BODIES INCORPORATED

Theoretical Appropriation for Somatic Intervention

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[**PRELUDE**: but with resistance to initiate; composed of three displacements, thirty-four notes, and sixteen interrupts, all intended to traverse the intentionally disarticulated discursive terrain of the "body." What follows (dys)functions as an appropriative hypertextual foray into what we call "cut and paste theory," a rhythmically (un)natural methodology for those finding themselves evermore adapted to working and living in fragmentary, dispersive, and non-linear environments. There are three main sections of dis- and re-placed text, each of which begins with an abstracted description of the t(r)opological milieu of Bodies INCorporated, a physical/Net installation. Following our initial displacements are sampled passages from other's writings, extracted, mixed-up, interrupted, repurposed and re-presented in effort to (un)systematically address conceptual issues that arise in response to our project-ed confrontation.]

THE PRE-CONSTRUCTED BODY

[DISPLACEMENT 1: Hypertextualized bodies in limbo -- a region where immaterialized thought-forms are detained until final judgment -- abstracted from the temporal flow, discontiguous, disarticulated, inert and constrained. Gestational body-as-prosthesis, enabling psychological acclimation to an aethereal self-as-other.]

Literary figurations of the reproductive body have always been open to a wide range of meanings, because literature functions as one of the institutions through which human beings are shaped to the needs of their society, through the process of identity construction that occurs in, and mutually implicates, both the symbolic and the material realms.[1] The constructionist body is not equal to the task if it is merely a compensatory or reactionary opponent to the humanist body. The proleteriazation or automatization of the body with respect to "discursivity" is an anxious reaction-formation to the "loss" of an autonomy that was itself an exclusive fiction.[2] [F]ractured identities call attention to alternatives, always multiple, always in tension.[3]

[INTERRUPT: somatically dis-placed anxiety around the loss of some fictional "self" is what happens when cognitive realities are structured through simplistic, ontologically stabilizing yet conceptually constraining, binarisms.]

[T]he nature of "consciousness" and "desire," or the familiar set of categorical oppositions that we rely upon to understand ourselves and our relationship to the universe: male/female, organic/inorganic, artifice/nature, reality/illusion, originality/duplication, life/death, human/inhuman [must be broken down][4] The wholesale, and often inappropriate, application of rigid and calculable norms encourage[s] the regularization of irregular, shadowy, and complex bodies in the name of an [author-itative] and corrective theory.[5] The body is always a [dys]function of discourse.[6]

[INTERRUPT: Un/Conscious desire for teleological progress(ion), is historically rooted in oppressively dualistic frameworks that resist ambivalent mid-sections, and work instead toward culmination points or "ends."]

THE DE-CONSTRUCTED BODY

[DISPLACEMENT 2: Death as spectacle, spectacular death -- now graphically materialized, soon to be de-materialized, thought-forms -- where psychological attachment is activated by the prospect of (psychic and terminally) projected loss. The dis-embodied becomes emotionally charged, ready to be horrifically realized, consequentially committed, and ex(or)cised.]

We have disparate experiences of individual social identities, having at their focus a physical "unit," a fiduciary entity called the person, whose varying modes of existence both support and problematize the obduracy of individual identity and its refractoriness to deconstruction.[7] The victim dies and the spectators share in what [the] death reveals. This is what religious historians call the sacramental element ... the revelation of continuity through the death of a discontinuous being to those who watch it as a solemn rite. A violent death disrupts the creature's discontinuity: what remains, what the tense onlookers experience in the succeeding silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the victim is now one.[8]

[INTERRUPT: Performative fascination with unified textual sacrifice solicits trepidation over the prospect of summoning a correspondence between physically being and the illustrated death of the phantasmatic.]

The narrative continues to fragment, however, introducing drawings that intrude into the textual space without notice or comment, and scrawled lines that run down the page, marking zones where the pros/e stops and the truncated, voiceless body of the text remains. From these semiotic spaces emerges a corpse that, haunting the narrative, refuses to stay buried ... [9] Death, for instance, may open [the void at a specific point]: the corpse into which death infuses absence ... A dead body cannot be called nothing at all, but that object, that corpse, is stamped straight off with the sign "nothing at all."[10]

[INTERRUPT: Excremental bodies, nauseatingly decomposed, decayed, and distantiated, nevertheless retain an apparitional status, functioning as ghostly reminders of their rancorously reconfigured cybernetic traces.]

