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"HOCUS-POCUSING" THE BODY. TECHNOLOGY AND FEMININITY IN PRINT ADS

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Introduction

The starting point of the present paper is the observation made by a number of French scholars that we are now living in hypermodern times, i.e. we are living in an era which is mainly characterized by excess at all possible levels (cf. Aubert 2004, Tissier-Desbordes 2004, Lipovetski 2005). These scholars argue that the postmodern world, with its back turned on modernity, has been replaced by a world characterized by the increased intensification of modernity's most cherished beliefs, i.e. consumption, science, and individualism, a world whose underlying principles are fast-forward and ever-more. In Lipovetsky's words: "We had a limited modernity, now is time of consummate modernity" (2005: 30).

Starting from Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes's postulation that "hypermodernism can be found in marketing communications in the same way it can be found in other aspects of the modern world" (2005: 240), we argue that advertising, as the core mechanism of (hyper)consumerism, has adopted a particular discourse on the feminine body, one that stresses two of the most prominent hypermodern signs: individuals' constant and excessive care for their body, on the one hand, and their pronounced faith in science and technology, on the other hand. Given that the former becomes more than obvious considering that most print ads in glossy magazines promote products directly related to a woman's body (e.g. cosmetic products), the present paper is an attempt to grasp the implications of the latter and to show that in the discourse of advertising, femininity, in general, and bodily management, in particular, are always linked to science and technology. Based on a corpus of one hundred print advertisements for cosmetic products taken from British women's magazines (mainly *Cosmopolitan*, but also *Glamour* and *Woman&Home*), we shall discuss the concept of a highly technological feminine body that ads seem to cultivate by constant appeals to the field of science and technology in the promotion of commodities. Moreover, we shall argue that print ads also promote a sense of instancy in the technological transformation of the female body, which accounts for the use of the verb "to hocus-pocus" in the title of the paper.

1. Science and Technology in the Flesh

It goes without saying that nowadays, all cosmetic products involve significant technological processing - a fact everyone knows without it having to be stated overtly. We have noticed that many adverts in glossy magazines celebrate the technology behind the advertised products, by making more or less explicit references to it as something not only beneficial, but also necessary for a woman's body. We remark that the noun *technology* - the most explicit reference to technology - does not occur so frequently in ads for cosmetic products. There are only seven ads in our corpus that use it, as follows: "new *technology*

wraps each lash", "modern *technology*", "new light *technology* provides […] expert care for fine hair", "Innovative *technology*", "Be amazed by our exclusive *technology*", "new innovative moisturizer with the benefits of Bioderm *technology*", "ColourStay patented *technology*", and "breakthrough *technology* maintains your unbeatable dandruff protection".

As it can be noticed, the noun "technology" is always accompanied by a premodifier, be it an adjective (e.g. new, modern, innovative, exclusive), a past participle (e.g. patented) or a noun (e.g. breakthrough, light, Bioderm). We note that all the premodifiers above are used to express positive value judgments about technology. Some of them, such as *new*, *modern*, *innovative*, *exclusive*, *patented* and *breakthrough*, do this in a more explicit manner, as these words are always associated with something good in our culture, while others, such as *light* and *Bioderm*, do this implicitly. These two particular nouns indicate the kind of technology used in the manufacturing process, but their positive connotations can be easily inferred, first, due to the genre within which they are used (i.e. one expects that ads always "speak" highly of a commodity), and second, due to the textual environment (i.e. they are surrounded by words that have a more explicit positive meaning, e.g. *new* and *benefits*).

On the other hand, "formula" is undoubtedly the noun which copywriters use most often to refer to and celebrate science and technology in cosmetic product ads, with the observation that "complex" is also favoured as a variant. Both nouns are connoted positively, as they are highly evocative of the technological process of carefully selecting and bringing ingredients together, in the right proportion. Besides its scientific ring, "formula" also acquires additional positive connotations because of its other nonscientific meaning (i.e. a means of achieving something desirable, as in "a formula for happiness"). Just as in the case of "technology", the two nouns are usually premodified by various parts of speech. Some examples are: "caring *formula*", "gentle, soap-free *formula*", "oil-free *formula*", "clinically proven *formula*", "ultra-resistant *formula*", "brightening *formula*", "energyboost *complex*", and "exclusive 'baby-skin' *complex*".

