

necessarily be temporal. Matter does not 'exist' in and of itself, for *all* time, but is instead repeatedly produced *over* time through performativity (performativity is that which brings into being or enacts what it names). While it may therefore seem certain that 'I am a woman', this identity is in fact never fixed, and is always unstable. The subject may *appear* to have 'an identity', an identity which is resolutely written on the body, but this is only because reiteration 'conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' (Butler 1993: 12).

The contributions in this section offer demanding and sometimes provocative reformulations of some of the more conventional and perhaps intuitive understandings of what a body 'is'. If these pieces are challenging, it is surely because they are faced with the hardest of tasks: engaging with and contesting the legacy of dualisms that haunt Western philosophy. Each of these texts, in their different (and more or less explicit) ways, have implications for the relations between 'nature' and 'culture', substance and matter, mind and body, and subject and object. These are among the most important themes that will be recurring in different contexts throughout the Body Reader.

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Elizabeth Grosz

REFIGURING BODIES

From E. Grosz (1994) *Volatile Bodies*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Philosophy and the body

SINCE THE INCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY as a separate and self-contained discipline in ancient Greece, philosophy has established itself on the foundations of a profound somatophobia. While I cannot here preset an adequate or detailed discussion of the role of the body in the history of philosophy, I can at least indicate in a brief sketch some of the key features of the received history that we have inherited in our current conceptions of bodies. The body has been regarded as a source of interference in, and a danger to, the operations of reason. In the *Cratylus*, Plato claims that the word body (*soma*) was introduced by Orphic priests, who believed that man was a spiritual or noncorporeal being trapped in the body as in a dungeon (*sēma*). In his doctrine of the Forms, Plato sees matter itself as a denigrated and imperfect version of the Idea. The body is a betrayal of and a prison for the soul, reason, or mind. For Plato, it was evident that reason should rule over the body and over the irrational or appetitive functions of the soul. A kind of natural hierarchy, a self-evident ruler–ruled relation, alone makes possible a harmony within the state, the family, and the individual. Here we have one of the earliest representations of the body politic. Aristotle, in continuing a tradition possibly initiated by Plato in his account of *chora* in *Timaeus* where maternity is regarded as a mere housing, receptacle, or nurse of being rather than a co-producer, distinguished matter or body from form, and in the case of reproduction, he believed that the mother provided the formless, passive, shapeless matter which, through the father, was given form, shape, and contour, specific features and attributes it otherwise lacked. The binarization of the sexes, the dichotomization of the world and of knowledge has been effected already at the threshold of Western reason.

The matter/form distinction is refigured in terms of the distinction between substance and accident and between a God-given soul and a mortal, lustful, sinful carnality. Within the Christian tradition, the separation of mind and body was correlated with the distinction between what is immortal and what is mortal. As long as the subject is alive, mind and soul form an indissoluble unity, which is perhaps best exemplified in the figure of Christ himself. Christ was a man whose soul, whose immortality, is derived from God but whose body and mortality is human. The living soul is, in fact, a part of the world,

and above all, a part of nature. Within Christian doctrine, it is as an experiencing, suffering, passionate being that generic man exists. This is why moral characteristics were given to various physiological disorders and why punishments and rewards for one's soul are administered through corporeal pleasures and punishments. For example, in the Middle Ages, leprosy was regarded as the diseased consequence of lechery and covetousness, a corporeal signifier of sin.

