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# **Bodies in Transition. The Unbearable Lightness of the Traditionless Self**

## **1. Are bodies born or made?**

The history of 20th-century discourses about the body is marked by a resolute search for the definitions and “determinable” features of the body. This project has always gone hand in hand with efforts to conceptualize the genealogy and evolution of (post)modern identity. This development has also meant the further fragmentation of the already dichotomic Western view of the human subject. If we take an overview of the major theories of the body, we find at least as many “bodies” as theoretical approaches and epistemologies. According to the most widespread classification, there are three bodies at three separate but overlapping conceptual and analytic levels.<sup>(2)</sup> The individual body is conceptualized in phenomenological theories of the body while the social body means the symbolic, representational uses which are found most commonly in structuralist theories. The third and most widely known in contemporary post-structuralist theory is the body politic which is formulated through the regulatory practices and controls of power. The fact that we can find a growing number of “bodies” in theories of the social sciences reflects both the significance and indeterminacy of the “body-problem” in contemporary society and also uncertainties in relation to the questions of identity. Naturally, these “bodies” also signify the major problems of (the body of) society and its institutions of power which label individuals through their bodies as deviant or normal, impure or clean, needful of control or disciplined.

Besides the evergreen controversies of biological essentialism and social constructivism, late 20th-century discourses about the body have brought together the problems of bodily control, commodity culture, self-expression and narcissism. In post-structuralist theory the human body can no longer be regarded as a given reality but as a product of knowledge. In this sense “bodies ... are not born: they are made”.<sup>(3)</sup> Even if it should seem a causeless naïveté or a useless pompousness, we still have to end the sentence with a question-mark and ask: “Are bodies born or made?”. We have to do this until we can decide whether the right answer (if an answer can be given to this question at all) or the re-formulation (elimination) of the question would help us to think about the body and its relation to subjectivity differently. It may also help to avoid the further fragmentation of the body and promote our understanding of it as a basis and frame of the subject’s identity.

## **2. Surfaces and boundaries of the body-the body as surface and boundary**

This is a question not only of the diversity of theories and the boundless fragmentation of the body, but the need for a new, “holistic” model also seems to be formulated in different criticisms of contemporary theories. One of the most common arguments against analyses of the discursive or textual construction of bodies-i.e. how the body is seen and portrayed-states that they tell little about the body’s implication in human agency, of how people experience the “lived body”.<sup>(4)</sup> Another frequent critique is that the body

should not be regarded simply as an object of sociological investigation, but as an inherently sociological and historical phenomenon. Further, there are authors who emphasize that we have to find the place of psychical representations in conceptualizing the body not in opposition to the social dimension but as necessarily interactive with it, to create a living subjectivity, a corporeality of the body.(5) In this regard the body itself has to be understood as a “threshold” or a “borderline” concept that not only reflects both the diversity and indeterminacy of its components but also involves the notion of totality. The Janus-faced concept of the border inherently refers to both fragmentation and non-differentiation. Does this “totality” of the body suggest the (re?)unification of the above-mentioned fragmented aspects? Does it mean the desire for the demolition of boundaries between different concepts and theories? Are we fascinated by the indeterminacy of the body or, on the contrary, do we feel embarrassed-even scared-by it?

Today it is often argued that there is a certain nostalgia about the body, a homesickness, a “not feeling at home” in the body. This is reflected particularly in those contemporary theories of postmodernity which put forward the vision of the “death” of the body and its replacement by technology. The repeated appearance of the themes of the fracture, instability and fluidity of modern life-and modern identity-in different scientific, popular and lay discourses may reflect a certain nostalgia for the spontaneity and emotional passions often associated with the non-disciplined, “different” bodies-grotesque bodies of the Other. The wish to “reconsecrate” the profane could explain the renewed interest in nature, magic, cults and fate, etc.(6) It could also be a possible explanation for the invention of traditions and (new) national or ethnic identities.