The repressed reemerges, among other things, through the mechanism of displacement: "What is repressed (but never destroyed) in the self [is] projected outward in order to be hated and disowned.[11]

[INTERRUPT: Not necessarily conscious and out of control displays in public spaces can cause confusion, fear, anxiety, panic: "It was an accident, a mistake," "I'll sue you if you don't delete my body"; the thought of a misconstrued manifestation too painful to bear/bare.]

According to phenomenology, in the everyday world we do not normally experience our bodies, nor our pain, as objects ... it is when we try to pay attention to pain or to talk about it, to "make sense" of it, that we objectify it. Experiencing severe pain, we simply are "in pain," we are "pain-full"...[12] Danger, the sense of threat as well as seductiveness which the computer can evoke, comes from both within and without ... It simultaneously constitutes erotic pleasure and a sense of loss of [authority] over the loss of the body. This mobilizes a constellation of responses to the simulation which deeply engage fear, pleasure, and also, perhaps, the simultaneous desire for and possibility of control.[13] [W]e often experience the body as an alien environment in which our body appears as something over which we do not have control.[14] The desire for rational calculated [command] of a predictable total environment in digital form surely has more to do with the death drive than with love of life.[15]

[INTERRUPT: Wizards, avatars, and tiny sex to die for; movement within the massively mediated "hyperreal" is problematically viewed as moving out of or away from something granted more ontological privilege and epistemological status, neglecting to productively show how ...]

[B]y the mirage of "virtual reality," ... "true" reality ... is posited as a semblance of itself, as a pure symbolic edifice.[16]

THE RE-CONSTRUCTED BODY

[DISPLACEMENT 3: Fetishized bodies to behold, beholden bodies to fetishize -- audibly text-ured thought-forms now crystallized, -- dispersively and cross-referentially exhibited in the public sites/sights they become, copyright disabled, voyeuristically available for parasitical/viral reproduction. An exposed community of body-owners, affectively touched in the intangible realm, made vulnerable to a defaulted void.]

[W]hat is the gaze if not *theoria* grasping the "thing itself" in the presence of its form or in the form of its presence; what is the voice if not the medium of the pure "auto-affection" enabling the presence-to-itself of the speaking subject? The gaze is,

so to speak, a point at which the very frame ... is already inscribed in the "content" of the picture viewed ... the same with the voice as object: this voice -- ... addressing me without being attached to any particular bearer -- functions again as a stain ...[17]

[INTERRUPT: Text-u(r)ally embedded bodies, the "actual" and the "artificial," graphically marked and projected with disordered voices; im/material manifestations that stand equivalent within the scene surveyed, imbued with an independent existence disconnected from authorial presence]

[A] concept such as "disorganized surveillance" would indeed begin to do justice to the complexities of contemporary practices. New technologies ... make possible a new intensity of surveillance, penetrating much more deeply into [our] daily routines ...[18] [F]etishistic scopophilia ... can exist outside linear time as erotic instinct is focused on the look alone ... The camera becomes the mechanism for producing ... an ideology of representation that revolves around the perception of the subject ... a convincing world in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude.[19] The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of substantial unity), and a volume in disintegration.[20] As in performance art, the body becomes the site of exploration, a site in which the implications of postmodern dissolution are inscribed and hypostatized. The body is already an interface between mind and experience ... The obsessive restaging of the alteration of the body is also a constant refiguring or redefinition of the subject through biotechnological apparatuses.[21] The computer-mediated milieu renders the body nakedly public ... Similarly, one result of the new non-invasive imaging technologies in the area of medicine is the capability of turning a person inside out ... It conjures up foreboding visions of an all-powerful observer who has instant visual access to the anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology of a patient.[22] Computer tomography x-ray imaging (CT), positron emission tomography (PET), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and ultrasound now probe noninvasively, but publicly, formerly private regions and occluded and secluded recesses. It remains to be determined, however, just what are the social or political dimensions and the ethical implications of this generalized somatic visibilization of the invisible.[23]

