."



The threat an female sexuality unchallenged male according to fundamental perception of this The sexually active fatal mixture of fear Both feelings

uncontrolled active poses for the desire for authority, originates Huyssen from a ambiguity in the male active female sexuality. female is perceived with a and absolute fascination. reinforce each other and

trigger an auto catalytic process which ends in transgression; a destruction of accepted norms and patterns of behaviour in favour of potentially destructive instincts. The same mixture of fear and fascination is similarly felt towards an unbridled expansion of the technological system. As a result of this specific mixture of fear and fascination, a violent reaction is always close at hand and poses a particularly strong threat to the social and patriarchal order.

Huyssen refers to a beautiful comment of the art collector and critic Eduard Fuchs on the painting *Allégorie sur la machine dévoreuse des hommes* by Jean Veber. What Fuchs said here in 1906, he could have said equally well and even more rightfully so, according to Huyssen, about Metropolis.

Fuchs: "Woman is the symbol of that terrifying, secret power of the machine which rolls over everything that comes under its wheels, smashes that which gets caught in its cranks, shafts and belts, and destroys those who attempt to halt the turning of its wheels. And, vice versa, the machine, which coldly, cruelly and relentlessly sacrifices hecatombs of men as if they were nothing, is the symbol of the man-strangling Minotaur-like nature of woman"

A perfect summary of male mystifications of female sexuality as technology-out-of-control!, Huyssen adds.

Bachelor Machines & Cyborgs

→ Francis Picabia: *Fille née sans mère*

→ Duchamp: *Machine célibataire*

→ The Bride: A Love Machine Running on Love-Gasoline

→ Barbarella: Duran Duran's machine Erotique

→ The Cyborg - Cybernetic Organism -

→ Robocop: Though on the streets / Having a bad day

→ The Borg / Birth of Locutus / Slashing the Borg → **Resistance is Fertile!**

→ Tetsuo & Crash: Technology as Sexuality out of Control.....

PICABIA

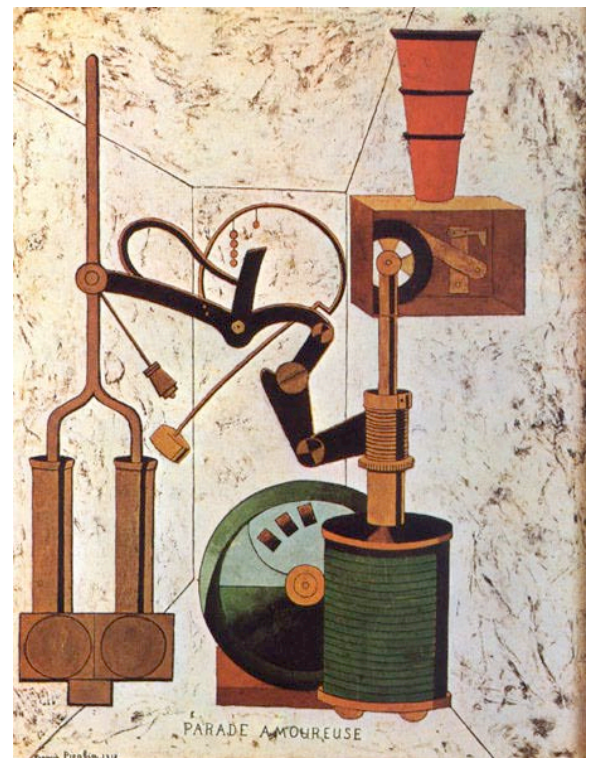
In the period 1915 - 1922, under the pressures of the first world war one of the most remarkable co-operations between two artists of the 20th century was formed; Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia. During this period Picabia produced his now famous, but often mocked and controversial series of machine-paintings. A phase of his career that the American art-critic William Camfield came to call his mechano-morphic period, and which extended to 1928 when Duchamp and Picabia were working and living in Paris.

Picabia commented in the New York Tribune of October 24, 1915: *"I have been profoundly impressed by the vast mechanical development in America. The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of life. It is really a part of human life... perhaps the very soul. In seeking forms through which to interpret ideas or by which to expose human characteristics I have come at length upon the form which appears most brilliantly plastic and fraught with symbolism. I have enlisted the machinery of the modern world, and introduced it into my studio.*

Of course I have only begun to work out this newest stage of evolution. I don't know what possibilities may be in store. I mean simply to work on until I attain the pinnacle of mechanical symbolism."