Mary Douglas has described the body as a metaphor of social cohesion, differentiation and conflict (7). A widespread concern with the maintenance and purity of bodily boundaries is most present at times of social crisis, when dominant bodies and established identities are threatened. The body has become an intensified object of concern in the last few decades. This has happened parallel with the processes of globalization which threatens individual and national boundaries. It is also widely discussed that the cleanliness of the body has become a central issue in contemporary discourses about health and illness. As bodily hygiene and also health and fitness have gradually become a moral issue, the search for a cleaner, harder, more defined body promoted the strengthening of distinctions, the construction of frontiers between different social groups. All these points could be connected to more general questions of globalization and identity (gender, ethnicity, etc.). Responses to the pressure of present-day globalization processes may be very different, but the most important is the creation of new artificial borders. One significant form of this is metaracism which tries to legitimate itself by building up a border around the cultural Other.(8) The creation and disqualification of the cultural Other as an abject from society’s body is endemic to any creation of group identity, but in excessive forms it may lead to ethnic, gender, and other forms of discrimination. All of these raise the question of where the borders of the body start and end, what kind of imagoes and-unconscious-fantasies form (and transform) representations about our own and the Other’s body.

### **3. Bodies in transition-representations of the body during political transition**

1989-90 was the period of “transition from dictatorship to democracy” in the Central European communist countries. As part of this historical process, free election was held in Hungary in the spring of 1990-this event led to the formation of the first non-communist government for more than forty years. Before the election an extremely heated and exciting campaign had taken place-the parties, most of them newly created, not simply the revitalization of the old, “historical” ones-competed for the allegiance of the voters. Naturally, the central issue of the campaign was the evaluation of the past and the delineation of the future course. In this respect most of the parties (including the Socialist Party, the ex-communists) agreed, at least on the surface, that a historical period was closing forever and something new had to begin; thus, the elections marked a radical caesura between past and future. Although the transition took place peacefully, constitutionally, through negotiating a consensus between the various groups of the political elite of the country, which was to guarantee a relatively smooth transformation of the political, social and economic system, a genuine revolution had taken place in the symbolic sphere. Old taboos collapsed suddenly; repressed, frozen or marginalized identities came to life again; new discourses were set in motion. Many people started to rewrite their life history and to redefine their identity; “overnight converts” discovered their lifelong democratic attitudes. “There is a big swarm on the road to

Damascus”–the Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy wrote in 1989.

The electoral campaign in 1990 was very rich in visual elements as well-TV programs, political advertisements, leaflets, posters, graffiti were spread all over the country. The visual propaganda-beyond its immediate political messages-also had a hidden, symbolic structure which appealed not only to the political and ideological attitudes of citizens but to their fantasy structures as well. While the surface of these messages aimed at gaining votes by trying to convince citizens about the rationality and the possible benefits of the realization of a given party’s program, that is, at a change of attitude, the hidden message was aimed at identity change, an overall change or redefinition of individual as well as collective identities. In this visual propaganda the representation of the body had a particularly important role.

The role of body images in political propaganda has become a widely discussed topic since Wilhelm Reich’s pioneering work *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933)(9), and, most notably, since Klaus Theweleit’s two-volume book (first published in German in 1978).(10) While most of these analyses are preoccupied with totalitarian propaganda, in our case it is the dissolution of a totalitarian regime which creates body representations as part of political propaganda that is of interest. (11)

To illustrate this, we have chosen two political posters from the 1990 Hungarian election campaign. Both posters had been celebrated-in Hungary as well as abroad-as the most representative visual expressions of the period of political transition. The first one, which was one of the elections posters of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF, the party which finally won the elections) shows the thick nape of a man, a Russian officer as ugly, disgusting-and the text of the poster contains two Russian words, printed in Cyrillic (though well known for most Hungarians, even for those who didn’t understand the language): TOVARISHCHI, KONIEC, “Comrades, this is the end!”. (See fig. 1).