Another way of emphasizing the benefits of technology to the body, this time less explicitly, lies in the use of certain past participles and adjectives, such as "developed", "advanced", "designed", "created", "formulated", and "innovative", as for example: "*designed* to protect", "*developed* to reinforce your skin", "*innovative* moisturizer", "specially *formulated* to be as pure as possible", "truly *advanced* foundation". All these words are connoted positively, as they suggest something resulted from scientific study and experimentation, as well as some sort of technological sophistication. As illustrated in the last two examples, intensifying adverbs (e.g. "truly", "specially") are occasionally used to further enhance their meaning. Similarly, the word "laboratory" (usually in the plural, with a capital letter) is sometimes used to evoke the importance of research and manufacturing processes behind a product, and with it, the subsequent gains a woman's body can get from using that product. For instance: "Clarins *Laboratories* have created a day cream that helps fight the stresses of a busy lifestyle".

As can be noticed, the technology behind the products is brought to the fore and valued highly as something beneficial for a woman's body. All the three nouns mentioned above, namely "technology", "formula" and "complex", are usually used metonymically to refer to the advertised cosmetic products, and thus ads highlight that it is technology that works wonders for a woman's body. One gets the impression that it is not products that are advertised in these print ads, but technology itself, and with it, the concept of a technological body. As it will be argued further on in the paper, the discourse of advertising actually attests Donna Haraway's cyborg metaphor (1991), in that it reveals a relationship between the body and technology that is closer than ever. Although not expressed overtly, this relationship also becomes obvious in ads that do not make specific references to technology. Given the fact that nowadays technology plays an integral part in cosmetic product

manufacturing, we can regard cosmetic products as the "instrumentalist technological solutions" (Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes 2005: 250) used in bodily management.

An impressive number of ads highlight the benefits that cosmetic products - the embodiment of technology - bring to various parts of a woman's body, either in relation to health or to beauty (although, as argued elsewhere, the two concepts become synonymous in advertising – cf. Kilyeni 2008). Sometimes one product works for both health and beauty at the same time, as maintained in the following ad for Clarins Screen Mist:

(1) "an advanced anti-pollution complex to help maintain skin's health and beauty. Innovative skin protection for today's world".

Below are several examples of ads where the rhetoric of transformation of the female body through technology becomes more than obvious:

Technology in the name of beauty:

- face: (2) Max Factor Age Renew foundation, "like magic, it beautifully covers fine lines helping to make shadows around the eyes disappear and illuminating skin";
- cheeks: (3) Clinique blush "gives you cheekbones when all you thought you had was cheeks";
- lips: (4) Estée Lauder lipstick promises "two new ways to do something wonderful for your lips", namely, it "gives you sheer colour with depth, texture and special crystal effects";
- eyelashes: (5) L'Oréal mascara provides "microscopic precision that separates and defines your lashes one by one", as well as "telescopic length for your eyes only: up to 50% longer lashes";
- décolleté and neck: (6) Clarins Décolleté and Neck Concentrate is "a super-intensive fluid cream specifically formulated for the décolleté, neck and top of shoulders to help smooth and firm the appearance of skin texture, even out pigmentation spots and reduce redness";
- breasts: (7): "With Bloussant Breast Enhancement tablets, you can increase your breast size, firmness and fullness".

Technology in the name of health:

- hair: (8) Clarke hair care products are "designed to protect against a specific styling tool", and provide "intense defence from red hot heat";
- face: (9) Yves Saint Laurent foundation "restores the skin's optimal hydration levels";

(10) Garnier Pure A moisturizer argues that "Skin is left purified and hydrated";

(11) L'Oréal night cream boasts that "the formula, with Pro-Calcium, helps reinforce the skin's barrier function and recharges the skin with moisture";

(12) Rimmel foundation "energizes tired skin";

(13) "Clarins thirst quenching hydra-care serum and moisture quenching hydra-care cream maintain ideal hydration levels, as if the skin had its own permanent source of moisture. They also protect against pollution".