Pontus-Hulten adds: *"For Picabia, machines represented a new unsentimental, 'mechanical' kind of life that he tried to lead, free from any conventional restrictions or responsibilities. The idea that machines have no morals was one that he found highly attractive. He uses his love of the machine as a platform for a pyrotechnic display of his attitude toward life - skeptical, ironical, hedonistic."*¹⁰

In Picabia work of this period the woman constructed by man (the daughter born without mother) depicted as a machine, emerged as a central theme. One of his earliest machine-paintings was *Voilà la femme*, from 1915. Camfield writes about this painting: *"Voilà la femme (..) is a fanciful invention which (..) introduces Picabia's use of color with associative and symbolic properties. 'Woman' is presented as an upright apparatus resembling a mechanical drawing of some sort of pump or compressor. She is attractively tinted in red, green, blue, brown and black, an set afloat in brown fog which enhances her formidable presence as an icon-machine or machine-goddess. Although her nature and function are not explicit, sexual analogies are suggested by the center shaft, the two receptacles, and a color scheme which reserves the hot reds for what is literally portrayed at the bottom center of the machine as the 'door' to 'woman'."*



In her impressive monographic study on Picabia, Maria Lluïsa Borràs concludes: *"Picabia's machines are not stupid toys or aesthetic designs; they are machines that respond to a law: This mental law, established by Picabia as from 1915, comprises two equal and equivalent ensembles: a sexual one (with its corresponding male and female elements) and another, mechanical one in which the two elements are opposed. In general the sexual act is not consummated, so that we would hardly know whether to classify these as machines of pleasure or of torture. In Picabia's work the metaphor of the machine is an erotic smile, which excludes procreation and states man's absolute right to pleasure. Frustration constitutes the*

¹⁰K.G. Pontus-Hulten, *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age*, (catalogue), New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1969.

determinant structure of his machines, which are just as 'spinsterly' as Duchamp's, even though he may call them by such names as *Daughter born without mother*, the machine born out of man's brain and not destined for procreation."

THE BACHELOR MACHINES

The literary theorist Michel Carrouges has identified this machine as a *Bachelor Machine* (Machine Célibataire), a concept that he then relates to a number of important literary sources. "The Bachelor Machine is a fantastic image, that transforms love into a mechanism of death", Carrouges writes.

Carrouges: "Contrary to real machines and even contrary to imaginary but rational and useful machines (like the Nautilus of Jules Verne or science-fiction rockets) the bachelor machines appears to be impossible, useless, incomprehensible, insane. At times she is not discernible at all, in those cases where she is one with the surrounding landscape. The Bachelor Machine can therefore consist of only one peculiar, strange and unknown machine, or of an apparently useless arrangement of parts. It can unify a lightning rod, a clock, a bicycle, a train, a dynamo, and even a cat or any part of an object or its remains. It is of no importance. The Bachelor Machine is not connected with any purpose, like a machine that is subject to the physical laws of mechanics or the social demands of usefulness. The Bachelor Machine is a simulacrum, one encounters in a dream, in the theatre, in cinema or at the practice sites of Cosmonauts."¹¹

The Bachelor machine belongs to the world of the subjective and it obeys its rules. The Bachelor Machine consists of a double system of complementary images. There are two domains; the sexual and the mechanical. The sexual domain is divided up into a male principle and a female principle. Complementary to this the mechanical domain is divided into a male mechanical element and a female mechanical element. The original structure originates from the sexual domain. The separation of the sexes is the foundation for the image and the meanings.

Carrouges: "For a better understanding we will turn to the simplest proto-type of a Bachelor Machine. It can be found in the famous exclamation of Lautréamont: "He is beautiful... like a accidental encounter of a sewing-machine and an umbrella on a dissection-table" (*Maldoror*, Chant VI) In this seemingly peculiar situation the umbrella can be recognised as the male symbol, and the sewing-machine as the female. The dissection-table then remains as third. It appears to be conclusive, but in another sense. The dissection-table is neither a mechanical element, nor a sexual. It assumes the specific function that results from the double-system of Sex and Mechanics. Where the bed, love used to be, signifying unity and life, now enters the dissection-table in the specific function of the Bachelor Machine: as harbinger of solitude and death."¹²

THE BRIDE STRIPPED BARE.....

The art critic William Camfield writes about the Large Glass (Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*): "It is not necessary to probe deeply into the complex, enigmatic content of the *Large Glass*, but it should be noted that it is an intricate philosophical statement about life expressed through the general theme of sexual love - a view which is not only supported by Duchamp's notes but dependent upon them, since the forms of the *Large Glass* are not explicit in themselves. By correlating Duchamp's notes and the Big Glass it becomes evident that he has stripped the sexual act of all love, intimacy and delight by making its procedure preposterous and by frustrating its consummation.