[INTERRUPT: Exteriorization of the interior self-as-site for public exploration, unpleasantly spotlighting the sacred-as-secret no longer, harshly penetrated, mercilessly exposed and incandescent, engenders an obsessive fascination with illusory subjectivities]

We misunderstand those elaborate formations made from human bodies ... set in motion and put on display, by seeing them as mere ornaments, as deindividualizations, as luxury-product nature ... or as indulgent forms of waste. They are also, clearly, technical apparatuses, machines as well as diagrams ...[24] [Deleuze and Guattari] also explore ways in which bodies can be seen as non-unitary, heterogeneous machines that may emphasize rather then obscure the contingent and ongoing process of reproducing subjectivities.[25] So the contemporary drama of the subject, terminal flesh, is played out on the surface of the body -- "depth" is an illusion that belongs to a passing moment of a particular subjectivity. The surface of the body becomes the arena for dissolving the governing instrumental reason of the organism.[26] Is it even possible to distinguish between the socially contingent rules of subject-formation, understood as regulatory productions of the subject through exclusion and foreclosure, a set of "laws" or "structures" that constitute the invariant mechanisms of foreclosure through which *any* subject comes into being?[27]

[INTERRUPT: Regulatory and regulated bodies in motion, speaking though spoken through, self-(dis)organizing into an in/organic machinic phylum; a new kind of species-becoming that is and has always been both empirically and experientially suspect.]

The "original" body is the authenticating source for the refigured person in cyberspace: no "persons" exist whose presence is not warranted by a physical body back in "normal" space.[28] There is a sense, then, in which we are all inhabited by processes of nonorganic life. We carry in our bodies a multiplicity of self-organizing processes of a definite physical and mathematical nature -- a set of bifurcations and attractors that could be determined empirically, at least in principle. Yet, is there any way *to experience* this nonorganic life traversing us ...[29]

[INTERRUPT: What is thought through language but an attempt to render the intangible tangible, to re-productively expose the immateriality of the material, to pay homage to the emotional logic of the more than double(d)-agent.]

[There exists] a pervasive tendency to ignore or misrecognize the social nature of the body, and the multifold ways it is constituted by relations with other bodies, in favor of a reified conception of the body as bounded individual, [just as there is] a

propensity to ignore the primary character of the body as material activity in favor of an emphasis on the body as a conceptual object of discourse; [but] the severance of the body's social roots, its de-materialization is a ... [problematic] substitution of "the body" conceived as a set of individual psychological or sensuous responses and needs for the body as material process of social interaction.[30] The social relations implicated in emotional experience [directly] involve the body: not simply the body as a physical entity subject to external forces, but the body as agent ... Those accounts [of the body] which focus on cultural presuppositions, vocabularies of emotion, and other cultural constructions suppose that social relationships are less important to emotional experience than the culturally given cognitive structures in terms of which social relations are supposedly given their meaning. In this approach the bodily basis of emotion are generally ignored or even denied.[31]

[INTERRUPT: The internally externalized emotionality of the more than body-double(d) is perceptually pre-fabricated, encoded and decoded, through techno-culturally constructed prosthetic device.]

Technology ... shapes our perceptions and cognitive processes, mediates our relationships with objects of the material and physical world, and our relationship with our own or other bodies.[32] And as if that weren't enough, we've also instituted *traditions* and *norms of critical reflection*, the better to police our identities, and to prevent our minds and our bodies from going astray.[33] [But] no matter how virtual the subject may become, there is always a[nother] body attached. It may be off somewhere else -- and that "somewhere else" may be a privileged point of view -- but consciousness remains firmly rooted in the [mediascapes of the] physical.[34]

[**REFRAIN**: Unceasingly, and with reluctance to terminate; "reach out and touch someone"© -- http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/bodiesinc]

NOTES

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