What Descartes accomplished was not really the separation of mind from body (a separation which had already been long anticipated in Greek philosophy since the time of Plato) but the separation of soul from nature. Descartes distinguished two kinds of substances: a thinking substance (*res cogitans*, mind) from an extended substance (*res extensa*, body); only the latter, he believed, could be considered part of nature, governed by its physical laws and ontological exigencies. The body is a self-moving machine, a mechanical device, functioning according to causal laws and the laws of nature. The mind, the thinking substance, the soul, or consciousness, has no place in the natural world. This exclusion of the soul from nature, this evacuation of consciousness from the world, is the prerequisite for founding a knowledge, or better, a science, of the governing principles of nature, a science which excludes and is indifferent to considerations of the subject. Indeed, the impingements of subjectivity will, from Descartes's time on, mitigate the status and value of scientific formulations. Scientific discourse aspires to impersonality, which it takes to be equivalent to objectivity. The correlation of our ideas with the world or the reality they represent is a secondary function, independent of the existence of consciousness, the primary, indubitable self-certainty of the soul. Reality can be attained by the subject only indirectly, by inference, deduction, or projection. Descartes, in short, succeeded in linking the mind/body opposition to the foundations of knowledge itself, a link which places the mind in a position of hierarchical superiority over and above nature, including the nature of the body. From that time until the present, subject or consciousness is separated from and can reflect on the world of the body, objects, qualities.

Dualism

Descartes instituted a dualism which three centuries of philosophical thought have attempted to overcome or reconcile. Dualism is the assumption that there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body, each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere. Taken together the two have incompatible characteristics. The major problem facing dualism and all those positions aimed at overcoming dualism has been to explain the interactions of these two apparently impossible substances, given that, within experience and everyday life, there seems to be a manifest connection between the two in willful behavior and responsive psychological reactions. How can something that inhabits space affect or be affected by something that is nonspatial? How can consciousness ensure the body's movements, its receptivity to conceptual demands and requirements? How can the body inform the mind of its needs and wishes? How is bilateral communication possible? Dualism not only poses irresolvable philosophical problems; it is also at least indirectly responsible for the historical separation of the natural sciences from the social sciences and humanities, the separation of physiology from psychology, of quantitative analysis from qualitative analysis, and the privileging of mathematics and physics as ideal models of the goals and aspirations of

knowledges of all types. Dualism, in short, is responsible for the modern forms of elevation of consciousness (a specifically modern version of the notion of soul, introduced by Descartes) above corporeality.

This separation, of course, has its costs. Since the time Descartes, not only is consciousness positioned outside of the world, outside its body, outside of nature; it is also removed from direct contact with other minds and a sociocultural community. At its extreme, all that consciousness can be sure about is its own self-certain existence. The existence of other minds must be inferred from the apparent existence of other bodies. If minds are private, subjective, invisible, amenable only to first-person knowledge, we can have no guarantee that our inferences about other minds are in fact justified. Other bodies may simply be complex automata, androids or even illusions, with no psychological interior, no affective states or consciousness. Consciousness becomes, in effect, an island unto itself. Its relations to others, to the world, and its own body are the consequences of mediated judgments, inferences, and are no longer understood as direct and unmediated.

Cartesian dualism establishes an unbridgeable gulf between mind and matter, a gulf most easily disavowed, however problematically, by reductionism. To reduce either the mind to the body or the body to the mind is to leave their interaction unexplained, explained away, impossible. Reductionism denies any interaction between mind and body, for it focuses on the actions of either one of the binary terms at the expense of the other. Rationalism and idealism are the results of the attempt to explain the body and matter in terms of mind, ideas, or reason; empiricism and materialism are the results of attempts to explain the mind in terms of bodily experiences or matter (today most commonly the mind is equated with the brain or central nervous system). Both forms of reductionism assert that either one or the other of the binary terms is "really" its opposite and can be explained by or translated into the terms of its other.

There are not only good philosophical but also good physiological reasons for rejecting reductionism as a solution to the dualist dilemma. As soon as the terms are defined in mutually exclusive ways, there is no way of reconciling them, no way of understanding their mutual influences or explaining their apparent parallelism. Moreover, attempts to correlate ideas or mental processes with neurological functions have thus far failed, and the project itself seems doomed.

Cartesianism

There are at least three lines of investigation of the body in contemporary thought which may be regarded as the heirs of Cartesianism. [...]