**ТОВАРИЩИ**

*КОНЕЦ!*

**Magyar Demokrata Fórum**

The surface message of the poster is self-evident: the Soviet military occupation and the Soviet domination of the country have to get end. It was a direct allusion to one of the slogans of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 “Ruskies go home!”. Subsequently, the question of Soviet domination was a taboo for more than three decades, but in 1990, the Soviet withdrawal had suddenly become a fact of the very near future rather than an (unrealistic) claim.(12)

Understandably, the Russians at that time were not particularly popular in Hungary. The inventiveness of the poster was such that it was able to manipulate this unpopularity and concentrate it around the body of a Russian man, a soldier, as the representative of the Russians in general. The soldier-figure has no face, no individuality; it is the Soldier who is, as Klaus Theweleit shows in the second volume of his aforementioned book, the “phallic weapon”.(13)

It is instructive to take a glance at the picture reproduced also in Theweleit’s book (p. 83): The Hollywood actor Erich von Stroheim in the role of an officer whose primary sexual characteristic is: German (see fig. 2.).



# TESSÉK VÁLASZTANI



This picture may have been the source of inspiration for the 1990 Hungarian political poster; however, the roles and the stages have changed: the main protagonist of the drama is now “the Russian”. He is shown in the moment of leaving, before crossing the border. He is still at the peak of his power, his heavy, grotesque neck betrays his bodily strength. However, the Russian word “koniec”, “the end”, also familiar from the last scene of Russian films, suggests that the body might be on the way to becoming a corpse: a shot in the back of the neck (once a popular method of execution in Soviet and Nazi prisons and camps) might transform the body of the Russian soldier into an abject. It becomes an abject-not the object of an heroic cult over the body of the fallen soldier. According to Julia Kristeva,

the abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-ject, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. What is abject is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object-that of being opposed to I. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses.(14)

The function of transforming the Russian body into an abject is not simply to get rid of the occupying forces-it is about the radical exclusion of the former authority from the collective identity, a radical redefinition of this identity which excludes “foreigners”. This is not the place to discuss the further implications of this poster, namely, its nationalist overtones which became evident subsequently in the ideology of the party in whose name the poster was originally issued. Nevertheless, the Russian figure represents here not only the “invaders” but the filthy, malignant, threatening Other in general. The spectacle puts the finishing touch to the removal of the remains of the Other. As Roland Barthes put it:

The petit bourgeois is a man unable to imagine the Other. If he comes to face with him, he blinds himself, ignores and denies him, or else transforms him into himself. [...] Sometimes-rarely-the Other is revealed as irreducible: not because of a sudden scruple, but because common sense rebels: a [sic] man does not have a white skin, another drinks pear juice, not Pernod. How can one assimilate the Negro, the Russian? There is here a figure for emergencies: exoticism. The Other becomes a pure object, a spectacle, a clown.(15)

This poster, however does not tell us what happens after one gets rid of the “comrades”. What happens after they crossing the border? What is the power which is going to replace the old one-the power of the “comrades”? What happens after the father the Big (Br)other has been killed?

#### **4. The promise of unlimited jouissance with no disciplinary Gaze**

The next poster we have selected shows exactly what happens after killing the father. (see picture 3.)



This was the poster of the Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), a party founded in 1988 by radical opponents of the Communist regime: young intellectuals, university students, mostly in their twenties, who at that time represented an alternative culture, with a strong emphasis on human rights, liberal values,



modernization etc. This party-though time to time enjoying high popularity-remained in parliamentary opposition until 1998, when FIDESZ-in alliance with right wing parties-won the elections and its leader Viktor Orbán formed a center-right government, with an agenda and political philosophy very different from the party's public image in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In the upper part of the poster we see a well-known picture from the seventies: Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet party leader, and Erich Honecker, that of East German greeting each other. The two old men kiss each other on the mouth-which was a gesture unusual even among Communist leaders who generally used to obey to the old Russian custom of men's ritual embracing and kissing (on the cheeks). In fact, Erich Honecker was known as one of the most servile Communist leaders-but the point here is not simply the political content of the encounter of these two men. The point is the grotesque character of their kissing in the eyes of the contemporary East European viewers who suffered several decades under these leaders' hated gerontocracy-in contrast to the picture on the lower part of the poster which shows a pair of young lovers kissing. The slogan says: MAKE A CHOICE! Thus, the FIDESZ poster shows what is going to happen when "they" leave-for ever. It is then "we" who occupy their place-WE, the young, healthy, normal, heterosexual people, instead of the old, disgusting, perverse, homosexual figures. They are the "objects" now, and making a choice means an absolute break between the past and the future.