All these examples illustrate that science has provided the right technology to make a woman's body both healthy and beautiful. As stated in (2) above ("like magic"), technology works wonders for the body. While the products advertised in the former set of examples promise to enhance physical appearance, those in the latter are primarily concerned with health. Some ads also give (more or less precise) details on how technology works on the body. Here are a few examples:

(14) Pantene ProV shampoo "penetrates your hair from root to tip, protecting and moisturizing, giving your hair everything it needs";

(15) Chanel Precision Energyzing cream explains how technology works to anticipate first wrinkles: "Six energyzing vitamins and trace elements help

stimulate all metabolism. A polyfractionated PFA active ingredient works to boost antioxidant defenses, revive radiance and prevent the first signs of aging";

(16) L'Oréal makeup remover explains how "it transforms into a fresh, transparent toner on contact with your skin";

(17) Lancôme moisturizer: "be amazed by our exclusive technology: reshaping effect with micro-tensing", "immediately, thousand of micro-tensing actions tighten the skin's surface so that it appears firmer, as if lifted, and helps define skin's contours";

(18) L'Oréal Collagen Filler eye cream ad explains that "collagen biospheres inflate up to 9x their volume on contact with water to help fill wrinkle furrows";

(19) Alberto VO5 hair treatment is "a unique B5-vitamin formula that actually bonds to weak areas leaving hair two times stronger";

(20) Elizabeth Arden's "exclusive CLX Complex delivers the restorative power of Ceramides and essential lipids to help strengthen skin's barrier".

Sometimes technology gets some help from the body itself. Technology and the body seem to make a good team, working side by side, in perfect harmony, as claimed in (22) below, to achieve the same noble goal: beauty and health. The following examples illustrate this joint effort:

(21) Nivea firming body lotion works "now with skin's own Coenzyme Q10";

(22) E45 moisturizing body lotion "works in harmony with your skin to restore lost moisture and creates a barrier to lock it in – so with regular use yours skin's moisture levels continue to improve";

(23) Clinique eye cream "Helps skin to boost its natural collagen production, so it looks less transparent, darkness less visible. […] Even helps skin to strengthen its moisture barrier";

(24) Bloussant Breast Enhancing tablets "actually stimulate the inner-cellular substance in the breast that becomes dormant following the teenage years";

(25) Nad's Hair Remover Gel "works with your body heat – naturally";

(26) Clinique foundation "goes beyond flaw-fixing, acting as skin's undercover moisture agent for a look that's downright dewy".

What it soon becomes evident from all the examples above is that, in the world of advertising, technology has become an integral part of a woman's body. The female body can be neither beautiful nor healthy without technology. The body always seems to be missing something, as an ad for Garnier eye cream states plainly: "formula developed to supplement your skin". Various parts of the body need to be filled and/or covered (e.g. 2, 18), coloured and/or glossed (e.g. 4, 5), enlarged (e.g. 5, 7), smoothed, firmed, toned and/or purified (e.g. 6, 12, 16, 17), or even restored (e.g. 8, 20, 22) and reshaped (e.g. 17), and the skin seems to decompose if it were not for technology to supply it with constant hydration (e.g. 10, 11, 13, 22, 23, 26). Moreover, the whole body would be extremely vulnerable to all sorts of "vicissitudes", from styling tools (e.g. 8) to pollution (e.g. 1, 13) and the passing of time (e.g. 15), unless it got the right kind of protection from technology. In short, a woman's body, as it is represented within the discourse of advertising, is a fully technological body, i.e. it can no longer exist on its own, separated from technology, and nor can technology be easily separated from the body (see, for instance, the use of the verb phrase *blends so evenly* in 30 below, and of the compound nouns *non-transferable* and *waterproof* in 33).