In the first line of investigation, the body is primarily regarded as an object for the natural sciences, particularly for the life sciences, biology and medicine; and conversely, the body is amenable to the humanities and social sciences, particularly psychology (when, for example, the discipline deals with "emotions," "sensations," "experiences," and "attitudes"), philosophy (when, for example, it deals with the body's ontological and epistemological status and implications), and ethnography (where, for example, the body's cultural variability, its various social transformations, are analyzed). The body either is understood in terms of organic and instrumental functioning in the natural sciences or is posited as *merely* extended, *merely* physical, an object like any other in the humanities and social sciences. Both, in different ways, ignore the specificity of bodies in their researches.

The more medicalized biologicistic view implies a fundamental continuity between man and animals, such that bodies are seen to have a particularly complex form of physiological organization, but one that basically differs from organic matter by degree rather than kind. In a sense, this position is heir to the Christian concept of the human body being part of a natural or mundane order. As an organism, the body is merely a more complex version of other kinds of organic ensembles. It cannot be qualitatively distinguished from other organisms: its physiology poses general questions similar to those raised by animal physiology. The body's sensations, activities, and processes become "lower-order" natural or animal phenomena, part of an interconnected chain of organic forms (whether understood in cosmological or ecological terms). The natural sciences tend to treat the body as an organic system of interrelated parts, which are themselves framed by a larger systemic order. The humanities reduce the body to a fundamental continuity with brute, inorganic matter. Despite their apparent dissimilarity, they share a common refusal to acknowledge the distinctive complexities of organic bodies, the fact that bodies construct and in turn are constructed by an interior, a psychical and a signifying view-point, consciousness or perspective.

The second line of investigation commonly regards the body in terms of metaphors that construe it as an instrument, a tool, or a machine at the disposal of consciousness, a vessel occupied by an animating willful subjectivity. For Locke and the liberal political tradition more generally, the body is seen as a possession, a property of a subject, who is thereby dissociated from carnality and makes decisions and choices about how to dispose of the body and its powers (in, for example, the labor market). Some models, including Descartes', construe the body as a self-moving automaton, much like a clock, car, or ship (these are pervasive but by no means exclusive images), according to the prevailing modes of technology. This understanding of the body is not unique to patriarchal philosophies but underlies some versions of feminist theory which see patriarchy as the system of universal male right to the appropriation of women's bodies (MacKinnon, Dworkin, Daly, and Pateman), a position that has been strongly criticized by other feminists (e.g. Butler and Cornell). In many feminist political struggles (those, for example, which utilize the old slogan "get your laws off my body") which are openly and self-consciously about women's bodies and their control by women (e.g. campaigns around such issues as sexual harassment and molestation, rape, the control of fertility, etc.), the body is typically regarded as passive and reproductive but largely unproductive, an object over which struggles between its "inhabitant" and others/exploiters may be possible. Whatever agency or will it has is the direct consequence of animating, psychical intentions. Its inertia means that it is capable of being acted on, coerced, or constrained by external forces. (This is not of course to deny that there are real, and frequent, forms of abuse and coercive mistreatment of women's bodies under the jealous and mutilating hostility of some men, but rather to suggest that frameworks within which women's bodies must be acknowledged as active, viable, and autonomous must be devised so that these practices can no longer be neatly rationalized or willfully reproduced.) As an instrument or tool, it requires careful discipline and training, and as a passive object it requires subduing and occupation. Such a view also lies behind the models of "conditioning" and "social construction" that are popular in some feminist circles, especially in psychology and sociology (Gilligan, Chodorow).

In the third line of investigation, the body is commonly considered a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering public and communicable what is

essentially private (ideas, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, affects). As such, it is a two-way conduit: on one hand, it is a circuit for the transmission of information from outside the organism, conveyed through the sensory apparatus; on the other hand, it is vehicle for the expression of an otherwise sealed and self-contained, incommunicable psyche. It is through the body that the subject can express his or her interiority, and it is through the body that he or she can receive, code, and translate the inputs of the "external" world. Underlying this view too is a belief in the fundamental passivity and transparency of the body. Insofar as it is seen as a medium, a carrier or bearer of information that comes from elsewhere (either "deep" in the subject's incorporeal interior or from the "exterior" world), the specificity and concreteness of the body must be neutralized, tamed, made to serve other purposes. If the subject is to gain knowledge about the external world, have any chance of making itself understood by others, or be effective in the world on such a model, the body must be seen as an unresistant pliability which minimally distorts information, or at least distorts it in a systematic and comprehensible fashion, so that its effects can be taken into account and information can be correctly retrieved. Its corporeality must be reduced to a predictable, knowable transparency; its constitutive role in forming thoughts, feelings, emotions, and psychic representations must be ignored, as must its role as threshold between the social and the natural.