Why does the picture of the two old political leaders kissing call forth the strong feeling of rejection in fantasy? Why do they become the object of disgust and abjection? It is not only because of the-rather direct-message that these leaders symbolize the hateful and oppressive ancien régime. This is (the fantasy-image of) the Leader here who has become comic and impotent since he has lost all of his strength and power. Formerly, the Leader was strong even in his death; Lenin's embalmed corpse dominated not only Red Square in Moscow but the fantasy of Soviet people with the slogan "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live!" (and, on the other hand, filthy and often obscene jokes about the mummified body and its-imagined-sexual parts). The doubling of the Leader in the picture may also mean symbolically that he is turning towards himself-kissing himself-in a perverted narcissistic manner. He has lost all of his threatening characteristics since he does not look at us, does not want to communicate even in his usual one-sided, ordering, prohibiting manner. Similarly to the Russian officer on the poster described above, we cannot see the eyes of the Leader which means that there is no disciplinary gaze monitoring us, the totalitarian leader has been losing his authority. The "Big (Br)other" is not watching you any more. His only potential is directed inward, turning to the Self in a deadly manner-has no capacity to take part in development, is unable to contribute to the sustaining of the Self (the body-self of society) in a creative manner. He can no longer hold the function of being the Ego-ideal for the group, or for the whole society.

The other possible source of rejection revealed by the picture is the multiplication of objects which, as Freud says, can be regarded as sources of the feeling of the uncanny.(16) The multiplying of objects is uncanny since-in Lacanian terms-the Real is lost through doubling, the immobilization, the freezing of time.(17) The possibility of change, the chance of (a new) life is clearly marked by the contradictions of the two pictures in the poster, which is a perfect image of the borderline nature of transition. The second picture shows a young man and a woman in an idyllic scene, kissing each other in a state of Paradise. The slogan "Make a choice"-like another FIDESZ slogan from the 1990 election campaign: "Listen to your heart, vote for Young Democrats!" invites the viewer to follow his/her own desire, promises the possibility of unlimited jouissance without the disciplinary gaze of the Leader (Father-God). The slogan of the radical student movement of the sixties, "Make love, not war" arrived in the (ex)Soviet Bloc, replacing Communist asceticism and totalitarian "fear of the feminine" (Theweleit) with pure jouissance.

This strong emotional message of the poster echoes our ultimate desire of being part of the primal scene, remaining there forever, being man and woman, father and mother, having the chance of being anything and anyone we like. This strongest wish is related to our desire for unrestricted freedom, for non-differentiation, for indeterminacy. This is a regressive, infantile desire of remaining at the border, being the border, not accepting the disciplinary law of the Father. Although this message is very attractive, it contains substantial dangers as well.