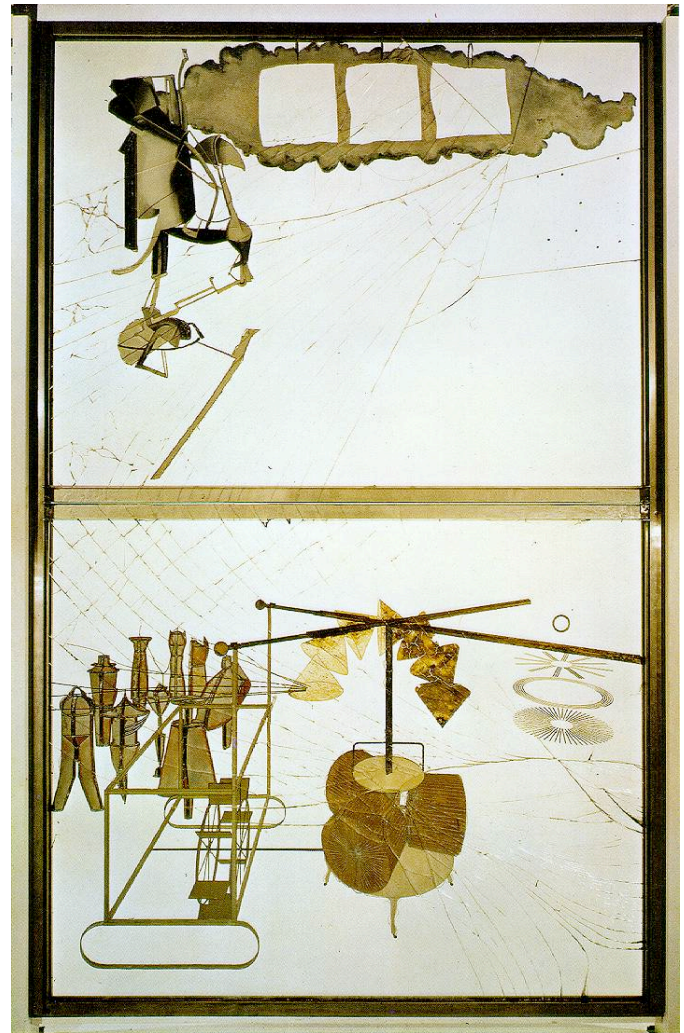
¹¹Harald Szeemann & Jean Clair, *Junggesellenmaschinen / Les machines Célibataires*, Venezia, Alfieri Edizioni, 1975, p. 21.

¹²Szeemann / Clair, p.22.

And this devaluation of love, devastating as it is, is only a piercing means to the larger comment that man is not a creature distinguished by powers of reason and love. Outwardly, man as represented by the malic molds, is determined by (and often judged by) his uniform or mold; inwardly he is activated by biological drives, which function with the relentless rhythm of a machine, and taunted from above by woman, an erotic motor whose parts and their relationships are incommensurable. Duchamp perceived in machines not the beauty and logic that thrilled Léger, not the speed and power glorified by the Futurists; he dealt with animated mechanisms that operated without will, intelligence, or passion - mechanisms fraught with visual, functional, and psychological analogies to his view of life as a folly-ridden affair wanting meaningful communication on earth and knowledge of any final goal."¹³

In fact the whole of the *Large Glass* may be seen as one gigantic machine, but it is not a regular machine, it is even more than simply imaginary, above all it is an insane machine. The iconographical scheme here is that of ascension. The *Large Glass* is clearly separated in two domains: The upper is the Bride's Domain and the lower is the Bachelor's Domain. They are fully separated, and belong to different worlds altogether, yet they relate to each other.

The Bachelor apparatuses below are motivated, or driven, by the desire to transcend to the Bride's domain, yet they can never reach her because the world they inhabit is three-dimensional world, whereas the bride inhabits an impenetrable four-dimensional world. The bride that is visible in the work is "a projection of the fourth dimension in the form of a three-dimensional geometrical section, which in turn has been reduced to the two dimensions of the glass."¹⁴ Thus the bachelor apparatuses, stripped from their outer uniforms (the *Malic Molds*) are driven endlessly to "grind their chocolate" by the unfulfilled desire for the consummation of the sexual act by the bride they can never reach. They are *Perpetuum Masturbeas*. The cacao they produce is the love gasoline that through an intricate mechanism transcends from one dimension to another to fuel the bride-machine. She is a *love machine running on love gasoline* as Duchamp once noted. Thus bachelors and bride belong to each other and depend on each other. They can, however, never reach unity and therefore the entire love machinery is frustrated to become Carrouges 'harbinger of solitude and death'.



¹³William A. Camfield, *The Machinist Style of Francis Picabia*, in: *Art Bulletin XLVIII*, New York, 1966, pp. 309 - 322.

¹⁴Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, p.155

the characters beyond themselves, a transgression in which technology and sexuality run completely out of control and inevitably lead to destruction, insanity and death.

The transformation of the organic body into a metallic machinery of destruction is reminiscent of the adoration of war by the Futurist's spokesman Marinetti when he ecstatically exclaimed: "*War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metallisation of the human body*". William Gibson, author of *Neuromancer*, has commented on the film: "*Tetsuo is primal 21st century cinema, a pure manga sensibility transferred to the screen with gorgeously deranged energy.*"