These seem to be some of the pervasive, unspoken assumptions regarding the body in the history of modern philosophy and in conceptions of knowledge considered more generally.

[...]

Judith Butler

BODIES THAT MATTER

From J. Butler (1993) *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* New York: Routledge.

IS THERE A WAY TO LINK THE QUESTION of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender? And how does the category of "sex" figure within such a relationship? Consider first that sexual difference is often invoked as an issue of material differences. Sexual difference, however, is never simply a function of material differences which are not in some way both marked and formed by discursive practices. Further, to claim that sexual differences are indissociable from discursive demarcations is not the same as claiming that discourse causes sexual difference. The category of "sex" is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a "regulatory ideal." In this sense, then, "sex" not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls. Thus, "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, "sex" is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law.

But how, then, does then notion of gender performativity relate to this conception of materialization? In the first instance, performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names. [...] [T]he regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative.

In this sense, what constitutes the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements, will be fully material, but materiality will be rethought as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect. And there will be no way to understand "gender" as a cultural construct which is imposed upon the surface of matter, understood either as "the body" or its given sex. Rather, once "sex" itself is understood in its normativity, the materiality of the body will not be thinkable apart from the materialization of that regulatory norm. "Sex" is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility.

At stake in such a reformulation of the materiality of bodies will be the following:

- (1) the recasting of the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects;
- (2) the understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains;
- (3) the construal of "sex" no longer as a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies;
- (4) a rethinking of the process by which a bodily norm is assumed, appropriated, taken on as not, strictly speaking, undergone by a subject, but rather that the subject, the speaking, "I," is formed by virtue of having gone through such a process of assuming a sex; and
- (5) a linking of this process of "assuming" a sex with the question of identification, and with the discursive means by which the heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/or disavows other identifications.

This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which – the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation.

[...]

From construction to materialization

The relation between culture and nature presupposed by some models of gender "construction" implies a culture or an agency of the social which acts upon a nature, which is itself

presupposed as a passive surface, outside the social and yet its necessary counterpart. One question that feminists have raised, then, is whether the discourse which figures the action of construction as a kind of imprinting or imposition is not tacitly masculinist, whereas the figure of the passive surface, awaiting that penetrating act whereby meaning is endowed, is not tacitly or — perhaps — quite obviously feminine. Is sex to gender as feminine is to masculine?

Other feminist scholars have argued that the very concept of nature needs to be rethought, for the concept of nature has a history, and the figuring of nature as the blank and lifeless page, as that which is, as it were, always already dead, is decidedly modern, linked perhaps to the emergence of technological means of domination. Indeed, some have argued that a rethinking of "nature" as a set of dynamic interrelations suits both feminist and ecological aims (and has for some produced an otherwise unlikely alliance with the work of Gilles Deleuze). This rethinking also calls into question the model of construction whereby the social unilaterally acts on the natural and invests it with its parameters and its meanings. Indeed, as much as the radical distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the de Beauvoirian version of feminism, it has come under criticism in more recent years for degrading the natural as that which is "before" intelligibility, in need of the mark, if not the mark, of the social to signify, to be known, to acquire value. This misses the point that nature has a history, and not merely a social one, but, also, that sex is positioned ambiguously in relation to that concept and its history. The concept of "sex" is itself troubled terrain, formed through a series of contestations over what ought to be decisive criterion for distinguishing between the two sexes; the concept of sex has a history that is covered over by the figure of the site or surface of inscription. Figured as such a site or surface, however, the natural is construed as that which is also without value; moreover, it assumes its value at the same time that it assumes its social character, that is, at the same time that nature relinquishes itself as the natural. According to this view, then, the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the natural by the social. Insofar as it relies on this construal, the sex/gender distinction founders along parallel lines; if gender is the social significance that sex assumes within a given culture — and for the sake of argument we will let "social" and "cultural" stand in an uneasy interchangeability — then what, if anything, is left of "sex" once it has assumed its social character as gender? At issue is the meaning of "assumption," where to be "assumed" is to be taken up into a more elevated sphere, as in "the Assumption of the Virgin." If gender consists of the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not *accrue* social meanings as additive properties but, rather, *is replaced by* the social meanings it takes on; sex is relinquished in the course of that assumption, and gender emerges, not as a term in a continued relationship of opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces "sex," the mark of its full substantiation into gender or what, from a materialist point of view, might constitute a full *desubstantiation*.

