

“DO YOU HATE YOUR MEAT?”: Selling Bodily Transformation in *Cyberpunk 2077*

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Abstract

Advertising for technological enhancements saturates Night City, the dystopian environment of *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020), shaping how bodies and futures are perceived by players and player characters alike. This video essay analyzes those diegetic advertisements and argues that they do more than market cyberware. They cultivate disdain for the “meat” of organic embodiment and organize desires for bodily transformation. I trace the aesthetic logics of Night City’s advertising through the biopolitics of the Freikorps, Italian Futurism’s celebration of mechanized modernity, and fascist erotics. These logics are monetized in *Cyberpunk 2077*. Bodily inadequacy, or “hating your meat,” becomes a problem that corporations promise to solve. Those promises structure gameplay, and technological enhancements become rational and pleasurable responses to in-game challenges. The game, as an ideological system, teaches its subjects to actively pursue a lifestyle of posthuman optimization. Fascist aesthetics return not through the state or mass spectacle, but by way of branding and mechanics.

Essay

Note: this essay was written by the author, and it was not copy-edited by *The Digital Review* or the Praxis Studio for Comparative Media Studies.

Advertising saturates Night City, the setting of CD Projekt Red’s *Cyberpunk 2077*. Billboards, posters, holograms, commercials, brand insignias, and digital displays cover much of Night City,

making advertising a principal mode of environmental storytelling. More than diegetic marketing, these ads organize how viewers perceive their bodies, desires, and technological futures. They cultivate dissatisfaction with organic, human embodiment while presenting technological transformation as aspiration and optimization. Advertising becomes the means by which corporate power organizes affect.

Existing scholarship reads *Cyberpunk 2077* in terms of technologized bodies, system design, and social breakdown. Alice Fox (2021) analyzes body modifications through a disability studies lens, revealing the ironic vulnerabilities of technoableism. Kryzstof Maj (2022) emphasizes inhabitable systems—as opposed to passive narrative containers—in spatial design. Miguel Bordallo López and Constantino Álvarez Casado (2025) argue the game is both “reflective and predictive of real-world” technology (2). And Morgan James Steele (2024) characterizes Night City as anomic. Collectively, these approaches reveal underlying logics regarding in-game representations of bodies and spaces.

Posthuman scholarship often frames technological embodiment as a process of becoming beyond the bounded liberal self, highlighting distributed, relational conceptions of subjectivity (Braidotti; Hayles). This essay asks a prior question: how is desire for posthuman embodiment produced? Before any cyberware installations, Night City’s advertising commodifies bodily inadequacy and correction. Citizens may indeed become posthuman through the bodily incorporation of cyberware, but they are first taught to hate their “meat” (Gibson). In Night City, the proliferation of forms of posthuman embodiment represents an ideological achievement as much as a technological one.

This advertisement presents a stylized act of self-directed violence. A person’s head and shoulders appear in profile, facing to the right. Their hand grips the skin around their nose, eyes,

and mouth, and pulls it away from their face, as if removing a mask, revealing bloodless gore, exposed teeth, and no nose. Alongside the image, the text reads, “DO YOU HATE YOUR MEAT?” in large print and, in smaller print, “BODY IMPLANTS” and a directional arrow.

The ad promotes one form of mechanical body modification. These devices, called cyberware, structure everyday life in Night City. Yet several details resist this neutral reading. The violence in the image is self-directed rather than imposed from outside. The tearing gesture is frozen in time, presented as a demonstration. The slogan addresses the viewer directly, framing embodiment itself as a problem to be solved.

The ad’s visual composition and textual address work together to frame self-hate as the precondition of bodily improvement. The phrase “hate your meat” does not describe the action depicted; it presupposes an affect. Disgust, aversion, even hostility toward one’s own flesh is taken as already present. The image then provides a visual logic for that hatred. The ad promises transformation through repudiation. Improvement begins with self-loathing.

This advertisement presents an eroticized display of domination and submission. Like the first ad, a hand grabs and pulls the subject, who appears in profile, facing the right margin, mouth agape. A figure standing behind and above the woman is reaching into frame, their tightly balled mechanical fist clutching her hair. The company’s name, Dynalar, appears in a bold, uniform font along the top margin. Below, a slogan reads “It’s all about the touch.”

Like the “hate your meat” billboard, this is both an advertisement for body-altering cyberware and ideologically charged. The woman is being physically controlled. Her submission is on full display, whereas the dominator remains anonymous. The slogan declares the primacy of touch; the image models the behaviour and adds an erotic valence.

The advertisement's text and composition reframe physical intimacy as a mode of domination and submission. Dynalar is advertising a prosthetic hand; their slogan, "It's all about the touch," promotes the device's tactile feedback. Such feedback implies an attuned sensitivity, but the image is of a clenched fist. The ad frames touch not as technologically refined, not as intimate, but as controlling and potentially violent. And what of the woman being touched? Her cropped platinum hair and slender features appear modern and delicate. Bold red lips and eyelids contrast the otherwise muted palette. Her submissive posture is eroticized: her open mouth and closed eyes embody a sensual, perhaps even orgasmic affect.