What is more, many advertisements emphasize the harmonious combination of technology and flesh. In other words, women are told that they can now achieve a "natural look" with the help of some product. This means that technology merges so imperceptibly into the body that it becomes difficult to distinguish one from another. For instance, an ad for

L'Oréal Multi-tonal hair dye says that "That's truly multi-tonal colour you can call your own"; another ad for Nailene fake nails asks: "Can you tell the difference?", while the picture of neatly manicured hand obviously allows the addressee to infer the negative answer. There is always room for doubt whether technology is at work, as implied by the Maybelline's slogan: "Maybe she's born with it, maybe she's Maybelline".

With that in mind, we notice that an impressive amount of ads stress the idea that not only do technology and the body make up a whole, but they also make up one perfect whole, as exemplified below:

> (27) Yves Saint Laurent foundation promises "perfection in a single brush stroke";
> (28) Maybelline blush "for a delicate finish";
> (29) Clinique powder gives skin an even, natural-looking finish";
> (29) Elizabeth Arden moisturizer "puts a pause on aging signs, to help keep skin at its peak";
> (30) Maybelline mousse foundation "brings you such pure matte perfection, blends so evenly, perfects completely";
> (31) Estée Lauder foundation "for a continuous flawless look";
> (32) Chanel foundation "for a complexion that breathes perfection";
> (33) Dior foundation "for a flawless complexion"; it is "non-transferable and waterproof".

Again, these examples emphasize the idea that a woman's body is somehow deficient and incomplete without some instrumentalist technological solutions, which are always capable of "finishing off" or perfecting the body.

In line with Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes (2005), we observe that most ads for cosmetic products rely heavily on a scientific or pseudo-scientific discourse "that gives an illusion of science and hence, new potentialities" (2005: 252). It is the implied "authority of science" (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 311) and not the literal meaning of words that such adverts build their discourse around, in an attempt to achieve particular rhetorical effects. To be more specific, scientific discourse is used in print ads as a pledge for the efficiency of the promoted "technological solutions" that allegedly allow women to manage their body at will, and that, in Aubert's opinion (2004), grants them a feeling of omnipotence.

The use of some form of scientific discourse is evident in the examples 2 - 26 discussed above. If in examples 2- 14 emphasis is placed on the description of results, in examples 15 - 26 it shifts to the description of the processes involved in obtaining the promised results. Specialized vocabulary, most often from the (interrelated) fields of pharmacology (as many beauty products promote their medicinal properties), medicine and biochemistry, abounds in the language of advertising. Here are just a few examples: *ceramides*, *peptides*, *hyaluronic acid*, *folic acid*, *amino acids*, *coenzyme Q10*, *collagen*, *collagen biospheres*, *vita niacin*, *essential lipids*, *vitamins*, *vitamin B5*, *vitamin A*, *vitamin C*, *vitamin E*, *omega 3*, *omega 6*, *antioxidants*, *polyfractionated PFA*, *trace elements*, (*dormant*) *inner-cellular substance*, *cellular activity*, *dead cells*, *salicylic acid*, *micro-tensing*, *pigmentation spots*, *optimal hydration level*, *skin's barrier function*, *to stimulate metabolism*, *to restore skin's elasticity*. When specialized terms concern some ingredient in the product, as do the first sixteen above, they often occur with a capital letter, which highlights their importance and makes them seem "somehow nobler" (Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes 2005: 247). Statistical terminology is also used, so as to enhance credibility, as in the following examples: Pantene shampoo "leaves hair beautifully smooth with up to 70% less frizz", Clariol shampoo "improves hair's health by 80%", with Maybelline lipstick "lips are up to 50% smoother", Maybelline mascara promises "up to 5x thicker lashes", while Max Factor mascara "adds up to 400% volume". In this case, statistics indicate that the product has been thoroughly researched and thus, its increased effectiveness can be

empirically proven. In other ads, statistics depict the satisfaction percentage, which again, certifies the effectiveness of the product, e.g. with L'Oréal age re-perfect night cream "skin feels firmer: 85% agree" and "skin feels less fragile: 81% agree", while "80% agree" that L'Oréal lipstick "nourishes like a balm, shines like a gloss".