When the sex/gender distinction is joined with a notion of radical linguistic constructivism, the problem becomes even worse, for the "sex" which is referred to as prior to gender will itself be a postulation, a construction, offered within languages, as that which is prior to language, prior to construction. But this sex posited as prior to construction will, by virtue of being posited, become the effect of that very positing, the constructed of construction. If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this "sex" except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by

gender, but that "sex" becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access.

But is it right to claim that "sex" vanishes altogether, that it is a fiction over and against what is true, that it is a fantasy over and against what is reality? Or do these very oppositions need to be rethought such that if "sex" is a fiction, it is one within whose necessities we live, without which life itself would be unthinkable? And if "sex" is a fantasy, is it perhaps a phantasmatic field that constitutes the very terrain of cultural intelligibility? Would such a rethinking of such conventional oppositions entail a rethinking of "constructivism" in its usual sense?

[...]

What I would propose in place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a *process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*. That matter is always materialized has, I think, to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power in the Foucaultian sense. Thus, the question is no longer, How is gender constituted as and through a certain interpretation of sex? (a question that leaves the "matter" of sex untheorized), but rather, Through what regulatory norms is sex itself materialized? And how is it that treating the materiality of sex as a given presupposes and consolidates the normative conditions of its own emergence?

Crucially, then, construction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place *in* time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. This instability is the deconstituting possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which "sex" is stabilized, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of "sex" into a potentially productive crisis.

[...]

Mary Douglas

THE TWO BODIES

From M. Douglas (1996 [1970]) 'The two bodies', in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, London and New York: Routledge.

THE SOCIAL BODY CONSTRAINS the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other. As a result of this interaction the body itself is a highly restricted medium of expression. The forms it adopts in movement and repose express social pressures in manifold ways. The care that is given to it, in grooming, feeding and therapy, the theories about what it needs in the way of sleep and exercise, about the stages it should go through, the pains it can stand, its span of life, all the cultural categories in which it is perceived, must correlate closely with the categories in which society is seen insofar as these also draw upon the same culturally processed idea of the body.

Marcel Mauss, in his essay on the techniques of the body (1936), boldly asserted that there can be no such thing as natural behaviour. Every kind of action carries the imprint of learning, from feeding to washing, from repose to movement and, above all, sex. Nothing is more essentially transmitted by a social process of learning than sexual behaviour, and this of course is closely related to morality.

[...]

Whereas Mauss was concerned to emphasize the culturally learnt control of the body, other scholars, before and after, have noticed unconscious correspondences between bodily and emotional states. Psychoanalysis takes considerable account of what Freud called 'conversion' of the emotional into the physical condition. This insight has had immense therapeutic and theoretical importance.

[...]

[But] such observations do not remotely approach a general sociological theory such as Mauss was seeking.

[...]

To be useful, the structural analysis of symbols has somehow to be related to a hypothesis about role structure. From here the argument will go in two stages. First, the drive to achieve consonance in all levels of experience produces concordance among the means of expression, so that the use of the body is co-ordinated with other media. Second, controls exerted from the social system place limits on the use of the body as medium.

[...]