Both ads share a governing logic: force is a regulatory mechanism for bodies. Whether experienced as pain or pleasure, whether self-directed or interpersonal, force is rendered structurally necessary.

Repetition integrates these ads into the sensory infrastructure of the city. Across formats and locations, advertising repeats the same bodily logic until it becomes normalized—just another feature of the environment. Deploying combinations of eroticism, violence, and self-loathing, advertising aestheticizes bodily improvement. Representations of such bodies are embedded in the audio-visual cityscape, conditioning viewers in how to feel about their bodies.

Advertising in Night City draws upon several historical aesthetic traditions concerned with bodies, technology, discipline, and desire. Through the early 20th century, German mercenaries called the *Freikorps* imagined bodies as porous, loathsome things in need of armouring. Some kept diaries as a mode of self-discipline, using writing to "compress themselves into line upon line of methodical handwriting and compacted syntax" (Theweleit, 233). Both the *Freikorps* and Night City's advertising characterize flesh as a weakness to be improved upon.

Italian futurism—contemporary with the *Freikorps*—likewise imagined surpassing the limitations of organic bodies but with a greater focus on technological enhancement. Italian futurists venerated technological modernity, celebrating machinery, speed, and violence as their signature virtues, as seen in Umberto Boccioni's *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913). Boccioni's rider is visually fused with his machine, presenting technological enhancement as an ideal of modern life. As Christine Poggi explains, futurists imagined fortifying bodies against an impending “nonhuman, mechanical, and combative destiny” (150). Although Futurism cannot be reduced to fascism, its aesthetic preoccupation with technological transformation and bodily enhancement informed later fascist visual culture.

Celebrations of mechanized modernity soon extended beyond avant-garde art into commercial advertising. The Italian Futurist Fortunato Depero designed bottles and an advertising campaign for the Italian apéritif, Campari. His designs celebrate machinery, speed, and industrial modernity. Tilted, intersecting lines generate dynamism. Bottles appear as traffic lights, embedding the product in a manic cityscape. Futurism in commercial culture transformed technological modernity into an object of consumer desire.

These developments help explain how technological enhancement became an object of desire. Yet the advertisements in *Cyberpunk 2077* do not merely render enhancement desirable, they eroticize domination. Susan Sontag describes fascist aesthetics as a nexus of stylized eroticism and violence; the aesthetic renders harm an object of sexual desire (1980). The Dynalar ad likewise muddles boundaries when promising touch while depicting force.

These ads are mobilizing aesthetic logics historically associated with fascist representations of bodies, discipline, and desire. But in *Cyberpunk 2077*, this logic is privatized and monetized.

Given their aesthetic lineage, these advertisements read as manifestations of a system that organizes affect. For those familiar with the aesthetics of Night City, the question “do you hate your meat?” is rhetorical; for the uninitiated, the question is instructive. The tearing gesture is legible as a model of self-improvement; its aesthetic genealogy is the context in which we understand the gesture. The Dynalar advertisement operates similarly, normalizing force as a mode of intimacy. What’s represented most clearly is the appeal of submission.

These dystopian advertisements are evidence of a broader system where bodies are rendered inadequate and compelled toward self-correction. That logic now operates as a privatized, internalized, desirable system. The player encounters that logic as imagery and as gameplay.

Posthumanism often asks what is possible beyond the liberal-humanist subject, *Cyberpunk 2077* asks a prior question: how are subjects taught to desire posthuman embodiment? The answer is that corporate advertising organizes dissatisfaction before organizing technological transformation.

Like in-game characters, players become habituated to Night City’s aesthetic regime. Body modification is part of game progression. Players are encouraged to replace organic body parts with cyberware to better handle challenges. They become stronger and faster. Weapons and hacking software are integrated directly into the body. 10 different installation sites exist, including limbs, the circulatory system, and the frontal cortex.

Although there are exceptions, cyberware appears normal and desirable. Installation often occurs in well-lit consumer spaces. Body modification is integrated into the pleasures of progression and customization, cultivating anticipation and aspiration. The player avatar, V, is friends with a kindly ripperdoc. All of this in a world saturated with images of bodily inadequacy. The

advertisements help normalize the player's actions by embedding enhancement culture into the visual logic of the city.

In this sense, *Cyberpunk 2077* represents and operationalizes ideological systems. Progression renders the protagonist's body inadequate, thereby incentivizing players to engage with the cyberware gameplay systems. The player's critical distance dissipates as they become increasingly enmeshed in body-modification culture through play. The game structures enhancement as the rational response to environmental conditions.

Night City's advertising organizes how bodies, pleasure, and power are perceived. Its citizens are taught to experience bodily transformation as aspiration, optimization, and freedom. Violence is intertwined with pleasure. In *Cyberpunk 2077*, fascist aesthetics do not return through the state or the mass rally. They reappear as lifestyle, branding, entertainment, and desire. More than observers, players participate in aesthetic logics that echo historical fascism. They come to desire the very technological transformation that advertising has affectively prepared them to embrace.

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