## **5. The double-bind nature of the border**

Identification with the border, “remaining stuck in” the Oedipal dilemma threatens the subject with the end-result of missing identity. As an example we can mention hysteria which is an often used metaphor for the fragmentation of (fin-de-siècle) bodies and identities. The hysteric is someone who is looking for the unlimited possibility of choosing identity but is unable to make any decision. We may suppose that there must be some kind of anxieties (besides desire) which contribute to the ambivalence about “making a choice”. The hysteric is not able to escape from the Oedipal circle, because s/he is afraid of the suffocating, death-bearing qualities of the “good” mother (and her womb) but at the same time s/he does not want to leave its safety and warmth, and simultaneously s/he is attracted to the world of the father, but scared of the power and dominance it symbolizes. So s/he wants to be neither mother nor father, but desires to be both (or neither).(18). S/he wants to remain there, at the source of beginning, the place of origin. S/he does not want to be either female or male, but wants to be both (or neither) of them, wants to remain indeterminate (19). S/he is struggling for non-differentiation, for a “borderline” body and-as Juliet Mitchell has put forward-a traditionless Self. S/he wants to be the Origin, s/he wants to be the Secret, the ultimate Truth. We know from classical and contemporary cases of hysteria that the hysteric pays the price of her/his never-fulfilled, impossible desire. S/he pays with loss of libido, with mental and physical symptoms-the fragmentation of her/his body and also of her/his Self.(20)

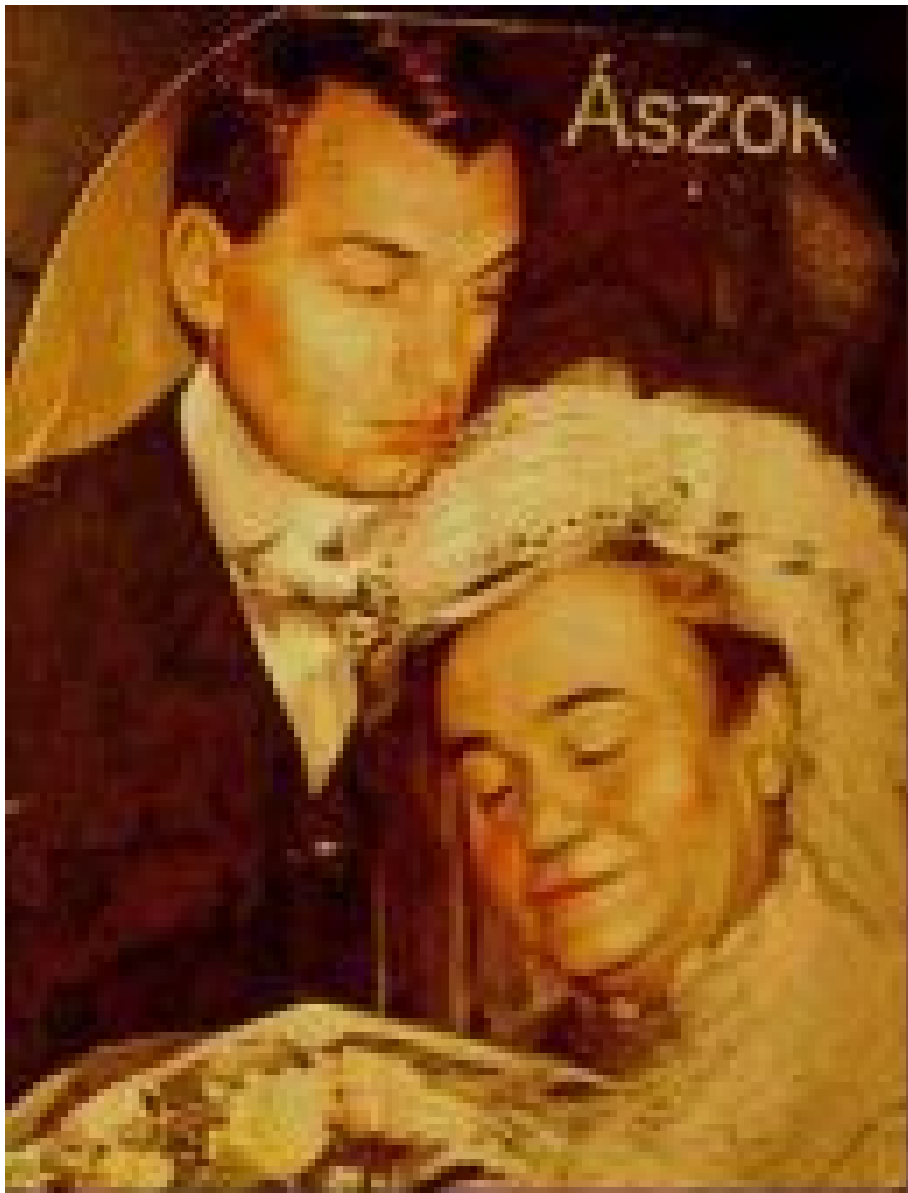
The impossibility of identifying with the border has very similar consequences as to occupying it. It will result in the death of desire and also the death of the body. In a Lacanian sense, the total confrontation with jouissance is always a fatal act. Non-differentiation and arbitrary, autocratic determination are two sides of the same coin.