Hence we would always expect some concordance between social and bodily expressions of control, first because each symbolic mode enhances meaning in the other, and so the ends of communication are furthered, and second because, as we said earlier, the categories in which each kind of experience is received are reciprocally derived and mutually reinforcing. It must be impossible for them to come apart and for one to bear false witness to the other except by a conscious, deliberate effort.

Mauss's denial that there is any such thing as natural behaviour is confusing. It falsely poses the relation between nature and culture. Here I seek to identify a natural tendency to express situations of a certain kind in an appropriate bodily style. Insofar as it is unconscious, insofar as it is obeyed universally in all cultures, the tendency is natural. It is generated in response to a perceived social situation, but the latter must always come clothed in its local history and culture. Therefore the natural expression is culturally determined.

[...]

[T]he human body is always treated as an image of society and ... there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension. Interest in its apertures depends on the preoccupation with social exits and entrances, escape routes and invasions. If there is no concern to preserve social boundaries, I would not expect to find concern with bodily boundaries. The relation of head to feet, of brain and sexual organs, of mouth and anus are commonly treated so that they express the relevant patterns of hierarchy. Consequently I now advance the hypothesis that bodily control is an expression of social control – abandonment of bodily control in ritual responds to the requirements of a social experience which is being expressed. Furthermore, there is little prospect of successfully imposing bodily control without the corresponding social forms. And lastly, the same drive that seeks harmoniously to relate the experience of physical and social, must affect ideology. Consequently, when once the correspondence between bodily and social controls is traced, the basis will be laid for considering co-varying attitudes in political thought and in theology.

[...]

So far we have given two rules: one, the style appropriate to a message will co-ordinate all the channels; two, the scope of the body acting as a medium is restricted by the demands of the social system to be expressed. As this last implies, a third is that strong social control demands strong bodily control. A fourth is that along the dimension from weak to strong pressure the social system seeks progressively to disembody or etherealize the forms of expression; this can be called the purity rule. The last two work

together, so I shall deal briefly with purity first, before illustrating how they dictate the bodily media of expression.

Social intercourse requires that unintended or irrelevant organic processes should be screened out. It equips itself therefore with criteria of relevance and these constitute the universal purity rule. The more complex the system of classification and the stronger the pressure to maintain it, the more social intercourse pretends to take place between disembodied spirits. Socialization teaches the child to bring organic processes under control. Of these, the most irrelevant and unwanted are the casting-off of waste products. Therefore all such physical events, defecation, urination, vomiting and their products, uniformly carry a pejorative sign for formal discourse. The sign is therefore available universally to interrupt such discourse if desired [...]. Other physiological processes must be controlled if they are not part of the discourse, sneezes, sniffs or coughs. If not controlled, formal framing-off procedures enable them to be shorn of their natural meaning and allow the discourse to go on uninterrupted. Lastly, and derived from the purity rule, are two physical dimensions for expressing social distance; one is the front-back dimension, the other the spatial. Front is more dignified and respect-worthy than back. Greater space means more formality, nearness means intimacy. By these rules an ordered pattern is found in the apparently chaotic variation between diverse cultures. The physical body is a microcosm of society, facing the centre of power, contracting and expanding its claims in direct accordance with the increase and relaxation of social pressures. Its members, now riveted into attention, now abandoned to their private devices, represent the members of society and their obligations to the whole. At the same time, the physical body, by the purity rule, is polarized conceptually against the social body. Its requirements are not only subordinated, they are contrasted with social requirements. The distance between the two bodies is the range of pressure and classification in the society. A complex social system devises for itself ways of behaving that suggest that human intercourse is disembodied compared with that of animal creation. It uses different degrees of disembodiment to express the social hierarchy. The more refinement, the less smacking of the lips when eating, the less mastication, the less the sound of breathing and walking, the more carefully modulated the laughter, the more controlled the signs of anger, the clearer comes the priestly aristocratic image. Since food takes a different place in different cultures this general rule is more difficult to see at work in table manners than in habits of dress and grooming.