According to Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes (2005), this fascination with science and technology in print ads, as illustrated above, is one of the signs that confirms the hypermodern era, on the one hand, and the break with postmodernism (whose hallmark was increased skepticism towards scientific discourse and technological progress), on the other. However, we note that along with overt faith in science and technology, ads also make constant and explicit references to nature. Based on the assumption that nature is perfect, almost every ad in our corpus either mentions (and also graphically highlights) the existence of some ingredient in the product that comes from the natural world, or uses the adjective "natural" to describe the product (cf. Kilyeni 2008). Ads' recurrent appeals to the natural world and claims that a product is natural or that it relies on a "natural formula" try to emphasize the fact that nature, i.e. some (natural) raw, unprocessed material, is an ingredient in the advertised product (cf. Vestergaard and Schrøder 1985). Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes assert that here, "we are close to the trends that postmodernism's proponents have described as the return to one's origins and to nature" (2005: 244).

However, we argue that the rhetorical exploitation of nature in advertising is yet another sign of our hypermodern times. First of all, the almost obsessive manner in which nature is used stands as proof of the contemporary emphasis on excess. In our opinion, the discourse of advertising attests the hypercommodification of nature. Women are urged to purchase and consume nature to attain "the (advertising) natural", i.e. (strictly defined) beauty (cf. Kilyeni 2008). Secondly and most importantly, although nature is highly acclaimed in print ads for beauty products, so is human control over nature through technological intervention. Along with the overt celebration of nature comes the implicit celebration of the scientific knowledge and the applied technology which now allow people to use the natural world at will and fully benefit from it, which stresses once more the hypermodern belief in the miracles of science and technology (cf. Lipovetsky 2005: 42). The following excerpt from an ad for Aveeno skincare products clearly illustrates this:

> […] And now, Aveeno has discovered a secret from the Far East. […] From centuries, soy has been one of the Far East's great secrets to natural beauty. Japanese soy workers have been known for their smooth, even, spot-free hands. Scientists in the West have only recently identified that it is the ingredients in soy that deliver these smoothing and evening effects. Today, East meets West. Aveeno – a pioneer in the study of natural ingredients for skin care – brings the natural benefits of soy to a line of facial care products that cleanse, tone ad moisturize.

In other words, raw nature luckily meets science and technology. Again, the obvious emphasis is on the great benefits technology brings to a woman's body. It is not nature that makes the body healthy and beautiful, as implied in ads, but advanced technology, which allows a tiny bit of nature to be processed and included in "the formula" among other technological ingredients.

Our point is that print ads advertise the feminine body as extremely hi-tech, despite frequent references to products' natural quality. Along with commodities, ads also promote a technological feminine body, which, in our opinion, is yet another sign of hypermodernity, a hybrid sign at the intersection of extreme bodily self-management and increased confidence in science and technology.

2. Time, Technology and the Body

Furthermore, it is interesting to note how ads for cosmetic products in women's glossy magazines also promote, along with the idea of the technological body, a particular conceptualization of the body–time relationship. We are not referring here to the ubiquitous time-as-enemy metaphor in the discourse of advertising, but to the sense of instancy in the transformation of the body that ads seem to cultivate.

We have noticed that many advertisements emphasize either the product's promptness of action (e.g. Clinique anti-blemish "goes to work *immediately*", Almay nail fortifier "absorbs *instantly*"), which results in an instantaneous transformation of some part of the body, or the immediacy of the makeover itself (e.g. with Estée Lauder's self tanner "*Instantly*, you're bronzed"), or sometimes both within the same ad: "Fine lines diminish *instantly*. Ultra sheer gel *instantly* transforms into a silky matte finish" (Neutrogena moisturizer). It is this particular observation concerning the immediacy of bodily transformation in ads that has led to the title of this paper. "Hocus-pocus" does not only refer to the words uttered by magicians when bringing about some sort of instantaneous change, but it also seems to be related to the body. According to the Occultism and Parapsychology Encyclopedia (*www.answers.com*), this term is apparently derived from the Latin *Hoc est Corpus Meum* (This is my body) – the words spoken at some point during the Roman Catholic Mass.