A good example of this can be seen in Peter Greenaway’s movie *The Pillow Book*. As a child the protagonist film Nagiko, was greeted by her father every birthday with the words: “When God created mankind, he made the first figure of clay, painted on it the eyes, the mouth and genitals. He was worried that people would forget their names, so he also painted names, one name for each person”. While listening to this declaration we see the father painting four letters on the girl’s forehead, cheeks and lips. Nagiko’s life is determined by this childhood experience and this is why in her adult life she is able to make love only with men who are willing to write on her body. She also writes on the body of her elderly lover, takes photographs of the inscribed surface, and these photos will comprise her first book. She tries to sell the book to a rich, sophisticated, influential, decadent and homosexual publisher, who sends her away. Nagiko seduces the publisher’s young lover, Jérôme, writes her subsequent works on the young man’s body and follows the bombarding of the publisher with her new books. But the publisher does not want the photos of the “body-books”, he wants to possess the whole body, specifically its borders both in the symbolic and literal senses of the word. One of the most harrowing scenes of the movie is when bored garbage-men empty the inner parts of Jérôme’s body in front of the publisher’s building. (In a Foucauldian sense, the body has to perish after the inscription of the message.) Then we watch the publisher spread the book made of the young man’s skin on his own naked body: he is trying to “read” it with his own skin. (After occupying the border, he wants to identify with it.) In the end of this triangular story (a Holy Trinity, in which the third vertex is occupied by the woman) (21) Nagiko gets back the book, the text, the boundary from the economically-intellectually-erotically powerful publisher. (Though the publisher is not immutable since his decadence symbolizes susceptibility of decadent power and his homosexuality deviance.) After the two men’s death it is Nagiko who occupies the textualized surface of the body with its all meanings. She possesses control over the permeability of the body. But the story does not end here. Nagiko does not remain entrapped by the Oedipal circle. The happy ending of the movie is a satisfactory and “fair” solution offered by Greenaway. On the first birthday of her daughter-whose father is Jérôme-Nagiko buries the “leather-bound” book of (Jérôme’s) body under a blossoming bonsai-tree. She buries the boundary, closes it away from consciousness, knowledge, rationality and power. The border (of the body) is in a safe place now, there is no one who can occupy or manipulate it. The one-year-old child can live, life can go on, but only under these conditions.

## **6. An expulsion from Paradise?**

Contrary to the great expectations, the Central and East European transition naturally did not create an earthly paradise. It would lead us too far to make a balance of the “gains” and “losses” of transition-it is enough to say here that the young couple portrayed on the 1990 poster had to face various economic and social hardships. Nevertheless, the newly emerged “consumer society” uses them as the “ideal couple” at whom the commercials, the advertisements, all the propaganda of the consumer benefits of the capitalist society are directed. They are no longer the loving, innocent couple who enjoy instead of obeying external rules, their young, healthy, fresh outlook and image is “sold” to the public with the message: make a choice, since you have to be like them, you have to consume our goods, and you can remain young and healthy forever...

The dissatisfaction at the loss of illusions after the transition-the loss of the possibility of remaining young, innocent, and free; losing the possibility of never-ending *jouissance*-are all portrayed in a caricature, a grotesque photographic montage from 1998 (see fig. 4.).