The contrast of smooth with shaggy is a member of the general set of symbolic contrasts expressing formal/informal. Shaggy hair, as a form of protest against resented forms of social control, is a current symbol in our own day. There is no lack of pop-sociology pointing a moral which is fully compatible with my general thesis. Take the general run of stockbrokers or academics; stratify the professional sample by age; be careful to distinguish length of hair from unkempt hair; relate the incidence of shagginess in hair to sartorial indiscipline. Make an assessment under the division smooth/shaggy of other choices, preferred beverages, preferred meeting-places and so on. The prediction is that where the choices for the shaggy option cluster, there is least commitment to the norms of the profession. Or compare the professions and trades one against another. Those which are aiming at the centre top, public relations, or hair dressing, and those which have long been fully committed to the main morality, chartered accountants and the law, they are predictably against the shaggy option and for the smooth drink, hair style, or restaurant. Art and academia are potentially professions of comment and

criticism on society: they display a carefully modulated shagginess according to the responsibilities they carry. But how shaggy can they get? What are the limits of shagginess and bodily abandon? It seems that the freedom to be completely relaxed must be culturally controlled.

[...]

[T]he social experience of disorder is expressed by powerfully efficacious symbols of impurity and danger. Recently I have argued that the joke is another such natural symbol (Douglas 1968). Whenever in the social situation, dominance is liable to be subverted, the joke is the natural and necessary expression, since the structure of the joke parallels the structure of the situation. In the same sense, I here argue that a social structure which requires a high degree of conscious control will find its style at a high level of formality, stern application of the purity rule, denigration of organic process and wariness towards experiences in which control of consciousness is lost.

[...]

Natural symbols will not be found in individual lexical items. The physical body can have universal meaning only as a system which responds to the social system, expressing it as a system. What it symbolizes naturally is the relation of parts of an organism to the whole. Natural symbols can express the relation of an individual to his society at that general systemic level. The two bodies are the self and society; sometimes they are so near as to be almost merged; sometimes they are far apart. The tension between them allows the elaboration of meanings.

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Mikhail Bakhtin

THE GROTESQUE IMAGE OF THE BODY AND ITS SOURCES

From M. M. Bakhtin (1984) *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

[...]

WE FIND AT THE BASIS of grotesque imagery a special concept of the body as a whole and of the limits of this whole. The confines between the body and the world and between separate bodies are drawn in the grotesque genre quite differently than in the classic and naturalist images.

[...]

Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears, and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form or that of inanimate objects. The eyes have no part in these comic images; they express an individual, so to speak, self-sufficient human life, which is not essential to the grotesque. The grotesque is interested only in protruding eyes. [...] It is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. Special attention is given to the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside. Moreover, the bulging eyes manifest a purely bodily tension. But the most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else. The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss.

The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. More-over, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world (let us recall the grotesque image in the episode of Gargantua's birth on the feast of cattle-slaughtering). This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body: the bowels and the phallus. These two areas play the leading role in the grotesque image, and it is precisely for this reason that they are

predominantly subject to positive exaggeration, to hyperbolization; they can even detach themselves from the body and lead an independent life, for they hide the rest of the body, as something secondary (The nose can also in a way detach itself from the body). Next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth, through which enters the world to be swallowed up. And next is the anus. All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interiorization. This is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven.

Thus the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths. Mountains and abysses, such is the relief of the grotesque body; or speaking in architectural terms, towers and subterranean passages.

Grotesque images may, of course, present other members, organs and parts of the body (especially dismembered parts), but they play a minor role in the drama. They are never stressed unless they replace a leading image.

Actually, if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception.

As we have said, the grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one.

We have already sufficiently stressed the fact that grotesque imagery constructs what we might call a double body. In the endless chain of bodily life it retains the parts in which one link joins the other, in which the life of one body is born from the death of the preceding, older one.

[...]

This boundless ocean of grotesque bodily imagery within time and space extends to all languages, all literatures, and the entire system of gesticulation; in the midst of it the bodily canon of art, belles lettres, and polite conversation of modern times is a tiny island. This limited canon never prevailed in antique literature. In the official literature of European peoples it has existed only for the last four hundred years.