This promise of instant bodily transformation in many print advertisements in our corpus is intrinsically linked to the very condition of the hypermodern individual. In Lipovetsky's opinion, "the man of the present […] is immersed in only one time - that of urgency and instantaneity" (2005: 41). By the same token, Aubert (2003) contends that the hypermodern individual is marked by "the cult of urgency" (*le culte de l'urgence*), or even "the dictatorship of full-scale urgency" (*la dictature de l'urgence généralisée*) which characterizes the present-day Western society, and which is first and foremost accounted for by the revolutionary developments in communication technology. The age of the Internet and of the mobile phone, combined with an economy based on instant profit, has led to unprecedented exploitation and celebration of the present moment as a source of immediate effective outcome.

This focus on the "now" becomes evident in the discourse of advertising, with the observation that the outcome mentioned above is a "new" (i.e. transformed) body. We point out that this relationship between the hypermodern individual and time has also put a mark on the advertising discourse on the female body. Many adverts for cosmetic products highlight the fact that, due to advanced technology, a woman's body can undergo transformation in no time. Just as "modern technology has made chalky powders with not-quite-real tints a thing of the past" (Clinique powder), it has also assumed the role of a magic wand. Usually, this sense of instancy is expressed through adverbs of time, such as "instantly" or "immediately", as in the examples given above, or through adverbial phrases of time, most often formed around a time-related noun. Here are some more examples:

(1) "Look up to 5 years younger *in a flash*", says Max Factor Age Renew foundation, which "*instantly* helps you look younger";
(2) "Look five years younger *in a moment*" (No.7 Age Rewind foundation);
(3) "Bronze ambition all over *in an instant*" (Rimmel bronzing spray);
(4) Nivea firming lotion "gives you *even faster*, more effective firming and toning while you moisturize"
(5) Neutrogena Sunless Tanning "dries *in less than 5 minutes*";
(6) Garnier hair dye "colours over grey hairs and roots *in just ten minutes*";
(7) St. Ives skin firming lotion is "clinically proven to help increase skin's firmness and elasticity *in only 8 weeks*";

(8) L'Oréal promises "Captivating colour *in 10 minutes*. Cashmere soft and mirror shine *in no time*";

(9) Braun hair straightener guarantees "Satin-sleek hair *in seconds*".

The adjective "instant" has the same function, e.g. "For *instant* shine just add H2O" (Herbal Essences shampoo) and "*Instant* colour and radiance" (Sanctuary moisturizer). However, our corpus indicates that adverbial constructions are usually favoured. Note that when a cardinal number is used in postdeterminer position, it is usually preceded by an intensifier (e.g. "less than", "just" and "only", in examples 5, 6 and 7). Also, such adverbs or adverbial phrases are often typed in capital and/or bold letters to highlight the immediacy of the transformation even more.

These examples point to the fact that advertising has added another dimension to the body: not only is the feminine body imbued with technology, but it is also inscribed with a sense of urgency due to technology. Within an society characterized by one's quest for self-management, by the dictatorship of urgency and by the technological "takeover" of the body, adverts promise women that "You can get a new body, and you can get it now! ". The discourse of advertising thus bears witness that "the modern obsession with time" has become as hyper as any other *hyper* of the era, as it "is no longer given concrete form merely in the sphere of work" (Lipovetsky 2005: 49); it has also reached the most intimate sphere: that of the body.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the present paper has been to grasp the specificity of the hypermodern feminine body in relation to applied science (i.e. technology), on the one hand, and to time, on the other, as it is reflected in the discourse of advertising in women's glossy magazines.

We can conclude that nowadays advertising is much more than a mere commodity promotion marketing tool: by evoking science and technology, which are used metonymically to refer to their tremendous potential, it is not only products endowed with transformative properties that advertisers promote (cf. Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 310-311), but bodies with science and technology in the flesh. Besides this "merger" between technology (and the science behind it) and a woman's body (be it solely for commercial interests), print ads for cosmetic products also promote a sense of immediacy in bodily metamorphosis.

In short, it can be argued that advertising cultivates a concept of femininity which is essentially linked to a kind of cyborg aesthetics, as well as to the intensity of the present moment.

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