This caricature appeared on the front page of a Hungarian magazine HVG (Economics Weekly) after the May 1998 parliamentary elections, when the Young Democrats formed a coalition government with a right-wing, populist, agrarian-based party (FKGP, the Smallholders' Party). In contrast to the anonymous young couple in the 1990 poster, both characters, the young "bridegroom" and the old "bride" have a concrete name now, their identity is determined. The "bridegroom" is the new Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the leader of the Young Democrats, the "bride" is József Torgyán, Minister of Agriculture and Regional Development, the leader of the Smallholder's Party. Their unusual, though not unexpected political marriage<sup>22</sup> was widely criticized for a variety of different reasons, especially because of Torgyán's infamous anti-liberal, demagogic manifestations.

The fact that both characters are wearing a disguise in the picture invites the viewer to fantasize, to find a desired object behind the veil. The satisfaction that we find in the new, young, handsome Leader in the costume of the bridegroom is disturbed by our feelings about the other character, the bride. The problem is not so much that this bride is too old for the bridegroom—could even be his mother, which reveals incest-fantasies—and not even that this bride has an undetermined or androgynous gender identity (and in that way this person can also be the bridegroom's father). Neither is the real problem that we do not find the typical object of desire (of a typical young man) behind the veil, nor the fact that we recognize the "bride" all too well. This recognition again does not serve with the well-known satisfactory feeling of success after "finding out the secret" or "solving the riddle". (As in psychoanalytic theories of drag, the satisfaction of the "revealing shot" proving that it is after all a man under the veil is generally supposed to be reassuring to [male] viewers. On this see Michelle Meagher's article in this volume). On the contrary, we may have a very similar feeling of the uncanny to the one we had in response to the picture of the two old political leaders kissing. Behind the veil we find another leader, who is not the counterpart, not the duplicate of the new young one, but an Other who does not want to unveil his/her real identity. The sad face of the bridegroom on the cartoon suggests that the forced marriage, with his (and our?) desire of the forced occupation of the border, the desire of being both mother and father or possessing them makes *jouissance* impossible. What makes the whole thing disturbing is that we cannot be sure, but only suspect that it is prohibited by this Other, who—again—in fantasy makes the Leader comic and impotent.

At the level of the Ego-ideal (for which a group or society is represented in the figure of the leader) the subject needs the illusion of free choice, unlimited possibilities. In order to gain support—to solicit votes at an election—all social systems must offer this illusion to their members. As has been demonstrated earlier, these desires can never be totally fulfilled, otherwise the whole system would disintegrate, which would mean a fatal confrontation with *jouissance*, the end of desire.<sup>(23)</sup> The Ego-ideal derives from the symbolic, the dead, castrated father, the Name of the Father, as Lacan says. He has to represent the public Law in contrast to the hidden, non-written Law connected to the conscience-function of the Superego. This latter comes from the primordial father, the *père jouissance*. This part of the Law—which guarantees the integration of society—bars the subject from the unlimited availability of *jouissance*—always has to remain invisible, otherwise it makes the subject protest.<sup>(24)</sup> The invasion of this primordial Superego-figure into consciousness would mean an autocratic, totalitarian governing of the group (and on the individual level, the Self).

This caricature suggests that the (re-)sexualization-revitalization-of the fantasy-image of the Leader after the transition is different from that expected in 1990. It is not only the impossibility of the total abolition of the past—the impossibility of creating a "traditionless Self"—that causes the frustration reflected in the caricature. It may be much more closely related to the feeling of the uncanny evoked by the obscure figure of the Leader/s. The ambivalences connected to the desired state of indeterminacy are now replaced by the anxieties about new boundaries.

Thus the symbolic representations and fantasy-images of the political transition reflect the general contemporary problems of the body and identity that we referred to at the beginning of the paper. These examples may also contribute to our understanding of why the desired fantasy-images of neutrality, indeterminacy, corporeality are all shadowed by the unbearable lightness of the "traditionless" Self. The "good news" is that contemporary social science still offers a large menu of "bodies" and "identities". Make a choice!