We shall give a brief characterization of the new canon, concerning ourselves less with the pictorial arts than with literature. We shall build this characterization by comparing it to the grotesque conception and bringing out the differences.

The new bodily canon, in all its historic variations and different genres, presents an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual. That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off (when a body transgresses its limits and a new one begins) is eliminated, hidden, or moderated.

All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface and the body's 'valleys' acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. All attributes of the unfinished world are carefully removed, as well as all the signs of its inner life. The verbal norms of official and literary language, determined by the canon, prohibit all that is linked with fecundation, pregnancy, childbirth. There is a sharp line of division between familiar speech and 'correct' language.

The fifteenth century was an age of considerable freedom in France. In the sixteenth century the norms of language become more strict, and the borderline between the different norms grew more evident. This process intensified at the end of the century, when the canon of polite speech that was to prevail in the seventeenth century was definitely formed. At the end of the century Montaigne protested in his *Essays* against these prohibitions.

What harm has the genital act, so natural, so necessary, and so lawful, done to humanity, that we dare not speak of it without shame, and exclude it from serious and orderly conversation? We boldly utter the words, *kill, rob, betray*: and the other we only dare utter under our breath. Does this mean that the less of it we breathe in words, the more are we at liberty to swell our thoughts with it? For it is amusing that the words which are least used, least written, and most hushed up should be the best known and the most generally understood. There is no person of any age or morals but knows them as well as he knows the word *bread*. They are impressed upon each of us, without being expressed, without voice and without form. (And the sex that does it most is charged to hush it up.)¹

In the new canon, such parts of the body as the genital organs, the buttocks, belly, nose and mouth cease to play the leading role. Moreover, instead of their original meaning they acquire an exclusiveness; in other words, they convey a merely individual meaning of the life of one single, limited body. The belly, nose, and mouth, are of course retained in the image and cannot be hidden, but in an individual, completed body they either fulfill purely expressive functions (this is true of the mouth only) or the functions of characterization and individualization. There is no symbolic, broad meaning whatever in the organs of this body. If they are not interpreted as a characterization and an expressive feature, they are referred to on the merely practical level in brief explanatory comments. Generally speaking, all that does not contain an element of characterization in the literary image is reduced to a simple bodily remark added to speech or action.

In the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level where their connotation becomes narrow and specific, torn away from the direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole. In this new connotation they can no longer carry on their former philosophical functions.

In the new bodily canon the leading role is attributed to the individually characteristic and expressive parts of the body: the head, face, eyes, lips, to the muscular system, and to the place of the body in the external world. The exact position and movements of this finished body in the finished outside world are brought out, so that the limits between them are not weakened.

The body of the new canon is merely one body; no signs of duality have been left. It is self-sufficient and speaks in its name alone. All that happens within it concerns it alone, that is, only the individual, closed sphere. Therefore, all the events taking place within it acquire one single meaning: death is only death, it never coincides with birth; old age is torn away from youth; blows merely hurt, without assisting an act of birth. All actions and events are interpreted on the level of a single, individual life. They are enclosed within the limits of the same body, limits that are the absolute beginning and end and can never meet.

In the grotesque body, on the contrary, death brings nothing to an end, for it does not concern the ancestral body, which is renewed in the next generation. The events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection. One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image.

In the new canon the duality of the body is preserved only in one theme, a pale reflection of its former dual nature. This is the theme of nursing a child. But the image of the mother and the child is strictly individualized and closed, the line of demarcation cannot be removed. This is a completely new phase of the artistic conception of bodily interaction.

Finally, the new canon is completely alien to hyperbolization. The individualized image has no place for it. All that is permitted is a certain accentuation of expressive and characterized features. The severance of the organs from the body or their independent existence is no longer permitted.

We have roughly sketched the basic outlines of the modern canon, as they generally appear in the norms of literature and speech.

[...]

Note

- 1 Montaigne, 'Essays', III, Chapter 5. Translated by George B. Ivez, Copyright Harvard University Press, 1925.