## Notes:

- (1) The authors express their greatest gratitude to Professor Naomi Segal (University of Reading, UK) for her suggestions and language editing of this text.
- (2) Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margareth M. Lock, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology", *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 1987, pp. 6-41.
- (3) Donna Haraway, "The biopolitics of post-modern bodies: determinations of self in immune system discourse", *Differences*, 1989, 1(1), pp. 3-44.
- (4) Brian S. Turner, *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology*. (London: Routledge, 1992).
- (5) Elizabeth Grosz: *Volatile Bodies. Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- (6) Philip A. Mellor and Chris Shilling, *Re-forming the Body. Religion, Community and Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).
- (7) Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).
- (8) See e.g. Ali Rattansani and Sallie Westwood, eds., *Racism, Modernity and Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).
- (9) New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970.
- (10) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Vol. 1.1987, vol. 2. 1989.
- (11) Or, more exactly, a post-totalitarian. See Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt 1973), especially its last chapter on the Hungarian Revolution.
- (12) The last Russian soldier left Hungary in June 1991.
- (13) *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2. p. 51. The topic of the "phallic weapon" is also elaborated by the Yugoslav film director Duan Makavejev in his film "W. R., the mystery of the organism" (1970) in the scene where the making of a plaster-cast of an erected penis is interrupted with the appearances of Mao and Stalin.
- (14) Julia Kristeva, "Approaching abjection" in Sue Vice, ed., *Psychoanalytic Criticism. A reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press. 1996), p. 156.
- (15) Roland Barthes, *Myth Today*, in Susan Sontag, ed., *Barthes: Selected Writings* (New York: Fontana 1982), pp.141-142.
- (16) Sigmund Freud, "The uncanny", in SE, pp. 217-52.
- (17) Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana, 1973).
- (18) On the hysteric's ambivalence toward sexual identity Juliet Mitchell writes: "The hysteric... will not acknowledge the Law of the castration complex, will oscillate between the two desired positions of the Oedipus complex—being mother or being father—and will be unable unconsciously to acknowledge that the polymorphous delights of infantile sexuality must be forgotten and repressed if past, present and future-traditions-are to be established in the mind. Not properly internalising the representative of the law (the "superego") in fantasy, she will be an incestuous Oedipus before his discovery of his origins, a self without a history." Juliet Mitchell, "From King Lear to Anna O. and Beyond: Some Speculative Theses on Hysteria and the Traditionless Self", *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 5:2, 1992, p. 93.
- (19) This intention is reflected in the bodily forms of the anorectic: her body does not show either female or male characteristics—even her menstruation cycle stops in most cases. Her body looks "ageless": it shows neither the form of a child nor an adult—remains at the border, in the state of adolescence.
- (20) See Marta Csabai, "Her Body Her/Self? On the Mysteries of Hysteria and Anorexia Nervosa. A feminine disease" in Miklós Hadas, Katalin Kovács, Emese Lafferton, eds., *Replika, Hungarian Social Science Quarterly* (special issue). 1998. 99-111.
- (21) See Julia Kristeva: "Women's Time" in Toril Moi, ed., *A Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 187-213.
- (22) See also the possible source of this poster, an American postcard cartooning Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan as a crossdresser couple, Reagan in a woman's and his wife in a man's dress. (fig. 5.)



(23) This problem is marvellously elaborated by Dusan Makevejev in his above-mentioned film in which he shows how Wilhelm Reich's program of sexual liberation had been perverted and turned into its opposite: how Reichian "vegetotherapy" became a violent domination and exploitation of the body and the parallels between this kind of politics of body and the coercive practices of totalitarian regimes and total institutions (like mental hospitals).

(24) Slavoj Žižek, "The inherent transgression or the obscenity of power", lecture at the Central European University, Budapest, June 1996. Published in Hungarian: *Thalassa* (8), 1997, 1, pp. 116-130. See also: Slavoj Žižek, "The Big Other does not exist", *Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, 5, Spring-Fall 1997.